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Deep Relation

Introduction

In this chapter I build a decolonial science of ‘deep relation’. The depth that I am retrieving can be found in a relationality that exists underneath the wounds of coloniality,¹ a cutting logic that seeks to – but on the whole never quite manages to – segregate peoples from their lands, their pasts, their ancestors and spirits. Decolonial science seeks to repair colonial wounds, binding back together peoples, lands, pasts, ancestors and spirits. Its greatest challenge is to bind back together the manifest and spiritual domains. For in the latter domain there exist hinterlands that were never colonized by Cook and Columbus, and therein lie the supports of a global infrastructure of anti-colonial connectivity. Decolonial science affirms Rufus Collins’ reply to the *kaumātua* (elder) at Te Hāpua that ‘the ancestors are meeting because we have met’. This science will become our compass and energy store.

The knowledge traditions of Māori and Pasifika peoples utilize sophisticated practices of relating – and valuing relations – that are firmly embedded in particular locales and peoples yet at the same time proffer general principles of engagement without laying claim to abstracted universals.² These practices, in part, depend on a participatory criterion which renders the categorical segregation of the ‘researcher’ from the ‘researched’ impossible.³ For this reason the chapter is organized along partially autobiographical lines. The living and growing knowledge traditions of Oceania – especially

mātauranga Māori – were an edifying gift that enabled me to dispense with the colonizing methodology of social science that I had previously been trying to work through/against. I learnt aspects of these traditions sometimes through university engagements but much more commonly through the intellectuals outside of academia who I worked with and for whom philosophy, ethics and application are not distinct pursuits.⁴ This work impelled me to recover, work in and work with the living knowledge traditions that were most urgent for the collective repair of the colonial wounds that had directly affected me. And ever since, I have been embedding myself back in the ‘continent of Black consciousness’⁵ that I claim personal historical allegiance to via the Indian Ocean human trafficking of Africans.

The flow of the chapter reflects this journey. As a clearing exercise I decolonize Hermes, the European agent that interprets relations. I then bring forth respective agents of Oceania – Tāne/Māui – and Africa – Legba – who cultivate knowledge through deep relation. As they meet, Tāne/Māui and Legba find existing commonalities between their relating skills, skills that are encompassed by the term ‘grounding’, and that enable them to know themselves better by knowing each other.

Hermes, Tāne/Māui and Legba

Hermes is the ancient Greek agent of communication and provides for the term hermeneutics, which in the Western academy stands for interpretative method.⁶ In the Homeric Hymn, Hermes must mature from a cunning child thief of cattle, representing the primitive pastoral tribes, to an adult who, via a binding oath to his elder brother Apollo, becomes a subordinate messenger to Olympus, the agent of commerce and city-state diplomacy.⁷ Hermes is therefore colonized by Homer and forced into urban civilization. I want to decolonize this personality. The St Lucian poet Derek Walcott compares the islands of the Caribbean with the Aegean and suggests that if the ancient Greeks were resurrected today

they would be considered Puerto Ricans – brown, gaudy, sensual etc.⁸ So, following Walcott, let us cast aside a certain ‘progressive’ narrative of Greek development that mirrors the fatal impact thesis of moderns – from myth and magic to reason, philosophy and history. Let us instead acknowledge that the magic of Hermes possesses its own rationalities.⁹

Before and besides the Homeric Hymn, Hermes appears as part of nature – a force in life, death and regeneration.¹⁰ And rather than city-states, Hermes’ provenance is the pastoral province of Arcadia.¹¹ There, he is the agent of the crossroads, of pathways that intersect, of thresholds and boundary stones.¹² As spiritual agent of the traveller, Hermes possesses the magic of translation that must be utilized when crossing from one domain to another. This magic, or ‘skill at the oath’, is not quite deceit or wilful misdirection and neither is it a use of trickery.¹³ In fact, the Greek word for trick can also be glossed as ‘technical skill’;¹⁴ and magic more accurately infers the act of binding together.¹⁵ Hermes’ prime skill, therefore, is to bind together different domains – geographical, social, spiritual. In this respect, Hermes is the quintessential craftsman and sometimes appears in Attic dramas as the ‘heavenly counterpart of the menial labourer’.¹⁶ Hence, despite his propensity for trickery, Hermes is considered the giver of good things to those in need. His regenerative force might even be intentionally wielded to address issues of redistribution and restitution.

I choose, therefore, to dispense with Homeric Hermes, the colonized messenger, and resurrect the Arcadian Hermes who is concerned with creatively cultivating knowledge of deep relations for the restitution of colonial wrongs. Why ‘deep’? Because the domains that are being bound back together reach to the seedbed of creation; we are not concerned here only with the cause-and-effect laws of the manifest domain. Moreover, unlike Homeric Hermes, Arcadian Hermes is not the supreme and singular messenger of the gods; he is a mundane agent rather than an exceptional world-historical figure masquerading as the colonizing European modern. Thus, the science and skill of deep relation that Hermes holds can be found everywhen and everywhere. So let us meet some of Hermes’ contemporaries.

