

A Necromantic Hauntology of the Void: *Pasados que (Nunca) Fueron y Futuros que (Nunca) Pueden Ser in the Canary Islands*

Elba Ramirez

elba.ramirez@aut.ac.nz
AUT University of Technology
Auckland, New Zealand

ABSTRACT. This article is the continuation of a personal journey, wrestling with (not) belonging, which started almost a decade ago with my arrival in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It was not until I was invited to share my ‘whakapapa’ (genealogy), merely reduced to ‘Spanish’ at that point, that I started to reflect on my own identity as a Canary Islander. Through my engagement with te ao Māori (the Māori world), I started to understand and know myself in relation to the Indigenous peoples of the Canary Islands, as it allowed me to reflect on ‘(not) belonging’ and un/becoming Indigenous (see Ramirez & Pasley, 2022). Learning about the Indigenous histories of the Islands and exploring my relationships with the Canary Islands and their Indigenous histories brought up more questions than answers. The process of decolonising the Canary Islands requires reconstituting onto-epistemological understandings and engagement with the Indigenous and colonial histories of the islands, decentring these from a Eurocentric/Western narrative/lens and establishing a Canarian onto-epistemology. To do so, I diffract Barad’s (2017) void of im/possibility with Derrida’s (1995) hauntology to develop the concept of a *necromantic hauntology of the void*. This allows me to tend to the wound that has been left behind in the Canary Islands and engage with the im/possibilities of the in/determinacy of Canarian Indigeneity’s nothingness/openness. This is part of my reconnection with the Indigenous Canarian inheritance (outside Western thinking) and the possibilities that *pasados que (nunca) fueron y futuros que (nunca) pueden ser* (pasts that were [not], futures than can [never] be) offer to revive my connections to the land, its histories and its/my Indigeneity.

Keywords: Canary Islands; guanche; Indigenous Canarians; coloniality; te ao Māori; hauntology

How to cite: Ramirez, E. (2024). A necromantic hauntology of the void: *Pasados que (nunca) fueron y futuros que (nunca) pueden ser* in the Canary Islands. *Knowledge Cultures*, 12(1), 15-30. <https://doi.org/10.22381/kc12120242>.

*Received February 23, 2024 • Received in revised form February 28, 2024
Accepted February 28, 2024 • Available online April 1, 2024*

The Start of My Wrestling with (Not) Belonging

My journey (and engagement with) wrestling with (not) belonging takes place as someone whose origin and identity have been rendered indeterminate by coloniality. My encounter with te ao Māori upon moving to Aotearoa/New Zealand for my doctoral studies raised some critical questions for me, as both an individual and academic, regarding my birthplace, its colonial history, my ancestry and the way in which Spanish coloniality has interrupted my capacity to form my own pepeha (Māori introduction). As I started to discuss in my work with And Pasley, in ‘De/Colonisation and the Un/Doing of Critical Theory’ (Ramirez & Pasley, 2022, p. 152), it became evident that addressing the inheritances of coloniality in the Canary Islands is not possible with a Critical Theory lens, as these inheritances cannot be reduced to a normative representation, because they are multiple and haunted. I soon realised that I needed decolonising (theoretical) alternatives to start unpacking the colonial baggage of my status as politically Spanish but geographically African, both and neither coloniser nor colonised, and (dis)connected from the colonial histories of the Canary Islands.

As a starting point, this decolonising practice involved moving away from the term *guanche*, which I had originally employed (Ramirez & Pasley, 2022), towards Indigenous or Indigenous Canarians/peoples. In Farrujia’s (2014, p. 14) words,

In the case of the Canary Islands..., the concept of ‘Indigenous’ implies clear temporal connotations: it refers to the populations present on the islands since the time of the first settlements in the archipelago (in the middle of the first millennium BC) until its rediscovery in the sixteenth century by Europeans.

Acknowledging that, even though the term *guanche* is widely used, it is a reductive colonial term that undermines the Indigenous histories of the islands and does not operate the way that the term Māori does in Aotearoa New Zealand because it is imposed rather than reclaimed.

This article starts with an account of my wrestling with (not) belonging through te ao Māori, unpacking why I struggled to form my pepeha (Māori introduction), which is directly linked to why I also find it difficult to develop a sense of belonging in Aotearoa. However, I was/am hesitant to appropriate te ao Māori, so I drew on agential realism for inspiration. What became evident was that I needed a situated onto-epistemology that emerged from the inheritance of the Canary Islands. Establishing and taking up a Canarian onto-epistemology is needed because Indigenous histories have been told and read through a Western lens. Next, I engage with the idea of what it would mean to decolonise my understanding and engagement with the Indigenous histories of the Canary Islands, my own identity as a Canary islander, problematising genetics and ‘blood quantum.’ After all, Canary islanders are ‘neither’ coloniser ‘and/or’ colonised. Following that, I examine the possibilities that *pasados que (nunca) fueron y futuros que (nunca) pueden ser* (pasts that were [not], futures than can [never] be) bring to revive my

connections to the land, its histories and its/my Indigeneity. I diffract Barad's (2017) void of im/possibility with Derrida's (1995) hauntology to develop the concept of a necromantic hauntology of the void. Finally, I explain how I am planning to continue to wrestle with (not) belonging through a return to the islands.

