

Oceanic Archives, Indigenous Epistemologies, and Transpacific American Studies

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Introduction

Oceanic Archives, Indigenous Epistemologies, and Transpacific American Studies

Yuan Shu

Ever since Shelley Fisher Fishkin popularized the phrase “the transnational turn in American studies,” at the American Studies Association annual convention in Atlanta in 2004,¹ American studies as transnational practice has not only aimed to address what Donald Pease calls its “intelligibility,”² which involves methodology, periodization, objects of analysis, and geographical locations, but it has also witnessed a paradigm shift in the field from the transatlantic to the transpacific.³ If the transatlantic entails Euro-American cultural and historical exchanges and African American experiences in coerced migration and labor across the Atlantic Ocean, then the transpacific, which incorporates the experiences of Asians and Pacific Islanders, brings up a new set of questions and challenges. From the outset, transpacific American studies has confronted the question of how to position itself in relation to the existing fields of Asian studies and Pacific studies and also to the growing field of Asian American studies. In Anna Brickhouse’s words, we cannot dismiss the possibility of “Western academic imperialism” even though it is not an imminent problem.⁴ If we invoke the transnational as the new field imaginary at the center of American studies as Fishkin challenges us to do, there also arises the question of what constitutes a common thread through American studies, Asian studies, and Pacific studies. In other words, what do we make of Eric Hayot’s provocative appropriation of the transnational turn as “the Asian turns”?⁵ Above all, the transpacific as the most promising, vigorous, and dynamic dimensions of transnational American studies should probe the critical questions of how to move beyond a simple negation of American exceptionalism and how to engage the Asia Pacific and Pacific Islands in a productive way that would generate alternative discourses grounded in non-Western and Third World epistemologies and generating new systems of knowledge production and dissemination.

It is precisely in this sense that we invoke the trope “oceanic archives” as the material basis of such critical interventions in the transnational turn of American studies. By “oceanic archives,” we first and foremost engage what Ann Laura Stoler articulates as the “politics of comparison,”⁶ which serves as a new critical

methodology for interrogating commonality among all empires of exception and also for underscoring similarity connecting the key moments of US imperial expansions and conquests. If Stoler focuses on the “predicaments of the tactile and unseen”⁷ as a controversial space and a problematic time of empire, then we examine the transpacific as both spatial and temporal dimensions of empire by retrieving what has seemingly been lost, forgotten, or downplayed inside and outside state-bound archives, state legal preoccupations, and state prioritized projects. As Yuan Shu and Donald Pease argue that the United States looked backward to the Atlantic World for origin and inspiration of US history and philosophy but looked forward to the Pacific for economic expansion and military conquest,⁸ we also aim to unveil some key moments in the transpacific experiences of the US Empire, in which its continuing westward expansion functioned as an extension of the European conquest of the Americas as well as appropriation of the “Asian Pacific” as the final destination of the Western civilizing mission, which had been economic, military, and religious in essence.⁹

By “oceanic archives,” we also seek to engage what Walter D. Mignolo calls “decolonial thinking,” which conjures up the Asia Pacific and Pacific Islands in their common cause of resistance to American expansionism, militarization, and exceptionalism, and which equally points to indigenous epistemologies as genuine alternatives to Western ontology, epistemology, and knowledge production. To Mignolo, decolonial thinking as a process begins with questioning the assumption of a universal human nature and succeeds by changing the terms of the conversation and the rules of the game. He notes, “If we start from the premise that there is no universal common ground of experiences and that situated knowledge has to be spelled out in the colonial matrix (rather than in an assumed history of humankind), we shall then spell out in what sense, decolonially speaking, knowledge and experience are marked (situated) through and by colonial and imperial differences.”¹⁰ In this vein, oceanic archives of the Asia Pacific and Pacific Islands offer different kinds of situated experiences and knowledge and speak to the very discrepancies, contradictions, and predicaments located in and generated by the empire. In other words, they are resources for rethinking indigenous epistemologies and regenerating non-Western knowledge production and dissemination.

Indeed, if the formation of “the Atlantic World” was contingent on the emergence of what Mignolo identifies as “the Atlantic commercial circuit” in the sixteenth century,¹¹ which would converge on the colonization of the Americas, the slave trade, and the founding of the American republic,¹² then the “Pacific Century” could always be recapitulated as contradictions, competitions, and uncertainties among local and global powers, which have haunted and shaped the region to the present.¹³ In his remapping of the Pacific as spheres of influences of Western powers from “the Spanish Lake” to “the American Lake,” Arif Dirlik argues that the Pacific posed as a major contradiction between its European invention in concept and its Asian materiality in content, which revolved around economic activities and

population migrations throughout the region for centuries. Such mapping of the Pacific not only offers a historicized understanding of the ocean as a construction of the West but also defines the ocean as sites of resistance with new questions on its changing meanings and implications in the twenty-first century.

Against such historical and theoretical backgrounds, we first explore the trajectory of the Euro-American consciousness and movement from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast of the United States and from North America to the Asia Pacific, and suggest the specific ways in which Asian, Asian American, and transpacific studies intervene in American exceptionalism as alternatives. Next, we consider the formation and development of the Asia Pacific in terms of what Kuan-Hsing Chen calls “Asia as method,” and the construction of the Pacific Islands in relation to what Epeli Hau’ofa defines as “our sea of islands” and “the ocean in us.” While Chen insists on decolonization as a mutual process for the colonized and the colonizer alike, Hau’ofa envisions a new indigenous way of rereading geography and rewriting humanity against neocolonialist and neo-imperialist practice. By investigating the transpacific as moments of military, cultural, and geopolitical contentions as well as sites of global economic integration and resistance, we develop transpacific American studies as a new critical paradigm in transnational American studies.

Whose Pacific? Empire, Expansion, and Archives

If the Pacific as a site of contradictions has been manifested in the gap between its Euro-American concept and its Asian content from the outset, then we should interrogate how the concept mismatches the content by revisiting the oceanic archives from both sides of the Pacific. In her documentation of American imagining of the Pacific, M. Consuelo León W. introduces its literary and cartographical backgrounds, which could date back to thirteenth-century European travel writing and to the eighteenth-century North American writing of “scientific exploration” as represented by George Vancouver’s *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean*. She foregrounds Thomas Jefferson as a facilitator of such imagination, which underlays the Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark expedition.¹⁴ By navigating through Jefferson’s “vast geographical knowledge,” “political pragmatism,” and “concrete government policies,” she suggests that “the image of the Pacific had been completely consolidated in American minds” by the time Jefferson left the presidency. Indeed, Jefferson’s “passage to India” would not only expand the American republic from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast and project its imperial power and imagination upon China and Japan as its destinations, but it also would partially fulfill Christopher Columbus’s original goal to reach “the rich lands described by Marco Polo and the romantic Sir John Mandeville,” which had designated China, Japan, and India.¹⁵

“The American errand into the wilderness” of the Pacific began with several Bostonian businessmen, who went to Hawai’i in 1833 and started the first sugar

plantation in the island kingdom.¹⁶ But it was really the annexation of California and the acquisition of the West Coast and the Southwest in 1848 that prompted Aaron Palmer, a “Counsellor of the Supreme Court of the United States,” to submit a proposal to Congress, recommending for expansion of US markets into Asia and importation of Chinese workers to further the development of US industries. He declared, “The commodious port of San Francisco is destined to become the great emporium of our commerce on the Pacific; and as soon as it is connected by a railroad with the Atlantic states, [it] will become the most eligible point of departure for steamers to . . . China.”¹⁷ As for the transcontinental railroad and the swamp in California, Palmer thought of no other than Chinese laborers, “No people in all the East are so well adapted for clearing wild lands and raising every species of agricultural product . . . as the Chinese.”¹⁸

It was through Secretary of State William Seward, who signed the Burlingame-Seward Treaty of 1868, that large numbers of Chinese laborers would be brought to the American West to complete the transcontinental railroad in 1869. And Seward’s vision and sense of history, which Richard Drinnon defines as “the long view,” extended the dream of Jefferson and reached right back to the original vision of Columbus: “What was Columbus doing in 1492 if not bumping into outlying islands of the land mass that blocked his passage to India?”¹⁹ In making this connection with the Old World, Seward believed that empire must make its way constantly westward to reach its final destination: “it must continue to move on westward until the tides of the renewed and the decaying civilizations of the world meet on the shores of the Pacific Ocean.”²⁰ Yet it was through another secretary of state, John Hay, a disciple of John Quincy Adams and William Seward and proponent of the “Open Door” policy to China, who on the occasion of commemorating “Fifty Years of the Republican Party” famously declared that the United States had advanced a “general plan of opening a field of enterprise in those distant regions where the Far West becomes the Far East.”²¹

As the Far West of North America became the Far East of Northeast Asia, Asian laborers started coming to Hawai‘i and the United States in large numbers as part of the US economic expansion and globalization of Anglo-American capitalism. Sucheng Chan notes, “During the second half of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth, almost a million people from China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and India emigrated to the United States and to Hawaii.”²² These demands and movements, whether we call them “push,” “pull,” or “means” in historiography and migration studies, provided the “content” of the transpacific and intensified a globalized and racialized class formation and development in the United States. Charles Crocker, one of “the Big Four” of the Central Pacific Railroad Company, made this statement in his testimony in Congress on the congressional investigation of Chinese immigration: “After we got Chinamen to work, we took the more intelligent of the white laborers and made foremen of them. Several of them who never expected, never had a dream that they were going to be anything but

shovelers of dirt, hewers of wood and drawers of water are now respectable farmers, owning farms. They got a start by controlling Chinese labor on our railroad.”²³

If the US state-bound archives did not include anything on the Chinese “middle passage” across the Pacific or the treatment after their arrival in Hawai‘i, North America, Central and Latin America, the Chinese and Chinese American “oceanic archives” filled in the gap. In his report on the conditions of Chinese laborers in Cuba and Peru after his trip of investigation to these countries, Yung Wing, the first Chinese American educated in the United States (with a BA in English from Yale College in 1854), detailed how these laborers had been treated worse than the African slaves in Cuba and Peru and what ordeal they had endured in their “middle passage” to the Americas. He thus describes it in his autobiography published in 1909: “My report was accompanied with two dozen photographs of Chinese coolies, showing how their backs had been lacerated and torn, scarred and disfigured by the lash. I had these photographs taken in the night, unknown to anyone except the victims themselves, who were, at my request, collected and assembled together for the purpose. I knew that these photographs would tell a tale of cruelty and inhumanity perpetuated by the owners of haciendas, which would be beyond cavil and dispute.”²⁴ Yung’s report finally convinced the Qing government to intervene and terminate the coolie trade between China and the Americas.

Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Chinese historians, particularly those with advanced training in the United States, have explored in-depth the coolie trade to Latin America and the complicity of US merchants and diplomats in this inhumane practice. In Zhu Shijia’s work, *Historical Materials Concerning U.S. Persecution of Chinese Laborers*, published in 1958 and celebrated as a monumental work on Chinese immigration to the United States during the 1960s and 1970s,²⁵ Zhu devoted a substantial part of the book to the theme of “U.S. Criminal Acts of Kidnapping and Defrauding Chinese Laborers”²⁶ and collected materials from the US National Archives and the Library of Congress and also from the Qing Dynasty’s Zhongli Yamen Archives in Beijing. In the first part, Zhu implicates that the US government had been aware of the activities of kidnapping and coaxing Chinese laborers to go to the Americas. He devotes two sections to this theme, “American Consul (in Amoy which is now Xiamen) Charles W. Le Gendre Coaxes Chinese Laborers to Go Overseas” and “American Companies Coax Chinese Laborers to Go Overseas,” which document the involvement of both US merchants and diplomats in the trade, such as the American Consul in Canton (Guangzhou) Charles P. Lincoln. Zhu includes a correspondence between John E. Ward, the US minister to China under President James Buchanan, and Secretary of State Lewis Cass in 1860:²⁷

When a Chinaman has been kidnapped or stolen, he is taken to the first vessel and asked if he wishes to emigrate. Should he answer in the negative, the captain, with great apparent honesty, declares he cannot receive him. His captors then leave the ship with him, and he is held in the water, or tied up by the thumbs, or cold water

is trickled down his back, or some other torture inflicted, until he consents to go, when he is taken to the next ship, and the same question repeated, "Are you willing to emigrate?" If his reluctance to become an exile is still unsubdued, he is again returned to his captors, and this process repeated until a consent is wrung from him, when he is received as one of the "willing emigrants."²⁸

In focusing on such details in correspondence between US officials, Zhu contends that there was no fundamental difference between Portuguese/Spanish and British/American ways of recruiting or transporting Chinese laborers to the Americas even though the latter declared that their vessels would not be allowed to engage in any coolie trade. He also reveals that the US government had been well informed of the practice of "free emigration" specified in the Burlingame-Seward Treaty of 1868. To Zhu, Euro-American workers' violent responses to Chinese workers were not so much examples of racism than instances of how the US capitalist class sought to replace class struggle with racial conflict.

Similarly, in his work, *A Literary Anthology on Resistance to the U.S. Exclusion of Chinese Laborers*, published in 1960,²⁹ literary critic A Yin locates a connection between the Chinese coolie trafficking and the African slave trade and explores the similar violent treatment of these laborers in the recruiting/capturing process and the "middle passage." In his introduction, A Yin quotes extensively from chapter 29 of the novel *Bitter Society*, which, with its entire inclusion in the anthology, was allegedly based on the oral history of a few surviving laborers as stated in the novel's preface. The quoted paragraphs describe in graphic detail how the workers were unable to move their legs upon their arrival after months spent in chains and captivity and how they were severely beaten by impatient sailors and the ship captain. For example, upon arrival, the captain and sailors found more than eighty dead laborers, their decaying bodies mixed with the smell of dried blood and urine created a repugnant scene in the dark and humid bottom deck of the ship.³⁰ A Yin authenticates this specific scene as an accurate representation of the "middle passage" of the Chinese laborers coming to the Americas and even incorporates into the anthology chapters from Lin Shu's translation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to highlight his sense of shared experiences of suffering, oppression, and exploitation.³¹

The Pacific Islands: Military Control, Nuclear Testing, and Oceanic Archives

If the movement between East Asia and North America defined the Pacific only in terms of East and West, there was another dimension or structure of the Pacific, which would be geographical and hierarchical in nature. Matt Matsuda describes it as "a geography distinguished by a famous fluid distinctions between north and south" in global economy and geopolitics.³² On the one hand, the north represented a new frontier of capitalism that would feature the theater of East Asia, where labor migrations and capital flows had centered in Japan, China, Hawai'i,

and the Philippines. On the other hand, the south designated a space of fantasy and imagination for the north, varying from a wasteland of noble savages like Caliban in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* to a paradise for Euro-American adventures, which had been popularized first by Herman Melville's *Typee* and then by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein's *South Pacific*. If US economic activities in the Asia Pacific concerned the south only in terms of whaling industry and constant renaming it from the "South Seas" to the "South Pacific," then its military activities have fundamentally impacted its ecologies and environments.

