

THE IMPERIALIST IMAGINARY

VISIONS OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
IN AMERICAN CULTURE

JOHN R. EPERJESI

FOREWORD BY DONALD E. PEASE



THE IMPERIALIST
IMAGINARY

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Visions of Asia and the Pacific in American Culture*

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*To my mother, Claudia,
for her loving support through difficult times,
and for teaching me to put the happiness of others before my own.*

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FOREWORD

Donald E. Pease

In *The Imperialist Imaginary*, John R. Eperjesi at once supplements and criticizes recent efforts to redefine U.S. imperialism. He begins with the observation that recent Americanist scholarship has failed to bring economic considerations into relation with cultural analyses of U.S. imperialism, and he remedies this failure through two interrelated methodologies: reading foreign policy and economic policy as literature, and reconceptualizing works of American literature as extenuations of foreign policy and economic theory. He applies these methodologies to an examination of the formation of an American Pacific in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Arguing that the trans-Pacific has not been considered a proper area for the analysis of U.S. cultures, Eperjesi proceeds to de-link the study of culture from the boundaries of the nation-state and to move within the discourse loosely called New Americanist. Specifically, he historicizes both the circulation of the term “American Pacific” and the conflicting social formations that were consolidated around it. In doing so, he finds that political struggle is regularly conducted through such spatializing key words, which map the world through a configuration of rhetoric and analysis.

According to Eperjesi, the regional imaginary of an American Pacific does not simply represent an already given region; rather, this imperialist imaginary was a geographical discourse that played a crucial role in the processes of crisis formation and resolution figured throughout the American Pacific. A metageographical term, the American Pacific named the practice of discourse whereby a dispersed geographical area was transformed into an abstract unity. Geographical terms such as the American Pacific produce the region they take as their geographical foundation, concealing the politics of their signification. Geographical terms are political because they naturalize a particular way of mapping the world and repress the fact that such ways of mapping themselves have histories—histories that are sites of political, economic, and cultural struggle. Geographical terms can be used both as a means of social control and a means to counter that control. If the American Pacific names a myth, Eperjesi reconstructs the history of the term’s usage in order to deconstruct the myth and to reveal it as a site of contesting interests.

Eperjesi correlates U.S. imperialism with the 1896 depression and strikes, with the transformation of the Spanish American War into the Filipino War,

and with the division of China by Russia and Europe. After the Spanish American War, the “American Pacific” displaced “imperialism” as the term through which these abstractions were analyzed. The American Pacific thereafter becomes the means through which to analyze imperialism and not the other way around.

Eperjesi further proposes that the desire for China in fact preceded the national imaginary of the nineteenth century, in that New England depended on the whaling industry and the China trade. According to Eperjesi, Oceania and Asia were not givens, but they answered the need of capital for a regional imaginary in order to overcome spatial barriers to expansion. Asia made its debut in the national imaginary as a space of convergence between economic fact and fantasy that was also the space of romance. It gave direction and inspiration to processes of political expansion and economic adventure. In 1895, after Russia seized Taiwan and Germany the port at Kiachow, various segments of capital in the northeast formed the American Asiatic Association in order to educate Washington and the public on the importance of expanding exports to China, in order to relieve both the crisis of overproduction and the social crisis that was thought to result from that surplus.

Eperjesi situates the formation of the American Asiatic Association within a historical moment in which a consortium of merchants, bankers, and farmers successfully forged a consensus around the belief that opening markets abroad might ameliorate a broad range of domestic economic crises. In envisioning China as a vast market for overproduced goods, and the Philippines as an asset of strategic value for the U.S. Navy, the association’s cognitive mapping of the region permitted the regulation and management of the crises that were at once the pretext for its founding and its epistemological rationale.

Thereafter, Eperjesi shows how the metageographical explanation that had effected the invention of the Asia-Pacific was itself a materialist practice necessitated by a socialist counter-narrative. The association’s mapping was used to hegemonize the interests of industrial and merchant capital against a socialist counter-narrative that recharacterized overproduction as a bourgeois mystification. The socialists named capital’s exploitation of labor as a better explanation for the widespread economic crises, and they recommended the public ownership of the means of production as the solution. In elucidating the antagonism between these formations, Eperjesi demonstrates how the American Asiatic Association’s geographical imaginary was crucial to the circulation of capital and how the socialists’ counter-imaginary materialized the American Asiatic Association’s internal limit.

In chapters on Frank Norris and Jack London, Eperjesi takes up American literature's contribution to the production of this imaginary. He reads Frank Norris's *The Octopus* as a jeremiad that located the cause of the nation's economic crisis in overproduction and its cure in the China market. The novel, he concludes, replaces the western frontier with a mission to China as the destiny of national belonging. Turning to London, Eperjesi argues that, in becoming Hawaiian, London strongly identified with the Hawaiian Other and thereby disavowed his positioning as a tourist. By seeing himself as Other he could all but disidentify with his Americanness. Eperjesi concludes that it was the resultant property of quasi-Americanness that produced the fiction of London's hybridity, and this fictive hybridity enabled London to take imaginative possession of the island.

The *Imperialist Imaginary* is a powerful, innovative, and timely contribution to studies of U.S. imperialism.

THE IMPERIALIST
IMAGINARY

Introduction

The American Pacific, an Errand into Oceania

Political ideology and political science are fused in the dramatic form of a myth.

—Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince*

Geography does not change, but the way of looking at it definitely does.

—Arif Dirlik, “The Asia-Pacific Idea”

MAPPING THE AMERICAN PACIFIC

In *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen*, published in 1898, a year after she was forced to cede the government of Hawai'i to the United States by a group of *haoles* on a sugar high, Lili'uokalani describes a slide show given by John Foster, secretary of state under President Harrison. Foster's agenda for the day was to provide information regarding the geographical location and economic importance of the Hawaiian Islands for an American government interested in their strategic value as a cheap supply of sugar and as a rest stop on the way to and from the supposedly vast, untapped markets of Asia. The image of Hawai'i as an end in itself, as an exotic destination for hip-shaking beach bums wanting to get their surf on, was still in the making.

There happened to be a few Native Hawaiians in the room who could check Foster's facts, and it appears that his research had more than a few holes in it. According to Lili'uokalani, Foster “had shown such a lamentable ignorance of my affairs as he did of those of Hawaii when he tried to speak of that country, her rulers, her people, even her situation geographically and socially, my case as a client would have suffered from his ignorance.”¹ She then describes Foster's presentation: “It seems that his remarks were to be illustrated by lantern slides; and on opening this series of illustrations, there first appeared on the screen a dark form, which no one in the audience could recognize, yet the lecturer nothing daunted, with pole in hand, began to describe the situation of the Islands; then it suddenly occurred to him that the dots on the Pacific as shown by the slides were placed near enough over to annex, if not to the United States, then to Mexico; so he paused in his remarks while the artist made a second attempt; but he had only fled from one extreme to the other, for now the unfortunate

group, so far as location was concerned, had every appearance of annexation to Japan. This was going from Scylla to Charybdis.”²

This anecdote might be funny if it didn’t summarize all too well the long, tragic story of American expansionist adventures into the Pacific. There are many lessons packed into this brief, representative moment in the history of U.S. imperialism. And there is little reason to doubt that similar situations have been repeated countless times throughout American history. Lili’uokalani points out that Foster spoke confidently while he pointed to the apparent subject of his talk, an indistinct “dark form” that was supposed to represent the Hawaiian Islands, and remained undaunted when that blur began to skip across the screen. Out of these blurry projections, the dots representing islands began to achieve definition as they moved in a web of inter-imperialist rivalry between Japan and the United States, thus foreshadowing Hawai’i’s violent trajectory over the course of the twentieth century. Blindness to the geographical location and social conditions of Hawai’i did not prevent Foster from delivering his insights to those political leaders responsible for shaping foreign policy in the region. Painfully observing this spectacle of cartographic misrecognition, Lili’uokalani reveals a striking instance of what in the following pages I refer to as the imperialist imaginary—a moment in which a particular representation, or misrepresentation, of geographical space supports the expansion of the nation’s political and economic borders. The imperialist imaginary names those practices of representation that project the vast, dispersed area of Asia and the Pacific as a unified region.³

I begin with the agonizing drama of representational violence enacted by Foster’s slide show because it introduces one of the central concerns of this book, which has to do with the politics of geographical representation. Over the course of the book, I look at a wide range of cultural materials—novels, poems, essays, advertisements, films, business journals—in terms of the mapping functions that they perform. All cultural materials project, either explicitly or implicitly, conceptions and practices of space. That is, they offer historically specific ways of seeing distances and proximities, boundaries and limits, centers and peripheries, insides and outsides, the big and the small, the symmetrical and the sublime, the open and the closed, origins and destinations, not to mention all of the ambiguous, uncertain, or unfixed areas in between. We tend to think that our knowledge about geography comes from the maps used in geogaphy class, and, on a less rigorous, everyday level, from tour guides, travel shows, the news, or the random copy of *National Geographic* lying around the waiting room at the dentist’s office. One assumption that connects the various readings brought together here is that people derive their geographical sensibilities from all sorts of cultural texts.

The cultural, political, and economic practices grouped under the names of imperialism and colonialism, when viewed through the critical lens of postcolonial theory, are usually understood in terms of the binary oppositions that separate us from them, same from other, domestic from foreign, civilized from savage, developed from undeveloped, center from periphery, West from East, progress from stagnation, science from superstition, and so on. The cultural critique of imperialism and colonialism, then, typically involves locating those representations that naturalize and universalize these oppositions, thereby legitimating the domination of the latter by the former. While these distinctions are crucial to understanding how the United States has historically imagined itself in relation to the North American continent they do not fully cover the history of U.S. expansion into the Pacific. To understand this history, a third term, or more precisely, a third space, needs to be entered into the equation, that of the region, or what I refer to here as the American Pacific.⁴ The fields of American Literature and American Studies have been historically devoted to understanding—at times celebrating, at times critiquing—representations of national space.⁵ Recently, a new set of geopolitical coordinates, such as the local and the global, the borderlands, the cosmopolitan, or the transnational, have entered these fields and pulled up the metaphysical roots, and routes, that have historically guided their modes of inquiry. While there is no shortage of conferences, journals, or books devoted to channeling interest in the study of the nation's regional/local literatures, the relationship between the extraterritorial region and practices of colonialism and imperialism has yet to receive sustained critical attention in Americanist literary and cultural studies.⁶

Regions are not natural givens. They take shape under specific historical conditions and in relation to particular sets of power relations. As Arif Dirlik has written, "In a fundamental sense, there is no Pacific region that is an 'objective' given, but only a competing set of ideational constructs that project upon a certain location on the globe the imperatives of interest, power, or vision of these historically produced relationships."⁷ Because geographical space does not automatically fit into meaningful units, the practice of representation is a necessary condition for the existence of a region. Asian Pacific cuisine, for example, does not prove that an Asian Pacific region exists. Rather, an Asian Pacific region exists because there are menus and restaurants, among other things, that make such a region imaginable. People can only act on the idea that a vast, culturally diverse area composes a unified and meaningful region if they assume, or take as common sense, the fact that such unity and meaning already exists. And common sense, as cultural studies has taught us, is the playground, or battlefield, of ideology and myth. On

one level, regions are myths, stories about space circulated by and through various institutions that help make sense of a diffuse and chaotic world. The imperialist imaginary of the American Pacific does not simply take hold of an already given region. Rather, the imperialist imaginary produces the region that it takes as its geographical foundation. In making this point, I am working with, and hoping to extend, Henri Lefebvre's proposition that "The spatial practice of a society secretes that society's space; it propounds it and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it."⁸

The American Pacific refers, in part, to the unstable ideological terrain upon which struggles over the scope and direction of economic and territorial expansion have been historically waged. The American Pacific is a regional, or regionalizing, myth, and in constructing that name, I use history to deconstruct the myth, to re-present it as a space of conflict and not nature. While I cannot possibly claim to have achieved a total view of the American Pacific during the period of its emergence in the nineteenth century and dominance during the 1890s, I hope to have moved in that direction by establishing connections between cultural materials that have not previously been read together or placed in the context of United States imperialism. In so doing, rather than simply debunking the myth of Asia-Pacific regional coherence, I work to reconstruct just how historically effective this myth has been to political and business leaders, as well as within American literary traditions.

It should be clear, then, that two concepts intersect the cultural materials that mingle on the pages of this book: imperialism and the American Pacific. I therefore want to provide some sense of how I will be using these terms in the following pages. Because the word imperialism has such a long and complicated history, it needs to be situated in the context in which it first gained public attention, in the political and economic debates generated by the Spanish-American and Filipino-American Wars. The concept of an American Pacific on the other hand is an abstraction that has enabled me to synthesize texts and situations that have been kept apart by the tendency to fix questions of culture within national borders, by academic hyper-specialization, and in general by the intellectual inertia that organizes much humanities scholarship.

HISTORICIZING IMPERIALISM

My reason for wanting to historicize the word imperialism, rather than proceed from it as a fully formed political or economic theory, is that the

meanings of keywords change over time, and those changes are the product of ideological struggles.⁹ Social struggles and movements all have their discursive fronts, where energies are spent working to attach specific meanings to specific words, and then, just as importantly, making particular combinations of word and meaning appear to be true, universal, or natural to as many people as possible. Discursive battles do not take place on an even battlefield. Those with access to institutions such as a national press are obviously going to have a much better chance of winning consent to their definitions of keywords than those who have to rely on photocopyers, wheatpaste, or gossip.

The bond linking a particular meaning to a powerful keyword is typically composed of an uneven mixture of emotion, intuition, and reason, though we prefer to think that it's mostly the latter. In his history of the word imperialism, Richard Koebner shows that since the 1840s, when imperialism first appeared in English, its meaning has changed over twelve times.¹⁰ Koebner suggests that words like imperialism "are often more powerful than precise, in them social organizations become articulate to ordinary people."¹¹ Imperialism has been an effective way to establish political solidarity and generate immediate attention because the suffix *ism* "concentrates great blocks of political emotion otherwise dispersed."¹² These days, imperialism is universally held to be a bad thing. When asked what they think imperialism means, my students tell me in unison that it is bad, though they are a little unclear as to its precise meaning. The persistence of negative connotations associated with imperialism derives largely from the rhetorical battles of the Cold War and the global student movements of the 1960s. During the Cold War, political leaders from both the United States and the Soviet Bloc hurled this dirty word at each other, while newly decolonized countries, seeking the voice of freedom, deployed it against both their former colonizers and against the First World in general. The slogan "cultural imperialism" was first used in the 1960s by university students in Argentina, who found the U.S. media to be an invasive force that was eroding their national culture from the inside. Because the era of official colonialism is more or less over, cultural imperialism has come to name the lingering interference of one country in the affairs of another. For many people of the world, Hollywood and Big Macs have taken over where water-torture and napalm left off.

My interest here is not to reign in the diffuse semiotic repertoire of the word imperialism, for a powerfully ambiguous word is much more interesting and effective than a precise one, but to draw attention to the fact that geopolitical conflicts are often conducted through spatializing keywords that map the world with rhetoric and analysis, emotion and theory, generalization and detail. Looking at the present world scene, it appears that the

term globalization has come to perform an ideological function similar to that once played by imperialism. Like imperialism at the turn of the century, the meaning of globalization today is up for grabs, its meaning debated and decided in the press, in classrooms, in think tanks, and on the tear gas-filled streets of Seattle, Milan, or wherever the World Trade Organization happens to be meeting. While the overall success of the spectacular opposition to the WTO is questionable, the new globally conscious social movements have unquestionably managed to denaturalize the word globalization, and this is an absolutely necessary moment in creating change. The word globalization has become the site of fierce ideological struggles—struggles in which the futures of the planet are being fought over. For those in power, globalization simply refers to the clean lines of economic policy, coded in benign, unimpeachable phrases like “structural adjustment,” while a wide variety of activist groups expose such definitions to the realities of racism, repression, and exploitation that result from such policies. Yet rather than simply oppose globalization, globally conscious social movements, which range from hard-hats to pink triangles, have been working to circulate new meanings and counternarratives of globalization, founded on ideals of justice, equality, and intelligent care for the environment.¹³ One of the central, and most persuasive, arguments against the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization is that these institutions are not held accountable to the public yet determine the living conditions, thus the hopes and dreams, of vast numbers of people. Again, this fact finds a historical parallel with the turn of the century, when the leading charge against imperialism was that the Filipino and Hawaiian people were being subjected to an alien political and economic system without their consent.

Imperialism, as distinct from words like empire or imperial, initially appeared in English as a critique of Bonapartism, a style of governance thought to rest on a sentimental enslavement to the monarchy. The concept of imperialism distinguished between a country ruled by liberal institutions, such as England, and one in which the government was alienated from the people, as was thought to be the case in France.¹⁴ France thus provided the first target for the charge of being imperialist. The word imperialism referred only to the internal affairs of the country and did not address the question of foreign relations. In the 1860s, debates over the scale of the British Empire heated up in the context of increasing instabilities in South Africa, India, and New Zealand. In the 1870s, continuing crises in these colonies put the word imperialism on the path toward some of the meanings that we now associate it with. Imperialism was first popularized as an anti-Disraeli slogan, where it referred to “over-ambition, greed, and immorality in pursuing the

extension of empire.”¹⁵ Again, at this point imperialism did not refer to extra-territorial conflicts between a core metropolis and its undeveloped periphery, but rather to the corrupting effects of foreign entanglements on the home country. This tradition has been kept alive in the United States in the form of Vietnam War films such as *Deer Hunter* (1978), or *Apocalypse Now* (1979), which are more concerned with America’s loss of innocence in the jungles of Asia than with the near total destruction of an emergent Vietnamese national culture. For such a perspective, one would have to turn to Bao Ninh’s *The Sorrow of War*. Bao Ninh, a young North Vietnamese soldier during the war, creates a depth for the young soldiers, which is totally absent from American filmic representations of the war.

Prior to the 1890s, circulation of the word imperialism was mostly limited to elite spheres of political debate. Yet 1898 marked the “climax in popular enthusiasm for ‘imperialism.’”¹⁶ During the 1890s, with the help of an emergent mass media, the audience exposed to this high-minded concept began to expand. At this time, a new way of thinking about imperialism began to appear: “There is no doubt that the word ‘imperialism’ first became part of the political and journalistic vocabulary during the 1890s in the course of the arguments about colonial conquest. Moreover that is when it acquired the economic dimension which, as a concept, it has never since lost.”¹⁷ In the British context, the event that triggered economic interpretations of imperialism and wide-ranging public debate over what was perceived to be a new historical situation was the Boer War in South Africa. In *Imperialism*, J. A. Hobson traced the economic origins of the Boer War. According to Hobson, imperialism referred to a political policy adopted by national governments as a direct response to the increasingly urgent demand for foreign markets.¹⁸ Imperialism stemmed from the inability of demand to keep pace with production. This idea permeated turn-of-the-century England and America, in part because it was accepted by both critics and apologists of economic expansion. Differences between the two sides appeared over the question of where, exactly, the expansion of the sphere of circulation was to extend. Should the home market be developed, or should foreign markets be the focus of efforts to increase consumption? If the latter, which foreign markets should receive the most attention, those in developed or undeveloped parts of the world? At the turn of the century, there was little consensus among business leaders about these questions.

Writing in opposition to the oligarchy that appeared to be driving the territorially acquisitive British Empire, Hobson argued that the solution to overproduction was not to be found in the pursuit of foreign markets, which was leading to the violent scramble for Africa and Asia, but in the redistribution

of income at home, which would counter overproduction by increasing demand.¹⁹ Hobson's theory of imperialism was part economic analysis, part attack on the control that banks exerted on British foreign policy, and part call for political and economic reform. For Hobson, as for many of the theorists of imperialism who would refine, extend, and sharpen his critique, imperialism was first and foremost a theory of economic crisis.²⁰

In the United States, the economic interpretation of imperialism was formed in the context of the pseudo-war against Spain that precipitated the very real, long, and bloody war against the people of the Philippines. A number of other movements in the Pacific and along the coast of China were also articulated through the question of imperialism. Shortly before war broke out in Cuba and the Philippines, England, France, Germany, Japan, and Russia began to compete for "spheres of influence" in China, through which their commercial interests could be expanded. In 1895, Russia seized Taiwan and Germany seized a port at Kiachow. The period of the scramble for China is represented from a Chinese perspective in Tsui Hark's classic kung fu film *Once upon a Time in China* (1991), in which Jet Li plays the legendary doctor/community leader Wong Fei Hung. Master Wong and his ragtag army struggle to defend China from the greedy and immoral Western imperialists and their Manchu puppets, as well as from a band of local warlords, while putting the country on the awkward path toward an alternative Chinese modernity. In this acrobatic act of national-historical memory, Tsui Hark envisions a China, albeit from the peripheral space of pre-handover Hong Kong, that can say no to the West. In the climactic battle scene, the American responsible for smuggling Chinese women to America to serve as prostitutes for Chinese migrant workers is lynched on board his ship, thus giving the imperialist a taste of his own medicine, while the stars and stripes wave darkly in the background. *Once upon a Time in China* is a visually stunning counter-narrative to the Euro-American scramble for China during the 1890s.

In response to the competition for spheres of influence in China, a group of business leaders, mostly located in the northeastern United States, formed the American Asiatic Association. Their mission was to educate Washington and the public on the importance of expanding exports to China. Increased exports were needed to relieve crises of overproduction and the social unrest that grew out of a stagnant economy. Although the significance of the China market as a solution to economic crisis was debated, both at the level of the state and between different fragments of the capitalist class, the linking of overproduction to the image of a vast, untapped China market quickly became a shibboleth worshipped all over American society.

Whereas today the word imperialism comes shrouded with negative associations, this has not always been the case. In the period leading up to the Filipino-American War and the scramble for China, the systematic study of imperialism as a problem of overproduction and need for new markets and fields of investment was conducted by Charles Conant.²¹ For Conant, imperialism was a political and economic improvement over colonialism. Conant was America's equivalent to Hobson, minus the passion for social reform, a banking and monetary authority who served the McKinley and Roosevelt administrations in making and implementing international economic policy in the Philippines, Latin America, and China. For Conant, the economic crisis facing industrial Europe and America was a result of overproduction, which derived from the more fundamental problem of oversaving. According to Conant, industrial build-up over the second half of the nineteenth century created a regular outlet for the investment of surplus capital. By the end of the century, Conant found, "Saving is applied in too many cases . . . to the needless duplication of existing manufacturing plants and the creation of enterprises which do not prove productive."²²

For Conant, the crisis of oversaving was no minor threat. The whole of Western civilization could be undone by it: "How profoundly it is disturbing economic conditions in the older countries, and how necessary to the salvation of these countries is an outlet for their surplus savings, if the entire fabric of the present economic order is not to be shaken by a social revolution."²³ Conant suggested that there were basically three solutions to the crisis of oversaving: socialism, developing the home market, or "the equipment of new countries with the means of production and exchange."²⁴ These weren't really options for Conant; the only real solution to oversaving for him involved making Asia into a consumer of producer goods. This would encourage infrastructural development and ultimately create a market for manufactured goods: "It is necessary that the great industrial countries should turn to countries which have not felt the pulse of modern progress. . . . They have not only to obtain buildings and machinery—the necessary elements in producing machine-made goods—but they have to build their roads, drain their marshes, dam their rivers, build aqueducts for their water supplies and sewers for their towns and cities. Asia and Africa are the most promising of these countries."²⁵ As far as the question of imperialism went, as long as commercial interests were extended, it did not really matter whether this was done by annexation, through the protection of "sovereignties nominally independent," or simply by setting up naval stations and establishing diplomatic representatives.²⁶ So while there appeared to be several different solutions to the problem of oversaving, imperialism, for

Conant, was “the result of a natural law of economic and race development.”²⁷

These ideas did not go uncontested. The Anti-Imperialist League, formed on November 19, 1898, looked to return the political dimension to the theory of imperialism. The Anti-Imperialist League brought together an unholy alliance of that captain of irony, Mark Twain, captain of industry, Andrew Carnegie, and captain of labor, Samuel Gompers. The Anti-Imperialist League worked to reconnect the question of imperialism to matters of governmentality and stated in its platform: “We hold that the policy known as imperialism is hostile to liberty and tends toward militarism, an evil from which it has been our glory to be free. We regret that it has become necessary in the land of Washington and Lincoln to reaffirm that all men, of whatever race or color, are entitled to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. We maintain that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. We insist that the subjugation of any people is “criminal aggression” and open disloyalty to the distinctive principles of our Government.”²⁸ The Anti-Imperialist League argued that there was no constitutional provision for the annexation of foreign lands. Even more serious was the threat that an imperialist foreign policy posed to republican institutions and representative government at home: “Much as we abhor the war of ‘criminal aggression’ in the Philippines, greatly as we regret that the blood of Filipinos is on American hands, we more deeply resent the betrayal of American institutions at home. The real firing line is not in the suburbs of Manila. The foe is of our own household. The attempt of 1861 was to divide the country. That of 1899 is to destroy its fundamental principles and noblest ideals.”²⁹

For a brief period of time, the question of imperialism was hotly debated in the nation’s print media. The most vocal opponent to anti-imperialism was the fire-breathing jingoist Senator Albert Beveridge, who injected Pacific passion into the traditional American jeremiad by arguing that territorial conquest and the domination of indigenous peoples did not go against the American grain but were in fact the “fundamental principles and noblest ideals” of the nation. In response to questions regarding the constitutionality of territorial expansion, Beveridge asked, “Does a thousand miles of ocean diminish constitutional power more than a thousand miles of land? . . . Senators in opposition are estopped from denying our constitutional power to govern the Philippines as circumstances may demand, for such power is admitted in the case of Florida, Louisiana, Alaska. How, then, is it denied in the Philippines?”³⁰ Beveridge correctly noted that the native populations of these areas were never asked for their consent to be dispossessed of their land, subjected to a foreign government, or simply killed off

by guns, disease, and starvation, so why should Filipinos be treated any differently? On the question of consent and rights, Beveridge produced a style of reasoning that connects the first Puritan errands into the wilderness to the age of empire and on through the twentieth century to the Vietnam War: questions of consent and rights are only relevant in relation to “civilized” peoples. The “uncivilized” cannot earn a natural right to private property or to the metaphysical pursuit of independence and freedom. Only God-fearing Anglo-Saxons are endowed with these rights. Beveridge therefore exclaimed, “The Declaration applies only to people capable of self-government. How dare any man prostitute this expression of the very elect of self-governing peoples to a race of Malay children of barbarism, schooled in Spanish methods and ideas?”³¹

At the same time, though, the racial politics of the Anti-Imperialist League were far from noble. The most common argument against imperialism at the time, and specifically against the annexation of the Philippines, was that it would only add to the racial troubles brewing at home. Race had already played an important role in one war, as the Anti-Imperialist League noted, and the country was having trouble incorporating its recently freed black population due to the persistent racist violence encouraged by Jim Crow laws, so how could anyone think of bringing more dark-skinned bodies within the nation’s legislative boundaries? Summarizing the racial politics of the debate over imperialism at the turn of the century, Richard Drinnon comments, “For the one side racism acted as a deterrent to grasping the spoils of war and for the other it acted as a stimulant.”³² So if the debate “was not over expansion versus no expansion,” what was it about? For Drinnon, “It was about whether the U.S. empire should be hemispheric or global, and secondarily about the constitution: did that document follow the flag?”³³ Drinnon points out that several members of the Anti-Imperialist League had land-grabbing impulses, just not in the direction of the Philippines. Carnegie had his eyes set on Canada. Others focused on Hawai‘i.³⁴

The political critique of imperialism offered by the Anti-Imperialist League could not keep pace with the economic theories that were gaining prominence at the time. The deployment of constitutional reasoning in opposition to the annexation of the Philippines was neutralized by the fact that the definition of imperialism appearing in quarters filled less with jingoistic racism than with dispassionate economic analysis was that imperialism did not require the rule of foreign peoples. “Leading anti-imperialists,” Robert Beisner notes, “gave no thought to economic implications of imperialism; they tended to subordinate them to racial, historical, and constitutional considerations.”³⁵ Put simply, the Anti-Imperialist League was

thinking in terms that may have been relevant to the nineteenth century but were not to the twentieth. As Henry Adams wrote in his *Education*, "The fathers had intended to neutralize the energy of government and had succeeded, but their machine was never meant to do the work of a 20-million h. p. society in the twentieth century, where much work needed to be quickly and efficiently done. . . . As a matter of mechanics, so much work must be done; bad machinery merely added to friction."³⁶ The Anti-Imperialist League added friction, but no real lasting opposition, to imperialism. While Mark Twain was penning vigorous tracts in high-brow periodicals denouncing imperialism for an elite readership, Thomas Edison was filming reenactments of the war in the Philippines in the hills of Orange, New Jersey, that would be seen by a growing mass public. With African Americans cast, ironically, as rebels, these films depicted Filipinos as being easily run over by American troops, thus creating a false public confidence, and therefore support, for the idea that the white man's burden in the Philippines was not a heavy one. In *Memories of a Forgotten War*, a recent documentary by Camilla Griggers and Sari Lluich Delena that I will discuss in chapter 6, Griggers points out that Mark Twain's nineteenth century anti-imperialist prose could not keep pace with the moving images of Edison's war propaganda that were ushering Americans into the twentieth century.

To locate a rather different understanding of imperialism, and of America's adventures in Asia and the Pacific, we need to look to socialist writings from the period. At the time of the Filipino-American War, expansionist movements in the Pacific were virtually ignored by the popular socialist weekly *Appeal to Reason*. Rather than isolating overproduction and the China market as the cause and solution of economic crisis, the weekly consistently focuses on the multiple symptoms of economic exploitation: poverty, unemployment, degradation of working conditions, and poor quality of life. When the Spanish-American War was discussed on its pages, it was seen as a conflict between the ruling classes of Spain and the United States: "We are told that Cuba is a charnal house. So are the sweat shops of every American city. We are just as brutal to our poor as is Spain, only the methods are a little different, but starvation is just as painful here as there."³⁷ At the same time, socialists wasted no time criticizing those political leaders and business interests responsible for suppressing Filipino struggles for independence. In a poem published in *Appeals to Reason* entitled "Uncle Sam's Mission," J. W. Hoveste wrote with a savage irony matched only by American military savagery, "Take up the white man's burden, With kindness and grace; As erst we have the Indians, Annihilate the race."³⁷ Overproduction, socialists argued, was a bourgeois mystification that hid the real problems of

poverty, exploitation, long hours, and savage working conditions that were increasingly faced by large numbers of Americans.

In order to begin to get a grasp on the rich, complicated history of the word imperialism, I have tried to reconstruct some of the ideological struggles embedded within and occasioned by it. I have begun with the rhetoric of imperialism because these struggles defined the terrain upon which foreign economic policy was put together. The American Pacific jeremiad, which envisioned China as the economic Promised Land and led to the strategic gridding of Pacific spaces, fed off the sense of crisis triggered by debates over imperialism. Keywords like imperialism emerge in response to, and help to define, particular historical conjunctures. Their power and popularity derives not from their truth-value but from the fact that they efficiently condense and put into a coherent picture a complex and confusing situation—again, much like the word globalization today. The filtering of ideological conflicts through this geopolitical keyword generated images of the relationship of the United States to Asia and the Pacific, as well as Europe and South America. Imperialism was central to emerging theories of economic crisis and the business cycle, central to debates over the relationship between the state and capital, and central to shifting ideas concerning race and gender identities.

One of the founding positions of cultural studies is the idea that the study of culture involves reconstructing the mediations—the narratives, images, myths, and symbols—that emerge in the exchange between crisis and the response to crisis. The question of how a crisis is to be interpreted is not given in advance by the crisis itself. Therefore, rather than simply beginning with an ideologically loaded term, I take as my starting point an abstraction that can help us put disparate texts and situations into some kind of order—the American Pacific.

PLACING THE AMERICAN PACIFIC

If you wanted to plan a trip to the American Pacific, for business or leisure, where might your travel agent send you? Where, exactly, is the American Pacific? Well, you could go to Hawai'i if you wanted to work on your tan, or, like Jack and Charmian London at the beginning of the century, to soak up some of the exotic local culture that is now actively promoted by many of the islands' resorts. If you wanted to invest in a computer company, you might head to one of the booming southern coastal cities of China, such as Shenzhen. While in China, you might plan a trip to Inner Mongolia, since you were fascinated by the sublime desert-scapes you saw in the movie

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon on the flight over. Once there, you would find a local Mongolian culture packaged for tourist consumption as wild, nomadic, and milk-drinking. Any number of places might be included on a map of the American Pacific, from the congested digital spaces of neo-Tokyo to the serene emptiness of the smallest atoll. But don't look too closely—there might be a concrete runway, a leftover from the atomic age, under that coral reef.

Can one really point to the American Pacific on a map? The answer is both yes and no, but mostly no, at least not on any maps that are currently in circulation. One would need a map designed by a Situationist to capture the complex arrangements that make up the multiple insides and outsides of the American Pacific. My interest here is not in constructing a catalogue, unless it's a Borgesian catalogue, of places that should be included on a map of the American Pacific, because the American Pacific exists both out there, off the west coast of the North American continent, and in here, located in those activities, those institutions and representations, that have been either directly or indirectly engaged in representing Asia and the Pacific as a commercially valuable, spiritually satisfying, and geographically unified, region. The American Pacific, then, is a geographically specific form of American Orientalism.

There is a long tradition of romantic Orientalism in America, which extends from Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau in the nineteenth century to Jack Kerouac and Timothy Leary in the 1960s and is currently sustained by Los Angeles Laker's coach Phil Jackson and Madonna. The Orient has repeatedly offered a line of flight from the banality and spiritual vacuity of a materialistic American culture. The American Renaissance, thought to be the founding cultural movement of the nation, was always tied up with thoughts of Asia. Take, for example, the blocks of ice that Henry David Thoreau contemplates while sitting on the banks of Walden Pond. For a brief period of time during the nineteenth century, that ice was packed up and shipped to Canton, where it enjoyed a brief performance as a novelty item that could be traded for the valuable chinoiserie, such as silks or porcelain, in vogue amongst America's patrician class.³⁸ The idea of an American Pacific draws attention to the fact that the material and cultural existence of nations and regions is shaped by border-crossing movements of ideas, people, technologies, money, bombs, and commodities. By attaching a possessive *American* to Pacific, I hope to reveal the will to mastery and control that has led to the Americanization of the Pacific.

It is tempting to think of the American Pacific as the historical predecessor to more recent constructions of this area under economic slogans

such as *Asia-Pacific* or *Pacific Rim*. The following pages attempt to map economic webs like the usage of Pacific Rim that connect America to Asia and the Pacific. As with those slogans, American Pacific designates, though from a critical perspective, a space of projection and fantasy, a utopic region of time and space compression that leads to smooth flows and big profits. Yet at the same time, the category of the American Pacific should seem a little off to the student of geography. Unlike Pacific Rim, the American Pacific doesn't pretend to be grounded in any geological formation. And whereas *Asia-Pacific* suggests benign proximity and co-prosperity, American Pacific names a will to geographical domination and control, to spatial hierarchies rather than neat anthropological classifications or harmless nautical grids. The desire to map and master the Pacific has always been tied up with political and economic agendas, such as finding the shortest routes between the Pacific Northwest and Canton, locating and securing ports with deep harbors, establishing military bases to frustrate the fiendish plots of Dr. Fu Manchu and Ming the Merciless, or testing atomic bombs, first on empty atolls, then Japanese civilians.

Jessica Hagedorn's Filipina-American novel *Dogeaters* reveals the fact that time and space compression has its winners and its losers. *Dogeaters* is a semi-fictional account of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos's reign of error and terror in the Philippines, which was backed by an American government that saw the Philippines as an important front in the Cold War. The novel narrates the Marcose's ideological and repressive opposition to the emergence of a democratic public sphere in the Philippines, while the dreams of its middle-class citizens are being shaped by images of white normativity that come courtesy of Hollywood. The fractured narrative, which is made up of bits of fiction, radio shows, official history, gossip, and advertisements, none of which is given the primacy of the "true" or "real"—so that gossip conveys history, and official history becomes a fiction—imagines a schizophrenic nation whose will to identity and independence has been torn apart by the history of American imperialism in the region. Middle-class characters study the world, and each other, in Taglish, sentences composed of words from Spanish, English, and Tagalog.³⁹ Sentence, narrative, and consciousness thus all become syncretic spaces that can't be purified or made neat, linear, or teleological. After imperialism, there's no going back.

The American Pacific is a space of contradiction and conflict rather than temporal continuity and benign geographical contiguity. Only by constructing geopolitical terms that foreground various struggles in all of their historical complexity can particular spaces be fully understood, analyzed, and transformed. We definitely need more geographical terms that enable, rather

than prevent, a critical understanding of space. If such terms seem awkward or counterintuitive, that means that they are doing their job, which is not to naturalize but to denaturalize established ways of thinking about the world.

My reason, then, for wanting to begin with this arbitrary abstraction, and not some real, describable place that can be pointed to on a map, is captured by Eric Wolf: "The world of humankind constitutes a manifold, a totality of interconnected processes, and inquiries that disassemble this totality into bits and then fail to reassemble it falsify reality. Concepts like 'nation,' 'society,' and 'culture' name bits and threaten to turn names into things. Only by understanding these names as bundles of relationships, and by placing them back into the field from which they were abstracted, can we hope to avoid misleading inferences and increase our share of understanding."⁴⁰ The American Pacific does not name a fixed or objective place but rather a bundle of cultural, political, and economic relationships that connect the territorial United States to the areas of Asia and the Pacific. The bits and pieces I've gathered here are those images and stories that instance a will to imagine Asia and the Pacific as constituting a unified and structured region. The regional imaginary of the American Pacific does not simply represent an already given region. Rather, such representations work to produce the region that they take as their geographical foundation.

As opposed to reifying terms like Asia-Pacific or Pacific Rim, which conceal the politics of their signification, the American Pacific foregrounds its arbitrariness, thus keeping it from taking up residence in the house of the given. One of the means by which ruling classes, races, or nations secure their power is by making a particular way of mapping the world appear natural. Geographical terms are political because they essentialize a singular way of mapping the world, repress the fact that there are multiple ways of mapping the world that have unique histories, and ignore the fact that those histories are structured by life-and-death struggles between memory and forgetting, blindness and insight. Geographical terms and descriptions can be used to secure and expand the authority of a particular political regime, or they can be used to oppose such authority. Old terms can be refunctioned to new ends, or new ones can be invented that encourage seeing the world in ways that expose power relations and open up the possibility for different futures. Mainstream geography, in other words, is depoliticized speech. Depoliticized speech erases the appearance of motive from the space of representation. The power of myth to seduce, as Roland Barthes suggested, is relayed by the apparent lack of motive, which normalizes and universalizes a particular mythological element. Barthes writes: "What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality . . . and what myth gives in return is a natural

image of this reality.”⁴¹ The American Pacific names a myth, and in constructing that name, I hope to use history to deconstruct the myth, to show it as a space of interest and not nature. More importantly, though, I hope to reconstruct just how historically effective this myth has been.

All of the chapters, in their different ways, aim to reveal how the area of Asia and the Pacific, as a space of multiple histories and identities, had to be put into parentheses in order to be transformed into a unified region: “In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically; it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics . . . it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity; things appear to mean something by themselves.”⁴² The trade table, the theory of overproduction, the China market, the scenic vista, the hospitable native are all, as Barthes says of myth, “poor, incomplete images, where the meaning is already relieved of its fat, and ready for a signification.”⁴³ Such images, which transform a culturally dense area into a structured region composed of readily discernible elements, perform the ideological work of relieving the area of its fat, that is, of its depth and multiplicity, which are the basic elements of life.

At various points in the book, I address alternative mappings of the American Pacific. In Chapter 3, “The American Asiatic Association and the Imperialist Imaginary of the American Pacific,” Fijian anthropologist Epili Hau’ofa’s re-vision of Oceania as a space of fullness and multiplicity is contrasted to the trade table that appeared to anchor the economic projections of the American Asiatic Association in “reality.” In Chapter 4, “Becoming Hawaiian,” I contrast the vision of plantation life offered through the romantic, tourist gaze of Jack and Charmian London to Milton Murayama’s *All I Asking for Is My Body*. In their travelogues, the Londons reproduce the ideology of plantation paternalism circulated by the white oligarchy ruling the islands at the time. In the process of producing a very different way of seeing plantation life, Murayama returns the fat, in the form of the interrelated issues of ethnicity, immigration, gender, and class, to the world(s) of Oceania projected by Epeli Hau’ofa. The limits of the American Pacific, erected by acts of subaltern resistance, can be plotted from many locations: the Boxer Rebellion, Filipino independence movements, the cult of Lili’uokalani, plantation strikes, Ho Chi Minh, yellow power. In the words of Edward Said: “Never was it the case that the imperial encounter pitted an active Western intruder against a supine or inert non-Western native; there was always some form of active resistance, and in the overwhelming majority of cases, the resistance finally won out.”⁴⁴

Another bundle of relationships within which the American Pacific needs to be placed is given by the space of what Lenin called inter-imperialist rivalry, or what Arif Dirlik has termed the “Euro-American Pacific.”⁴⁵ The Euro-American Pacific names those supranational movements, both alliances and rivalries, that were instrumental to the spread of capitalism throughout the region. Jack London brings the multiple dimensions of the Euro-American Pacific together in his short story “The Chinago.”⁴⁶ This is the story of Ah Cho, a Chinese laborer working on a plantation for an English company on the island of Tahiti, a French colony. Ah Cho, along with five other laborers, has been accused of killing a fellow worker by a German plantation boss. Ah Cho had been saving his pay, which was in Mexican dollars, hoping to return to China. Yet because he is unable to understand the language that his trial is conducted in, French, Ah Cho is mistaken for the real killer, Ah Chow, and is unjustly put to death. Whereas the Euro-American Pacific appears as a space of mobility and exchange, the Chinese Pacific as envisioned in “The Chinago” is a space of misrecognition, of the mistranslation that leads to the death of a Chinese plantation worker.

The lines that striate the American Pacific are intersected at every point by segments that run both above and below the level of the nation-state, and in multiple directions. The American Pacific, therefore, needs to be supplemented by an Asian American Pacific, an Alaskan Pacific, a Russian Pacific, a Mexican Pacific, a South American Pacific, and so on. Within the Asian Pacific, we find a Japanese Pacific, a Chinese Pacific, a Malaysian Pacific, and so on, each of which could then be broken down into smaller entities or connected to bigger ones. Only a schizophrenic cartographer could make sense of transversal relations between these various constellations. Perhaps the best advertisement for the Pacific as a space of multiplicity and difference, of segments that both encourage and resist totalization, is projected by the “indcipherable” maze of lines encrypted on the back of the White Whale in *Moby Dick*. These hieroglyphics are a kind of Deleuzean diagram, a “spatio-temporal multiplicity” that has to be repressed, or put into parentheses, in order make the lines that connect Asia/Pacific/America readable as a unified and structured whole.⁴⁷

ON ORIENTALISM

This book was initially conceived as an application of Edward Said’s critique of Orientalist culture to the American context. My question from the start: To what extent do the terms found in *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* help us to understand the history of U.S. expansion into Asia and the

Pacific? Said has never really engaged the histories of imperialism and colonialism in the United States with the same rigor or systematicity that he devotes to the British context. The biggest difference between the British and the American empires stems from the fact that the former was historically centered on India and the Middle East whereas the latter was centered on China, Japan, and Korea. And whereas England's relationship to its Orient was expressed in terms of direct colonialism for the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, the United States was not in a position to establish colonies in continental Asia. At the turn of the century, for example, economic leaders in the United States tended to support the spread of nationalism in China, primarily because Chinese national consciousness and a strong territorial state appeared to be the only way to block the encroachment of European powers.

Said writes that Orientalism refers to the "*distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; it is an *elaboration* not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of 'interests,' which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but maintains; it *is*, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different . . . world"⁴⁸ There is still a great deal of Americanist cultural work to be done that explores these rich and wide-ranging issues. My revisions to Said's critique of Orientalism do not point to any inherent flaw in his scholarship but simply to the fact that, as Said has himself repeatedly pointed out, concepts are historically specific and need to be carefully localized. "Geopolitical awareness," for example, has meant very different things in England and America. For example, in *Culture and Imperialism* Said argues that "The main battle in imperialism is over land; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future—these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative."⁴⁹ John Carlos Rowe offers an important corrective to this framing of the imperialist situation, stating that "Nevertheless, it is extraordinary how many of our imperial ventures had more to do with controlling trade routes and markets than with the inherent value of the land that happened to lie along the way. . . . U.S. imperialism has primarily been as intent on commercial, technological, and human control as on territorial control."⁵⁰ At the turn of the century, imperialism primarily referred to expanding markets. If imperialism is instead primarily defined in terms of

territorial conquest, what do we do with Japan, China, or Korea, sites where, until the middle of the twentieth century, the United States was not in a position to acquire colonies or express direct political might? The concept of the region, and of the regional imaginary, brings together multiple expressions of power whose differences are paved over when questions of culture, political economy, and governmentality are sealed within the boundaries of the nation-state or structured by rigid distinctions between Same and Other. Said's analysis of Orientalist discourse is too tightly organized in terms of the relationship between colonizer and colonized to make careful sense of American expansion into Asia and the Pacific.