Wrestling With (Not) Belonging Through te Ao Māori

Being able to respectfully acknowledge my eternal gratitude with te ao Māori for helping me start my own decolonisation through my (re)connection and (re)planting processes with/of my whakapapa (ancestry) and whenua (land), without (mis)appropriating and (mis)using a world that I do not belong to, has been and continues to be a struggle. After all, I am coloniser, colonised and neither. te ao Māori (the Māori world) remains a nurturing space to problematise my Western-indoctrinated understanding and engagement with the world, assisting me with my own decolonisation.

It has never been my intention to claim any expertise or authority in te ao Māori or to appropriate a world for my own benefit. My engagement with te ao Māori has always been done from respect and appreciation, acknowledging that my encounters with 'whakapapa' (genealogy), 'whanaungatanga' (kin relationships) and 'whānau' (family) awakened a critical awareness of my heritage and inheritances. Being raised within a Western educational paradigm meant that thinking of my genealogy was limited to my immediate family, disregarding the importance of being aware of and acknowledging my links to aspects of my ancestry beyond humans. Te ao Māori encouraged me to embrace what remains of the Indigenous histories and legacies, engaging with the idea that the Indigenous Canarians did not completely disappear (Ramirez & Pasley, 2022, p. 152). It was not until my arrival to Aotearoa/New Zealand, and, particularly, thanks to te ao Māori, that I was able to start thinking and engaging with the world outside a Western paradigm, and my wrestling with (not) belonging started.

Consciously engaging with wrestling with (not) belonging was provoked when I was first asked to share my pepeha. A pepeha 'is an introduction for any person and their affiliations in a Māori context for one purpose, to make connections' (Opai, 2021, p. 92). This practice is also open to non-Māori, though this may differ in some important ways, such as not confabulating relationships with the whenua (land) that do not necessarily exist for the sake of replicating the Māori pepeha.¹ In the moment that I was invited to share my own, something inside was triggered due to my inability to think of my connections to my whenua (land) and my 'whakapapa' (genealogy). Taonui (2015, para. 1) explains that 'Whakapapa is genealogy, a line of descent from ancestors down to the present day. Whakapapa links people to all other living things, and to the earth and the sky, and it traces the universe back to its origins.' Furthermore, in Rameka's (2016) words,

From a Māori perspective, people are not superior but related through whakapapa to all aspects of the environment, themselves imbued with spiritual elements. Māori are part of the environment, connected to

everything in it; therefore, it requires respect. Furthermore, at birth, the ancestors' umbilical cords were buried in the land, and, on their death, their bodies were buried in the land. They were, therefore, conceptualised not just as inhabitants of the land but as the land itself... Knowledge of one's *pepeha* and the ability to recite it is therefore not only critical to connections with the environment, with the spiritual and physical worlds, with people – past, present and future – and with the creation of the world but is also central to the development of a strong sense of identity and belonging as Māori. (pp. 389-392)

Not being able to form my *pepeha* was a significant event because I realised that I had been distanced from my *whānau* (family/community) and *whenua* (land). It made me reflect on my lack of awareness about my *tūrangawaewae*, my foundations, my 'home.' This is an important aspect of *te ao Māori* because, and, as Opai (2021, p. 92) delineates, the *pepeha* helps everyone present 'to place [themselves] among the vast lines of *whakapapa* of that *iwi* [tribe], *hapū* [sub-tribe] or *marae* [meeting grounds] ... mention[ing] their *whakapapa* affiliations via their ancestral mountain, river, *waka* [water craft/canoe], *iwi*, *hapū*, *marae* and other kinship ties.' I realised that I was longing for connection because I had been uprooted at an early age and lost knowledge about and experiences in my homeland. I kept asking myself, *¿De dónde soy? ¿Quiénes son mis ancestros?* (Where am I from? Who are my ancestors?). This also reinforced the indeterminacy of my identity as a Canarian in-/outsider, which resulted in wrestling with (not) belonging.

The reason why it was and remains difficult for me to form my *pepeha* is because of more than just my uprooted sense of belonging; it also that I have never found an appropriate way to do it 'without misappropriating any Indigenous ties to land, water and air' (Opai, 2021, p. 101) because as I mentioned before, I could not relate to *whakapapa* affiliations beyond humans, via ancestral mountain, river and other kinship ties. Opai's (2021) work has been essential during the writing of this article because his work provided me guidance about how to respectfully approach *te ao Māori* as a non-Māori and still be able to engage with it.

Opai (2021) explains that,

For many Māori people who are not strongly connected to *te ao Māori*, this is one of the mechanisms to reconnect with those kinships and to feel a sense of belonging. This desire to feel part of a collective, to know one's place in the larger scheme of things and to have a real sense of belonging and a confidence in that belonging. (p. 93)

Although I do understand these are not similar experiences (making sure here I am not creating false equivalences), I was able to understand my inability to connect with my own *whakapapa* (ancestry) because of lost history. Unpacking and understanding wrestling with (not) belonging is part of this need to truly connect

with my ancestry and have a real sense of belonging. My lack of connection means that my identity, as neither coloniser and/or colonised, is indeterminate.