Māori cosmologies speak of an entity known as Tāne (occasionally Tiki) who is the progenitor of humankind and of forest life. Tāne forcibly separates his parents Papatūānuku (earth mother) and Ranginui (sky father) from their loving embrace thereby creating the space within which humans live.¹⁷ Yet Tāne also races against his evil brother Te-ika-a-whiro to ascend to the realm of Io-mata-ngaro (the begotten, i.e. the hidden face) in order to bring back to the manifest domain of human beings the three baskets of knowledge.¹⁸ Tāne, similarly to Hermes, is a generative force of human life and also a ‘messenger of the gods’ to the extent that he translates their sublime knowledge so that humans might live well in the manifest world. In short, Tāne creates meaningful human life by redeeming deep relation between the manifest and spiritual domains that he himself had rent asunder. In this respect, Tāne embodies a fundamental predicament but also ethos of humanity: to *relate*, that is (to follow the Latin etymology of the word), bring back – re-bind – that which has been rent asunder.

However, the skill of binding together different domains is practised most acutely in Māori cosmologies by Māui. Māui is well known throughout Oceania, although he is always integrated in particular ways into particular cultural constellations.¹⁹ Here I follow the key contours of North Island Māori narratives. Māui is neither good nor absolutely bad, but he is a great voyager and, like Hermes, well practised in trickery, especially in changing shape. Māui utilizes these skills in order to shape the environment of the manifest world such that it is better suited for human habitation.²⁰ For example, Māui tricks Mahukia into giving to humanity the technology of fire; and Māui ensnares the sun, and forces it to travel more slowly so that the day might be longer in which humans can perform useful activity.²¹ In this respect, one of Māui’s key characteristics is the will power he exercises in order to meet his objective. This wilfulness is partly related to Māui’s low-born status. He is, in fact, a miscarried foetus, and survives initially in the sea before being found and cared for by a surrogate family.²² So in his endeavours Māui often seeks to overcome his lowly status.²³ And for this, he regularly breaks *tapu* (a state of sacredness).

Here we might note that the ethos of humanity – to relate – is closely linked to the pursuit of restitutive justice.

Māui's fate is eventually sealed when he attempts to break the ultimate *tapu* and climb back into his ancestress Hine-nui-te-po, who crushes him by closing her thighs.²⁴ Cognizant of this warning, I want to assert that the restitutive ethos of humanity is not an imperial process of convergence that seeks to homogenize all the diverse experiences of humanity and dimensions of existence. Rather, the act of binding implicates diverse but relatable matters, and hence this ethos of humanity should be conceived of as a wilful relating. Indeed, this wilfulness is suggested by Māui's very name. *Mā* can be glossed as to be freed of the restrictions of *tapu* (a state of sacredness); and *ui* can be glossed as to ask or inquire. So Māui embodies the skill of open inquiry in order to creatively make a path.²⁵ This creativity borders on the irreverent; however, it does not seek to destroy but rather to manipulate arrangements, perhaps even for the purpose of addressing injustices. Thus I submit that the Tāne/Māui complex embodies a decolonial science of deep relation, that is, the binding back together of different domains in order to cultivate useful knowledge through which to provide restitution for a disadvantaged social position.

A cognate personality to Tāne/Māui exists in many cosmologies of the African Diaspora, that is, those persons and their descendants trafficked to work enslaved on the plantations of the Americas (as well as South-East Asia and elsewhere). Legba, a key personality in West African Fon cosmology, is one such agent who dwells at the thresholds of temples and houses.²⁶ Legba is also present at the threshold of communications between humans.²⁷ As the interpreter of fate Legba enjoys a close relationship to Fa, who rules over divination and expresses the destiny of the cosmos.²⁸ Fa resides on the top of her tree, and every night Legba climbs up to open the eyes of his sister to survey the manifest world.²⁹ In this respect, Legba, similar to Tāne, moves between the manifest and spiritual domains, especially by revealing to human beings their fates but also, similarly to Māui, by providing them with the ability to 'trick' fate, i.e. to utilize certain binding skills to their advantage.³⁰

Similar to Arcadian Hermes, Legba is a trickster who cannot be relied upon, yet is nonetheless a guardian of human beings.³¹ There is, moreover, a restitutive aspect to Legba's relationship with humanity, an aspect that can also be gleaned in Tāne/Māui. As time goes by, human beings remember Fa (destiny) yet forget Legba (malleable fate). In fact, wars break out because those who have been given kingdoms have forgotten the language of their parents. Legba must be remembered, even if only by certain pivotal people, so that fate can be 'tricked' and war cease.³² In this respect, Legba embodies a certain irreverence to ordained fates, as does Māui. And this characteristic takes on especial importance in the African Diaspora with regards to reparation for the wounds of enslavement.