Starting with the overthrow of the kingdom government under Queen Lili'uokalani in 1893 and the annexation of Hawai'i in 1898, the United States continued its westward expansion, which Takaki calls "the masculine thrust toward Asia."³³ The mastermind behind this movement was Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, who had authored numerous articles and books on the importance of rebuilding US sea power and colonizing the Asia Pacific as the future of the US Empire. In his work, *The Problem of Asia and Its Effect upon International Policies*, among others, Mahan interprets the significance of the annexation of the Philippines after the Spanish-American War in 1898 as one more step toward China as naval bases and coaling stations.³⁴ With support and collaboration with President Theodore Roosevelt, Mahan not only brought the concept of the Pacific Age into the American political discourse and public consciousness but also underscored his main vision that the Pacific would replace the Atlantic as the center of future world interest and struggle.³⁵ Christopher Connery resituates Mahan's concepts of military power as sea and land ideologies in the history of US expansion and emergence as a global power.³⁶

What is often forgotten in the critique of US military expansion in the Pacific is the ocean itself, its islands and island population, who suffered from US militarization of the islands and nuclear fallout throughout the Cold War. In her essay, "The Myth of Isolates: Ecosystem Ecologies in the Nuclear Pacific," a case study that traces the origin of the science of ecosystem ecology to the nuclear tests conducted by the US military during the Cold War, Elizabeth DeLoughrey observes that few scholar in the field of ecology today understands the indebtedness of the Age of Ecology to the Atomic Age, which defines a "multi-constitutive relationship between radioactive militarism and the study of the environment."³⁷ She writes, "American environmentalism and militarism are paradoxically and mutually imbricated, particularly in their construction of the isolate. Thus the ecosystem paradigm relies on the idea of a closed system, a concept that was constituted by the island laboratory and the irradiated atoll and perpetuated by the aerial view utilized by AEC films (the Atomic Energy Commission) to introduce US viewers to the newly acquired island territories in the Pacific Islands."³⁸

Indeed, with the acquisition of Guam in the Mariana Islands as part of the booty in the Spanish-American War in 1898, the United States started using the Pacific Islands for its military expansion and strategic interests. With the military triumph over the Japanese Empire in the Pacific theater of World War II, the United

States took over most of the Pacific Islands granted to Japan in 1920 and placed them under the US Navy's "Trust Territory."³⁹ At the very end of the Pacific War, the United States created a Joint Task Force to develop a nuclear weapons testing program and turned the Marshall Islands into a "Proving Ground" and a nuclear colony. According to the US Department of Energy's Open Net, "The Marshall Islands, located in the central Pacific Ocean, are part of the US Trust Territory of the Pacific. Between 1946 and 1962, 67 bomb tests were conducted in or around the Marshall Islands. The largest of these tests was the 1954 *Bravo* shot, with an explosive force equal to nearly 1,000 Hiroshima-type atomic bombs."⁴⁰ According to the calculation of an article in *Washington Post* in 2015, the impact of nuclear fallout was tremendous: "If their combined explosive power was parceled evenly over that 12-year period, it would equal 1.6 Hiroshima-size explosions per day."⁴¹ The nuclear fallout was not contained to any isolated atoll but spread globally. If it was *Baker* detonated in Bikini Atoll rather than the two atomic bombs exploding in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which "first brought the issue of radioactivity compellingly to the nation's consciousness,"⁴² then it was *Bravo*, which "catalyzed a worldwide outcry against the H-bomb and forced the AEC to more thoroughly assess the radiation impact of its weapons testing program."⁴³ DeLoughrey notes, "In the antinuclear activism that followed, the militarized island became configured as a synecdoche for the world. The irradiated atoll, as an 'anti-island' or 'zero-island,' became a catalyst and signifier for a global consciousness about an increasingly militarized planet."⁴⁴

In retrieving and uncovering this history from the oceanic archives of empire and the Pacific Islands, DeLoughrey offers us new perspectives on empire and its practice. To begin with, isolation was no longer a descriptive term in the colonial and imperial vocabulary but has evolved to be a concept that would have strong implications for policy and decision-making for the colonial and imperial regime. Second, science and technology have never been ideologically neutral but often served the purpose of Western colonial and military regimes in their expansion and conquest.

Decolonization, Reimagining of Asia, and Transpacific American Studies

If the concept of the "Pacific Age" was first proposed by Japanese political economist Inagaki Manjiro in 1892 and would be promoted by the Japanese nation-state throughout the twentieth century,⁴⁵ then we need first to discuss the relationship between Japan and the United States before we can address the question of decolonization. According to Pekka Korhonen, not only was Japan the first nation-state to propose the concept of the "Pacific Age," but it was also the only non-Western country that had ever been accepted by Mahan as "an adoptively European power and part of the European commonwealth just like the United States."⁴⁶ Back in 1900, Mahan believed that "the dynamic Teutonic race" as represented by Germany, England, and the United States "would carry on their shoulders the main burden of

advancing Christian civilization during the century that had just begun.”⁴⁷ The main collision would be the Asiatic race, which represented an old civilization, stagnant and corrupted.

The notion of the “Pacific Age” continued to be promoted by Japan and the United States following the establishment of the Institute of Pacific Relations in Honolulu as a NGO in 1925. At the institute’s second conference in Honolulu in 1927, Sawayanagi Masatarō, president of the Imperial Educational Association of Japan, announced that “the Pacific Ocean is gradually becoming the center of the world.”⁴⁸ Then in 1967, the idea of the Pacific Age was revived by Japanese economist Kojima Kiyoshi and advanced by the Japanese Foreign Minister, Miki Takeo as the “Asia-Pacific Age.”⁴⁹ The term finally gained momentum in 1980, when the total value of transpacific commerce outweighed that of transatlantic commerce for the first time in human history.⁵⁰

The years of 1927 and 1967 marked two important moments of Japan’s role in the Pacific, one under British hegemony from the late nineteenth century to the 1920s, and the other under US hegemony from 1945 to the present.⁵¹ In the 1920s, Japan unveiled its imperialist ambition by invading Northern China and continuing its colonization of the Korean peninsula, while “the United States and Great Britain chose to do little about it, save for a lot of rhetoric about the ‘open door.’”⁵² And the enunciation of the Asia-Pacific Age in 1967 defined a moment of success of the US policy toward Japan since the end of World War II in 1945 and then the beginning of the Cold War in 1947: “Dean Acheson and George Kennan masterminded this repositioning of Japan in the world system, by deciding in 1947 to place Japan as an engine of the world economy, a US-defined ‘economic animal,’ shorn of its prewar military and political clout.”⁵³ Cumings read the success of Japan as bad news for the rest of the Asia Pacific and offered a pessimistic picture of these countries as “the Third World in our midst,” which would find “no exit in the ‘Pacific Rim community,’ save hard work at low pay.”⁵⁴ Contrary to an optimistic world in the 1990s, which celebrated the collapse of the Soviet Communist block as the end of history in the Hegelian sense and embraced neoliberal capitalism as the golden straightjacket fitting all,⁵⁵ Cumings made a rather gloomy picture of the status quo: “The Third World is dominated by the advanced countries in a way unprecedented since the colonial era, with no convincing antisystem model to follow. It is outside the loop of the prosperity of recent years, and therefore is the prime source of war, instability, and class conflict.”⁵⁶

Decolonization in this context has to begin with Japanese reflections upon its own role in the Pacific Age. In his lecture, “Asia as Method,” Takeuchi Yoshimi resituates the modernization of Japan in a trilateral relationship among Japan, Europe, and China, and critiques the externality of Japanese modernization as the opposite of the internality of Chinese modernity.⁵⁷ To him, in establishing a modern nation-state and incorporating modern culture modeled on West Europe and North America, the Japanese state superficially “sugarcoated its outside with

western civilization” but in fact “maintained its feudal structure.”⁵⁸ Takeuchi reads the result of this as “the internal division of Japan of the Asian and the non-Asian,”⁵⁹ which shows contempt for China and other Asian countries on the one hand but sustains good relations with the United States on the other: “Yet the fact that Japan enjoys good relations with the United States while peace remains to be made with the other Allied Powers means that the war is still unresolved. Japan is still at war with China.”⁶⁰ He concludes by redefining “Asia as method” in two different senses. First, Asians must embrace their own cultural values as method or rather self-formation of subjectivity. Second, Asia must re-embrace and change the West so much so that Western outstanding cultural values such as equality and democracy would cover all and create real universality in the true sense of the word.

The epistemological and ontological implications of Takeuchi’s argument is further articulated and elaborated by Kuan-Hsing Chen in terms of the importance of transforming the existing knowledge structure and our own subjectivities in terms of cultural locations. In a book that bears the same title, *Asia as Method*,⁶¹ Chen seeks to achieve two objectives. First, he uses the idea of Asia as “an imaginary anchoring point,” or rather new points of reference for each other among Asian nation-states so that Asian identities could be transformed and reconstructed. Moreover, Chen further employs Asia as method to readdress “the tripartite problematic of decolonization, deimperialization, and de-cold war.” He notes, “Historical processes of imperialization, colonization, and the cold war have become mutually entangled structures, which have shaped and conditioned both intellectual and popular knowledge production.”⁶² If New York, London, and Paris have regularly served as sites for intellectual conversations and critical investigations, Chen raises the possibility of expanding them to include new sites in Asia such as Seoul, Kyoto, Singapore, Bangalore, Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Taipei.

Similarly, in rethinking the politics of imagining Asia, Wang Hui interrogates the modern Japanese notion of “East Asia” as grounded in European culturalism, which would not see any contradiction in its practice of “shedding Asia” and “invading Asia.” He interprets the tragedy of modern Japan in terms of “incomplete westernization” and “incomplete modernization” rather than Japanese modernity per se.⁶³ He turns to the model of Russia, which reverses the Japanese path to modernity by “shedding Europe” and “turning toward Asia,” and examines the effect of the Russian Revolution of 1917 upon the Chinese Revolution by calling attention to its underlying logic of combining national self-determination with socialist internationalism. In going over different accounts of Asia, Wang offers a dialectical rereading of Asia in which “the idea is at once colonialist and anticolonial, conservative and revolutionary, nationalist and internationalist, originating in Europe and, alternately, reshaping Europe’s image of itself.”⁶⁴ He closes by suggesting that reconsidering Asian history become “an effort to rethink nineteenth-century European ‘world history’” as well as a gesture to “break free of the twenty-first-century ‘new imperial’ order and its associated logic.”⁶⁵ What Wang articulates here is not only a critique

of colonialism and imperialism in the nineteenth century but also an imperative to extend such critical insights to the current US-centered global order.

While Kuan-Hsing Chen's work is theoretically embedded in Western cultural studies and South Asian postcolonial studies, Wang Hui represents a new effort of the Chinese Left, which tries to reconnect to Marxist materialism and dialecticism after the turn of socialism with the so-called Chinese characteristics, which David Harvey critiques as neoliberalist in nature, but which Giovanni Arrighi celebrates as neoclassic in the Adam Smith's sense of the word.⁶⁶ There is another tradition in theorizing the Asia Pacific in terms of diasporic Chinese movements in Southeast Asia, which Aihwa Ong and Donald M. Nonini articulate as an "ungrounded empire," involving a new "cultural politics of diaspora and transnationalism"⁶⁷ and reinventing "Chinese transnationalism as an alternative modernity."⁶⁸

Island Ontology, Indigenous Epistemology, and Transpacific American Studies

If decolonization in the Asia Pacific involves reconceptualization of identity and history for both the colonizer and the colonized, then the same process in the Pacific Islands points directly to indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. In her critical work, *Routes and Roots*, Elizabeth DeLoughrey engages Stoler's sense of politics of comparison by examining the oceanic archives of the Spanish, British, and American empires on the one hand, and also by rereading Caribbean and Pacific Island literatures together as coalitional responses to colonialism and imperialism, which would break new ground in both transoceanic studies and postcolonial studies on the other hand. Invoking Kamau Brathwaite's concept of "tidalectics," she seeks to foreground how "a dynamic model of geography can elucidate island history and cultural production" and then explores the specific ways in which the complex relationships between sea and land, diaspora and indigeneity, and routes and roots were entangled and unfolded.⁶⁹ She documents how the European sea powers including Japan sought remote islands to discourage the epistemological susceptibility of Europeans, distant islands to minimize the islanders' defense against Western diseases, and isolated islands to ensure colonial military superiority. She also explores how Columbus's arrival in the Caribbean was predestined "in a collapse of time-space between Antillian and Asian islands," which in cartographical representation would erase the Americas so that the Atlantic Ocean could merge with the Pacific.⁷⁰ To her, "Island topographies, labor, and resources have not only materially benefitted Europe (such as sugar plantations), but have provided the botanical, anthropological, biological, environmental, and ideological space for European laboratories, experiment, and development."⁷¹ By focusing on the cultural production of "peoples of the sea" in both the Caribbean and the Pacific, DeLoughrey calls for a new vision of deterritorialism, which would spatially reconfigure diaspora, indigenous, and postcolonial studies.⁷²

Indeed, Kanak Chief Jean-Philippe Tjibaou employs “tales of generations of Tongans, Fijians, Samoans, and Kanak in struggle against each other” as evidence of long histories of acknowledging and challenging claims to islands.⁷³ Tjibaou’s father, Jean-Marie Tjibaou, famously lectured the French colonizers on the forgotten Kanak history and culture and celebrated them in 1975 by organizing Melanesia 2000, “an Oceanic festival of music, art, and cultural heritage.” He and his collaborators envisioned these activities as predating “the millennial imperatives of the Western calendar.”⁷⁴ It is on this basis that Matsuda conceives the Pacific Islands as being constituted by island communities, situated in geographies of land and sea, as well as imagined by spoken, danced, cared, and moving yet deeply localized navigational expressions.⁷⁵

Pacific Islanders have never stopped challenging the Western appropriation of the islands as isolation and irrelevancy. In 1976, Samoan writer Albert Wendt introduced the idea of a shift in perspective “towards a new Oceania”; and in 1993, the late Tongan writer Epeli Hau’ofa called for a similar switch from “viewing the Pacific as ‘islands in the far sea’ [to seeing it] as ‘a sea of islands.’”⁷⁶ Hau’ofa begins by describing how Oceania operates at two different levels, one of “national governments and regional and international diplomacy, in which the present and future of Pacific island states and territories are planned and decided on,” and the other of “ordinary people, peasants and proletarians,” who “plan and make decisions about their lives independently, sometimes with surprising and dramatic results that go unnoticed or ignored at the top.”⁷⁷

Hau’ofa traces the history of colonialism, in which Polynesia and Micronesia are both undermined as “too small, too poorly endowed with resources, and too isolated from the centers of economic growth for their inhabitants ever to be able to rise above their present condition of dependence on the largesse of wealthy nations.”⁷⁸ Such belittlement, he argues, can be internalized for long and transmitted across generations and in that sense may lead to moral paralysis and fatalism which were manifested in both the Indian reservations in the continental United States and the internment camps of the Japanese Americans during World War II. In that sense, Pacific Islanders have been confined to both physical and mental reservations.

Hau’ofa recalls the history and culture of Oceania that comprise of the myths, legends, oral traditions, and cosmologies, which not only designate land surfaces and surrounding ocean insofar as people can traverse and explore them, but also encompass “the underworld with its fire-controlling and earth-shaking denizens” and the heavens above with their hierarchies of powerful gods and named stars and constellations guiding people’s ways across the seas.⁷⁹ He identifies oceanic cultures with a critical border consciousness anchored in long histories of inter-island mobility and draws attention to “the contemporary process of what may be called world enlargement that is carried out by tens of thousands of ordinary Pacific Islanders right across the ocean—from east to west and north to south, under the very noses of academic and consultancy experts, bureaucratic planners and their

advisers, and customs and immigration officials—making nonsense of all national and economic boundaries.”⁸⁰ Such practices, Hau’ofa notes further, reach back to the “days when boundaries were not imaginary lines in the ocean, but rather points of entry that were constantly negotiated and even contested.”⁸¹

In another groundbreaking essay, “The Oceania in Us,” Hau’ofa suggests the possibility of developing “a substantial regional identity that is anchored in our common inheritance of a very considerable portion of Earth’s largest body of water, the Pacific Ocean.”⁸² Such a new sense of the region should be based on “our own creation” and “our perceptions of our realities,” which are necessary for “our survival in the dawning era.”⁸³ In this vein, he turns “the ocean in us” into a new kind of ontology and epistemology, which would decenter what Walter Mignolo and Madina Tlostanova call the “modern foundation of knowledge.”⁸⁴ This new sense of ontology and epistemology de-privileges the European Renaissance as the point of reference of modernity and challenges its two complementary moves that interpret the historical present, one along the colonization of time and the invention of the Middle Age, while the other through the colonization of space and the invention of the Americas. The significance of Hau’ofa’s articulation can be best captured in terms of what Mignolo and Tlostanova theorize as “critical border thinking”:

Why do we need border thinking? Where is it taking us? To the de-colonial shift as a fracture of the epistemology of the zero point. Border thinking brings to the foreground different kinds of theoretical actors and principles of knowledge that displace European modernity (which articulated the very concept of theory in the social sciences and the humanities) and empower those who have been epistemically disempowered by the theo- and ego-politics of knowledge. The decolonial epistemic shift is no longer grounded in Greek and Latin categories of thought that informed modern epistemology (since the Renaissance) in the six European languages (Italian, Spanish and Portuguese for the Renaissance; French, English and German for the Enlightenment), but in the epistemic borders between European imperial categories and languages and categories that modern epistemology ruled out as epistemologically non-sustainable . . . Border thinking is the epistemology of the future, without which another world will be impossible.⁸⁵

It is precisely through the oceanic archives, old and new, colonial and de-colonial, that indigenous ontologies and epistemologies can be reinvented and reimaged. It is through this critical border thinking that transpacific American studies should be grounded and theorized.

