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LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

Writing in Translation: Robert Sullivan's *Star Waka* and Craig Santos Perez's from *unincorporated territory*

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Abstract:

This article reads the multilingual poetics of Robert Sullivan's *Star Waka* and Craig Santos Perez's *from unincorporated territory*, showing how each poet deploys a range of formal, thematic, and imagistic strategies for expressing a contemporary transnationalism. Rather than identify a language of the metropole resisted by a threatened yet contestatory 'local' language, Sullivan and Perez cast ostensibly regional languages as equally traveled as the colonial languages that threaten to mask or silence them. In so doing, these poets argue not just for the vitality and resurgence of Maori and Chamorro respectively; they ultimately privilege neither 'first' nor 'second' language, neither 'source' nor 'target,' metropole nor colony, locating their argument for sovereignty in a kinetic space of translation, identifying the process of moving between heterogeneous languages which are irreducible to national literatures—even though they have been co-opted into nationalist discourses both oppressive and resistant—as equally valuable as the recourse to self-expression in an oppressed or minority language. This practice, which we term 'writing in translation,' offers evidence for a wider postcolonial turn, identified by critics such as Subramanian Shankar, Jacob Edmonds, and Gayatri Spivak, from seeing translation principally as evidence of colonial/imperial rupture and instead identifying within it a poetics of emergent discourse in which translation allows the multiple idioms and registers to co-exist, displaying a range of power structures and social hierarchies simultaneously.

Keywords: Robert Sullivan; Craig Santos Perez; poetry; transnationalism; multilingualism.

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Introduction

In poet Robert Sullivan's *Star Waka* (1999), a man recalls going to 'the Waitangi celebrations' in Paihia, Aotearoa/New Zealand, and 'pass[ing] waka tua, pahi, waka ama,' seeing them as a 'resurrection' heading 'into the new age: vehicles for a revival' (Sullivan 1999: 26). In fellow Pacific poet Craig Santos Perez's serial project from unincorporated territory, a grandfather, now living in Fairfield, CA, U.S.A., teaches his grandson about a traditional fishing net used in Guåhån/Guam, the island once their home: 'you hold the nicho like this' (Perez 2008: 31). His words half-elude the grandson, spoken in a language—Chamorro—near-eradicated by waves of colonizers.

These scenes seemingly offer classic narratives in which an oppressed minority refuses to let old customs die. Yet each also expresses a complex multilingual transnationality, that emerges not only through the overt presence of geography and multilingualism but also in subtle attention to everyday language, such as definite articles and prepositions. Perez's book, for example, imagines a larger work, unincorporated territory, of which we only have a part, hence its titular 'from', creating an analogy for Guåhån/Guam's compromised sovereignty. Sullivan's italicized 'the' indicates neither Maori nor English words are italicized as foreign; they are instead equals within the poems' mother tongue. Perez at times glosses Chamorro words but elsewhere refuses or delays translation, undermining any sure sense of what counts as source or target language. Both poets engage in the complex spatialized literary questioning that Sheila Hones has identified as setting into relation 'the fictional space generated in the event of the text,' 'the uncontained intertextual space' that opens up as poets' books enter into conversations with one another, and 'a sociospatial dimension' in which figures of audience, such as Perez's grandfather and grandson, become present in the text's meaning (Hones 2014: 8-9).

Sullivan and Perez have not been read alongside one another, despite thematic and biographical connections. Both writers have held faculty positions in the English Department at the University of Hawai'i (Sullivan from 2003-2007, Perez from 2011). Perez's review of Sullivan's *Star Waka* for a 'recovery project' in *octopus* #9 (2006-7) praises the way it 'interweaves the personal, political, historical, and mythological into prosodic and semantic vehicles' (np), an apt description also for the books comprising Perez's *from unincorporated territory*: [hacha] (2008), [saina] (2010), and [guma'] (2014). While Perez more obviously experiments with the page, incorporating maps and images, both writers investigate the co-presence of languages. Whereas Afrosporic poet M. NourbeSe Philip has explored the 'foreign anguish' of English as 'another tongue' (Philip 1989: 56),

Sullivan and Perez write bi- and multilingual works of poetry which less seek to undermine the dominance of English than to demonstrate the ways English, Maori, and Chamorro cannot be understood apart from other languages spoken alongside. Sullivan and Perez are, this essay argues, 'writing in translation,' offering a multilingual textuality that figures a transnational Pacific experience, both historically and within the contemporary moment.

This multilingual textuality, rooted in the multiple and particular histories, geographies, and politics of the Pacific, offers correctives to recent developments in comparative and postcolonial studies and in translation theory. As Subramanian Shankar argues, 'translation—the actual practice, not the trope ... has been generally undervalued in postcolonial theory' (Shankar 2012: 104); the term is, for instance, incidental within the anthology *Re-Routing the Postcolonial: New Directions for the New Millennium* (2009).¹ The last five years, admittedly, have seen a movement away from viewing translation as an elaborate conceit for colonizer-colonized relations or as a set of facts about unequal power hierarchies and towards 'translation as an active rather than a prosthetic practice' (Spivak 2012: 472). In addition to Spivak's own work, a number of monographs, including Jacob Edmonds' *A Common Strangeness* (2012), Shankar's *Flesh and Fish Blood* (2012) and Ignacio Infante's *After Translation* (2013), offer extended accounts of 'the series of recurring mechanisms of translation, displacement, and substitution' by which poetic texts 'articulate a space of mediation between different national traditions, languages, and cultures' (Infante 2013: 15, 8). Yet these publications rarely enter into dialogue with a similar surge of interest in translation as a contemporary poetic mode in Pacific literary studies; in that context, Nicholas Wright has argued that 'the poet's work first and foremost [is] that of the translator' (Wright 2011: 219). In what follows we aim to develop the conversation between postcolonial, comparative, Pacific and Atlantic critical engagement with translation and contemporary transnational poetics, building on a model proposed by Chadwick Allen when he asks 'What do we learn or see differently when we juxtapose diverse indigenous texts?' (Allen 2007: 3).