In this book we will walk at different times with both the continental and diasporic children of Legba. However, while diverse articulations of Legba exist in West African cultures, in this chapter I will focus more on the diasporic children's conceptions. For the enslaved that are forced to make the middle passage, Legba's prime aspect becomes that of the gatekeeper,³³ his key purpose: to provide redemption from the fate of slavery.³⁴ In Haitian Vodou, Legba stands at the crossroads between the manifest world of humans and the spiritual realms of *loa* (spiritual agencies), domains that map respectively onto the Americas – the place of plantations, enslavement and suffering – and the domain of the island below the sea, populated by the ancestral and spiritual agencies of Guinea (Africa).³⁵ Legba helps the diasporic sufferers in the manifest domain to repair the breach with the spiritual domain that has rendered them dehumanized. He does so by facilitating useful communication between manifest beings and their ancestors/spirits. For those who dare, Legba might be mobilized for even grander schemes of redemption, that is, repatriation out of the living death of the American plantations to African homelands. By these means, the colonial destiny (Fa) of enslavement might be reduced to a malleable fate (Legba) to be decided through liberation struggles.

In sum, Tāne/Māui and Legba (as well as Arcadian Hermes) are personalities that embody the creative cultivation of deep relation.

Their magic, i.e. their decolonial science, binds different domains together – individual, social, geographical and spiritual – in the pursuit of restitutive justice. The problem of binding back together is germane to the human condition. It is not a colonial creation. Colonial science was never that innovative. We will, nevertheless, dwell in the particular dispensation of this problem caused by the European colonial science of segregation, which stands opposed to the decolonial science of cultivating deep relation.³⁶ A brief excursus into anthropology can help us to clarify this difference.

Categorical segregation versus deep relation

Let us recall the image of the *Graphic's* imperial world map that I discussed in the last chapter. In the first part of the twentieth century, anthropologists made claim to the method of ethnography, that is, the examination of other cultures from a position of intimacy usually achieved through extended fieldwork in a native community. The term ethnography has a Greek provenance, referring to the study of foreign places in order to construct the difference and distance between there and home.³⁷ In this sense, the expectations of ethnographic writing diverge from the cultivation of deep relation. Indeed, ethnography, as a tool of colonial administration, sought to mark, justify and police precisely the categorical difference between native and modern. And it is this ethnographic gaze that is behind the *Graphic's* imperial world map, fixing the subaltern in its subordination to Britannica. Caught in this ethnographic gaze, Tāne/Māui and Legba could never relate to each other (or with an Arcadian Hermes) because, as non-moderns, they do not possess the competency to interrelate; they are merely 'unreflexive' agents, practising the old mystic arts of magic and trickery. To become competent, therefore, Tāne/Māui and Legba would have to look to a third force – a modernizing force of self-reflexivity – that could render the meaning of their actions on their behalf.

With independence from colonial rule, many traditional ethnographic sites became less easily accessible to Western anthropologists as the peripheral characters began to take back their own voices on the world stage. In this new era the supposedly higher sciences of translation and interpretation practised by the white ethnographer were at least partially revealed to be simply political instruments of colonial rule.³⁸ We should be careful to suppose that anthropological inquiry is incapable of breaking out of colonial science.³⁹ Nevertheless it is still rare to find studies that engage with the relationship of (post)colonized to *each other* 'sideways' without having to call upon Britannica to interpret and provide the meaning of these relationships.⁴⁰

How might deep relation be a different practice of knowledge cultivation to that of categorical segregation? We must start by acknowledging that the manifest world is a broadly (post)colonial one, structured through imperial hierarchies that encourage the one-way transmission of political authority, social relations and knowledge from the centres outwards. But Tāne/Māui and Legba use their skills to bind this manifest domain to the hinterlands of the spiritual domains wherein colonial logic and lore is certainly an intrusion, although only an intrusion, and not a foundation. This is why I term this particular aspect of the spiritual domain as 'hinterland', that is, a space that has not been colonized yet faces the colonial frontier. Most importantly, the spiritual hinterlands provide the expanded agency to redress colonial fates in the manifest domain by providing the compass and energy store for anti-colonial self-determination.⁴¹