Reading Oceanic Archives in the Transnational Space: Ocean History, Spanish Manila, and the World Geography of Faith in the Early United States

The first three chapters in the volume not only rediscover the early oceanic archives but also remap transpacific movements in different directions and moments,

marking a paradigm shift from the Atlantic to the Pacific, reclaiming spaces from Southeast Asia to the Americas, and intervening in the American civilizing mission from North America to East Asia. James R. Fichter's chapter, "American and International Whaling, c.1770–1820: Toward an Ocean History," examines the unique space of the South Seas, where the Southern Atlantic, the Indian, and the Pacific Oceans meet, and foregrounds three archives largely unconsulted in global whaling history—the Saint Helena Archive, the Cape Town Archive Repository, and the Brazilian Arquivo Nacional. He argues that the American whaling narrative should be interpreted as transnational and global rather than national from the outset and its ecological and economic consequences should be explored in terms of Western capitalist expansion and competition.

In "Spanish Manila: A Transpacific Maritime Enterprise and America's First Chinatown," Evelyn Hu-DeHart develops a Chinese/East Asian version of the transpacific by investigating how the Minnan (southern Fujian in Chinese) traders linked the old and vast Indian Ocean world to the Spanish Pacific and made the Manila Galleon trade the first completely global commercial enterprise. In response to the master narrative of the American Pacific, she offers an alternative transpacific story, which emphasizes the Chinese and other Asians crossing the vast ocean to Mexico and Peru and creating new spaces and formations as slaves, artisans, merchants, travelers, religious pilgrims, and family members.

Kendall Johnson's chapter, "Residing in 'South-Eastern Asia' of the Antebellum United States," presents a case study of the American "civilizing mission" in the early nineteenth century. Reading Reverend David Abeel's (1804–1846) missionary dedication to speak, read, write, and print in languages other than English in terms of transoceanic imaginary, Johnson examines the two directions of the resulting print circuit—outward to the unconverted and inward back home to the church-going Christians of the early United States. He concludes that Abeel's evangelical geography did not necessarily convert the Chinese into Christians but enabled the Mandarins such as Xu Jiyu to embrace the missionary's sense of geography and interpret the strategic power of commerce in a new light.

Oceanic Archives and the Transterritorial Turn in American Studies: Constituting the "Public," Genealogizing Colonial and Indigenous Translations

In this section, the three chapters engage "the transterritorial turn in American studies" by interrogating the colonial archives and reinventing indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. In "'Thank God for the Maladjusted': The Transterritorial Turn towards the Chamorro Poetry of Guahan (Guam)," Craig Santos Perez examines the US territories outside the national borders and develops a new conceptual framework, which views America from the discontinuous territories of the empire and questions the exceptionalist narratives of American freedom, liberation, and

democracy. Perez reads the poetry of Guam as a way for the Chamorro to articulate their cultural pride against US colonialism and imperialism.

In “Land, History, and the Law: Constituting the ‘Public’ through Environmentalism and Annexation,” Susan Y. Najita builds her argument around Hau‘ofa’ vision of Oceania and elaborates the intimate and genealogical relationship between land and water. By investigating the significance of place for the Hawaiian monarchy and establishment of the national park against US colonialism, Najita highlights both the legal and ethical foundations for conservation and environmental stewardship in contemporary Hawai‘i.

Drawing on recent scholarship in translation studies, indigenous studies, and Hawaiian studies, Brandy Nālani McDougall investigates the English translations of the Kumulipo by Queen Lili‘uokalani, Martha Beckwith, and Rubellite Kawena Johnston, as well as the historical contexts of their publication. She questions the continuing distortion of the indigenous claims to sovereignty in the neocolonial production and dissemination of knowledge and highlights the enduring power of the Kumulipo figures in the consciousness of contemporary Kanaka Maoli writers and performers from a US-occupied Hawai‘i.

Remapping Transpacific Studies: Oceanic Archives of Imperialism/s, Transpacific Imagination, and Memories of Murder

The chapters in this section explore different oceanic archives and develop competing visions and forms of the transpacific. Tomoko Akami’s “The Ocean as a Medium for Interimperial Collaboration: Scientists’ Networks across and in the Pacific Ocean in the 1920s” examines the two US-led nongovernmental, multinational institutions—the Institute of Pacific Relations (1925–1960) and the Pan Pacific Science Congress (1920–present). She argues that the two institutions envisioned the Pacific as an open space rather than closed seas and thus facilitated a vision of “inter-imperialism” rather than an anti-imperialist internationalism popular in the 1920s and 1930s. Akami suggests that these power dynamics at the metropolitan centers offshore continue to impact the lives of people in Oceania.

In his chapter, “Maxine Hong Kingston’s Transpacific Imagination: From the Talk Story of the ‘No-Name Woman’ to the Articulation of Peace,” Yuan Shu argues that Kingston has moved away from the narrative role as a native informant in her early work and presented a new multicultural United States by reinventing a Chinese American epistemology and by intervening in US neo-imperialism around the globe, particularly in Iraq. Her efforts at pacifism substantiate what Walter Mignolo calls “decolonial thinking,” a critical gesture that reclaims non-Western humanity, revalidates indigenous ontology and epistemology, and legitimates third world knowledge production and dissemination.

Viet Thanh Nguyen’s chapter, “Memories of Murder: The Other Korean War (in Viet Nam),” invokes “oceanic archives” provocatively in terms of “the vast archives of

the dead” and offers a new perspective on the American War in Vietnam. Defining “oceanic archives” as “the weight of the lost and of the loss felt locally and across oceans,” he not only explores the space between the United States and elsewhere but also the space between South Korea and its own elsewhere. To Nguyen, the controversy about the other Korean War in Vietnam derives from “how that war has been ineluctably intertwined with the Korean economy, with Korean politics, and with Korean visions of how Korea positions itself vis-à-vis its veterans, its citizens, the United States, the Cold War, the global market, and other Asian countries including Viet Nam, all within the context of a regional and global order dominated by US power and interests.” Nguyen concludes by emphasizing how both the United States and South Korea manufacture and distribute their own memories about wars “across different seas to Viet Nam.”

Revisiting Oceanic Archives, Rethinking Transnational American Studies: Next Steps, Oceanic Communities, and Transpacific Ecopoetics

The last three chapters speculate upon new directions in which transpacific American studies may move. In her chapter, “Transnational American Studies: Next Steps?” Shelley Fisher Fishkin challenges American studies scholars to use non-US archives and to engage materials in languages other than English in their critiques of American exceptionalism. In that regard, she proposes transnational, multilingual, collaborative, digital research projects as a way to explore topics that are virtually impossible for works of monolingual, solo scholarship to address. In using the specific example of “the Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project” at Stanford, which she and Gordon Chang initiated in 2012, Fishkin suggests that we learn lessons about the challenges and rewards of pursuing this kind of project—made possible by digital technology—which may point to the future of transnational American studies.

Otto Heim’s chapter, “Recalling Oceanic Communities: The Transnational Theater of John Kneubuhl and Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl,” not only builds its argument on Epeli Hau’ofa’s vision of “our sea of islands” and “the ocean in us” but also articulates Oceanic experiences and projections of space in terms of community consciousness beyond the national framework and different from global experiences. Reading the plays of John and Victoria Kneubuhl with a focus on the meaning of loss and the work of memory, Heim explores the role of genealogy in the formation of Oceanic communities, which weave together diverse and conflicting viewpoints in a common acknowledgement of an unseen life of the past in the present.

In the last but not the least chapter in the volume, “Oceania as Peril and Promise: Towards Theorizing a Worlded Vision of Transpacific Ecopoetics,” Rob Wilson not only examines the increasing tension in the South China Sea as “Asia’s Roiling Sea” but also raises the serious issue of how to reframe the ocean in terms that would

“elicit consent and inspire an imagination of co-belonging, mutual interest, and eco-poetic care.” For ocean to signify “a bioregional site of coalitional *promise*” rather than “a geopolitical danger zone of antagonistic *peril*,” Wilson argues for a new perception of ourselves as oceanic citizens as much as earth-dwellers connected in a Gaia-like wholeness and invokes such authors of oceanic eco-poetics, from Gary Snyder and Epeli Hau’ofa to Craig Santos-Perez and Juliana Spahr, as a means to disrupt the environmental unconsciousness and historical amnesia reigning across the Pacific. Wilson articulates a future of the ocean that would figure in a more worlded vision of planetary totality set at the core of a transnationalized cultural studies de-mapping as well as remapping the oceanic entanglements.

Notes

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16. Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989).
17. Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19th-Century America*, revised ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 229.
18. Takaki, *Iron Cages*, 229.
19. Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 271.
20. Drinnon, *Facing West*, 271.
21. Drinnon, *Facing West*, 278.
22. Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 3.
23. Takaki, *Strangers*, 28.
24. Yung Wing, *My Life in China and America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1909), 195.
25. Shih-shan H. Ts'ai, "Chinese Immigration through Communist Chinese Eyes: An Introduction to the Historiography," *Pacific Historical Review* 43, no. 3 (August 1974): 395–408. Ts'ai, a historian based at the University of Arkansas, offered an assessment of the work of Zhu and Qing on p. 408: "Chu Shih-chia's (Zhu Shijia) two books of selected archival materials are among the most important Sino-American historical documents prepared by any Chinese. Ch'ing Ju-chi's (Qing Ruji) lengthy work must also be ranked as a leading Sino-American diplomatic history in the Chinese language."
26. With a PhD in history from Columbia University and extensive research experiences in archives, museums, and libraries in both China and the United States, Zhu obtained a position in the Asiatic Division of Library of Congress in October 1939, and scrutinized all the available Chinese language material in the archives during his tenure there. He copied over 1000 entries of US-China diplomatic exchanges and memorials and donated them all to the Chinese National Archives upon his return to China in 1950, at the invitation of Chen Hanseng, a prominent historian at Peking University, and after his resignation as an associate professor of history at the University of Washington in Seattle.
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28. Zhu, *Historical Documents*, 22–23. Cf. "Chinese Coolie Trade," H. Executive Document 87, 36 Congress, 1 session (1860), serial 1057. 29. Accessed May 18, 2016. https://archive.org/stream/unitedstatescon128offigoog/unitedstatescon128offigoog_djvu.txt.

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This volume collects an array of poems, plays, novels, and travel writing on the conditions and experiences of Chinese laborers coming to North America and Latin America but frames these texts in light of the spirit of the Bandung Conference of 1955, which had represented a transnational and global coalition of the Third World anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist movements.

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33. Takaki, *Iron Cages*, 253.
34. Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Problem of Asia and Its Effect upon International Politics* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1900).
35. Mahan, *The Problem of Asia*, 131, 192.
36. Christopher L. Connery, “Ideologies of Land and Sea: Alfred Thayer Mahan, Carl Schmitt, and the Shaping of Global Myth Elements,” *boundary 2* 28, no. 2 (2001): 173–201, 183.
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39. Glenn Alcalay, “Pacific Island Responses to U.S. and French Hegemony,” *What Is in a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea*, 2nd ed. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 309–23.
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53. Cumings, "Rimspeak," 63.
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3

Residing in “South-Eastern Asia” of the Antebellum United States

Reverend David Abeel and the World Geography of American Print Evangelism and Commerce

Kendall Johnson

Every chaplain to seamen—every missionary to heathen—every travelling Christian—should carry a lending library with them.

—David Abeel, *Journal of a Residence in China, and the Neighboring Countries, from 1829 to 1833* (1834)

The field is the World.

—Matthew 13:38

The travel accounts of Reverend David Abeel (1804–1846) demonstrate an abiding transoceanic imaginary that inspired American missionaries in their pursuit of reading, writing, printing, and preaching in languages other than English.¹ One of the first two US missionaries to China, the twenty-five-year-old Abeel set out on from New York on October 14, 1829, with Reverend Elijah Bridgman to the port city of Canton (Guǎngzhōu; 廣州) in Southern China. After crossing the Atlantic and rounding Africa, Abeel spent weeks moving through the Indian Ocean without sight of land until spotting the “small island of St. Paul,” “the first stable object which changed for a moment [his] wearisome prospect.”² (The island of St. Paul is antipodal to the state of Colorado.) Abeel continued to the island of “Sandalwood” (contemporary Sunda in Indonesia), through the Ombay Passage into the Banda Sea, on through the Manippa Straits, past the Dampier Straits, and into the Pacific Ocean. Proceeding north to the Pewloo (Palau) Islands, his ship navigated around the Philippines to Formosa (contemporary Taiwan) and south to Macau, proceeding up the Pearl River to reach Canton on February 25, 1830. The voyage took four and a half months. Figure 3.1 breaks down into stages the itinerary of the first voyage, bridging locations in East and Southeast Asia that literary and cultural historians have not generally considered relevant to the cultural development of the United States before the Civil War.³

The word “residence” in *Journal of a Residence in China, and the Neighboring Countries, from 1829 to 1833* (1834) suggests immersive engagements with places and people as—according to the title page—this “Minister of the Reformed Dutch Church in North-America, and Missionary of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions [ABCFM]” moves and resides throughout “South-Eastern Asia.” The American Seamen’s Friends Society sponsored Abeel during his first year in Canton. For ten months he ministered to international sailors on the nearby island of Whampoa and studied Chinese with Rev. Robert Morrison of the London Missionary Society (LMS) and British East India Company. On Christmas Day 1830, he set out to preach throughout the region of China’s “neighboring countries.” Over the next two years he visited LMS centers of printing set up by Morrison, William Milne, and Samuel Dyer in the Straits Settlements, including Malacca (in contemporary Malaysia), Batavia (contemporary Jakarta, Indonesia), Penang (in contemporary Malaysia), and Singapore. Following the trail of the seemingly indefatigable German Rev. Karl Gützlaff, whom the Netherlands Missionary Society had sent to Java in 1826, Abeel also collaborated with LMS members Reverends Walter Medhurst and Jacob Tomlin, distributing translations of the Bible and spiritual tracts throughout what he calls “South-Eastern Asia,” from Java to Siam, Cochinchina (contemporary Vietnam), Cambodia, Burma, and Borneo.⁴ In August 1834 illness pushed him to return to the United States via Europe. He spent the next five years lecturing on his experience as he recuperated.

In February 1839, Abeel returned to Canton as the First Opium War (1839–1842) was getting started. During this second voyage, he continued to keep a journal, but never published it as a book; excerpts of it appeared in *The Chinese Repository* (published in Canton, Macau, and Hong Kong) and *Missionary Herald: Containing the Proceedings of the ABCFM with a View of Other Benevolent Operations* (published in Boston). During his second voyage, Abeel visited Borneo, Malacca, and Singapore before ending up in the port city of Amoy (Xiamen; 廈門) in Fujian Province (福建) in 1842 during the First Opium War. He worked there until his health failed, and he left China for the last time in 1844. He passed away in 1846 in Albany, New York, at forty-two years of age.