Sullivan and Perez's work is germane to comparative readings predicated not on discrete national spaces but on the impossibility of compartmentalization, in part because of the ways the two deploy multiple languages to explore a porously-demarked Pacific geography. Sullivan and Perez document the challenges of separating Aotearoa from New Zealand and Guåhån from the 'unincorporated territory' of U.S.-controlled Guam. Both texts engage with spaces whose very names encode a translation practice as part of an understanding of sovereignty. As Hsuan Hsu notes, Felix Camacho suggested Guåhån as Guam's official name when he was governor (Hsu 2012: 303). Rather than adopt either term, Perez moves between the two, reminding us that the island in question is variously and uncertainly signified: his third book's subtitle, *guma'*, is a suggestive anagram for and distortion of its Anglicized name, while also a Chamorro word meaning house, shelter, or refuge. Indexing and resisting the official American-English name, Perez finds Chamorro persisting and offering succour. (For clarity's sake, this article will use 'Guam' rather than switching between terms, in part as a reminder that the island remains an 'unincorporated territory,' unable to entirely name itself.) Likewise, Sullivan deploys both 'Aotearoa' and 'New Zealand' precisely and to particular ends. C. F. Goldie is 'a famous

New Zealand / painter' in 'Goldie (2)', distinguishing him geopolitically from his Maori subjects (Sullivan 1999:38). In 'Waka 71' we learn first that the outrigger team for 'New Zealand won eight gold medals' and immediately following that the 'national association is called Nga Kaihoe o Aotearoa'. The term 'national' in this context draws our attention to the double-naming of Aotearoa / New Zealand that is always at play (80). This co-presence signals a key argument for this article: that meaning emerges not when one language is chosen at the exclusion of another, but when languages interact. Both poets collapse mythico-historical sweeps, reading early modern Maori and Chamorro traditions as present within contemporary New Zealand and Guamanian life; such 'superimpositions,' to borrow Jacob Edmonds' term, do not argue for the replacement of one national imaginary with another, but map the co-presence of competing identities within transnational space.

Our central argument is that these multilingual works make visible the polydirectional nature of translation itself—not moving from colonized to colonizer (or back) but across a range of colonized and postcolonial positions both historical and contemporary. Sullivan and Perez's writings position their language as in translation—even when it seems to be 'English.' When Sullivan writes, 'in English, the waka / is a canoe / but the ancestral waka / were as large / as the European barks / of the eighteenth century explorers' (Sullivan 1999: 21) he reconsiders what is 'English' through a series of dislocations. The Maori word 'waka' should not exist 'in English' while 'European barks' reverses colonial narratives of the 'savage native' via its homophonic play on dog-like noise (emphasized by avoiding the more common 'barque'); in so doing, it signals a foreign element within Maori experience. These lines invite translation between waka, canoe, and bark: the three terms are not reducible to one another, but nor can the meaning of any exist fully without the others. To understand the history of the waka and the meaning of 'ancestral,' we trace a series of historically-specific and geographically-situated narratives that accept the superimposition of Maori and European seafaring. Building on Miranda Ward's argument that 'the language used specifically about or in a place is part of that place' (Ward 2014: 738), this essay demonstrates the ways that a set of competing languages can create an understanding of place precisely as the texts emerge across languages.

In drawing attention to the co-existence of multiple languages within a language, and arguing for a comparative, transnational reading that is aware of the ways translation remains an open process rather than closed circuit, we offer an alternative to the influential ideas put forward by Rebecca Walkowitz, in her series of articles on 'comparison literature' written between 2006 and 2013 and subsequently developed in *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature* (2015). Walkowitz's reading of J.M. Coetzee's *Diary of a Bad Year* argues that it does not 'simply appear in translation but in important ways has been written for translation' (Walkowitz 2007: 569): it anticipates translation within its composition through its inherently comparative structure. Yet the writings of Sullivan and Perez pose a challenge to Walkowitz's 'written for translation' and her key term, adapted from digital art, *born-translated*. While Walkowitz first uses that term in her 2009 article 'Comparison Literature,' she later glosses it as a way to name works that 'travel beyond their place of origin, and ... anticipate their own

future in several literary geographies' (Walkowitz 2013: 174). Although this term recognizes that translation can form an important dynamic in an apparently monolingual work, it risks problematically recognizing the work as of value once translated, in ways that recall the power wrested through translation by colonial metropolises over vernacular writers. In claiming that the work of critics must be 'to analyze how a work participates not only in its first literary system, the literary system of the language in which it was composed, but also in the other literary systems in which it has a presence,' Walkowitz repeats a hierarchical relationship between originary language and translated language that we find disrupted and redirected in Sullivan and Perez's writings (Walkowitz 2009: 580). Eric Cheyfitz, for instance, has cautioned against a 'romance of translation in which, like the Indians in the Marshall Court's decisions, the other is translated into the terms of the self in order to be alienated from those terms,' noting that 'at the heart of every imperial fiction ... there is a fiction of translation' (Cheyfitz 1997: 15).

Sullivan and Perez's works offer a fruitful archive for rethinking Walkowitz's argument in part because, like Coetzee's *Diary of a Bad Year*, they 'project comparative beginnings,' exploring cultures that cannot be easily delineated into (imagined) national communities (Walkowitz 2007: 572). The mode of their comparison is not simply lexical and linguistic but works through 'comparative structures' that include journals, typographical experimentation, and discourse code-shifts (567). Yet, as poetic texts, they also challenge the primacy of the novel as site of translation required by Walkowitz's numbers-based contention that 'novels travel more easily than other genres' (571)—a contention underlined by her choice predominantly to read the fiction of poets such as Ben Lerner in *Born Translated*.

Sullivan and Perez's work offers a different model for the 'travel' of a literary work: while in a materialist sense, contemporary poetry is published very slowly in translation, it exists within a wider dynamic of translation practices, including what Shankar has called 'social translation.' By this he means the way so-called 'literary' translation, 'the kind ... critics are prone to study,' exists on a continuum with a 'gradual, collective, anonymous, and oral [social] translation (that is, the translation that happens as part of the social encounter between languages—in bus-stop conversation, over the dinner table, at a political meeting)' (Shankar 2012: 112, 111). As the slippage between national names in both works indicates, Perez and Sullivan's work often asks us to think about the difficulty with which translation takes place, calling attention to historical modes and provocative metaphors of difficult travel, and giving voice to a historically-inflected contemporary postcolonial experience rooted in the Pacific diaspora but tied to commercial, political, and social routes that cross such metropolises as Wellington, Tokyo, and Washington, D.C. This kinetic, unresolvable quality of translation as an activity with no termini gives rise to the unavoidable complexities of transnational identity; it should, we argue, become a larger focus for future comparative studies.