Opai (2021) suggests that using a pepeha for non-Māori would allow making connections while also avoiding misappropriating any Indigenous ties. I will focus on the relevant aspects of the pepeha for this article and invite you, the reader, to consult Opai's invaluable work for the complete template and all necessary contextual information to engage with it. Following his pepeha template for non-Māori (Opai, 2021), we should always start our introduction with a greeting and a farewell, *tēnā koutou katoa* (greetings to one and all). We are invited to introduce first our ancestry, 'Ko ... te whakapaparanga mai' ('placename' is my ancestry), to identify the location our ancestors/lineage come from. However, for someone from the Canary Islands like me, who does not have access to their 'family tree,' they would either say 'Spain' (and/or the island they are from) or ask themselves, *¿Quiénes son mis ancestros? ¿Son europeos y/o africanos?* (Who are my ancestors? Are they European and/or African? This is also an interesting moment to reflect on the complex nature of the Canary Islanders as both and neither coloniser and/or colonised. How can we reconcile with the absence of the Indigenous histories and stories of the Canary Islands, and our capacity to understand who we are in relation? Part of the issue is that the history of the Canary Islands and their Indigenous heritage is largely left out of African histories (reduced to a strategic location for European colonisers) as well as the critical role in the history of the Americas (both in terms of enabling colonisation and the Indigenous Canarians as slave labour).

As part of our pepeha, we are also invited to introduce the place where we grew up, 'Ko ... te whenua tupu' ('placename' is where I grew up), where we call home, regardless of our ancestry, 'Ko ... te kainga' ('place' is my home), where we are from, 'No ... au' (I am from 'place'), and/or where we live, 'Kei ... au e noho ana' (I am living in 'place'). Reflecting on this is potentially 'easier' / more accessible for Canary Islanders who never left or lived in the islands most of their lives. In my case, I grew up in and lived in different places. I do not have a place I call home or that makes me feel at home. This is more profound than identifying or reflecting on 'location'; it is deeply connected to my uprootedness and disconnection from my 'whakapapa' (genealogy), 'whanaungatanga' (kin relationships), 'whānau' (family) and whenua (land).

Although under a Western paradigm, when introducing oneself, we generally start with our name (and family name), 'Ko ... au / Ko... taku ingoa' (I am 'name' / My name is), the order of the pepeha (Opai, 2021, p. 98) shows that,

The name of the person who is identifying themselves is absolutely last and this is always so. Simply because the person speaking is a direct result of their ancestry, their whakapapa, their history. They could not exist without all of these things. This is the Indigenous truth. And it is both humbling and empowering... There is power and mana [spiritual

life force energy/agency] in knowing one's self and a humble pride in embracing relationships with whanaunga (relatives).

Western paradigms have a fundamentally different understanding of and engagement with 'belonging,' which hindered my ability to engage with who I am in relation to the Indigenous inheritance of the Canary Islands. Embarking on a journey of decolonial (self-) discovery in relation to the Canary Islands is essential to further my understanding of and engagement with Canarian Indigeneity and its colonialities. One of the colonialities in the Canary Islands has to do with 'identity' and 'belonging.' Canary Islanders started to lose knowledge of and engagement with their/our whakapapa (ancestry) and connection to places and ancestors after the conquest and assimilation into Spanish territory. Forming a pepeha as a Canary Islander offers the possibility for deep reflection beyond a Western understanding of identity and belonging. Just as Māori use a pepeha to 'connect with others of the same iwi [tribe]/hapū [sub-tribe]/whānau [family] or rohe [tribal homeland/ boundaries], especially for those who weren't brought up within their kinship groups' (Opai, 2021, p. 93), this could provoke Canary Islanders to consider the sort of relations that constitute their inheritance across the islands.

Forming my pepeha, I am inspired by the whakataukī (proverb) 'Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua: "I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past"' (Rameka, 2016), which

expresses the Māori perspective of time, where the past, present and future are intertwined, and life is a continuous cosmic process. It highlights Māori ways of viewing the world and being within the world. Furthermore, it frames Māori views of time, where one travels backwards into the future and where ancestors live with their descendants in the physical as well as spiritual world. (p. 395)

This resonates with my journey as I start to restore relationships with what it means for me to inherit the Canary Islands, fostering connections with both pasts and possible futures (*pasados* and *futuros*). Moreover, as ancestors to come, this is not our present; we borrow the future from our descendants. This extends beyond the Western understanding of what an ancestor entails and beyond 'land' as location and property. This connection refers to a relationship with the ancestors and the land that goes beyond geography and humans (living or not). Subsequently, I understand the process I am undertaking to become a good ancestor to those who will inherit the islands from me, fostering a future where descendants and ancestors cohabit in/with connection to the land, a decolonising practice.

As with Māori, the Indigenous peoples of the Canary Islands had an oral tradition; however, colonisation and subsequent colonialities erased (and/or did not record) any of their oral stories. Unfortunately, '[i]f records are destroyed, manipulated or excluded, the narrative of the groups cannot be transmitted across time. Their stories ... may ultimately disappear from history' (Carter, 2006, p.

217). Thus, what is left in the islands? How much of Indigenous knowledge and wisdom survived and is still alive? And how can I reconnect with these ways of knowing and being?