With these points in mind let us return to Tāne and his retrieval of the three baskets of knowledge from the begotten domain of Io-mata-kore, as detailed by the scholar Māori Marsden. In one basket lies knowledge of Te Ao Tua-ātea – the world beyond space-time. This is the ultimate sublime reality – of the spirit, of potential, and of the first cause (*Io-taketake*). It is also the condition from which and towards which the cosmos as a whole is tending.⁴² In another basket is knowledge of Tua-uri, dark worlds (*te pō*) that are nevertheless the 'seedbed of creation' wherein space-time is gestated, evolves and

refined, ultimately, into the various and specialized manifestations of the natural world. In these sublime worlds, *hau-ora* [the breath of life] begets shapes, shape begets form, form begets space, space begets time and time begets Rangi and Papa.⁴³ Ranginui the sky father and Papatūānuku the earth mother embrace each other in this world of becoming until Tāne forces their separation and births Te Ao Mārama – the manifest world of light. This, then, leads us to the final basket of knowledge of Te Aro-nui, the natural world of being that can be apprehended through our senses in terms of events, sequences, cycles, regularities and, in general, relations of cause and effect.⁴⁴

In recounting this genealogy of creation, Māori Marsden is at pains to point out that different domains have different competencies, traits and purposes. This point resonates with the caution that I took from Māui's ultimate fate. In short, the binding skills of Tāne/Māui do not seek to collapse domains but, rather, to make their agents relatable and their energies traversable. We might also remember that Tāne, after causing a breach that creates the manifest world, seeks knowledge through which to repair the breach. I have suggested that this could be considered an ethos of humanity, one that requires a science. And in this science of deep relation, the material must be apprehended as material-and-spiritual, whereas in colonial science the spiritual must be profaned, that is, it must be transmogrified into a material cause (or ideology or symbol) so as to be captured by imperial logic.

We must now examine how these binding skills open temporal and spatial pathways that subvert the colonial segregations that structure the manifest domain. Let us first examine the temporalities that allow colonized history to be displaced by decolonial pasts.⁴⁵

Contrary to a developmentalist understanding of time, which is focused upon the creation of a pristine future, both Tāne/Māui and Legba practise deep relation as, principally, the reparation of ancestral ties.⁴⁶ In Te Reo (the Māori language), *mua* functions both as a locative indicating in front and also the past, while *muri* indicates behind and also the future. Therefore, the future is behind us, because it is unknown and yet to be inhabited. The past, however, are the days

which lie in front (*ngā rā o mua*).⁴⁷ This temporal orientation can also be identified in cosmologies associated with Legba. One Akan symbol that has gained popularity among enslaved Africans and their descendants is Sankofa – a bird that looks back to take an egg off its back. The imperative of Sankofa, meaning to ‘go back and take’, is to retrieve valuable heritage for the present day.⁴⁸ Likewise, Haitian Vodou ceremonies will often begin by halting profane time; the *hougan* (priest) will emerge out of a sacred chamber in a backward motion orientating the congregation forward to the first human and ultimately to the godhead, the source of all cosmic agency and relation.⁴⁹ The RasTafari faith provides a short-hand for this temporality: the ‘i-ncient [ancient] future’.⁵⁰

Legba facilitates a reparative process by way of this temporal sensibility. He stands at the crossroads, a site of orientation.⁵¹ The cosmogram of the crossroads is composed of a vertical pole that denotes the centre of the world while the horizontal pole denotes the boundary of water called *nzadi* – the great river – that separates the mountains of the manifest (alive) and the spiritual (alive other-wise) that are nevertheless connected at their bases under the water.⁵² The greater the distance between these two mountains the more that equilibrium is required by means of communication between the entities of the two domains.⁵³ In many faith systems in the African Diaspora, that great river is the Atlantic and great polarity had been created by the human traffic crossing it. Thus, even greater skill would be required for the enslaved if they were to repair the breach, escape the lands of death (Americas) and return to the lands of the living (Guinea).⁵⁴

These temporal orientations provide a means to heal the colonial wound of segregation in so far as they bind post(colonized) peoples back to their ancestors and other spiritual agents that are not subaltern but still-living entities with their own integrity. Colonized presents cannot be sutured by uninhabited futures but by meaningful, already inhabited pasts. Moreover, the temporal (re-)orientation of decolonial science enables and requires the cultivation of different spatialities and relationalities that are also categorically ruled out by colonial science.