Indeed, Brent Hayes Edwards has suggested that 'the cultures of black internationalism can be seen only in translation' (Edwards 2003: 7). While invoking the conventional sense of that phrase—'the great majority of peoples of African descent do not speak or write in English'—his reading subtly articulates 'the way that discourses of internationalism travel' (7). Edwards' ideas indicate that translation itself, rather than the

product of translation alone (a new work in a 'target' language), can make otherwise hidden logics and ideologies visible—in part through moments which resist translation, but in part because 'translation both provides support for the 'domestic' agenda and continually threatens to undermine it or reconfigure it' (116). The kinds of 'mutual answerability' that Edwards' version of translation involves are very much in dialogue with the contemporary Pacific poetics represented by Sullivan and Perez's explorations of physical, cultural and linguistic translation; as Nicholas Wright argues, 'the cultures that comprise the Pacific's 'sea of islands' assumes a politics of translatability as their orienting point of culture' (Wright 2011: 222). Within this politics and poetics of translatability meaning emerges not through the comparison of source and target languages, but in the engagement and lacunae between the languages used (Maori/English for Sullivan, Chamorro/English/Spanish/Japanese for Perez). These texts foreground the fact of having to exist, as reader and writer, in translation, located across geographic spaces and among two or more languages that do not resolve themselves hierarchically. The indeterminacy of both/and rather than either/or characterizes Sullivan and Perez's multilingual poetics. Their writings offer a mode of translation that resists the double-closure of 'born' and 'translated' in favour of a perpetual motion in which language cannot be understood apart from its idiosyncratic, globally-inflected, contexts. By first analyzing the ways in which Sullivan's *Star Waka* commingles languages not in order to correct colonial displacement of Maori culture but to establish conversations among languages and Pacific regions, and then exploring the non-linear poetics deployed by Perez as a way to subvert linguistic hierarchies and complicate discrete geographic spaces, this article identifies a process of 'writing in translation' with particular application within Pacific/Oceanic studies, but wider application within other transnational and comparative contexts.

Floating Signifiers: Robert Sullivan's *Star Waka*

From his early collections, *Jazz Waiata* (1990) and *Piki Ake!* (1993), through his children's book, *Weaving Earth & Sky: Myths and Legends of Aotearoa* (2003), to his editing of both volumes of *Whetu Moana: Contemporary Polynesian Poems in English* (2003, 2010), Sullivan has focused as much on peripatetic aspects of Polynesian culture as on a more commonly understood rootedness associated with indigeneity. *Star Waka* takes its title from the Maori term, *waka*, for seafaring vehicles used by Western Polynesians in the historic diaspora north to Hawai'i, south to Aotearoa, and as far east as Easter Island. Throughout the collection the *waka* serves as a symbol of journeying through time and space, but also as a symbol of the poem, positing a purposive mobility in the poetic act itself.

In this context, Sullivan's use of Maori language in what are predominantly Anglophone poems demands attention, not least for the way his deployment of Maori makes the language of his poetry visible as such. While Sullivan's conscious decision not to include a glossary (as he does in *voice carried my family* [2005] and the *Whetu Moana* collections) underscores the distinct experiences of reading with greater or lesser immediacy of linguistic comprehension, the attention the Maori words command goes

beyond the simple unfamiliarity a non-Maori speaker might experience. This consciousness of the language of the poems that arises from Sullivan's use of Maori is reinforced by techniques that draw our attention to translation as a poetic act. As with the 'gradual, collective, anonymous, and oral' elements of the 'social translation' Shankar has identified within transnational writings, Sullivan's poems, foregrounding their spoken potential, complicate the neat resolution of their language into polarized 'national' languages. Many of the poems in *Star Waka* mimic speech: hailing a presumed audience ('38: fleurs de lis'), reproducing the cadences of everyday speech ('52'), staging conversations between interlocutors ('37'), and so on. The emphasis on speech situates the poems within Maori oral tradition, inviting the reader not simply to grasp the meaning of the words on the page but to grapple with their auditory quality, their homophonic potential as much as their conceptual valence. This grappling occurs particularly for the non-Maori speaker encountering unglossed Maori words and phrases—yet even for the Maori speaker there is a moment of cognitive syncopation when a word appears unsignalled though immediately identifiable as Maori within a poem's apparent Anglophony.

Implicit in the presence of the Maori word or phrase is a suggestion of untranslatability reinforced by the absence of a glossary. This resistance recalls that 'base of discontent,' identified by Nathaniel Mackey in Clarence Major's *Surfictionist Project*, 'which can never not problematize itself, never not be in touch with the ethic of disturbance on which it rests' (Mackey 1993: 11). Mackey suggests that in Major's work 'the return of the repressed' enters 'both as content or theme and as form/deformation, working its disruptions into what the poems say and into the way—grammatically, syntactically, typographically—they say it' (10). In *Star Waka* we observe a similar move whereby the unexpected Maori terms disrupt their Anglophone context—a move embodied most clearly by the term *waka*, a term repressed in ethnographic studies of Maori culture.

Indeed, Sullivan characterizes each poem in the collection as a *waka*, recalling the diasporic fleet from Western Polynesia. *Waka* was translated (and reduced) by early ethnographers as 'canoe,' and Sullivan repeatedly returns to the problems of this translation, expressing both an appreciation for these early ethnographers' interest in Maori culture, and frustration with their interpretations. In 'Waka 59 E lsdon Best' Sullivan writes:

To be fair to Best he did find the term canoe
an inadequate word, quoting from the copy of
Webster's available to him around 1925:

A boat used by rude nations, formed from the trunk
of a tree, excavated by cutting or burning into a
suitable shape.