Marxist critics of Said have argued that he never treats the political economy of expansion with nearly as much concern as he does issues of narrative, culture, and identity.⁵¹ Describing this culturalist shift, Aijaz Ahmad, Said's most vocal and intemperate critic, writes: "An obvious consequence of repudiating Marxism was that one now sought to make sense of the world of colonies and empires much less in terms of classes, much more in terms of nations and countries and races, and thought of imperialism itself not as a hierarchically structured system of global capitalism but as a relation, of governance and occupation, between richer and poorer countries, West and non-West."⁵² Against the desire to read colonialism and imperialism in terms of the politics of identity, Ahmad contends that "What gave European forms of these prejudices their special force in history, with devastating consequences for the actual lives of countless millions and expressed ideologically in full-blown Eurocentric racisms, was not some transhistorical process of ontological obsession and falsity—some gathering of unique force in domains of discourse—but, quite specifically, the power of colonial capitalism, which then gave rise to other sorts of powers."⁵³ Said does admit that there are economic interests behind imperialist cultural narratives, yet those interests tend to remain rather abstract and static. Economic interests need to be carefully distinguished from political interests. Political expansion and economic expansion are not necessarily synchronous processes and may, at times, come into conflict or move at different speeds. The American Pacific has been structured as much by the lack of coordination between the political and the economic as by the presence of it. Politicians, for example, were initially very sluggish in terms of acting on the promise of China and had to be pushed into action by business organizations like the American Asiatic Association. In theorizing the lack of coordination between political and economic processes, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari write, "Capitalism has from the beginning mobilized a force of deterritorialization infinitely surpassing the deterritorialization proper to the State."⁵⁴

We also need to be careful not to ascribe uniform interests to a homogeneous ruling class that appears to be running the imperialist machine, because ideological battles are regularly waged between business groups and between various “authorities” on the economy over questions regarding the *where* of expansion. Andrew Carnegie, for example, a rather potent and vicious symbol of American capitalism at the turn of the century, opposed the annexation of the Philippines yet pushed for the annexation of Canada. Conflicting interests, both within and between classes, structure the terrain on which struggles for hegemony are waged, the outcomes of which are not guaranteed in advance by either the needs of capital or the interests of a supposedly homogenous ruling class. Needs and interests are not transhistorical. Rather, they are shaped in and through discursive struggles that take place at the level of the state, civil society, and mass culture.

For Ahmad, Said symbolizes the tendency within postcolonial/poststructural theory to make discursive struggle, the struggle over culture, identical to political struggle. Ahmad, like E. San Juan Jr., punishes postcolonial theory for its elevation of terms like ambiguity, hybridity, or indeterminacy into coherent signs of political opposition. San Juan Jr., for example, declares: “Because postcolonial critics are heavily invested in the complicitious critique offered by postmodernism via irony, allegory, and self-reflexive tropes of doubleness, they reduce everything to metanarratives of contingency and indeterminacy.”⁵⁵ San Juan Jr. therefore concludes that “Despite its *prima facie* radicalism, I contend that in general postcolonial discourse mystifies the political/ideological effects of Western postmodernist hegemony and prevents change.”⁵⁶ While I am in part sympathetic to this critique, this project draws heavily on the poststructuralist theory toward which Ahmad and San Juan Jr. are so hostile.

In order to put together a critical cartography, this book moves back and forth between minute discourse analysis and the structural dimensions of capitalist expansion, hitting issues of culture and governmentality along the way. Hopefully, the readings assembled here reveal that a deconstructive sensibility can prove useful in understanding the political economy of imperialism; that attention to the sliding of signifiers can go beyond the politics of play. My goal has not been to reduce the economic to discourse but to expand the semiotic repertoire of economic terms. A crucial element of imperialist discourse at the turn of the century was the myth of the China market. What do we do with the endless chatter about the China market? Do we try to prove that this market wasn't all it was cracked up to be? Then what? We are still left with the fact that business leaders organized themselves upon an unblinking faith in this entity. Fredric Jameson can help us figure out what to do with this

imagined entity when he asks: “Is market discourse merely a rhetoric? It is and it isn’t . . . you have to talk about real markets just as much as about metaphysics, psychology, advertising, culture, representations, and libidinal apparatuses.”⁵⁷ In these readings of imperialist culture, I try not to turn everything into myth but to discern those discursive and institutional locations where history was transformed into myth, and where myth began to guide history. In doing so, I hope to have followed the lead of the myth-symbol critic Henry Nash Smith, who in his classic work of American Studies, *Virgin Land*, wrote: “These illustrations point to the conclusion that history cannot happen—that is, men cannot engage in purposive group behavior—without images which simultaneously express collective desires and impose coherence on the infinitely varied data of experience. These images are never, of course, exact reproductions of the physical and social environment. They cannot motivate and direct action unless they are drastic simplifications.”⁵⁸ The American Pacific is just such a “drastic simplification” of a complex geographical area. Imperialist culture in the United States at the turn of the century both produced and was founded upon this regionalizing myth, which continues to structure our national imaginary.

CHAPTER OUTLINES

In general, this book attempts to answer a basic question posed by David Harvey: “What role does geography play in the process of crisis formation and resolution?”⁵⁹

Literary and cultural critics often read the year 1898 as a point of transition in which the continental frontier was replaced by a Pacific frontier. In my first chapter, “The ‘Superlative and Poetry of Commerce,’” I question this periodization, arguing that the desire to capture the China trade coexisted with the continental frontier in the national imaginary of the nineteenth century. The material existence of the Eastern Seaboard depended heavily on the whaling industry and trade with Asia. The literary superstructure of New England was hardly unaware of the region’s economic debts to Asia and the Pacific, for it was also funded by cultural flows from the area. Asia and the Pacific provided important points of aesthetic cathexis for major authors of the period, whether it be in terms of Emerson’s economic Orientalism, Melville’s oceanic death-drive, or Whitman’s erotic, extra-maritime affairs. Nineteenth-century American literature is packed with narratives in which Asia and the Pacific figure as essential components of the nation’s cultural and economic identity. Economically, the emplotment of Pacific waters and

islands as mediating linkages between China and the United States during the mercantilist period inaugurated the emergence of an American Pacific.

Asia made its debut in the national imaginary as a space of convergence between economic fact and fantasy, giving direction and inspiration to processes of political and economic adventure. Asia has long been associated in the Western imagination with exotic wealth. Throughout the mercantilist period, the idealized flow of wealth was from east to west. In the post-bellum period, this idealized flow was reversed as economic crisis began to be read in terms of overproduction. In the second chapter, "An American Pacific Jeremiad," I read Frank Norris's *The Octopus* as an American Pacific jeremiad that located overproduction as the cause of the country's socioeconomic crisis and projected a China market as the cure.

In 1898 the American Asiatic Association was formed to promote trade in "Asia and Oceania" in direct response to the international rivalry for "spheres of influence" in China. At the time, it was the only interest group singularly organized around this historical task. In the third chapter, "The American Asiatic Association and the Imperialist Imaginary of the American Pacific," I provide a close reading of the *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* and argue that "Asia and Oceania" was not a geographical given. Rather, through the play of geographical signifiers structuring the *Journal's* discourse, an entity about which knowledge could be accumulated was imagined: an American Pacific. By reading David Harvey's notion of the "spatial fix" into Marx's theory of crisis in the *Grundrisse*, I argue that capital needs a regional imaginary in order to overcome spatial barriers to expansion.

In the fourth chapter, "Becoming Hawaiian," I turn to Jack London's travel writings and short fiction set in the Pacific. Jack London spent the better part of the last sixteen years of his life sailing, and signifying, around the Pacific, funding his tours with a constant stream of short stories, novels, and magazine articles. A variety of different places and peoples were drawn into the semiotic webs spun out of his time in the Pacific. But for the Londons, Hawai'i was exceptional, the ontos and telos of the Pacific. London's travel writings manufacture a desperate identification with the Hawaiian other, and an equally desperate disavowal of the Londons' position as American tourists. Seeing themselves in the place of the other gave Jack and Charmian a way to disengage from feelings of complicity with the emerging project of U.S. imperialism in the Pacific. Lili'uokalani named people "Quasi Americans" who used a fiction of self-othering to take imaginative possession of the islands. Lili'uokalani found this fiction to be one of the most effective, and insidious, weapons in the war for annexation.

In the fifth chapter, I find in Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* a counter-narrative of the American Pacific that appears through her representation of the Chinese diaspora. *China Men* is a route-text, less concerned with the linear tracing of roots back to an origin in China than with dispersing those roots across the Pacific and North America. *China Men* manages to work on, and against, two fronts: the idealization of the frontier in the American national imaginary, and the idealization of China in the effort to contain the identity of overseas Chinese populations. The narrative of *China Men* projects the fluid contours of a third space, that of a Chinese American Pacific, that eludes territorialization by either the United States or China.

I conclude in the sixth chapter with a reading of *Memories of a Forgotten War*, an experimental documentary film by independent filmmakers Camilla Griggers and Sari Lluch Dalena. While this country was founded on the belief that the power of a government derives from the consent of the governed, it became brutally clear to Filipinos at the turn of the century, as it had earlier to Native Americans and slaves imported from Africa, that this idea only applied to God-fearing white people. It is this combination of ignorance and injustice that Griggers and Dalena address with their vivid excavation of the savagery conducted by the U.S. military in the name of civilization against the people of the Philippines at the dawn of the twentieth century.

In the process of reconsidering what he was trying to do in *Virgin Land*, Henry Nash Smith lamented: "I did not follow the consequences of the idea of Manifest Destiny beyond a discussion of Whitman's mystical vision of brotherhood of nations and races brought together by the American advance across the Pacific."⁶⁰ Hopefully the following pages, which owe a great deal of debt to the kind of cultural analysis initiated by Smith, make some progress in this direction.

The “Superlative and Poetry of Commerce”

Scattered Origins of an American Pacific Frontier

Capitalism long ago created a world market.

—V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*

The Buddhist is a Transcendentalist.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

LOOKING OUTWARD

In Han Ong’s novel *Fixer Chao* (2001), William Paulinha is a down-and-out hustler drowning in a pool of cheap tequila when he is approached by Shem C., a writer seeking revenge on the wealthy New York community that he married into. Shem’s plan is to reinvent William as Master Chao, a venerable Feng Shui expert, in order to relieve this trendy community of their dignity and their cash. William becomes quite skilled in the Chinese art of arrangement, too skilled, in fact, not because of some Oriental essence that was waiting to be released but rather because “Meditation, yoga, transcendentalism were once more, as in the seventies, the buzzwords. And you could tell, if Madonna—the head mall girl who approached everything as a trying on and a taking off—had gotten hold of it, it was only a heartbeat away from her young disciples. . . .”¹ William gains his clients’ trust and thus access deep into their twisted personal lives and bank accounts, yet he never takes complete pleasure in the scam: “Will you trust me? I asked, feeling like the priests of my childhood in Manila, those fucking fakers.”²

Master Chao’s vague yet earnest spiritualism enables him to profit from a longstanding Orientalist tradition in America, one that connects Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau to Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, and that is currently sustained by Los Angeles Lakers coach Phil Jackson and Madonna. The Orient has long provided a line of flight for a diverse cast of dharma bums from the banality, spiritual vacuity, and crass materialism of American culture. And yet, whereas the yogic retreat to Walden enabled Thoreau to imagine that he had cleansed himself of the “sordid stain of commerce,” as Hepzibah puts it in *House of the Seven Gables*, the Orient

has, at the same time, always figured in the national imaginary precisely as a symbol of wealth and exotic luxury goods. Today, you can step into any Pottery Barn, or Ligne Roset if you can afford it, and you will find that the nineteenth-century cult of *chinoiserie*, which furnished the homes of the country's patrician class with exotic silks and porcelain, still keeps the cash registers ringing.³ Oriental self-fashioning obviously requires deep pockets.

In this chapter, I locate the scattered origins of the American Pacific in literary projections of Asia and the Pacific as an economic frontier. After the Civil War, this geographic area began to be imagined as constituting a unified and structured region. Such regional coherence was not a defining feature of the narrative production of Asia and the Pacific prior to the Civil War. While the United States might not have possessed colonies in Asia or the Pacific in the antebellum period, this area did possess a strong hold on the nation's literary and economic imagination. Canonical American writers such as Washington Irving, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman all fixated on these extraterritorial spaces as aesthetic and economic frontiers at a time when the continental frontier was supposedly shaping the American character and the defining country's democratic institutions.⁴ My goal here, then, is to break up the all too familiar, and all too easy, story of nineteenth-century American culture that sees the Pacific frontier as the successor to the continental frontier. The Asia/Pacific frontier was there from the start.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ASIA/PACIFIC FRONTIER IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Only recently have Americanists begun to address the significance of the Asia/Pacific frontier in American culture prior to the Civil War. One explanation for this absence is captured by several lines from Edward Said's *Orientalism*: "there was no deeply invested tradition of Orientalism . . . in the United States . . . the imaginative investment was never made . . . perhaps because the American frontier, the one that counted, was the westward one."⁵

Said puts his stamp on an assumption that has guided the study of American culture for a long time, at least since Fredric Jackson Turner delivered his "frontier thesis" as president of the American Historical Association at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago. Turner's mission was to reveal those unique qualities that defined American civilization. For much of the nineteenth century, American history was told either in terms of the origin of the nation's democratic institutions in a tribe of Saxons residing in the medieval forests of Germany, or in terms of the slavery issue. Obviously,

neither of these perspectives is capable of setting off fireworks or inspiring patriotic flag-waving. Turner found the key to American exceptionalism on the frontier, the boundary that separated civilization from savagery. Turner claimed that with repeated crossings of this boundary, the "American" gradually came into existence: "The result is that to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism. . . ."⁶ The western frontier gave Americans a coherent sense of where they came from and where they needed to go. It also provided the nation with a sense of where Native Americans should go—away. In this compelling story of the adventurous birth of the white nation, Turner condensed and universalized ideologies of rugged individualism, of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority, and of the missionary errand into wilderness that would come to plague American mass culture throughout the twentieth century, as embodied in reactionary action heroes such as John Wayne, Charles Bronson, Rambo, or Ronald Reagan.

Although few Americanists would like to be caught in bed with the geographical determinism and racism of Turner's thesis, the problem of the frontier has consistently provided the horizon beyond which few Americanists working on the nineteenth century have ventured to think. Turner's frontier thesis, now viewed more as a cultural symptom than as fact, authorized a periodization of American history, and a production of national space, that has exerted a hypnotic influence on the fields of American Literature and American Studies over the course of the twentieth century, beginning with the foundational work of the American Literature Group (ALG) in 1928.⁷ David Shumway argues that the ALG "established both the main boundaries of the field of American literature and the most significant subdivisions of that territory, its major periods and problems."⁸ The major problem for the study of American literature, one that gained momentum as it was passed from the ALG to the myth-symbol critics of the 1950s and on to the revisionist readings of the nineteenth century that came out of, and helped shape, the new social movements of the 1960s, was the problem of the frontier.⁹ Whether read as the master symbol of American exceptionalism or as a symptom of racist empire-building, the continental frontier has repeatedly set the geographical scope through which Americanist scholarship has been pursued.

Literary and cultural critics working within the frontier paradigm instituted by the ALG typically assume that the area of Asia and the Pacific did not really count until the twentieth century. More often than not, 1898 has

served as a convenient point of transition from continental to overseas expansion. The absence of an obvious system of direct political control of overseas territories, in contrast to the British Empire, provides the geopolitical rationale that fixes this transition in the national memory (or it would, if Americans knew anything about the conquest of Hawai'i or the Philippines). The first non-contiguous territorial acquisition made by the United States was the purchase of Alaska in 1867. In the 1860s, Secretary of State William Seward made noises about purchasing Hawai'i, arguing that American economic prosperity and social and political stability depended on control of the Pacific access to the markets of Asia. Yet these imperialist ejaculations were premature. Seward's failure to secure the annexation of Hawai'i has provided Richard Drinnon with a concise explanation as to why the United States did not possess an overseas empire before the Civil War: "He [Seward] knew as well that an industrialized, steam-propelled empire moved more rapidly than one that was sail-driven and horse-drawn and knew what he was proposing shot ahead of where the country was. For all these advantages to be realized, the United States still had to lick its Civil War wounds, complete the basic industrial plant, mop up resistance of the Plains Indians against final continental consolidation, and have a political and economic climate warm enough for the plunge into overseas colonies."¹⁰

Because political, economic, and cultural domination was directly expressed over the indigenous populations of North America and African slaves, as well as over Asian and Latin American laborers, these racial and ethnic groups are usually read as the constitutive others of an expanding American Empire. Indian-hating, slavery, and the super-exploitation and then gradual exclusion of Asian labor were supported by a vicious Anglo-Saxonism that justified the conquering of the continent on the basis of the racial superiority of the white race.¹¹ But we should not let this continental scheme of racism and oppression authorize the assumption that the western frontier was the one that really counted. In order to enter the Asia/Pacific frontier into the equation, political and cultural oppression needs to be delinked from economic expansion.

American Pacific Orientalism begins with those spaces coded as economically valuable in the national imaginary before they were subjected to military domination, juridico-political administration, and state-sanctioned racist violence. Unlike the nineteenth-century European and British contexts, the distinction between Occident and Orient does not neatly map onto the difference between colonizer and colonized when viewing the American context. American expansion into Asia and the Pacific at this time forces us to grasp economic encounters that cannot be fully handled by a colonizer/

colonized model of the world. So how should we think about those extraterritorial spaces coded as economically valuable that could not, and would not, be subjected to American political power? In the nineteenth-century, interest in the Pacific was ultimately directed toward expanding trade with China. At the time, the United States was not in a position to establish colonies in the Pacific, and it has never been in a position to establish formal colonies in China. If anything, American foreign policy in the Pacific from the nineteenth-century to the present has been shaped by the inability to express direct political and economic might in China. When considering the role of China in the nineteenth-century national imaginary, we need to keep in mind that, as Richard Van Alstyne has succinctly put it, "the cliché that 'trade follows the flag' has no validity for China."¹²

AMERICAN PACIFIC ORIENTALISM

The linear, episodic narrative of westward expansion, which reads American history from its Puritan origins up through the nineteenth century as an errand into wilderness driven by American Adams, excludes from its field of vision the fact that, from the very beginning, New England was heavily dependent on maritime activity. The rough coastline of the New World did not readily lend itself to agriculture and forced colonists to turn to the sea for food and marketable goods. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, following the nation's independence from England, the sphere of maritime activity began to include the Pacific Ocean, as American ships could enter these waters for the first time. Independence from England had another important effect: when England prevented American ships from trading directly with colonies in Southeast Asia, the geographical terms "Orient" and "Asia," which during the eighteenth century encompassed a massive, vaguely defined area and could just as easily refer to India as to China or the Arabic world, gradually began to refer primarily to China, around which was clustered Japan, Korea, and the Philippines. By the 1890s, India and the Middle East were pushed to the margins of American maps of Asia or the Orient.

In 1790 the *Columbia* returned to Boston as the first American ship to circumnavigate the globe, opening the Pacific Northwest fur trade along the way. By 1792 a trade route connecting Boston, the Pacific Northwest, and Canton, and then returning to Boston by way of the Cape of Good Hope, had been established.¹³ If we add to the Northwest fur trade the facts that by the middle of the nineteenth century whaling and whaling production were leading industries in Massachusetts¹⁴ and that Salem was a major international port for products from the East Indies and China, it becomes imper-

ative to acknowledge the maritime origins of the nation-state. From the late eighteenth century onward, the Pacific and Atlantic coastlines assumed economic value in relation to Asia, both in fact and fiction.¹⁵ Summarizing the significance of the China trade in the nineteenth century, John Kuo Wei Tchen writes, “The use of Chinese things, ideas, and people in the United States, in various imagined and real forms, has been instrumental in forming this nation’s cultural identity.”¹⁶ And Samuel Eliot Morison nicely summarizes the oceanic orientation of the early republic in his *Maritime History of Massachusetts*: “For two hundred years the Bible was the spiritual, the sea the material sustenance of Massachusetts.”¹⁷

The literary culture of New England was hardly unaware of the region’s debts to Asian and Pacific spaces. References to this area are all over the map of nineteenth-century literary and cultural production: Poe’s Oriental tales, the Pacific death-drives of Gordon Pym and Ahab, Hawthorne’s dark, Oriental heroines, the influence of Hinduism on Emerson and Thoreau. As Emerson would write in “The Superlative,” “The Northern genius finds itself singularly refreshed and stimulated by the breadth and luxuriance of Eastern imagery and modes of thinking, which go to check the pedantry of our inventions and the excess of our detail.”¹⁸ And this is just in the realm of literature. Add to this the trade of furs for tea, sea slug for silk, ginseng for porcelain, and we are forced to read the eastern seaboard of the early republic in terms of the emergence of commercial routes through Asia and the Pacific. The central question for the study of the emergence of an American Pacific is how to synthesize diverse economic practices and literary representations in relation to the production of space that emerged from them and at the same time helped ground them.

American Pacific Orientalism begins with the need on the part of merchants and traders, in whose hands were held the fate of countless numbers of sailors and ship builders as well as the desires of the country’s patrician class, to find items that could be exchanged at the strictly regulated Canton market for luxury goods such as tea, silk, and porcelain. These luxury goods played a significant role in the everyday lives of the upper classes in America, for, much like today, they provided a means of creating cultural distinctions between the haves and the have-nots. The practice of “tea time” provides a good example of Orientalist self- and home-fashioning in the early republic: “With the assistance of servants and slaves, the home became a vehicle for cultivating genteel moral virtue. Among other things of value, Chinese objects of distinction were critical to this process. Most notably, tea time and the family dinner were turned into secular rituals for social interactions between family, friends, and guests to take place.”¹⁹

In *New York before Chinatown*, John Tchen provides a vividly detailed catalogue of the ways in which America's patrician class relied on cultural commodities from the Orient in order to distinguish themselves from those perceived to be beneath them. Through such commodities, this class identified itself not only with the supposed vast wealth of Asia but with the rich sense of history conveyed by the Orient, thought to be the birthplace of civilization. The West had been sipping on intoxicating images of China's wealth for a long time, at least since 1291, when Marco Polo supposedly returned to Venice from China, his bags packed with tall tales of the jeweled monkeys and gold-plated elephants he discovered there.²⁰

Considered from the perspective of world history, it is hard to understate the importance of the mercantilist desire to tap into the flow of odd and exciting goods waiting in the Orient. Eric Wolf provides the deep historical perspective in which nineteenth-century American thought about Asia needs to be situated: "The voyages of European explorers and merchants to America and Africa grew out of the search for routes to Asia, the imaginary treasure house of unlimited wealth."²¹ And Henry Nash Smith fills out the geopolitical rationale for such voyages: "From the ancient Phoenicians to the English, the nation which has commanded the trade of Asia in each successive era has been the leader of the world in civilization, power, and wealth."²² Marco Polo got the idea of China as fountain of sublime wealth rolling, a fantasy that has provided inspiration for a good number of real adventures. The fact that the jury is still out on whether Marco Polo ever really went to China or just made the whole thing up provides the historical irony upon which this book is based: economic fantasies provide the inspiration for real material adventures.

The ability of American merchants and traders to tap into this "imaginary treasure house of unlimited wealth" was greatly expanded when they were freed from the grip of the British. Yet the expansion of commercial relations with China confronted a significant barrier in nature. While the nation's artists and poets were celebrating the landscape, awe-inspiring waterfalls and majestic vistas did not have much purchasing power in China. In his list of the requirements for developing sea power, Alfred Thayer Mahan wrote, "The tendency to trade, involving of necessity the production of something to trade with, is the national characteristic most important to the development of sea power."²³ The North American continent did not produce anything, with the limited exception of inferior grades of ginseng, which was desired at the vibrant markets of Canton. The fur that kept otters and seals warm as they swam around the Pacific Northwest was a more durable object of exchange, at least until reserves were virtually wiped out by the middle of the century.

In 1835, Washington Irving, considered the greatest American writer at the time, was approached by John Jacob Astor and asked to write a history of Astor's efforts to establish the Pacific Fur Company. The company began in 1810 and went under in 1813, following the outbreak of the War of 1812. Even though the company failed, Astor wanted to be remembered as a "dreamer of Empire"²⁴ and placed Irving in charge of creating this public memory. Given the size of Irving's reputation, *Astoria* possessed immediate importance as a national narrative at a time when the territorial boundaries of the nation were still relatively fluid. With *Astoria*, Irving assumed the historical task of creating an imperial legacy for the developing nation, and the center of the map sustaining this legacy was Astoria, the mouth of the Columbia River located between Oregon and Washington. In *Astoria*, the Pacific Northwest is located both as an outpost of American civilization and as a jumping-off point to the Canton market. Irving's history maps Astoria as a place that is both center and periphery, national and transnational.

Irving begins *Astoria* with the observation that "Two leading objects of commercial gain have given birth to wide and daring enterprize in the early history of the Americas; the precious metals of the south, and the rich peltries of the north. . . . These two pursuits have thus in a manner been the pioneers and precursors of civilization. Without pausing on the borders, they have penetrated at once, in defiance of difficulties and dangers, to the heart of savage continents, laying open the hidden secrets of the wilderness. . . ."²⁵ For Irving, the fur trader and trapper, those "Sindbads of the wilderness," provide the economic frontline of an advancing civilization. Yet Irving's story takes an interesting turn when he reports on the history and geography of the early fur trade.

Irving notes that following the voyages of Captain Cook along the Pacific Coast, American merchants learned of "the vast quantities of the sea otter to be found along that coast, and immense prices to be obtained for its fur in China. It was as if a new gold coast had been discovered."²⁶ The China trade created the gold standard for this region. The Pacific Northwest gained strategic value for commercial adventurers like Astor due to its position in relation to China. Irving tracks the fur trade up the coast of California to Alaska. The movement of the traders documented by Irving deserves to be quoted at length. Traders "would run in near shore, anchor, and wait for the natives to come off in their canoes with peltries. The trade exhausted in one place, they would up anchor and off to another. In this way they would consume the summer and when autumn came on, would run down to the Sandwich islands and winter in some friendly and plentiful harbour. In the following year they would resume their summer trade, commencing at

California and proceeding north; and having in the course of the two seasons, collected a sufficient cargo of peltries, would make the best of their way to China. Here they would sell their furs, take in teas, nankeens and other merchandize, and return to Boston after an absence of two or three years."²⁷

From this passage we get a very different representation of the time and space of American empire-building than is found in Turner's thesis. Rather than a monolithic movement from East to West across vast stretches of virgin land, here the starting point is the Pacific and the founding economic movement is up and down the West Coast. In *Astoria*, Irving romanticizes the fur trade, seeing in it "as wandering and adventurous a commerce on the water as did the traders and trappers on land."²⁸ This simile imagines a synchronic relation between maritime adventure and continental adventure. One does not precede the other. Both are peopled by American Adams, or Sinbads, and errands into the wilderness. The difference is that one errand leads into the Pacific Ocean rather than the forest.

Irving situates the Lewis and Clark Expedition, which made possible the "linking together [of] the trade of both sides of the continent," in the context of this commercial circuit.²⁹ From the perspective of the fur trade, the interior of the continent appears as a border for "both sides of the continent." This perspective possessed clarity in the eyes of the historian and trader long before California, Oregon, and Washington were incorporated as states. The ability to represent the interior of the continent as a frontier from the perspective of the Pacific Northwest is authorized by the value of the region as, in Irving's terms, "a new gold coast."

Astor looked to extract the value swimming in the waters of the Pacific Northwest as part of his imperial dreams. His plan was to create a line of small trading posts along the Missouri and the Columbia Rivers that would feed into a large trading post at the mouth of the Columbia: "A ship was to be sent annually from New York to the main establishment with reinforcements and supplies, and with merchandize suited to the trade. It would take on board the furs collected during the preceding year, carry them to Canton, invest the proceeds in the rich merchandize of China, and return thus freighted to New York."³⁰

Astoria was a place where multiple times and spaces converged. For the expanding American empire, it was a non-contiguous area dependent on supplies from New York. For Astor, it was a place where furs from the interior and Pacific coastline could be accumulated. And for the merchants, investors, and mariners, it was a point of departure for the Canton market. If we add to this commercial circuit the fact that the Pacific Northwest was home to a number of indigenous populations such as the Kalapuya Indians,

as well as traders and trappers from Russia, Britain, and Spain, we get a production of space that is thoroughly decentered and transnational yet at the same time centered within a narrative framing of the American nation-state. Irving's history of Astor's fantasies looked to secure the importance of the region for a developing America and thus counter the expanding presence of other nations, especially Russia, in the region. The purchase of Alaska in 1867 would take care of Russia, at least until the Cold War.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari suggest that "capitalism has from the beginning mobilized a force of deterritorialization infinitely surpassing the deterritorialization proper to the State."³¹ In other words, trade does not always follow the flag. In fact, the reverse has often been the case, at least when viewing American advances into the Pacific. In Irving's *Astoria*, there is a notable absence of stable colonial binaries. Because of the lack of repressive state power in the region, traders had to meet indigenous peoples more or less as equals, regardless of whatever racist attitudes they might have personally held. John Kendrick, captain of the *Columbia*, told fur traders to "treet the Natives with Respect where Ever you go. Cultivate frindship with them as much as possibel and take Nothing from them But what you pay them for according to a fair agreement, and not suffer your peopel to affront them or treet them Ill."³² When the government finally caught up with Astor, native populations were subjected to genocidal policies issued by a distant metropolis, thus establishing clear boundaries between ruler and ruled. It wasn't until the 1850s that this area was "secured" and tribal groups were moved to the Grand Ronde Reservation.

The representation of space that emerges from Astor's fantasies offers a very different way to narrate the emergence of the nation, one in which expansion is not read as a continuous crossing of a monolithic boundary separating "civilization" from "savagery." Rather, "both sides of the continent" are made contemporaneous, connected by a system of exchange that extends across the Pacific Ocean. Commerical fantasies of China's wealth created a perspective from which the Atlantic and Pacific coastlines could be seen as temporally connected, while being disjunct from the interior of the continent. In other words, Astor and Irving looked at America, which was still an unstable social, political, and economic formation, from the perspective of the emerging China trade. This perspective enabled them to fix both coasts of the North American continent within a single narrative framing of the nation long before the West Coast was politically incorporated into the United States. Astor's material efforts, combined with Irving's representational efforts, translated the fur trade into the forerunner of empire by incorporating the transnational space of Astoria into the history of America.

EMERSON'S ECONOMIC ORIENTALISM

Ralph Waldo Emerson lived a life that was in loving proximity to the Orient, if for no other reason than that his nickname for his second wife, Lydia, was Asia. This nickname has received quite a bit of attention because critics have found it to represent Emerson's attitude toward Asia and thus toward the bigger issues of colonialism and imperialism. Fred Carpenter suggests that Emerson saw in his wife the fundamental reconciliation of opposites, such as male and female, mind and body, that defined the essence of Asia. If Carpenter is correct, then this nickname locates Emerson in a tradition of romantic Orientalism in which Asia appears to be intellectually and spiritually superior to Euro-America. Yet Malini Schueller argues that, "Asia/Lydia . . . represents faculties of emotion as opposed to the faculties that Emerson (the West) represents."³³ This interpretation locates Emerson in the Orientalist tradition in which Euro-America appears to be superior to Asia and is therefore entitled to do what it wants with the people, land, and wealth there. Given the fact that Emerson displayed uneven, vague, and contradictory attitudes toward Asia, plenty of evidence can be marshaled to support both interpretations. However, another explanation for the origin of Lydia's nickname appears in a letter Emerson wrote to Thomas Carlyle in 1838: "But at home, I am rich,—rich enough for ten brothers. My wife Lidian is an incarnation of Christianity,—I call her Asia—& keeps my philosophy from Antinomianism."³⁴ Both Carpenter and Schueller miss the mark, I believe, for it is the association of Asia with "riches" that provides the key to understanding Emerson's Orientalism.

It is tempting to view Emerson as the founding guru of those waves of spiritualism surfed by new age travelers such as Timothy Leary or Madonna. In many ways, Emerson is the Allan Watts or Deepak Chopra of the nineteenth century, encouraging the intellectual and spiritual casualties of Jacksonian liberalism to look inside and think for themselves. Indic religious texts provided Emerson with the authority and inspiration for rigorous, philosophical bouts of soul-searching.³⁵ Yet the most coherent thing that can be said about the representations of Asia in Emerson's poems and essays is that they are marked by more than a few contradictions and inconsistencies. As a devout idealist, Emerson based his generalizations at first on secondary readings, and then on primary readings, of religious texts such as the *Vishnu Purana*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Bhagavad Gita*, and therefore he could do little but furnish his imagination with a highly abstract and dehistoricized Asia. Material things did not matter to Emerson; it was the essence behind the thing that mattered, and the road from essence to stereotype is not very long.

While it is tempting to discuss Emerson's Orientalism in the singular, critics have not paid sufficient attention to the fact that there were at least two Asias flowing out of his transcendental pen: a religious-philosophical Asia and an economic Asia. The former, which Emerson derived from his readings of the Indic classics and their Western explicators, was a timeless entity defined by spiritual unity or oneness. The latter, on the other hand, was an imaginary Asia filled with vast, though stagnant, riches, and was therefore subjected to a progressive sense of history and to a belief in Anglo-Saxon cultural superiority. At times, Emerson romanticizes Asia, elevating it above a materialistic and small-minded America. At other times, though, the timeless and mystical Asia appears to be a stationary, decadent civilization, defined precisely by the wasteful display of luxury goods, that needs to be regenerated by a rapidly moving West. Emerson never manages to carefully reconcile these two visions of Asia.

By reading Emerson from the perspective of his attitudes regarding identity categories such as race, gender, and nation, Schueller has concluded that Emerson was a proto-imperialist: "The more Emerson read Indic texts, the more he began to use the Orient to stand for an absolute spiritual past, against which a whole and unified New World nationhood as the latest seat of the westly, Anglo-Saxon movement of civilization could be formulated."³⁶ There are more than a few places where Emerson appears to be an unequivocal booster of the superiority of Anglo-Saxon civilization. "If it comes back however to the question of final superiority," Emerson wrote, "it is too plain that the star of empire rolls West: that the warm sons of the Southeast have bent the neck under the yoke of the cold temperament and the exact understanding of the Northwestern races."³⁷ For all his idealism, at times Emerson channels a rather crude ecological determinism, in which cultural differences, and the superiority of the West, are explained, and justified, according to the regularity of weather patterns.

Schueller also finds fault with Emerson's tendency to envision the East as an ". . . unproblematic spiritual territory, dissociated from materiality and power relations."³⁸ The first half of this sentence is more or less on point, but the second deserves some qualification. Asia appears in Emerson's writings as both a spiritual territory and an economic territory. It is difficult to fix Emerson's attitudes toward Asia because they changed dramatically over the course of his life. During his undergraduate years, he wrote a condescending little poem entitled "Indian Superstition." As the title suggests, the poet sings the praises of an enlightened Western civilization at the expense of those people stuck at an earlier stage of the historical dialectic. At the same time, though, in what would become a familiar move during the age

of imperialism, Emerson was critical of British violence against people who had yet to see the light of civilization.³⁹ America is great, according to Emerson, because we aren't nasty and short like the colonized or mean and brutish like the colonizers. America simply brings sweetness and light, in the form of reason and democracy, into the world. Emerson did not pull his punches when advancing his thoughts about China, writing in 1824, "Celestial Empire, hang the Celestial Empire. I hate Peking."⁴⁰

Yet it would not be long before Emerson would be knocked off his high horse and discover that maybe everything didn't revolve around the enlightenment project. The turning point came in 1830, when he read Joseph de Gerardo's *Histoire comparee systems*, which argued that philosophy should replace religion as the focal point of learning.⁴¹ Gerardo introduced Emerson to ancient Indic, Chinese, and Persian thought, which was presented as the philosophical equal to Hebrew, Greek, and Christian thought. Emerson gradually came to accept that Eastern thought, because it dealt in universals, could be a valuable resource for thinking about the self and world, life and death, in the American context. In 1831, Emerson began to hear about the *Bhagavad Gita* from the French philosopher Victor Cousin, the study of which provided the inspiration for poems such as "Brahma" and "Hamatreya."⁴²

"Brahma" did not do Emerson's reputation as a poet a whole lot of good. The poem baffled readers, and popular journals mercilessly parodied its vague mysticism. "Hamatreya," on the other hand, appropriated Eastern thought in order to deliver a very clear lesson to American readers. The poem begins by setting up a group of proud American Adams, confident in their ability to master the land: "'Tis mine, my children's and my name's. / How sweet the west wind sounds in my own trees!" The poet then proceeds to knock them down: "Earth laughs in flowers, to see her boastful boys / Earth-proud, proud of the earth which is not theirs; / Who steer the plough, but cannot steer their feet / Clear of the grave."⁴³ "Hamatreya" begins with the possessive words of the farmers, yet it is nature that gets the last laugh: "Mine and yours; / Mine, not yours. / Earth endures. . . . They called me theirs, / Who so controlled me; / Yet every one / Wished to stay, and is gone, / How am I theirs, / If they cannot hold me, / But I hold them?"⁴⁴ Shortly before these lines were written, the Panic of 1837 had made Emerson suspicious of the vacuous materialism and vain individualism that was coming to define the Jackson era. This was an important move for Emerson, as it would be for a 1960s counterculture reared on Jack Kerouac's *Dharma Bums*. Sounding like Timothy Leary on one of his jeremiads into the psychoactive wilderness, Emerson wrote: "In the East, the words I and Mine constitute ignorance."⁴⁵

A more systematic treatment of Asia appears in the section on Plato in "Representative Men," where Emerson unleashes a fury of geo-philosophical binaries in order to outline the historical significance of Plato: "At last comes Plato, the distributor, who needs no barbaric paint, or tattoo, or whooping; for he can define. He leaves Asia the vast and superlative; he is the arrival of accuracy and intelligence. . . . This defining is philosophy. Philosophy is the account which the human mind gives to itself of the constitution of the world. Two cardinal facts lie forever at the base; the one, and the two.—1. Unity, or Identity; and, 2. Variety. We unite all things, by perceiving the superficial differences, and profound resemblances. But every mental act,—the very perception of identity or oneness, recognizes the difference of things. Oneness and otherness. It is impossible to speak, or to think, without embracing both."⁴⁶

This passage exemplifies an important, and consistent, contradiction in Emerson's Orientalist cultural geography. On the one hand, Asia is located in the past, left behind by the progress birthed by the scientific precision of Plato. As a faithful enlightenment thinker, Emerson repeatedly associates accuracy and precision, and the devout attachment to the materiality of the here and now, with historical progress. On the other hand, sameness and difference, unity and variety form interdependent, overlapping terms upon which all existence depends; they "lie forever at the base." Therefore, Asia cannot be simply identified as a residual civilization. Given his homegrown Hegelianism, at the end of the day it was unity that mattered most to Emerson, not difference, variety, or distinctions. On a material-economic level, Asia was stuck in the past. On a philosophical-spiritual level, though, Asia had moved beyond the West.

If anything, for Emerson the West was a supplement of the East, not the other way around. The splitting of the world into its constitutive parts is simply a phase through which appearances must pass. Intellectual, poetic, and spiritual power involves transcending differences, because in the last instance, everything was One: "In all nations, minds dwell in fundamental unity, sublime unity."⁴⁷ This was the basic point of "Brahma" that baffled so many readers: "Far or forgot to me is near; / Shadow and sunlight are the same; / The vanished gods to me appear; / And one to me are shame and fame."⁴⁸ The reconciliation of opposing terms, such as fame and shame, is most characteristically demonstrated in the essay entitled "Fate," where Emerson shows how much he wants his cake, in the form of necessity, and wants to eat it too, in the form of freedom: "But Fate has its lord; limitation its limits,—is different seen from above and from below, from within and from without. For though Fate is immense, so is Power, which is the other

fact in the dual world, immense. If Fate follows and limits Power, Power attends and antagonizes Fate.⁴⁹ Like fate and freedom, America and Asia relate to each other dialectically, each supplementing the other, one becoming two, two always on the way to becoming one. The Emersonian dialectic has led Carpenter to claim that "At the deep end of the pool, East and West were one."⁵⁰ Emerson did like to go off the deep end. Dialectical relations between necessity and freedom, sameness and difference, and unity and variety create the a priori foundation for all being and thinking. Because each is essential to the other, the question of superiority is irrelevant. Only the failure to work toward the reconciliation of opposing terms would signify lack, failure, or inferiority for Emerson.

Schueller argues that "Fate" rests on a distinction between an active West and a passive East: "The construction of the Orient as incapable of action and the assigning of will and agency to the Occident were means by which the nineteenth-century discourse of imperialism justified itself. Oriental passivity and fatalism invited New World will and action."⁵¹ Yet an important distinction needs to be entered between Emerson's attitude toward Hinduism and his attitude toward Buddhism. Buddhism was the only Eastern religious system that Emerson did not like, precisely because he believed that it encouraged quietism and passivity.⁵² Emerson did not simply read Asia as a homogenous text. An unchecked belief in the ability of individuals to create their destiny would be for Emerson just as crude, just as much a sign of ignorance, as the blind, passive acceptance of fate. If there were any religion that encouraged a blind acceptance of fate, according to Emerson, it wasn't to be found in Asia, but in our own backyard in the form of Calvinism.

One thing is clear, though—size always mattered to Emerson. Traversing the Emerson canon, the most consistent word one finds attached to Asia after "unity" is "vast": vast wealth, vast soul, vast geography, vast speech. All of these spheres come together in "The Superlative," where Emerson moves quickly from observations regarding different styles of speech to lofty generalizations regarding essential differences between Occident and Orient. Emerson presents America as the land of plainspeak, where the relationship between word and thing or event is not mediated by fancy, unnecessary elocution. The ideal-typical subject of this mode, of course, is the common man. Excess in speech creates, rather than overcomes, the distance between people and the world: "We talk, sometimes, with people whose conversation would lead you to suppose that they had lived in a museum, where all the objects were monsters and extremes. Their good people are phoenixes; their naughty are like the prophet's figs. They use the superlative of grammar: 'most perfect,' 'most exquisite,' 'most horrible.' Like the French, they are

enchanted, they are desolate, because you have got or have not got a shoe-string or a wafer you happen to want, not perceiving that superlatives are diminutive and weaken; that the positive is the sinew of speech, the superlative the fat.”⁵³

The superlative is excess, exaggeration, overstatement in speech—the bloated rhetoric of Captain Ahab. Ahab provides an interesting contrast to Emerson’s arguments in “The Superlative,” where he dwells extensively on imagined threats to a healthy national body. Whereas Emerson would find greater beauty and reality in the vigorous, regular tapping of a telegraph key, Melville found it in the irregular, portentous thumping of Ahab’s ivory prosthetic. Rather than filling the gap between word and world with the prosthetics of romance, Emerson pays his debts to the practical science of optometry: “I am very much indebted to my eyes, and am content that they should see the real world, always geometrically finished without blur or halo.”⁵⁴ Emerson therefore aborts the desire for romance from the American scene: “Our customary and mechanical existence is not favorable to flights; long nights and frost hold us pretty fast to realities.”⁵⁵ Contrast these lines to Ishmael’s musings at the beginning of his journey aboard the *Pequod*: “I have an everlasting itch for things remote.”⁵⁶

Emerson asks if there is “something so delicious in disasters and pain?”⁵⁷ We know how Poe, Melville, Hawthorne, and later Frank Norris answered that question. Mental and physical health, according to Emerson, requires a close and constant proximity to facts and reality. As if psychoanalyzing Captain Ahab, Emerson wrote, “It seems as if inflation were a disease incident to too much use of words, and the remedy lay in the recourse to things.”⁵⁸ Yet the “recourse to things,” *Moby Dick* demonstrates, does not necessarily get us any closer to reality than do the manic distortions of reality by troubled minds. In fact, there is something kind of sick about those long, scientific descriptions and definitions of the White Whale that come in the middle of Melville’s mock encyclopedia.