Beyond the movement of his physical body, what links the geographical terms “North America” and “South-Eastern Asia” in his narrative? Through printing, distributing texts, and preaching from them, Abeel and his fellow missionaries of the ABCFM strived to adapt “the Protestant vernacular tradition” to international print publication in languages other than English during the Second Great Awakening.⁵ The resulting print circuit reached in two directions—outward to the unconverted, and inward, back home to the church-going Christians of the early United States. After returning from his first voyage, Abeel reflected on the challenge of learning Chinese in *Journal*:

There is nothing in a missionary’s labor which [*sic*] tries his patience and power of application so much as these different and difficult languages. No effort of genius

can overcome the obstacles which [*sic*] he continually meets. It is true there is a talent for languages, which gives immense advantages to those who possess it, but the acquisition of the Chinese depends on a close imitation of writings, which can scarcely be said to be governed by any principles, and in which the idiom is totally opposite to any thing known or employed among western nations. . . . It is the untiring exertion required in mastering these difficulties, connected with the effects of a climate which [*sic*] proves unfavorable to close mental application, which has injured the health of the majority who have devoted themselves to this mission. This fact however, should not discourage any who feel it their duty to consecrate their lives to the salvation of these nations.⁶

The acquisition of Chinese was particularly challenging because of the various dialects with which Abeel had to contend—Guangdonghua (Cantonese) and Mandarin to start with, and later Fukienese, which he learned and used as he traveled northward, establishing residence up the coast near the port city of Amoy in 1842. For the ABCFM, it was not simply a matter of attaining a functional literacy, but rather of acquiring a degree of knowledge that enabled missionaries to write and to print Chinese characters. Furthermore, Chinese was not the only language that Abeel and his fellow missionaries aspired to use, but also Siamese (Thai) and Malay.

The early ABCFM missionaries knew that Christian doctrines were not the easiest concepts to communicate and translate into other languages. So, they yoked religion to instruction on practical matters, conveying putatively useful information that would capture an audience’s attention and eventually win Christian converts. In the epigraph to this essay Abeel advises every chaplain, seaman, heathen, and traveling Christian to carry with her or him a lending library. We can assume that it might include the Gospel of Matthew and other excerpts from the Bible, devotional biographies, and printed sermons. The library would also be stocked with pamphlets dedicated to “those branches of general literature” that are “most useful,” including the “history of other nations” and “the geography of other countries.”⁷ With this “useful” information, missionaries hoped to counter China’s claim to be the Middle Kingdom, positioned at the “centre, and well nigh the sum of the world—the focus of all intellectual and moral light” and receiving tribute from the world’s satellite barbaric peoples.⁸

The following chapter reads Abeel’s accounts of various residences for the attention he pays to the geography of languages in mapping out China and “South-Eastern Asia” for congregations reading in the United States. In *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (1998), Benedict Anderson ties the concept of “Southeast Asia” to its development as an area studies program in the United States after World War II.⁹ Anderson attributes the region’s prior lack of national cohesiveness to several factors such as the influence of “mottled imperialisms,” including the Portuguese, Dutch, British, French, and Japanese, all with overlaying claims and precarious dominions that rose and fell throughout the war-torn nineteenth century and early twentieth.¹⁰

Pervading Abeel's accounts of circulating through a zone of straits, islands, and coastal areas that later became "South-Eastern Asia" are the linguistic imprints of empires and languages exerting influence prior to the more recent mottled imperialisms that have shaped area studies. Emphasizing the dynamic and long-standing historical relationships between the local and regional languages, Sheldon Pollock proposes the phrase "cosmopolitan vernacular" in his essay of the same name. Observing that "vernacular" or local languages do not just emerge from particular places, he looks to the long social historical processes by which they "are made" through transregional practices of conversation, writing and print publication.¹¹ Considering the geographical reach of Sanskrit during a five hundred year period from AD 1000 to 1500, Pollock outlines transregional models of literary expression against which "vernacular intellectuals" reacted in developing and promoting their particular "local" languages, which in turn bore cosmopolitan relation to "smaller cultural spaces."¹² There is not room in this chapter to chart the full range of play between local and regional languages suggested by Abeel's account. However, an awareness of the broader geographical and historical currents in Southeast Asia equips us to appreciate his description of Chinese, Malay, and Arabic, raising the question: What do Abeel's descriptions of these geographical areas suggest about early American Christianity and the development of distinct national identity in the United States?

To begin answering this question this chapter considers the implications of Abeel's failure to win Christian converts during his series of evangelical residences. Abeel witnessed the commercial activity that led to the First Opium War (1839–1842) and the demise of the trading system centering on Canton in South China. Perhaps he sensed the growing unrest in the Chinese countryside that would culminate in the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864) as its leaders embraced another missionary's millennial urgency. By way of conclusion, I hope to extend the archive of early American geography through a brief consideration of Abeel's connection to Xú Jìyú's (徐繼畬; 1795–1873) ten-volume *Yíng huàn zhì lüè* (瀛環志略) or, *A General Survey of the Maritime Circuit, a Universal Geography* (1849). Xu was a high standing Mandarin official who collaborated with Abeel in Amoy after the Opium War. He mapped the world and the United States in ways that challenge the complementarity of Christianity and commerce—a complementarity that Abeel presumed and struggled to maintain. *A General Survey of the the Maritime Circuit* suggests a rich archive through which to understand Chinese reactions to early American national presence in "South-Eastern Asia."

The World Geography of Early American Faith

In reading of Abeel's travels, one is tempted to let the litany of place names stream by without paying much attention. But the ideal reader would have traced exactly where in the world the ministering Abeel was when he made his observations. His

account exemplifies an early national geographic imagination spanning the oceans of the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific and fueled by evangelical faith in Christianity and commerce. The account warms up if one recognizes in the sequence of places an imaginative force enabled by what Martin Brückner calls "geographical literacy" or the "internalization of geography as a kind of language."¹³

Brückner's *The Geographic Revolution in Early America: Maps, Literacy, and National Identity* (2006) examines the role that geography played in the training of reading and writing. His compelling account links text-based attention to the form of alphabetic characters with the rules of grammatical linkage through development of a "spatial imagination" by which young readers learned to orient themselves in relation to places both local and global; "in theory and practice the construction of the American subject was grounded in the textual experience of geography."¹⁴ By the end of the eighteenth century and after the American Revolution, the memorization of place names fostered a self-reflective curiosity about the geographical shape of the nation and a fascination with spaces that were local (related to the practice of surveying and commodifying land as property) and global (concerned with trans-continental points of reference that implied one's status as a civilized person in an imperial network of mercantile trade).

A key figure in Brückner's account is Reverend Jedidiah Morse, a prominent orthodox Calvinist minister of the Second Great Awakening whose writings show a keen interest not only in mapping the newly national ground but also in networks of commerce that laced the globe. Morse earned the reputation as "father of American geography" because his book *The American Geography; or, A View of the Present Situation of the United States of America* (1789) and his more popular primer *Geography Made Easy: Being an Abridgement of the American University Geography For the Use of Schools and Academies in the United States of America* (1784) influenced generations of young students. According to Brückner, Morse's mode of instruction extended the "visual pedagogy of the picture primer" by referring to particular states.¹⁵ His exercises in descriptive mapping referred primarily, but as we shall see not exclusively, to a "national map" that "functioned like a proleptic device, asserting the primary union while anticipating and containing local desire for self definition."¹⁶ The activity of learning to read reinforced the developing geography of the nation; by "sound[ing] aloud" particular "place names," those acquiring literacy became attuned to the "signaled spatial demands" that "invoked territorial rights and borderlines for both readers and listeners."¹⁷

Through this national logic of geographical literacy, Brückner adapts the dynamics of collective self-consciousness that Anderson explores in his influential *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983).¹⁸ Linking Morse's political stance as a Federalist to this promotion of geographical literacy, Brückner argues that as students learned to read they rehearsed the logic justifying ratification of the Constitution, configuring the particular States into a national whole. By submitting to the functions of grammatical construction

that governed words and phrases, readers learned to recognize meaningful relations between discrete places and to form politically meaningful visual assemblages. Abeel's account also suggests that the configuration of the national map was nested in a more general configuration of world geography including "South-Eastern Asia" and the Chinese city of Canton, a point to which I will return.

The global scale of Abeel's geographical imagination makes better national sense if we consider that Morse was a key factor in setting the worldwide ambitions of the ABCFM. On the one hand, Morse's patriotic fervor was rooted in convictions of faith as a member of the so-called "standing order" of congregational ministers, religious conservatives of a Calvinist tone whose Federalist ambitions were to build the republic on a moral foundation.¹⁹ Richard Moss goes as far as to describe Morse's *Geography* as a "a jeremiad surveying the state of the nation and calling Americans back to a vision of moral perfection and simplicity, a vision rooted in an image of New England and most specifically of Connecticut."²⁰ But, on the other hand, these roots in Connecticut and Massachusetts had global implications. To paraphrase the Gospel of Matthew (chapter 13, verse 38), the field of Morse's geographical sensibility included the world beyond national borders. Founded from Williams College in 1810, the ABCFM made their first forays in the Far East to Marathi, India, in 1813, and to Ceylon in 1817, and in the Far West to the Cherokee (in the state of Georgia), Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Dakota on the North American continent. ABCFM missionaries went to the Sandwich Islands (Hawai'i) in 1820, to Sumatra and Borneo in 1834, and to Micronesia (the Marshall and Caroline Islands) in 1843. Meanwhile, the Foreign Mission School (1817–1826) in Cornwall, Connecticut, educated Henry Obookiah (1792–1818) from Hawai'i, several students from China and Malaysia, and Elias Boudinot (1802–1839) from Cherokee Country.²¹

It was not enough to go these places. The goal was for missionaries to preach their experience as inspiration for Christian conversion. From the very beginning of the ABCFM, publications by and about missionaries such as Abeel addressed congregations wrestling to define themselves as Americans amidst sectional antagonisms of slavery's compromises and westward expansion. The title page of his book describes Abeel as both a missionary and "a minister of the Reformed Dutch Church in North-America," alluding to the US congregations in the North and South to which Abeel would return in 1834 after his first mission to China. One senses that Abeel reflects standard features of an American Protestant vernacular in revived form of the Second Great Awakening. His efforts have a millennial urgency. The world will soon end and judgment will be swift. Inspired by a disinterested benevolence he hopes to convert as many as possible to believing in the word of God before it is too late. This was a project both within national borders and beyond. Figures 3.2 and 3.3 are maps by Morse in which letters span across masses of land in assigning names to the continents. In relation to these figures, consider the sermon by Rev. Gardiner Spring in New York who outlined the textual terms of his congregation's global attention in "The Extent of the Missionary Enterprise":

The text represents this world as the field, where every thing [*sic*] is in progress for a great moral ingathering; and from the labors of which, neither God, angels, nor men will rest, until that eventful consummation, when he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. We occupy here and there an enclosure in this vast territory—a kingdom or nation—a few spots reclaimed from bareness, and clothed with beauty; while the wide field is for the most part grown over with thorns. And yet it is not one portion of the earth alone toward which the efforts and prayers of the friends of God and man are to be directed; it is to *the world*. I repeat it, it is to the *world*. This is the field, and nothing short of this. The field is the world.²²

The quote's symbolic economy of citing the Gospels of Mark and Matthew concentrates a profession of faith through exegesis of a biblical passage in which enclosure of the faithful figures civilized nations. The secular world becomes a field that yields the faithful as a crop to be harvested like wheat at the event of second judgment. The reaping ends secular life, transporting those harvested to a divine space beyond the secular referents of time and place. The allegory's specific geographical implications suggest both a worldwide Christian community and a distinctly Christian United States, standing enclosed in a vastly wide field of the globe's barren spiritual landscape. By repeating for emphasis the phrase "the field is the world," Rev. Spring borrows the language of national husbandry and property to inspire a spiritual mission of reclaiming and enclosing other parts of the globe as Christian territory. He appeals to his auditors' geographical imagination in supposing a vast field that "we" map and occupy through exercise of our faith. Abeel's *Journal* is itself a vehicle to motivate and inspire such extraterritorial missionary projections and investments of faith.

Appealing to the geographical imagination of persons sitting in a pew in Connecticut, Boston, or in New York, Abeel blends religious conviction with dreams of success born from commercial trade rather than homesteading. Although Abeel did not profit monetarily from his labors, he looked to the trading companies of Britain, Holland, and the United States as potential collaborators in spreading the word of God. He calls on the reader to recognize the places in his *Journal of a Residence* as potential missionary destinations by using the language of commerce to assert the feasibility of conversion:

It is, no doubt, judged by some advisable to defer missionary engagements, until commerce shall open an access to these barbarous regions, and prepare the way of the gospel; but even if the character and conduct of traders had this general tendency, how long shall we wait? Had there been any strong inducements to commercial enterprise, the advantages would not have been neglected until the present. And as it has been found that the influence of men from Christian countries, in pursuit of wealth, is generally prejudicial to the extension of the religion, whose principles they fail to exemplify; it is no doubt favorable that such a preliminary barrier has not been reared against the introduction of the truth.²³

Commercial traders seem to be the front line of advancing Christianity; their “character and conduct” is not perfect and they may need reminders of their duties as Christians, but Abeel also implies that good Christians potentially make excellent merchants. Reflecting on the history of Dutch missions in Batavia and Malacca, Abeel asserts that one of the “principle purposes” behind forming the Dutch East India Company (VOC) was the “propagation of Christianity.”²⁴ Considering the future of Timor, he draws direct analogy to the seventeenth-century colonization of North America: “The Dutch Church in these islands was planted nearly the time, when our forefathers colonized New Amsterdam.”²⁵ He then predicts that the Dutch missionaries from the Netherlands Society who arrived in 1821 at Coopang on the “south-west end of the island” are the hope of a “new era of Christian Missions.”²⁶

Abeel sees language as the key opening the door of the Middle Kingdom and its “neighboring countries” to Christianity and commerce. His impressions are shaped by the linguistic context of the Canton System in which Canton was the major hub of activity for commerce between China and the West. Centuries before Portugal’s arrival in the early 1500s during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), Canton had been a trading hub in the region. In mid-century (1557) the Portuguese were pushed out of Guangzhou and relegated to supervising an enclave at Macau, facing the South China Sea. Over the next centuries, Macau would become a key point of regulating trade up the Pearl River by East India Companies from England, France, Holland, Sweden, Denmark and others who sought the lucrative commerce in tea. After the fall of the Ming dynasty to the Qing (1644–1912) in the mid- to late 1600s, China became much less tolerant of Catholicism and in 1724 the Emperor Yǒngzhèng Dì (雍正帝) declared Christianity to be heterodox and banned its practice. In 1757, China further restricted trade with Europeans in what has become known as the Canton System of trade. The rules were clear. Western traders lived in a quarantined zone outside of the city’s walls. No Western women were allowed. Under penalty of death, the law prohibited teaching of Chinese to foreigners. In regard to commerce, European traders could only obtain tea in exchange for silver.

Missionaries and merchants bristled at the phrase “Middle Kingdom” for suggesting that the lucrative global traffic linking the ports of the world merely facilitated imperial tribute to China from barbarian peoples. Through instruction in geography and Christian faith, the missionaries hoped to convert the heathens of China and her “neighboring countries” into practicing the civilized principles of free trade. Nevertheless, recalling Morse’s adage that “Geography is a species [*sic*] of composition,” there are ways that China was indeed at the center of the missionaries’ senses of the world. Abeel’s regional categories of “South-Eastern Asia” and “China” (and to a lesser extent “North America”) pivot around Canton in the southern province of Guangdong, from where trade routes reached into the Pacific and across zones of competing imperial control throughout contemporary Indonesia, Thailand, and India.²⁷ Morse himself notes the importance of Canton in *Geography Made Easy* (1789), which by 1814 had gone through seventeen editions. In the

subheading called “Cities” in the section on “China,” he singles out Peking (Beijing), Nanking, and Canton, which he describes as “the only port to which Europeans are admitted is 20 miles in compass, contains 2,000,000 inhabitants, and often sees 5,000 trading vessels at a time, waiting to receive its rich commodities.”²⁸ Notice the absence of latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates. Morse situates Canton for his reader by designating its function as an international port and by evoking its position as the destination in a global trading network.