He found it, however, ' . . . scarcely advisable to employ
the native term of *waka* . . .' (p.18) without saying why. (Sullivan 1999: 66)

Eldson Best, was a Pakeha ethnographer of Maori culture (particularly the Ngāi Tūhoe) who was appointed ethnographer to the Dominion Museum in 1910 and whose prolific publications include a Maori history of Wellington Harbour, *The Land of Tara* (1919), *The Maori Canoe* (1925a) and the 1,200 page, *Tuhoe, the Children of the Mist* (1925b), in which he details Tūhoe mythology. Best's resistance to 'the native term waka,' an unspoken explanation for which lies in the adjective 'native,' is matched by the vessel's refusal to resolve itself under any Anglophone term. In this poem, the word 'waka' serves as a focal point for an exploration of the way in which the vessel is comprehended in Maori and Pakeha readings of Maori mythology. As the poem continues, Sullivan moves us from the signifier to its signified, noting Best's own observation that certain wakas shared their names with constellations, and his appreciation for the story of 'the stars ... placed in Tama-rereti's waka / so that the sun and the moon / would not jostle them' (Sullivan 1999: 66). The resistance of Best to the 'native term,' and of the vessel to its Anglophone designation, is counterpointed by Best's leisured fascination with 'Polynesian culture'—Sullivan writes of such scholarship as 'an afterthought by those Europeans not overly preoccupied with other things'—and by Sullivan's 'grateful,' if guarded, reception of Best's fascination (66-7). Sullivan's poem thus takes on a contrapuntal form, reinstating what Best missed but conserving Best himself against the too-easy charge of racist scholarship: 'I am still grateful to Best. He saw the beauty / in our stories...' (66).

As with the term waka in 'Waka 59 Eldson Best,' Sullivan's use of Maori elsewhere in the collection tends to occur with markers of cultural significance. These terms' untranslatability highlights their cultural specificity. Although these words find rough equivalents in English—'iwi' might be approximated as 'tribe' or 'clan'—the intangibles and specificities, the phenomenological character, we might say, of a given iwi or of what an iwi is per se, remain in the Maori domain. These terms and phrases embody Judith Butler's ideal of a translational mode that maintains a 'certain distance or fissure' whereby 'difference and translation are irreducible' (Butler and Spivak 2007: 61-2). Sullivan's poetry, to follow Butler's argument, maintains the visibility of translation within the community formed by language by using untranslated and untranslatable Maori terms that communicate concepts which cannot be housed in English.

However, this untranslatability is rarely definitive; this is not Witi Ihimaera's 'tino rangatiratanga,' the idea of 'different cultures ... strong and independent' (Watkin 2004: 22).² Like the Maori myth of the stars carried in Tama-rereti's waka, Sullivan uses his poems to explore the possibilities of moving beyond the point of untranslatability. Sullivan yokes together untranslatable concepts in imaginative flights of fancy that still aim at the real world beyond the poem. In '46,' Sullivan writes 'it is feasible that we will enter / / space / colonise planets call our spacecraft waka / perhaps name them after the first fleet / erect marae transport carvers renew stories / with celestial import' (Sullivan 1999: 50). Here, the myths that traveled with the first Western Polynesian fleet, and that grew up around that voyage, are reactivated through the idea of space waka. Sullivan combines Maori and non-Maori technologies and astronomies to propel us into a utopian space where we might 'establish new forms of verse / free ourselves of the need for politics / and concentrate on beauty / / like the release from gravity.' (50) Space travel's physical release from gravity becomes a metaphor for ideological and creative

release, in which Maori culture is 'no longer subject to peculiarities / of climate the political economies / of powers and powerless' (50).

Chris Prentice refers to the utopianism of the poem as an extended metaphor 'of translation' and 'in translation' (Prentice 2006: 119). Whilst the poem's utopia imagines a release primarily for Maori culture, that release is enabled by a synthesis of Maori and non-Maori technologies that resonates with Robert Jahnke's concept of the 'trans-customary' (Jahnke 2006: 48-50). The poem's imagery of gravity-less freefall assumes a familiarity in the reader with media footage of space travel yet Sullivan's astronauts include Maori carvers who will decorate the marae (iwi meeting houses) on newly colonized planets. Thus, although the utopia imagined is characterized as Maori, underlined by terms such as waka and marae, it draws unapologetically, indeed delightedly, on the technologies of other cultures: the spacecraft of superpowers are reconceived, transformed into Maori vessels bent on the establishment not of galactic domination but cultural utopia. Sullivan thereby challenges the assumption that Maori culture is inherently of the past, fit only for the museum, instead suggesting its creative value for future technologies. Maori culture infiltrates the space-age manifestation of imperial forces of colonization, rather than having to accede to or resist them.

This infiltration and reconception aligns with the 'common strangeness' Jacob Edmonds has identified within twentieth-century avant-garde poetics. Noting 'a powerful if ill-defined dream of an imagined transnational poetic community,' he seeks 'illustrations of the often violently superimposed singularities through which the poles of sameness and difference are constructed and sometimes challenged' (Edmonds 2012: 11). In, for example, Yang Lian's mapping of Beijing over Auckland within his prose and poetry, two distinct geographical locations and geopolitical histories form a palimpsest without either becoming the dominant or primary site: there is no 'difficult reconciliation' within Yang's writings since 'the possibility of connection or touch emerges instead out of the very impossibility of such reconciliation' (37). Swiss-born, Beijing-raised, London-based poet Yang's writings offer a neat analogy for the ways Maori tradition is neither romanticized nor rendered obsolete within Sullivan's work; each reference to marae and iwi and waka 'transforms and is transformed by the form and context of its presentation,' creating new instances of meaning that transcend an apparent untranslatability through the plural, dislocating possibilities of on-going translation (195).

A similar trajectory is signaled in 'Waka 65,' which opens with the phrase 'He kakano i ruia mai i Rangiatea' (Sullivan 1999:74). The phrase is taken from the proverb 'E kore au e ngaro he kakano i ruia mai i Rangiatea' ('I shall never be lost, the seed which was sown from Rangiatea'). It refers to an island North of Tahiti, home to the Taputapuātea marae complex associated with Io, supreme God of Hawaiiki, land of the Gods and ancestral land of the Maori. It also refers to the site of what is now a Maori church in Aotearoa/New Zealand built in the mid-nineteenth century upon a rock, brought from Rangiatea, which had originally served as foundation to a marae. This church was burnt down in 1995 by Frank Shaw, a Maori radical who claimed that the Anglican Church had undermined Maori culture. Almost immediately the church community responded in planning the rebuilding of what had been the oldest Maori

church in the country. (Incidentally, this same year a great gathering was held at the Taputapuatea marae complex, following its restoration in 1994.)