While the excesses of romance are to be shunned if America is to keep itself physically and spiritually healthy, verbal and material excess define the Orient. While geometry, exactitude, and definition create the poetry of the West, the superlative characterizes the poetry of the East: “Whilst to Western nations the superlative in conversation is tedious and weak, and in character is a capital defect, nature delights in showing us that in the East it is animated, it is pertinent, pleasing, poetic. Whilst she appoints us to keep within the sharp boundaries of form as the condition of our strength, she creates in the East the uncontrollable yearning to escape from limitation into the vast and boundless. . . .”⁵⁹ Unlike his meditations on religion and philosophy

elsewhere, which are abstract and dialectical and thus hard to ideologically pin down, in "The Superlative" Emerson fixes a historical difference between East and West in terms of commercial relations that cannot be reconciled in the way that terms like fate and freedom or unity and diversity are reconciled elsewhere. As in "Representative Men," the fundamental distinctions used to represent the Asian/American dynamic here are between possession and trade, display and use, rest and motion. Considering the economic superlative, Emerson writes: "The costume, the articles in which wealth is displayed, are in the same extreme. Thus the diamond and the pearl, which are only accidental and secondary in their use and value to us, are proper to the oriental world. The diver dives a beggar and rises with the price of a kingdom in his hand. A bag of sequins, a jewel, a balsam, a single horse, constitute an estate in countries where insecure institutions make every one desirous of concealable and convertible property. Shall I say, further, that the orientals excel in costly arts, in the cutting of precious stones, in working in gold, in weaving on hand-loom costly stuffs from silk and wool, in spices, in dyes and drugs, henna, otto and camphor, and in the training of slaves, elephants and camels,—things which are the poetry and superlative of commerce."⁶⁰

Asia, for Emerson, is a culture of excess and display, as opposed to trade and use. Emerson's elaboration of these binaries situates him within visions of Asia that emerged from nineteenth-century political economy. Summarizing the role of ideas about excess in the rhetoric of political economy, Tchen writes, "For the process of exchange to work, it was believed that the natural and man-made resources of the Orient should, as a matter of 'natural rights,' be freely open to exchange. The term superfluities connoted excess from what was necessary, a superabundance. Merchant and national wealth, therefore, was contingent on either the taking over of established trade routes to the richest Asian lands and empires from European rivals, or the finding of new routes."⁶¹ The excessive display signifies a detachment from reality, from the here and now, and thus from history. The expansion of commercial relations with Asia, and China in particular, would therefore reconnect this decadent civilization to history and the rational, progressive movement of civilization.

Emerson comments that those who speak in the superlative do so as if they were in a museum. Display is a tricky word for Emerson, because it very quickly makes the switch from being poetic to pathetic, from being a sign of luxury to a sign of decay. Nathaniel Hawthorne confronts this switch head-on in *House of the Seven Gables*, locating it in the figure of Hepzibah, who prefers to display her family's wealth rather than work. Hepzibah, like Ishmael, is troubled by an "itch for things remote" as she dreams of an uncle

“who had sailed for India, fifty years before, and never been heard of since— might yet return, and adopt her to be the comfort of his very extreme and decrepit age, and adorn her with pearls, diamonds, and oriental shawls and turbans, and make her the ultimate heiress of his unreckonable riches.”⁶² Like Emerson, Hawthorne associates the display of wealth with Asia and the use of wealth, or trade, with a rapidly modernizing America. Hepzibah is associated with the Orient through her desire to display, and to be on display, rather than be subjected to the reality of work and commodity relations. Unfortunately, “The sordid stain of that copper-coin could never be washed away from her palm.”⁶³ In a modernizing America, Hepzibah becomes relatively useless and stagnant compared to Phoebe, who embodies practical commercial energies.

For Hepzibah, crisis appears in the negation of tradition, in the negation of hereditary repetition, by the destabilizing motions of capitalist modernity. Hawthorne contrasts Hepzibah’s physical and pecuniary stagnation to the creative and practical commercial energies of Phoebe. The relationship between Hepzibah and Phoebe, like the relationship between the faded Seven Gables and the fresh, bustling city street, maps neatly onto the binaries of rest/motion, display/use, and possession/trade pushed by Emerson: “Some malevolent spirit, doing his utmost to drive Hepzibah mad, unrolled before her imagination a kind of panorama, representing the great thoroughfare of a city, all astir with customers. So many and so magnificent shops as there were! Groceries, toy-shops, dry-goods stores, with their immense panes of plate-glass, their gorgeous fixtures, their vast and complete assortments of merchandize, in which fortunes had been invested; and those noble mirrors at the farther end of each establishment, doubling all their wealth by a brightly burnished vista of unrealities! On one side of the street, this splendid bazaar, with a multitude of perfumed and glossy salesmen, smirking, smiling, bowing, and measuring out the goods! On the other, the dusky old House of the Seven Gables, with the antiquated shop-window under its projecting story, and Hepzibah herself in a gown of rusty black silk, behind the counter, scowling at the world as it went by!”⁶⁴

In this passage, which parallels the reversals in Emerson’s essays, the hereditary display of wealth, residue of America’s aristocratic past, changes from being a sign of luxury to a sign of decay. Hepzibah’s dark Oriental world crumbles when confronted with these bright new spaces of commercial exchange. Through Hepzibah, Hawthorne trades an attachment to display for a fantasy of modernization, for accelerated commercial development and commodity explosion. America, for Emerson and Hawthorne, stands for practical energies, not the wasteful display of wealth. As if summarizing the

difference between Hepzibah and Phoebe, Emerson writes: "For the luminous object wastes itself by its shining—is luminous because it is burning up; and if the powers are disposed for display, there is all the less left for use and creation."⁶⁵

The association of Asia with display also works its way into Henry James's *The Bostonians*, where romantic Orientalism moves through Olive Chancellor's emotional and intellectual attachments to Verena Tarrant. Verena, whose working-class parents commodify her looks and voice, informs the reader that Olive, who is comfortably leisure class, "doesn't care a speck what she wears—only to have an elegant parlour. Well, she has got that; it's a regular dream-like place to sit. She's going to have a tree in next week; she says she wants to see me sitting under a tree. I believe it's some oriental idea."⁶⁶ Olive wants to put Verena on display in order to expose her "celestial side." Olive's display is in the service of knowledge and progressive political change, whereas Verena's parents want to display her for money. Olive abhors this mawkish commercialization of Verena. In *The Bostonians*, Olive's "elegant parlour" becomes host to a pastoral construction of the Orient, the imaginary outside of an emergent consumer culture. Romantic Orientalism sees sameness and repetition as signs of tranquility and tradition, qualities that were fading in the West as craft production was being replaced by mass production.

Within the broader social and political context addressed by James's novel, the women's suffrage movement, the "oriental idea" is associated with social reform. Whereas Hepzibah associates the Orient with hereditary privilege and feudal social relations, using the Orient to step outside of modernity, Olive uses the Orient to take a modern step forward through progressive reform. Both moves are characteristic of pastoral constructions of the Orient. From the late eighteenth century to the counterculture movements of the 1960s, the Orient has repeatedly supported both a pastoral critique of modernity and the imagining of progressive social change. In the 1960s, the *Compassionate Buddha* and Chairman Mao, macrobiotic cookbooks and the "Little Red Book," were two sides of the same countercultural coin. Romantic Orientalism is fairly benign in its elevation of a tranquil East above a neurasthenic West. To the phenomenologist, the philosopher of history, or the political economist, though, cultural sameness and repetition, symbolized by the excessive display of luxury items, are the narcotics that have knocked the Orient out. The idea that the Orient, like its representative Hepzibah, is antithetical to modernity was voiced by the major figures of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century intellectual history—Voltaire, Smith, Herder, Hegel, Marx—who all represented the Orient in terms of metaphors of sleep and stagnation.⁶⁷

In *The Wealth of Nations*, for example, Adam Smith assembled ideas that would exert a strong pull on Western views of Asia, specifically China, well into the twentieth century: “China has been long one of the richest, that is, one of the most fertile, best cultivated, most industrious and most populous countries in the world. It seems, however, to have long been stationary.”⁶⁸ For Smith, sameness and repetition, what Emerson characterized as “rest” or “immovability,” were the cultural effects of an economy dominated by subsistence. Of the “Chinaman,” we are told, “If by digging the ground a whole day he can get what will purchase a small quantity of rice in the evening, he is contented.”⁶⁹ The prevalence of subsistence, and laws discouraging foreign trade, kept China from moving onto the tracks of historical progress: “A country which neglects or despises foreign commerce, and which admits the vessels of foreign nations into one or two of its ports only, cannot transact the same quantity of business which it might do with different laws and institutions.”⁷⁰ The failure to produce for exchange, according to Smith, results in a static society and culinary degradation: “The subsistence which they find . . . is so scanty that they are eager to fish up the nastiest garbage thrown overboard from any European ship. Any carrion, the carcass of a dog or cat, for example, though half putrid and stinking, is as welcome to them as the most wholesome food to the people of other countries.”⁷¹ While at times Emerson finds display and trade to be philosophically complimentary terms, when they are looked at from the perspective of the political economy of Adam Smith, they are hierarchically related. “Thus the diamond and the pearl,” Emerson wrote, “which are only accidental and secondary in their use and value to us; are proper to the oriental world. . . . The political economist defies us to show any . . . shore where pearls are found on which good schools are erected.”⁷²

Representations of the Orient in terms of the “superlative and poetry of commerce” connect the transcendental imagination to the rhetoric of political economy. This particular way of framing the otherness of the Orient provided economic purpose and geographic direction for a nation that was still finding its place in the world. More than any other writer of the nineteenth century, Emerson elaborated the cultural significance of those commodities, or *chinoiserie*, sought after by merchants involved in trade with China. Tchen writes, “Desired Chinese and Chinese-style luxury goods and ideas, imbued with symbolic meanings, were integral to the formulation of a new American individual and nation—an identity to be further reconstituted in the process of exchange itself. Before the Revolution, these beloved things became part of the driving force for social, political, and economic change. After the Revolution, such expectations propelled the consumer

republic to seek its own trade routes. The solution to postwar malaise would be to trade directly with China.⁷³ The quest for a medium of exchange that could link the American economy directly to China led to the growth of the Northwest fur trade and to the discovery that items harvested on Pacific islands, such as sandalwood and sea slug, were valuable in China. If we add to the Northwest fur trade and the harvesting of Pacific plantations the fact that following the Revolution, American whaling vessels began cruising the Pacific, hitting various island ports along the way to rest, refuel, and replace laborers who had deserted, we discover a map of the gradual temporal and spatial compression of the Pacific, where the islands are being drawn closer to each other as well as to the United States and southern China.

MELVILLE AND WHITMAN: THE SMOOTH AND THE STRIATED

By the late eighteenth century, American merchants were second only to the British in Canton, and this was primarily due to the fact that the British could use silver as a medium of exchange in China.⁷⁴ Merchants involved in the China trade had to plough the Pacific for goods to trade at the Canton market because, with the exception of inferior grades of ginseng, the North American continent did not possess much that was desired in China.⁷⁵ In order for trans-Pacific voyages to be worth the effort, merchants had to find goods that would "tempt the mandarins and at the same time secure the 1000 per cent returns regarded as reasonable profit for such hazardous enterprises."⁷⁶

The sperm oil of whales, as well as seal and sea otter fur, could all turn a high a profit, so ships from Boston, Salem, and Nantucket were sent in hot pursuit.⁷⁷ Whalers used the islands of the Pacific as places to repair and refuel, and as pools of labor to replace those who had deserted. Gradually, other items were discovered on islands and atolls of the Pacific that had a market in China: sandalwood, beche-de-mer (also known as trepang or sea slug), pearl, and tortoise shell.⁷⁸ Summarizing early contact with the Pacific islands, Douglas Oliver has found that "many an American fortune was made by trading cheap Yankee knickknacks to islanders for sandalwood and trepang, which would then be carried to Canton and bartered for silks and tea for ultimate sale back home, with a fine profit at each turnover."⁷⁹ In *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, Poe comically lists items that could be traded for sea slug, a delicacy in China, which could then be resold for a high profit: "beads, looking-glasses, tinder-works, axes, hatchets, saws, adzes, planes, chisels, gouges, gimlets, files, spokeshaves, rasps, hammers, nails, knives, scissors, razors, needles, thread, crockery-ware, calico, trinkets,

and other similar articles.”⁸⁰ And yet, “this one-sidedness gave way as more traders began to compete and as islanders lost their first awe for anything brought in by the white demigods. The reaction went so far in places like Hawaii that full-rigged ships had to be given to island chiefs in exchange for precious sandalwood.”⁸¹ By the 1820s America took over control of the sandalwood collection in Hawai‘i from the British, destroying large tracts of land in the process.⁸²

By 1837 the Northwest fur trade was exhausted.⁸³ And by the middle of the century, the whaling industry began to decline, as sperm oil was replaced by Pennsylvania oil and baleen was replaced by steel. Further contributing to the decline of whaling, “rival industries, including textile manufacturing in New England and gold mining in California, drained away manpower from whaling, and the Civil War thinned out the American whaling fleets.”⁸⁴ American whalers were ultimately replaced by Norwegian and Japanese whalers in the Pacific, who focused their activities farther north in the Antarctic.⁸⁵

Melville wrote *Moby Dick* as the American whaling industry was beginning to decline. In Ahab we find a cracked mirror of American identity, a crippled American Adam on a schizophrenic errand into the oceanic wilderness. The White Whale supplements that identity, for it provides Ahab with a sense of memory, and thus of history, without which he would be completely lost, both to himself and to the world. Without that supplement, Ahab could not stand; it is his means of psychological and economic support. *Moby Dick* has come to symbolize the founding political, economic, and philosophical conflicts out of which American civilization emerged. Beginning with F. O. Matthiessen’s *American Renaissance*, Melville’s story about a big fish in a big pond, although unpopular at the time of its publication and for quite a while after, has become firmly entrenched in the canon of American literature. In the 1950s, Ishmael was recruited by the Cold War state, through its bureau of American Studies, in order to secure favorable attention for American civilization abroad. Recounting the political incorporation of *Moby Dick* during the McCarthy era, Donald Pease writes, “*Moby Dick* was not, for scholars of American Studies, merely an object of analysis. It provided the field itself with a frame narrative that included the norms and assumptions out of which the field was organized. The action that *Moby Dick* narrated was made to predict the world-scale antagonism of the Cold War. The narrative provided the state with an image of itself as overcoming the totalitarian Other to which it defined itself as opposed, and it supplied the literary sphere with an image of itself as exempt from the incursions of the state. Overall this frame narrative assisted in structuring the constitutive

understanding of the society it purported to represent."⁸⁶ Ishmael was thus locked in an ideological struggle with the Stalinesque Ahab and his axis of totalitarian evil. The Ishmael/Ahab binary, Pease comments, would structure readings of the novel for the next half century.

Critics have formalized, historicized, psychoanalyzed, and deconstructed just about everything in the novel except the fact that the *Pequod* was a whaling vessel cruising the Pacific. While the adventures of the *Pequod* have been understood to be a kind of frontier narrative, more often than not whaling and the Pacific frontier are read as symbols of the frontier that supposedly really mattered at the time, the western one. Melville encourages this interpretive switch with descriptions of the passage of the *Pequod* as "sailing through boundless fields of ripe and golden wheat."⁸⁷ Yet from the American Revolution on, the Pacific was itself an economic and cultural frontier. The errand into oceanic wilderness was a founding movement of the nation, as the products and profits from the whaling industry brought light, in the form of the sperm oil used in street lamps, and life, in the form of luxury goods from China, to the emerging nation. Melville describes the oceanic origins of New England with typical exuberance: "Yes; all these brave houses and flowery gardens came from the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans. One and all, they were harpooned and dragged up hither from the bottom of the sea."⁸⁸ The pursuit of the sperm whale began in the Atlantic and gradually pulled American whalers up the coast of Chile and then across the Pacific to the whaling grounds off the coast of Japan.⁸⁹ So how does the Pacific frontier look from the bow of the *Pequod*?

There are at least three errands into oceanic wilderness that come into conflict on board the *Pequod*. First, there is the commercial adventure pursued by the crew. The crew of the *Pequod* wants to kill as many whales as possible, while the vessel's owners, Bildad and Peleg, expect to see a handsome return on their investments. Their reason for entering this adventure is profit, pure and simple. "This world pays dividends," we are told, as Melville fills out the portfolios of Peleg and Bildad.⁹⁰ As the *Pequod* cruises through the Indian Ocean toward the whaling grounds off the coast of Japan, distant places are brought into proximity by excessive and extravagant similes and metaphors designed to capture, and familiarize, the vast sphere of circulation cruised by whaling vessels: "There now is your insular city of the Manhattoes, belted round by wharves as Indian isles by coral reefs—commerce surrounds it with her surf."⁹¹ Like the transnational crew on board the vessel, the hemispheric movements of the *Pequod* are geographically integrative, generating resemblances and proximities, such as that between Manhattan and an island in the Indian Ocean, that cannot be represented on the flattened,

static space of a topographic map. This extravagant simile translates vastness into proximity, thus enacting the time and space compression that the whaling industry both relied on, in the form of navigational advancements, and encouraged, by furthering commercial interactions in and across the Pacific. Given the fact that the coastline bordering the Pacific had yet to be developed, the importance of whaling to the geopolitical awareness of the emerging nation cannot be understated. The development of this coastline would be essential to the formation of American sea power in the Pacific, for, as Alfred Thayer Mahan wrote, "The seaboard of a country is one of its frontiers; and the easier the access offered by the frontier to the region beyond, in this case the sea, the greater will be the tendency of a people toward intercourse with the rest of the world by it."⁹² Whaling, and the commercial encounters that resulted from it, enabled Americans to develop economic ties in and across the Pacific without having an adjacent seaboard. In order to render Asia and the Pacific proximate to centers of international commerce in America such as Manhattan, New Bedford, and Nantucket, Melville deploys an elaborate tropography in place of a clearly defined topography.

In contrast to the crews' instrumental relationship to the sea, Ishmael is on a dreamy quest for romance, adventure, and metaphysical exploration: "To any meditative Magian rover, this serene Pacific, once beheld, must ever after be the sea of his adoption. It rolls the midmost waters of the world, the Indian ocean and Atlantic being but its arms."⁹³ Like Jack London, as I will discuss in chapter 4, Ishmael pursues adventure for the sake of adventure. In Ishmael's eyes, the Pacific is an object of beauty, and therefore an end in itself, that unites and centers the world: "The same waves wash the moles of the new-built Californian towns, but yesterday planted by the recentest race of men, and lave the faded but still gorgeous skirts of Asiatic lands, older than Abraham; while all between float milky-ways of coral isles, and low-lying, endless, unknown Archipelagoes, and impenetrable Japans. Thus this mysterious, divine Pacific zones the world's whole bulk about; makes all coasts one bay to it; seems the tide-beating heart of earth. Lifted by those eternal swells, you needs must own the seductive god, bowing your head to Pan."⁹⁴ Like the commercial, instrumentalizing map of the Pacific held by the crew, Ishmael's aesthetic map reads the Pacific as an integrative force. Yet unlike the former, here the Pacific appears as an end in itself by giving form to the rest of the world, delivering metaphysical contours and meaning to all that borders it. Like the Pacific of Whitman's "Passage to India," which I discuss below, Ishmael's Pacific connects the old, Asia, to the new, America, while timeless isles float in between. This vision of the Pacific should be familiar to contemporary readers, for it still circulates in most tourist brochures and travel shows.

Both errands, the commercial and the aesthetic, depend on long-distance vision in order to see the Pacific as integrated and integrating. Only by assuming distance from the space being described can the Pacific area be plotted onto a grid or given formal properties. For Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "striated space" names the product of such distance: "Striated space . . . is defined by the requirements of long-distance vision: constancy of orientation, invariance of distance through an interchange of inertial points of reference, interlinkage by immersion in an ambient milieu, constitution of a central perspective."⁹⁵ This is the optical space of imperialism and colonialism, in which "lines or trajectories tend to be subordinated to points: one goes from one point to another. In the smooth, it is the opposite; the points are subordinated to the trajectory."⁹⁶ "Smooth space," on the other hand, refers to those disorienting areas, such as a sea or desert, that resist being mapped, and refuse to submit to mathematical regularities, thereby frustrating the desire to chart a passage, develop a strategy, or calculate a distance. Smooth space confuses basic geographical and psychological coordinates, such as the near and the remote, origin and destination, center and periphery. On the production of striated maritime space, Deleuze and Guattari write, "For the sea is a smooth space par excellence, and yet was the first to encounter the demands of increasingly strict striation. The problem did not arise in proximity to land. Maritime space was striated as a function of two astronomical and geographical gains: bearings, obtained by a set of calculations based on exact observation of the stars and the sun; and the map, which intertwines meridians and parallels, longitudes and latitudes, plotting regions known and unknown onto a grid."⁹⁷

Considered from the perspective of its representation of oceanic space, *Moby Dick* appears to be structured by conflicts and collaborations between the smooth and the striated. In contrast to the integrative, or striating, errands being pursued by Ishmael and the crew, Ahab smashes the ship's quadrant, thus sending the *Pequod* on a journey across smooth space: "Foolish toy! babies' plaything of haughty Admirals, and Commodores, and Captains; the world brags of thee, of thy cunning and might; but what after all canst thou do, but tell the poor, pitiful point, where thou thyself happenest to be on this wide planet, and the hand that holds thee: no! not one jot more!"⁹⁸ Ahab's attitude toward practical, mundane commercial enterprise is voiced from the start with the antipathy he displays toward the owners' financial investment in the *Pequod*: "Let the owners stand on Nantucket Beach and outyell the Typhoons. What cares Ahab? Owners, owners?"⁹⁹

Given this hostility toward the small-minded pursuit of money, a different set of spatial figures come into play in the descriptions of Ahab's Pacific:

“Round the world! There is much in that sound to inspire proud feelings; but whereto does all that circumnavigation conduct? Only through numberless perils to the very point whence we started, where those that we left behind secure, were all the time before us. Were this world an endless plain, and by sailing eastward we could for ever reach new distances, and discover sights more sweet and strange than any Cyclades or Islands of King Solomon, then there were promise in the voyage. But in pursuit of those far mysteries we dream of, or in tormented chase of that demon phantom that, some time or other, swims before all human hearts; while chasing such over this round globe, they either lead us on in barren mazes or midway leave us behind.”¹⁰⁰ Romantic adventure depends on fixed distinctions not only between origin and destination but between the near and the remote, the familiar and the unfamiliar. While Ishmael announces that he has an “everlasting itch for things remote,” here Ahab deconstructs that itch with a soliloquy on the fact that whatever those “things” are, they are either always already in front of us, or behind, but never actually made present. The absence of fixed coordinates leads Ahab to question whether the *Pequod* has really gone anywhere at all. As opposed to the euphoric sense of otherness pursued by the adventurer, Ahab succumbs to a fear of totalizing sameness—to a world of universal fungibility in which Manhattan appears not to be fundamentally different from an island in the Indian Ocean. The fact that such a simile is enabled by the spatial figure of rings of commerce suggests that Ahab wants to imagine a world beyond work and commodity relations, but he can’t. The fearfulness of the familiar therefore becomes the source of adventure for Ahab. As if summarizing Ahab’s adventure, Deleuze and Guattari write, “Voyage in place, that is the name of all intensities.”¹⁰¹

Through Ahab, two spatial figures, the circle and the maze, are brought into conflict, both with each other and with the linear, instrumental relationship to the sea determined by the need to stop at various ports to repair and refuel. The circle symbolizes a space of stability, security, and familiarity. The circle also designates the sphere of commercial exchange that connects distant places, giving form to geographical relations that were previously unimaginable: “What wonder, then, that these Nantucketers, born on a beach, should take to the sea for a livelihood! The first caught crabs and quahogs in the sand; grew bolder, they waded out with nets for mackerel; more experienced, they pushed off in boats and captured cod; and at last, launching a navy of great ships on the sea, explored this watery world; put an incessant belt of circumnavigation round it. . . .”¹⁰² The circle signifies continuity and, as the evenly marked punctuation and phrasing of this passage suggests, a carefully staged narrative of progress and geographic expansion, all of

which is made possible by the stabilizing force of memories that link the individual to the national community. The maze, on the other hand, is a spatial configuration where distinctions between origin and destination, the familiar and the unfamiliar, break down. A maze is disorienting precisely because of the inability to gain visual distance from a particular location, which makes it impossible to put together a strategy for getting out. When in a maze, you might be right next to the exit and never know it. The exertion of political and economic power over and across the sea depends on those activities, such as the establishment of familiar and repeatable trade routes and military bases, that translate the unmapped into the optical space of the mapped. A maze is also disorienting because it resists the grasp of memory. The aura of familiarity haunts every move in a maze. Without memory, there can be no calculation of progress, no rational movement between two fixed points, no significant difference between catching crabs and quahogs and launching a navy. Ahab's violent errand takes the *Pequod* on nomadic, irrational wanderings while forgetting practical matters like the need for water: "But how now? in this zoned quest, does Ahab touch no land? Does his crew drink air? Surely, he will stop for water."¹⁰³

These multiple ways of seeing and relating to maritime space ultimately collide on the back of the White Whale, forming a palimpsest of the journey of the *Pequod*: "In life, the visible surface of the Sperm Whale is not the least among the many marvels he presents. Almost invariably it is all over obliquely crossed and re-crossed with numberless straight marks in thick array, something like those in the finest Italian line engravings. But these marks do not seem to be impressed upon the isinglass substance above mentioned, but seem to be seen through it, as if they were engraved upon the body itself. Nor is this all. In some instances, to the quick, observant eye, those linear marks, as in a veritable engraving, but afford the ground for far other delineations. These are hieroglyphical; that is, if you call those mysterious cyphers on the walls of pyramids hieroglyphics, then that is the proper word to use in the present connexion. By my retentive memory of the hieroglyphics upon one Sperm Whale in particular, I was much struck with a plate representing the old Indian characters chiselled on the famous hieroglyphic palisades on the banks of the Upper Mississippi. Like those mystic rocks, too, the mystic-marked whale remains undecipherable."¹⁰⁴ These "numberless straight marks in thick array," these "linear marks" that "afford the ground for far other delineations," mirror the *Pequod*'s pursuit of Moby Dick across the Pacific. Like the back of the "mystic-marked whale," the Pacific ultimately becomes "undecipherable." So rather than generate a map of the Pacific that converts the unknown into the known, Melville reverses

the process, converting the Pacific into an area so dense that the narrative shatters the optics of long-distance vision.

Both Melville and Whitman put together a vision of passage across the Pacific in order to interrogate intersections of race, nation, and history. Yet unlike *Moby Dick*, “Passage to India” appears to be directly committed to the commercialization and striation of Pacific space, to enacting, at the level of imagination, the time and space compression upon which political and economic expansion depends. Whereas *Moby Dick* brings several spatial figures into conflict in order to enact a violent representation of maritime space, in which the distinction between origin and destination is blurred and the geopolitical purpose and direction of the expanding nation is disrupted, the dominant spatial figure in “Passage to India” is the line, symbol of historical progress and national teleology. The violent representation of maritime space in *Moby Dick* renders the oceanic illegible, while Whitman creates legibility through a series of logical resemblances and purposeful homologues in which lines of commercial, technological, sexual, historical, and spiritual exchange efficiently connect America to Asia across the Pacific. Lines connect past, present, and future. Lines connect distant places. Lines enable time and space compression. “Passage to India” asks: “For what is the present after all but a growth out of the past? / (As a projectile form’d, impell’d, passing a certain line, still / keeps on, / So the present, utter form’d, impelled by the past.)”¹⁰⁵ The Pacific is the last uncharted space: “The first travelers famous yet, Marco Polo, Batouta the Moor, / Doubts to be solv’d, / the map incognita, blanks to be fill’d.”¹⁰⁶

The desire to fill in the “map incognita,” to fill in gaps and blanks, has propelled the present out of the past and into the future. Canals, railroads, and the telegraph all provide linear metaphors for historical continuity and progress: “Tying the Eastern to the Western sea, / The road between Europe and Asia.”¹⁰⁷ “Passage to India” sings praises to technological feats that have already been completed, such as the transcontinental railroad, while moving, for the most part, in the passive tense: “Passage to India! / Lo, soul, seest thou not God’s purpose from the first? / The earth to be spann’d, connected by network, / The races, neighbors, to marry and be given in marriage, / The oceans to be cross’d, the distant brought near, / The lands welded together.”¹⁰⁸ Whitman performs time and space compression at the level of the copula. The poet repeatedly praises incomplete projects—commercial, technological, racial—as if they had already been completed. While these projects may be incomplete, their meaning and purpose have nevertheless been guaranteed in advance. In the last line of this stanza, “The lands welded together,” omission of the copula “to be” gives the stamp of sacred time to this commercial fantasy of shrinking of the Pacific.

Whitman reads national destiny into the built landscape, repeating one of the defining features of the Puritan errand into the wilderness, the fusion of secular and sacred time, for an emergent age of empire.¹⁰⁹ Sacvan Bercovitch writes, "The American Puritan jeremiad was the ritual of a culture on an errand—which is to say, a culture based on a faith in process. Substituting teleology for hierarchy, it discarded the Old World ideal of stasis for a New World vision of the future."¹¹⁰ Direction and purpose were essential features of this vision. Where *Moby Dick* frustrates the desire to follow American destiny into the Pacific, "Passage to India" universalizes it. Gaps, blanks, and doubts only exist to be overcome; they never disturb the foundational continuity that directs the cadence of the poem. Melville, conversely, crashes associations into each other, to the point where the person, emotion, object, or place being described disappears in a maze of verbal excess. One way to get a handle on the different rhetorical styles of *Moby Dick* and "Passage to India," and the relation between these styles and their respective productions of space, is to view the works in terms of the difference between catechresis and metaphor. In classical rhetoric, catachresis was thought to be an improper, abusive, or excessive metaphor. Obviously, *Moby Dick* is a good advertisement for catechresis. Metaphor, on the other hand, is supposed to appear proper, effortless. Cicero wrote, "In fact the metaphor ought to have an apologetic air, so as to look as if it had entered a place that does not belong to it with a proper introduction, not taken it by storm, and as if it had come with permission, not forced its way in."¹¹¹

Summarizing the generally accepted difference between catechresis and metaphor, Patricia Parker suggests that "catachresis is a transfer of terms from one place to another employed when no proper word exists, while metaphor is a transfer or substitution employed when a proper term does already exist and is displaced by a term transferred from another place to a place not its own."¹¹² What interests me in this particular framing of the distinction between catachresis and metaphor is how these two figures encode contrasting spatial dynamics.¹¹³ Catachresis is a forced, violent movement from one place to another when "no proper word exists," while metaphor appears "as if it had come with permission" to a place not its own.

In *Moby Dick*, the rhetorical figure of catechresis is vigorously, and many times humorously, foregrounded. Through Ahab, Melville never writes as if he had entered a place with permission. Rather, he takes places by storm. In the above passage, what starts out as an attempt to describe the back of the White Whale leads to a description of Italian engravings, which are then compared to hieroglyphics discovered along the Mississippi River. Elsewhere we learn that "If the Sperm Whale be physiognomically a Sphinx, to

the phrenologist his brain seems that geometrical circle which it is impossible to square.”¹¹⁴ And in the funniest line of the book, we learn that “This Right Whale I take to have been a Stoic; the Sperm Whale, a Platonian, who might have taken up Spinoza in his latter years.”¹¹⁵ The White Whale repeatedly comes under attack from discourses that were incommensurate in nineteenth-century America—science and mysticism—neither of which are privileged by Melville but instead promiscuously blended in blunt forms of verbal miscegenation. The quadrant destroyed by Ahab, for example, is described as a cabalistic instrument. The White Whale ends up being written over with so many chaotic associations, so many furious tropes and wild styles of writing, that it looks like a New York City subway car in the late 1970s. Catachresis is a form of graffiti that reveals the rhetorical effort, and violence, entailed in seeing the spaces of Asia/Pacific/America as integrated or whole. The White Whale reveals that there is nothing *there* that can be pointed to from afar, only a multiplicity of conflicting languages and images, all of which appear to be out of place. Like Foster’s slide show discussed in the introduction, attempts to see the Asia/Pacific area as integrated depend on distortions enabled by long-distance vision, and they involve the violent transference of terms from one place, or time, to another.

The geographically integrating errands of Ishmael and the crew ultimately fall apart, for catachresis forces a critical decompression of time and space. “Passage to India,” on the other hand, is driven by metaphors that line everything up, so that it seems as if America had entered the Pacific with a “proper introduction,” not stormed its way in. The jargon of imperialism, encoded in slogans such as “civilizing mission” or “white man’s burden,” relies on rendering the origins of metaphor in catechresis absent. All geographical terms, in one way or another, result from catechresis. I explore this idea in more detail in the third chapter, in relation to the spatial violence enacted by the trade table circulated by the American Asiatic Association.

C. L. R. James found himself frustrated with Whitman due to the fact that his radically democratic visions were not always clearly distinguished from those of a colonial administrator or captain of industry: “Yet this writing of Whitman’s was exactly what a skilled publicist on their behalf would have written, visionary *ideals* of individual freedom and concrete subordination to the *reality* of the prevailing regime.”¹¹⁶ “Passage to India” was first published in 1871, around the time that William Seward was championing the completion of the transcontinental railroad while eyeing Hawai‘i as the Pacific access to the China market. For Seward, the transcontinental railroad would develop the interior of the continent, literally welding the land together, by encouraging industrial development and providing the cheap

transportation that would boost agricultural exports.¹¹⁷ The railroad would open trade with China to all classes, not just wealthy property owners. And by relieving agricultural surpluses, the railroad would emancipate the United States from economic dependence on England and Europe, a movement that began with the Lewis and Clarke Expedition.¹¹⁸ When the Union Pacific and Central Pacific were joined in 1869 at Promontory Point, Seward claimed that Japan, China, and Australia were now "already adjacent, and commercially bound to the American Pacific Coast."¹¹⁹ So when one reads the lines, "I see over my own continent the Pacific railroad / surmounting every barrier," it is hard not to do so in terms of Seward's imperialist dreams of the Americanization of the Pacific.¹²⁰

By juxtaposing *Moby Dick* with "Passage to India" and then situating their respective imaginings of oceanic space in terms of the difference between the smooth and the striated, I do not mean to suggest that these texts form opposite ends of an ethical or political spectrum. The smooth and the striated do not form a static binary; rather, one is always caught up with, and being translated into, the other. While Ahab's monomania may generate smooth space in terms of the trajectory of the *Pequod*, the centralized and racialized social relations on board are thoroughly striated. It is tempting to read smooth space as inherently liberatory and striated space as inherently oppressive. Yet Deleuze and Guattari caution, "Of course, smooth spaces are not in themselves liberatory. But the struggle is changed or displaced in them, and life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches adversaries. Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us."¹²¹ Maps, lines, and the power afforded by long-distance vision can be used to fight the production of exploitative places, such as a military base, sweatshop, or tourist resort. Few people would like to sign on for Captain Ahab's trip across smooth space, whereas Whitman's fantasies of love, cultural exchange, and racial harmony across the Pacific are projects that need to be completed. Unfortunately, Whitman's democratic visions have been hijacked by those looking to benefit from the shrinking of the Pacific at the expense of those who are pushed back in time, hidden away and imprisoned in sweatshops, the sex trade, the service industry, forced to perform dangerous and degrading labor for a transnational class.

So rather than try to situate Whitman as going with, and Melville against, the cultural grain of U.S. imperialism, a better foil to Whitman would be the rather militarized vision of the Pacific offered by Alfred Thayer Mahan: "As a wilderness gives place to civilization, as means of communication multiply, as roads are opened, rivers bridged, food-resources increased, the operations of war become easier, more rapid, more extensive."¹²² By rendering the

Pacific “undecipherable,” Melville disrupted emerging visions of America’s destiny in the Pacific. *Moby Dick* generates a hemispheric, or regional, consciousness yet refuses to provide a clear map with directions on how to read it. Melville put a lot of effort into creating a “map incognita.” This move can be thought of as liberatory to the extent that, by negating a national destiny in the Pacific, Melville created an opening, however fleeting, for the imagining of other futures, futures that do not make sense within, and could move against, the imperialist imaginary of the American Pacific.

PERIODIZING THE AMERICAN PACIFIC

The American Pacific names only part of the much larger, decentered, transnational commercial activity that was beginning to link distant peoples and places in and across the Pacific over the course of the nineteenth century. A fuller account of the political, economic, and cultural practices condensed by the term American Pacific would have to include the migration of Chinese laborers across the Pacific. Through their work on the transcontinental railroad, diasporic Chinese enabled the shrinking of the Pacific, yet they are routinely left out of the national picture. David Palumbo-Liu writes, “The very revision of modern American time and space was enabled by Chinese labor on the transcontinental railroad, that concrete, modern technological link that, in a particular enactment of time/space compression, shrank the distance between the Atlantic seaboard and the Pacific coast and allowed America to imagine more precisely its particularly modern dream of an American Pacific ‘lake.’”¹²³ By re-reading the Pacific Coast as a frontier for Chinese sojourners, we gain an important revision to the time and space of the nation memorialized by standard frontier narratives.¹²⁴

My effort to create points of contact between literary history and economic history reveals repeated invocations of the Orient as a space of excessive, exotic abundance, as a kind of Pier One for the Western imagination. At the time Whitman was fantasizing about a commercial and spiritual marriage between East and West, the American economy was beginning to sink into crisis. Studying the period of economic instability that followed the Civil War, T. J. McCormick has found that “The two and a half decades between the Panic of 1873 and the War with Spain encompassed one of the most profound social crises in American history—the inability of *laissez-faire* capitalism to function either rationally or equitably in a period of rapid industrial maturation. Hence the Janus-faced image of the economic terrain: skyrocketing production which made America an industrial giant second to none, but at the same time plummeting prices, falling rates of profit, and

enervating depressions—the crisis of overdevelopment.”¹²⁵ The same period also saw a dramatic, and to the owners of capital, frightening, increase in the use of strikes by workers to transform their working conditions.¹²⁶ The question of “how to stabilize the economy and tranquilize the society” became quite urgent.¹²⁷ Before 1873, monetary policy was thought to be the key to understanding economic crisis. Discussions of economy tended to focus on the amount of money in circulation, and on what kind of standard should be used to back it up: gold, silver, or a combination of the two.

In the 1870s, a new way of defining economic crisis began to enter the picture: overproduction. Although monetary theories of economic crisis would continue through the 1890s, dramatized by the heated contest between the goldbug McKinley and the silverite Bryan in 1896, such theories were being gradually replaced by the concept of overproduction. Dispersed historical energies began to rally around this definition of the situation: “If the world of rhetoric has any meaning, then it is clear that by the Spanish-American War a consensus already existed among conservative businessmen, politicians, and journalists on the reality of an industrial glut and the pressing need for a new frontier in world markets to relieve it.”¹²⁸ One reason for the popularity of this idea, McCormick suggests, is that the theory of overproduction “was so amorphous that it could subsume monetary arguments without necessarily destroying them.”¹²⁹ The emergence of the concept of overproduction as a way to interpret economic crisis signaled a transition in the history of the American Pacific. In mercantilist rhetoric, it was the size of Asia’s wealth that mattered. The focus of American expansion in the Pacific in the nineteenth century was the Canton market, “the golden lodestone for every otter-skin, sealskin, or sandalwood log collected on Northwest Coast, California, or Pacific Islands.”¹³⁰ In the rhetoric of imperialism, it was the size of China as an untapped market for American industrial and agricultural overproduction that mattered. By the 1890s, Asia in general, and China in particular, began to be consistently read through a new set of mystifications. My goal in the following chapters is not to reveal the reality behind the mystification, but to reveal the reality of the mystification, to understand the historical projects, and the “distribution of geopolitical awareness,” that were condensed by such mystifications.

An American Pacific Jeremiad

Frank Norris's The Octopus and U.S. Imperialism

It is on the level of ideologies that men become
conscious of conflicts in the world economy.

—Karl Marx, "Introduction to a Critique of Political Economy"

In actual fact, the knowledge contained in a mythical concept is confused,
made of yielding, shapeless associations . . . it is a formless, unstable, nebulous
condensation, whose unity and coherence are above all due to its function.

—Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*

EPIC AMERICA

In a brief essay on the history of American literature entitled "A Neglected Epic," Frank Norris laments the fact that over the course of the nineteenth century, America failed to produce an epic literature that matched the big adventure of continental expansion. Surveying world history, Norris discovers that "various fightings, mysterious race-movements, migrations, wars and wanderings have produced their literature, distinctive, peculiar, excellent."¹ While the Trojan War spawned the *Illiad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Aeneid*, Norris wonders, "the conquering of the West, the subduing of the wilderness beyond the Mississippi—what has this produced in the way of literature? The dime novel! The dime novel and nothing better."² According to Norris, American literature is in pretty bad shape when it can find "no nobler hero than Buffalo Bill."³

In order to summon a self-image of the nation appropriate to its bloody, land-grabbing history, Norris joined the chorus of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophers of history who narrated the progress of civilization from its birthplace in Asia Minor, through its movement through the Greek and Roman empires to its high point in the Anglo-Saxon civilizations of England and America. Just as civilization expanded with the westward movement of empire, Norris believed, so America came into being by conquering western territories and the "savages" who inhabited them, then setting up shop on virgin lands. With the incorporation of America, though,

“nature’s nation” faced a severe identity crisis. Along with spokesmen for the age of empire such as Fredric Jackson Turner, Brooks Adams, and Alfred Thayer Mahan, Norris asserted that “Suddenly we have found that there is no longer any Frontier. The westward-moving course of empire has at last crossed the Pacific Ocean. Civilization has circled the globe and has come back to its starting point, the vague and mysterious East.”⁴

The Octopus is Norris’s epic response to the apparent crisis of the closing of the western frontier. Literary naturalism, Mary Lawlor argues, typically invokes a claustrophobic sense of space.⁵ While on one hand *The Octopus* imagines the American west not as free and open but as socially and economically congested, on the other the novel directs the forces of naturalism toward expanding the symbolic borders of the nation. With *The Octopus* Norris projected an image of America as an emerging world empire, an image that delivered purpose and direction for a nation that had just begun fighting against Spain, a decadent friarocracy that symbolized empire in decline, in two distant oceans. By seeing America as an empire on the move, Norris sanctified not only the nation’s status as carrier of world history but, more importantly, its actions and entanglements in the world beyond its borders. For Norris, an empire-minded literature would fill the cultural void created by the departure of the frontier spirit. Norris therefore positioned *The Octopus* along the cultural front of American imperialist expansion in the Pacific.

Norris’s contribution to a projected imperial legacy for America was his “Trilogy of the Wheat.” The trilogy was to include a story of production, set in California, a story of distribution, set in Chicago, and a story of consumption, set in Europe. Only the first two novels, *The Octopus* (1901) and *The Pit* (1903), were written before his death. “One of the requirements of an epic,” Norris argued, “is that its action must devolve upon some great national event.”⁶ The national event fictionalized in *The Octopus* was the “Mussel Slough Affair,” which involved a violent conflict between ranchers and the Southern Pacific Railroad in the San Joaquin Valley in 1880. Thanks to government handouts, the railroad owned alternate sections of the ranchers’ land. Believing in the agricultural mystique of John Locke and Thomas Jefferson, the ranchers thought that they could purchase those sections at their original worth, before they were transformed into valuable property by their sweat and toil. The state’s railroad commission, though, was less interested in natural rights than in super-profits and graded the land at its worth after it had been turned into precious farmland. The ranchers were free to either pay up or be evicted. When the ranchers refused to pay, a posse was sent by the railroad to evict them from their city on a hill.

In *The Octopus* Norris spins several stories out of the details of this conflict, all of which revolve around a symbol of national prosperity and progress: wheat. By fertilizing this symbol with purpose and direction and projecting a market rhetoric in which China figures as the Promised Land, Norris rearticulated the defining features of the American jeremiad for the age of empire. Yet rather than identify a particular people as embarking upon a providential errand into wilderness, Norris identifies a particular product, the wheat, as embodying the spirit of the nation. As a secular entity, the wheat is subject to overproduction and the laws of supply and demand. Yet as a sacred entity, the wheat is destined for China. The wheat, which is both a commodity and something that exceeds commodity relations, is the mechanism in the novel that naturalizes economic expansion and the myth of the China market. Outlining the spatial ideology supporting the American jeremiad, Sacvan Bercovitch comments that “the ritual of errand . . . implies a form of community without geographical boundaries.”⁷ Norris found the epic he was looking for at the intersection of the nationalist jeremiad and the emerging imperialist project in the Pacific. Representations of the American Pacific like *The Octopus* appeared in the gap and helped smooth the transition between crisis and hope, fact and fantasy. Such representations, therefore, were a necessary moment in the expansion of capitalist modernization in the United States at the turn of the century.