In the manifest domain of colonial governance, entities are racially segregated into enslaved, indentured, native, free poor and masters. None can relate sideways to each other. They are fixated by the gaze of Britannica, the master. However, Legba allows for these segregations to be re-rendered as meaningful relations by binding together the manifest and spiritual domains, and the colonial present back to decolonial pasts. Ultimately such binding is made possible because the spiritual hinterlands are arranged not according to colonial logics of segregation but to those of relation. For instance, in the Caribbean island of St Vincent, the Converted, an African Baptist faith, practise spiritual journeying through which they will receive guidance for problems that plague their everyday life. In this journeying they freely visit Africa, India and China – originating regions of the various labourers brought to the islands by British colonialism. They might also visit Ethiopians, ‘a tribe of very small, eerie dark people in Africa’; however, in order to meet them the ‘tone has to be deep in the Spirit’ of the sojourner.⁵⁵ Samoan writer Sia Figiel poetically expresses a similar science of deep relating for those who journey with Tāne/Māui:

alofa [love] for the dead
that live inside us
nurturing our imaginations of ancestors across continents
across time and space.⁵⁶

Therefore, instead of fatalism in the face of manifest colonial domination, Tāne/Māui and Legba turn cause and effect to run forward in order to redeem the past. And when the past is redeemed as a living site of anti-colonial agency, the spiritual hinterlands can redeem relationships between peoples segregated by the manifest forms of colonial rule. What is more, if Tāne/Māui and Legba are walking together in the spiritual hinterlands, their children might be moved to do the same in the manifest domain. Thus, beyond the imperial gaze, subalterns cease to be as they relate to each other as other persons of integrity; the ancestors are meeting because we have met. We can mark this material-and-spiritual relationality with

the Māori term *tātou tātou*, that is, ‘all of us and all of us’ meaning, everyone must be recognized as relatable entities rather than as categorically segregated objects.

In this section I have not made statements of belief. Neither have I been trying to convince you to believe with me. Rather, my statements are avowedly substantive – ontological, even. The material is material-and-spiritual. Temporalities that bind back together the material and spiritual also bind (post)colonial presents back to decolonial pasts as well as persons and collectives spatially segregated by colonial logics. Knowledge is cultivated as part of this political pursuit, and that is decolonial science. This science is not waiting to be profaned in order to become a higher-order science of modern self-reflexivity for that would be, first and foremost, an imperial move rather than an epistemic revolution.⁵⁷ As Māori Marsden confirms, it is certainly true that profane matter has its own competencies. Nevertheless, these competencies manifest quite late in the day in cosmological terms and do not constitute the deep structures of existence.

We have arrived, then, at the prospect of a radical expansion of agency made possible in the practice of binding together the manifest and sublime domains so as to redeem and refigure the past in an expanded and interconnected global arena. My concerns in this book are to apprehend this expansion of agency and energy as part of a pursuit of global justice in colonial conditions that practically and epistemically outlaw such pursuits, relationships and solidarities. I now elaborate on the particular skill of relating practised by Tāne/Māui and Legba known as ‘grounding’.

Grounding

To my mind, decolonial science *cultivates* knowledge, it does not *produce* knowledge. Using the Latin roots of these words, we could say that to produce knowledge is to lengthen, prolong or extend,

whereas to cultivate knowledge is to till, to turn matter around and fold back on itself so as to rebind and encourage growth. Knowledge production is less a creative endeavour and more a process of accumulation and imperial extension so that (post)colonized peoples could only consume or extend someone else's knowledge (of themselves).⁵⁸ In short, a colonial science produces knowledge of and for subalterns. Alternatively, knowledge cultivation is a necessarily creative pursuit as it requires the practitioner to turn over and oxygenate the past. Most importantly, cultivation also infers habitation, which means that knowledge is creatively released as the practitioner enfolds her/himself in the communal matter of her/his inquiry. What is more, this constant oxygenation process – a circulatory one – necessarily interacts with a wider biotope, enfolding matter from other habitations. To cultivate knowledge of deep relation can therefore be understood as 'grounding'.

In Māori cosmology, the manifest world is created when Tāne separates Ranginui from Papatūānuku. Specifically, Papatūānuku refers to the sublime aspect of *whenua* – the manifest earth.⁵⁹ *Whenua* (land) is therefore never just a material object, because it connects the manifest world back to the seedbed of creation. Inhabitation is an enaction of creation; hence the term *tūrangawaewae* – glossed as 'stomping ground' but more accurately rendered as 'to stand is to be'.⁶⁰ This is why the land is an ancestor to human beings.⁶¹ With regards to these considerations the term *whakapapa* takes on great importance. In a quotidian sense *whakapapa* can be glossed as 'genealogy'; for example, 'who do you *whakapapa* to?' means 'what are your tribal affiliations?' More accurately, however, *whaka* means to make or cause, and *papa* refers to ground or foundation. So *whakapapa* can be glossed as 'to make a ground/foundation';⁶² and because of the constitutive relationship of land to being, the act of *whakapapa* is in many ways an enaction of creation.