Amidst expensive wars in the eighteenth century, Britain found its coffers coming up short. The balance of power would shift in the late eighteenth century as the East India Company systematized the opium trade, auctioning opium in Bengal (Calcutta; Kolkata) to private traders who then smuggled it into China to reap financial reward through systems of finance reaching back to London. This imperial triangle (Bengal, Canton, London) dramatically reversed the flow of silver, and eventually China was losing massive amounts of the coveted specie.²⁹ Over the ensuing decades until the First Opium War (1839–1842), the trade in opium enabled Britain to extract more silver from the China.³⁰ There is not space here to explain the entire system or to detail the attempts by the Chinese to enforce the ban on opium traffic; recent accounts by Jacques Downs, Paul Van Dyke, James Fichter, John R. Haddad, and John D. Wong offer illuminating description and interpretation of a long-standing interest within fields of historical studies.³¹ David Abeel and his fellow ABCFM missionaries were regional eyewitnesses to the unfolding of tumultuous historical events.

As Abeel’s narrative draws to conclusion, he becomes more hyperbolic in promoting commerce. Abeel never visited Celebes (Sulawesi, Indonesia), the Philippine Islands, or Japan, but he continues his *Journal* by filling out the map, so to speak. He cites descriptions of the Philippines and the Loo Choo Islands (the Ryukyu or, in Japan, the Nansei Islands, which are northeast of Taiwan) culled from other missionary accounts and early issues of the *Chinese Repository* that fellow ABCFM missionaries Elijah Bridgman and Samuel Wells Williams edited from Canton.³² He writes:

The inquiry remains in reference to these interesting heathen, what shall be done,—what *ought* to be done for their eternal welfare? How shall these lovely islands be reduced to the dominion of Christ? Might not ships visit them—might not their objections to an honorable trade be annulled—ought we not to distribute freely among them the written word?—and who knows but that the living teacher might force himself upon them,—soon dissipate their groundless fears, and prove to them the advantages of his presence and influence. They must soon be annexed to the kingdom of Jesus; and it is high time that the children of the kingdom should attempt some plan for their immediate advantage. Ye merchantmen, who have found the pearl of great price, to another appeal must be made. When will you connect, with the system of missionary societies, missionary agents, and missionary presses, *missionary ships*?³³

It is worth emphasizing that as he conjured this “kingdom of Jesus,” the United States was itself in the midst of sectional conflicts that would eventually erupt into a devastating civil war when westward expansion wrecked constitutional compromises over slavery and Indian removal, and as a financial collapse loomed in 1837. Perhaps a mission to “South-Eastern Asia” redirected the anxiety about how to constitute a single national terrain in North America.

Controlling the Character of Faith and Commerce

To convert the world to Christianity and commerce, missionaries did more than learn to speak other languages. They learned to print in them. They strived to preach in them. Consider the goals staked out by Rev. Samuel Worcester who was pastor of the Tabernacle Church in Salem, Massachusetts, and the first corresponding secretary of the ABCFM.³⁴ (His nephew Samuel Worcester would later preach to the Cherokee; he is also the plaintiff in the third case of the Marshall Trilogy, *Worcester v. Georgia* of 1832.) In 1809, the elder Worcester praised the efforts of the LMS (established in 1795) by emphasizing the rapturous effect of translating the word of God:

Already have the heralds of salvation gone forth into the four quarters of the globe. Already have Missionary [*sic*] stations been established from the populous regions of the East to the dreary wilds of our own continent, and from the frozen climes of the North to the newly discovered islands of the Southern ocean. Already are the lively oracles of God translated, or translating, into the various languages of both Pagans and Mohammedans, and people of all nations and all lands, Hindoos and Mahrattas, Chinese and Persians, Turks and Tartars, Hottentots and Greenlanders, the inhabitants of the isles and the tribes of the wilderness, begin to hear men speaking to them, in their own tongues, the wonderful works of God. And already, in these different and heretofore discordant languages, do the praises of Immanuel begin to be uttered, from one end of the earth to the other, in the grateful and harmonious songs of salvation.³⁵

This goal of translating the “lively oracles of God” required the purchase and transportation of the press equipment necessary to print the volumes from centers in China and South Asia.³⁶ The missionaries then went into what they called “the field” to preach and to disseminate these tracts by hand. For Abeel the “discordant languages” he sought to harmonize in Christian “songs of salvation” were Chinese (in various dialects of Cantonese, Mandarin, and Fukienese), Malay, Siamese (contemporary Thai), and Arabic.

The restrictions of the Canton System meant that in 1807 the earliest LMS missionary Dr. Robert Morrison faced considerable challenges in printing Chinese texts in Canton or Macau. He nevertheless authored the first Cantonese/English dictionary while living in Canton and Macau. He also established printing headquarters in Malacca and Penang with William Milne and Samuel Dyer. Together

understanding of the language(s) in which they are appealing to their audience. To appreciate and understand his performance, if it is indeed a performance, we need to account not only for the overlay of commercial and missionary efforts and ensuing play of western languages—Dutch, English, and Portuguese—but also the local languages, including those to which Abeel refers as “tribal,” Malay, and the competing cosmopolitan languages of Arabic and Chinese. The “deranged Chinaman” seems to be using the book as a prop, consulting it as if it contains a transcendental meaning that he then renders into a nonsensically obscene “reading dialect” or pointed “colloquial” expression (whatever that exactly would be). He switches among various codes to mock the missionaries in their method of communication. The final sentence of Abeel’s passage—“Many tracts were distributed, and instructive sentiments expressed before we returned”—hangs clumsily in the passive voice. Half-heartedly Abeel tries to foreclose the significance of the anecdote, rehearsing his assertion that distributing texts in clear language devoid of flowery rhetoric communicates God’s word to any audience whose members are not deranged.

Missionaries such as Abeel did not convert a great number, but some of their readers did embrace the millennial urgency of their message. Abeel did not live to see the outbreak of the Taiping Rebellion (太平天國運動), which would rage for more than a decade (1850–1864) and claim the lives of over twenty million people.⁶⁵ Its leader Hong Xiuquan (洪秀全), a man disillusioned by his repeated failure to succeed in the scheme of imperial examinations, read tracts printed and disseminated by the American missionaries in Canton. Inspired by a dream, Hong declared himself to be the brother of Jesus. With a core of key collaborators he built a massive following, rising up against the Qing dynasty. It is difficult to define what it means to be “deranged” in relation to convictions of faith that accept seemingly apocalyptic scenarios as paving the way for righteous mortality that ensures salvation. Meanwhile, as the United States moved toward its own civil war, early American Christians were developing a sense of national consciousness by imagining relations to China, and “South-Eastern Asia”—relations that those now engaged in the study of early American print culture are beginning to appreciate fully by expanding the archive of early American writing to include the Pacific.

The World Geography of Xu Jiyu in the Wake of the Opium War

To gauge the legacy of Abeel’s evangelical geography, instead of to Hong, we might turn to the Mandarin Xú Jiyú (徐繼畬; 1795–1873) and the publication of his *Yíng huàn zhì lüè* (瀛環志略), or *General Survey of the Maritime Circuit, a Universal Geography* (1849), “compiled from many different sources, many of which are Western.”⁶⁶ Xu was a significant figure during the Opium War, with a short administrative stint in the southern province of Guangdong and a determined attempt to defend Amoy from the British, whose artillery proved overwhelming. From his time as a prefect there in the 1830s, Xu knew the area of Hsün-chou (Xunzhou; 潯

州) in the south western province of Kwansi (Guǎngxī; 廣西) where the Taiping Rebellion would begin in 1850; two years later, Xu would be removed from administrative duties and return to his home province of Shanxi (Shānxī; 山西) in the north where he would spend the rest of his life as a scholar, teaching and studying “the Han dynasty” and “local history and geography.”⁶⁷ When the Taiping Rebellion threatened to spread to what had become his homeland retreat, he collected taxes to fund military defenses and tried to integrate the use of maps into military planning.

In the years immediately prior to the Opium War, while Xu was climbing the administrative ladder of authority as a promising Mandarin, Abeel was in the United States where he related the first phase of his missionary residences, expounded on the difficulties of learning Chinese, and tried to restore his health. On his first voyage in 1830 he had described Lintin Island outside Macau as “the depot of smugglers, where the opium ships are moored, and whence this deathful drug, to the amount of many of millions of dollars annually, is conveyed throughout the empire.”⁶⁸ He returned to Canton just as war was getting underway. His alchemy of faith and commerce tended to rationalize the opium traffic and in a logistical sense his travels sometimes depended on it.⁶⁹ In the posthumously published *Memoir of the Reverend David Abeel, D.D.* (1848), Abeel’s nephew Rev. Williamson writes that Abeel regarded the “opium trade” as “fraught with ruinous consequences to the bodies and souls of the inhabitants of China.”⁷⁰ And yet Abeel “deemed the [Opium War] necessary to overcome the prejudices, and destroy the exclusive policy of these self-styled subjects of the ‘Son of Heaven.’”⁷¹ Williamson puts it this way: “He looked beyond the political questions; and saw in these difficulties, the providence of God working great results for good out of seeming evil.”⁷²

When Abeel went north to Amoy in February 1842, six months before the war ended, his residence there would have been against the Chinese law (i.e., the imperial decrees from Beijing). However, the prohibition on foreigners was at this point unenforceable in the now British-controlled territory. As a coastal port city, Amoy had a long history as a “Chinese Phoenicia” of trade; traffic included Western traders before the Canton quarantine in the seventeenth century, and sustained traffic thereafter with “the Philippines, Borneo, Malaya, Siam.”⁷³ Abeel settled on the island of “Kolongsoo” (Gǔlàngyǔ; 鼓浪嶼), separated from Amoy by a strip of water about one-half of a mile wide. In a journal entry for September 9, 1842, he describes learning of the truce between England and China:

Today a steamer brings us unexpected news of peace between Great Britain and China. The treaty quite equals our expectations. The opening of so many large cities to commerce and foreign intercourse, the appointment of consuls to whom alone their country men are to be amenable, the regulation of trade by a fixed and published tariff, the liberty so often effectually resisted of having ladies accompany their husbands are points gained which will promote the interest of the missionary quest as much as the merchant.⁷⁴

The Treaty of Nanking (1842) between China and Great Britain ended the First Opium War (1839–1842), opening four more treaty ports in Amoy (Xiàmén; 廈門), Foochowfoo (Fúzhōu; 福州), Ningpo (Níngbō; 寧波), and Shanghai (Shànghǎi; 上海) on the east coast of China. The treaty also ceded Hong Kong to the British and exacted twenty million silver dollars from China as punitive compensation for the opium destroyed in 1839. In the years that followed, the network of trade that developed out of the treaty ports would greatly curtail the world geographical standing of Canton.

After the war, Xu became the governor of Fujian province (Fújiàn; 福建), living in Fuzhou and visiting Amoy where he had long conversations with Abeel. Abeel describes him as:

the most inquisitive Chinese of a high rank I have yet met. After asking many questions about foreign countries, we proposed bringing an atlas and showing him the position and extent of the places which were most interesting to him. To this he gladly assented, and we have given him as much general information as we could compress into part of an afternoon. We promised to send him Christian books, and yesterday I made up a package for him containing the New Testament and other books.⁷⁵

In the wake of the Opium War, Xu did not become a Christian; Drake refers to him as a “scion of Confucian culture.”⁷⁶ Abeel describes the meeting and his own disappointment that Xu was more interested in maps than the Bible:

That he has gained considerable knowledge is very evident; but he is far more anxious to learn the state of the kingdoms of this world, than the truths of the kingdom of heaven. The maps he has constructed are by no means accurate. He aims more at obtaining general ideas of countries,—their size, political importance and commercial relations, especially with China,—then attracting the lines of latitude and longitude, and thus fixing the exact position of places. England, America and France have been subjected to a more careful investigation than the other countries of the world.⁷⁷

Xu embraced geography as a technology to reconceptualize the Middle Kingdom in anticipation of continued conflict with Western powers (Britain, France, Russia, and the United States). When describing the years of work assembling sources, translating them, taking notes, and designing his own maps, he mentions Abeel specifically: “In the year 1843, I was at Amoy on public duties, and there became acquainted with an American named Abeel, who was a scholar well acquainted with western knowledge, and able to converse in the dialect of Fuhkien.”⁷⁸ Xu notes that Abeel had with him “a book of maps beautifully drawn, but unhappily I did not know their characters; I had ten or more sheets of them copied, and then asked Abeel to translate them for me; I thus partially learned the names of each country, though I was so hurried I could not find time to learn them thoroughly.”⁷⁹ Abeel was but one source for Xu, but an important one.

Xu published *General Survey of the Maritime Circuit, a Universal Geography* (1848) from the city of “Fuchau” (Fúzhōu; 福州) while serving as the governor of the Fujian province. The ABCFM was very interested. In 1833, Samuel Wells Williams had arrived to take Abeel’s place in Canton and he worked for more than thirty years as a missionary, printer, and diplomat in Canton, Macau, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Beijing. In an April 1851 article for the monthly *Chinese Repository*, Williams outlines the ten volumes and forty-two maps of Xu’s *General Survey of the Maritime Circuit, a Universal Geography* (Yíng huàn zhì lüè; 瀛環志略, 1849); “such sketches as these” Williams advises “render this Geography more interesting and valuable to foreigners, for they may be regarded in some degree as an index of the state of feeling and knowledge among the magnates and literati of China.”⁸⁰

Of Xu’s ten volumes, the first three are on Asia, beginning with Luzon (the largest island of the contemporary Philippines), Japan, Taiwan, and the Lewchew Islands (Ryukyu Islands [Ryūkyū-shotō; 琉球諸島] or Nansei Islands [Nansei-shotō; 南西諸島]), and moving southward, down the Philippine archipelago and into Indonesia, and following with Annam, Siam, Burmah, and Laos. Xu stresses the long-standing “tributary relations of these states to China” and notes the many Chinese emigrants to these lands, “collecting there like wild ducks, buying lands, marrying and “never returning home.”⁸¹ Xu seemed particularly suspicious of overseas Chinese for their potential to collaborate with the Western powers that he regarded as a threat. Book 3 considers India and the “Mohammedan countries of Persian, Afghanistan, Bellochistan, Badakshan, Kokand, Tashkend, Balk, and other small states lying between Caspian and Himalaya.”⁸² Books 4 through 7 address Europe with special emphasis on the commercial and naval power of England. Book 8 is on Africa, and books 9 and 10 are on the Americas, the ninth focusing on the North American continent, and the tenth on “Mexico, the South American states, and the West Indian Islands.”⁸³

Throughout the geography, Xu offers a reappraisal of commerce for its ability to influence world affairs, especially when backed by naval and military capabilities. Williams quotes Xu: “The Occidentals are clever in traveling to remote parts, as their ships wander over the four seas, on reaching a place, they take out a pencil and there draw a map of it, so that their maps alone are worth of credit.”⁸⁴ Xu notes the progression of Western powers (Portugal, and proceeding to Holland, France, and England) in exercising a controlling influence over Southeast Asia, in space from Luzon, to Celebes, through the Indonesian straits and India. He takes special notice of the methods that Britain used to set up its commercial and maritime power through the system of opium trade:

The English bought a strip of land in Bengal large enough to build a house upon and open a shop, and in the year 1756 they subdued the kingdom of Bengal, and thence went on conquering all the kingdoms in India as a silkworm eats a leaf, for these nations were weak and scattered, and could not resist them; therefore the greater part of the states became subject to them.⁸⁵

As Drake outlines, Xu's view anticipated the Self-Strengthening movement that China would embrace after defeat in the Second Opium War (1856–1860). Drake continues: “Hsu [Xu] found that European trade was a phenomenon that had begun to undermine China's position vis-à-vis her tributary states.”⁸⁶ His *Survey* concluded that it was important for China to project a commercial influence outward and “hinted” that China had failed by not “[using] trade more effectively as a positive device for international manipulation.”⁸⁷ His efforts in the *Survey* actually hindered his career advancement as advisors in Peking held to a defensive posture in the face of the Taiping uprising, other concurrent rebellions, and further pressure from Western countries.