NORRIS: REFORMIST OR DEFEATIST?

In *The American Jeremiad* Sacvan Bercovitch argues that the ideology of the Puritan errand into wilderness, the idea that God had sent the Puritans on a mission to expel evil from a savage continent, did not dissipate with the rise of modern American nationalism but was repeatedly connected to various nationalist projects over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And the rhetoric of mission repeatedly appeared throughout the twentieth century as well. The Cold War, John Wayne, Vietnam, Ronald Reagan, and most recently George W. Bush’s “axis of evil” are just a few of the major twentieth-century events and names that have kept alive the dream, or nightmare, depending on your perspective, of America’s sacred, unimpeachable place in the world. The historical situation capitalized on by the nationalist jeremiad is social crisis. The jeremiad is a kind of parasite that needs a climate of crisis in order to reproduce itself. If there does not happen to be an obvious crisis around which the community can be unified, one can be manufactured. Bercovitch has found that, “Crisis was the social norm it (the jeremiad) sought to inculcate. The very concept of errand, after all, implied

a state of unfulfillment.”⁸ The rhetoric of national mission has historically functioned as a powerful ideological response to the appearance of social, political, or economic crisis, and part of that response entails both the production and the policing of the crisis itself. Crises can be interpreted in any number of ways. Struggles for hegemony, for cultural leadership over a national people, involve winning consent to a particular understanding of, and thus ways of dealing with, crisis.

If there is one word that describes the social, political, and economic trouble projected by *The Octopus*, it is crisis. In the novel, everything is in crisis: the economy, democracy, the community, the family, American manhood. The novel manufactures this unstable climate in order to hypnotize readers with a vision of the China market as the only logical solution to the nation’s economic troubles. This ideological refrain was beginning to gain momentum in political circles and the national press around the time Norris began writing his trilogy. In order to move readers who were not familiar with details of the Mussel Slough Affair, Norris had to invoke a structure of crisis that hit closer to home than was afforded by the actual event. The key to unleashing a familiar structure of crisis that would fit the 1890s better than the time of the actual conflict in 1880 was the fear that big corporations were accumulating too much power in the economic arena and using this power to influence the political machine. Readers of *The Octopus*, from its publication in 1901 to the present have worked to settle the matter of how Norris resolves the “trust question.” Is *The Octopus* populist venom directed at a truculent plutocracy? Or does Norris construct a world run by forces that individuals are incapable of bending to their will? Martin Sklar has argued that at the turn of the century the trust question had three interrelated parts: What should be the relationship between society and large corporations? What should be the relationship between large corporations and the state? And what should be the relationship between the state and a society increasingly dominated by large corporations? Sklar shows that the trust question emerged out of the severe depression of the 1890s and involved both the recognition that the market needed some form of regulation and the suspicion that corporations were gathering too much influence over American political institutions.⁹

At the time of the novel’s publication, many reviewers applauded Norris’s passionate muckraking. The *Washington Times* found that *The Octopus* “paints the evils of railroad monopoly in no uncertain colors.”¹⁰ The *Louisville Times* discerned “a terrific protest against the oppression of a community by a great railroad; it is a stinging indictment of a trust”¹¹ Some readers believed that the novel represented “on a small scale the struggle

continuously going on between capital and labor, the growth of centralized power, the aggression of the corporation and the trust."¹² And in his glowing review of *The Octopus*, Jack London saw "the agricultural force as opposed to the capitalistic force, the farmer against the financier, the tiller of the soil against the captain of industry."¹³

These readings are not entirely misdirected, for they go along with the fact that in the late 1890s Norris breathed the air of reform at *McClure's Magazine* with Ida Tarbell, Lincoln Steffens, and Ray Stannard Baker, who set the monopolies, on oil or sugar, for example, in opposition to the interests of the average worker, consumer, and small businessman.¹⁴ Many readers earnestly wanted Norris's farmers to stand for the underdog, either labor or the people. The desire to find strands of populism in *The Octopus* should not be too quickly dismissed, for political movements often achieve self-consciousness by productively misreading texts in ways that further, by generalizing, their interests.

Other reviews, though, saw in the novel only an epic call to submission. Such reviews expressed dissatisfaction with a story that promised so much yet delivered so little. *The Review of Reviews*, for example, found that "The purpose of the story is to drive home into the mind of the reader the conviction that the farmers are absolutely helpless in the grasp of the railroad octopus."¹⁵ Other readers took Norris to task for justifying "the Octopus on the principle of the greatest good to the greatest number."¹⁶ In *The Economic Novel in America* W. F. Taylor locates the novel's moral and political ambiguity in the fact that Norris "interprets his story at times by a philosophy of free will, according to which life is a moral experience; and, on the other hand, he interprets his story at other times by an optimistic determinism, according to which life is an amoral experience, and the individual man of no importance in comparison with the total life-scheme."¹⁷ For Taylor, this uncertainty leaves the reader feeling "that he has been witnessing a flurry of hectic action without meaning"¹⁸

So what do we do with these contradictory readings? Is *The Octopus* so confused as to be "without meaning"? One term that can help make sense out of the apparent senselessness of the novel is displacement. Displacement is everything for Norris. At different points in the narrative, each of the above interpretations would appear to be correct. The story begins as a romantic melodrama that congeals pity for the ranchers and fear of the railroad, and it finishes as a more conspicuously naturalist narrative in which the wheat moves beyond good and evil. This narrative turn is synchronized with displacements in the sublime object of imperialist desire. Just when we think the landscape is the source of national greatness, along comes the railroad.

And just when we think the railroad is the authentic techno-modern sublime, along comes the wheat.

In many respects, *The Octopus* is not a very good piece of literature. It is middlebrow, sensationalistic, and predictable, and it offers far more clichés than symbols. Nevertheless, Americanists, both old and new, should agree with Walter Fuller Taylor that “*The Octopus* comes very near summing up the American experience of economics from the Civil War to 1900”¹⁹ Perhaps Norris’s apparent confusion is less an aberration and more a symptom of the period in question. Alfred Kazin provides a useful point from which to begin plotting the contradictory, and messy, ideological terrain worked up by Norris: “The generation dominated by the dream of reform was a generation fascinated by imperialism.”²⁰ Tension between reform and imperialism structures the narrative of *The Octopus*. At the start, the reader’s heart is tugged in the direction of populist reform. By the end, though, perhaps exhausted from the “flurry of hectic action,” the reader is made to passively look on as the wheat sails across the Pacific toward China, leaving a trail of destruction behind it and presenting a fantasy of hope in front of it.

DEBUNKING POPULISM

When *The Octopus* is read in the context of populist discourse, we find that Norris clearly knows the rules of the game but is quite selective in his application of them. Richard Chase has pointed out that Norris both reproduces and takes apart key elements of populist mythology.²¹ Populist mythology interwove the idea that nature is inherently good with a conspiracy theory of history.²² Conspiracy theory involves the suspicion “that all would be well with American life if only it were not for the machinations of the money power—the bankers, the railroad magnates, and their panoply of venal journalists and lawyers, suborned marshals, and hired assassins.”²³ *The Octopus* gets a lot of mileage out of this manner of thinking about the circulation of power in American society, yet Norris departs from the full rhetorical rush of populism in important ways. For example, the ranchers are not quite as innocent and heroic as readers have made them out to be. Donald Pizer puts the ranchers in their place with the observation that “The greed of the railroad is matched by that of the ranchers.”²⁴ Walter Fuller Taylor’s reading of *The Octopus* similarly frustrates the desire to identify the ranchers, as Jack London did, with either labor or the people: “The very People of whom he theoretically made so much—the great mass of laborers and tenants on the Los Muertos ranch, for example—appear for the most part as only shadowy figures in the background of the story. The real conflict in the story is not

the conflict of a free folk against aggressive tyranny, as Norris's poet Presley thinks. It is rather the conflict of one big enterpriser—the collective ranchers—with another and larger enterpriser—the railroad. What interests Norris is not the struggling of average humanity, but the warfare of Titan against Olympian.”²⁵

Norris replaces the homesteading hayseed with astute agribusinessmen, thereby deconstructing the basic building block of Jeffersonian democracy. The ranchers are not simple yeomen—embodiments of democracy, freedom, and rugged individuality—engaged in subsistence farming. And they are clearly not making themselves happy, healthy, and independent in the process of appropriating the goodness and health conferred by nature. “Indeed,” John Carlos Rowe writes, “most family farms on the frontier failed; the large agribusinesses and western ranches that took over failed settlers’ farms, often converting them to other purposes, depended on the latest technologies of farming, ranching, communication, and transportation.”²⁶ This powerful ranching bloc is locked in a conflict with an equally powerful railroad that owns alternate sections of their land, and there is a big difference between the price they expect to pay for their land and the price they are assessed. Their future is held in the hands of a railroad commission, which is in the pockets of the railroad. This situation initially makes the reader, like Dyke’s little daughter Sid, want to run to the fence and spit and hiss as the train goes by.²⁷

Magnus Derrick, Annixter, Broderson, Dyke, and the other tillers of the land are cut from the cloth of the typical late-nineteenth-century rancher, who “had long since taken from business society its acquisitive goals and its speculative temper, but . . . was still practicing the competitive individualism that the most advanced sectors of industry and finance had outgrown.”²⁸ Norris’s ranchers are shrewd businessmen with one eye on their land, the other on fluctuations in the global grain market, and their heads in a vice being tightened by the railroad trust. They typify an “agricultural society whose real attachment was not to the land but to land values.”²⁹ Lack of faith in either economic individualism or grass-roots democracy should make it clear that *The Octopus* is no populist manifesto.

LOOKING FOR THE SUBLIME IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

Presley, the partial narrator of the story, enters this strenuous American scene with the Whitmanian intention of writing a “Song of the West” that would be one of the “forerunners of empire!”³⁰ In contrast to the instrumental rationality of the ranchers, Presley is possessed by a romantic

attachment to the land. With Presley, Norris creates a sensitive, aesthetically and ethically minded individual struggling to make sense of a world that has become difficult and uncomfortable to imagine. Fredric Jameson suggests that the rise of imperialism, the historical period in which the identity of Western nations became more intricately connected to distant parts of the globe, unleashed a “growing contradiction between lived experience and structure, or between a phenomenological description of the life of an individual and a more properly structural model of the conditions of existence of that experience.”³¹ Presley provides the lens through which the destructive effects of monopoly capitalism on both public and private life are observed. He is also the place in the novel where the inability to map local, national, and regional space appears to result from destabilizing processes of overproduction and expanding spheres of circulation. Presley initially conducts both the pity with which we react to the ranchers and the hatred with which we react to the Pacific and Southwestern Railroad. Yet when Presley can’t find his American Arcadia, he exchanges aesthetics for politics and the demand for justice. Through Presley, we get to throw a bomb at the unctuous middle manager, S. Berhman, and get to ask Shelgrim, owner of the P.&S.W., how he can live with himself knowing the pain and suffering his railroad has caused. Yet, like a weathervane in a windstorm, Presley again changes directions as the demand for justice fades, and he finally slides into an attitude of Jamesean indifference.

Unlike Whitman, Presley is incapable of combining the machine and the garden into some higher unity, for his romantic rustications are constantly interrupted by fences, grids, the clicking of telegraph keys, railroad tracks, and the constant chatter about grain rates and tariffs. The penetration of the country by the city is conveniently symbolized by Presley’s mode of transportation: a bicycle. Obviously, the West is not as rugged as it used to be. Presley therefore laments, “I was born too late.”³² More bicycle-rider than rough-rider, Presley is a feminized aesthete, clearly out of place in the brave new world of monopoly capitalism, a weak link in the white race: “His eyes were a dark brown, and his forehead was the forehead of the intellectual, wide and high, with a certain unmistakable lift about it that argued education, not only of himself, but of his people before him. The impression conveyed by his mouth and chin was that of a delicate and highly sensitive nature, the lips thin and loosely shut together, the chin small and rather receding. . . . One expected to find him nervous, introspective, to discover that his mental life was not at all the result of impressions and sensations that came to him from without, but rather of thoughts and reflections germinating from within.”³³ As a frat boy at the University of California, Norris advocated the practice of hazing new

members, commenting that "One good fight will do more for a boy than a year of schooling . . . it wakes in him that fine, reckless arrogance, that splendid, brutal, bullying spirit that is the Anglo-Saxon's birthright."³⁴ Reading Norris, it appears that naturalism is in essence a form of literary hazing. It is obvious from the start that Presley needs to be roughed up a bit in order for his observations regarding life in the San Joaquin Valley to have any validity. Norris loves to give physical, psychological, and emotional bruises to his male characters, such as Ross Wilbur in *Moran of the Lady Letty*, who is beaten into a more vigorous manhood by a foul-mouthed, hard-drinking uberwensch.

Never backing off from a good cliché, Norris tops off Presley's lack of robust masculinity with the fact that he is "threatened with consumption."³⁵ Presley needs a good game of football, the boy scouts, a war, or to be shanghaied like Ross Wilbur in order to toughen him up. Just as William Dean Howells was for Norris, and Woody Allen is for our times, Presley is a fragile society figure for whom cultivation has come at the expense of closeness to those primitive, elemental forces that should constitute American manhood. Presley represents the opposite of everything Theodore Roosevelt was championing as "the strenuous life": an aggressive Anglo-Saxon masculinity as the cure for a neurasthenic, anxiety-producing modernity.³⁶ Presley's problem is not so much that he was born too late but that he is a victim of the dainty literary sensibilities of the period.

Like his ideological kin Fredric Jackson Turner, Presley longs for those geographically determined values that guided American expansion and defined the American Character. This pursuit both separates him from and connects him to the ranchers' struggles: "But whatever he wrote, and in whatever fashion, Presley was determined that his poem should be of the West, that world's frontier of Romance, where a new race, a new people—hardy, brave, and passionate—were building an empire; where the tumultuous life ran like fire from dawn to dark, and from dark to dawn again, primitive, brutal, honest, and without fear."³⁷ Like Turner, Presley wants a frontier that is "primitive" and "brutal." Yet he also wants a frontier that is evacuated of the violence and work that reside in that image's political unconscious. When Presley encounters Hooven, the German immigrant who works for Magnus Derrick, we learn that "These uncouth brutes of farmhands and petty ranchers, grimed with the soil they worked upon, were odious to him beyond words."³⁸ "The people" are only meaningful to Presley as romantic abstractions: "He told himself that, as part of the people, he loved the people and sympathized with their hopes and fears, and joys and griefs; and yet Hooven, grimy and perspiring, with his perpetual grievance and his contracted horizon, only revolted him."³⁹

Just as Turner put the genocide of Native Americans “beyond words” in his narrative of America’s becoming, Presley struggles to avoid the economic significance of the land and the social conflicts that it mediates: “These matters, these eternal fierce bickerings between the farmers of the San Joaquin and the Pacific and Southwestern Railroad irritated him and wearied him.”⁴⁰ Yet economic signifiers repeatedly return from beyond: “He searched for the True Romance, and, in the end, found grain rates and unjust freight tariffs.”⁴¹ Presley’s imagination is rattled by the apparent incompatibility of aesthetic and economic modes of representing the land, because he fails to realize the idea Norris hoped to reveal through his “Trilogy of the Wheat”: in a country dominated by the trusts and imperialist aspirations, economic adventure should provide the raw material for the American epic.

The decisive turning point in the biography of Presley occurs when, distressed by the lateness of his birth and his inability to grasp the significance of the landscape, he climbs a hill to read “his little tree-calf edition of the *Odyssey*” which “roused him from all his languor. In an instant, he was the poet again, his nerves tingling, alive to every sensation, responsive to every impression.”⁴² Bursting at the seams with inspiration, Presley looks out on the valley, where “everything in the range of his vision was overlaid with a sheen of gold . . . the San Joaquin expanded, Titanic, before the eye of the mind, flagellated with heat, quivering and shimmering under the sun’s red eye.”⁴³ Then, the creative floodgates are opened: “Ha! there it was, his epic, his inspiration, his West, his thundering progression of hexameters. A sudden uplift, a sense of exhilaration, of physical exaltation appeared abruptly to sweep Presley from his feet. As from a point high above the world, he seemed to dominate a universe, a whole order of things. He was dizzied, stunned, stupefied, his morbid supersensitive mind reeling, drunk with the intoxication of mere immensity. Stupendous ideas for which there were no names drove headlong through his brain. Terrible, formless shapes, vague figures, gigantic, monstrous, distorted, whirled at a gallop through his imagination.”⁴⁴

While it appears that Presley has finally experienced the American sublime, what, exactly, is he really seeing? This passage is overrun by an excess of compelling, yet indefinite, signifiers. He is not really seeing anything at all, only “hexameters,” “stupendous ideas,” “formless shapes,” and “vague figures.” Presley is partially blinded by the bright sun. Nevertheless, he is convinced that he has finally glimpsed the American West in all its luminous ferality. Presley descends the hill, “still in his dream,” when he is interrupted by some unwanted impressions. Right when his romantic orgasm is about to climax—“At last he was to grasp his song in all its entity”—the machine crashes into the garden: “The hideous ruin in the engine’s path drove all thought of

his poem from his mind. The inspiration vanished like a mist . . . and abruptly Presley saw again, in his imagination, the galloping monster, the terror of steel and steam, with its single eye, cyclopean, red, shooting from horizon to horizon; but saw it now as the symbol of a vast power, huge, terrible, flinging the echo of its thunder over all the reaches of the valley, leaving blood and destruction in its path; the leviathan, with tentacles of steel clutching into the soil, the soulless Force, the iron-hearted Power, the monster, the Colossus, the Octopus.⁴⁵

Presley quickly refocuses sublime imagery from nature to technology, from the “sun’s red eye” to the “single eye” of the train. Yet this displacement does not entail a shift from the ideal to the material, for the machine is just as abstract as Presley’s meditations on the landscape, and both abstractions are laundered in the hypertrophic vocabulary of the sublime. The difference is that one abstraction was fermented inside Presley’s “supersensitive mind,” whereas the other was an intrusion from without. While processing these destabilizing impressions, Presley notices that a flock of innocent sheep had climbed through a hole in the fence and wandered onto the railroad tracks. The sheep are then followed by painfully lowbrow foreshadowing, where they are pathetically slaughtered by an oncoming train. This scene triggers an existential crisis in Presley, for he now realizes that the frontier, as imaginative reserve of otherness to the dirty world of work and commodity relations, is gone. The frontier as safety valve for all of the problems associated with claustrophobic urban space is officially closed. Presley therefore begins to look for inspiration in “blood and destruction” rather than beyond it.

AMBER WAVES OF IMPERIALIST GRAIN

In the scene described above, perhaps Presley does not see anything definite or concrete but only “stupendous ideas” because there is simply not much to see. *The Octopus* begins just after the harvest of the wheat: “It was the period between seasons, when nothing was being done, when the natural forces seemed to hang suspended.”⁴⁶ Norris quietly builds an ironic relationship between Presley and the landscape—Presley’s imagination is most fertile when the land is most barren. Presley therefore has to force it, with his “thundering progression of hexameters,” because “The wheat stubble was of a dirty yellow; the ground, parched, cracked, and dry, of a cheerless brown.”⁴⁷ In contrast to Presley’s abundant imagination, the reader looks out on “vast spaces of dull brown earth, sprinkled with stubble. . . . To the east the reach seemed infinite, flat, cheerless, heat-ridden.”⁴⁸ Further compounding the ironic relationship between the cycle of the harvest and the

social relations it regulates is the fact that when the landscape appears lifeless, the ranchers are most alive. Yet, as we were bluntly forewarned when those poor sheep began to graze on the tracks of progress, Norris is going to reverse this situation. The center of this reversal of the rancher's fortune is Magnus Derrick, who, like Presley, is having difficulty adjusting to this transformed American scene. Magnus may not have been born to late, but he clearly belongs to a different era.

In order to combat the railroad monopoly, the ranchers decide, after a lengthy debate, to bribe the state's railroad commission in order to receive a favorable grading of their land. Yet political subterfuge does not come easily for Magnus Derrick, our vanishing American Adam. Magnus's conscience provides the focus of deliberation over whether to gamble on the political machine: "It was the last protest of the Old School, rising up there in denunciation of the new order of things, the statesman opposed to the politician; honesty, rectitude, uncompromising integrity, prevailing for the last time against the devious maneuvering, the evil communications, the rotten expediency of a corrupted institution."⁴⁹ Magnus's descent from innocence to experience signals the death of the charmed yeoman. Richard Hofstadter provides a helpful context for understanding the particular sense of crisis built through the tortured soul of Magnus Derrick: "In the Progressive era the life of business, and to some degree even of government, was beginning to pass from an individualistic form toward one demanding industrial discipline and engendering a managerial and bureaucratic outlook. . . . Most Americans who came from the Yankee-Protestant environment, whether they were reformers or conservatives, wanted economic success to continue to be related to personal character. . . . The great corporation, the crass plutocrat, the calculating political boss, all seemed to defy these desires."⁵⁰ For Norris, as it was for Dreiser's Hurstwood in *Sister Carrie*, the Trust negates the power and influence of Character. Closeness to nature was supposed to infuse the homesteader with a rigorous moral system. Relying on the discourse of natural rights, the ranchers argue that time spent cultivating the land earned their right to it. They expect to simply pay the price of the land prior to its cultivation. It would clearly be wrong for the railroad to profit from land that it did not spend time cultivating. Yet natural rights are voided by monopoly capitalism: it is not proximity to nature that governs the ranchers' universe but processes of capital accumulation. And with their bonanza farming practices, the ranchers hardly symbolize opposition to this motive. Unfortunately, the railroad's pockets are deeper than those of the ranchers,' so the railroad commission gives in to the highest bidder and decides that instead of the two dollars per acre the ranchers were expecting to pay, the

price is set at twenty-seven dollars, thus forcing their eviction from the land. A last ditch effort to keep the tentacles of the railroad off their property produces several casualties and leaves the rest, most notably Magnus Derrick, signifier of broken masculinity, kicked out of their city on a hill.

The slaughter of the ranchers occurs just as the land is beginning to show signs of life. Prior to the showdown at the irrigating ditch, it is the ruggedly pragmatic Annixter, not the genteel Magnus or the starry-eyed Presley, who first notices the enlivened landscape: "The east glowed opalescent. All about him Annixter saw the land inundated with light. But there was a change. Overnight something had occurred. . . . There it was, the Wheat, the Wheat! The little seed long planted, germinating in the deep, dark furrows of the soil, straining, swelling, suddenly in one night had burst upward to the light. The wheat had come up. It was there before him, around him, everywhere, illimitable, immeasurable. . . . Once more the strength of nations was renewed."⁵¹ Annixter is capable of seeing things clearly because his vision isn't clouded by deep thoughts. In this respect, he is like Moran of *Moran of the Lady Letty*, who "lived by doing things . . . not thinking."⁵² Annixter, the rough-riding parallel to Norris's rough-writing, does not think about the landscape, he lives it. In Norris's descriptions of Annixter, as with Presley, phenotype reflects archetype. Annixter's "youthful appearance was offset by a certain male cast of countenance, the lower lip thrust out, the chin large and deeply cleft. His university course had hardened him rather than polished him. He still remained one of the people, rough almost to insolence, direct in speech, intolerant in his opinions, relying upon absolutely no one but himself"⁵³ Whereas the desexualized Presley is moved by books, Annixter is moved by the genuine love of woman. While there is no human hero at the center of the *The Octopus*, Annixter, with his awkward blend of public toughness and private tenderness, is a good candidate for the job. His courtship of Hilma Tree, whose "greatest charm of all was her simplicity," is yet another subplot that parallels the growth of the wheat.⁵⁴ This soap-operatic pairing of innocence and experience becomes the symbolic place in the novel where Norris enthusiastically equates heterosexual procreation with work and the cycles of the harvest, thereby building an allegory out of the fact that you need both sex and a high-fiber diet in order to perpetuate the species.

Norris assembles this allegory out of sexualized images of the interactions between worker, machine, and earth. While Presley snuggles with his fancy ideas, there is real, penetrative work being performed all around him. Norris, unlike Presley, gives us racy descriptions of horses and workers as rough trade: "Everywhere there were visions of glossy brown backs, straining, heaving, swollen with muscle; harness streaked with specks of froth,

broad, cup-shaped hoofs, heavy with brown loam, men's faces red with tan, blue overalls spotted with axle-grease; muscled hands, the knuckles whitened in their grip on the reins"⁵⁵ For Norris, production is figured as an epic embrace of technology and nature: "Everywhere through the great San Joaquin, unseen and unheard, a thousand ploughs up-stirred the land, tens of thousands of shears clutched deep into the warm, moist soil. It was the long stroking caress, vigorous, male, powerful, for which the Earth seemed panting. The heroic embrace of a multitude of iron hands, gripping deep into the brown, warm flesh of the land that quivered responsive and passionate under this rude advance, so robust as to be almost an assault, so violent as to be veritably brutal."⁵⁶

We are obviously not dealing with virgin land here. By turning the narrative into softcore agri-porn, we find a clear example of the naturalist effort to grasp reality in all of its vulgar materiality, as opposed to the "drama of the broken tea-cup" that Norris found in Howellsian realism. Yet the sexualization of work as rape fantasy suggests that production is only meaningful for Norris by its placement within an eschatological allegory. Is there really anything "material" that precedes this allegorization? What becomes of the political and economic struggles that apparently gave rise to this allegory?

Studying the representation of production, and the movement of the ideal/material binary in the narrative, Walter Benn Michaels finds that "Norris's utterly idealized account of the production of wheat as the emergence of a spiritual body out of a natural one can coexist peacefully with an utterly materialist account of the growing wheat as a mechanical force."⁵⁷ I would take Michaels's reading a step further and say that rather than making the ideal and material coexist, the supposedly materialist combination of wheat, work, and worker is always already idealized within the naturalist mode of representation. These terms are only meaningful in relation to the overarching allegory of life and death that structures the narrative. Such representations of production create an utterly idealist vision, because the ideal does not so much emerge out of the material as the material is, from the start, thoroughly idealized. The distance between Norris and Presley, between naturalism and romanticism, collapses when we consider that Norris values workers and work only as abstractions, as an occasion for some rough-writing that exists in ideological tension with Presley's bicycle-riding.

Norris appears to encourage a reading of *The Octopus* in which nature is equated with the ideal and the machine is equated with the material. Leo Marx gives in to this interpretation by fixing narrative displacements with the "machine in the garden" motif. Following this interpretive line, Michaels argues that a "central problem for naturalism (is) the irruption in nature of

the powerfully unnatural.”⁵⁸ The novel does seem, at the outset, to rely heavily on this romantic antinomy, hence the massacre of those poor sheep. Looking out on the valley, Presley begins to get the picture: “And there before him, mile after mile, illimitable, covering the earth from horizon to horizon, lay the Wheat. . . . There it lay, a vast, silent ocean, shimmering a pallid green under the moon and under the stars; a mighty force, the strength of nations, the life of the world. . . . Ah, yes, the Wheat—it was over this that the Railroad, the ranchers, the traitor false to his trust, all the members of an obscure conspiracy, were wrangling. As if human agency could affect this colossal power!”⁵⁹ This “silent ocean,” this “nourisher of nations,” appears to be a reserve of otherness to the railroad, techno-modern symbol of death and destruction. Yet this opposition does not stand for long: “Nature was, then, a gigantic engine, a vast cyclopean power, huge, terrible, a leviathan with a heart of steel”⁶⁰ Machine and garden become one powerful assemblage in the figure of the wheat. Against Leo Marx’s reading of the novel, Donald Pizer suggests that “Norris draws upon machine imagery to provide emotional intensity to the description of any destructive force, including nature itself when it is so conceived.”⁶¹ By transcoding the romantic opposition between machine and nature, Norris translates the wheat into an epic entity that blends the innate goodness and transcendence of nature with the amoral, post-human power of the machine. The result is nature’s machinic nation, in which, as in “Passage to India,” technology is not something to be feared but is productively absorbed in a metanarrative of an emerging American Pacific.

OVERPRODUCTION AND THE MYTH OF THE CHINA MARKET

The Octopus is ultimately concerned not with the destructive effects of the railroad on an innocent landscape or heroic people, nor with production, but with the spirit of the product—the wheat. In *The Octopus* the wheat plays a role similar to that of the gold *McTeague*; it is a master-symbol that unifies the multiple parts of the narrative and keeps these parts moving forward in a singular, meaningful direction. In this articulation of the American jeremiad, it is a commodity, not a people, which is on an errand into oceanic wilderness. Norris therefore relocates the providential self-representation of the American empire from territorial conquest to the conquest of overseas markets. Order and unity, at the level of both structure and content, is achieved by the flexibility inhering within the symbol of the wheat, which enables it to contain and transcend all contradictions and differences. Just as

the gold in *McTeague* was more than just a symbol of value—it was value *par excellence*, the arbitrary, and therefore ultimately meaningless, guarantor of all other values—the wheat is more than just a commodity. The wheat is both machine and garden, both product of human labor and indifferent, self-moving force, both private property and national prize. The autotelic movement of the wheat across the Pacific holds out the promise of national greatness for the country at a moment when the landscape can no longer provide such services. The multiple displacements and ironies that structure the narrative, which are always linked to particular moments of crisis, ultimately force the reader to follow the wheat across the Pacific, toward the China market. Norris's American Pacific jeremiad, centered on the figure of the wheat, can therefore be read as offering "a realistic way to deal with crisis and change, and so becomes a source not only of revitalization but of rededication."⁶² The "trust question" is merely an entertaining distraction along the way. In addition to enabling the synthesis of machine and garden, the wheat is the place in the novel where the gaps separating the secular from the sacred, fact from prophecy, are overcome. As a secular entity, the wheat is subject to the laws of supply and demand. Yet as a sacred entity, the wheat is destined to regenerate a stagnant Asia.

Within the narrative, the shipping magnate Cedarquist produces the secular reading of the wheat. As the ranchers await the outcome of their efforts to bribe the state's railroad commission, Cedarquist comes along and dazzles Magnus with a compelling theory of overproduction: "Our century is about done. The great word of this nineteenth century has been Production. The great word of the twentieth century will be—listen to me, you youngsters—Markets. As a market for our Production—or let me take a concrete example—as a market for our Wheat, Europe is played out. We, however, have gone on producing wheat at a tremendous rate. The result is over-production. We supply more than Europe can eat, and down go the prices. The remedy is not in the curtailing of our wheat areas, but in this we must have new markets, greater markets. For years we have been sending our wheat from East to West, from California to Europe. But the time will come when we must send it from West to East. We must march with the course of empire, not against it. I mean, we must look to China."⁶³ The key words of this imperialist jeremiad are "will be." Cedarquist's economic sermon on the crisis of overproduction and the salvation to be found in China provides the point in the novel that most immediately, and directly, connects to ideas that were in the process of taking shape in the world surrounding Norris's novel.

Through Cedarquist, Norris gives a voice to, and cultural backing for, a style of interpreting economic crisis that was gaining prominence at the

turn of the century. At this time, economic discourse on Asia in general, and on China in particular, was fundamentally prophetic. A representative anecdote of imperialist futurology appears in a speech that Senator Albert Beveridge presented to President McKinley in 1900 entitled “Policy in the Philippines.” When the Spanish-American skirmish turned into the Filipino-American War, Beveridge wanted to make sure that America did not back down from its manly duties in the Pacific, for the independence movement in the Philippines had aroused highly visible domestic opposition to the war led by a captain of industry, Andrew Carnegie, and a captain of irony, Mark Twain. Anti-imperialism makes strange bedfellows. To counter the rise of American anti-imperialism, Beveridge channeled John Winthrop for the age of empire: “The Philippines are ours forever, ‘territory belonging to the United States,’ as the Constitution calls them. And just beyond the Philippines are China’s illimitable markets. We will not retreat from either. We will not repudiate our duty in the archipelago. We will not renounce our part in the mission of our race. We will not renounce our part in the mission of our race, trustee, under God, of the civilization of the world. And we will move forward to our work, not howling out regrets like slaves whipped to their burdens, but with gratitude for a task worthy of our strength, and thanksgiving to Almighty God that He has marked us as His chosen people, henceforth to lead in the regeneration of the world.”⁶⁴ Beveridge goes on to assert, “The Pacific is our Ocean. More and more Europe will manufacture the most it needs, secure from its colonies the most it consumes. Where shall we turn for consumers of our surplus? Geography answers the question. China is our natural customer.”⁶⁵

In addition to America’s malevolent assimilation of the Philippines, a series of massive depressions and violent strikes, which moved in step with the increased visibility of urban poverty and overcrowding, thanks to the rise of yellow journalists like Stephen Crane and Jacob Riis, led many God-fearing, middle-class Americans to question their faith in the capitalist project. A wide variety of leftist groups—communists, socialists, anarchists, utopians—were emboldened by this historical situation and worked to turn this structure of uncertainty to their favor. To stabilize the economic terrain and boost public confidence in, and hope for, the future, various agrarian organizations and segments of the bourgeoisie—manufacturers, merchants, bankers—began to push an economic narrative that located the origin of the nation’s problems in overproduction and projected the myth of the China market as the solution.⁶⁶ Just about the only place that this explanation was ignored, as I will argue in the next chapter, was in socialist analyses of economic crisis. The excessiveness of Beveridge’s speech, like that offered by his

fictional counterpart in Cedarquist, wraps a theory of overproduction in the rugged rhetoric of the jeremiad. In digesting this purple prose, it is tempting to separate theory from rhetoric, economic analysis from decorative jingoism. Yet, as noted at the end of the last chapter, the concept of overproduction was fast becoming the common sense explanation of economic crisis in the period leading up to the outbreak of the Spanish-American War. Therefore, to understand the discourse and practice of imperialism at the turn of the century, we need to pay close attention to the rhetorical maneuvers through which ideas regarding overproduction and the China market were linked in a persuasive geography of hope that would lead the country out of crisis. Representations of the American Pacific like *The Octopus* appeared in the gap and helped smooth the transition between crisis and hope, fact and fantasy. Such representations, therefore, were a necessary moment in the expansion of capitalist modernization in the United States at the turn of the century.

If there was one member of the political superstructure then that was responsible for articulating a coherent theory of overproduction, and thus of providing geographical direction to processes of modernization, at the levels of both production and consumption, it was Charles Conant. While discussions of imperialism usually highlight the writings of Hobson and Lenin, and to a lesser extent Hilferding and Luxemburg, for their theories of modern imperialism as a distinct stage of, or crisis in, capitalist development, Charles Conant is a crucial and much overlooked node in the history of American thought about imperialism. Working for both the McKinley and Roosevelt administrations, Conant drafted economic policy on the Philippines, Latin America, and China.⁶⁷ Along with Alfred Thayer Mahan and Brooks Adams, Conant was a core member of the imperialist brain trust, whose “primary responsibility was to . . . provide those imperial executives with the global, big picture; to ascertain the state of the world and to project a vision of how it might be altered and what America’s role in that alteration process might be.”⁶⁸ While Conant’s name is commonplace in political and economic histories of U.S. imperialism, he seldom appears in efforts to reconstruct the culture(s) of that imperialism. However, Conant was the state intellectual most responsible for instituting the imperialist jeremiad as foreign policy.

Conant’s mission was to locate the origins of, and solutions to, the economic crises that had become endemic during the second half of the nineteenth century in America. As Henry Adams conveyed with epiphanic force in *The Education*, capitalism appeared to be creating considerably more chaos than order. To start making sense of economic crisis, Conant began with the idea that it is “the result of disturbances of the equilibrium between

demand and supply.”⁶⁹ Like Karl Marx, Conant ran against classical political economy by questioning the foundational belief that supply and demand naturally and inevitably balance each other out. Rather than begin with a preordained identity between supply and demand, Conant presupposed their fundamental separation. For Conant, imbalances between supply and demand were not temporary aberrations but regular features of modern capitalism, because “production in anticipation of demand is the almost universal rule.”⁷⁰ Overproduction was itself the effect of a deeper problem, that of oversaving. According to Conant, when the economy was strong, surplus capital tended to be reinvested in fixed capital, such as new machinery or factories, which quickly produced in excess of demand. Oversaving therefore led to overproduction, which would then be followed by falling prices, depression, and class antagonism. New markets were the obvious, and only, solution to open class warfare.

For Conant, owners of capital could never calculate, in advance, the precise relations of supply and demand. Such calculations would require omniscience on the part of the capitalist: “Thus, in order to determine exactly the equations of demand and supply, a producer would need to possess complete knowledge in regard to all existing industries and the gift of prophecy in respect to future changes in popular demand for their products.”⁷¹ In order to rectify imbalances between supply and demand, “A certain period of time is needed for finding new outlets for finished goods and for the adjustments which are required by changed conditions.”⁷² Political regulation of the excesses of profit-seeking is futile. Just as Cedarquist asserted that “The remedy is not in the curtailing of our wheat areas,” Conant argued that restriction of production would not resolve economic crisis, because such an action would require state intervention in the economy and would thus threaten the sacred institutions of individualism and private property. With fresh overseas markets, prices and profits would rise, interest rates would lower, new fixed investments and national growth would result, and the nation would sail confidently into the future.

Imperialism was not a dirty word for Conant, as it was for members of the Anti-Imperialist League, which I will discuss in the following chapter. Rather, imperialism simply referred to the progressive desire to secure overseas markets: “The writer is not an advocate of ‘imperialism’ from sentiment, but does not fear the name if it means only that the United States shall assert their right to free markets in all the old countries which are being opened to the surplus resources of the capitalistic countries and thereby given the benefits of modern civilization. Whether this policy carries with it the direct government of groups of half-savage islands may be a subject for argument,

but upon the economic side of the question there is but one choice—either to enter by some means upon the competition for the employment of American capital and enterprise in these countries, or to continue the needless duplication of existing means of production, with the glut of unconsumed products, the convulsions followed by trade stagnation, and the steadily declining return upon investments which this policy will invoke.”⁷³ Conant worked to separate the political from the economic in thinking about imperialism. In so doing, he set colonialism, the direct rule of distant territories, in opposition to imperialism, the clean and efficient pursuit of foreign markets. Imperialism, Conant argued, did not require the “direct government of half-savage islands,” and thus did not logically contradict principles of democracy and liberty, of a constitutional government founded on the “consent of the governed.” Summarizing the potent history of this mode of imagining America’s place in the world, John Carlos Rowe writes, “Americans’ interpretations of themselves as a people are shaped by a powerful imperial desire and a profound anti-colonial temper.”⁷⁴

For Conant, as for Norris, economic expansion found its homology in nature: “The irresistible tendency to expansion, which leads the growing tree to burst every barrier . . . seems again in operation, demanding new outlets for American capital and new opportunities of American enterprise.”⁷⁵ In the shift from recognition of a lack of demand at home to the demand for markets abroad, what is dissolves into the promise of what will be. As Cedarquist instructs Magnus, “Tell the men of the East to look out for the men of the West. The irrepressible Yank is knocking at the doors of their temples and he will want to sell ‘em carpet-sweepers for the harems and electric lights for the temple shrines.”⁷⁶ For Cedarquist, the fictional mouthpiece of Conant, the most important space of economic opportunity was to be found in China. The China market was not only one “new outlet” among others; at the turn of the century, China appeared to be the Promised Land. Summarizing the domestic and international conflicts in China that culminated in the Boxer Rebellion, Henry Adams wrote with his famous blend of foresight and hyperbole, “The drama acted at Peking, in the summer of 1900, was in the eye of the student, the most serious that could be offered for his study, since it brought him suddenly to the inevitable struggle for the control China, which, in his view, must decide the control of the world.”⁷⁷ For Adams, always on the lookout for figures who embodied emergent political and economic energies, John Hay was the lone figure in Washington who recognized the importance of China to the future of America and the world, and who worked against the political inertia that was keeping this “20 million h.p. society” from assuming a leading role in China.

A crucial turning point in which the economic promise of China went from being the fantasy of scattered politicians and business leaders, and their mouthpieces in the press, to being officially recognized in Washington, came through an exchange of letters between the China Committee, the New York Chamber of Commerce, and President McKinley. In 1898 a China Committee formed out of the fear that China was about to be partitioned into “spheres of influence” by European powers and that foreign occupation of China would put the glorious future of trade with China in jeopardy. In a letter to the New York Chamber of Commerce, Everett Frazar, president of the China Committee, wrote, “Under these circumstances your Committee believe that the privileges in China, now enjoyed by American citizens under existing treaty rights, should be jealously guarded and carefully watched, and that the Chamber of Commerce should impress upon our Government the increasing value of the export trade of the country to the Empire of China, and the imperative necessity for its protection in view of the action taken by European powers in the East.”⁷⁸ The China Committee succeeded in moving the New York Chamber of Commerce to write to President McKinley, that “the trade of the United States to China is now rapidly increasing, and is destined, with the further opening of that country, to assume large proportions unless arbitrarily debarred by the action of foreign governments.”⁷⁹

The urgency of this situation was given by the fact that, as the report stated, “The Administration at Washington seems to be supine about the present menace to these important interests of our citizens in China, relying apparently on the fallacious theory that our treaty rights there will continue unimpaired and will automatically protect themselves throughout any political changes.”⁸⁰ In his response to this letter, Frazar reported to the New York Chamber of Commerce, “The situation in the East is really changing from day to day, while the future cannot, at the present time, be correctly foretold.”⁸¹ Shortly following this exchange of letters, the China Committee was renamed as the American Asiatic Association, with Frazar as president. Having instigated a war of position at the level of the state, the American Asiatic Association shifted its energies toward educating the public on the importance of China to America’s future, and of America to China’s future, by publishing the *Journal of the American Asiatic Association*. I explore the geopolitical significance of this particular institution to the formation of an American Pacific in the next chapter.

Through this exchange of letters, an imagined China market appeared to be essential to the health of the American economy. Yet because this particular future was made uncertain by inertia and ignorance at key levels in

Washington, this economic fantasy had to become the focus of active political work in the here and now. Real consent had to be manufactured around the promise of China. In *The Octopus* the power of this economic promise is dramatized through a dialogue between Cedarquist and Magnus, where Magnus is immediately seduced by the obviousness of Cedarquist's solutions to the ranchers' problems: "However, his (Cedarquist's) very vagueness was a further inspiration to the Governor. He swept details aside. He saw only the grand coup, the huge results, the East conquered, the march of empire rolling westward, finally arriving at its starting point, the vague, mysterious Orient. He saw his wheat, like the crest of an advancing billow, crossing the Pacific, bursting upon Asia, flooding the Orient in a golden torrent. It was the new era."⁸² What connects this reorientation of Magnus's consciousness from the here and now of the claustrophobic West to the imaginary markets of Asia is the simultaneous recognition and disavowal of the difference between fact and promise, reality and prophecy. The defining feature of market discourse on China at the turn of the century, much as it is today, was the slippage between we should, we must, and we will. The prophetic moment of market discourse, then, is not merely a rhetorical cover for a theory that deals primarily with facts. Rather, facts are grasped and interpreted through rhetorical figures, or, as I will argue below, through myth.

With this close reading of *The Octopus*, I hope to have outlined a formative moment in the history of what David Palumbo-Liu has termed the Asian/American dynamic. Palumbo-Liu argues that processes of modernization in the United States have historically been mediated by both real and imagined contacts with Asia: "The very shape and character of the United States in the twentieth century—specifically, in the imaginings of modern American development in the global system—is inseparable from historical occasions of real contact between and interpenetrations of Asia and America, in and across the Pacific Ocean."⁸³ The argument put together both here and throughout this book is that imaginary contacts between Asia and America, rather than following real contacts as re-presentations of an actual exchange, provided the symbolic structure through which real exchanges were defined and interpreted. Fantasies of the China market supported political and economic movements across the Pacific long before that market was realized and were in dramatic excess of its actual potential. The rhetoric of imperialism, the discursive umbrella under which spatializing economic terms such as expansion, overproduction, overseas markets, and crisis were articulated, generated an imaginary China that gave direction and purpose to rapidly, and unevenly, expanding spheres of production, circulation, and consumption in the United States at the turn of the century. And, as

Beveridge's speech made explicit, the expansion of these spheres was connected to, and through, this country's bloody conquest of the Philippines.