Thus, when Sullivan opens with the phrase 'He kakano i ruia mai i Rangiatea'—set apart as a single-lined verse—he calls to mind two interrelated sources of memory and heritage, that of the Rangiatea north of Tahiti and that of the Maori church. Sullivan plays upon this interrelatedness in the following lines:

When the waka congregate at the high temple
of Taputapuatea, in Rangiatea,
when our priests are gathered
and permissions granted to proceed,
we will piece together our intelligence
from the two thousand year mission – (Sullivan 1999:74).

Here the lexical set traditionally associated with the church—'congregate,' 'priests,' 'mission'—is applied to the non-Christian site of Taputapuatea. Consequently, Sullivan effects another moment of cognitive synecopation. We might read this in line with Mackey's ethics of disturbance: the signifiers and what they signify culturally at odds, with the failure of language to translate occurring not for the Maori terms but for the Anglophone ones inscribed onto the scene of this Eastern Polynesian marae. Chadwick Allen, however, offers us an alternative paradigm in his discussion of 'bilingual punning' in the collaborative work of Rowley Habib and Ralph Hotere. Allen posits bilingual punning as offering 'the possibility of a synchral experience of (at least) two distinct language and cultural systems' (Allen 2007: 13). Rather than defamiliarizing language, 'bilingual punning works to create additional layers of meaning for particular audiences by engaging multiple denotations ... [and] connotations' in order to stress simultaneity (13). Insofar as it resists straightforward reapplication the religious language of 'Waka 65' ensures that the reader familiar with the recent events at the Maori church keeps both Rangiateas in mind.

However, just as in '46' the dominant culture at stake was Maori, so in 'Waka 65' the focus is similarly Maori and Eastern Polynesian. At the center of the poem Sullivan posits 'A great living Library of the people, / trillions of brain cells indexed / from the heart, cross-referenced / through usefulness to life...' (Sullivan 1999: 74). The non-Maori tradition of the print library is creatively re-imagined as a non-verbal systematization of knowledge that serves the history and the future of Maori culture.³ Like his galactic utopia, this 'living Library' returns to the Anglophone reader the concept 'library' dramatically transfigured. The poem suggests an imaginative and utopian curatorial practice for conserving heritage that transforms, to use Edmonds' term, not the past but the future. In so doing the Maori language itself is unmoored from the role of static artifact, a stable figuration of a stable culture, and is propelled into the future and propels that future through its capacity to carry, its power of *translatio*.

Like the Polynesian fleets that sailed north, south, and east from Samoa, Sullivan's imagery and languages travel out from each other, along multiple trajectories. These

trajectories, however, are not without purpose, not a sort of postcolonial *parole in libertà*. 'Waka 65' ends:

...Among
 these cells lie references to waka,

 waka ritual, methods of navigation,
 knowledge of stars currents wind –

 the great gathering place of spirits,
 Te Hono i Wairua, represents

 this knowledge – for after death
 we know where to find Hawaiiki –

 the living send them here
 without directions. (Sullivan 1999: 74)

At the mythical level, this adapts de Certeau's paradigm of the return of the other as the same transfigured (de Certeau 1988: 219): all waka, and these poems as waka, return to Hawaiiki, the source. This is the trajectory that all navigation inevitably follows, and the knowledge in the blood which the 'great living Library of people' curates. Yet this is only possible through writing in translation: by refusing to let Maori or 'English' connote alone, and by refusing to resolve the punning tensions between waka, canoe, and other possible versions of a particular signifier. Star Waka is no oxymoron, nor is it simply either nostos or science fiction. Unsettling the binaries between past/future, Aotearoa/New Zealand, and Maori/English, Sullivan's text cannot be simply thought of as an Anglophone work enriched by a reader's knowledge of Maori; it is a work that emerges as the reader keeps translating its terms and geographies.

'From' language: Craig Santos Perez's from *unincorporated territory*

Craig Santos Perez's serial poetic project, from *unincorporated territory*, currently comprising three books, addresses questions of departure, translation, and source similar to those in Star Waka. As 'the first books of poetry published in English by a Chamorro' (Hsu 2012: 287), Perez's multilingual texts share with Sullivan's the condition of being written in an English that knows its own porousness.

First occupied by Spanish colonists in 1668, and later by Japanese and American forces, Guam is an 'unincorporated territory,' neither U.S. State nor independent nation. from *unincorporated territory* traces a Guamanian history that relates Perez's biography alongside larger national and ethnic stories. Perez weaves theoretical sources with personal anecdote and found materials, including language from tourist brochures and legislative acts. from *unincorporated territory* exists within what Michael Davidson identifies

as 'nonnarrative, experimental forms' engaging with 'cross-cultural and cross-border realities of a new global public sphere' (Davidson 2011: 32).

An initial glance at *from unincorporated territory* suggests differences from *Star Waka*. Perez's extended uses of visual material, including a map of U.S. naval bases on Guam, deploy his page as a non-linear 'open field,' in contrast to Sullivan's relatively linear syntax and lyric mode (although Sullivan turns to concrete poetry in wakas '51' and '53'). While both poets address the encounter between the postmodern forces of globalisation and unifying mytho-historic insular narratives, their conclusions seem to diverge. Sullivan documents a fragmented modern world—his waka share space with 'a Holmes special' and 'an Ironman event'—but his poetic cento moves towards a stable future. By contrast, *from unincorporated territory* is informed by the projective poetics of Charles Olson, whose 'let them not make you as the nation is' Perez uses as an epigraph (Perez 2008: 54). Perez's use of unclosed parentheses, echoing Olson's, suggest the impossible-to-conclude nature of his island's historiography. More markedly than Sullivan's, Perez's work exemplifies both of Robert Wilson's senses of the postmodern, bearing 'strange markings of writerly experimentation and textual play' alongside 'the concerns of belonging to and expressing a distinct, particularized, and limited model of identity' (Wilson 2000: 124; see Lai 2012: 6). While Perez, like Sullivan, employs conventional elegy, its presence alongside visual scatter and techniques of defamiliarization suggest Guam is produced through multiple, dissonant stories.