Wrestling with Onto-Epistemological (Not) Belonging

Part of my wrestling with (not) belonging requires me to theoretically ‘situate’ myself and the consequences of this situatedness for my research journey. Reading the work of different academics on historical and anthropological issues in/of the Canary Islands made me reflect on the onto-epistemological implications of their work and my journey. I begin from a place of recognition that extant accounts of the Indigenous peoples and histories of the Canary Islands are informed by Western approaches that delimit the onto-epistemological possibilities of Indigeneity in the Canary Islands, which are expanded in this section. In Farrugia’s (2014) words,

The knowledge about the Guanche past that rules today in the Canarian archipelago started to become legitimised with the construction of an official past (mainly since the nationalist prehistory was defined during Franco’s regime). It has always been the Canarian oligarchy that has invested the greatest efforts in maintaining these conditions, with changing facades and new masks. In this context, history, anthropology and archaeology have been effective instruments in moulding regional consciousness. Obviously, the oligarchy not only governed, and still governs, in the Canary Islands but also writes its history and dictates the rules that must apply in all social contexts. In this sense, it is clear that the oligarchy, as the coloniser, needed, and still needs, others in order to maintain its status and reproduce itself. This also helps explain why the colonial discourse is still alive in archaeology in the Canary Islands, where postcolonial studies are underrepresented. (p. 64)

This is a result of the near-complete obliteration and assimilation of the Indigenous population, hence why Indigenous Canarian ontologies remain only as ghosts in the traces of Indigenous practices and in the land (Ramirez & Pasley, 2022). Everything about the Canary Islands, their history and the Indigenous peoples and stories is/has always been told and read through a Western lens. Thus, how can one negotiate colonialities as someone whose belonging is interrupted in these complex ways? While *te ao Māori* (the Māori world) was fundamental in highlighting the need to move away from a Western paradigm, the unique historical and social complexities that define the Canary Islands cannot be explained with other Indigenous worlds/onto-epistemologies.

My approach to the Indigenous histories of the Canary Islands is informed by coloniality studies and decolonising theory. The process of decolonising the Canary Islands requires reconstituting onto-epistemological understandings and engagement with the Indigenous and colonial histories of the islands, decentering these from a Eurocentric/Western narrative/lens. However, the colonialities of the

Canary Islands make it hard to figure out what decolonisation means. Is it even possible? What sorts of resistance is possible in the Canary Islands?

Rivera Cusicanqui (2012) contends that ‘[t]here can be no discourse of decolonisation, no theory of decolonisation, without a decolonising practice’ (p. 100), which requires ‘de-linking’ the prevalence of Eurocentrism/Eurocentric colonialities (Mignolo, 2007). This seems to only be possible by unlearning and reimagining future pasts, “decolonis[ing]” by reconnecting ... [and] reconfiguring relationships with coloniality from which new possibilities for un/becoming [Indigenous] emerg[e], to remember and decolonise Canary Islanders’ relationships with the histories of the islands. Un/becoming [Indigenous] is a process of decolonisation’ (Ramirez & Pasley, 2022, pp. 171-172). This article uses the questions around the nature of my (not) belonging to establish what it would mean for me (and other Canary Islanders) to take up a Canarian onto-epistemology. Given the indeterminacy of Canary islanders as both and neither coloniser and colonised and the complex inheritance of the Canary Islands’ past and futures, hauntology and agential realism provide a lens that aligns with these states and affords me tools to do this work.

To engage with *pasados que (nunca) fueron y futuros que (nunca) pueden ser* (pasts that were [not] and futures that can [never] be), imagining possible ways to ‘resurrect’ the ghosts of futures past, I need to go back to my whenua (land), (re)plant my roots, see, connect and converse with whānau (family/community), as a process of uncovering not only my whakapapa (ancestry), but also the Indigenous wairua (spirit) that lives in the whenua (land); ‘[a]lthough [Indigenous Canarians] have disappeared into a Global North paradigm, their wairua (spirit) remains in the whenua, whānau, whanaungatanga, the languages spoken in the islands and various cultural practices’ (Ramirez & Pasley, 2022, pp. 169-170).

Wrestling with In/Determinate Canarian Identity

My relationship with the whenua (land), which is inherited from Indigenous ancestors, is complex because of the diffractive and in/determinate identity of Canary Islanders as both and neither coloniser and colonised, European and African, and resistant to and facilitator of ongoing colonialities. In fact, ‘[t]he colonialities in the Canary Islands are different because the coloniser never left, and the islands remain Spanish territory’ (Ramirez & Pasley, 2022, p. 167).