While Norris may have exalted the China market, he did not hold actual Chinese in such high favor. For example, in *Moran of the Lady Letty* Chinese sailors are repeatedly described as secretive rat-eaters, thus perpetuating the dehumanizing stereotypes in circulation at the time that justified violence, both physical and legislative, against Chinese immigrants to this country.⁸⁴ When Wilbur and Moran encounter a junk full of "coolies," Norris depicts them as possessing "simian cunning and ferocity devoid of courage."⁸⁵ In the final showdown, Wilbur and Moran fight the Chinese over a valuable batch of ambergris. Innate Anglo-Saxon superiority determines the outcome of the battle, and the Chinese are taught a valuable life lesson: "Don't try to fight with white people."⁸⁶ *The Octopus* and *Moran of the Lady Letty* are representative of a period in the history of white American nationalism in which the health of the national economy appeared to depend on expanded exports to China, while the Chinese immigrant was being defined as a subhuman threat to the national body. This hypocrisy would structure representations of Asia, and Asians in America, throughout the twentieth century.

The narrative of *The Octopus* picks up speed as it moves toward a fantasy of Asiatic consumption as the salvation for both a famine-stricken Asia and a crisis-ridden America. Norris forgets production while idealizing consumption, thereby moving the readers' active sympathy away from the ranchers' struggles and toward a passive acceptance of the providential laws of supply and demand. Summarizing this narrative shift, Walter Benn Michaels finds that "*The Octopus* is much less concerned with its presumed subject (production) or even with its titular subject (the railroad, hence distribution) than with the final stage in Norris's economic cycle—consumption, the imagination of an appetite for American wheat."⁸⁷ In the shift from production to consumption, the counterpart of American abundance becomes famine-stricken Asia. Norris orchestrates the Asian/American dynamic through a series of antithetical terms: lack/fullness, weakness/strength, empty/full. Reversing the Orientalist binary system that was prevalent earlier in the century, excess is here relocated to the American side of the equation. Famine is lack essentialized—demand and in its most urgent form. Norris makes famine a signifier of demand, and thus of weakness and dependence, of China's need to be regenerated by American abundance.

By the time we reach the resolution to all of the crises and conflicts that make up *The Octopus*, half a dozen of the ranchers have been killed, one is in prison for life, another has turned to a life of crime, and the rest have been evicted from their land. Minna Hooven has been forced into prostitution,

and Mrs. Hooven starves to death in the streets of San Francisco. This is to be expected because literary naturalism has never been known for its homecoming parades or happy endings. Despite all of the calamity and turmoil that has ravaged this once powerful ranching community, “the Wheat remained. Untouched, unassailable, undefiled, that mighty world-force, that nourisher of nations, wrapped in Nirvanic calm, indifferent to the human swarm, gigantic, resistless, moved onward in its appointed grooves.”⁸⁸ While the people of the San Joaquin Valley are stripped of agency and purpose, the wheat is transformed into a master-symbol that reconciles all of the fundamental oppositions that structure the narrative: machine/garden, production/consumption, secular/sacred, good/evil, politics/economics, East/West. The final image of the wheat moving out of the country combines elements of the beautiful—calm, purposeful, bounded—and the sublime—gigantic, indifferent, boundless. The wheat becomes a floating signifier that can absorb qualities from anywhere and everywhere yet still remain meaningful as a suprahuman ethical force. Ultimately, the circulation of the wheat is transformed into an eschatological allegory in which a geographical and historical past located along the western frontier is made continuous with a future located in the vast, untapped markets of Asia: “Falseness dies; injustice and oppression in the end of everything fade and vanish away. Greed, cruelty, selfishness, and inhumanity are short-lived; the individual suffers but the race goes on. Annixter dies, but in a far distant corner of the world a thousand lives are saved. The larger view always and through all shams, all wickednesses, discovers the Truth that will, in the end, prevail, and all things, surely, inevitably, resistlessly work together for the good.”⁸⁹ In the final analysis, it is the impersonal wheat that drives the narrative, possesses agency, and contains the innate force to expand, not the American people. Unlike Shelgrim or Cedarquist, who provide secular readings of the wheat as a commodity, the omniscient narrator who takes over for Presley, and is endowed with the gift of prophecy sees the wheat for what it is: “Colossal indifference only, a vast trend toward appointed goals,” and “a resistless, huge force, eager, vivid, impatient for the sea.”⁹⁰

THE WHEAT AS SYMPTOM AND SYMBOL

While Norris works to make the wheat into a symbol of national unity and an allegory of progress that overcomes all social, philosophical, and geographic contradictions and conflicts, the movement of the wheat out of the country also undoes such imaginary fixations. Norris needs the wheat to stand for the nation because, in the age of empire, such unity cannot be

found at the level of race, space, or economy. Wherever the narrative turns, one finds antagonism, struggle, and little hope for the future. Anglo-Saxon bloodlines, while distinguishing the ranchers from grimy farmhands and bomb-throwing anarchists, do little to protect them from the railroad's henchmen. And white pride does not get them their land back. The frontier may have once held out hope for an imagined Anglo-Saxon American community composed of self-reliant individuals—obviously at the expense of indigenous peoples. But the closing of the frontier, and its infusion with conflicts both within and between classes, meant that the West could no longer function as the safety valve that would relieve the nation's social pressures. Norris frequently championed Anglo-Saxon racial nationalism in both his fiction and his non-fiction. Yet there is little in *The Octopus* that inspires Teutonic pride or confidence in the march of Anglo-Saxon civilization. Once upon a time, so the story goes, Aryan tribesmen carried civilization out of the forests of Germany and spread its blessings while following the path of the sun westward. But in Norris's monumental transfer of power from the people to the wheat, race stops signifying progress. While America may have descended from freedom-loving Saxons, *The Octopus* shows that the political foundations of the country reach their expiration date with the emergence of an overseas empire. Recalling his education regarding the relationship between the emergent aggregations of power at the turn of the century and the residual political institutions established by the founding fathers, Henry Adams wrote, "Modern politics is, at bottom, a struggle not of men but of force, massed about central power-houses. The conflict is no longer between men, but between the motors that drive the men, and the men tend to succumb to their motive forces."⁹¹

Norris sounded the imperialist anthem of overproduction in order to awaken readers to the epic national adventure that surrounded around them. Yet keeping in mind Conant's argument that a time lag exists between the fact of overproduction and the promise of securing new patterns of consumption, the movement of the wheat out of the country has to be read more as a symptom of this delay than as a symbol of its overcoming. Read as symptom rather than symbol, the wheat comes to signify discontinuity and difference rather than continuity and identity. America then appears as a space of lack that needs to be regenerated by something outside of it—in this case, an imagined China market. Slavoj Žižek suggests that "the symptom is, strictly speaking, a particular element which subverts its own universal foundation . . . it consists in detecting a point of breakdown heterogeneous to a given ideological field and at the same time necessary for that field to achieve its closure, its accomplished form."⁹² Norris situates the wheat both inside and outside the social

and economic networks that gave rise to it. In order for the wheat to “resistlessly work for the good,” Norris has to idealize its consumption. Therefore, consumption becomes a precondition for production—for without it, production, and all of the struggles compacted around it, is meaningless.

In other words, this allegory of circulation translates the destination of the wheat into its origin. Because the conditions of national health and equilibrium are shown to be external to the space of the nation, the wheat functions as a kind of postnational metonym—it is a part that, rather than standing for the whole, reveals the whole’s fundamental incompleteness. It is a part in relation to which a tattered and beaten-down people are seen, yet it is not a part in which the people can see themselves reflected. The people of the San Joaquin Valley, no matter what class strata they are from, are incapable of identifying, as either producers or consumers, with the paths of economic circulation pre-programmed into the wheat. Railroad kingpin Shelgrim, who appears to be the most powerful person in town, falls into his ship’s cargo hold and suffocates to death as he is consumed by the wheat. Unlike baseball or apple pie, the wheat is not a symbol in which the nation can see itself reflected in a compact and purified form. Norris makes it easy for the reader to read against this grain by documenting in excruciating detail Mrs. Hooven’s slow starvation on the streets of San Francisco while this “nourisher of nations” sails indifferently out of the country. In spite of itself, *The Octopus* asks readers how there can be overproduction in a country where people are starving. This question is as relevant today as it was at the turn of the century.

On the one hand, the wheat brings the various parts of the national narrative together. Yet it is at the same time alienated from those parts. So rather than symbolizing equilibrium or balance, the wheat is a symptom of the fundamental imbalance between supply and demand, an imbalance that sends concussions throughout American society. In order to regain his moral and aesthetic balance, Presley boards the ship holding the wheat and passively follows it on its pre-appointed path toward Asia. Rather than providing an imaginary fixation to economic imbalance, the wheat registers the perpetual breakdown and dependence of the national economy. Žižek writes, “The ‘normal’ state of capitalism is the permanent revolutionizing of its own conditions of existence; from the very beginning capitalism ‘putrifies,’ it is branded by a crippling contradiction, discord, by an immanent want of balance; this is exactly why it changes, develops incessantly—incessant development is the only way for it to resolve again and again, come to terms with, its own fundamental, constitutive imbalance, ‘contradiction.’ Far from constricting, its limit is the very impetus of its development.”⁹³ The

prophets of expansion tell the American people that foreign markets are the solution to all of their troubles. But as Žižek points out, following Marx, whom I discuss in the following chapter, breakdown is fundamental to capitalism, and the expansion of the sphere of circulation only extends the sphere of crisis, it doesn't resolve it. Yet the fantasy of new, untapped markets nevertheless casts a powerful spell over capitalist societies, because they hold out the promise of balance and equilibrium amidst chaos and disorder. The American Pacific jeremiad fattens itself off the rhetoric of overproduction while getting plenty of exercise through repeated missions into overseas markets, both real and imagined.

THE MYTH OF MARKETS

Much of my argument here can be read as an extension, and historicization, of Fredric Jameson's contention that "the fundamental level on which political struggle is waged is that of the legitimacy of concepts like planning or the market."⁹⁴ Jameson's cultural theory of economic discourse in *The Postmodern Condition* has directed my effort to draw parallels between the market rhetoric in *The Octopus* and the fantasy of the China market circulated by those political and economic players responsible for shaping the semiotic repertoire of the term imperialism at the turn of the century. Jameson points out that capitalist markets need to be viewed as both representation and reality. Because of this double nature of markets, "the success of market ideology can . . . not be sought in the market itself."⁹⁵ Political struggle over market ideologies are grounded in practices that either open or close the gap between fact and promise, reality and representation. During the 1890s, the imperialist fixation with China worked to close these gaps. In this chapter and the next, I hope to open these gaps back up by returning a sense of contingency and arbitrariness to economic terms such as overproduction that are often read as descriptive rather than interpretive. Like Melville, I want to return spatializing cultural and economic terms to the "map incognita" from which they sprang. Only then can the American Pacific begin to be read as a space of history rather than myth.

One of the keywords that bring the different parts of this book together is myth. The concept of myth has been central to both American Studies and cultural studies, and it has enabled me to move between the two fields while making critical revisions in both directions along the way. The primary function of myth, as Roland Barthes argues, is to naturalize history: "We reach here the very principle of myth: it transforms history into nature . . . what causes mythical speech to be uttered is perfectly explicit, but it is immediately frozen

into something natural; it is not read as a motive, but as a reason.”⁹⁶ Market rhetoric naturalizes what it presupposes: the China market has always been there, it is simply dormant and just needs to be jump-started. Hegemony does not only involve winning consent to the way things are, but more importantly to a particular vision of the future. For Barthes, as for Bercovitch, the politics of myth are found in the fact that “mythology is certain to participate in the making of the world.”⁹⁷ Myths about markets become real by making them appear to be the only realistic solutions to crisis. Economic crises are always attended by mythologies that attempt to figure them out. The prophetic, mythological moment of economic analysis is, therefore, a real, material feature in the struggle over markets.

The American Asiatic Association and the Imperialist Imaginary of the American Pacific

Internationalism, in other words, has been one of the constitutive traditions of the Left, but in this age of late capitalism it is best to recognize that certain kinds of internationalism also arise more or less spontaneously out of the circuits of imperialist capital itself, and the line between the internationalism of the Left and the globalism of capitalist circuits must always be demarcated as rigorously as possible.

—Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory*

But the filling out of the Pacific from the sixteenth century on had a more compelling logic to it, whether we speak of geographical discovery or the pursuit of commodities: the logic was the logic of the capitalist world economy spreading out of Europe to conquer the world.

—Arif Dirlik, *What is in a Rim?*

What “ought to be” is therefore concrete; indeed it is the only realistic and historicist interpretation of reality, it alone is history in the making and philosophy in the making, it alone is politics.

—Antonio Gramsci, “The Modern Prince” in *The Prison Notebooks*

The New Americanist project, or projects, of which this book is mostly an elaboration, looks to disrupt those spatial antinomies—inside/outside, domestic/foreign, center/periphery—that have historically sustained dominant narratives of national belonging.¹ As Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease convincingly demonstrate in their introductions to *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, the participation of these terms in moments of nationalist euphoria and doctrines of American exceptionalism needs to be replaced by critical, “postnational” terms, that de-link the study of American culture(s) from the reproduction of various systems of domination and exclusion. *Global-localism*, *decentered cosmopolitanism*, *globalized space*, and *transnationalism* have become an emergent set of geopolitical signifiers through which New Americanists have begun to grasp one of the more embattled terms in American political rhetoric: imperialism.

One conception and practice of space that has yet to be fully located by New Americanist remappings of the fields of American Literature and American Studies—one that mediates relations between the local and the global, the national and the transnational—is the region.² In this chapter, I extend the general discussion of U.S. imperialism I began in relation to Frank Norris's *The Octopus*, arguing that the American Pacific names the regional imaginary through which capital looked to expand into Asia and the Pacific at the turn of the century. Here, I hope to outline with some rigor, and in some detail, what exactly defines an imperialist spatial practice. The postmodern geographer David Harvey asks, "What role does geography play in the process of crisis formation and resolution?"³ Capital needs a regional imaginary in order to overcome spatial barriers to expansion. As a metageographical term, American Pacific names those practices of regional articulation through which a heterogeneous or dispersed area is discursively transformed into an abstract unity. Regional imaginaries enable capitalist world powers to work through moments of "crisis formation and resolution" and are therefore necessary to the reproduction and expansion of capitalist modernization.⁴

In 1897, Germany seized Jiaozhou and Qungdao in the Shandong Province of China. That same year, Russia, France, Japan, and Britain also acquired "spheres of influence" or "spheres of interest" in China. This situation created a panic amongst New York merchants, who, on January 6, 1898, responded by forming a "Committee on American Interests in China."⁵ The committee directed the New York Chamber of Commerce to push the Department of State to act against the potential partitioning of China. Following success in this effort, the committee, renamed the American Asiatic Association, looked to maintain regular contact with Washington. When organized in 1898, the American Asiatic Association was the only interest group concerned exclusively with Far East policy.⁶ Through close contact with John Hay, secretary of state during the McKinley and Roosevelt administrations, the association became an effective historical bloc whose goal, as stated in its constitution, was "To foster and safeguard the trade and commercial interests of the citizens of the United States, and others associated therewith, in the Empires of China, Japan, and Korea, and in the Philippine Islands, and elsewhere in Asia or Oceania."⁷ The historical project organized through the *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* was to reify the conjunction connecting Asia to Oceania. The market discourse issued by the American Asiatic Association was a hegemonic point of condensation for the emergent regional imaginary of the American Pacific.

The editor of the *Journal*, and the secretary of the association, was John Foord.⁸ Before organizing the association, Foord was a member of the editorial staff of the *New York Journal of Commerce*, a specialist in economic and foreign policy, and “the most persistent public exponent of the China market.”⁹ Foord’s editorials set the agenda for each issue. In the first issue, Foord wrote, “In order to facilitate the interchange of views among the members of the Association and to provide a medium for the diffusion of information bearing on the development of commercial enterprise in the Far East, it is proposed to issue, as occasion may require, a record to be known as the ‘Journal of the American Asiatic Association.’ As the influence of the Association expands, and its touch with affairs in Eastern Asia and Oceania becomes more intimate, the value of this Journal will necessarily increase.”¹⁰ The goal of the association was to educate “the American public into a clearer perception of the intimate way in which the future of this Republic is bound up with its prestige on the Pacific Ocean.”¹¹ Foord lamented, “New York is very much behind the great capitals of Europe in the appliances it offers for the study of the cultures, history and products of Eastern Asia.”¹²

Franz Boas extended the pedagogical aspirations of the American Asiatic Association at one of its dinners: “How few of the young men who go out to China, to Japan, to India, to the Philippine Islands, have any knowledge of the nations of the Far East, of the complexity of their history, of their achievements, and of their aspirations. Knowledge of Asiatic culture among our own people who stay at home is perhaps even more deficient; and still our opportunities in the Far East will not become evident to us until we know what we have that is of value to the people of the Orient. . . . At the present time there is no place in the United States where a young man can obtain information on subjects relating to Eastern Asia.”¹³ The association appears to have succeeded in its pedagogical mission by attaining visibility in the press. The *New York Times*, the *New York Tribune*, and *American Trade*, for example, regularly cited its position on matters related to trade in the region.¹⁴ Foord therefore could claim that “The education of public sentiment into a perception of the magnitude of American interests in the Far East has formed an important part of the work of the association, through its sub-committees, and has been attended with gratifying results. The very large space which was accorded to this subject in the daily press and in the monthly magazines . . . is the best possible proof of the change which has taken place in the attitude of the American people toward such questions as the maintenance of the open door in China.”¹⁵

The first issue of the *Journal* appeared on July 25, 1898. Subsequent issues came out sporadically, usually every other month, until April 1902, when the

format of the *Journal* was standardized in order to increase circulation. New issues then appeared monthly, contained a table of contents and subscription rates, featured an editorial summary by Foord, regularly listed figures for exports to China and Hong Kong, and began to include advertising. The web of trade comparisons anchoring each issue most often included import/export figures between the United States and China, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines, as well as figures comparing the United States to Great Britain, France, Germany, Japan, India, and Spain.

Trade tables were interspersed with articles from periodicals such as the *North American Review*, the *Review of Reviews*, and the *North China Daily News*. Articles also cut and pasted excerpts from the writings of imperialist state intellectuals such as Brooks Adams, Charles Conant, and Alfred Thayer Mahan, as well as from senate and congressional debates, political speeches, and laws related to foreign trade. The *Journal* usually featured intensive descriptions of those places included in its rhetorical space, detailing size, climate, population, imports, exports, politics, currency, and labor. Basically, it included everything a merchant, investor, or owner of industrial or agricultural capital might want to know about a particular place as a site of production, investment, or market for U.S. goods.

The *Journal* focused the association's pedagogical mission by creating an organizational moment in which coherent positions on major questions of the day relating directly or indirectly to foreign trade in Asia and Oceania could be formulated. The discursive terrain of the *Journal* reflected events both in Washington—debates over Asian immigration, the administration of the Philippines, the funding of the trans-Pacific cable and Panama Canal—and in the region—the Boxer Rebellion, the Russo-Japanese War, and Chinese nationalism. There were no necessary reasons why these scattered events should be thought to revolve around the common problem of expanding trade. The American Asiatic Association had to assemble the logics that could connect dispersed events and data in the process of explaining why the expansion of trade in the region was essential to the growth, development, and stability of the United States. Such connections were nowhere given in advance. By connecting the dots, the association pictured a geographical entity about which information could be accumulated and statements predicated. At first, the association was mostly anxious about threats to China's territorial integrity. The situation in China led to the postulation of a paranoid binary in which European colonialism, against which the United States could not compete, was imagined as a threat to a glorious future of Asian American coprosperity. When the Open Door became federal policy, the association gained momentum and began to address a variety of other issues.

The ideological work of the association comes into focus when placed in the context of uncertainties at the time over how to represent the areas of Asia and the Pacific. Due to the continental scheme of geography derived from the Greeks, which persisted throughout the nineteenth century, the geographical entity "Asia and Oceania" would not have made much sense in the 1890s. Oceania was a tenuous construction, because geographers did not know what to do with Southeast Asia, Australia, and the islands of the Pacific.¹⁶ The raw material of continents was land, not water. So were these islands parts of already existing continents? Or were they connected, in some way, to each other? Martin Lewis and Karen Wigen note that the idea of Oceania as constituting a fifth sector of the world only became prominent in the twentieth century, "when several cartographers marked off insular Southeast Asia from Asia and appended it to the island world."¹⁷ Summarizing the history of attempts to represent this geographical area, they note that "No other part of the world has endured such incessant metageographical reorientations."¹⁸

When placed in this context of cartographic undecidability, the market discourse of the *Journal* can begin to be read as a territorializing or articulatory practice. Market discourse on Asia and Oceania looked to fix or stabilize, without ever appearing to do so, an arbitrary complex of geographical relations. The regional imaginary of the American Pacific was made up of relations of contiguity and hierarchy between places sutured by the trade table. Trade tables were only part of the *Journal's* multiform market discourse, yet they were most representative of the general ideological maneuver of reducing the area to manageable abstractions that could be compared and contrasted. The *Journal's* catalogue of Asia included Ceylon, China, British India and East Indies, Dutch East Indies, French East Indies, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Persia, Asiatic Russia, Siam, and the Straits Settlements. As for Oceania, it included the Philippines Islands, Commonwealth of Australia, New Zealand, Mauritius, and the Hawaiian Islands.¹⁹ The practice of distributing import/export figures for each of these discrete places disciplined movement by the imposition of a grid, thus creating a dehistoricized order that could then deliver the aura of science to discourse on the region. Following Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno, we could say that "Asia and Oceania" was subjected to a "mathesis universalis," an instrumentalization of space in which "The multiplicity of forms is reduced to position and arrangement, history to fact, things to matter."²⁰

My argument here is not that these places could not be thinkable together before the construction of a regional imaginary. It is difficult to talk about an American Pacific without providing some space for recognition of the world

that Euro-American imperialism was displacing. One voice that looks to confront Western imperialism in the region with counter-narratives of Oceania's past and future is that of Fijian social anthropologist Epeli Hau'ofa. In "Our Sea of Islands," Hau'ofa puts together an image of Oceania that sharply contrasts the world envisioned by the trade table: "The world of our ancestors was a large sea full of places to explore, to make their homes in, to breed generations of seafarers like themselves. . . . Theirs was a large world in which peoples and cultures moved and mingled unhindered by boundaries of the kind erected much later by imperial powers. From one island to another they sailed to trade and to marry, thereby expanding social networks for great flow of wealth. They traveled to visit relatives in a wide variety of natural and cultural surroundings, to quench their thirst for adventure, and even to fight and dominate."²¹

For Hau'ofa, Oceania is an imagined community, historically constituted by deterritorializing flows of "peoples and cultures." Trade tables, one of the discursive fronts of imperialist territorialization, convert dense, mobile particularity—Hau'ofa's "social networks," or what Deleuze and Guattari would call smooth space—into an abstract, econo-mathematical formula—striated space—that only makes sense to the investor, the owner of a company, the manager, the engineer, the foreign policy analyst, or the business association. Trade figures, those power tools for rationalizing space, appear to root market discourse in the materiality of the here and now. Yet the trade table is a forcible unity, a catachretic formation in which repeatable lines both separate and put places into contact and where numbers are (mis)used to represent places. Trade *figures* can then become the raw material that founds economic narratives constructed along their up and down movements. Asia and Oceania was a catachretic formation instituted by the American Asiatic Association, the abusiveness of which appears when Hau'ofa's "large sea" is read against its grain (or grid). For Hau'ofa, the futures of Oceania depend on recoding distances and proximities in directions that counter the violence of imperialist projects in the region.

Asia and Oceania sounds large, yet the rhetorical space of American economic intervention was rather limited. Despite the catholicity of the trade table, the association's attention converged on China, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines, regularly ignoring the rest of Oceania. Why were these four countries isolated from the others? The *Journal* produced insight principally on those places not yet subjected to colonial aggression by other powers. The association would have spread itself too thin, and thus disperse its political will if it were too expansive in its quest for free trade. These places were coordinated along a north/south axis, a para-basin of circulation: "A systematic

effort will be made to render the *Journal* a regular medium of intercourse between the merchants, manufacturers and others in the United States interested in the development of trade with the Far East, and the mercantile community of the great ports of Asia and Oceania from Singapore to Yokohama. . . . It is not too much to hope that it will prove a powerful aid toward the continuance of an attitude of an uncompromising resolution on the part of the United States in support of the policy of the open door.”²²

The spatial figure organizing this passage, “great ports of Asia and Oceania from Singapore to Yokohama,” shows that the association’s attention was directed toward what business groups in the 1970s began to designate as the Pacific Rim.²³ The *Journal* repeatedly invokes these coordinates, sometimes extending the northern perimeter to Vladivostok and the southern perimeter to Melbourne. The reason why is not hard to figure out: at the turn of the century, the sphere of circulation in Asia and the Pacific was mostly limited to islands and the port cities dotting the South China Sea, the East China Sea, and the Sea of Japan.

The islands of the Pacific, most notably Hawai‘i, were seldom discussed in any detail, an absence that is surprising given that Hawai‘i was, among other things, a hot spot in debates over imperialism. This exclusion might be explained by the fact that annexation was considered a *fait accompli* and thus removed Hawai‘i from the category of “the foreign.” Because American-born whites had controlled governmental functions for much the 1890s, Hawai‘i was already a relatively secure node in the emergent regional hegemony of the United States, whereas the Philippines, which received an obsessive amount of attention on the pages of the *Journal*, was not. Secondly, the plantation economy of Hawai‘i might not have been considered able to produce many potential consumers, thus exiling itself from consideration as a worthwhile market for U.S. goods.

Hawai‘i and the Philippines were both represented in the category of Oceania. Use of the term *Oceania* by the association is curious, for at the turn of the century, the usual designation in political and economic discourse for the area was *Pacific* or *Islands of the Pacific*. In his critique of the different synthetic operations performed by these terms, Hau‘ofa contends that “the first term, ‘Pacific Islands,’ is the prevailing one used everywhere; it connotes small areas of land surfaces sitting atop submerged reefs or seamounts. Hardly any anglophone economist, consultancy expert, government planner or development banker in the regions uses the term ‘Oceania,’ perhaps because it sounds grand and somewhat romantic, and may connote something so vast that it would compel them to a drastic review of their perspectives and policies.”²⁴

Hau'ofa wants to reclaim a romantic, mythological register for Oceania in order to generate an excess that overwhelms the controlling gaze of imperialism. Yet vastness can also be a constitutive feature of that gaze. Oceania performs a contradiction: it can suggest a large, exotic, undifferentiated area, whereas Islands of the Pacific emphasizes calm, discrete parts. Oceania thus slides more easily into the place formerly occupied by the nineteenth-century mythologies of the frontier that inspired continental expansion. At the same time, though, Oceania is a scientific, classificatory term, used by Western cartographers since the mid-nineteenth century to give order to the complexities of the Pacific area. A clue to its past usage can perhaps be found in the present. The *International Dictionary of Historic Places* (1996) maintains "Asia and Oceania" as a classificatory division, whereas the *Cambridge History of Pacific Islanders* (1997) does not use the term *Oceania*. This Latinate construction issues scientific detachment, and spatial remove, from the places it encompasses. Pacific, on the other hand, when linked to anthropological concerns, assumes a greater proximity to, and intimacy with, its referent. With the term Oceania, I would argue, the market discourse of the *Journal* created "the optical space of long-distance vision," which, as noted earlier, is the spatial practice of imperialism and colonialism.²⁵

Slippage in this term was also created by its inclusion of the Philippines. Usually, the Philippines are aligned with Asia, not Oceania. One explanation for this realignment might be found in the racial hierarchy, via the different claims to modernity, that was thought to triangulate geopolitical relations between the United States, China, and the Philippines. Lewis and Wigen write, "By the early 1800s, most Western historians had convinced themselves that only Europeans could really be said to possess history. The rest of the world was divided into two broad categories; a zone of Eastern despotism (Asia), which had once been progressive but was no longer so, and a realm of savagery and barbarism (sub-Saharan Africa, pre-Columbian America, Oceania), which had always been bereft of history."²⁶

In the *Journal's* market discourse, China, as a metonym for Asia, was consistently represented through a metaphoric of greatness, whereas the Philippines, as a metonym for Oceania, were represented through a metaphoric of strategy. The Philippines were important as a zone of strategic relations, but it was China that provided the purpose and promise guiding America's mission in the Pacific: "Situated less than 700 miles from Hong Kong, with good harbors, and warehouse facilities, we will indeed hold one of the most important "open doors" for our own and other foreign trade at the very gateway to the great Chinese Empire."²⁷

Yet the Philippines were like a wild card that could be played in both directions. Notice in the following passage by John Barrett, former Minister to Siam, that the Philippines are (mis)recognized as an “Asiatic port”: “With our strong new position in the Philippines, which is the geographical, commercial, and strategical center of the mighty broken coastline that extends from Melbourne on the south right away for 8,000 miles to Vladivostock, we should have to our credit at least half this interesting total. If a circle of 2,500 miles radius is drawn with Manila as the center, it will take in such important but widely separated points as Vladivostock on the north, Sydney on the south, and Calcutta on the west. No similar circle drawn around any other Asiatic port will include more centers of population and commerce.”²⁸

The practice of plotting Pacific islands within a macrogeometry of market expansion fixed them in the imperialist imaginary as objects to be acted upon; China, on the other hand, was a latent subject, or sleeping giant, to be regenerated by American influence. Both Hawai‘i and the Philippines were fashioned in the American imperialist imaginary as counterpoints to European and British expansion in Asia and the Pacific. As Alfred Thayer Mahan stated on the importance of Hawai‘i to the assertion of regional hegemony, “Hawaii . . . possesses unique importance—not from its intrinsic commercial value, but from its favorable position for maritime and military control.”²⁹ The strategic mapping of Hawai‘i and the Philippines followed from, and gave support to, racist logics that held that Oceania could not govern itself, logics that created important racial distinctions *within* the broader racial formation of an American Pacific.³⁰

Although the association did not initially take a public position on the question of whether to annex the Philippines or not, by 1902, Foord convulsed against the “endless claptrap about the inalienable rights of the Filipinos to misgovern themselves without any interference from the power on which has fallen the responsibility for their guardianship.”³¹ The ability to misgovern did not figure into descriptions of the Chinese people—even though the anti-Christian, anti-merchant uprisings that culminated in the Boxer Rebellion alarmed many in Washington. Between 1900 and 1904, discussion of the Chinese Exclusion Act intensified, with Congress debating whether the act should continue as written in 1888 or should be rewritten. In its most notable failure, the association could not move Washington toward a more liberal immigration policy. Foord and company argued that students, tourists, and merchants should not be subjected to the same immigration policy as laborers. Disturbed by the “chronic Sinophobia” of immigration officials, Foord wrote, “While there is no hope that the new treaty will be more liberal in its provision than the one expiring by limitation in December, it

should be . . . framed as to enable Chinese merchants, students, and travelers for pleasure to come here without being subjected to insult and contumely at the port of entry.”³²

Foord believed that the exclusion laws were fostering violence against Asians, a situation that disabled American merchants in China. Another aspect of the association’s position on the Chinese Exclusion Act was its desire to secure the free migration of Chinese labor to the Philippines, on which economic development appeared to depend. In 1902, Foord wrote: “The Filipino won’t work—unless perhaps to earn enough for more extended loafing—and that with Chinese labor and that alone, these new possessions can readily be made a valuable asset.”³³ Because tropical climates did not appear to encourage strenuous activity, “loafing” was also the image Americans would have had of Hawaiians, hence the need to import vigorous Asiatic labor. The moral of the story here is that the interests of capital in securing cheap reserves of labor and expanding markets, processes of deterritorialization, may conflict at times with the territorializing functions of the state. The conflict over Chinese immigration needs to be understood as a structuring difference within imperialism, in which race, as a floating signifier, was struggled over by capital and the state.

The association eventually supported the violation of the Philippines’ territorial integrity through annexation, while at the same time demanding the preservation of territorial integrity for China. This great market needed to be protected by an independent, stable, centralized nation-state. Foord issued this imperative in a 1903 editorial: “The oldest civilization in the world is rotten to the core, and the empire which was ancient when Rome was modern, is doomed to partition, disintegration, destruction. If this be the actual state of things . . . it would seem to be a waste of time to talk about the magnificent openings which exist there for capital and enterprise, to discuss the regeneration of the Government by means of administrative reforms. . . . Capital will certainly not be attracted to a country in the throes of dissolution.”³⁴

By 1910 the topic of Chinese nationalism overshadowed all other topics heading the *Journal’s* pages. Whereas Filipino nationalism had to be violently suppressed, the *Journal* could report favorably on the emergence of nationalism in China with articles entitled “Consul General Wilder on Chinese Nationalism,” “Some Qualifications Necessary to a True Citizen of China,” or “The New Regime of China.” In the years between 1898 and 1910, China began to look and act like a nation-state and could thus be (re)plotted along a metanarrative of modernity, unlike the Philippines, which needed to be cooked longer in the administrative protection of the United States before it could be trusted with independence. Attention to the structuring of racial,

political, and economic differences between China and the Philippines reveals that the regionalizing logic of market discourse within the broader historical movement of imperialism was not simply a matter of flattening or homogenizing space. Market discourse also stratifies the space it seeks to unify—such stratifications hold it together, at least at the level of ideology.

Obviously, class interests were not hidden deep in the *Journal's* geopolitical unconscious. What should be pointed out is the fact that the association was becoming a visible player in a historical conjuncture in which class struggle was fast becoming ruptural. In the 1890s the two most public signifiers of economic crisis were the series of depressions between 1893 and 1897 and the labor uprisings at Homestead in 1892 and Pullman in 1894. Economic crisis was a constant theme in the literary realism of William Dean Howells, the literary naturalism of Frank Norris and Theodore Dreiser, the reformist journalism of Lincoln Steffens and Ida Tarbell, the photodocumentaries of Jacob Riis, and the art of the Ashcan School. And the emergence of agrarian and socialist parties did not help matters any. At all levels of the social formation, America appeared to be coming apart at the seams. To stabilize this terrain, various agrarian groups and segments of the bourgeoisie—manufacturers, merchants, bankers—pushed an economic narrative that located the origin of the nation's problems in overproduction and projected the image of a China market as the solution.

Through its analysis of a turn-of-the-century situation staggered by depressions and violent opposition to working-class struggle, the American Asiatic Association put together a political will amongst a group that would have otherwise remained dispersed. The *Journal's* political function was to be a point of condensation for the interests of primarily Northeastern industrial and merchant capital. The American Asiatic Association eventually included Southern cotton interests and Pacific Coast states within its ranks. Beginning with a membership of forty-five “prominent Eastern firms” in 1898, that number had jumped to 250 by 1940, five of which were from the Pacific Coast. Members included most of the large New York firms engaged in import-export business with the Far East, as well as manufacturers of iron and steel, machinery, and locomotives from Philadelphia, Bethlehem, and Pittsburgh. By 1911, one of the association's six vice-presidents, was from New York, one was from Portland, Oregon, one was from Washington, D.C., one was from Chicago, and two were from South Carolina. Summarizing the importance of the association, James Lorence writes, “The distinguishing characteristic of the Asiatic Association . . . was the fact that it was able to speak as the voice of nearly all firms with a direct economic stake in the China market.”³⁵

This hegemonic work of the American Asiatic Association comes into view if we read its definition of the situation against the one produced by socialists at the time. While it is misleading to speak of turn-of-the-century American socialism in the singular, judging from the *International Socialist Review* and the *Appeal to Reason*, it appears that socialists found agitation over imperialism and the China market to be little more than bourgeois mystification. *Appeal to Reason*, the country's most popular socialist weekly, virtually ignored the Spanish-American War. And rather than getting worked up about overproduction and the China market, the weekly concentrated on the multiple symptoms of economic exploitation: poverty, unemployment, dehumanization of work, and quality of life under capitalism. Like those behind the *Journal of the American Asiatic Association*, socialists struggled to publicize a set of logics that explained, and projected solutions to, social and economic crisis. As one writer for the *International Socialist Review* put it: "From the point of view of the capitalist class expansion or imperialism is a stern necessity; it is something which must be. That from the point of view of the working class expansion is, or rather ought to be, something absolutely devoid of charm; something not worth talking about. Our new foreign policy has no concern, one way or the other, with the material interests of this class. The one thing that alone primarily concerns the present well being and future welfare of the workers of America is the condition of things at home, or the manner in which their exploitation is being aggravated by the rapid but inevitable growth of capitalism in this country. Imperialism is simply a clever device which, whilst furnishing a market in which the capitalist may dispose of the surplus produce of the American worker, is calculated to divert his attention from the consideration of momentous home problems."³⁶

Rather than repeat the economic narrative that plotted overproduction as the origin of the nation's troubles and imagined foreign markets as the cure, socialists put together a counter-narrative that began with the exploitation of workers and concluded with the public ownership of the means of production. Far from being the cure, foreign markets were read as part of the poison of exploitation. This act of refusing the ruling class's explanation of things, of refusing to organize practice around distortions that conserve the economic system in the process of addressing a moment of crisis, marked one of the *internal limits* of the American Pacific.

For the association and the segment of American capital that it represented, China was an *external limit* to expansion that had to be overcome. Most of the work of the association was devoted to this end. In June 1899 a "Special Number" of the *Journal* appeared that was devoted entirely to the

problem of China. The issue offered “in a compact and intelligible form the reasons why the future of China is a question of supreme moment to the United States. Till the importance of that question is appreciated by the American people, it is useless to expect on the part of our Government a policy as vigorous and resolute as the occasion demands. Since free access to the greatest undeveloped market in the world touches the interest of every one engaged in productive industry or distributive commerce throughout the United States, it is highly desirable that the circulation of this issue of the *Journal* should be as wide as the country.”³⁷ Former Minister to Siam John Barrett opened the issue on China with the report that “China is a world opportunity. She is also a world necessity. Her undeveloped possibilities and the inexorable need of foreign markets are compelling the attention and activity of all expanding and producing nations to her limitless fields of exploitation and trade.”³⁸

The representation of China through predictive figures such as “world opportunity,” “greatest undeveloped market,” and “limitless fields” shows that while an abundance of trade figures linking the United States to “Asia and Oceania” appear to root the *Journal* in the materiality of the here and now, the here and now was made meaningful by the ineluctable futurity of expanding trade. China was positioned as the excessive margin of the American Pacific, the double of the excess of overproduction, a point made abundantly clear in Barrett’s “economic analysis.” In “Our Interests in China—A Question of the Hour,” Barrett creates a Whitmanian catalogue that undercuts the obviousness of the *Journal*’s proximity to the real: “To those who wish to learn more of China, I will enumerate some of the principal exports that are already going to China in greater or less quantities, but most of which can be expanded: Manufactured and raw cotton; petroleum or kerosene oil; flour and other breadstuffs; canned goods, including fruit, butter, milk, cheese, and meats; lubricating oils; timber and manufactured woods; medicines and chemicals; wines, spirits, and beers; tobacco, especially in cigarette form; all kinds of machinery and hardware; locomotives, cars, rails, bridges, structural iron; clocks and watches; sewing machines and bicycles; telephones, telegraph supplies and electric railroads, lights and fans; paper; leather; and, if the field is properly exploited, a long list that comes under the commercial head of ‘muck and truck.’ To many this enumeration is interesting as showing the variety of the trade opportunity in China. The Philippines will, moreover, consume a proportionate share of these same products.”³⁹

In the period between 1898 and 1910, export trade between the United States and China fluctuated. When exports to China were up, such increases

were read as proof that the task of the association was legitimate. When exports suffered, though, this task only became more urgent, and the ignorance of those at fault, which included those in China and in Washington, became more intolerable. The fluctuation of this trade led to the enactment of a *fort/da* game in which the China market appeared close at times, distant at others. One simple explanation for such fluctuation was the fact that those imagined “limitless fields” had real limits.

At the turn of the century, it might not have been too smart to bet on China, for a number of factors made the economic narrative promoted by the American Asiatic Association dubious. First, as Michael Hunt notes, “the tangible evidence—the hard facts and figures—that business could use to prove to policy makers the immediate importance of the China market simply was not there.”⁴⁰ A “realistic” analysis of the turn-of-century situation would most likely show that industrial Europe would be the most profitable market for the immediate future.⁴¹ And when we view exports from the other side of the walled city of Canton, those “limitless fields” look even smaller. Paul Varg, for example, argues that “only a small part of China, the coastal cities and a few ports on rivers, was open to trade.”⁴² Other factors confining the expansion of trade in China included the lack of a transportation system, the absence of a need for many Western goods, the poverty of the Chinese, and the resentment of foreigners by some Chinese officials.⁴³ All of these limits, repressed at the level of economic fantasy, point to an urgent distinction that needs to be kept in mind when thinking about markets. As Stuart Hall writes, “There is no fixed and unalterable relation between what the market is, and how it is construed within an ideological or explanatory framework.”⁴⁴ While an abundance of ready-made consumers in China might have been missing, there was no shortage of discourse about what they wanted, which suggests that economic reality was lagging behind economic fantasy. Nevertheless, captains of industry persisted in seeing China as if through a rear-view mirror, with the vast market appearing much bigger and closer than it really was.

As William Appleman Williams points out in *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, whether opportunities in China were being realized or not matters less than the fact that people in business thought they were and then organized upon this premise.⁴⁵ The American Asiatic Association unified itself, and thus could make claims to historical agency, through a system of description and prediction—that sought to win consent to its vision of the future. Prediction, as Gramsci wrote, is an indispensable moment of political struggle: “But it is absurd to think of a purely ‘objective’ prediction. Anybody who makes a prediction has in fact a ‘programme’ for whose victory he is

working, and his prediction is precisely an element contributing to that victory. . . . Certainly a conception of the world is implicit in every prediction.”⁴⁶ What was true in the association’s discourse, in the play of geographical signifiers that generated an entity about which knowledge could be accumulated and statements predicated, was an American Pacific, the core of which was “the China market.” Repeated exchange between statistic and prediction, between “what is” and “what ought to be,” between necessity and opportunity, is the process through which ideology comes to mediate reality, creating a “regime of truth” in which opportunity appears as necessity. Imperialist (re)territorialization, which had to go beyond the present to achieve unity, was supposed to relieve the multiple symptoms of economic crisis that had become violently desublimated throughout the 1890s: stagnation, depression, overproduction, strikes, and so on. The trick, for owners of capital, was to treat the symptom while conserving the general system that produced it. Both Adam Smith and Karl Marx understood economic crisis in terms of the failure to find markets for surplus production. For Smith, expanding markets create the social conditions that enabled individual liberty and freedom to thrive.⁴⁷ Yet for Marx, market expansion never really solves economic crises, it only displaces them.

As every good capitalist will tell you, time is money. In *Crisis Theory* and the *Grundrisse*, Marx sees interruptions in the time and space of circulation as the abstract form of crisis under capitalism. Circulation is the process by which commodities are converted into money. A commodity must undergo this conversion so that it can then be exchanged for the labor and the materials needed to reproduce the whole circuit. Marx therefore writes, “the *circulation process* which is in itself also a *process of reproduction*.”⁴⁸ All of the different moments in the movement of capital—production, consumption, reproduction, circulation—mediate each other and thus form an abstract identity. They cannot be separated, at the level of conception, because capital, as a total process, needs each moment in order to realize itself as capital.

But there is a big difference between the conception of totality and how that totality plays itself out in history. Although production, circulation, and consumption mediate each other and are thus unified in the abstract, Marx also argues that “their unity . . . is accidental.”⁴⁹ In specific historical situations, production and consumption, purchase and sale, or supply and demand are separated by time and space, thus making capitalism an incomplete project. This incompleteness needs to be constantly overcome, because abstract identity regularly confronts the reality of separation, which for Marx is the general form of crisis: “The possibility of a crisis, in so far as it shows itself in the simple form of metamorphosis, thus only arises from the

fact that the differences in form—the phases—which it passed through in the course of its progress, are in the first place necessarily complementary and secondly, despite this intrinsic and necessary correlation, they are distinct parts and forms of the process, independent of each other, diverging in time and space, separable and separated from each other.”⁵⁰

Temporal interruptions appear when the flow of money-capital back into production is delayed, thus delaying the re-creation of the labor process and most importantly the creation of surplus value. Surplus value must make several detours before it can come back home and be realized as capital. The temporality of circulation, a process marked by interruptions or detours, is therefore one of the limits, and preconditions, of production based on capital.