By way of conclusion, consider Xu's map of the Western hemisphere and how he positions and describes the United States within the configuration. The North American continent appears between two oceans, one to the left is the, “big foreign sea, that is, east foreign big sea” (大洋海即東洋大海; dà yáng hǎi jí dōng yáng dà hǎi), or the Pacific Ocean. The “big west foreign sea” (大西洋海; dà xī yáng hǎi), or Atlantic Ocean, is on the right. Identifying George Washington as a national hero, Xu saw great promise in the country's development after successfully rebelling against the United Kingdom. Williams translates and quotes Xu explaining that “before America was lost [by Britain], those who had no patrimony went across the sea to find sustenance, but afterwards as the northern colonies of America were cold and the land untellable, they therefore took the broad lands of India.”⁸⁸

Xu divides North America between Britain and the United States. Over the eastern states is a Chinese name for the United States: 米利堅即花旂二十六國 (Mǐlì jiān jí huā qí èr shí liù guó), which roughly translates as “America, that is, flower flag twenty six states,” although “guo,” can mean a country, people, state, or nation. In a written description Xu describes the relationship between the many states and central government as: “From among the commanders (*cheng-t'ung-ling*) [i.e., state governors] of each state, a general commander [i.e., the president] is recommended, and he alone governs the affairs of making treaties and engaging in war. Every state obeys his orders.”⁸⁹ With our historical hindsight, we can see in Xu's general description of the United States the sectional crises that would culminate in the Civil War (1861–1865). Samuel Wells Williams describes Xu's map: “On the north the country is bounded by English territory, on the south by Mexico and Texas, on the east by the Great Ocean.”⁹⁰ To the north, Xu notes the area of 英吉利屬地 (Yīngjílì shǔdì), or “English-controlled areas.” Designating countries to the south, he renders their names phonetically, as 得撒 (Dé sā) for Texas, and 墨西哥 (Mòxīgē) for Mexico. Central America and the Caribbean include: 危地馬拉 (Wēidimǎlā) or Guatemala; 古巴 (Gǔbā) or Cuba; 牙買加 (Yámǎijiā), or Jamaica; 海地 (Hǎidì), or Haiti; and, 波爾多黎各 (Bōěrdūolígè) for Puerto Rico. To the west, he divides up the continent between 英吉利未墾地 (Yīngjílì wèikēn dì) or “English-controlled/administrated land that is undeveloped” and 米利堅未墾地 (Mǐlì jiān wèikēn dì), “American-controlled/administrated land that is undeveloped.” Of the continent's “original

inhabitants” Xu writes that they “possess the five senses, the members and trunk of the body. They are similar to Chinese.”⁹¹ Of European conquests he writes:

[Columbus] arrived at the archipelagoes of the Caribbean Sea, and he [then] knew there was the spacious land of America. He first took hold of Colombia . . . [Later] the Spaniard Cortez learned of Mexico’s abundant wealth. He led troops to attack Mexico and snatched away the country. He then expanded to the south. The Spaniards gradually spread and settle in each country of western South America, like the gnawing of silkworms.⁹²

The missionary project of Abeel, Williams, and the ABCFM had hoped to Christianize through the lessons of useful geographical information. Xu rejected Christianity but embraced geography to offer a different interpretation that raised alarm over the strategic power of commerce to erode the authority of a place’s “original inhabitants,” equating the Chinese with those encountering European imperialisms in the Americas. But Xu is not proposing any sort of cultural analogy with the putative barbarians of another continent. Rather, he is warning that China needs to defend itself against Catholic and Protestant Christians who have snatched away countries in the name of God and the pursuit of commerce.

Notes

1. This chapter relies on the following writings by Abeel: “The Missionary Fortified Against Trials: An Address Delivered in Park Street Church, Sabbath Evening, November 23, 1834,” (1835), in *Christian Pamphlets, Volume 4* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Library, 2005), 1-1; “Extracts from the Journal of Mr. Abeel,” *Missionary Herald: Containing the Proceedings of the American Board of Foreign Mission* 39, no. 6 (June 1843): 251–55; 39.12 (December 1843): 449–52; 41, no. 3 (March 1844): 87–89; 41, no. 6 (June 1844): 183–87; *Journal of a Residence in China, and the Neighboring Countries from 1829 to 1833* (New York: Leavitt, Lord, & Co., 1834); *Memoir of the Rev. David Abeel, D.D. Late Missionary to China*, comp. and ed. G. R. Williamson (New York: Robert Carter, 58 Canal Street, 1848); and, extracts from his journals published in the *Chinese Repository*.
2. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 14.
3. For recent scholarship on the relationship of the United States to China and the Pacific, see John R. Eperjesi, *The Imperialist Imaginary: Visions of Asia and the Pacific in American Culture* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2005); John Rogers Haddad, *America’s First Adventure in China: Trade, Treaties, Opium and Salvation* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2013), and *The Romance of China: Excursions to China in U.S. Culture, 1776–1876* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Yunte Huang, *Transpacific Imaginations: History, Literature, Counterpoetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Malini Johar Scheuller, *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790–1890* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1998); John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of*

- American Culture, 1776–1882* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Rob Wilson, *Reimagining the American Pacific: From South Pacific to Bamboo Ridge and Beyond* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).
4. For Abeel’s collaboration with Gützlaff, see Jessie Gregory Lutz, *Opening China: Karl F. A. Gützlaff and Sino-Western Relations, 1827–1852* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008).
 5. David D. Hall, *Cultures of Print: Essays in the History of the Book* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 5.
 6. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 316.
 7. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 142.
 8. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 141.
 9. Benedict Anderson, *Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (London: Verso, 1998), 8–19.
 10. Anderson, *Spectre of Comparisons*, 4.
 11. Sheldon Pollock, “The Cosmopolitan Vernacular,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 1 (1998): 7.
 12. Pollock, “Cosmopolitan Vernacular,” 8.
 13. Martin Brückner, *The Geographic Revolution in Early America: Maps, Literacy, and National Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006), 12.
 14. Brückner, *Geographic Revolution*, 6.
 15. Brückner, *Geographic Revolution*, 107.
 16. Brückner, *Geographic Revolution*, 134.
 17. Brückner, *Geographic Revolution*, 106.
 18. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).
 19. Peter S. Field, *The Crisis of Standing Order: Clerical Intellectuals and Cultural Authority in Massachusetts 1780–1833* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998).
 20. Richard J. Moss, “Republicanism, Liberalism, and Identity: The Case of Jedidiah Morse,” *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 126 (1990): 209–36; as quoted from David N. Livingstone, “Geographical Inquiry, Rational Religion, and Moral Philosophy: Enlightenment Discourses on the Human Condition,” in *Geography and Enlightenment*, ed. David N. Livingstone and Charles W. J. Withers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 111.
 21. Emily Conroy-Krutz considers the varying assumptions of “Christian imperialism” (7) behind these ABCFM efforts in *Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).
 22. Rev. Gardiner Spring, “The Extent of the Missionary Enterprise,” Missionary Paper 21 in *Constitution, Laws and Regulations of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston: Printed by Crocker & Brewster, 1839), 1–24 in non-paginated collection.
 23. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 36–37.
 24. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 17.
 25. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 21.
 26. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 21.
 27. Quoted in Brückner, *Geographic Revolution*, 151 and 163.

28. Jedidiah Morse, *Geography Made Easy: Being an Abridgment of the Universal Geography to which are Prefixed Elements of Geography. For the Use of School and Academies in the United States of America*, 17th ed. (Boston: Thomas & Andrews, 1814), 327.
29. For the effect of opium on the balance of trade in regard to silver, see Frederic Wakeman Jr. "The Canton Trade and the Opium War," in *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 10, Late Ch'ing, 1800–1911, Part 1*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 163–212; Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (University of California Press, 1998); and, Carl A. Trocki, *Opium Empire and the Global Political Economy* (Routledge, 1999).
30. See Jacques M. Downs, *The Golden Ghetto: The American Commercial Community at Canton and the Shaping of American China Policy, 1784–1844* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1997).
31. In addition to the previously cited Downs and Haddad, see Paul Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700–1845* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005); James R. Fichter, *So Great a Profit: How the East Indies Trade Transformed Anglo-American Capitalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); and John D. Wong, *Global Trade in the Nineteenth Century: The House of Howqua and the Canton System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
32. On the efforts of Bridgman and Williams, see Kendall A. Johnson, "The Sacred Fount of the ABCFM," *Free Press, Free Trade, and Extraterritorial Printing in China*, *The New Middle Kingdom: China and the Early American Romance of Free Trade* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017): 132–69.
33. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 367.
34. Clifton Jackson Philips, *Protestant America and the Pagan World: First Half Century of the American Board of Foreign Missions, 1810–1860* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 240.
35. Samuel Worcester, *The Wisdom of God: A Sermon Delivered before the Massachusetts Missionary Society, at the Tenth Annual Meeting in Boston, May 30, 1809* (Boston: Printed by Joshua Cushing, 1809), 34. Samuel M. Worcester was the son of Reverend Samuel Worcester.
36. See Christopher A. Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876–1937* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2004); and, Xiantao Zhang, *The Origins of the Chinese Press: The Influence of the Protestant Missionary Press in Late Qing China* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).
37. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 86.
38. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 140–41.
39. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 79–80.
40. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 317.
41. In a different context, Eric Cheyfitz considers the power of controlling the relationship between the literal and figurative (i.e., the associative dynamics of metaphor) in the course of translation; see *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997). See also Lydia H. Liu, "The Question of Meaning-Value in the Political Economy of the Sign," in *Tokens of Exchange: The Problem of Translation in Global Circulations*, ed. Lydia H. Liu (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000): 13–44.
42. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 92.

43. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 331.
44. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 314.
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46. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 29.
47. Ronit Ricci, *Islam Translated: Literature, Conversion, and the Arabic Cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 19.
48. Ricci, *Islam Translated*, 14.
49. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 185–86.
50. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 186.
51. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 164.
52. Ricci, *Islam Translated*, 12.
53. Ricci, *Islam Translated*, 5.
54. Ricci, *Islam Translated*, 6.
55. For the systematic sense of Islamic civilization, see Robert Irwin, “The Emergence of the Islamic World System, 1000–1500,” in *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World*, ed. Francis Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 32–61; and Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).
56. Ricci, *Islam Translated*, 14.
57. Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 24.
58. Sucheta Mazumdar, “Locating China, Positioning America: Politics of Civilizational Model of World History,” in *From Orientalism to Postcolonialism: Asia, Europe and the Lineages of Difference*, ed. Sucheta Mazumdar, Vasant Kaiwar, and Thierry Labica (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 43–82.
59. Ricci, *Islam Translated*, 172.
60. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 163.
61. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 163.
62. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 179.
63. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 181.
64. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 85–92.
65. See Jonathan Spence, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996); and Yuan Chung Teng, “Reverend Issachar Jacox Roberts and the Taiping Rebellion,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 23, no. 1 (1963): 55–67.
66. See Rune Svarverud, *International Law as World Order in Late Imperial China: Translation, Reception and Discourse, 1847–1911* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 73; and Fred W. Drake, *China Charts the World Hsu Chi-Yü and his Geography of 1848* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).
67. Drake, *China Charts the World*, 17, 169–70.
68. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 46.
69. See Michael C. Lazich, “American Missionaries and the Opium Trade in the Nineteenth-Century China,” *Journal of World History* 17, no. 2 (June 2006): 197–223.
70. Abeel, *Memoir*, 180.
71. Abeel, *Memoir*, 180.
72. Abeel, *Memoir*, 180.
73. Drake, *China Charts the World*, 212.

74. Abeel, "Extracts from the Journal," *Missionary Herald* (June 1843): 254.
75. Abeel, "Notices of Amoy and Its inhabitants: Extracts from a Journal of Rev D. Abeel at Kúláng Sú," *Chinese Repository* 13, no. 5 (May 1844): 236.
76. Drake, *China Charts the World*, 1.
77. Samuel Wells Williams, "*The Ying Hwán Chí-lioh* [yíng huàn zhì lüè] 瀛環志略 or *General Survey of the Maritime Circuit, a Universal Geography by His Excellency Sù Ki-yü* [Xú Jiyú; 徐繼畬] of Wútái in Shansi, the Present Lieutenant-governor of Fuhkien. In 10 books, Fuhchau, 1848," *Chinese Repository* 20, no. 4 (April 1851): 170.
78. Williams, "*The Ying Hwán Chí-lioh*," 171.
79. Williams, "*The Ying Hwán Chí-lioh*," 171.
80. Williams, "*The Ying Hwán Chí-lioh*," 187.
81. Williams, "*The Ying Hwán Chí-lioh*," 179.
82. Williams, "*The Ying Hwán Chí-lioh*," 180.
83. Williams, "*The Ying Hwán Chí-lioh*," 190.
84. Williams, "*The Ying Hwán Chí-lioh*," 171.
85. Williams, "*The Ying Hwán Chí-lioh*," 184.
86. Drake, *China Charts the World*, 97.
87. Drake, *China Charts the World*, 97.
88. Williams, "*The Ying Hwán Chí-lioh*," 184.
89. Drake, *China Charts the World*, 159. Drake uses italics to echo Xu's method of stressing certain passages by "placing a series of circles beside the characters" (61).
90. Williams, "*The Ying Hwán Chí-lioh*," 187.
91. Drake, *China Charts the World*, 155.
92. Drake, *China Charts the World*, 158.

Recalling Oceanic Communities

*The Transnational Theater of John Kneubuhl and Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl**

Otto Heim

I

Much work by scholars, artists, and activists in the past few decades has reclaimed and rearticulated Oceania as the repository of a spatial imaginary that can offer a model of globality predating and coexisting with that based on the worldwide dominance of capital. What started as “experimental archaeology,”¹ with the first round-trip voyage between Hawai‘i and Tahiti by the replica Polynesian canoe *Hokule‘a* in 1976, led to a revival of interest in traditional navigation and provided evidence for the view that long-distance travel in all directions across the Pacific by non-instrument methods of navigation, as baffling as it seemed to European explorers, was not only possible but common in premodern times. Indeed, as John Terrell wrote in his study of the variations in language, customs, and human biology in the Pacific Islands in 1986, “we should guard against thinking that island colonization was necessarily an uncommon event in the past: something that happened only once or twice during the prehistory of each island found inhabited at the time of European discovery.”² Instead, the seemingly inexplicable patterns of similarity across great distances and difference among close neighbors found in the Pacific should, according to Terrell, be viewed as “a function of those ongoing kinds of events we speak of as the comings and goings of people.”³ The practical challenge to long-held theories about the isolated lives of native islanders was programmatically summed up by the late Epele Hau‘ofa in his influential 1993 essay, “Our Sea of Islands.”⁴ Announcing a paradigmatic change in perspective, Hau‘ofa rejected both the Eurocentric view of the Pacific as “islands in a far sea,”⁵ too small and too isolated to sustain a rich life, and predominant views of indigenous cultures, popular among academics as well as indigenous elites, that either saw these cultures as altogether primitive or paid undue attention to the practices and paraphernalia associated with chiefly status while overlooking the lives of common people. Against this view, he proposed a vision of Oceania as a “sea of islands,”⁶ held together by long-established networks

of trade, travel, and kinship, which continued to thrive in the everyday lives of ordinary people, both in the islands and in the countries along the Pacific Rim.