Star Waka and *from unincorporated territory* similarly see translation as a way to unmoor asymmetries of power within insular space by offering polysemous linguistic geographies. *from unincorporated territory*, while predominantly Anglophone, also draws on the colonial languages of Spanish and Japanese as well as an indigenous but only partly-remembered Chamorro. The first half of Perez's poem 'ginen tidelands 9', for example, written in Chamorro, explicitly resists Anglophone lyric, withholding semantic meaning from those not versed in this minority language. The poem concludes with two Anglophone paragraphs, but these are styled as footnotes, relegated outside of the poem's main frame, and, moreover, struck through.

Yet this poem does not offer a simple reversal of English as a dominant language: the two Anglophone paragraphs are sourced from Anglophone Chamorro testimonies to the United Nations; their presence indicates that the need to state the case for sovereignty can also be expressed in 'English.' Struck through, they suggest Guamanian testimony remains unconsidered even as the Chamorro writing above seeks a meaningful expression beyond the limits of English. Yet the struck-through text is legible, in contrast to the ways colonial powers successfully erased Chamorro, nearly eradicating it. In the notes to the collection, Perez invites us to e-mail him for further instances of testimony (Perez 2010: 131). The effect is a cooperative relationship between English and Chamorro, each limited yet necessary to a case for sovereignty. While Perez's note inviting e-mails is ancillary to the poem, it establishes a Habermasian public sphere, which *from unincorporated territory* positions as a method of engaging in meaningful debate about Guam, extending the sphere of testimony from the United Nations to a wider, poetry-reading public. As Michael Davidson argues in relation to Habermas's ideas (in *On the Outskirts of Form*, especially 2011: 97-100), such textual moments recognize the

importance of 'counter publics' (Michael Warner's term, among others) as 'venues where rational debate is authorized' (99). While Perez's gesture here argues for Guam's presence within the public sphere through a particularly prestigious institution, the United Nations, his formal play simultaneously acknowledges Guam's continuing separation from that sphere.

This interplay between multiple languages and sites of reception imagines translation as a kind of semantic return to different terms. As with de Certeau, Perez sees return as a measure of difference: the place or knowledge returned to has been altered by what has happened in the intervening space. Such a claim for return, whether in terms of travel or linguistic translation, can especially be seen within [hacha]. Section II opens with a series of verbal-visual maps, including '[Guam: Pacific hub to Asia],' a map of airplane routes one might find in an in-flight travel magazine. A web of lines connects 21 Pacific-region airports to Guam, not always directly. While Perez's map positions Guam at the center of Pacific activity, subverting its designation as an 'unincorporated territory' invisible to the American mainland, the map also inscribes Guam's isolation: [GUM] is seven steps from [LAX], past [TKK], [PNI], [KSA], [KWA], [MAJ], and [HNL], and thus at several removes from the site of its ultimate government, not even on the map. (In order, these airports are located in Guam, Los Angeles, Weno, Pohnpei, Okat, Keisah-Papua, Majuro Atoll-Marshall Islands, and Honolulu.) Further, no direct flight is shown from Guam [GUM] to Honolulu [HNL], though direct flights from Guam to Honolulu have existed for at least 40 years, an omission that perhaps gestures to older Spanish colonial shipping routes—the preceding pages repurpose maps of 'routes of the Spanish galleons' and 'War in the Pacific Ocean'—suggesting their implication in contemporary global networks. These poem-maps stage the local emerging in part from interests outside its region; Guam, like other Marianas islands, has long been produced by others' arrivals.

Rather than rejecting such outside impositions, Perez excavates Chamorro identity as it emerges along and across these routes. This map-poem is immediately followed by a seemingly more personal poem entitled 'from TA(LA)YA,' dedicated 'for my grandfather'; this sequencing situates an autobiographical narrative in the context of discrepant local-global relations. Perez's grandfather, in 'his small apartment in fairfield california,' recounts his imprisonment by the Japanese military, which occupied Guam during World War II after attacking 'its' American bases. When the grandfather explains 'you hold the nicho like this ... and the nasa around your fingers like this,' the reader is inside the apartment, with 'threads suspended from ceiling hooks,' instructed in a technique from which she also is separate, likely unfamiliar with the 'talaya,' the thrown fishing net of which the 'nicho' and 'nasa' form a part (Perez 2008: 31). Neither Chamorro word is italicized, suggesting that they have no different relationship to language than the Anglophone words Perez's grandfather also uses; these are the signifiers for what his grandfather describes, and his meaning emerges among languages. A similar dynamic is explored by Sullivan, who critiques 'subeditors' who have 'ceased italicizing' Maori words 'to give them a sense of inclusion' or 'for purposes of pacification' (Sullivan 1999: 21). For both Sullivan and Perez, the argument is not simply for or against the italicizing of Maori or Chamorro, but for tracing the interaction between multiple languages:

'pacification' puns both on the idea of subduing a minority and on the hope for greater understanding of indigenous Pacific experience.

Below his moment of grandfatherly instruction, Perez includes factual information: 'in 1903, the u.s. completed the transpacific submarine telegraph cable, connecting guam to manila, midway, honolulu, and san francisco' (Perez 2008: 31). This rhetoric of connection is undercut by the reader's separation from the talaya's significance to Chamorro culture; notably, this separation is also Perez's, since he, too, is at a remove, needing the grandfather's instructional story. Even the poem's title fragments the talaya: 'ta(la)ya' hovers between talaya and taya, a Chamorro word connoting 'nothing.' While this lesson in constructing a fishing net alludes to the kind of return Star Waka promises, the persistence of tradition, Perez's talaya refuses to be a stable signifier for the past. As the poem casts words across its surface ('ghost knot // tight') to mimic the grandfather's own casting, we are further removed from the tradition by the reminder that our fingers hold a book of poems, not a thrown fishing net.