Capital therefore deals with its separation anxiety by looking to reduce the time of circulation. Space mediates circulation and thus imposes limits on the productivity of labor: “Circulation time appears as a barrier to the productivity of labor = an increase in necessary labor time = a decrease in surplus labor time = a decrease in surplus value = an obstruction, a barrier to the self-realization process of capital. Thus, while capital must on one side strive to tear down every spatial barrier to intercourse, i.e. to exchange, and conquer the whole earth for its market, it strives on the other side to annihilate this space with time, i.e. to reduce to a minimum the time spent in motion from one place to another. The more developed the capital, therefore, the more extensive the market over which it circulates, which forms the spatial orbit of its circulation, the more does it strive simultaneously for an even greater extension of the market and for greater annihilation of space by time.”⁵¹ Here, Marx composes a definition of economic imperialism—capital as conquering “the whole earth for its market”—that would eventually become popularized in the 1890s by well-placed bourgeois economists like Charles Conant.⁵² Yet where does culture fit into this economic matrix? To rephrase my argument in relation to the metageography of circulation found in Marx, one necessary moment in the processes of circulation and reproduction is the construction of a regional imaginary for capital. This imaginary posits a “spatial orbit of circulation” in which spatial and temporal barriers to expansion are overcome *in advance*. Marx writes, “Every limit appears as a barrier to be overcome.”⁵³ The practice of recoding a limit as a barrier is the ideological move at the heart of economic imperialism.

Barriers, as Marx argues, are spaces to be overcome. Economic barriers follow the logic of the supplement; they simultaneously mark something that is both out there and in here. They are both extra and essential. If my argument here can be read as making an intervention in postcolonial theory, it is with the idea that some of the critical terms at play in that field, particularly

in the work of Homi Bhabha—margin, supplement, excess—potential signifiers of oppositionality when situated within the problematic of identity, can be read as positive elements of imperialist economic discourse. Capital produces liminality in the shift from limit to barrier.

For Marx, this shift can be located extensively, in the transformation of uncommodified areas into new markets, and intensively, at the point of the exploitation of labor. Marx therefore writes, “But from the fact that capital posits every such limit as a barrier and hence gets *ideally* beyond it, it does not by any means follow that it has *really* overcome it.”⁵⁴ Capital can never *really* overcome the basic contradiction between labor and capital that enables its movement. It can only try to alleviate such contradictions by spreading itself out over a greater area. Expanded circulation may temporarily negate crisis, but as Antonio Negri argues, “it does not eliminate the relation that constitutes crisis and capital itself, the schism between the two classes and their struggle. Capital must extend outward and multiply in the process of circulation in order to normalize the crisis, in order to contain the logic of separation which constitutes it and which is constantly about to explode—more and more impetuously. But every new territory invested by capital and its circulation constitutes one more class relation.”⁵⁵

Separation, then, is the precondition for what becomes a historically necessary unity, a “unity of production and realization, not immediately, but as a process linked to certain conditions.”⁵⁶ A regional imaginary is one of these conditions. An American Pacific was, and continues to be, a space of imaginary circulation, thus a space of interruption and of the annihilation of space by time. At the turn of the century, a regional imaginary in which Asia and Oceania were posited as the extensive limit to domestic production was designed to direct the expansion of capital so that the conditions enabling the production of surplus value *at home* could be re-created. Capital needs an imagination to find its spatial fixes, they don’t come ready made. Or, as David Harvey has written, “Spatial barriers can be reduced only through the production of particular spaces.”⁵⁷

The American Pacific, then, refers to the historically contingent and politically charged cluster of signifiers, and the practices and institutions that disseminate them, through which the geographical area of the Pacific makes sense, and becomes sensible, as a region. My argument here follows in tracks laid by Arif Dirlik: “In a fundamental sense, there is no Pacific region that is an ‘objective’ given, but only a competing set of ideational constructs that project upon a certain location on the globe the imperatives of interest, power, or vision of these historically produced relationships.”⁵⁸ The American Asiatic Association, an important node in the broader political

and economic system that pushed the United States in the direction of becoming a regional hegemon, instituted a historically effective set of geographical distortions, an American Pacific ideology. Such distortions provided the rhetorical origin of real political and economic policies and practices that were structuring the emergent region. At the turn of the century, there *was* a market for U.S. goods in China. Yet there was, and continues to be, a world of difference between this fact and the flood of signification about the China market.

In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx writes, "The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere."⁵⁹ With the trade table, we find a compact image of capital's desire to "establish connections everywhere." Yet what does it mean when we talk about capital's need to constantly expand? Cultural studies, as it was articulated by the turn to Gramsci in the work of Stuart Hall, worked with the idea that the real appears in relays between the economic base and the ideological superstructure.⁶⁰ Reading beyond Marx means understanding that there is no direct or immediate relationship between economic crisis and the interpretation of crisis. For cultural studies, the interpretation of crisis, the posing of definitions of the situation, was theorized as a crucial site in struggles for hegemony. In my reading of the market discourse of the American Asiatic Association, I have tried to show how this historical bloc looked to stabilize a terrain of crisis by giving capital a clear vision of the future. The idea that the China market provided the solution to crisis was nowhere given in advance by the needs of capital.

Symbolically, if not in violent fact, 1898 marked the beginning of a Pacific century for the United States, a century in which the Americanization of the Pacific greatly intensified. It took the better part of a century to realize the dreams of the American Asiatic Association. By focusing on these dreams, I have not aimed to reduce the economic to discourse but rather to expand the semiotic repertoire of economic terms by isolating the regionalizing dynamic of capital at the moment of discursive articulation. Fredric Jameson asks, "Is market discourse merely a rhetoric? It is and it isn't . . . you have to talk about real markets just as much as about metaphysics, psychology, advertising, culture, representations, and libidinal apparatuses."⁶¹ Like people, capital too has a fantasy life. America's psychic attachments to Asia and the Pacific have deepened considerably since the 1890s. From Jack London's *Pacific Tales to Survivor*, from the Filipino-American War to Hiroshima, Korea, and Vietnam, from the American Asiatic Association to Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the American Pacific is always already in

the process of coming to be. But this also means that it is an incomplete project.

This incompleteness, or regional undecidability, connects the imperialist past to the transnational present. There are a number of similarities between debates over imperialism then and debates over transnationalism and globalization now. At the turn of the last century, the term imperialism described what was thought to be a new historical condition yet it also circulated as an ideological slogan. As with imperialism, the rhetoric of globalization projects a future that has yet to be decided yet it nevertheless acts as if that future were already in place. As Paul Smith argues, "Capitalism is, then, surely entering a new phase—a phase guided by the magical notion of globalization, but which equally proceeds as if that dream were already a reality revealed or about to be revealed."⁶² We therefore need to be careful about too quickly accepting the vision of the borderless future issued by business school ideologues like Robert Reich and Theodore Levitt.

The area of the Pacific continues to be produced as a kind of *dreamwork* in which the interests of capital provide the dominant hermeneutic for transcoding its multiple and tangled flows. In his reading of the invention of this regional space in the current conjuncture, Rob Wilson finds that "more than a stylistic promise or commercial slogan, 'Asia-Pacific' serves these days as a powerful political-economic signifier to bespeak the border-crossing expansionism if not will to hegemonic unity erupting in the 'borderless' region. This trope of Asia yoked to Pacific is used to mobilize the cash-driven transfusion and megatrends of transnationalizing economies in the region, which, without such a geopolitical signifier, does not yet exist in anything like a coherent geopolitical or cultural framework."⁶³

The rhetoric of imperialism at the turn of the century, like globalization rhetoric these days, was an important locus for the creation of an economic imaginary that enabled fantasies of regional coherence. With Wilson and Hau'ofa, we see that the struggles over regional imaginaries are real. There are other ways of interpreting the dreamwork of the Pacific. If a necessary step toward opposing the globalizing/regionalizing movements of capitalism involves finding new futures by reimagining the spaces of Asia and the Pacific, hopefully the critique of the U.S. imperialist imaginary offered in this book can be found to contribute, in some way, to such efforts.

Becoming Hawaiian

*Jack London, Cultural Tourism,
and the Myth of Hawaiian Exceptionalism*

An uninterrupted work of writing links the centre and the periphery.
—Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

It's party time! Aloooooooha!
—MC at tourist lu'au in Hawai'i¹

HAWAIIAN EXCEPTIONALISM

Jack London is the American writer most critics love to hate, hate to love, or simply ignore. Such a wide range of critical affect stems from the fact that the most coherent thing that can be said about London is that his writings, both fiction and non-fiction, are full of contradictions.² London channels doctrines of Anglo-Saxon masculinist supremacy one minute and exposes the horrors of such a worldview the next. The reception of London's writings has tended to reflect such contradictions; his work has enjoyed enormous popularity, yet he remains subcanonical, his legacy being more the product of fan culture and primary school English classes than of serious literary criticism.³

Most readers associate London with his two stories set in the Yukon, *The Call of the Wild* and *To Build a Fire*. These foundational texts of canine fiction have installed in countless generations of youth the idea that the study of literature means arranging a series of extra-large binaries: Man versus Nature, Man versus Society, Man versus Man. Few readers are aware, though, that these vivid depictions of the chilly Alaskan climate were penned while London was sun-bathing in Pearl Harbor, or that his article, "A Royal Sport," was one of the first detailed descriptions of surfing, complete with photographs, for the American public. This article helped popularize the sport to which Annette Funicello and Dick Dale owe their careers, one that has regularly mediated the relationship between waves of postwar American youth, the Pacific Ocean, and the multicultural mix that regularly congregates on beaches looking to hang ten.⁴

London spent the better part of the last sixteen years of his life sailing, and signifying, around the Pacific, funding his tours with a continuous stream of short stories, novels, and magazine articles that provided crucial links between Hawai'i and the continental United States. According to his wife, Charmian, a typical day in Hawai'i for Jack would not begin until he had written 10,000 words, no more, no less.⁵ A number of different places and peoples were drawn into the semiotic webs spun out of his time in the Pacific. But for the Londons, Hawai'i was exceptional, the ontos and telos of the Pacific. Jack London's relationship to Hawai'i can be summarized by a well-exercised anecdote narrated by Charmian in *Our Hawaii*, her diary of their first trip around the Pacific:

"Do you know what you are?" I quizzed Jack, having outrun him by a word or two in the race for knowledge.

"No, I don't. And I don't care. But do *you* know *where* you are?" he countered.

"No, I don't. *You* are a *malihini*—did you know that?"

"No, and I don't know it now. What is it?"

"It's a newcomer, a tenderfoot, a wayfarer on the shores of chance, a—"

"I like it—it's a beautiful word," Jack curbed my literary output. "And I can't help being it, anyway. But what shall I be if I stay long enough?"

Recourse to a scratch-pad in my pocket divulged the fascinating sobriquet that even an outlander, be he the right kind of outlander, might come in time—a long time—to deserve. It is *kamaaiana*, and its significance is that of old-timer, and more, much more. It means one who belongs, who has come to belong in the heart and life and soil of Hawaii; as one might say, a subtropical "sourdough."

Jack then replies:

"I'd rather be called 'Kamaaiana' than any name in the world, I think," Jack deliberately ignored my efforts at his education. "I love the land and I love the people."⁶

One of my goals in this chapter is to scour the political unconscious of this expression of affection, "I love the land. And I love the people." London supporters such as A. Grove Day have used this quote to defend him against the usual battery of charges that much of his writing readily lends itself to—racism, ethnocentrism, or vulgar Nietzscheanism.⁷ Here I want to read between the lines of Jack and Charmian London's desire to become *kamaaina*.

The fantasy of becoming *kamaaiana* that circulates in the Londons' travel writings enabled them to believe that they had distanced themselves from their Americanness. According to Lili'uokalani, this fantasy, which was becoming quite popular amongst white settlers around the turn of the

century, was one of the more insidious weapons in the war for annexation. “Quasi American” was the name she gave to those white settlers who thought they had shed their affiliation with the mainland by enthusiastically cultivating a native affect. There is no shortage of references to the devastating effects of Euro-American imperialism in London’s short fiction set in and around Hawai‘i. In stories like “Koolau the Leper” and “Good-By, Jack,” the traders and missionaries who formed the white oligarchy that overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy are figured as an alien, destructive presence that is directly responsible for the loss of paradise. Yet in London’s autobiographical account of his time in Hawai‘i, *The Cruise of the Snark*, the context of imperialism disappears. I believe that London pushes political issues into his fiction as a way of keeping them at a safe distance, thus creating an imperialist prophylactic that protects him from the critique his fiction has to offer. Both Jack and Charmian vigorously endorse the pleasures to be had from performing native ritual—surfing, *poi*, *hula*, *lu‘au*, fishing—or what has come to be called “cultural tourism,” while disavowing any potential complicity such pleasures have in the project of imperialism. As model “quasi-Americans,” Jack and Charmian exclaimed that they “detested the tourist route” while paving its way.

THE RACIAL FORMATION OF THE AMERICAN PACIFIC

Even though Jack London is most well known for his Yukon fiction, the Pacific was his career. This career began aboard a sealing ship in 1893. Returning to San Francisco at the end of the year, he capitalized on that experience by writing an essay entitled “Typhoon Off the Coast of Japan,” which won first prize in a writing contest sponsored by a San Francisco newspaper, thus launching a writing career dedicated to awkwardly compelling combinations of machismo, adventure, socialism, and race.

In 1904, with his fame on the ascent following the publication of his novella *The Call of the Wild*, the San Francisco Examiner looked to capitalize on the London brand name by sending him to Japan and Korea to cover the Russo-Japanese War. London thus followed in the tracks of other celebrity war correspondents, such as Richard Harding Davis, Stephen Crane, and Frank Norris. This time spent as a war correspondent had the important effect of installing in London an excessive fear of Japanese expansionism. From 1904 until the end of his life, London worked to keep America’s eyes open to the potential coming of a “yellow peril.” The emergence of a paranoid relationship to Asia, and Japan in particular, which was sustained in the early part of the twentieth century by fictional figures like Dr. Fu

Manchu and Ming the Merciless, those fiendish Asiatic leaders bent on nothing less than world domination, and in the latter part of the century in films like *Black Rain* and *Rising Sun*, which alerted the nation to a potential economic takeover by secretive Japanese corporations, signals an important turning point in the history of the American Pacific.

Political and economic modernization in Asia has triggered repeated yellow peril panic attacks. Over the course of the twentieth century, the U.S. Orientalist imagination has therefore had to become sensitive to cultural and historical differences within Asia, as first imperial Japan, and then communist China, fueled a paranoid American military machine that intensified the colonization of Pacific spaces from all directions. More than any other writer, London fixed the idea of a yellow peril in the minds of turn-of-the-century Americans, an idea that, in addition to justifying the militarization of the Pacific, supported a national imaginary that has consistently refused to distinguish between Asia and Asian-America, a failure that justified the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II and that led to the violent death of Vincent Chin in Detroit, whose name has become a synecdoche for all of those unnamed cases where Asian Americans have been subjected to physical violence while being told to “go home.”⁸

In his letters to the *Examiner*, London spent less time providing information about the actual war than he did reporting on the mix of races he found himself caught up with. Most turn-of-the-century Americans would have cared little about distinctions between people from China, Korea, and Japan, the core countries of the U.S. Orientalist imagination. These distinctions only mattered to the managers of plantations, mines, or factories, who would play different immigrant groups off each other as a means of ensuring discipline and preventing labor organization. White nationalist immigration policy was less interested in racial or ethnic differences within Asia than it was in distinguishing laborers from students, merchants, and political leaders. London viewed the people and places he encountered during his travels in Asia through the lens of racist ethnography, jumping from random behavioral and phenotypic observations to racial essences that he then evaluated in relation to a white, Anglo-Saxon norm. London’s war correspondence established a racial fix for the Pacific Rim of Asia that paralleled the spatial fix of the area instituted by the American Asiatic Association.

At the top of the order of things in Asia, according to London, were the suspiciously efficient mimics of the West, the Japanese. Below the Japanese came the hard-working Chinese. And far below both came the Koreans. The real danger in the region, London warned his American readers, came from Japanese expansionism, which might awaken a unified yellow race that

would then swarm across the Pacific and turn America into an appendage of Asia. Korea, the prize being fought over in the Russo-Japanese War, symbolized Japan's first step across the Pacific. Japan's defeat of Russia was an important turning point in the history of representations of Asia in America, for it dramatically negated belief in the innate superiority of the white race.

According to London, Koreans were to blame for their fate as pawns in a struggle between the superior Russians and Japanese. London read the fate of Korea off the faces of its people: "The Korean has finer features, but the vital lack in his face is strength. He is soft and effeminate when compared with the strong breeds. . . . He is certainly the most inefficient of human creatures, lacking all initiative and achievement. . . . As a draught animal and packhorse he is a success. And yet, I am confident . . . that my own breed can beat him at his own game; that my own breed, from what I have seen of it in the West and North, can outwalk him, outpack him, and outwork him at coolie labor."⁹ London then pulls together a series of anecdotes that leads to the conclusion that "In short, the first weeks of a white traveler on Korean soil are anything but pleasant. . . . If he be man of sensitive organization he will spend most of his time under the compelling sway of two alternating desires. The first is to kill Koreans, the second is to commit suicide. Personally, I prefer the first. But, now consider myself fairly immune and have reasonable hopes of surviving the trip."¹⁰

The Japanese presented a very different set of problems for London, which stemmed from the fact that they acted like a Western nation but were Asian in essence. Japanese hybridity summoned contradictory feelings of admiration and derision, praise and panic, in London. On the one hand, techno-military mimicry in Japan put London in the presence of the familiar: "Inventions, weapons, methods, systems (the navy modeled after the English, the army after the German), everything utilized by the Japanese has been supplied by the Western world; but the Japanese have shown themselves the only Eastern people capable of utilizing them."¹¹ Japan's mimicry-industrial complex enabled the country to expand across the Sea of Japan and dominate Russia in the struggle over Korea. Yet this brief moment of recognition and praise is quickly negated by the infantilization of an emergent Japanese modernity: "The Japanese resembles a precocious child who talks philosophy one moment, and the next moment is making mud pies. One moment he is acting with the wisdom of the West and the next moment with the childishness of the East."¹² London continued, "The Japanese may be the Britisher of the Orient, but he is still Asiatic"¹³ The real problem, for London, stems from the fact that "When one man does not understand another man's mental processes, how can the one forecast the

other's future actions? This is precisely the situation today between the white race and the Japanese. In spite of all our glib talk to the contrary, we know nothing (and less than nothing in so far as we think we know something) of the Japanese."¹⁴

London was hardly blazing new trails with these images of the "inscrutable Oriental." Such observations depended less on the novelty of experience than on violent stereotypes of the Oriental that appeared in American popular culture shortly after Chinese laborers began to cross the Pacific in search of gold in the 1850s.¹⁵ London suspected that the Japanese, after taking care of Russia, would advance on China. Japan itself presented no threat to the West. The cause for alarm came from the fact that "We understand the Chinese mind no more than we do the Japanese. What if these two races, as homogenous as we, should embark on some vast race-adventure?"¹⁶ London's war correspondence was structured by the recognition of both difference and sameness between Japan and China: "There have been changes, differentiations brought about by diverse conditions and infusions of other blood; but down at the bottom of their being, twisted into the fibres of them, is a heritage in common—a sameness in kind which time has not obliterated."¹⁷ What if, London warned the American public, "in the four hundred millions of yellow men should the little brown man undertake their management?"¹⁸

In London's racialized regional imaginary, race and nation are lined up and made to form coherent geographical categories. The racial formation of London's American Pacific is shaped by the recognition of differences between Japanese, Chinese, and Korean. At the same time, London projects a threatening Asiatic essence lurking behind these differences. While Japan presented London with a deceptive sense of the familiar, the only occasion for authentic identification between equals occurs when London gets a glimpse of Russian prisoners: "And thus I rode into Kuel-ian-ching. Into the windows of a large Chinese house I saw many Japanese soldiers curiously peering. Reining up my horse at a window, I too, curiously peered. And the sight I saw was as a blow in the face to me. On my mind it had all the stunning effect of the sharp impact of a man's fist. There was a man, a white man, with blue eyes, looking at me. He was dirty and unkempt. He had been through a fierce battle. But his eyes were bluer than mine and his skin was as white. And there were other white men in there with him—many white men. I caught myself gasping. A choking sensation was in my throat. These men were my kind. I found myself suddenly and sharply aware that I was an alien amongst these brown men who peered through the window with me. And I felt myself strangely at one with those other men behind the window—felt

that my place was there inside with them in their captivity, rather than outside in freedom amongst aliens.¹⁹

In addition to clearly demonstrating London's desperate lack of subtlety when thinking about issues of race, this sentimental portrait of the bonds of whiteness has the geographical effect of delinking Russia from the rest of Asia. This is an important rhetorical move, given the fact that "the Russian Empire could be easily consigned to the category Orient."²⁰ Yet racist science, which has cast a strong spell over the study of geography, has historically encouraged ethnographers and anthropologists, as well as war correspondents, to separate the Russian Empire from the rest of Asia.

For Michael Omi and Howie Winant, the concept of a "racial formation" refers to "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed."²¹ Jack London's war correspondence, centered on the image of a yellow peril emanating from Japan, instituted particular ways of seeing the Asian rim of the Pacific Ocean as a racial formation integrated by racial differences that were at once fixed and fluid. Read as a racial fix, London's war correspondence mapped a static racial typology onto a stable geographical topography. Yet these imaginary fixations could be quickly undone by Japan's supposedly precocious and inscrutable modernity.

It is important to keep in mind the fact that the Asian/American dynamic was undergoing a number of important transitions at the turn of the century. Japan and China began to be regularly distinguished from each other in the mainstream press. Furthermore, images of Asiatic stagnation inherited from the past were beginning to come into conflict with reports of intense political drama, such as the Boxer Rebellion and the rise of Chinese nationalism, that located China in relation to an active historical situation. Reportage on such events, to which must be added the Russo-Japanese War, frustrated the tendency in the West to view Asia as a space without history. London's war writings, while obviously a severe misrepresentation of the people and places he encountered, nevertheless delivered a depth and complexity to the area that it had never before possessed in American mass culture. Ironically, it was its apparent unknowability that gave Asia an unstable historical presence in the Orientalist imagination, thus triggering a defensive nationalism that was beginning to spread across the Pacific, providing one of the main arguments for the annexation of Hawai'i.²² London grudgingly recognized the emergence of Japanese modernity. At the same time, he worked hard at separating Native Hawaiian culture from the question of modernity, that is, from the politics of imperialism, fixing it instead within the optics of tourism and the aesthetics of adventure.

ACCIDENTAL TOURISTS

Shortly after returning to California from Korea and Japan in 1907, London began building the *Snark*, the vessel that would take him on a two-year trip to Hawai'i, the Marquesas, Tahiti, Pitcairn Island, the Solomon Islands, and Australia. A rigorous writing schedule resulted in several novels, including *Martin Eden*, *Adventure*, and *Burning Daylight*; juvenilia, including *Jerry of the Islands* and *Michael, Brother of Jerry*, and some of his most interesting and controversial short stories, including "Koolau the Leper," which were published under the title *The House of Pride*.²³ The Londons' adventures were narrated by Jack in *The Cruise of the Snark* and by his second wife and crewmate, Charmian, in *Our Hawaii*.

The Hawai'i of London's short fiction and the Hawai'i of the Londons' travelogues were not the same place, though there are several continuities between the ways of seeing Native Hawaiian culture that emerge from these two genres. Unlike the Japanese and Koreans he encountered during the war, and the "diseased cannibals" he found in the Solomons,²⁴ Native Hawaiians are praised by Jack and Charmian for their beauty, strength, and kindness; they thus fix in their readers the vision of Hawai'i as a land of "soft primitivism," an image that connects the Londons to Gauguin, Robert Louis Stevenson, and James Michener.²⁵ While in Hawai'i, the Londons discovered an abundance of what tourists pay top dollar for: "aloha spirit." Yet "aloha" projects a difference, and distance, no matter how warm and gracious, between the insider and the outsider, and we know which side the Londons wanted to be on.

In order to cross this cultural border, both travelogues, *The Cruise of the Snark* and *Our Hawaii*, create excessive identifications with Native Hawaiian culture, in which white skin appears, at times, to be a limitation rather than a privilege or an occasion for racial panic. The absence of panic or fear while in Hawai'i suggests the extent to which American cultural, political, and economic management of the islands was relatively secure, as compared to that other hot spot of imperialist expansion, the Philippines.

The Londons' travel writings are permeated by both anxieties regarding the unbearable whiteness of being and feelings of hominess with these soft primitives. This contradiction initially funds a kind of cultural *fort/da* game in which the adventurous couple appears as insiders one minute and outsiders the next. Ultimately, though, London began to see himself as being more *kamaaiiana* than *malihini*. For Jack, racial and cultural restrictions separating inside from outside, self from other, were the site of numerous

adventures that could be overcome by performing native rituals, thus reversing the typical flow of colonial mimicry, in which the colonized is expected to look and act like the colonizer, while forever remaining not quite white, a reversal currently being canonized by “reality shows” like *Survivor* and *Desert Island*, the humorless descendants of *Gilligan’s Island*.²⁶

Like *Survivor*, *The Cruise of the Snark* is an action-packed collection of moments of “voluntary daring” and quests for “extraordinary events,” the basic terms through which the idea of adventure began to be understood in the early modern period.²⁷ Adventure for London, like literary naturalism for Norris, separated doing from watching, reality from representation, the immediate from the mediated, the men from the boys. Wimpy tourists maintain a safe visual distance from native culture. The Londons take pride in getting their hands dirty. Like Norris, London was an ardent champion of the strenuous life: “I’d rather win a water-fight in the swimming pool, or remain astride a horse that is trying to get out from under me, than write the great American novel.”²⁸ It would seem, then, that a good deal of turn-of-the-century American writing is, in many respects, the literary equivalent of the popular MTV show *Jackass*, making London and Norris the daring forefathers of Johnny Knoxville.

Shortly before his death in 1917, London reflected back on his time in Hawai‘i in an essay entitled “My Hawaiian Aloha.” As proof of his knowledge of the islands, much like the character of Jack Kersdale in the short story “Good-by, Jack,” London wrote, “Detesting the tourist route, as a matter of private whim or quirk of temperament, nevertheless I have crossed the tourist route in many places and know what I am talking about.”²⁹ We should keep in mind the fact that London’s travel writings appeared just as the tourist industry in Hawaii was beginning to gain momentum. The Hawaii Promotion Committee, the first deliberate effort to attract tourists to Hawai‘i, was established in 1903 and has been in existence ever since. “By the late 1920s,” Jane Desmond notes, “tourism had become an established industry in the islands. A formal system of tourist infrastructure—hotels, travel companies, a tourist service bureau, special tourist publications, new, vigorous advertising on the mainland, and so forth—had replaced the more haphazard services rendered to visitors during the nineteenth century.”³⁰

So while the Londons may have detested this route, they nevertheless helped pave its way, as their travelogues are filled with glowing descriptions of a warm and hospitable people, vivid descriptions of scenic vistas, and attentive displays of exotic native rituals, all of which helped consolidate the image of Hawai‘i as a dreamy antidote to the neurasthenic materialism of the Gilded Age. When the *Snark* neared Hawai‘i, London screened their approach with images that would have been familiar to readers of Melville’s *Typee*: “Our

last memories of men were of United States marshals and of panicky little merchants with rusty dollars for souls, who, in a reeking atmosphere of soot and coal-dust, laid grimy hands upon the *Snark* and held her back from her world adventure. But these men who came to meet us were clean men. A healthy tan was on their cheeks, and their eyes were not dazzled and be-spectacled from gazing overmuch at glittering dollar-heaps. No, they merely verified the dream. They clinched it with their unsmirched souls.”³¹

London, like Ishmael, is driven by an “everlasting itch for things remote.” As in *Moby Dick*, this itch appears to be the product of, rather than an escape from, capitalist modernity. Bourgeois travel writing has historically been centered upon a “human being whose desire for adventure in exotic lands and outside the bourgeois order forces him to travel.”³² London both invoked and furthered this highly conventional understanding of adventure, one that, at the same time, appeared to be deeply personal and intensely individual. When London tries to come up with a rationale for the *Snark* voyage, the only reason can he give is “I am so made. I like, that is all. The trip around the world means big moments of living.”³³ Ishmael may swim in philosophically deeper waters than London, but the basic itch is the same.

“Unsmirched” natives, sublime vistas, and aloha spirit drench Hawai‘i with a premodern, sun-baked authenticity that had been lost in the Western world. Passages such as the above entice the reader to come to Hawai‘i, and at the same time try to create a distance from run-of-the-mill tourists. When London visits Haleakala, he steps into an Edenic paradise that “has a message of beauty and wonder for the human soul that cannot be delivered by proxy.”³⁴ He says elsewhere, “Yet the tourist comes not, and Haleakala sleeps on in lonely and unseen grandeur.”³⁵ The desire to see a place as if it were “unseen” is an important moment in the production of tourist desire, where the condition of being unseen delivers a mystique to the place that can then be transferred to those lucky individuals who get there before a gift shop or theme park opens up. Myths of innocence and purity, whether in reference to native people or places, can only assume meaning in relation to impure people and places. The condition of being unseen implies that native eyes do not possess value within this visual system; only Western eyes are capable of delivering an aesthetic judgment. The act of rendering natives incapable of appreciating the beauty of the landscape rhetorically separates them from the land, creating an aesthetic parallel to natural rights discourse, which held that because indigenous people, such as Native Americans, did not value private property, they could never earn a legitimate right to it.

In addition to fixing Hawaiian vistas in the optics of romantic individualism, both *Our Hawaii* and *The Cruise of the Snark* function as meta-tourist

guides. That is, they don't simply provide information about native culture; they also work as instruction manuals that teach readers how to fashion themselves as tourists while disregarding that position at the same time. Both texts include numerous photographs of Jack and Charmian standing with Native Hawaiians, of Jack wearing some element of native gear, of the landscape, of activities such as surfing or fishing. Keeping in mind that mobile photography was only just becoming generally available at the beginning of the century, the practice of vacation photography had yet to be firmly established as a regular middle-class habit. The photographs included in *The Cruise of the Snark* taught readers not only how to relate to Hawaiian culture but how to re-present that relationship back home.

The role of photography in tourist encounters, especially in colonial contexts such as Hawai'i, is typically understood as a means of surveillance, a means of consumption, or both.³⁶ While the photographs of Hawai'i included in *The Cruise of the Snark* obviously turn exotic places, adventurous activities, and native people into objects to be visually consumed, thus affirming, at the cultural level, the power of a technologized and progressive West over a natural and timeless island culture, the visual images also express a desire for slippage between self and other. Read in the context of the verbal narrative in which the photographs were embedded, the visual narrative projects a fantasy of standing—or surfing or fishing—in the place of the other. Photography gave the Londons concrete images of the potential for becoming *kamaaiana*.

This rhetoric of self-othering is most apparent in London's description of surfing in *The Cruise of the Snark*, entitled "A Royal Sport." At the turn of the century, surfing, an ancient sport practiced by Hawaiian royalty, had been mostly snuffed out by missionaries, who condemned it as "frivolous play that promoted nudity and took time away from work."³⁷ London was taught to surf by Alexander Hume Ford, "a globe trotter by profession, bent ever on the pursuit of sensation," whom he met on the beach at Waikiki.³⁸ As Charmian tells it, "Jack, who seldom stops short of what he wants to accomplish, finds this man most stimulating in an unselfish enthusiasm to revive neglected customs of elder island days, for the benefit of Hawaii and her advertisement to the world."³⁹ Their efforts obviously payed off. "By the latter half of the 1920s," Desmond notes, "surfing was an established part of tourist iconography and tourist itineraries, and by the end of the 1930s Native Hawaiian 'beachboys,' hired by hotels to provide surfing lessons and outrigger canoe rides, were established workers in the tourist industry."⁴⁰

"A Royal Sport" begins with a metaphysical survey of the surf that could have easily appeared in *Moby Dick*: "And one sits and listens to the perpetual

roar, and watches the unending procession, and feels tiny and fragile before this tremendous force expressing itself in fury and foam and sound. Indeed, one feels microscopically small, and the thought that one may wrestle with this sea raises in one's imagination a thrill of apprehension, almost of fear."⁴¹ Seen through London's eyes, the "kanaka" is an erotic master of this sublime seascape: "When a gloriously bodied kanaka, naked but for a loin-cloth carved against his shining bronze, takes off like a miracle in the down-rushing smother of a breaking wave, arms outstretched and heels winged with backward-streaming spray, you watch, stricken of speech."⁴²

Both Charmian and Jack string their travelogues with moments of what Jacques Lacan termed the "specular jubilation" that constitutes imaginary identification with the other. The imaginary, for Lacan, refers to the process by which a subject comes to recognize itself through the projection of wholeness onto the other, thus introjecting lack, incompleteness, or inadequacy.⁴³ For the Londons, Native Hawaiian men function as an imago, an "Ideal-I," which is simultaneously a point of identification and difference, through which they see themselves: "Fallible and frail, a bit of pulsating, jelly-like life, it is all that I am. About me are the great natural forces—colossal menaces, Titans of destruction, unsentimental monsters have less concern for me than I have for the grain of sand I crush under my foot. They have no concern at all for me. They are unconscious, unmerciful, and unmoral . . . in the maze and chaos of the conflict of these vast and draughty Titans, it is for me to thread my precarious way."⁴⁴ While London lavishes attention on the massive brown bodies riding the surf, both Jack and Charmian vividly detail, and take pleasure in listing, the number of bruises, cuts, and burns that their longing for adventure gives them, literalizing the psychoanalytic theory of the split subject.

On one of his treks in Nepal, Pico Iyer discovered that a masochistic relation to one's body was a popular sign of successful border-crossing: "It often seemed, in fact, that the principal aim of every Overland journey was nothing, really, but an exhaustive knowledge of suffering . . . hard-core travelers felt 'close to the natives' only when they were actually close to death."⁴⁵ Ironically, if the tourist, or traveler, must come close to death in order to get close to the native, the native must also come close to cultural death due to proximity to a tourist. The tourist apparatus props up the native and rather than drawing blood turns this figure into a spectacle whose only function is to be observed. Summarizing Lacan's theory of imaginary identification, Kaja Silverman writes, "This self-recognition is . . . a mis-recognition; the subject apprehends itself only by means of a fictional construct whose defining characteristics—focus, coordination—it does not share."⁴⁶

Describing the emergence of these brown gods from the surf, London ejaculates, "And suddenly, out there where a big smoker lifts skyward, rising like a sea-god from out of the welter of spume and churning white, on the giddy, tipping, overhanging and downfalling, precarious crest appears the dark head of a man. Swiftly he rises through the rushing white. His black shoulders, his chest, his loins, his limbs—all is abruptly projected on one's vision. . . . He is a Mercury—a brown Mercury."⁴⁷ While these male Hawaiian surfers function as an "ideal-I" in relation to the Londons' bruised and beaten bodies, it needs to be pointed out that these surfers are represented as totally non-threatening, as pure surface. London idealizes them out of existence. While the projection of wholeness onto the other briefly destabilizes London's sense of self, it does nothing to destabilize or interrupt the power relations between colonizer and colonized. Rather than bringing these surfers to life, London de-realizes and de-humanizes them, sealing them in a coffin nailed tight with excessive references to classical mythology.

Because London is unable to be like the *kanaka*, he trades his initial scopophilia for a perspective that is more empowering, that of science. "A Royal Sport" progresses from the over-idealization of Hawaiian surfers to a scientific description of the mechanics of surfing and then to practical instructions on how to surf. Despite his best efforts, London confesses, "I tried to emulate them. I watched them, tried to do everything that they did, and failed utterly."⁴⁸ Later that day, London learns that his battle on the Waikiki surf left him with a serious sunburn, rendering him unable to move for several days. Nevertheless, London declares: "Upon one thing I am resolved: the *Snark* shall not sail from Honolulu until I, too, wing my heels with the swiftness of the sea, and become a sunburned, skin-peeling Mercury."⁴⁹ But try as he might, London just couldn't burn the white off him.

London found a different kind of adventure at the leper colony on Molokai. The subject of leprosy was the theme for one of his most interesting, and controversial, short stories, "Koolau the Leper." The forced relocation and detainment of lepers, and the disease itself, provided London with symbols of an epic conflict between paradise and civilization. Critics have fixated on this story because it appears to be an explicit critique of the devastating effects of imperialist expansion in Hawai'i, thus providing an important counterweight to the fantasies of Anglo-Saxon superiority that appear elsewhere in the London canon. Earl Labor has been most vocal in praising "Koolau the Leper" for its vigorous celebration of the native underdog: "Maimed and deformed physically, he is indomitable spiritually—a pitiable yet magnificent rebel against the inevitable white man and the iron

laws of civilization.”⁵⁰ Following this line, James Slagel finds “Koolau the Leper” to be the “powerful and enduring political statement of a man (London) struggling with and finally, in Hawaii’s case, rejecting the imperialism spawned by Social Darwinism, ethnocentric doctrine, and Western perspectives on the Exotic.”⁵¹ Slagel notes that London’s sympathetic portrait of leprosy “kept his work off local bookstore shelves and the writer all but shunned by the white population in Hawaii.”⁵² The white settler population did not want Hawai’i to be associated with leprosy, because, regardless of whether the representation was sympathetic or not, it was bad for business. And yet, as Rob Wilson has pointed out, “Koolau the Leper” is a story that “Hawaiians hate to this day.”

Of the five short stories set in Hawai’i that were written during this trip, three—“Good-by, Jack,” “The Sheriff of Kona,” and “Koolau the Leper”—use leprosy to critique Western imperialism. These short stories all attribute the degradation of the islands to missionary and economic imperialism. For example, “Good-by, Jack” begins with an explicit attack on the “missionary crowd”: “The fruit of the seed of the missionaries (the sons and grandsons) was the possession of the islands themselves—of the land, the ports, the town sites, and sugar plantations. The missionary who came to give the bread of life remained to gobble up the whole heathen feast.”⁵³ In “Koolau the Leper,” Molokai is represented as a prison ruled by white men: “Today all the islands are theirs, all the land, all the cattle—everything is theirs.”⁵⁴

“Koolau” is based on a real historical event, the refusal by a band of lepers to relocate from Kauai to Molokai. London’s fictional Koolau leads the rebellion and kills more than a few of the members of the army that has come to arrest him; despite the desertion of his comrades, this subaltern Rambo eludes the army in the wilderness for two years before succumbing to the disease. James Slagel has found that London made several significant revisions when crafting his version of the story. Several versions were in circulation at the time, and London most likely heard one of them from Bert Stolz, a *Snark* shipmate whose father, Sheriff Stolz, was killed by the real Ko’olau.⁵⁵ Slagel notes that London’s story is very similar to an account written in the Hawaiian language that was based on the journals of Ko’olau’s wife, Pi’ilani.⁵⁶ By comparing these two versions, Slagel argues that London revised the story in ways that sharpen its political edge, making it more available as a critique of imperialism. According to Pi’ilani’s journals, Ko’olau was not fighting with a group of rebels but rather fighting to keep from being separated from his family. After receiving orders by the government to go to Molokai, Ko’olau consented, provided he would not be separated from his wife and son. Sheriff Stolz refused, and the family retreated into the forest in order to stay

together. The family eluded the police for a year before Ko'olau died. London also left out the fact that the real Ko'olau was a Christian. And in perhaps the most significant revision, London greatly exaggerates the visible symptoms of Ko'olau's leprosy. For Slagel, these modifications add up to a critique of imperialism that is more direct than that to be found in the Hawaiian accounts: "Leprosy, then, became an appropriate and powerful backdrop for the struggle against imperialism London apparently was beginning to appreciate in the later years of a short life."⁵⁷

London clearly wanted his Koolau to be a noble rebel, yet I think it's possible to come to a somewhat different reading of London's revisions of the original story. There is no doubt that London was deeply sympathetic to the community he found on Molokai, seeing the spectacle of playful joy amidst pain and suffering as an existential drama that extended beyond the shores of the colony to humanity in general. In his autobiographical account "The Lepers of Molokai," London worked to provide humanizing descriptions of life on the colony that countered its image in the local and American press as being peopled by the "living dead." The fact the London was willing to ignore myths about the contagiousness of the disease and participate in the horse and donkey races with the patients with the same enthusiasm he devoted to surfing with the brown gods at Waikiki should not be ignored.⁵⁸ Overcoming the fear of leprosy was an adventure for London, just like any other, the result of which was the admission that if he had to choose between living on Molokai or the East End of London, the East Side of New York, or the Stockyards of Chicago, "I would prefer one year of life in Molokai to five years of life in the above-mentioned cesspools of human degradation and misery."⁵⁹

Whereas the real Ko'olau's symptoms were internal, London gives his Koolau grotesque visible symptoms of the disease. In his autobiographical account of his time at Molokai, London pays little or no attention to the effects of the disease on the body. Yet in this short story, we learn that "Their faces were leonine. Here a space yawned in a face where should have been a nose, and there an arm-stump showed where a hand had rotted off. They were men and women beyond the pale, the thirty of them, for upon them had been placed the mark of the beast."⁶⁰ "Koolau the Leper" is like a horror movie in reverse, with the monstrous Koolau in the role of the hero. Despite this reversal, Koolau remains an object of pity. London made it more difficult for readers to identify with Koolau's struggles by ignoring the fact that he was a Christian and by making him fight with a group of monstrous-looking rebels rather than for the preservation of his family. As in his representation of surfers, London idealizes Koolau out of existence. The critique of imperialism

loses its grip when the other loses all historical existence and becomes a pathetic figure of disease and destruction.

The story begins as a collective defense of the land against white civilization. Yet by the end, Koolau's struggle is thoroughly individualized: "I am a free man," he announced. "I have done no wrong. All I ask is to be left alone. I have lived free, and I shall die free. I will never give myself up."⁶¹ As is often the case with London's short fiction, a critique of imperialism is given with one hand, and taken back with the other. "He was convinced of the hopelessness of his struggle," we are told of Koolau. "There was no gainsaying that terrible will of the haoles. Though he killed a thousand, yet would they rise like the sands of the sea and come upon him, ever more and more. They never knew when they were beaten. That was their fault and their virtue. It was where his own kind lacked."⁶²

"Koolau the Leper" begins by offering a partial identification with the struggles of this noble rebel against Euro-American imperialism. The story gradually dissolves this identification, replacing it with a not-so-noble negative definition of freedom, that of wanting to be left alone, and then with the admission of defeat. As a noble rebel, Koolau, as in images of Native Americans at the turn of the century, was made into a contradictory symbol of resistance and unavoidable defeat, thus suggesting the ideological flexibility of an imperialist imaginary that takes pride in memorializing the strength and independent spirit of indigenous peoples as they are taking their last breath.

PLANTATION PATERNALISM

The critique of soul-grabbing missionaries and land-grabbing white planters in London's short fiction is, for the most part, direct and unambiguous. It's ironic, then, that both Charmian and Jack heap praise in their autobiographical travelogues on figures like Sanford Dole and Lorrin Thurston, the sons of missionaries whose resumes included the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy. Dole and Thurston, lawyers by trade, were the architects of the "Bayonet Constitution" that King Kalakaua was forced to sign in 1887, which among other things, "created a property qualification for voting so high that mostly it was the sugar-rich haole who could qualify."⁶³ The "Bayonet Constitution," which received its name from the fact that Dole and Thurston assembled a white militia in order to "inspire" the king to sign the document, accelerated the erosion of native control of governmental functions and sped up the transfer of lands into the hands of whites, thus ensuring that Hawai'i would be ruled by "King Sugar."⁶⁴

While in Hawai'i, the Londons moved amongst the white oligarchy that had come to rule the islands with as much ease as they moved amongst the soft primitives they found playing on the beach. For A. Grove Day, this mobility, this ability to mix and mingle with both high and low, both white settler and brown native, signified the catholicity of their attachment to Hawai'i: "Although enjoying the society life of Honolulu, they found that most of their pleasure came from swimming and chatting with bronzed Polynesians and others on the beach."⁶⁵ Day ignores the fact that such mobility had less to do with personal integrity, and than with race and class privilege.

As Rob Wilson has commented, "Ever quoted in tourist blurbs and bylines, Jack London helped evoke this 'aloha spirit' of Waikiki that once reeked of class aura, racial exclusion, and resort status as sporting site for the white corporate yacht set and Hawaiian royalty."⁶⁶ Those groups whose presence on the islands was mediated by subordinate race and class positions could not have moved about so freely. The tourist experience depends on spatial mobility, which is secured by cultural and economic capital (and a competent police force). The tourist is more or less free to associate with both high and low, the latter giving the stamp of authenticity to experience, while ignoring various boundaries, such as the boundary separating different tribal or ethnic groups, or the rigid boundary represented by the hotel lobby that separates the native from the tourist, that restrict the movements of subordinate groups. After participating in a lu'au, Charmian confesses that "We four had the honor of being the only white guests, for in these latter days the natives are chary of including foreigners in their more intimate entertainments."⁶⁷ After observing the hula performance, Charmian is forced to admit that Native Hawaiians did not want their cultural practices to be observed by outsiders. Yet physical and visual border-crossing defines the authenticity of the tourist adventure, so it mattered little to the Londons whether Hawaiians wanted to be observed or not. As we all know, the more exclusive the ritual, the more value it possesses within the economy of tourist desire.