Colonisation puts me in a complex position, wherein the Indigenous Canarians have been assimilated, enslaved, or annihilated, such that there is no Indigenous culture for me to return to, because, as Farrujia (2014) explains, ‘[t]he entire Indigenous culture, which had existed in the Canary Islands since the middle of the first millennium BC, began to disappear irreversibly following the conquest and colonisation of the archipelago that began in the Late Middle Ages’ (p. 10). The colonialities in the Canary Islands, particularly the Western/Euro-centric approaches to the Indigenous histories and pasts of the islands, remain prevalent since the end of the process of colonisation. As Farrujia (2014) explains,

The rediscovery of the Canary Islands by the Europeans, therefore, led to the gradual disappearance of the Indigenous settlements, the elimination of material items from the Indigenous culture, the appropriation of Indigenous areas (which were occupied by the new settlers and by the emerging colonial society), and the imposition of ways of life and systems of social organisation and production governed by a Western-European world view, values and regulatory mechanisms that were alien to the Indigenous Canarian world. Over time, the arrival in the archipelago of an imperialist archaeology, developed during the nineteenth century and a good part of the twentieth century, would help perpetuate this Western European interpretation of the Indigenous Canarian past. (pp. 14-15)

My inability to enact my pepeha because of my disconnect from my whenua (land) and whakapapa (ancestry) rendered my need for connection/re-tracing my ancestry tangible. Despite the lack of theoretical frameworks and research practices for the colonial history of the Canary Islands and the colonialities that still exist, because of the socio-political characteristics of the islands, drawing on te ao Māori (the Māori world) feels like appropriation, particularly as I am uncertain whether I am genetically descended from Indigenous Canary Islanders.

There are ways to determine whether I have Indigenous heritage, such as through DNA testing; however, this requires that I give credence to colonial discourses of blood quantum, measuring Indigeneity against biologising narratives (McKittrick, 2021; TallBear, 2013). As part of their refusal to engage with genetics, IZURAN (in Tifinagh language: ⵉⴰⵣⵓⵔⴰⵏ; 2023), an online magazine that discusses issues around the Berber/Amazigh culture of the Canary Islands, poses a question: ‘Por qué al hispanismo o europeísmo no se le pide ADN y al guanchismo se le exige pureza genética?’: why it is required to demonstrate ‘genetic purity’ (full blood quantum) for *guanchismo* (Indigenous Canarian genetic heritage), but not to Hispanic/European genetics. Moreover, IZURAN (2023) states that,

No somos un xaxo [momia/cuerpo embalsamado], los descendientes de guanches en Canarias existimos. No se trata de presumir de purezas genéticas, pero sí de una herencia milenaria a la que no tenemos por qué renunciar en nombre de un mestizaje indefinido que nos niega toda posibilidad de reparación y cultivo en libertad. Ser herederos de la cultura amazigh isleña no es estar anclados en el siglo XV, no es figurar en el interior de una vitrina museística, no es cuestión de purezas inmaculadas, no es fetichismo material o biológico. El pueblo canario, como todos los pueblos, ha cambiado en estos últimos siglos y seguirá haciéndolo, pero nuestra identidad y cultura no dependerá de las medidas de un cráneo, el color de piel o los haplogrupos adjudicados a nacionalidades contemporáneas. (para. 8)

With this statement, IZURAN claims that ‘we,’ *el pueblo canario* (Canarian peoples), are descendants of the Indigenous Canarians with an inheritance that goes beyond biological remains and traits, and historical and archaeological sites. Focusing on genetics hinders our ability to repair and cultivate our ancestry.

It is not about ‘blood quantum’ but about ‘ancestral inheritance,’ which goes beyond genetics and historical and anthropological sites. It is about the need to push the boundaries of what it means to become Indigenous in the context of the Canary Islands, recognising that kin-making to become Spanish is likewise a fiction that draws on a colonial biologising narrative (McKittrick, 2021). Moreover, there is ‘nothing’/no Indigenous reference for me. To be Indigenous in the Canary Islands is related to its ‘haunted, multiplicitous and more-than human un/becomings’ (Ramirez & Pasley, 2022, p. 172). Arguably, whether I am genetically descended from Indigenous Canarians has little bearing on what it means for me to inherit the islands or what it means to decolonise because only traces remain. Indeed, upholding colonial notions of blood quantum ensures that Canarian Indigeneity stays dead and gone, and would render me complicit in the perpetuation of this erasure because it traps Indigeneity in that essentialising biologising narrative. Blood will not resurrect these ghosts.

To think about what it means to become a Canary Islander, given my lack of connection to the islands and their Indigenous histories, I draw on Barad’s (2014) notion of *diffractive in/determinacy*, which ‘is not a state of being but a dynamic through which that which has been constitutively excluded re-turns.... In/determinacy is the surprise, the interruption, by the stranger (within) re-turning unannounced’ (p. 178). Barad’s (2017) invitation to reflect on the possibilities for embodied re-membering of the past – reconfiguring the present, which is never simply here-now – doing justice to those victims who are gone and those who will emerge, resonates not only with my wrestling with (not) belonging but also with the nothingness, the void (Barad, 2012) that is coloniality in the Canary Islands.

The victims of this injustice include the Indigenous Canarians who were erased through death and assimilation, those like me who are engaging with the indeterminacy of our identities as Canary Islanders, and those yet to come, forced to deal with nothingness. Yet, this void is not empty – it contains what could have been but was not, with the *pasados que (nunca) fueron y futuros que (nunca) pueden ser* (pasts that were (not) and futures than can (never) be). In Barad’s (2012) words, ‘indeterminacy is responsible not only for the void not being nothing (while not being something), but it may in fact be the source of all that is, a womb that births existence’ (p. 9). After all, ‘[n]othingness is not absence, but the infinite plenitude of openness’ (Barad, 2012, p. 17). Subsequently, the question I am left with is what im/possibilities might this nothingness/openness offer?