All critics who have written on Perez's work note its complex use of Chamorro terms alongside English equivalents: a Chamorro term often appears within an 'English' sentence, without gloss or translation, with an explanation elsewhere on the page, or several pages later, a technique Valeria Woodward calls 'delayed translation' (Woodward 2013: 83). In 'from 'ta(la)ya,' we find '[spool : nicho]' at the top of the following page. For Paul Lai, this arrangement 'requires readers to move back and forth across the pages, seeking connections' while also, where translations are not provided, 'suggesting an incompleteness to the project of cross-cultural translation' (Lai 2012: 11, 16). More than this, Perez's cross-lingual strategy involves a particular reading of translation, one that unsettles a source/target relationship between words across language, and goes beyond 'delayed,' 'incomplete,' or 'born' translation to reveal the importance of a kinetic, punning and unending 'writing in translation.' This process has a parallel in what Jason Dittmer has called 'plurivectorial narrative,' or the way 'the reader must continually shuffle back and forth across the page' (Dittmer 2010: 230). As the mapping in the book suggests, such movement is for Perez both literary and geographic.

Perez links 'spool' and 'nicho' with a colon (and not a dash, hyphen or equals) and places an equal amount of white space on either side of the colon. Thus, spool doesn't introduce 'nicho' as a subordinate phrase; both are equivalent. Though spool might take precedence as the first of the pair, the decision to italicize it in an Anglophone text implies spool is the more 'foreign' term, for the grandfather and within [hada] as a whole. Similarly, further down the page we encounter [thread : nasa], which establishes a similarly co-equivalent relationship across language (Perez 2008: 32). Moreover, thread not only glosses (and is glossed by) 'nasa' but also repeats the poem's opening image, 'threads suspended,' a phrase haunted by the near-homophone 'threats,' gesturing back to the map of Pacific war sites and prefiguring the grandfather telling how 'nine japanese seaplanes moved in formation / westward towards the village of sumay less than a mile from the marine barracks, the Pan-American World Airways' (33). Neither Chamorro nor English emerges as a lingua franca in this narrative, which is interspersed with contestatory markers of global belonging. As with Sullivan's similar defamiliarisation of the lexical set 'congregate,' 'priests,' and 'mission' in 'Waka 65,' the process of writing in translation

itself glossed in polysemous ways within [saina], most visibly via a scene in which 'is remembered our class practiced our counting outside sitting in a field ... our teacher mr flores recited 'hacha hugua tulu fatfat lima'— we repeated after him' (Perez 2010: 48). The meaning of 'hacha' is complicated, however, by another personal anecdote about Mr. Flores' teaching, a conversation between Perez and his grandmother:

when she read my first book she asked what does 'hacha' mean?—i said 'hacha' means 'one'—she looked surprised, asked in what language?—in chamorro i said—she replied: i speak chamorro all my life and i never heard that word, one is uno in chamorro—no grandma, that's Spanish—she looked confused, hacha, hacha, she repeated, feeling the sound in her mouth—maybe you mean 'hatsa' she said, hatsa mans 'to hit'—uno is one i never heard of hacha (Perez 2010: 59).

Perez's grandmother, source of much Chamorro knowledge contained in [hacha], here contests his understanding of the language as formally taught to him. Since any language system is socially codified, by practice and by instruction, it is possible Perez's grandmother used *uno* as a 'Chamorro' word all her life, even if *hacha* is 'correct'; alternatively, we could read this as a 'senior moment' that suggests the fragility of the wider island stories Perez's books document. Yet Perez leaves open the possibility that he and Mr. Flores are mistaken, firstly by not correcting his grandmother's insistence 'i never heard of *hacha*' and then by admitting, further down the page, 'in Spanish 'hacha' could mean a large candle, torch, or ax—the *gachai*, a Chamorro traditional stone-tipped adze ... is said to sail from the Spanish word 'hacha'.' As before, Perez singles no word out as alien to his re-territorialization project. Meaning skims across the words *uno*, *hacha*, *hatsa*, *gachai*, and *hit*. We end the poem less certain of how to translate *hacha* yet more fluent in the practice of reading and writing in translation. In both the slippage of *latinas* and the uncertainty over *hacha*, Perez alludes to the circumnavigation of language, its ability and propensity to 'sail.' His production of language as an experience in translation rather than the end result of something translated from source to target echoes his insistence on the prepositional force of 'from' as essential to a delineation of Pacific space.

Perez's serial project thus intervenes in, even as it documents, a series of asymmetrical power dynamics concerning Guam and the wider Pacific. Even as Perez creates a fictional literary field in which the page is allowed to dramatize engagements between different ways of naming the world, the discrepancy between acts of forced silencing by colonial presences and intra-family disagreements over word choice remind the reader that the work of translation is itself impacted by the kinds of political situations that necessitate an appeal to the United Nations or an attempt to change the island's name from Guam to *Guåhån*. Guamanian geography remains in process because the very language of 'unincorporated territories' that seeks to define it is legally sovereign yet not coterminous with the space it seeks to name. To write in translation offers one means to highlight and subvert this dynamic, and to attempt to return as different the ideas of incorporation and territorialisation.

Conclusion: To Remain in Translation

As a serial project composed of poem series—numerous poems begin from—from unincorporated territory continually locates its reader within partial instances excerpted from a wider context. Herein lies a key resonance between Sullivan's *Star Waka* and Perez's project: analogous to Sullivan's working-through of the waka as historical vessel, cultural symbol, and translation problem, many of Perez's poems in [saina] concern the sakman, 'an outrigger canoe—once numerous in the waters of the mariana islands—often referred to as flying proas' (Perez 2010: 14). The sakman surfaces in [saina] as a sign of cultural erosion through conquest and conversion—'the sakman was later burned. by the mid nineteenth century the knowledge of how to build and sail them was lost'—but also as icon of personal significance (14). Perez relates the story of his father, moving the family to mainland U.S.A., gently carrying with him two hand-carved model boats, a galaide and a sakman. Waka and sakman alike offer powerful metaphors of cultural heritage resurfacing: [saina], meaning 'parents elders spirits ancestors' (15), takes its title from the name of a sakman built and launched in 2007-8 by TASI (Traditions About Seafaring Islands), a Guam-based organization dedicated to 'the inter-relationship of islands.' The sakman, then, is more than a return to a lost cultural heritage; like Sullivan's futuristic waka, it stands for a contemporary argument about teleology, national sovereignty, and inter-national relationships.