Many of the Londons' trips around the Hawaiian Islands were led by Lorrin Thurston, who introduced the Londons to Sanford Dole. Describing a breakfast with Dole and Thurston, Charmian wrote, "And all this leisurely breakfasting was done to the animated conversation of two of the most representative of *kamaaianas*, who talked unreservedly of their vivid years and their ambitions for the future of the Islands. Always and ever we note how devoted are the big men of the Territory, old and young alike, above all personal aggrandizement, to the interests of Hawaii. It is an example of a truly benevolent patriarchy."⁶⁸ If organizing a coup is one of the qualifications for

becoming *kamaaiana*, then Dole and Thurston more than qualify. This “benevolent patriarchy” represented the “interests of Hawaii” through the Committee on Annexation, which was euphemistically renamed the Committee on Safety. Appraising the constituency represented by the Committee on Safety, Tom Coffman notes, “The Committee of Annexation represented virtually no Hawaiians, only part of the white foreign community, and only a part of the American and American-descended community. It seems possible that Dole and Thurston represented as little as 2 percent of the population, and never more than 4 or 5 percent.”⁶⁹

In 1893 this benevolent patriarchy, backed by an American warship, overthrew the Hawaiian government. And in 1898, in the interests of the Hawaiian people, “Dole handed the sovereignty and property of the government of the Hawaiian Islands to a representative of the United States, Harold M. Sewall,” which included “45 percent of the entire acreage of the Hawaiian archipelago.”⁷⁰ Yet if *kamaaiana* means, as Charmian said to Jack, “one who belongs, who has come to belong in the heart and life and soil of Hawaii,” then Dole and Thurston might have to settle for the name “imperialists.” Yet the word imperialist never appears in London’s writings in the vicinity of the names Dole or Thurston.

The circumference of the Londons’ experience in Hawai‘i was not limited to the surf; they also ventured inland, when Dole and Thurston led them on several tours of plantations. At the time, five large sugar corporations, known as the “Big Five,” exerted control over all areas of the Hawaiian economy.⁷¹ Enticing readers to look beyond the beautiful beaches, Charmian wrote, “When you come to Hawaii, do not fail to visit one of the big sugar plantations, to see the working of this foremost industry of the Territory, for nowhere in the world has it been brought to such perfection.”⁷² In Charmian’s surveys of plantation life, the tourist gaze is firmly aligned with that of the planters, through which the plantation system appears to be a healthy multicultural community.

Jack did give a lecture on socialism in Honolulu, that led to a vigorous, collegial debate between him and Thurston. Yet Hawai‘i, according to Charmian, was not an appropriate setting for discussions of socialism: “Hawaii knows little of socialism, for she lacks the problems that confront the United States and other great countries. Sugar is her backbone, labor is almost entirely imported, and handled in a patriarchal way that makes for contentment, especially in so rigorless a climate. Feudal Hawaii is; but the masters are benevolent.”⁷³ London continued this theme in “My Hawaiian Aloha,” writing, “Yet will I dare assert that no owning class on the mainland is so conscious of its social responsibility as is this owning class of Hawaii.”⁷⁴

The idea that plantation owners were benevolent, and that plantations were diverse social communities, not exploitative economic arrangements, did not simply appear out of thin air. Rather, this idea was carefully scripted by the owners of plantations and the nascent tourist industry, both as a public relations tool and as a means of increasing production and maintaining discipline over immigrant workers. Ronald Takaki has determined that while some plantation owners did show a genuine interest in the lives of their workers, the ideology of plantation paternalism nevertheless needs to be understood as part of the process of extracting profit from people: "Plantation paternalism was designed not only to extract a good day's work from the laborers but also to weaken the power of the workers to organize and strike. . . . But plantation paternalism not only paid; it also functioned as an ideology to maintain the caste/class reality of plantation society."⁷⁵

Very different representations of plantation life from those offered by the Londons appear in Milton Murayama's *All I Asking for Is My Body* and Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men*. I will discuss *China Men* in the following chapter. In *All I Asking for Is My Body*, Murayama shatters the veil of plantation paternalism with careful descriptions of the vertical, striated social space of the plantation that contradict the horizontal multicultural community hallucinated by the Londons: "It was a company town with identical company houses and outhouses, and it was set up like a pyramid. At the tip was Mr. Nelson, then the Portugese, Spanish, and nisei lunas in the nicer-looking homes, then the identical wooden frame houses of Japanese Camp, then the more run-down Filipino Camp. There were a plantation store, a plantation mess hall for the Filipino bachelors, a plantation community, and a plantation social hall."⁷⁶ For Murayama, paternalism means that all of the dimensions of public and private life were owned and regulated by the plantation, which leads the narrator Kiyō to conclude that, "Freedom means being a plantation boss."⁷⁷ Like the tourist, the plantation boss has access to a position from which the whole, the pyramid of social relations, can be observed, as opposed to being stuck in one particular segment. Kiyō and his brother Tosh's success as boxers allows them to travel to other islands, thus creating alternative routes of mobility and moments of temporary autonomy. At the same time, though, obviously boxing was cast as a diversion by the plantation owner to divert and contain the energies of the laborers.

Hostility between laborers and the plantation, as well as between different ethnic working-class groups, pulses throughout *All I Asking for Is My Body*. One feels that things could erupt at any moment. Dialogue between family members provides the location where complex, and tenuous, articulations of class and ethnicity are given shape:

“The Filipinos are to be pitied. They’re running out of food,” Tosh said at supper one night.

“They can’t win,” father said.

“The Japanese should’ve joined them,” Tosh said.

“The Japanese went on strike in 1920 and 1922 and both times the others were the strikebreakers,” father said.

“That’s why nobody can beat the plantation,” Tosh said.

“We shouldn’t worry about other people’s business,” mother said.

“It’s our business too,” Tosh said. “We fighting the same plantation.”

“We should know our place and not anger them. That’s the only way we’ll gain their respect,” Father said.⁷⁸

While the mother and father struggle to be seen in the eyes of the owners as model minorities who “know their place,” Tosh and Kiyo struggle to identify across ethnic barriers.

By contrast, when Charmian surveys the plantation, she wonders “if anywhere in the whole world so many nationalities blend in harmonious social intercourse.”⁷⁹ A tour of a sugar plantation headed by Dole, which would be like taking a tour of a Nike factory led by company founder Phil Knight, leads to the discovery that “more absorbing than these technicalities of the Plantation were the human races represented among the workers who live and labor, are born, are married, and die within its confines. Through a bewilder of foreign villages we wandered on foot—Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, Norwegian, Spanish, Swedish, Korean; even the Russians were here but lately. Porto Ricans were tested, but proved a bad lot, always ready with a knife from behind. One cannot fail to note the scarcity of Hawaiian laborers—and rejoice in it, for they are proud and free creatures, and it would seem a pity to bind them on their own soil. On the other hand, there is no gainsaying that they are capable toilers when they will. Indeed, it is said that they accomplish twice the work that a Japanese is willing to do in a day; but when pay day comes, the Hawaiian is likely not to appear again until all his money is gloriously squandered. He is strong and trustworthy, and makes an excellent overseer, or luna, as well as teacher; for he is not merely imitative, but intelligent in applying what he has learned.”⁸⁰

Charmian begins by praising the multicultural mix to be found on the plantation, but this idealization quickly gives way to a recognition of conflicts between different groups of laborers, as well as to the admission that the work is far from pleasant. The nobility of the Hawaiian depends in part on the refusal to perform this difficult and dehumanizing work. Yet Charmian nevertheless leaves the plantation in a sentimental mood: “I thought we could never leave the kindergartens, with their engaging babies of endless colors and variety of lineaments, pure types and crossbred.”⁸¹

By contrast, Murayama displays the strategic manipulation of cultural difference designed to keep wages down and prevent the organization of labor. Summarizing the effects of this strategy, Ronald Takaki writes, "Although planters placed orders for labor as they would a commodity or tool, they were not unaware of the workers' nationalities or ethnicities. In fact they systematically developed an ethnically diverse plantation working class in order to create divisions among their laborers and therefore reinforce management control."⁸² Takaki notes that there has always been resistance to the plantation's efforts to discipline and punish workers, whether it takes the camouflaged form of slowdowns, feigned illness, or arson, or the direct form of the strike. The first strike to have an explicit demand for higher wages was initiated by Japanese workers in 1909. To counter this action, the plantation aggressively hired Chinese, Hawaiians, Puerto Ricans, and Koreans as scabs, and after four months the strike fell apart.⁸³

Whereas Charmian considered work on a plantation to be relatively comfortable given the "rigorless climate," Murayama offers this thick description of work on a tropical island: "The dust hangs in reddish clouds all around us. We are drenched, our denim pants cling to our wet legs, sweat trickles down faces and necks and moistens palms and back of hands. We wipe continually, hands on pants, shirt sleeves over eyebrows, blue handkerchief around neck. You wear a broad straw hat against the sun, you hold your breath and try to breathe the less dusty air in gasps, you tie the bottom of your pant legs to keep the dust and centipedes out, you stop and clean your nostrils of chocolate dust with the blue handkerchief wet from wiping your neck."⁸⁴

The difference between London and Murayama (and Kingston, as I will discuss in the next chapter) is instructive for our own times. As capitalism becomes transnational, corporate multiculturalism, and the celebration of difference, has become an important public relations tool and management strategy, while an invisible multicultural workforce is locked away out of sight. The Londons' willful misrecognition of exploitation as a celebration of difference and diversity needs to be countered with Masao Miyoshi's argument that "We should not be satisfied with recognizing the different subject-positions from different regions and diverse backgrounds. We need to find reasons for such differences—at least in the political and economic aspects—and to propose ways to erase such 'differences,' by which I mean political and economic inequalities."⁸⁵

For Jack and Charmian London, the production of pleasure while in Hawai'i depended on repressing the political and economic contexts of what they were seeing and doing: surfing, sport fishing, hula, lu'au. The separation of these cultural activities from the politics of imperialism enabled the Londons,

and their readers back on the mainland, to entertain fantasies of proximity to Native Hawaiian culture. In *Our Hawaii* the question of imperialism does briefly surface, when Charmian describes a reception that included both elite white settlers and members of the Hawaiian royalty, at which Lili'uokalani was present. While the Londons were in Hawai'i, Lili'uokalani was an important focus of resistance to the American occupation. As Tom Coffman notes, "There was a concerted movement among Hawaiians during this period to refocus the central role of Lili'uokalani. The Hawaiian press was filled with letters, poems, and songs written in adoration of her. Long articles detailed the forced nature of the abdication papers she had signed."⁸⁶

At the reception, Charmian studies the appearance of the recently deposed queen: "I was glad to be well down the line, as I had more time to watch her, for the vigor of her great fight of but yesterday to preserve the Crown of Hawaii is to me one of the most interesting dramas in history—bleeding tragedy to her."⁸⁷ This is the first time that Charmian admits that the story of Hawai'i means one thing to her and Jack and another to Lili'uokalani and the Native Hawaiian population. Charmian is subjected to a difference, and distance, that cannot be overcome or contained by the aesthetics of adventure. Alterity becomes fearful as the seer becomes the seen: "Photographs and paintings do not flatter Queen Liliuokalani. All I have seen depict a coarseness and heaviness that is entirely absent. I was therefore surprised, brought face to face with Her Majesty, to find that face rather thin, strong, and pervaded with an elusive refinement that might be considered her most striking characteristic, if anything elusive can be striking. But this evasive effect, in a countenance fairly European in feature, was due, I think, to the expression of the narrow black eyes, rather close-set, which were implacably savage in their cold hatred of everything American. And who can blame her? As near as I can figure it, she was tricked and trapped by brains for which her brain, remarkable though it be, was no match. . . . Most certainly, when our eyes met in the short contact of glances there was nothing of the tender suavity of the Hawaiian, only abysmal dislike."⁸⁸

The wordless gaze of Lili'uokalani freaks Charmian out, forcing her to self-identify as American.⁸⁹ Charmian anxiously projects a hatred of Americans onto the queen, producing a split in these adventure-seekers that brings their complicity in the project of imperialism to the surface. In this moment, the transparency and innocence of the tourist gaze is shattered, as, to borrow Homi Bhabha's words, "the look of surveillance returns as the displacing gaze of the disciplined, where the observer becomes the observed and the 'partial' representation rearticulates the whole notion of *identity* and alienates it from its essence."⁹⁰

Yet these narratives of tourist possession roll on, pausing only briefly to contemplate the gaze of the other on their way to becoming *kamaaiana*. In the bulk of the Londons' autobiographical writings, Hawai'i was the exceptional space of the Pacific. Hawaiian exceptionalism enabled the Londons themselves to feel exceptional, to be something more than tourists. Hawaiian exceptionalism authorized a fantasy of passage from same to other, from us to them, from *malihini* to *kamaaiana*. The channeling of desire through native ritual gave the Londons the confidence to extract themselves from complicity with the project of imperialism, despite the fact that their access to native culture was conducted by the two most prominent architects of annexation. Such complicity was forced on Charmian by the mere presence of Lili'uokalani because this presence made it impossible for her to separate Hawaiian culture from the politics of annexation. Lili'uokalani's gaze fixed the Londons' self-recognition, if only for a moment, within the imperialist imaginary of the American Pacific.

TOURISM: WAR BY OTHER MEANS

This chapter opened with an exchange between Charmian and Jack that critics have often cited in order to defend London against charges of racism and ethnocentrism. For *A. Grove Day*, the avowed desire to become *kamaaiana* created an imperialist prophylactic that protected London from being complicit in the project of annexation. Hawai'i and Hawaiians were clearly exceptional for the Londons. If colonial discourse typically construes "the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction," as Homi Bhabha has put it, then the Native Hawaiian was a model minority.⁹¹ As a model minority, no matter how much ethnographic data London compiled, Native Hawaiians only possessed meaning as an abstraction. Ironically, Hawaiians possess greater depth and reality in London's short fiction than they do in his nonfictional travelogues. The myth of Hawaiian exceptionalism ultimately transformed native history into a series of gestures or ritualistic performances. By reading Murayama against the Londons, we find that rather than being insiders, the Londons construct a spectacle of the inside that relieves the host not of existence but of memory, which allows the host to give off the appearance that it is still alive and therefore that paradise hasn't been entirely lost. While in Hawai'i, London de-naturalizes white skin (but not the privilege that went with it) while hyper-naturalizing brown skin (and demonizing black skin), thus separating pigmentation from power relations, and locking it instead within the formal boundaries of sport and sexuality.

In her autobiography *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen*, Lili'uokalani puts together a counter-memory of the American Pacific in which the myth of Hawaiian exceptionalism is replaced by a political narrative of the extra-judicial means used to annex the islands. One of these means involved white settlers, backed by American guns, renaming themselves as Hawaiian. Lili'uokalani describes these flexible subjects as "quasi Americans who call themselves Hawaiians now and Americans when it suits them."⁹² By giving this ideological maneuver a name, Lili'uokalani closes the door on those whites fronting as *kamaaiana*: "When I speak at this time of the Hawaiian people, I refer to the children of the soil,—the native inhabitants of the Hawaiian Islands and their descendents. Two delegations claiming to represent Hawaii have visited Washington at intervals during the past four years in the cause of annexation, besides which other individuals have been sent on to assist in this attempt to defraud an aboriginal people of their birthrights,—rights dear to the patriotic hearts of even the weakest nation. Lately these aliens have called themselves Hawaiians."⁹³

Prior to annexation, Sanford Dole argued for a homesteading policy in Hawai'i like that of the American West, which would encourage the settlement of whites from the mainland in order to secure American hegemony over the islands. Technically, Dole's plan did not work, but the tourist cultural economy has been much more effective at Americanizing the Hawaiian Islands. Summarizing the effects of the Americanization of Hawai'i, Native Hawaiian scholar and activist Haunani Kay Trask writes, "On the ancient burial grounds of our ancestors, glass and steel shopping malls with layered parking lots stretch over what were once the most ingeniously irrigated taro lands, lands that fed millions of our people over thousands of years. Large bays, delicately ringed long ago with well-stocked fishponds, are now heavily silted and cluttered with jet skis, windsurfers, and sailboats. Multistory hotels disgorge over six million tourists a year onto stunningly beautiful (and easily polluted) beaches, closing off access to locals. On the major islands of Hawaii, Maui, O'ahu, and Kaua'i, meanwhile, military airfields, training camps, weapons storage facilities, and exclusive housing and beach areas remind the Native Hawaiian who owns Hawaii: the foreign, colonial country called the United States of America."⁹⁴ Jack London, who may have officially detested the tourist route, nevertheless helped institute a particular form of tourism in Hawai'i, what has come to be called cultural tourism, "a trend toward more engaged or experiential forms of tourist experience."⁹⁵ "Ironically," Earl Labor points out, "Jack's writings about Hawaii were responsible in considerable measure for the increase in tourism over the following decade."⁹⁶

Shortly after the publication of *The Cruise of the Snark*, the “live performance” was beginning to be advertised in order to attract tourists to Hawaii, so that, “By the late 1920s hula performances were brought right into the hotels and contracted by management.”⁹⁷ The myth of Hawaiian exceptionalism encourages the extension of cultural tourism over all aspects of native life. Again, Trask deserves to be quoted at length: “But American colonization has brought more than physical transformation to the lush and sacred islands of our ancestors. Visible in garish ‘Polynesian’ revues, commercial ads using our dance and language to sell vacations and condominiums, and the trampling of sacred *heiau* (temples) and burial grounds as tourist recreation sites, a grotesque commercialization of everything Hawaiian has damaged Hawaiians psychologically, reducing our ability to control our lands and waters, our daily lives, and the expression and integrity of our culture. The cheapening of Hawaiian culture (for example, the traditional value of aloha as reciprocal love and generosity now used to sell everything from cars and plumbing to securities and air conditioning) is so complete that non-Hawaiians, at the urging of the tourist industry, are transformed into ‘Hawaiians at heart,’ a phrase that speaks worlds about how grotesque the theft of things Hawaiian has become.”⁹⁸

We currently live in a world in which the recognition of difference and diversity has become a standard moment in the smooth, efficient functioning of power. Jack and Charmian London’s travel writings set in Hawai‘i are an important point of emergence for the practice of cultural tourism. Cultural tourism today, as in the Londons’ travelogues, is typically staged upon a multiculturalist imaginary that is guided by the recognition of difference and the celebration of diversity. But as Trask powerfully asserts, what is needed in Hawai‘i is a little less recognition and a lot more redistribution.⁹⁹

Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men*

Frontiers of the Chinese American Pacific

The middle is by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed. Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle.

—Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

We lived in a special spot of the earth, Stockton, the only city on the Pacific coast with three railroads—the Santa Fe, Southern Pacific, and Western Pacific.

—Maxine Hong Kingston, *China Men*

But the boundary between archipelagic cultures and their surroundings is rarely so sharp as that between land and water.

—Martin Lewis and Karen Wigen, *The Myth of Continents*

IMAGINING A CHINESE AMERICAN PACIFIC

During the summer of 2001, Ang Lee's martial arts meets Masterpiece Theater epic *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* took America by storm. In an acceptance speech at the Academy Awards for his crew's stunt work, the high priest of Hong Kong action-cinema, Yuen Wo Ping, accepted the award on behalf of "Chinese everywhere." A similar sentiment was echoed throughout the Pacific Rim, from Premier Chang Chun-hsiung of Taiwan, who translated the film from Mandarin and English into techno-euphoric Rimspeak with the declaration that "the production crew and their outstanding achievements are the pride of the Chinese,"¹ to Karim Raslan's praise for Michelle Yeoh in the *Singapore Times*—"The way you can flit between the different countries and cultures of the Pacific Rim is testament both to your Chinese-ness as well as your Malaysian-ness."² Active promotion of this romantic portrait of prerevolutionary China by the People's Republic of China suggests that the era of ping-pong diplomacy has been replaced by an era of kung-fu diplomacy.

The favorable reviews of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* that emerged from various pockets of the Chinese diaspora seldom praised the film itself,

instead celebrating the fact that Chineseness, as both a local and a regional identity, had accumulated cultural capital on the international stage. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* quickly became a symbolic terrain upon which “cultural China,” as a territorially dispersed yet ethnically integrated regional community, could be imagined.³ The idea of cultural China has recently become both a symptom and a symbol of the center/periphery dramas through which representations of China and Chineseness are increasingly being (re)coded, and it provides an important mediating term between East and West, Orient and Occident, China and America, one that is sensitive to those emergent economic formations in the area of Asia/Pacific/America that cannot be grasped within easy binary frameworks.

Much like Ang Lee's film, Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men*, through its detailed distribution of various segments of the Chinese diaspora across the Pacific and the Americas, offers an occasion for the imagining of cultural China. There are a number of similarities between *Crouching Tiger* and *China Men*. Both Lee and Kingston write from the margins of mainland China—Lee from Taiwan and New York, Kingston from California and Hawai'i. And, predictably, because of their crossover successes, combined with the fact that neither Lee nor Kingston had been to mainland China—Kingston did not make the trip until after the publication of *China Men*, while Lee did not make the trip until the start of filming on *Crouching Tiger*—both have been accused of selling out, of catering to the foreign devils, of offering little more than updated forms of *chinoiserie*. For example, Li Xun, director at the Graduate Programme in China Film Arts Research Centre, has offered this explanation for the enthusiastic reception of the film in the United States, as compared to its disappointing reception on the mainland: “What is appealing to American audiences is the exoticism: the totally fresh aesthetic of Chinese martial arts and the imaginary artistic conception. But that turned out to be mundane to Chinese viewers.”⁴

In *China Men*, the semi-autobiographical voice of the narrator states, “I want to compare the real China with the one I made up.”⁵ Recalling his first opportunity to compare the “real” China with the one he made up, Ang Lee has commented, “I was kind of disappointed. Other than the palace, everything was modern. I didn't see what I was looking for—it felt as if I were in a big Taipei. I had no thrill because that China does not exist anymore, either in Taiwan or America or here: It's a history. It's a dream that all the Chinese people in the world have, an impression. Gone with the wind.”⁶ Lee finds himself disappointed with the “real” China, a fact that attests to an important contradiction within the concept of cultural China. On the one hand, this concept opens the categories of China and Chineseness to meanings shaped

by diverse local, national, and regional contexts. At the same time, the spatial imaginary offered by the idea of cultural China is typically represented by arboreal metaphors, with branches standing for various trajectories of the Chinese diaspora, while the roots remain planted firmly, and uncritically, in mainland China.⁷

Surveying the unstable ideological terrain upon which the idea of cultural China travels, Ien Ang finds “An overwhelming desire—bordering, indeed, on obsession—to somehow revitalize the notion of Chineseness as a marker of common culture and identity in a rapidly postmodernizing world. . . . While the meaning of Chineseness is defined explicitly as fluid and changeable, the category of Chineseness itself is emphatically not in question here: Indeed, the notion of cultural China seems to be devised precisely to exalt and enlarge the global significance of Chineseness, raising its importance by imbuing it with new, modernized meanings and heightening its relevance by expanding its field of application far beyond the given spatial boundaries of geopolitical China.”⁸ Ang argues that the concept of cultural China possesses the radical potential to project “a new, alternative centre, a decentered centre whose name is cultural China.”⁹

On one level, the diasporic regional imaginary projected by *China Men* can be read as a defensive response to the persistent othering of Chinese Americans in relation to supposedly “proper” Anglo-European immigrants. Ellis Island continues to trump Angel Island in the national imaginary. “Global diaspora,” Ien Ang writes, “signifies deliverance and release from territorialized national identity, triumph over the shackles of the nation-state.”¹⁰ Yet Kingston’s turn to diaspora in *China Men* is more than a defensive response to the drama of marginalization and fragmentation at the national level, and the reach for unity and centeredness at the global level. For Kingston, diaspora does not represent a realm of ethnic or racial unity in contrast to fragmentation at the level of the nation-state. Rather, the diasporic regional imaginary put together in *China Men*, or what I will be referring to as the Chinese American Pacific, is not one but several, composed of multiple peripheries and the partial lines that connect them.

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, with its misty and mystical dreams of a Han-centered, prerevolutionary mainland, is a root-text. Rather than decenter the center, the film hypnotizes viewers with a mainland that is viewed through the reifying, nostalgic lens of tradition. Maxine Hong Kingston’s *China Men*, on the other hand, is a route-text, less concerned with the linear tracing of roots back to an origin in China than with their dispersal across the Pacific and North America. *China Men* manages to work on, and against, two fronts at the same time: the idealization of the frontier in the American

national imaginary and the idealization of China in the effort to contain, and capitalize on, the identity of overseas Chinese populations. The multiple stories brought together in *China Men* project the fluid contours of a third space, that of a Chinese American Pacific, that eludes territorialization by either the United States or China.

“THE RAILROAD WAS THEIR DRAGON”

Like the continental United States, *China Men* is traversed by multiple, non-contiguous points of entry. In *China Men*, these points of entry become momentarily visible through stories that piece together peoples and places of the nineteenth-century Chinese diaspora. In many respects, *China Men* can be read as a kind of “Passage to India” in reverse. In place of Walt Whitman’s linear, techno-euphoric, and miscegenistic movement of civilization eastward across the Pacific “To reason’s early paradise,” Kingston gives birth to Chinese sojourners in dispersal. Similar to the topography of the expanding nation in Washington Irving’s *Astoria*, *China Men* revisits those ethnified frontiers that do not fit the standardized time, space, and phenotype of the nation blessed by Fredrick Jackson Turner’s “frontier thesis.” And in place of those homogenous sites of redemption that witnessed the birth of an exceptionally white nation, *China Men*’s frontiers are sites of dialectical relations between hard labor and racist violence on the one hand and creative and flexible responses to those conditions on the other. It is through this dialectic that Kingston explores the ambiguous, unstable, and uneven processes through which “Chinese” becomes “Chinese American.” Kingston has suggested that *China Men* represents an effort to “claim America for Chinese Americans.”¹¹ *China Men* stakes this claim by pluralizing the frontier mythos, scattering representative places and representative subjects across both oceanic and continental frontiers, from the plantations of Hawai‘i to the Sierra Nevada mountains, from the streets of New York City to the crossroads of Stockton—frontiers that moved at different speeds and in multiple directions, fashioning different constellations of place and identity along the way.

Kingston traces one route through the Chinese American Pacific with the story of Ah Goong, the great-grandfather who blew holes through the Sierra Nevada mountain range as the Central Pacific snaked its way eastward toward its arranged marriage with the Union Pacific. Ah Goong is the muscular Chinese American Adam who “pickaxed the mountain, the dirt filling his nostrils through a cowboy bandana.”¹² Through this cowboy self-fashioning, Kingston masculinizes the Chinese male body, in relation not only

the difficult and dangerous work conditions, but also in relation to the ideological struggles that were played out over these laboring bodies in the nineteenth century. Chinese laborers were driven toward heavy construction projects and manufacturing, often as strikebreakers, because they were unjustly believed to be “a degraded and servile labor force, incapable of class consciousness or unwilling to organize as workingmen.”¹³ While this image might have structured white working-class folk culture in the form of popular ballads, employers quickly realized the unique skills that Chinese laborers brought with them, such as the ability to come up with ingenious ways to make the mountain terrain submit to the machine. For example, Chinese laborers made baskets and “To drill holes in rock faces or to light dynamite, they hoisted themselves up and down cliffs in wicker baskets they wove from reeds, working pulleys.”¹⁴

One day, as he hangs over a cliff doing dynamite work, Ah Goong, inspired by the perilous vista, is overwhelmed with excitement. As he masturbates over the cliff, Ah Goong rewrites the image of the frontier as virgin land from a Chinese perspective: “I am fucking the world,” he said. The world’s vagina was big, big as the sky, big as the valley. He grew a habit: whenever he was lowered in the basket, his blood rushed to his penis, and he fucked the world.”¹⁵ Ah’s high-altitude promiscuity is the product of the loneliness of life on the frontier. In opposition to the geometrical precision of laying railroad spikes, and the instrumental relationship to his body demanded by labor, Ah reappropriates his body with an act that pleurably reconnects him to himself and to the world around him. This sexualized relationship between work and the landscape offers a sharp contrast to the violence and danger that surround him and the other workers. Grasping his manhood, Ah symbolically fights the constant threat of dismemberment: “The dynamiting loosed blizzards on the men. Ears and toes fell off. Fingers stuck to the cold silver rails. Snowblind men stumbled about with bandanas over their eyes. Ah Goong helped build wood tunnels roofing the track route. Falling ice scabbled on the roofs. The men stayed under the snow for weeks at a time. Snowslides covered the entrances to the tunnels which they had to dig out to enter and exit, white tunnels and black tunnels.”¹⁶

While the physical and spiritual struggles of Ah Goong are clearly presented as heroic, they do not resolve themselves into a heroic individual. Rather, Kingston represents Ah’s struggles as typical of an emergent, racialized working-class community. The name of Ah Goong is always affixed to a bigger “we.” Kingston narrates the emergence of class, race, and gender consciousness amongst Chinese laborers through the contradictory ways in which their bodies were represented by the newspapers of the time: “On the

second day, artist demons climbed the mountains to draw the China Men for newspapers. The men posed bare-chested, their fists clenched, showing off their arms and backs. The artists sketched them as perfect young gods reclining against rocks, wise expressions on their handsome noble-nosed faces, long torsos with lean stomachs, a strong arm over a bent knee, long fingers holding a pipe, a rope of hair over a wide shoulder. Other artists drew faeries with antennae for eyebrows and brownies with elvish pigtailed; they danced in white socks and black slippers among mushroom rings by midnight.¹⁷

Confronted with this Orientalist catalogue, which runs the gamut from noble savage to hermaphroditic celestial, Ah Goong reads himself narcissistically in terms of the former. Ah Goong's internal dialogue with these artists' renderings of his people then shifts to a dialogue with his fellow workers: "Ah Goong acquired another idea that added to his reputation for craziness: The pale, thin Chinese scholars and the rich men fat like Buddhas were less beautiful, less manly than these brown muscular railroad men, of whom he was one. One of ten thousand heroes."¹⁸

Ah Goong is sculpted along lines that would not circulate widely in the United States until Bruce Lee began to kick white ass on film in the 1970s. Like Ah Goong, Bruce Lee's film persona was structured around a narcissistic relation to a tightly molded masculinity. With the crossover success of *Enter the Dragon*, Bruce Lee became the second male Asian sex symbol to appear in the American mass media, the first being James Shigeta, while on the local level, Lee inspired both yellow and black power movements in their fight against imperialism at home and abroad.

Ah's narcissistic reinterpretation of his body is shown to be an imaginative, flexible response to work on a massive, life-threatening construction project as well as to an emasculating Orientalist national imaginary. This reinterpretation also distances Ah from the "proper" Chinese male body, that of the scholar endorsed by elitist Confucian culture, and links him to a new race and class formation powerfully named as "ten thousand heroes." By reimagining these brown bodies, Ah Goong is able to imagine an overseas Chinese working-class community under conditions of displacement and dispersal, both in relation to their homeland and to those dehumanizing stereotypes that supported the white labor movement's efforts to cleanse the frontier of its racialized others.

It would appear that Ah Goong symbolizes the ideological incorporation of Chinese labor into the rhetoric of the American jeremiad. Yet when placed in the broader context of the specific material conditions encountered by Chinese workers in America, Kingston's explicit gesture toward the rhetoric of virgin land becomes more than the repetition of a hegemonic national

myth, for this incorporation could only be partial. Kingston's thick, unromantic descriptions of labor, both physical and imaginative, provide the means for returning Chinese subjects to scenes, such as Promontory Point, from which they have been violently erased.

On the one hand, the China men celebrate the completion of the railroad: "The second day the China Men cheered was when the engine from the West and the one from the East rolled toward one another and touched. The transcontinental railroad was finished. They Yippe'd like madmen. The white demon officials gave speeches. 'The greatest Feat of the Nineteenth Century,' they said. 'Only Americans could have done it,' they said, which is true. Even if Ah Goong had not spent half his gold on Citizenship Papers, he was an American for having built the railroad. A white demon in top hat tapped on the gold spike, and pulled it back out. Then one China Man held the real spike, the steel one, and another hammered it in."¹⁹

Yet the celebration was short lived. For while the completion of the transcontinental railroad enabled the nation to both consolidate and expand its borders, the U. S. government, with the help of bands of white supremacist vigilantes, was contracting its borders along racial lines. Ah Goong may be a kind of Adamic hero on a Chinese American jeremiad, yet he also represents an internal limit of the nation, forcibly removed, both symbolically and physically, from the landscape. As if in direct response to Whitman's geography of hope—"The earth to be spann'd, connected by network, / The races, neighbors, to marry and be given in marriage"—in *China Men* we learn that "While the demons posed for photographs, the China Men dispersed. The Driving Out had begun. Ah Goong does not appear in railroad photographs."²⁰ Kingston repeats the basic elements of frontier mythos, yet in so doing, she pushes these elements against the white nationalist grain, exposing them to the physical and representational violence that had to be repressed in order for the frontier mythos to serve as a unifying national narrative.

In his overview of the dominant nineteenth-century myth of the frontier, Donald Pease writes, "The move west made it necessary for many individuals to pull up their roots; it also made cultural anomie, or the inability to designate oneself as part of any vital community, a common form of social malaise. The doctrine of manifest destiny was, on one level, intended to convert this anxiety accompanying cultural displacement into a national mission. And the figure of the frontiersman was intended to give this experience of uprootedness a heroic appearance."²¹

In Kingston's revision of the frontier mythos, uprootedness is not romanticized but placed within a specific political and economic context. The condition of being uprooted is shown to be the product of racist attitudes toward

Chinese labor on the one hand and the duration of a heavy construction project on the other. When the latter is completed, the former ensures that those workers labeled as “degraded” hit the road. In contrast to the idealization of mobility and the equation of westward movement with freedom and liberty, Kingston invents a new myth called the “Driving Out.”

In this counter-myth, mobility signifies a strategy of survival, not freedom. The demand that Chinese workers have a flexible relationship to capital, that is, have the ability to scatter across the country in search of work, is the product of exploitation, not liberty. The linking of the transcontinental railroad, rather than signaling a moment of completion and unity, becomes a moment of loss, of removal from the symbolic terrain of the nation. The image of the Driving Out not only captures the violent disruption of Chinese working-class communities in the second half of the nineteenth century, but also the fact that, over the course of the twentieth century this history has been driven out of the national memory. One would be hard-pressed to find an Ah Goong, or any of the “brown muscular railroad men,” in any of the foundational studies of nineteenth-century American culture. It would not be until the emergence of an Asian American movement in the 1960s, in which Kingston was an important figure, that this history would be driven back into the national memory.

Kingston depicts the effort to establish a sense of community amongst the workers through their relationship to the railroad. In *China Men* the railroad serves as a transitional object that registers the workers’ spatial and temporal dislocation from both China and America: “When the big dipper pointed east and the China Men detonated nitroglycerine and shot off guns for the New Year, which comes with the spring, these special bangs were not as loud as the daily bangs, not as numerous as the bangs all year. Shouldn’t the New Year be the loudest day of all to obliterate the noises of the old year? But to make a bang of that magnitude, they would have to blow up at least a year’s supply of dynamite in one blast. They arranged strings of chain reactions in circles and long lines, banging faster and louder to culminate in a big bang. And most importantly, there were random explosions—surprise. Surprise. SURPRISE. They had no dragon. The railroad was their dragon.”²²

By reading the railroad as a dragon, the China men symbolically loot America of one of its national treasures in order to compensate for the loss of their sense of historical time due to the deafening, repetitive shocks of the dynamite that renders the Chinese New Year indistinct from any other day. Imaginative investment in the railroad with elements from a different symbolic universe fills in the gap between the fading Chinese calendar on the one hand and the marginalization in relation to the promise of America on

the other. Kingston packs a great deal of counter-Whitmanian sentiment into a profoundly simple sentence describing Ah's frustration: "The railroad he was building would not lead him to his family."²³

While the nation's artists and writers cast a romantic eye on sublime vistas and technological achievement, the Driving Out loomed menacingly on the horizon for Chinese laborers. The Driving Out meant that diaspora did not end for overseas Chinese once they reached terra firma. If anything, diasporic movements became more entangled as the completion of the railroad generated subsequent rounds of decentered internal migrations: "While the demons posed for photographs, the China Men dispersed. It was dangerous to stay. Ah Goong does not appear in railroad photographs. Scattering, some China Men followed the north star in the constellation Tortoise the Black Warrior to Canada, or they kept the constellation Phoenix ahead of them to South America or the White Tiger west or the Wolf east. Seventy lucky men rode the Union Pacific to Massachusetts for jobs at a shoe factory. Fifteen hundred went to Fou Loy Company in New Orleans and San Francisco, several hundred to plantations in Mississippi, Georgia, and Arkansas, and sugarcane plantations in Louisiana and Cuba. . . . Seventy went to New Orleans to grade a route for a railroad, then to Pennsylvania to work in a knife factory. The Colorado State Legislature passed a resolution welcoming the China Men to come build the new state. They built railroads in every part of the country—the Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad, the Houston and Texas Railroad, the Southern Pacific, the railroads in Louisiana and Boston, the Pacific Northwest, and Alaska. After the Civil War, China men banded the nation North and South, East and West, with crisscrossing steel. They were the binding and building ancestors of this place."²⁴

While the spectacle of the completion of the railroad at Promontory Point helped make the nation visible to itself, "the binding and building ancestors of this place" are rendered invisible, forced underground. The disjointed narrative of *China Men* reflects this condition of oppressive flexibility, where Chinese workers were pushed by the racist hate of paranoid segments of the white working class and pulled by the racist love of capital.²⁵ Kingston reads nineteenth-century America from the perspective of these geographical displacements, from the perspective of laboring populations who are repeatedly being pushed out of the national picture while being pulled into specific local contexts that were always already unstable, subject to recall at any moment.

Following his work on the railroad, Ah Goong cannot find stable employment and therefore goes from being a maker of history to being lost to history, "Good at hiding, disappearing—decades unaccounted for—he was not

working in a mine when forty thousand were Driven Out of mining.”²⁶ The narrator loses track of Ah Goong at the end of the chapter, able to locate him only through negation—she can’t say where he was, only where he wasn’t. The chapter therefore concludes with a heavily loaded “maybe”—maybe he died in San Francisco, maybe he died back in China. The word “maybe” appears repeatedly throughout *China Men*, signaling the obstacles to writing a controlling narrative about a scattered community that, as a matter of survival, had to be “good at hiding, disappearing.” The Driving Out, therefore, goes from being a description of a specific historical situation of oppressive flexibility to a rhetorical strategy for writing a history that can only appear in parts that are connected by a series of maybes.

THIS DIASPORA THAT IS NOT ONE

China Men spans a historical period that begins with the push of laborers from Guangzhou (Canton) toward North America in the mid-nineteenth century, and moves through the Cold War to Vietnam-era America. The sequence of chapters that make up *China Men* appears to begin with a Chinese past, in the form of myth, and to conclude with a Chinese American present, in the form of autobiography. The narrative becomes more concrete and coherent as it moves closer to the here and now of the narrator. Yet this progressive dimension of the narrative is repeatedly interrupted by brief, vertical flights into fable and myth, which condense and generalize the issues of identity, memory, and diaspora raised throughout.

These interruptions are themselves interrupted by the narrator as she repeatedly stumbles while struggling to put together information regarding her father, her extended family, her ancestral roots in Guangzhou—her Chineseness. The figure of the father symbolizes the narrator’s physical and ontological distance from these roots: “No stories. No past. No China. You only look and talk Chinese. There are no photographs of you in Chinese clothes nor against Chinese landscapes.”²⁷ She is obviously frustrated with the fact that her father doesn’t wear his Chineseness on his sleeve, thus leaving few visible clues to the past.

The narrator attacks the gaps and silences that surround her with intricate stories about her ancestors woven out of memory-fragments, recognizing all the time that these stories are provisional and probable rather than historically precise. These stories may or may not be true, but undecidability—“My father was born in the year of the Rabbit, 1891 or 1903 or 1915”²⁸—is a sign of their authenticity, for these fragments are the product of a fragmented history, of the need to camouflage “facts” from the territorializing gaze of a racist

security state eager to detain and deport Asians. In the preceding quotation, the repetition of the word “or” is significantly not fixed in a binary relation of either/or, thus rendering the distinction between fact and fiction inappropriate to a careful understanding of Chinese American history. The serial proliferation of this disjunction becomes both a marker and an enactment of history, because the truth of the experiences collected and re-presented in *China Men* can only be safely approached by the deliberate, paranoid blurring of fact and fiction, the real and the imagined: “I tell everyone he made a legal trip from Cuba to New York. But there were fathers who had to hide inside crates to travel to Florida or New Orleans. Or they went in barrels and boxes all the way up the coast to New York harbor.”²⁹

The mobilization of serial disjunctions plays another role in *China Men*—it suggests the various routes or burrows that made up the Chinese diaspora: “They had met one another as planned in Paris or Johannesburg or San Francisco.”³⁰ While on the surface, *China Men* appears to be a root-text, in which the movement of sojourners/settlers across the Pacific in the nineteenth century is retraced from a narrative present back to their origins in southern China, *China Men* is much more of a route-book, in which partial origins are distributed across a Chinese American Pacific. Kingston does not compose the parts that made up, and continue to make up, the Chinese American Pacific to be equivalent or substitutable. These parts do not move through a homogenous, unified space, and they are not centered, either in relation to China or to the United States. Rather, the Chinese American Pacific names the condition of dispersal or separation across local, national, and regional spaces, as well as transversal movements of labor, communication, and imagination, not simply the movement between two fixed geopolitical blocs. Kingston represents immigrant experiences in relation to multiple peripheries and numerous frontiers that move in many directions and at varying speeds, all the while fashioning different, overlapping, and at times conflicting modes of Chineseness along the way.

Historically, different ways of being Chinese or Chinese American have been contained by opposing the sojourner to the settler. In *China Men*, as memory-fragments become woven into a semicontinuous autobiographical narrative set firmly in the continental United States, it would be tempting to allegorize this transition into a broad historical shift from sojourner to settler, from migrant to immigrant, from the oceanic to the continental, from Chinese to Chinese American. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the image of the sojourner provided the cover story that justified the exclusion acts that targeted Chinese immigrants. The sojourner never intended to take up permanent residence, it was argued, and therefore could never

become Americanized. The idea of the Asian as a permanent stranger in this country continues to this day, whether it be in the abject form of the murder of Vincent Chin or in the apparently innocuous question faced by many of our Asian American students who, when asked where they are from, are met impatiently with the follow-up question, "No, where are you *really* from?"³¹ It would seem that *China Men*, by displaying the rugged masculinity of those Chinese American bodies who helped build America, whether on the railroads, in mines, on plantations, or in laundries, provides a forceful counterargument to the myth of the sojourner.