As part of a decolonial science, *whakapapa* proposes that 'to understand phenomena we must understand relationship'.⁶³ And one of the key structuring principles of *whakapapa* is the relationship between junior (*tēina*) and senior (*tuākana*) relations. While this principle is

heavily implicated in the web of family and tribal structures, it also operates on a broader cosmological scale: manifest entities hold a junior relation (*tēina*) to those senior entities (*tuākana*) that inhabit the spiritual domain. This being said, although *whakapapa* expresses hierarchical relations, these are always multiple and overlapping. Indeed, one of the most signal qualities of Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) is just how many diverse and sometimes conflicting stories peoples have of themselves and of their relationships.⁶⁴ Hence *whakapapa* are, to a certain extent, malleable. It is possible, for example, to identify more strongly with a junior descent line (*tēina*) than a senior (*tuākana*) or with one's matrilineal lines more than with patrilineal lines.⁶⁵

The qualified malleability of *whakapapa* is amenable to the creative path making that is a signal quality of Māui's skills.⁶⁶ Indeed, the retrieval of particular lines and ancestors can be creatively mobilized to address present-day challenges. For example, if a child is taught the skill of weaving they might not only be taught about Hine-te-iwaiwa, the originator of the skill, but perhaps also about an ancestor who was noted for the skill.⁶⁷ Many of the people who I have cultivated relationships with in the course of writing this book similarly explain their present-day work, politics and direction by intentional reference to particular *tūpuna* (ancestors) and the living legacies that they now embody.

In this respect, *whakapapa* is not only a practice that concerns personal genealogy but can also be mobilized to relate through common experiences or the pursuit of common purpose.⁶⁸ For instance, in explaining how the Black Power gang should be more accurately considered an *iwi* (tribe), Eugene Ryder, Wellington spokesperson, mobilizes the concept of *whakapapa*. *Iwi*, like all collective groups, constitute themselves through their genealogy. But what binds Black Power members, argues Ryder, is not so much common personal lines of descent (although they can be these too), but, more so, common lines of purpose to which they are all committed, often inter-generationally so. Thus Ryder is a member of a number of *iwi*: Ngāti Kahu – his personal genealogical line – and Mangu Kaha (Black Power) – his line of purpose.⁶⁹

In sum, *whakapapa* provides for the ‘ultimate catalogue’ of relations between people and all other entities in the manifest and spiritual domains – flora, fauna, land, ancestors, spiritual agencies etc.⁷⁰ Indeed, *mātauranga* Māori (Māori knowledge systems) are themselves organized through *whakapapa* and usually communicated by narrative, as is the case with Māori Marsden’s cosmological recital that I rehearsed above.⁷¹ All entities – tangible and intangible – are therefore related as part of creation. Less a passive rehearsal of genealogy, *whakapapa* is much more an intentional and creative (re-)cultivation of relations that constitute the cosmos, announced to the world in the form of storytelling (*whaikōrero*). *Whakapapa* demands persons to ‘know their foundations and embrace a diverse humanity’.⁷² To be and to know, absent of relating, is unthinkable. This is why the *tūpuna* (ancestors) teach that one must always ‘*whakapapa* to the world’.⁷³ In this way, knowledge cultivation through *whakapapa* epistemically and ethically demands the enfolding of diverse matters into the habitation of indigenous being. Perhaps, then, oceans (Pacific and Atlantic) and racial categorizations (black and brown) are only manifest barriers to peoples that can be bound back together at deeper levels. A ground can always be creatively prepared for relating.

Legba, keeper of the crossroads, is invoked in the ‘invisible institutions’ – the secret night-time congregations of enslaved peoples on plantations presided over by fellow enslaved preachers and prophets.⁷⁴ In the emergency conditions of the plantation, worship had to be physically and spiritually sheltered from the overseers and masters. In the 1930s and 1940s Caribbean, adherents of the RasTafari faith began the next iteration of this tradition.⁷⁵ Elder Bongo Spear notes that secluded meetings among RasTafari became synonymous with a theocratic assembly called the Nyahbinghi Order.⁷⁶ Referring back to a set of nineteenth-century religious and political movements in central Africa against European colonialism, Nyahbinghi came to denote a cardinal imperative of the RasTafari faith: (spiritual) death to all black and white oppressors.⁷⁷ The Nyahbinghi began to call their collective deliberations ‘grounations’. Cognate to *whakapapa*, but adding an

explicitly political impulse, grounation etymologically brings together ground, foundation and nation.⁷⁸ As such, grounation announces the binding together of manifest and spiritual domains guided by the collective pursuit of self-determination.