The importance of 'from' as a vector for these poets' projects can be seen in Sullivan's back cover blurb for Perez's [hacha], praised as a 'deft first book' which

delivers a Guam outside the story of the 'nation,' reminding us who and what is 'from' his island through the biography of touch, and the intermingled military and colonist histories brought to the Chamorro people from far across the ocean.

Couching both 'from' and 'nation' in inverted commas, Sullivan directs our attention to the ways from unincorporated territory erodes singular narratives of the nation-state such as those which gave Guam the (unwittingly) ironic motto 'where America's day begins'; he indicates that 'from' is no simple matter of source or export. The prepositional force of 'from,' then, is not suggestive of a movement that takes us from one demarcated space towards another; instead, it makes visible a condition of being almost perpetually in motion, without hope (or need) of conclusion. Like de Certeau's notion of 'cut[ting] across,' Perez's idea of 'from' involves border crossing in ways that go beyond differentiation, rendering ambiguous the identity and location of geographical and political borders. Neither being from or heading to a place, [saina] names a writing in translation, recognizing place through displacements voluntary and forced. TASI is in name a symbol for such a multiply-languaged experience of a transnational world that is as much routed as rooted. The organisation is named in English, yet tasi is a Chamorro word for the sea (via seaweed). Just as with the 'confusion' between uno and hacha, we find productive meaning during the punning process of translation, rather than after translation. The possibilities of such 'plurisecular colinguism,' to use Étienne Balibar's term (Balibar 2004: 177), should lead us to rethink translation, transcending a

'before/after' teleology and learning to read the coexistence of multiply-located linguistic terms, in *Star Waka* as well as from unincorporated territory—learning, that is, to follow the routes language takes rather than to resolve its meaning. Language becomes itself a sailing in which the reader has to remain in translation to gather and disperse meaning.

To read in this way could also be to transcend the Pacific diasporic context within which Sullivan and Perez are writing: to recognize not just that their experiences of the Pacific are different and contiguous, but, moreover, that the forms of writing and poetics these poets deploy are also in conversation with other global, transnational, and postcolonial contexts. Elizabeth DeLoughery's *Routes and Roots* (2007), an early consideration of the Caribbean alongside the Pacific, argues for an intermingling of geological and human scales: 'while the human body may be thought to circulate the blood of the seas, the sea may also be imagined as a conduit for human blood' (271). Such 'dissolution,' to use her term, is at stake within the work of Perez and Sullivan (whose *Star Waka* DeLoughery discusses). To go further, such 'dissolution' might be a mingling in which languages and experiences both dissolve and resolve, revealing themselves to be passing between and among, translating across the natural and artificial boundaries by which we designate regionality both geopolitically and within disciplinary literary criticism.

What Sullivan and Perez imagine via such writing in translation offers a different model from the spatial geopoetics of writers like Kamau Brathwaite, despite a similar focus on routes and roots, kinesis versus locatedness. Brathwaite's 'tidal dialectic,' which presents a vision of 'coming from one continent/continuum, touching another, and then receding' (Brathwaite 1999: 34), a notion that he has seen as cyclical rather than linear, stages a continual 'return' that invokes a continual engagement with, and transfer of, difference. Yet, as Paul Naylor has noted, Brathwaite has insisted on the 'land island my Bajan culture' at the root of his poetry (Naylor 1999: 139) even as he acknowledges its engagement with sites including Ghana, Jamaica, England, and the United States. Such a formulation returns to glean a set of original islands, to work against diasporic scatter—and for historically precise reasons. This chimes with Glissant's desire for a Totality which can recognize the idiosyncratic and individualized experience of globalized identity and yet not atomize: 'knowledge is not abstract, and must be frisked in the field of islands as it was dreamed. Here are several voices of the We, still scattered, fragile for not recognizing one another' (Glissant 2010 [1997]: 149).

What we see within the diasporic Pacific of Sullivan and Perez, however, indicates the impossibility, even the undesirability of finding a way back. Even the English in Perez and Sullivan's poetry exists in translation, as when Sullivan writes: 'off to consult with the top boss, / to ask for sovereignty and how to get this / from policy into action back home' (Sullivan 1999: 7). Sullivan's lines are about more than speaking the language of the oppressor or using the master's tools; they concern the ways in which a Maori understanding of 'sovereignty' must resonate alongside the 'top boss's' notion of 'policy' and 'action,' just as Perez places Anglophone Guamanian petitions for sovereignty alongside Chamorro self-expression.

Allowing such resonances to co-exist, we come to see the complexity of 'back home' as a referent which indexes a kind of non-site for both the colonized and the

colonizer: it is no longer any place recognizable, but must be created anew. We cannot get back to it, these books seem to suggest. Like Perez's mercantile conquest-cum-transpacific flight route maps which exhibit both the problem of departure/return and the necessity of recognizing a corporate imperial superimposition that inflects and is inflected by insular life, and like Sullivan's iwi and marae which find their 'back home' neither in past nor present but in a galactic future, we are suggesting a methodology that examines 'translating' and remaining 'in translation' rather than what happens once something has been 'translated'. Moreover, we want to suggest that in comparative studies our basis can no longer be the assumption of stable geographies and histories to be weighed alongside one another, but rather still-emerging geopolitical spaces where language, and our consciousness of it, remains untethered—and in its untethering, radically open to questions of the transnational that remain hidden if translation is viewed as a closed circuit rather than a kinetic provocation.

Notes

¹ This volume offers a useful survey of postcolonial theory and thought-provoking new directions; in addition, Kaori Nagai does consider issues of bilingualism and translation, albeit within Esperanto, in her essay contained within. Although this aporia in scholarship is less marked in Pacific literary studies, there has historically been a similar relative silence in relation to the practices (rather than the fact) of translation in contemporary literature. Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson's major literary and critical 1998 anthology, *Inside Out*, for example, contains very limited references to translation. Although see also Teresia K. Teaiwa (2001).

² For a critique of Ihimaera's turn away from what he calls pakeha-style biculturalism towards 'tino rangatiritanga' see Patrick Evans, "'Pakeha-style biculturalism' and the Maori writer' (Evans 2006).

³ Sullivan is himself a qualified librarian who worked at Auckland University Library.

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