The past in the Canary Islands has left marks that cannot be erased, yet it is not about changing the past but about reconfiguring relationships with it to offer greater response-abilities (Barad, 2017); a greater capacity to respond. Barad (2017) contends that response-abilities are enacted by tracing the entanglements of

pasts that were (not) and futures that might (not) be to understand the im/possibilities that the present offers, hence my attention to the hauntological constitution of the Canary Islands. Interestingly, one of the multiple ways that the context of the Canary Islands differs from that of Aotearoa/New Zealand is that, in Aotearoa, the colonialities are tangible (for example, institutional discrimination and violence against Māori). In the Canary Islands, there is ‘nothing’ to reclaim, no one to reclaim it to and/or for, nothing/no one to resurrect. We have somewhere to return to, but not someone. What capacity do I have as someone whose ancestors have been obliterated? Even if the Indigenous Canarians were not my ancestors (I could not whakapapa (genealogy)), I inherited the whenua (land) from them; it is about inheritance and honouring those who were first.

Thinking about the coerced assimilation of Indigenous Canary Islanders into Spanish society finds some resonance with Kerekere’s (2017) discussion of the ‘silence’ of tūpuna (ancestors) around takatāpui (gender, sex and/or sexually diverse Māori). Kerekere explains that ‘[w]hen whānau [family/community] were scared or angry with takatāpui being visible, this was not necessarily evidence of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, but rather the vestiges of a historical anxiety – a memory from our tūpuna [ancestors] that silence was protection’ (p. 182). There are records of Indigenous Canarian elders not sharing/talking about (and so, passing on this knowledge about) their ancestral cultural practices to avoid any negative judgement from the Spanish colonisers. This is consistent with the common practice of requiring Indigenous peoples to get baptised and become Christians and serve ‘God’ to stop further violence (Abreu Galindo, 1590). Indigenous Canarians had to resort to ‘non-disclosure’ of their Indigenous ties for survival and access to ‘resources’ by not disclosing their Indigenous (family) names and adopting the colonisers’ and assimilating into their religious and social practices (Fregel, Ordóñez & Serrano, 2021; Pérez-Camacho, 2019). The power of archival ‘silence’ (Carter, 2006) is further entrenched in the Canary Islands as Indigenous peoples’ histories were not recorded from their own perspectives but by Western written reports on them. Unfortunately, Indigenous Canarians were coerced into participating in their own erasure (Ramirez & Pasley, 2021). This has resulted in the ‘no one left’ narrative, which consigns Indigenous histories to the past.

A Necromantic Hauntology of the Void

As I have reiterated throughout this article, in the context of the Canary Islands, there is ‘nothing’ to reclaim, no one to reclaim it to and/or for, nothing/no one to resurrect. As Canary Islanders, we have somewhere to return to, but not someone. We only have the land and the nothingness, the void, which contain the spectres of that which has been erased, including what was and what could have been. This is what I refer to when I talk about *pasados que (nunca) fueron y futuros que (nunca) pueden ser* (pasts that were (not) and futures than can (never) be). However, it is exactly the im/possibilities of these *pasados y futuros* (pasts and futures) that the

possibility of resurrecting the ghosts of futures past seems possible. Hauntologically, the ghosts of the past inhabit both the present and the future, and the present is constantly inheriting and reproducing the past, making impossible the existence of new and original futures.

The indeterminacy of Canarian Indigeneity presents im/possibilities for its own nothingness/openness (Barad, 2012), which are haunted by the spectres of the Indigenous Canarians, as the ghosts of the systematic assimilation/annihilation that the Indigenous peoples of the islands were submitted to. I took inspiration from Derrida's (1995) notion of spectral inheritance in literature for thinking about Canarian im/possibilities and ways to engage with the 'void' (Barad, 2012). Would it be the same when talking about the existing extended literature (scientific, historical and fictional) that has been produced since the beginning of the colonisation of the Canary Islands? What about the ghosts of the Indigenous peoples in what remains? If so, how can I identify and actively engage with the spectres that dwell within texts? Moreover, how can these approaches afford nuanced ways of re-reading our relations with and through the land and other Indigenous materialities that remain?

Hickey (2021) talks about how ghostly deconstruction of texts is what conjures the spectres that inhabit the texts and are brought to the surface through a process of interacting with their absent presence in the language use, the words and their etymology, historic-cultural inheritances of the author, etc. This process provides the reader with the capacity to form new interpretations through a process of interrogation and conjuration of the spectres they are interacting with. Since the beginning of my journey, I have been unconsciously interacting with and conjuring these spectres, which have been providing me with 'suppressed' knowledges, from/about the in-/determinacy of my own identity and the Indigenous histories of the Canary Islands, and 'predictions' on the im-/possibilities for past futures. There is something different about the Canarian context, though: the reality that all we have are ghosts and their true resurrection is impeded by Canarian erasure, so complete that scant marks of their existence remain. Subsequently, I diffract Barad's (2007) void of im-/possibility with Derrida's (1995) hauntology to develop the concept of a necromantic hauntology of the void. This allows me to tend to the wound that has been left behind in the Canary Islands.