At grounation, reasoning, chants, prayers and meditation enable the faithful to be rejuvenated in order to focus on 'chanting down Babylon', quickening repatriation, and fulfilling the Nyahbinghi creed – the hungry be fed, the naked clothed, the sick nourished, the ancients protected, and the infants cared for.⁷⁹ Marijuana, the sacramental herb or 'wisdom weed', is consumed because it opens up the I-tes (the heights, the spiritual domain, the intellect). A 'fire key' is lit with the recitation of a set of Psalms that affirm salvation and refuge for the faithful and brimstone for the wicked.⁸⁰ Drums (or 'harps') are played for the duration of the congregation, their volume, style and speed varying according to the reasoning taking place and its affect upon the congregation. At grounation these various technologies facilitate the binding together of manifest and spiritual domains in order to bring Zion to earth in the pursuit of African liberation, as testified to in this popular rhyme:

Natty dread shake him locks
And a lightning clap
And a weak heart drap! [drop]⁸¹

It is true, though, that RasTafari do not expressly practise the same kind of ancestor veneration as many African Diasporic faiths.⁸² This is an important observation in so far as it indicates that the RasTafari apprehension of spiritual intercession is also different from many indigenous practices. Nevertheless, I would argue that this difference is strategic and contextual rather than existential. Confronting the legacy of slavery as a living death, RasTafari disavow any notion of dying and hence pursue a more dramatic intercession for 'more life' via the powers of the Most High manifest in the human and living persona of the Ethiopian emperor, Haile Selassie I, alongside Empress Menen Asfaw. Direct intercession is, in fact, a component of much African

ancestor veneration, although such a practice is only to be utilized in circumstances of extreme danger.⁸³ I submit that kidnapping, trafficking, enslavement and dehumanization can be considered as extremely dangerous circumstances. In this sense, the absence of direct ancestor veneration in RasTafari does not necessarily infer the absence of ancestors. Witness, for example, elder Bongo Ketu who explains that at grounation, ‘when a skill man play ’pon de peta [repeater], de drums bring forth de spirits of all de Ancients ... de drum is de ancient Ethiopian form of communication’.⁸⁴

While grounations are somewhat formal affairs, the practice of *grounding* is more often than not quotidian as is the case with the face-to-face practising of *whakapapa*.⁸⁵ And wherever RasTafari ground, they cultivate knowledge other-wise to the Babylonian institutions of knowledge production. Walter Rodney, the famous Guyanese academic and activist, returns to the University of West Indies (his *alma mater*) to teach in 1968. He relocates his classroom from the Mona campus to the shanties of downtown Kingston. There, Rodney and members of the RasTafari faith take part in informal grounding sessions, exchanging views on African history, politics and the liberation struggles.⁸⁶ Rodney comes with dead books but is ‘amazed’ at the living practices of knowledge cultivation pursued by RasTafari, the way in which they are able to traverse the segregations of colonial science, retrieve African personhood from ‘thingification’,⁸⁷ and recentre the peripheral and marginalized sufferers within a deep set of supportive and emancipatory relations.⁸⁸

As is the case with *whakapapa*, RasTafari grounding tends to exceed its immediate habitation among the African Diaspora. The RasTafari pronoun ‘I and I’ is similar to *tātou tātou*, and specifically infers that my sanctified being must also be directly relatable to your sanctified being; the RasTafari pronoun for ‘you’ is, in fact, ‘the I’. Additionally, RasTafari make use of ‘spiritual anthropology’, based on African fractal aesthetics, wherein research is ‘insearch’, i.e. what is inside is outside.⁸⁹ Sociological and/or racial segregational categorizations (native/negro, red, brown/black) cannot therefore frame grounding between I and I.

Rather, as is the case with African Baptists, RasTafari ground across these lines. For instance, RasTafari consider the Americas in general to be indigenous land and First Nation spiritual practices to be cognate to their own, especially in terms of the use of drums, fire and sacraments.⁹⁰ These considerations are manifested, whenever appropriate. Hence, the grounation that inaugurated the First International Gathering of RasTafari in May 1994 took place among the Miccosukee people of north-east Florida.

Grounding in Aotearoa NZ

Tāne/Māui and Legba have forged for us a decolonial science of deep relation that utilizes a key skill: the creative preparation of a ground for relating. Their decolonial science seeks restitution as a general ethos of humanity, but specifically as an anti-colonial pursuit, and will enable us to come to terms with a global infrastructure of anti-colonial connectivity that exists underneath and surreptitiously runs through the imperial hierarchy of Britannica. This decolonial science seeks to bind the manifest colonized world back to the uncolonized spiritual hinterlands, the colonized present back to decolonial pasts, (post) colonized peoples to other (post)colonized peoples, and the children of Legba to the children of Tāne/Māui. Perhaps even the children of Arcadian Hermes might have a part to play – or a relation to redeem – in this enterprise.

But the deep relation that we are retrieving in this book is of Africa in Oceania. And Oceania – specifically Aotearoa NZ – is not vacant nor a neutral space but one that is already inhabited. As a child of Legba I must address the fact that I am cultivating knowledge of the children of Tāne/Māui, on their own grounds. What, then, might be the ethical and methodological directives of this pursuit?