Hau'ofa's celebration of Pacific Islanders as "ocean peoples"⁷ inspired new and revisionist accounts and discussions of islanders' negotiation of mobility and settlement in the light of reclaimed indigenous epistemologies. Writing about Chuukese travelers, for instance, Joakim Peter has interpreted contemporary migrations of Micronesians in pursuit of medical services in the US and its Pacific territories as following the principles of traditional travel to maintain the "strong clan connections and trade partnerships [necessary] for basic life support,"⁸ guided by a concept of space that is "not just physical [but] fluid and mobile."⁹ David Welchman Gegeo, re-envisioning the concept of place in the Pacific, has explained that in the epistemology of the Kwara'ae on Malaita in the Solomon Islands place evokes a complex sense of source grounded in a specific location and integrating notions of place of origin, genealogy, right of access, social standing, rhetorical competency, cultural knowledge, kinship obligations, world view, and a learning model.¹⁰ Against the "notion that because [Pacific Islanders] are away from place [they] are somehow contaminated and can no longer claim [their] Indigenoussness or Nativeness," Gegeo maintains that this concept of place is "portable" and can be stretched to encompass new situations, without therefore relinquishing its home in a particular physical and cultural location.¹¹ In a similar vein, Teresia K. Teaiwa has questioned the applicability of the concept of diaspora in understanding Pacific Islanders' dwelling in distance. Quoting James Clifford's description of diaspora discourse, she has argued that "the Native in Oceania can articulate forms of community consciousness and solidarity that maintain identifications outside the national space/time border to live inside, with a difference, too."¹²

I would like to follow this suggestion that Oceanic experiences and projections of space can sustain forms of community consciousness that extend or transcend national frameworks in ways comparable to, but distinct from, experiences of globality such as diaspora. Keeping in mind that communities are people living together on limited resources, land in particular, how do Oceanic histories equip people to live together in crowded places in a world where communities may not have much in common?

Studies of customary land tenure systems in the Pacific can give us an idea of the connection between community consciousness and Oceanic environments. According to R. Gerard Ward, "[a]ll land tenure arrangements were flexible and pragmatic."¹³ They were focused on rights of access and use rather than property, similar in some ways to commons. But Pacific Island tenures were most remarkable for being highly differentiated and dynamic, capable of recognizing a great variety of overlapping and intersecting claims. As Ron Crocombe notes, "[r]ights to land were in all cases multiple, conditional and negotiable."¹⁴ Any particular area would typically accommodate several different rights, distributed among different parties. Conversely, any one party typically held rights in various sites, which might

be “scattered throughout [an] island or even across several islands,” and “plots were often interspersed among those of other households.”¹⁵ Water rights were not distinguished in principle from land tenures but were even “more varied,” according to Crocombe, who points out that the

marine tenures [of Polynesians and Micronesians] were among the world’s most complex, and included different categories of rights (to reefs, shoals, passages, swamps etc) being held by communities, descent groups and individuals; rights to use of surface waters being differentiated from those of bottom waters; rights to particular fish being separate from those of other fish and from the waters they swam in; and sometimes seasonal changes in rights.¹⁶

In addition, rights “transferred through the dynamic interaction of multiple principles over time.”¹⁷ The intricacy of these arrangements yielded a spatial imaginary that geographer Joël Bonnemaïson describes as “a complex network, a flexible and reticulated system of places and roads of alliance, weaving nexus upon nexus around various places of confluence, which themselves are connected with spatial configurations farther away.”¹⁸

Such a complex, open and dynamic articulation of space could not be abstracted from time and, as Crocombe observes, “[w]ithout writing or mapping, rights and boundaries relied on memory.”¹⁹ A striking example of this can be found in the classic Māori ethnography by Makereti (also known as Whakarewarea tourist guide Maggie Papakura), *The Old-Time Maori*, first published in 1938. Refuting claims that the economy of the Māori was poor and insecure because they had “no idea of concentrating their industry,”²⁰ Makereti lists on three pages more than one hundred locations of sweet potato cultivations that belonged to her people, which were distributed over an area ranging “from two to fifteen miles away” from where people usually slept and were connected by “very narrow tracks leading in all directions to the various grounds.”²¹ Instead of suggesting that such a multifarious conception of space could not be mapped, it is perhaps more appropriate to say that it stretches the concept of a map from a two-dimensional drawing to a four-dimensional mnemonic performance. “Sea routes were mapped on chants,” Epeli Hau’ofa explains in “Pasts to Remember,” and “natural landscapes [were] maps of movements, pauses, and more movements.”²²

Colonialism did not destroy this worldview or the practices that sustained it, but it suppressed them and caused them to fall into abeyance or become casual. As Donald Denoon notes, “[w]herever a colonial economy was established, old maritime networks either lapsed or shrank.”²³ Colonial administrations’ priority was to open access for foreign investment, and consequently close paths for the development of indigenous ventures. Except in larger settler colonies like New Zealand and Hawai’i (and military bases like Guam), where the bulk of land and water rights were alienated, traditional land tenure systems were not generally converted into Western property regimes, but in many places they became rigid, as

rights were fixed and reduced to (individual) entitlements based on birth, leading to ever smaller apportionments as indigenous populations recovered from the decline suffered during earlier phases of colonization.²⁴ Decolonization, as uneven as it has been throughout the Pacific, has tended to exacerbate such fragmentation further by consolidating arbitrarily drawn colonial boundaries as borders of newly formed nation states and territories.²⁵

Where does that leave Oceanic communities today? What does it mean for a customarily open, fluid, and mobile consciousness of space to make its home in a world structured by the blueprints of Western capitalism? According to Hau'ofa, the economic globalization since the Second World War has had “a liberating effect on the lives of ordinary people in Oceania”:

The new economic reality made nonsense of artificial boundaries, enabling the people to shake off their confinement. They have since moved, by the tens of thousands, doing what their ancestors did in earlier times: enlarging their world, as they go, on a scale not possible before.²⁶

Such optimism perhaps understates the extent to which economic globalization is continuous with colonialism and has succeeded in instrumentalizing nation-states in the interest of capital flows while undermining their ability to protect the communities they are supposed to represent. While the renewed mobility of Pacific Islanders may be a testimony to the resilience of Oceanic cultures and community consciousness, the motive for migration in many cases has been a stagnation or deterioration in the life on islands. Even the extraordinary mobility of Samoans, for instance, which, according to Ron Crocombe, has led to “three times as many American Samoans liv[ing] in the USA as in American Samoa [and] more Samoans liv[ing] in New Zealand, Australia, USA and beyond than at home,”²⁷ is a result of a colonial history that continues to separate the archipelago into two unequal halves, one an independent country, the other an American colony, with “most Samoan extended families (*aiga*) hav[ing] branches on both sides.”²⁸ According to Cluny Macpherson, the large-scale migration of Samoans to New Zealand since the 1960s was motivated by a combination of population growth, economic decline, and ecological devastation.²⁹ In the ensuing “transnationalization of Samoan society” strong ties between the Samoan islands and the rim-based communities were preserved, with the center of cultural influence gradually shifting from the former to the latter.³⁰

In many other situations, the circumstances of migration are probably even harsher. As David Gegeo notes, while Malaitans’ migrations have not weakened their sense of indigeneity, their “increased participation in international diaspora is not of these Islanders’ own choosing, but is born of social catastrophe,”³¹ notably overpopulation and a hardening of ethnic conflict. According to Joakim Peter, cuts in American funding to the Chuuk State hospital following the formation of the Compact of Free Association and the “ravages of chronic illness in Chuuk on the

rise” have driven these Islanders in the tens of thousands to Guam, Hawai‘i and the mainland US in search of medical services.³² And as Trisha Watson points out, the dismantling of land-based communities followed by an escalation of real estate prices has forced Hawaiian families out of their homes to take up residence in parks and on beaches along the leeward coast of O‘ahu.³³

If the community consciousness at work in these tactics of survival is not merely confined to a subaltern position in a globalizing world, how can it challenge dominant political identifications and perhaps even guide action in institutions and organizations purporting to represent decolonized imagined communities? Given its ability to infiltrate the structures of a global economy, how might an Oceanic orientation stir the world-making consciousness of communities flung together by forces of globalization? What difference does it make to propose the Ocean as the name of a political identification, as Hau‘ofa does in “Our Sea of Islands,” declaring “Oceania is us. We are the sea, we are the ocean”?³⁴ What effort is required to activate the critical, perhaps transformative potential of such a metaphor, seeing how easily it seems to be made amenable to a free market rhetoric of resource accessibility, commodity circulation and capital flows?

For one thing, “we are the ocean” can be read as acknowledging the ocean as constitutive of identity in an ecological sense, an idea that Hau‘ofa elaborates in the essay, “The Ocean in Us.”³⁵ In this perspective, “we” can encompass a universally human, planetary identity, expressed in the epigraph from Teresia Teaiwa: “We sweat and cry salt water, so we know that the ocean is really in our blood.”³⁶ In this all-inclusive sense, the ocean is acknowledged as the foundation of the atmosphere sustaining all terrestrial life (as well as its origin), an identity we all have a stake in and from which emerge regionally, if not globally, shared heritages that connect settlements to histories of oceanic travel, an observation that allows Hau‘ofa to invoke Derek Walcott’s metaphor of the sea as history in this context.³⁷ This global historical perspective leads over to a second sense of “we are the ocean,” in which the ocean can designate a political identification analogous to other imagined communities, as is indicated by its allegorization in the mother figure of Oceania. As such, Hau‘ofa emphasizes the inclusiveness of this community: “This mother has a big heart, though; she adopts anyone who loves her.”³⁸ And he makes it clear that inclusiveness does not presuppose identity among “ocean peoples” but interdependence³⁹ and the ability to negotiate and contest boundaries.⁴⁰ Drawing attention to Oceanians’ multiple affiliations both in the island world and beyond, he stresses that “anyone who has lived in our region and is committed to Oceania is an Oceanian.”⁴¹

As Vilsoni Hereniko suggests, such inclusiveness may be more easily claimed than sustained: “The sea of Oceania may be vast, but no one I know is fighting for a piece of the ocean to build a house on. Instead, everyone wants a plot of land they can call their own.”⁴² Yet the negotiation between interdependent openness and bounded inclusiveness is perhaps the major challenge that the island world of Oceania offers to a rethinking of community. Hau‘ofa’s casually invoked (Pacific

Rim) metaphor of a doughnut seems useful here, for while he rightly rejects the “notion that Oceania is the hole in the doughnut,”⁴³ he nevertheless remains concerned to draw a circle around Oceania, which not only excludes the continental rim but also the Asian islands of Japan, the Philippines, and Indonesia.⁴⁴ The challenge then may be to see in the circle not just the image of a community that finds strength in the size of its circumference, but—perhaps by substituting the image of an atoll or a lei for the doughnut—one that creates sustenance from the void. From this point of view, the idea of an Oceanic community calls for a reinterpretation of metaphors around which people rally, effecting a reorientation by disclosing different genealogies to national and transnational feelings of belonging.

Perhaps most importantly, such a reorientation involves a reinterpretation of metaphors of genealogy themselves. Indeed, if despite prevailing winds of necessity Pacific communities have not been reduced to conditions of sameness and isolation, this also demonstrates the resilience of an understanding of genealogy that not only encompasses relations of reproduction and production, but equally importantly and perhaps more centrally acknowledges what Hannah Arendt has described as an “intangible . . . web of human relationships” sustained through speech and action.⁴⁵ Arendt thus distinguishes action (and speech) from labor and work among human activities and associates it with the empowering togetherness of community. Speech and action give rise to what Arendt calls a “space of appearance,” a space that “can only be actualized but never fully materialized”⁴⁶ and which depends for its continued existence on the power of remembrance and sustained togetherness. When these lapse, people’s lives fall back upon realms essentially governed by necessity and utility.

Although Arendt, writing in the 1950s, was concerned with the diminished conditions for community in Western societies, her description of community as a potential space of appearance actualized through action and speech resonates with expressions of genealogy and community that one finds quite commonly in Pacific Island writing. I’m thinking, for instance, of what in Māori is referred to as *te āo mārama* or the world of light, a phrase that served as the title of several anthologies of Māori writing in the 1980s and 1990s; or the Samoan concept *va*, which Albert Wendt describes as “the Space-Between-All-Things which defines us” and also associates with genealogies: “The space between us is not empty; it forms relationships. Genealogies, *gafa*, convey the same thing.”⁴⁷ A similar idea is conveyed in the image of the canoe and the art of navigation and the cultivation of relationships associated with it, but also in the Hawaiian art of the hula as a celebration of the space of appearance in chant and dance, showing forth an intangible web of relationships encompassing past and present. And the recognition of community as a space of appearance sustained through remembrance in speech and action also seems to account for the centrality of the image (and activity) of breathing in Oceanic concepts of knowledge and creativity.⁴⁸ Images and arts such as these remind us that genealogy, and with it community, is as much a matter of open articulation as of

closed bloodlines, expressing not so much an assumption of identity as an acknowledgment of difference, less a preoccupation with selfhood than a reckoning with the presence and precedence of others.

II

The play-writing of John Kneubuhl and Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl is exemplarily committed to nurturing such a space of appearance as a condition for community and especially to stirring the remembrance that keeps this space alive and recognizes its transnational Oceanic foundation. The two writers' lives themselves embody the open and far-flung genealogies characteristic of Oceania. Born in American Samoa in 1920 to a Samoan mother and an American father, John Kneubuhl was, in his own words, "the world's greatest Swiss/Welsh/Samoan playwright."⁴⁹ He was sent to secondary school in Hawai'i and continued to Yale University in 1938, where his talent for theatre was recognized and nurtured by teachers like Walter Prichard Eaton and Thornton Wilder.⁵⁰ In 1946 he returned to Honolulu and became associate director at the Honolulu Community Theatre, winning acclaim both for his own plays and for his adaptations of Broadway plays. His plays were noted for their innovation, specifically in focusing on Hawaiian themes and in bringing Hawaiian Pidgin to the stage. Shortly after writing and directing his first movie, *Damien*, in 1950, he was called to Hollywood and worked the next eighteen years as a highly successful screenwriter, writing episodes for many popular TV series of the fifties and sixties, including *Adventures in Paradise*, *Hawaii Five-O*, *Star Trek*, and *The Wild, Wild West*.⁵¹ In 1968, he turned his back on Hollywood and returned to Oceania, devoting himself to the study of Samoan and Polynesian culture and traditions, and teaching in American Samoa, Tonga, and Hawai'i. During these years, he also returned to play-writing and toward the end of his life worked on the publication of his last three plays, the only ones to be published so far, which appeared in 1997, five years after his death, under the title *Think of a Garden and Other Plays*.

Born in Hawai'i, Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl is the daughter of John Kneubuhl's brother while "[h]er mother's side is English, Irish, and Hawaiian."⁵² With a degree in Hawaiian cultural studies and psychology and an MA in drama and theatre from the University of Hawai'i, she has long been involved in the preservation and teaching of Hawai'i's history and heritage. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, she worked as coordinator of educational programmes and curator of education at the Hawai'i Mission Houses Museum and as education specialist at the Judiciary History Center in Honolulu. In 1993, she created the script for a three-day historical pageant, *January, 1893*, commemorating the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893.⁵³ A recipient of the Hawai'i Award for Literature, the state's highest literary honor, she is currently the writer and co-producer for the television series *Biography Hawai'i* and has recently also published three mystery novels set in 1930s Honolulu. Since the mid-1980s, she has written twelve plays, some of which "deal with Samoa, where

A *Play* may be considered the “most ‘ Samoan ’” of the three plays given its confident reliance on the conventions of the *fale ituu*.⁷⁴ Seen in this light, the sequence of the three plays and its orientation thus can be said to lead from a diasporic vision of a lost Samoan community to a Samoan vision of a transnational community.