A necromantic hauntology of the void begins with me, offering the possibility of a foundation to establish a Canarian onto-epistemology by embracing my in/determinate identity to decolonise my 'haunted self.' Embarking on a journey of (self-)discovery in relation to the Canary Islands is essential to further my understanding of and engagement with Canarian Indigeneity and coloniality by returning (to) the past, 'turning it over and over again – interactively intra-acting, re-diffracting, diffracting anew, in the making of new temporalities (spacetime-matterings), new diffraction patterns' (Barad, 2014, p. 168). However, since there is nothing to reclaim and no one to resurrect, the necromancy I engage in seeks to raise the spectres that inhabit the (memories of the) land, in the

geography, the mundane practices (e.g., consuming *gofio*, a flour made from roasted/toasted grains), in archaeological remains, art and unencountered spaces.

However, there are too many spectres to raise alone. Enacting a Canarian onto-epistemology needs to emerge from non-Western/Eurocentric paradigms, as Indigenous Canarian histories have always been told and read through a Western lens. There is a need to ‘Indigenise’ the relationships of Canary Islanders with their history and land by actively examining the consequences of reconfiguring the ongoing relationship with Canarian ancestry to reconnect with and redefine Indigenous Canarian identity and inheritance. This needs to be done without appropriating Indigenous worlds/onto-epistemologies. Simultaneously, this cannot be done without moving away from a Western paradigm. Given the absence of a Canarian onto-epistemology, drawing on Indigenous examples is more appropriate for the context of the Canary Islands.

Yellowhorse (2023), a Diné (Navajo) scholar, explains that ‘Ancestral stories of disability are found in [their] land-based knowledge systems, [their] oral histories, in [their] art, and within [their] songs and prayers. [These] are kept safe within [their] ancestors’ careful planning and refusal to let these important teachings perish’ (para. 4). In the Canary Islands, ancestral knowledge, stories, rituals and cultural practices ‘perished’ and only the ghosts exist in the void. As a decolonial practice, Canary islanders should embark on a journey of re-learning from and reconnecting with the land, invoking and resurrecting the ghosts and spectres that inhabit our land, languages, art and cultural practices. This is why necromancy is required to raise the spectres from the void that has been left behind.

Continuing To Wrestle With (Not) Belonging

The next steps in my personal journey of wrestling with (not) belonging need to be informed by a hauntological reading of Canary Island colonialities, which understand Canary Island pasts that were (not), futures that can (never) be and ghosts of futures past all simultaneously co-constitute the lived realities of these spaces (Ramirez & Pasley, 2022) and the void of im/possibility. Moreover, I am engaging with perspectives that understand the more-than-human constitution of Indigeneity (Yates, 2021). This will be critical for theorising what it means to be Indigenous in the Canary Islands, recognising that Indigeneity is more than blood (TallBear, 2013), and informing engagements with colonial subjectivity.

In practice, I intend to enact my necromantic hauntology of the void by literally returning to the Canary Islands to explore archives of Indigenous history, the traces of Indigenous culture(s) that remain despite/within colonisation’s marks of the land and engage in a critical inquiry into the narratives that surround ongoing Canarian coloniality. Returning to the Canary Islands means that I can reconnect with my whenua (land), (re)plant my roots, see, connect and converse with whānau (family/community) as a process of uncovering not only my whakapapa (ancestry) but also the Indigenous wairua (spirit) that lives in the whenua (land). As someone who was uprooted at an early age and lost knowledge about and experiences in

their homeland, I have always felt (and continue to feel) an in-/outsider, always in an in-/determinate state of (not) belonging.

Kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face) engagements with academic and non-academic connections are a core element of my research journey while (re)establishing my relationship with the whenua (land) of the Canary Islands. Moreover, I need to gain a critical insight into the Canary Islands context and politics that are not accessible through the literature, particularly given the silenced, partial and curated Indigenous stories in/of the Canary Islands; spectres live outside texts. Thus, under a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach, I will be seeking out collaborators rather than participants (Castleden, Garvin & Huu-ay-aht First Nation, 2008), accentuating the agency of Canary Islanders to foster decolonising approaches to Canary Island life, and not forgetting that the spectres we need to raise together. My own research journey is taking up an oral tradition of knowledge transmission, honouring ancestral Canarian practices.

My necromantic hauntology of the void will be guided by the ghosts, which will help me explore how Indigenous stories and practices are still present in the Canary Islands, in historical archives, heritage sites and everyday Canary Island life, and how these stories and practices are embedded in and informed by the whenua (land) and local knowledges. Thinking more speculatively, other possibilities include employing technological solutions, such as AI (Artificial Intelligence), to build imaginaries of the (ghosts of futures) past, ghost stories based on facts, old tales and the infinite imagined peoples and events. In the Canary Islands, where so much has been lost, this could make Indigeneity tangible, helping to shape a collective imagination around possible pasts and enabling more response-able futures. Technology can assist us to visualise and picture what we (can) imagine but seems impossible to ‘manifest’ in intelligible and tangible ways. AI has the potential to help us reconstruct Indigenous narratives and (hi)stories. Examples of how AI can be used to project our imaginaries can already be found in digital filmmaking (Sarajy, 2023). In fact, in the context of the Canary Islands, there is a visual artist imagining San Borondón, a mythical eight island, and its inhabitants and culture throughout time using AI, which provides a tangible way of imagining people and cultural expressions and practices.