Here I follow the advice of Manuka Henare on the terms of engagement between *tauiwi* (non-Māori) and *mātauranga* Māori

(Māori knowledges). Henare affirms that there are particular stories whose guardians are particular groups – *whānau* (family), and *hapū* and *iwi* (larger social and political constellations). In these cases, the ethical and methodological imperative of knowledge cultivation addresses a primary question: ‘who are the appropriate guardians’. Social science imperatives of ‘(how) can I extract the knowledge’ must be subservient to the addressing of this primary question. After all, the principle of rightful guardianship (*kaitiaki*) is of foremost concern, especially when stories, as *whakapapa*, constitute being itself.

Yet Henare argues that there also exists a narrative that congenitally folds within itself numerous groups – Māori and *tauiwi* (non-Māori) – and is therefore, in principle, much more open to cultivation by all who feel compelled to claim an investment in it. This is the story of pan-Māori self-determination (*mana motuhake*) integrally connected to the arrival and building of relationships with Pākehā (European settlers).⁹¹ I would respectfully add that the *tauiwi* (non-Māori) in this story are constituted by more multiple and diverse peoples than European settlers. Landmarks of this multicultural story include the Māori Declaration of Independence in 1835 (He Wakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga), the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) in 1840, the emergence of the Kīngitanga (the Māori King Movement) in the 1850s as a response to breaches to Te Tiriti, and the renaissances of *mana motuhake* (self-determination) in the 1970s and 80s. I situate my engagement on these terms. That is, I retrieve the deep relation between the descendants of Africa and Oceania as part of the broader politics and narrative of the pan-Māori anti-colonial struggle for *mana motuhake*, a struggle that must involve *tātou tātou* – I and I.

Let me finish by rehearsing the cardinal skills of decolonial science that we have examined in this chapter. Grounding signals the cultivation of deep relation by variously binding different domains together. These domains are fundamentally the material and spiritual, domains that necessarily also enfold present and past, living and ancestors, and *tātou tātou* – persons and persons. For the purposes of this book, whenever an intentional attempt is being made by persons at some

kind of binding along these lines (even in the absence of face-to-face relations) then grounding is taking place. *Whakapapa* is the particular expression and organization of these relations in the form of stories, or more accurately, as enactments of (a part of) creation, i.e. stories of creative constitution. Crucially, *whakapapa* do not simply describe mundane and material causal relations. Certainly, *whakapapa* cannot be composed out of fiction; however, their composition is an intentional, wilful rearrangement. In other words, there is a significant restitutive element to *whakapapa* – a creative redeeming of deep relation that material causality is in the service of rather than the master over. At various points in the book, I will recite *whakapapa* that will intentionally and creatively retrieve the depth of the grounding between the children of Tāne/Māui and Legba.

Many of the chapters in this book cluster around the time period of the 1970s and 1980s. However, the narrative of the book is not ordered chronologically; instead, its flow should be apprehended as an expression of a deepening relation with all its contentions. However, there are many crossroads along the way, delineated by the chapters of the book. As we proceed through the chapters, this contentious and staged deepening of relations between the children of Tāne/Māui and Legba will be signalled in the following movement: from comparison, to identification, to inhabitation and finally to enfolding.

The following chapters pursue the project of *mana motuhake* with this compass in hand. We begin in the late 1960s and 1970s when Māori activists start to compare their struggles and strategies with those of the Black Power movement of the USA. Here, the children of Tāne/Māui and Legba attempt to bind themselves together within the public sphere of the manifest domain, and they start to glean their deep relation through comparative exercises. But it is a contentious process. They then journey deeper into the relation and move from comparisons with Black Power to identifications with Blackness in public and personal arenas. We walk some way in this direction with the Polynesian Panthers, the struggles over sports and Apartheid, and the Black Women's Movement. Then we move from political

Blackness to spiritual and aesthetic Blackness, witnessing theological engagements with Black liberation and artistic projects that attempt to mobilize Black liberation for decolonial ends. At this point the children of Arcadian Hermes appear, seeking to appropriately support this deepening identification.

We then travel deeper still, from identification to mutual inhabitation in the arena of faith. We examine RasTafari as a faith of the children of Legba that the children of Tāne/Māui inhabit on their own grounds and terms. Subsequently we travel into the spiritual hinterlands using the Māori prophets of the nineteenth century as our vessel. There we find Tāne/Māui and Legba walking together in anti-colonial solidarity as the biblical Shem and Ham. We return to the present material-and-spiritual domain to witness how these traversable energies enfold RasTafari into the indigenous and endogenous prophetic traditions of Aotearoa NZ. Finally, we rehearse a general *whakapapa* of Africa in Oceania, and in so doing, make the greeting between ancestors at Te Hāpua intelligible as part of a deep, global infrastructure of anti-colonial connectivity.