III

Victoria Kneubuhl’s concern with memory work is evident in her long involvement in the teaching, documentation, and representation of Hawaiian history. Interested above all in the interaction between the life of history and the lives of people, her work as a writer brings historical research based on archival records into the realm of lived experience, in living history programs at museums, TV documentaries, and reenactments of history such as the Mai Poina Walking Tours held in the week of Queen Lili’uokalani’s birthday in September, commemorating events leading up to the overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy in 1893 (and continuing the remembrance staged in the centennial pageant, *January, 1893*). Kneubuhl’s work in this area highlights the role of memory in Hawaiian politics, not only in relation to the ahistorical image production of the tourist industry, but more importantly also in relation to the Hawaiian sovereignty movement and the legacy of the Hawaiian Kingdom, which, as Jonathan Osorio reminds us, “was a multiethnic constitutional monarchy that treated with dozens of nations, and whose laws, at least until 1887, acknowledged that citizenship and civil rights were not related in any way to race.”⁷⁵ In this context, Kneubuhl’s dramatic work exposes the basis of community in cross-cultural relationships whose constitutive role is more easily forgotten than remembered. To do so, her plays often invoke representational conventions of museum displays in order to disclose what could be called the spectral life of memory, the largely invisible because mostly unrecalled trace of past actions in the present. Exposing and mobilizing what Svetlana Alpers calls the “museum effect,” engaging visual interest in things on display,⁷⁶ Kneubuhl’s plays direct attention from an apprehension of loss toward an acknowledgment of the intangible, what cannot be possessed in the first place, the mostly unseen life of the past (ours and others’) that surrounds and guides the life we call our own. This cannot be lost, only forgotten, and therefore does not call to be restored in order to be acknowledged, but to be remembered. Set in a space where museum and theatre meet, the plays make visible such memory work and invite reflection on its role in the life of communities as diverse as Hawai’i, by showing forth the life that has left us the material and discursive remnants of the past.

The Conversion of Ka’ahumanu, the first play in *Hawai’i Nei*, questions the perception of loss already in the choice of its subject: Ka’ahumanu, the wife of Kamehameha I, who after his death in 1819 was a driving force behind the abolition of the *kapu* system of sacred laws and the destruction of the temples of the Hawaiian gods shortly before the arrival of the first American Protestant missionaries in

1820. Among the first to convert to Christianity, Ka'ahumanu's most controversial act was the removal of ancestral remains from their burial places and the public exposure and burning of the bones of former chiefs.⁷⁷ Although Kneubuhl shows her disapproval of this in her later play, *Ola Nā Iwi*, in *The Conversion* she represents Ka'ahumanu sympathetically, refraining from judging her from either a past or present perspective. Instead, the play in a biographical vein focuses on her predicament as a powerful woman in a time when tradition seemed to offer little help to people suffering under imported illnesses and the ravages of the sandalwood trade.

The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu emerged from the living history programs Kneubuhl directed at the Mission Houses Museum⁷⁸ and its stage set and dramatic structure recreate a museum setting and mobilize the museum effect. Thus the set is composed of three distinct interiors that resemble spaces for life group displays or living history performances in a museum: the Mission House, Ka'ahumanu's House, and Hannah's House, arranged around a central Playing Area. As the action of the play unfolds, the characters' movements within and between the designated locations in which history would place them are interwoven with movements in and out of the empty Playing Area in the center of the stage, crossing representational thresholds and emphasizing visual relations in a form of double exposure that is also a source of comedy. The play begins by foregrounding the museum effect: in Scene 6 of Act 1, first the missionary women, Sybil Bingham and Lucy Thurston, stare at the audience and share their first impressions (of shock) at seeing the naked Hawaiians; then they freeze and themselves become the objects of visual interest to the Hawaiians, Hannah and Pali, who are mystified by their clothing. The scene thus encourages a reflection on the agency of looking and its causal relationship with the foundation of identities, as well as the historical connections between the museum effect and other ways of looking, including the audience's. This exchange of looks forms the background to the first conversations between missionaries and Hawaiians, which end with the missionaries' suggestion to "talk a little more" later so as to "come to know each other's ways."⁷⁹ This movement of attention from looking to talking as modes of knowing initiates the action of the play, which will repeatedly and insistently expose how ways of looking inform ways of talking and how ways of talking may transform ways of looking by guiding vision toward the unseen. The object of this altered vision is the human body, which from being seen as a visible sign of cultural difference increasingly comes into view in its very resistance to the penetration of the gaze, hinted at already in the first encounter by the different preoccupation of both missionaries and Hawaiians with clothing.

In the course of the play, the audience witnesses the misunderstandings and confrontations between the missionaries and the Hawaiians as well as the gradual transformation of their attitudes from rejection and hostility to acceptance and mutual care, as the characters' ways of looking at each other are changed in response to what they learn of each other's inner lives, specifically their suffering from abuse, illness and pain. This transformation also concerns the spectators whose associative

memory is invoked as they are led to recall and re-view earlier scenes and to view later ones with what they have heard in mind. As a result, the characters are gradually released from their museum setting and come to address the spectators directly, culminating in a sequence of scenes in which the characters' inner lives and memories are repeatedly disclosed in monologues. By engaging the audience primarily as listeners, these scenes shift attention from the visual to the aural; yet the persistent concern with bodily conditions of illness, suffering and pain in the spoken words may in turn prompt us to look again at what we see on stage, where the bodies of the characters are again emphatically placed before our eyes, often alone in the empty Playing Area and highlighted by a single spot. Thus isolated from their historical surroundings and even the dramatic context, we now see them in their space of appearance, not as the visible signs of cultural or personal identities and differences embodied in them, but simply as the material shapes of singular lives that remain essentially unseen but are disclosed to us in words in the form of memories and feelings.

This exposure of an inner life leads us back to the museum, for many of these monologues can be traced to archival records and biographical documents that Kneubuhl's play visibly draws on. In doing so, however, she reminds us of the essentially fragmentary nature of such records, as indeed of all remains from the past, inasmuch as they have been detached from the people to whose lives they belonged. The wholeness of these lives cannot be restored by any narrative but can only be remembered, and *The Conversion of Ka'āhumanu* shows the active role this memory plays in the visual experience of everyday life whenever we are reminded of and respond to the unseen cares, choices, and experiences that have gone into the world we see around us.

Emmalehua, the second play in Victoria Kneubuhl's trilogy, dramatizes the invisible life of the past by focusing on the hula, visible everywhere in the tourist environment of Hawai'i but not often seen in its integral role in the life of a community. The play is set in Honolulu in 1951 in the postwar boom during which the Americanization of Hawai'i as a tourist paradise was seemingly completed and came to be embodied, as Jane Desmond points out, in the ubiquitous image of "the dancing 'hula girl.'"⁸⁰ Kneubuhl engages the commodification of the hula in order to again question the perception of loss and, as in *The Conversion of Ka'āhumanu*, to reinterpret loss in terms of cultural memory and its effects. The stage set already points toward such a revision: bare and black, it seems to be designed in explicit contrast to the visual saturation of the tourist world outside. As such, it can be seen as a representation of cultural deprivation, an impoverished inner life as a result of the commercialization of culture. Yet as a stage set, it immediately challenges such a perception and the association of visibility with cultural vitality, as the empty stage emphatically directs attention to where nothing can be seen, in order to visualize the role of what remains unseen in the visible production of the present. In this way,

Emmalehua, too, mobilizes the museum effect and encourages reflection on “how we look and what we see,”⁸¹ here focused on the image of a hula show.

Like the empty Playing Area in *The Conversion*, the bare stage in *Emmalehua* serves as a liminal space of metaphorical transformations through which a kind of memory work proceeds that involves sorting out and rearticulating overlapping levels of experience. In this sense, the circular empty stage also indicates a ritual space, as does the presence of a chorus in several scenes of the play. This memory work can be distinguished at various levels and also involves the audience, who have to call on their imagination in order to work out what is happening on a stage whose spatial reference changes, with almost no visual cues apart from lighting, from the representation of the protagonist’s dream visions to a party in her living room, a board room meeting, an outdoor scene, and a stage for a hula performance. In the play itself, the memory work operates at three levels, literal, figurative, and performative. The literal story is that of Emma who was adopted by her grandmother when she was seven to be initiated to the traditional art of the hula and placed under a *kapu* for five years, which means that she had to spend her childhood apart from others and follow strict rules. Because her grandmother died before she could lift the *kapu*, Emma, who is now in her twenties, has been living in a kind of limbo, plagued by nightmares and trying to forget what she was taught. In the course of the play, in response to critically fortuitous incidents—mainly conflicts with her engineer husband and her hula-dancing half-sister and attraction to a Native American colleague of her husband—she comes to listen to her memories until they finally release her. In accordance with the representational conventions of hula shows, Emma’s story can also be viewed figuratively as an allegory of Hawaiian culture, but whereas tourist shows, according to Desmond, tend to dehistoricize culture, Kneubuhl’s play uses allegory to triangulate a historical situation: while Emma represents an indigenous personality burdened by a past she cannot connect to the present, her sister is comfortably at home in the present but resents not having access to Emma’s knowledge, and Emma’s husband rejects his Hawaiian past altogether and oversees a project to build a hotel on the site of an ancient fishpond that is a link between history and oral tradition and the place of Emma’s initiation. Both the literal and the allegorical meanings in turn enable the audience to perceive the performance of hula as a form of memory work too. Like conventional tourist shows, *Emmalehua* includes different types of hula, cliché, modern, and traditional, but instead of presenting them according to some abstract classification, it shows them as symbolic expressions of, and responses to, particular situations.

While the play’s incidents provide the path for the resolution of Emma’s inner conflicts, the triggering event is her apparently accidental retrieval of a boar tusk necklace that her grandmother left her. One of barely a handful of props mentioned, the necklace, called a *lei hoaka*, also links the different levels of the play’s memory work. For Emma, it is a family heirloom that becomes something like a transitional object which helps her mediate, by way of play, between her inner psychic reality

and her environment. Culturally, the *lei hoaka* represents a valuable object that by virtue of its history can offer guidance and in turn demands guardianship; as such, it is also potentially a museum piece. Performatively, finally, the *lei hoaka* is likely to be a contemporary product, possibly a prop made specifically for hula performances as well as perhaps as a souvenir for tourists. In relation to the play's memory work, it is a liminal object that serves to make distinctions and connections between various realms that remain invisible. For Emma, it is instrumental in helping her to clear her troubled mind and to arrive at a way of seeing reality multi-dimensionally. In this sense, it is emblematic of the performance of the hula itself, which Kneubuhl's play encourages the audience to see in connection with psychological well-being, cultural history, the natural environment and economic development. Behind the visual archive of tourist images, whose very saturation conceals amnesia, *Emmalehua*, through the alchemy of the museum effect, thus discloses an invisible archive of memories, which articulates an image of community focused in different, overlapping and intersecting, ways of viewing a seemingly isolated object from the past and their present re-creations.

An image of community formed by memory work likened to the weaving together of diverse and conflicting points of view is finally also offered by the last play in Victoria Kneubuhl's collection, *Ola Nā Iwi*. If *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu* and *Emmalehua* mobilize the museum effect in order to disclose the spectral life of memory embodied in the present, *Ola Nā Iwi* mobilizes what could be called a "theatre effect" in order to expose the fixation of the museum gaze on objects, and thus ownership. More than the two other plays, it emphasizes the recognition that the past cannot be shared in any sense involving ownership but needs to be remembered in acknowledgment of the presence and precedence of others around us. The play does so by focusing on the issue of repatriation of human remains and its connection to questions of sovereignty. Quoting the proverb that also serves as the title of Kneubuhl's play, Dana Naone Hall explains this connection in her essay on "Sovereign Ground" in *The Value of Hawai'i*:

No one owns a burial site except perhaps the individual whose remains are interred at that site. Importantly, not even a landowner owns the burials that may be present on property he or she owns. This fundamental fact gives the burial places of our Hawaiian ancestors an inherent sovereignty.⁸²

Ola Nā Iwi deals with the contentious and sensitive matter of diverging attitudes toward human remains in a way that weaves together comedy and poetry. The play's action shows various parties rushing to retrieve and claim a set of human bones stolen from a German museum and smuggled back to Hawai'i by Kawehi, a museum curator and member of a touring theatre group. It uses a self-reflective structure of theatricality involving disguises, self-conscious play with props and lighting, a costume ball, as well as vignettes showing nineteenth-century grave robbers, phrenologists and anthropologists in living history mode, in order to

maintain an ironical perspective that denaturalizes any claims to proper rights of ownership. The entangled structure evokes the invisible web of relationship, which through the actions of others before and around us always deflects and interferes with our intentions, so “that action almost never achieves its purpose.”⁸³ At the same time, Kneubuhl’s staging pointedly isolates the nineteenth-century grave robbers and scientists from this web of relationships, satirically caging them in museum displays.

The self-conscious use of theatricality makes Kneubuhl’s play structurally most akin to one of her uncle’s, especially by invoking the *fale aitu* as a corrective vision, hinted at also by the inclusion of a part-Samoan detective, Fatu. Similar to John Kneubuhl’s *A Play: A Play*, the agent of the *fale aitu* in *Ola Nā Iwi* is the ancestral figure, Nanea, who shows up on Kawehi’s doorstep shortly after she returns with the stolen bones. It soon becomes apparent that Nanea is in fact Liliha, a leading woman and popular rival of Ka’āhumanu in the early nineteenth century, and that the bones are hers. Nanea’s intervention in the action thwarts the plans of all characters and eventually leads the play to its proper conclusion with the secret burial of the bones.

Through the theatrical use of the supernatural, Nanea/Liliha also embodies the work of memory, offering Living History tours in Honolulu (telling her own story), but most compellingly by teaching Kawehi how to weave a *kā’ai*, a sennit casket in which the bones of chiefs were traditionally deposited, an art long believed lost,⁸⁴ like the last two known *kā’ai* that were taken from the Bishop Museum in 1994 and presumably given a secret burial on the island of Hawai’i.⁸⁵ As Justina Mattos points out, the *kā’ai* also offer a metaphor for the structural complexity of the play,⁸⁶ weaving together the multiple strands of the plot and bringing the characters’ efforts to secure the bones together in a result that places them safely out of reach. As such, the weaving of the *kā’ai* in *Ola Nā Iwi* is indeed a powerful symbol for the memory work that sustains a community. For as artifacts, tangible objects, they were made to remove the bones of ancestors from view, to make tangible the respect for intangibility itself. The forgetting of the art of making *kā’ai* could thus be interpreted as a sign of a weakening remembrance, a weakening awareness of the intangible world of ancestors. Yet in this regard, Victoria Kneubuhl’s play hints at the greater endurance of the intangible world over the world of material artifacts and suggests that a memory that has passed away may yet be stirred to life again in the theatre. It is the reconciliation of making and acting that at the end of the play remains as an emblem of community.

Focusing on the meaning of loss and the work of memory, the plays of John and Victoria Kneubuhl thus repeatedly and insistently recall and address the role of genealogies in the formation of Oceanic communities, weaving together diverse and typically conflicting viewpoints in a common acknowledgment of an unseen life of the past in the present. In doing so, they articulate a vision of community that, as Hannah Arendt observed more than half a century ago, has been almost forgotten among Western societies due to the primacy accorded to economic activity and

the concomitant, nostalgic or utopian, idealization of a shared identity, culture, or past. By contrast, the vision we find in these plays brings to mind a concept of community that Jean-Luc Nancy opposes to the view of community as something lost or in need of being restored: a community resting in a space of appearance (Nancy speaks of “compearance”)⁸⁷ that is to be acknowledged rather than built. The political efficacy of community, Nancy suggests, thus depends on whether, and how, it is remembered or forgotten. Such a view seems fitting to the imagination of a sea of islands, accustomed to the experience of finitude, difference and interdependence. Yet by persistently setting their plays in the transnational spaces of the postcolonial Pacific, John Kneubuhl and Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl suggest that such a vision could also be relevant to cosmopolitan communities rethinking their foundations elsewhere.

Notes

- * Research for this chapter has been supported by a grant (project number 17600515) from the General Research Fund of the Hong Kong Research Grants Council, which is gratefully acknowledged.
1. Ben Finney, *From Sea to Space* (Palmerston North: Massey University, 1992), 14.
 2. John Terrell, *Prehistory in the Pacific Islands: A Study of Variation in Language, Customs, and Human Biology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 120.
 3. Terrell, *Prehistory in the Pacific Islands*, 120.
 4. Epeli Hau'ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” in *We Are the Ocean: Selected Works* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 27–40.
 5. Hau'ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” 31.
 6. Hau'ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” 31.
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