Fostering a critical Indigenous perspective in the Canary Islands is essential to decolonising (the history of) the islands and the inheritance of their inhabitants, so exploring potential steps to achieve this is also part of my journey. This requires establishing a Canarian onto-epistemology, as Indigenous histories have so far been told and read through a Western lens. Becoming a good ancestor pursuing to provide a possible future where descendants and ancestors cohabit in/with connection to the land, and where descendants connect and engage with the Indigenous histories of the Canary Islands is my goal and responsibility.



Elba Ramirez, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1428-852X>

Author's contribution

The author confirms being the sole contributor to this work and having approved it for publication. They take full responsibility for the accuracy and the integrity of the data analysis.

Conflict of interest statement

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Note

1. Opai (2021, pp. 93-94) acknowledges that there is variation among Māori about whether it is appropriate for non-Māori to have and use a pepeha.

References

- Abreu Galindo, J. (1632/1977). *Historia de la conquista de las siete Islas de Canaria*. Goya.
- Barad, K. (2012). *What is the measure of nothingness? Infinity, virtuality, justice*. In M. Taussig (Ed.), *Fieldwork notebooks: 100 notes, 100 thoughts* (pp. 1-34). Hatje Cantz.
- Barad, K. (2014). Diffracting diffraction: Cutting together-apart. *Parallax*, 20(3), 168-187. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2014.927623>
- Barad, K. (2017). Troubling time/s and ecologies of nothingness: Re-turning, re-membling and facing the incalculable. *New Formations*, 2017(92), 56-86. <https://doi.org/10.3898/NEWF:92.05.2017>
- Derrida, J. (1995). *Espectros de Marx: El estado de la deuda, el trabajo del duelo y la nueva internacional* (J. M. Alarcon & de Peretti, C., Trans.). Editorial Trotta.
- Carter, R. G. (2006). Of things said and unsaid: Power, archival silences and power in silence. *Archivaria*, 61, 215-233. <https://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/12541>
- Castleden, H., Garvin, T., & Huu-ay-aht First Nation. (2008). Modifying photovoice for community-based participatory Indigenous research. *Social Science & Medicine*, 66(6), 1393-1405. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2007.11.030>
- Farrujia de la Rosa, A. J. (2014). *An archaeology of the margins: Colonialism, Amazighity and heritage management in the Canary Islands*. Springer.
- Fregel, R., Ordóñez A. C., & Serrano, J. G. (2021). The demography of the Canary Islands from a genetic perspective. *Human Molecular Genetics*, 30(2), R64-R71. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hmg/ddaa262>
- Hickey, I. (2021). *Haunted Heaney: Spectres and the poetry*. Routledge.
- IȚURAN [ἧṡṡQ.]. (2023, August 4). *Por qué en IȚURAN no hablamos de genética?* IȚURAN. <https://izuran.blogspot.com/2023/08/por-que-en-izuran-no-hablamos-de.html>

- Kerekere, E. (2017). *Part of the whānau: The emergence of takatāpui identity: He whāriki takatāpui* [Doctoral thesis, Victoria University of Wellington]. ResearchArchive. https://researcharchive.vuw.ac.nz/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10063/6369/thesis_access.pdf
- McKittrick, K. (2021). *Dear science and other stories*. Duke University Press.
- Opai, K. (2021). *Tikanga: An introduction to te ao Māori*. Upstart Press.
- Pérez-Camacho, J. (2019). *Guanches: Legend and reality: The mysterious people of the Canary Islands* (5th ed.). Weston.
- Ramirez, E., & Pasley, A. (2022). De/colonisation and the un/doing of critical theory. *Knowledge Cultures*, 10(3), 150-176. <https://doi.org/10.22381/kc10320229>
- Rameka, L. (2016). Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua: 'I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past.' *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 17(4), 387-398. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949116677923>
- Sarajy, A. A. (2023, September 6). How AI will change every aspect of the filmmaking process. In C. Milligan (Chair), *Artificial Intelligence and the Creative Industries* [Symposium]. AI + Communication Symposium, Auckland, New Zealand.
- TallBear, K. (2013). *Native American DNA: Tribal belonging and the false promise of genetic science*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Taonui, R. (2015). *Whakapapa: Genealogy*. Te Ara: The encyclopaedia of New Zealand. <https://teara.govt.nz/en/whakapapa-genealogy/page-1>
- Yates, A. M. (2021). Transforming geographies: Performing Indigenous-Māori ontologies and ethics of more-than-human care in an era of ecological emergency. *New Zealand Geographer*, 77(2), 101-113. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nzg.12302>
- Yellowhorse, S. (2023, June 18). *Indigeneity and disability: The teachings of our ancestors and being in relation towards harmonious outcomes*. Disability Visibility Project. <https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/2023/06/18/indigeneity-and-disability-the-teachings-of-our-ancestors-and-being-in-relation-towards-harmonious-outcomes/>