Kingston usually locates the transition from migrant to immigrant, from Chinese to Chinese American, in the space of the family, where the *China men* function as the cultural front of assimilation and cultural forgetting, whereas the *China women* function as repositories of tradition and memory. In the chapter entitled "The Father from China," Kingston describes the cultural reassignment surgery undergone by her father and uncles, who started a laundry in New York in the 1930s: "On Saturday Ed and Woodrow went to Fifth Avenue to shop for clothes. With his work pants, Ed wore his best dress shirt, a silk tie, gray silk socks, good leather shoes with pointed toes, and a straw hat. . . . he looked like Fred Astaire."³²

The narrator's father and uncles fashion themselves much like the singers and dancers recovered by Arthur Dong in *Forbidden City U.S.A.* (1989), a documentary film about the San Francisco nightclub of the 1930s and 1940s that served the "Chinese Fred Astaire" and the "Chinese Sophie Tucker" to the American public and was the inspiration for the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *Flower Drum Song* (1961). Like their clubland counterparts, these immigrant dandies sing and signify along the busy streets of New York City during their precious time away from the laundry, their buoyant, imperturbable steps generating an excessively American pop culture syntax: Lucky Strikes, Kodak, the Statue of Liberty, Thomas Edison, pompadours, Mickey Rooney. These "modern men," we are told, "knew more about American manners than white people."³³ When Ed's wife arrives from China, he complains about her appearance and immediately buys her new clothes. While visiting an aquarium, she asks, "When do you think we'll go back to China?"³⁴ Yet Ed is more interested in buying powder to whiten her skin. While the men look ahead, "The Gold Mountain was indeed free: no manners, no traditions, no wives;"³⁵ it is the figure of the wife who "brought back the holidays. She made the holidays appear again."³⁶

Kingston reads the family as a constellation of conflicting styles, ideologies, and temporalities, an unstable border zone where differences between Chinese and Chinese American, between recent immigrants and those who

have been around a while, are played out. Such conflicts are also played out between families, as the narrator's family is anxiously portrayed as being "modern" in relation to those "superstitious backward peasants" who have just arrived in the country.³⁷

The Chinese American Pacific of *China Men*, though, is not a one-way street. *China Men* does not simply isolate movements from a fixed origin in southern China to a fixed destination in the Americas and then associate these movements with a transition from tradition to modernity. Rather, Kingston compiles the redoublings, the multiple departures and returns, that unsettle the distinction between sojourner and settler, origin and destination. In her history of the Chinese diaspora, Lynn Pan writes: "Indeed, then as now, there was scarcely an immigrant group anywhere in the world that did not talk of going home eventually. Some did just that. Many did not, and for these 'the myth of return' soon became a consoling form of self-deception. Nor was it unknown for return migrants to re-migrate when they found their native village to be not quite the place it had appeared during the years abroad, as it was seen sentimentally through nostalgia's prism."³⁸

Whereas the first half of *China Men* compiles multiple returns, later chapters narrate the blockage of the desire, due to Cold War paranoia and Cultural Revolution fever, to move flexibly across the Pacific. For example, as in the period of the exclusion laws around the turn of the century, Chinese Americans during the Cold War were forced to disguise their relationship to China by internalizing the gaze of the Cold War security state. Sentimental attachments to China had to be hidden and anti-communist sentiment avowed. As Kingston writes, "The FBI would use our interest in China to prove our un-Americanness and deport all of us."³⁹ The chapter entitled "The Making of More Americans," ironically, is packed with frustrated expressions of the desire to return to China that result in various forms of madness. The political blockage of the Pacific during the period leading up to the era of ping-pong diplomacy provides the context for understanding Mad Sao's guilt over the death of his mother in China, which leads him to buy her ghost a plane ticket so he can put her, and his guilt, to rest. Geopolitical blockage also impacts Kau Goong's troubled decision to reunite with his wife in China: "Gapping, gapping spaces. Two old people with a planet between them, and the planet unfathomable with its hunger and wars and laws."⁴⁰ And Uncle Bun, the avowed communist, gradually loses his mind as he overdoses on wheat germ and paranoia.

The Chinese American Pacific names a space of multiple returns, even if those returns could take place only at the level of the imagination, due to the regimes of economic uprootedness enforced by the demand for geographically

flexible labor, and the regimes of political rootedness created by ethnic segmentation and segregation. While the Chinese American Pacific can at moments be read as “a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle,” to borrow the words of Deleuze and Guattari that open this chapter, Kingston’s regional imaginary is also composed of points of condensation, momentary suspensions of physical movement, materialized in symbols that emerge from localized relays between despair and hope and fashion reserves of continuity within discontinuity, of endurance within the unendurable.

While planning one of his return trips to China, Ah Goong decides to make a ring for his wife out of the gold he had earned working on the railroad. Before going back, though, Ah visits the Chinese Opera, which comforts him and gives him the power to endure an uncertain, lonely existence: “Though Ah Goong knew they were boy actors, he basked in the presence of Chinese ladies . . . Ah Goong felt refreshed and inspired. He called out Bravo like the demon in the audience, who had not seen theater before. Guan Goong, the God of War, also God of Literature, had come to America.”⁴¹ As Yong Chen has argued in his history of the trans-Pacific communities that grew out of migrations back and forth across the Pacific, “Many Chinese Americans comprehended their experiences in the context of the trans-Pacific world, rather than solely in that of American society. While working and living in America they maintained strong memories of both the emigrant communities in South Guangdong and of their historical heritage. Such ties became precious resources that helped to reinforce the immigrants’ cultural identity, gave meaning to their American existence, and served as a source of hope and strength for enduring life’s daily harshness.”⁴²

The Chinese Opera as experienced by Ah Goong is not simply identified as a Chinese “tradition.” Rather, this cultural practice is refunctionalized in relation to his condition of displacement from China. The meanings and uses accumulated by “traditional” cultural activities change in relation to the local context of their production, circulation, and reception, especially under conditions of geographical displacement. The performance not only fills Ah with nostalgia for home, it also gives him courage to endure the present and move into the future. Ah’s ability to believe that he “basked in the presence of Chinese ladies” is obviously heightened by the absence of Chinese women in America, a situation that resulted from racist immigration policies designed to prevent Chinese families from growing on American soil, as well as from restrictions on the mobility of women in China. For Kingston, the meaning of the Chinese Opera as performed in America is specific to the interaction between the trans-Pacific world of the Chinese immigrant and his local

situation. Like the recent tours of Shaolin monks that have been kicking and tumbling their way across America, the Chinese Opera cannot be understood here as simply “Chinese.” Nor does the term “Chinese American” do these cultural performances justice. Rather, like the spectacle of Chineseness put into circulation by *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, they make most sense in relation to what Chen terms the “trans-Pacific world,” or what I have here been calling the Chinese American Pacific.

The term Chinese American is typically enframed by continental borders within which the production and reception of markers of identity are interpreted and struggled over. Yet it is only in relation to the multiple frontiers of the Chinese American Pacific that we can begin to fully appreciate the spontaneous invention of symbols, such as Ah’s discovery of a new Chinese masculinity or his epiphany that “the railroad was their dragon,” that make particular migratory routes visible. In *China Men* Kingston suggests that we can only understand the inner lives of Chinese sojourners and settlers through a geographical frame of reference in which individuals and communities live, love, and struggle in two or more places at the same time.

The importance of the Chinese American Pacific as a founding cultural geography is most evident in the chapter entitled “Great Grandfather of the Sandalwood Mountains.” This is the story of Bak Goong, who worked on the plantations of Hawai‘i. Kingston draws vivid parallels between the physical and spiritual exhaustion experienced cutting sugar cane and that experienced blowing holes through unforgiving mountain terrain. Both Bak Goong and Ah Goong respond creatively to dangerous and exploitative material conditions—Ah by “fucking the world” as he hangs over a cliff, Bak by digging a hole into which he screams a litany of invectives at his white oppressors and expressions of longing to his family. The other workers soon follow Bak’s lead: “Talked out, they buried their words, planted them. ‘Like a cat covering shit,’ they laughed. ‘That wasn’t a custom,’ said Bak Goong. ‘We made it up. We can make up customs because we’re the founding ancestors of this place.’”⁴³

Whereas life in continental America for Chinese laborers was shaped by perilous internal migrations and timed to the hectic and unpredictable duration of heavy construction projects, life was relatively more stable in Hawai‘i, timed as it was to the cycle of the planting season. Kingston registers this comparative stability in the life of Bak Goong: “For recreation, because he was a farmer and as an antidote for the sameness of the cane, he planted a garden near the huts.”⁴⁴ While the conditions of work in Hawai‘i were no less inhuman than in the mines, on the railroad, or in factories, there is a much stronger sense of continuity in the families and communities of the Chinese

laborers in Hawai'i. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the racial formation encountered by Chinese laborers in Hawai'i was very different from that of the United States. As Ronald Takaki has shown, the presence of a large white working-class population in California led to more numerous and vicious acts of violence against the Chinese than in Hawai'i, because in Hawai'i "Whites did not have a predominantly white society to preserve or defend."⁴⁵ A greater sense of stability for the Chinese worker was also given by the fact that the Hawaiian government encouraged the growth of Chinese families by permitting wives to immigrate. Stable families, it was argued, would keep workers from running amok, spending their wages gambling and drinking, thus making them more productive. Finally, whereas miscegenation was illegal in the United States, Chinese were allowed to marry Native Hawaiians.

Both Bak Sook Goong, the great-grandfather who married a Native Hawaiian, and Bak Goong, "the great grandfather with a good memory," ultimately go back to China. In these two figures, we encounter a blurring of the distinction between the sojourner and the settler. As Yong Chen writes of early Chinese immigrants, "They did not have to make a choice between being settlers and sojourners or between China and America. . . . For those Chinese immigrants who had the freedom to make a choice, many chose to be both settlers and sojourners at the same time."⁴⁶ This sense of doubleness permeates *China Men*, beginning with the father's preparations to leave for America: "BaBa would go with two sets of papers: bought ones and his own, which were legal and should get him into the Gold Mountain according to American law. But his own papers were untried, whereas the fake set had accompanied its owners back and forth many times."⁴⁷

The Chinese American Pacific provides the geographical horizon within which the blurring of the line between sojourner and settler ought to be interpreted. Like the production of oceanic space in *Moby Dick*, the Chinese American Pacific is made up of both stabilizing circles and lines as well as destabilizing mazes. It is not the location of an *either/or* drama but of the *both/and* that encompasses the spontaneous, local production of symbols and desires that result from a Pacific that, like the engravings on the back of the White Whale, is "obliquely crossed and re-crossed with numberless straight marks in thick array."

Throughout *China Men*, the Chinese American Pacific is variously represented as a space of exile, separation, exploitation, or marginalization, and seldom as a cause for ethnic triumphalism or transnational euphoria. Yet Kingston does inject two brief, vertical flights of the imagination into the biography of Bak Goong, in which diaspora appears as a kind of

romantic synthesis. As the story of Bak Goong begins to unfold, the diegesis is briefly suspended by an oceanic epiphany in which the hesitant, provisional, interrogative voice of the narrator suddenly becomes determined, essentialist, and declarative, adding geographical determinism to Whitmanesque superlative: "Ocean people are different from land people. The ocean never stops saying and asking into ears, which don't sleep like eyes. Those who live by the sea examine the driftwood and glass balls that float from foreign ships. They let scores of invisible imps loose out of found bottles. In a scoop of salt water, they revive the dead blobs that have been beached in storms and tides: fins, whiskers, and gills unfold; mouths, eyes, and colors bloom and spread. Sometimes ocean people are given to understand newness and oldness of the world; then all morning they try to keep that boundless joy like a little sun inside their chests. The ocean also makes its people know immensity."⁴⁸

This romanticized, ahistorical vision of *ocean people* is clearly out of place with what comes both before and after. Here, fragmentation gives way to unity, pain gives way to pleasure. The passage has the same rhetorical effect as the opium that Bak Goong smokes during his passage to Hawai'i. While Bak is locked below deck with the other sojourners, the reader is transported to a floating hell where "Their fresh air was the whiff and stir when crewmen exchanged the food buckets for the vomit and shit buckets. . . . The beds looked like stacks of coffins in a death house."⁴⁹ Bak Goong gradually gives in to the temptations of the opium pipe that is being passed around. After inhaling the sticky substance, this fetid and cramped physical environment gives way to the soothing play of abstraction and linear metaphors: "His thoughts branched and flowed and branched again and connected like rivers, veins, roads, ships' lanes."⁵⁰ Yet when the warmth of the high fades, the universalizing hallucination fades back into the coldness of exile: "Opium was merely a rest from constant pain."⁵¹

Is the euphoric vision of the oceania offered by the narrator merely an opiate that softens the physical and emotional pain of diaspora? Like Bak Goong's flight into allegorical space sparked by the opium pipe, these passages are strikingly out of place in relation to the thick descriptions of life on the plantation that follow. These euphoric visions of oceania, populated by explorers and adventurers, offers only momentary relief from the drama of physical pain, economic exploitation, and cultural fragmentation that permeates *China Men*. One way to reconcile this radical shift of register and narrative voice with what comes both before and after is to locate it in the political unconscious of the narrator, not in some essential feature of the Pacific or in the people of southern China.

Throughout *China Men*, sojourners and settlers respond creatively, through both resistance and accommodation, to white American nationalism, both in its institutional and its everyday forms. In the here and now, the narrator is marginalized in relation to America, to her father, and to her Chineseness. The romantic celebration of her roots in the maritime culture of southern China provides an imaginary fixation that overcomes these gaps and blanks. Summarizing the psychological comfort, if not the political advantage, to be gained by looking beyond the boundaries of the nation-state for sources of identity and community building, Ien Ang writes, "Of course, the transnationalization of the imagination afforded by the notion of diaspora can be experienced as liberating indeed. By imagining oneself as part of a globally significant, transnational Chinese diasporic community, a minority subject can rise, at least in the imagination, above the national environment in which (s)he lives but from which (s)he may always have felt symbolically excluded."⁵²

Kingston's myth of a founding ocean people, with its celebratory shading of diaspora, its romantic coding of distance and separation as unity, offers temporary relief from the traumatic, non-totalizable memory fragments that storm across the text. A transnational oceanic imaginary provides momentary healing from the cultural abrasions that cut into the narrator, her family, her community.

By recoding distance as immensity, separation as adventure, and becoming as being, a unified space, and subject, of the Chinese diaspora begins to emerge from this foundational myth of ocean people: "They wonder what continents contain the ocean on its other side, what people live there. Hong Kong off the coast tugged like a moon at the Cantonese; curiosity had a land mass to fasten upon, and beyond Hong Kong, Taiwan, step by step leading out. Cantonese travel, and they gamble. . . . But China has a long round coastline, and the northern people enclosed Peiping, only one hundred miles from the sea, with walls and made roads westward across the loess. The Gulf of Chihli has arms, and beyond, Korea, and beyond that, Japan. So the ocean and hunger and some other urge made Cantonese people explorers and Americans."⁵³

In this geographical hallucination, serial disjunction is replaced by serial conjunction. The production of space defined by the phrase *step by step* creates a structure of cultural linearity and filial continuity, while at the same time reproducing one of the key metaphors for the Pacific in the U.S. imperialist imaginary, the idea that the Pacific was crossed with "stepping stones." If these were the final words of *China Men*, the Chinese American Pacific would be little more than the imperialist imaginary flipped around and pluralized. Fortunately, there is more to the story.

Like the “mariners, renegades, and castaways” of Melville’s *Moby Dick*, ocean people cannot be reduced to either origin or destination. In terms of origins, the maritime culture of southern China in the nineteenth century was far from homogenous, and equally far from being a representative space of China. Historically, coastal southern China centered on Guangzhou, has been viewed as progressive and open, in contrast to a rigid and closed northern China, centered on Beijing. As Edward Friedman argues, “Southerners . . . defined patriotism to harmonize with continuous ties to a non-Chinese world. The southerner was open to a world of market, money, mobility, and other people.”⁵⁴

China Men locates “China” and “Chineseness” in terms of the maritime economy and archipelagic cultures of southern China. When viewed from the perspective of a trans-Pacific maritime community, China appears as a culturally heterogenous or hybrid space. Hybridity isn’t something that happened to Chinese after emigrating; it was there from the start. In other words, the origin was always already impure, due to the intensification of commercial relations in and across the Pacific during the nineteenth century. The area of Guangzhou was an important center of emigration for Chinese laborers and merchants, yet it was peripheral to standard, Han-centered narratives of Chineseness. The birthplace of Kingston’s ocean people was also an important locus of regional commerce and exchanges with the West. As Yong Chen writes of Guangzhou, “It was home to one of China’s oldest and most developed market-oriented economies. This economy bred not only a relatively high degree of prosperity but also gave rise to individuals willing to venture away from home to pursue money-making opportunities. This helps explain why news about the discovery of gold triggered the first wave of emigration to California. Moreover, the region was also culturally vital as a result of its geographical location at the forefront of China’s maritime frontier. For decades before the Opium War the provincial capital of Canton (now spelled Guangzhou) served not only as the regional economic center but also as the nation’s sole official port for trade with the West.”⁵⁵

China Men starts off by sinicizing the American frontier mythos, taking apart its representative subjects and spaces as it narrates the circulation of ocean people from one frontier to the next, and sometimes back again, or elsewhere, to the point where the difference between origin and destination becomes blurred. Yet *China Men* does more than simply add Chinese and Chinese American subjects to an already given national terrain by repeating an original, and originating, frontier mythos. Through its sharp mimicry of the Americanist frontier mythos, important differences surface, differences that shift the question of origins, not only of Chinese America but of the

American nation-state itself, to the maritime culture of southern China and its cultural dissemination through the oceanic imaginary of a Chinese American Pacific.

In the chapter entitled "The Adventures of Lo Bun Sun," Kingston condenses all of the issues related to diaspora into a representative anecdote of the Chinese American Pacific told by the narrator's mother in the form of a bedtime story. In this ironic rewriting of a founding myth of Euro-American imperialism, "The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe," Kingston creates a fable for floating populations of ocean people.

At the center of the story is Lo Bun Sun, who, like Kingston's ancestors, was not one but several: "Lo Bun Sun worked. He was never idle, never lazy. He farmed the island. There is drudgery in his name: Lo is 'toil,' what one does even when unsupervised; he works faithfully, not cheating, Lo means 'naked,' man 'the naked animal,' and lo also sounds like the word for 'mule,' a toiling animal, a toiling sexless animal. Bun is the uncle who went to China to work on a commune. And sun is like 'body' and also 'son' in English and 'grandson' in Chinese. Sun as in 'new.' Lo Bun Sun was a mule and toiling man, naked and toiling body, alone, son and grandson, himself all the generations."⁵⁶ Like Crusoe, Lo Bun Sun is shipwrecked and passes the time vigorously cultivating what appears to be a deserted island. One day he discovers a footprint and struggles to convince himself that the footprint is his, yet paranoia gradually consumes him.

Like Ah Goong, who was "good at hiding," we learn that "Lo Bun Sun fortified his hiding places. . . . He established burrows, coverts, and camouflages everywhere, and planted twenty thousand trees in all."⁵⁷ Lo Bun Sun's actions offer a mirror of the narrative of *China Men*, which itself is composed of the "burrows, coverts, and camouflages" that historically defined the experience of migration across the Pacific and through the Americas. In addition to mapping a particular historical experience, "burrows, coverts, and camouflages" model a political strategy of building trans-Pacific consciousness while deflecting the attention of the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the State Department.

Eventually, Lo and Sing Kay Ng, whom Lo saved from a group of cannibals, are rescued. "But that isn't the end of the story," her mother states. That was just the introduction. She then adds a crucial supplement. After he returned home, Lo married and raised a family. "When his wife died, he went to sea again." Lo teams up again with Sing and they set sail for new adventures. Once upon the sea, "A nostalgia for his island came over Lo Bun Sun," so they returned to the scene of their first encounter. Yet once there, they find that "The island was now inhabited by mutineers and savages, who had

formed a society. They felt no need for rescue, nor did their children have any curiosity about their ancestral countries." "After more adventures," we learn, "Lo Bun Sun returned to the land where he was born; he retired at the age of seventy-two."⁵⁸

All of the contradictory and overlapping dimensions of diaspora are brought together in this fable of the Chinese American Pacific: isolation, paranoia, restlessness, separation, reunion, loss, return, adventure. Rather than fix the identity of Lo in relation to one particular place, Kingston keeps him in restless movement between places and cultures. Such movement is an occasion neither for celebration nor for tragedy, for the mother's retelling of this story contains neither ecstatic homecomings nor tearful separations and is therefore, like a good myth, open and flexible enough to make sense of a wide range of particular experiences and historical situations.

"MARINERS, RENEGADES, AND CASTAWAYS" OF THE CHINESE AMERICAN PACIFIC

In her 1980 film *Song of the Exile*, Hong Kong director Ann Hui offers a narrative of the Chinese diaspora that parallels, in many respects, that of *China Men*. *Song of the Exile* is the story of Wei Hui (Maggie Cheong), a woman who returns to Hong Kong from London in the early 1970s to attend her sister's wedding as the Vietnam War and the Cultural Revolution rage across the Asia Pacific region. With her long hair and decadent attitude, Wei appears to have been westernized by the 1960s counterculture and is painfully out of place in the world of perms and tacky dresses that her mother imposes on her.

Through a series of flashbacks triggered by preparations for the wedding, the setting jumps to Wei's childhood growing up in Macau with her mother and grandparents while her father worked in Hong Kong. The grandparents shower Wei with affection and separate her emotionally, and then physically, from her mother. Her mother tries to bring Wei to Hong Kong, but she wants to stay in Macau with her grandparents, who dream of returning to the mainland. Another series of flashbacks shifts the setting to Manchuria during World War II, where her father was a Chinese translator and her mother, we learn for the first time in the film, is a Japanese citizen. Her mother's feelings of being out of place in Hong Kong and Macau then begin to make sense in a way that they hadn't before this point in the film.

When Wei's sister decides to move from Hong Kong to Vancouver, Wei's mother decides to move back to Japan to be closer to her roots. In the process of returning home, feelings of exile are transferred to Wei, who begins to

understand how her mother felt in Hong Kong and Macau. After a bitter-sweet homecoming, Wei's mother realizes that she likes the food in Hong Kong better, so mother and daughter, having been brought closer by parallel experiences of exile and displacement, return together to Hong Kong.

Shortly after returning to Hong Kong, Wei learns that her grandfather suffered a stroke while being questioned by Red Guards after he tried to send her a book of Tang Dynasty poems. Wei then visits him in Guangzhou. When she returns to Hong Kong, Wei begins producing television documentaries that expose local political corruption. Like *China Men*, *Song of the Exile* disperses Chinese identity across local, national, and regional spaces. Both Maxine Hong Kingston and Ann Hui respond to the condition of exile from multiple locations by envisioning a transnational space that delinks identity and politics from both national and ethnic supplements. They show that a relationship to space, be it local, national, or regional, is not given or inherited but made, in part through the act of representation.

The Chinese American Pacific, like the American Pacific discussed in the previous chapters, is made up of a collection of myths that give it shape and direction. Throughout *China Men*, Kingston documents the invention of customs that were specific to diasporic laboring communities. These customs were imaginative responses to exploitation at the economic level and exclusion at the political level. Like the workers that populate the narrative, Kingston herself is active in the invention of myths that help envision a Chinese American Pacific. This act of invention works on two fronts, the continental and the oceanic, the national and the transnational.

On one hand, Kingston mimics frontier mythology, sinicizing foundational myths of the white nation in order to attack the injustices and exclusions that supported continental expansion. Yet *China Men* does more than deconstruct the symbolic terrain of the nation. The narrative also moves constructively into the realm of the oceanic, a mythic third space that is situated between and beyond China and America. Yong Chen writes, "The arrival of Chinese, and later, other Asian immigrants who came to the West Coast from the East, as well as the arrival of Mexicans who hailed from the south of the national border, enriched and redefined the meaning of the American West. More important, the world of those people remained transnational—shaped not only by what they encountered in America but also by memories of their home communities and by the personal, socioeconomic, and political ties that they maintained therein over time. For these immigrants, especially those who traveled back and forth between two countries, national borders—natural and artificial—symbolized both disruptions and points of conjunction in their lives."⁵⁹

Kingston does for the Chinese American Pacific and its symbolic point of condensation in Angel Island what C. L. R. James did for the black Atlantic and its symbolic point of condensation in Ellis Island.⁶⁰ Through his reading of *Moby Dick*, James transformed Ellis Island into a mobile landscape whose geographically indeterminate space transgressed fixed national boundaries, thus projecting a hopeful model for the “frantic democracy” of a multicultural America.

China Men, like *Moby Dick*, rewrites America from the perspective of “mariners, renegades, and castaways” who are not reducible to either China or America. Ocean people float between, and beyond, all fixed geographic categories, even if only at the level of imagination. Yet as Aiwha Ong and Donald Nonini caution, “One should not assume that what is diasporic, fluid, border-crossing, or hybrid is intrinsically subversive of power structures.”⁶¹ As *Moby Dick* and *China Men* both demonstrate, flexibility and hybridity were both the product of, and a support for, the economic exploitation of America’s racialized others. At the same time, ocean people, like “mariners, renegades, and castaways,” represent a geography of hope in which working-class multicultural America could ultimately win out over the contemporary incarnations of Captain Ahab bent on driving this country toward a fate not unlike that of the *Pequod*.

Memories of a Forgotten War

A Filipino/American Ghost Story

As the credits roll by at the end of the experimental documentary by Camilla Benolirao Griggers and Sari Lluch Dalena, *Memories of a Forgotten War* (2001), Griggers asks random passers-by on the streets of New York what they know about the Filipino-American War. Person after person responds with slightly embarrassed, stuttering confusion: “The Filipino-American what?” One person, in all sincerity, offers up the theory that the war was about rice—that the Filipinos traditionally ate brown rice and we forced them to switch to white rice.

Such a response would be funny if it didn’t summarize all too well the near total ignorance on the part of the American public regarding this country’s first bloody overseas imperialist adventure, the conquest and annexation of the Philippines. While this country was founded on the belief that the power of a government derives from the consent of the governed, it became brutally clear to Filipinos at the turn of the century, as it had earlier to Native Americans and slaves imported from Africa, that this idea only applied to God-fearing white people. It is this combination of ignorance and injustice that is addressed by independent filmmakers Griggers and Dalena, with their vivid excavation of the savagery conducted by the U.S. government, in the name of civilization, against the people of the Philippines at the dawn of the twentieth century.

Memories is an experimental documentary or historical memoir—the visual equivalent of feminist Asian American literary texts like Maxine Hong Kingston’s *Woman Warrior* or Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters*—that weaves historical films and animated photographs into 16mm reenactments of particularly vicious encounters between colonizer and colonized, such as the “slash and burn campaign” on Samar, during which the U.S. military burned a strip fifty miles wide across the island, destroying rice fields and five villages. This is what was known at the turn of the century as a “civilizing mission.”

These aren’t the kind of reenactments you’ll likely find on the History Channel. Mainstream historical reenactments, in their banal pursuit of authenticity—the period costume, the period armor, the period weapons, the period haircut, the period beverage—empty history of meaning and politics.

Nor do historical reenactments have to come safely after the original event. Included in *Memories* is a clip from one of the first narrative films made in the United States, Thomas Edison's reenactment of the "Battle of San Juan Hill" in 1900. Filmed in the woods of Orange, New Jersey, with the goal of winning public support for the war, Edison cast African Americans as Filipinos—while over in the Philippines, U.S. soldiers yelled "nigger" at the enemy—and depicts Filipinos as falling down at first sight of their white saviors. Whereas mainstream reenactments induce forgetting by trivializing history, making the unacceptable appear to be acceptable, *Memories* is a collection of subaltern reenactments that, when layered over archival images, collide past and present while composing the ghostly faces of resistance to U.S. imperialism.

The idea for the project came about when Griggers began reading up on Mark Twain's opposition to the war in the Philippines. Twain was the public face of the Anti-Imperialist League, formed in 1901 to oppose the annexation of the Philippines. In his bitterly ironic tract opposing the war, "To the Person Sitting in Darkness," Twain observed, "There must be two Americas: one that sets the captive free, and one that takes a once-captive's new freedom away from him, and picks a quarrel with him . . . then kills him to get his land."¹

In beginning to explore her identity as Filipina-American, Griggers realized that there wasn't a cozy balance between the two sides of the equation. "That's when the light bulb went off," Griggers recalls after reading Twain. "I had finally found a context for the history of domination and abandonment in my family. From that point on, I knew I had to make this film. And I knew I had to go back to the Philippines."²

The story Griggers wanted to tell begins with her grandmother, Gregoria Benolirao, who was a seamstress in Manila. In 1916, Gregoria married a U.S. cavalryman, Ralph Dixson, who was in the Philippines as part of the occupation. Their relationship was marked by verbal and emotional abuse, until he eventually abandoned his wife and four children and returned to the United States, never to be heard from again.

Griggers says that she had two goals in making the film: "To correct the historical record and to create a healing story—healing from the history of violence, both in my family and in the Philippines."

Mainstream history books have perpetuated violence against the Philippines by remembering the war as a "Spanish-American War," a name that brutally misrepresents what really happened, because the fighting between a fading world power on one side and a rising one on the other was very short lived, and because the United States ended up purchasing the Philippines

from Spain for twenty million dollars. So a more accurate name for this phase of the war would be the Spanish American Exchange. The real war began when a loose federation of revolutionary groups seeking independence in the Philippines clashed with occupation forces, and President McKinley, after consulting God, decided to ignore their multiple declarations of independence and rule the islands with the end of a bayonet.

While “benevolent assimilation” and “civilizing mission” were the upbeat jingles advertising the war to the American public back home, water torture—which involved bending a captive’s head over a rock, forcing their jaw open with the butt of a rifle, and pouring water into their mouth until they reached the edge of drowning—was a popular way of winning consent to American rule. So was burning rice fields. And when Filipinos still refused to give up, American soldiers were ordered to “kill every *thing* over ten.” While the official end of the war was 1902, active resistance to the U.S. invasion continued until 1913, hence the temptation to find analogies with the war in Vietnam (or any of America’s “interventions” during the Cold War). And, as revealed in *Dogeaters’* autopsy of the raunchy underbelly of the Philippines during the Marcos era, fighting never really stopped, as Hollywood effectively took over where the U.S. military left off.

Griggers knew that she could not tell this story by herself. “I would be repeating the history of colonial violence and misrepresentation,” she comments, “if the Philippines were subjected yet once again to one voice, one narrative, one goal.” There had to be multiple voices and faces and agendas populating the film. “I couldn’t just go in and write their history for them. It had to be a collaboration because I could tell the story from the American side, but there was still a lot I had to learn. I didn’t want my vision to be totalizing.”

In 1996, while giving a lecture at the University of the Philippines on representations of war in the media, Griggers asked the chair of the film program if she knew of any women filmmakers that she might work with, and she was told that she had to meet Sari Lluch Dalena. A screening was set up, and Griggers recalls, “When I saw Sari’s work, I knew she was the one to shoot the film. It’s so hard to represent war, and her work was both experimental and beautiful. I knew that she could represent the dead.”

The war produced a lot of dead bodies, most of them on the Filipino side. While the United States suffered 4,200 deaths and 2,800 wounded, estimates at the time claimed that as many as 200,000 Filipinos were killed. But these numbers were more ideological than real, because they included only casualties between 1899 and 1902, the “official” end of the war. Post-Marcos historians, when finally freed from the grip of an authoritarian government

hesitant to upset an important source of its legitimacy, the first Bush administration, put the total number of Filipino casualties at over one million.

The media typically calculates the effects of war in terms of numbers. *Memories* puts faces to some of those numbers in the form of black-and-white photographs of well-known revolutionary leaders like Emilio Aguinaldo and Andres Bonifacio as well as ordinary citizens. The U.S. media at the time depicted Filipinos as brutish primitives desperate for a bar of soap and someone to teach them about Western civilization. Photographs of those killed during the war were brought to life by artist Rocio Martinez who digitally colored them with frame grabs from Dalena's film footage, revealing the rich Filipino culture that had to be repressed in order to justify the war. The faces that haunt the film are vivid and fleeting, concrete and ghostly, as they quietly surface and then disappear, wandering restlessly throughout the work.

"Among my earliest childhood memories are old black-and-white family photographs that were hung in the living room in our old house," Dalena remembers. "These photographs haunted me because they have a ghostly quality in group portraits, especially when there are photographic errors like double exposure or overexposure that create an eerie effect. Most Filipino families are overly superstitious and believe that the pictures of the dead 'breathe' along the years, when it could simply be a photochemical process that gives the black and white photos a fading effect. To most old folks, photographs of the dead are a reminder to the living relatives that their spirits still inhabit the house."

The most haunting of the reenactments is the recreation of the Bud Dajo massacre, during which the U.S. military destroyed an entire Islamic village on the island of Jolo by lobbing artillery into the crater of an extinct volcano where people were hiding.

Griggers and Dalena had a rough idea of what they wanted to do when they started filming this scene, but because accurate information about this war only exists in scattered fragments, they had to make constant revisions of the script. Even within the Philippines, there are conflicting accounts about what really happened. Dalena recalls that "Filming the Bud Dajo massacre was an ongoing exploration for me. I knew I was recreating an untouched piece of history that has never been seen on celluloid. I went to the library, talked to a lot of historians about the massacre, and drafted a working script. But when I visited the location where the original violence took place and talked to the descendants and the village historians, I literally ditched my script. It was like unearthing a vast wealth of undocumented stories and details of war."

The Bud Dajo massacre took place on the island of Jolo. The Islamic people of Jolo are Tausug (“people of the current”), who have fought Spanish, American, and, most recently, Philippine national government attempts to control them. In the last thirty years the area has seen considerable strife between the national government and various nationalist groups, including the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and the radical Abu Sayaaf movement.

Memories captures or, more accurately, releases a formal wedding ceremony in which the entire village had come together to celebrate. As bride and groom meet up, the bombs begin dropping. As in the other reenactments, Dalena imagines the devastation that results when an everyday ritual is suddenly shattered by long-range artillery. The origin of the violence is left off screen. As the bodies begin to fall to the ground, the camera voyeuristically surveys the dead, bringing them to life in order to haunt the present. Dalena comments, “The camera lingers on their dead bodies because I wanted to show beauty even in the face of death. These women and children are heroes. I wanted the audience to take a long look, to meditate on this fierce tribe who would rather find freedom in death than be taken alive as prisoners. They died praying and singing.”

“Some of the filming, especially on location in Bud Dajo, Jolo, definitely had an otherworldly air,” Dalena recalls. “For instance, after shooting the mosque sequence, where the women and children were killed, a number of the cast began having violent seizures that the Imams attributed to possession by spirits. It took the local shaman the whole night to exorcise the poor actors.”

On all levels, *Memories* breaks with the norms of documentary filmmaking. Rather than strive to create distance from the events and people they describe, “We wanted to shatter the safe, objective distance that you get with traditional documentary,” Griggers notes. “We wanted to put the audience in the war zone and let them have an emotional response to it. To be objective about war, not to have an emotional response, is the kind of thinking that allows you to pull the trigger.”

“With the Bud Dajo massacre,” Dalena says, “I took a very subjective approach, one from the perspective of the local Moros, who were hopelessly outgunned but stood their ground in protecting their land. We didn’t have the means to recreate a grand battle sequence. So instead of going for a macrocosmic view of the events, we went for the smaller emotional moments of individual people.”

Griggers could not go along with the crew when they were filming the Bud Dajo massacre because the island was not politically stable at the time,

due to the Philippine government's hunting for members of the Abu Sayaaf. Reflecting on the reenactment of the Bud Dajo massacre, Dalena remembers, "Some people thought I had gone mad when I said I was going to bring my small crew to Jolo, right in the heart of the war zone, and film a 'battle scene' complete with explosions, too! Jolo is a small island down south in Mindanao with a long history of warfare, where the media has branded the locals as pirates, kidnapers, and Muslim extremists. The Muslim people's place in the history of the Philippines has long been ignored. This film gave them the opportunity to recreate their own history, as told by themselves and played by themselves. This is their gift to the rest of the Philippines and the world, who have never heard of their heroism."

While the rest of the film is in Tagalog and English, the reenactment of the Bud Dajo massacre is not translated from Tausug into English or Tagalog. While the images paint a pretty clear picture, the lack of translation creates an important distance that makes it difficult for metropolitan audiences, be they American or Filipino, to completely identify with what's going on. In these scenes, the audience is partially pushed away from the film, drawing attention to the invasive nature of all documentaries, no matter how experimental, and showing that, while the community may have been destroyed, the spirit of independence and resistance lives on. When asked why these scenes were left untranslated, Griggers responds, "We wanted this part of the film to be just for the people of Jolo, because they've had so much taken away from them."

While Griggers and Dalena worked to create images that would have a healing effect on audiences as well as on themselves, the actual shooting of the film also had a powerful effect on the communities where the reenactments took place. The people living in these communities were the descendants of those killed during the war. "The whole village would turn up for the shoots," Griggers recalls. "People were sharing oral histories, what they knew and didn't know. They saw themselves as actively making this history. It was an amazing experience to integrate with the community and tribal groups."

"It is like the process of doing an anthropological project," Dalena notes. "You live with them, eat and spend long hours listening to their stories. But we were not doing an anthropological film. The collaboration between the crew and the community was born out of mutual curiosity and longing to break the religious and cultural barriers that our history has built between us. There was a lot of ignorance between the two parties that contributed to the difficulty of filming the scenes."

"The reenactments in the film create a space to release the rage and paralysis and sorrow of the past, and to feel one's freedom in the present to choose

another history,” Griggers summarizes. “In having local peoples reenact scenes from their own histories, we not only recreated the reality of war trauma, we also created a way for the participants and the audiences to heal themselves from a violent history.”

Screenings of the film have provoked intense responses, especially in the Philippines, where it was first screened in January 2002. Filipinos wept and applauded, thanking Griggers and Dalena for making the film. The passionate dialogues created by the film, within Griggers’s family, between Asian American and Filipina women, between Islamic and Christian communities, between institutional historians and local/oral histories, between the film crew and local people, and between the film and various audiences, not to mention between the Philippines and the United States, has proven that this war has not been, and will not be, forgotten.

Conclusion

Outside in the American Pacific

An economic war with Japan erupts into World War III, leading the president of the United States to sign a bill requiring all people of Japanese ancestry to “go back home” or be sent to internment camps. Jingoistic slogans such as “Buy American. Screw Japan” saturate the airwaves. The number-one hit on the pop music charts is “I Capped a Jap,” by DJ Patriot Missile. A billboard projects an image of the Statue of Liberty wielding a sledgehammer. Eating raw fish is labeled anti-American. Such is the dystopic vision of America’s future in Perry Miyake’s novel *21st Century Manzanar*.

21st Century Manzanar begins in Venice, California, a densely multicultural and hybrid territory populated by “buddhaheads,” Miyake’s equivalent to the “mariners, renegades, and castaways” on board the *Pequod* in Melville’s *Moby Dick*. Miyake’s renegades include Keith Magwili, who is part Filipino, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, and Polynesian; Vic, a Latina lesbian socialist; Jenny, a caucasian “who was never comfortable around too many white people”;¹ and Ray: “He had a Japanese American walk. An American swagger, with the dip of the shoulder from growing up in a black neighborhood, and a Clint Eastwood stride like he was always walking in cowboy boots, even if he was wearing Reeboks or zories. Then, from the waist down he was Toshio Mifune in a samurai outfit, low to the ground and solid.”² “They weren’t Americanized,” Miyake writes. “They were American.”³

Miyake’s Venice is a lot like the Venice memorialized in the recent documentary film *Dogtown and Z-Boys*, the working-class border zone where skateboarding subculture originated with a multicultural mix of castaways, for whom the boundaries between Japanese, Chinese, Hawaiian, Caucasian, and African American were productively blurred and blended. For the buddhaheads, who, like the Dogtown skaters, are alienated from mainstream, middle-class white America, a defensive attachment to a local space becomes a strategy for cultural endurance: “His Venice was how he could feel a part of this country.”⁴ In the 1970s, in order to erect *symbolic* boundaries around the Dogtown area of Venice, locals would throw *real* chunks of concrete from the dilapidated pier down on invaders from the valley who would try to surf their waves.

Miyake projects a vicious return of this repressed history into the future, both to keep the memory of the first internment alive, which many would just as soon forget (or have never even learned about), as well as to post a

warning that the ideological conditions that justified a war against Japanese American citizens by the American state in 1942 are still alive. A similar warning, though in response to a different historical situation, was partially sounded by Melville in the nineteenth century, a warning that C. L. R. James condensed and sharpened in an interpretation of *Moby Dick* written while he was interned on Ellis Island for “passport violations” during the Cold War. James wrote, “Melville built this gigantic structure, a picture of world civilization, using one small vessel, with a crew of thirty men, for the most part isolated from the rest of the world. Here was I, just about to write, suddenly projected onto an island isolated from the rest of society, where American security officers controlled the destinies of perhaps a thousand men, sailors, ‘isolatoes,’ renegades and castaways from all parts of the world.”⁵

In the wake of the terrible events of 9/11, it has become more important than ever to go back to C. L. R. James’s discussion of the totalitarian tendencies in American social and political life: “I was an alien. I had no human rights. If I didn’t like it, I could leave. How to characterize this otherwise than as inhuman and barbarous? And what is its origin except that overweening national arrogance which is sweeping over the world like some pestilence?”⁶ James’s forced isolation from the world is currently being felt by the hundreds of detainees at Guantánamo Bay, the living casualties of 9/11 who have been violently named “unlawful combatants” to keep them from being accorded basic rights, such as a hearing, demanded by Geneva Conventions.

21st Century Manzanar, like Melville’s *Moby Dick* and Kingston’s *China Men*, creates openings for the emergence of new ways of thinking about the relationship between identity and space. The “buddhahead,” the “mariner,” the sojourner/settler are not *primarily* defined by markers of nation, race, or ethnicity but by commitments to local and/or regional spaces and by the bonds of love and friendship through which such spaces become real. Trans-Pacific constellations of identity and space *could* become one of the founding movements of a “frantic democracy” in America, to borrow Melville’s suggestive words.⁷ Yet white nationalism has historically fixed such constellations as a limit of, or threat to, the nation and thus subject to legislative, psychological, and representational forms of violence. Such violence doesn’t have to take the direct form of racist hate. It can take the indirect form of “racist love”—be it Jack London’s love of Hawai‘i or the love America often shows those model minorities who are made to know their place and don’t stir up trouble.⁸

At the same time, Miyake, Melville, and Kingston never lose site of the fact that trans-Pacific subjectivities are often the product of exploitative economic arrangements. In the nineteenth century, whaling vessels acquired

multinational crews because lower-ranking crewmen were forced to desert once the bulk of their labor was used up and were replaced by Pacific islanders, who were paid considerably less than their Euro-American counterparts. Hybridity and flexibility amongst Chinese sojourners/settlers, as Kingston shows, was largely a result of the contradictory spatial demands posed by capital and the state. Yet the macro political and economic forces of “push and pull,” be they inter- or intra-continental, do not negate the possibility of agency and creativity on the part of those subjected to them. Globalization may make it very hard to think in dialectical terms, but Kingston forces us to do just that, in relation to a particular historical situation, the Chinese diaspora, that was no less complex, no less fragmented, no less global than our own.

Most important of all, Miyake, Melville, and Kingston all draw attention to what James Clifford has termed “discrepant cosmopolitanism,”⁹ which makes critical distinctions between the “specific experiences of diverse groups at home, on the road, or in the air who participate unequally in the cultural production and time-space compression of late capitalism.”¹⁰ This is the point that Whitman, unfortunately, makes so difficult to register, given his relentless celebration of everyone and everything. The concept of discrepant cosmopolitanism is summarized by Ah Goong in *China Men* with his recognition that “The railroad was not bringing him any closer to his family.”

Economic transnationalism, while inspiring moments of euphoric border-crossing and celebrations of the mobile subject, can also trigger overwhelming assertions of nationalist territorialization and nativist violence. In their overview of the rise of Asian transnationalism and its potential impact on minority populations in the United States, Aiwha Ong and Donald Nonini provide a context that can help us situate Miyake’s disturbing vision of the future in the present, “We are . . . aware that one of the first targets of antagonisms toward the new Asia will be Asian Americans, whose civil liberties and rights to citizenship may, as in the past, be called into question.”¹¹

During the 1970s, the image of China in America began to improve, as Chinese ping-pong players replaced Red Guards and starving peasants in the national imaginary. Presently, the era of ping-pong diplomacy is being succeeded by an era of kung fu diplomacy; *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and Shaolin monks, along with panda bears and Houston Rockets center Yao Ming, have become important symbols of pride in China and Chineseness throughout the Pacific Rim and North America. As Ong and Nonini point out, “Chinese transnationalism . . . has produced transnational imaginaries of ethnic self-celebration.”¹² China is doing much better in American mass media these days than Japan did in the 1980s.

One symbol of “ethnic self-celebration” circulating in the cultural underground is Jin tha MC, a Chinese American rapper who, for an amazing seven weeks in a row in 2002, won BET’s “106 and Park—Freestyle Fridays,” a weekly freestyle MC competition. When other MCs came at Jin with slurs about eating dogs and having slanted eyes, Jin calmly and creatively imploded racist stereotypes with rhymes such as “Yeah, I’m Chinese, maybe now you’ll understand it. I’m the reason why your little sister’s eyes are slanted.”

The increased presence of Asian Americans in hip hop could signal the emergence of a progressive cultural movement, one that looks back to those fleeting exchanges between the black and yellow power movements in the 1960s around a mutual opposition to American imperialism in Asia. But whether exchanges between African American and Asian American cultures today turn into anything more than reified forms of mass entertainment and edge marketing remains to be seen. More often than not, as the film *Better Luck Tomorrow* (2003) reveals, the hip-hop culture appropriated by young Asian Americans is not politically conscious “message” rap but rather the hyper-consumerist/gangsta rap that has come to provide an imaginary outside to the category of the model minority. *Better Luck Tomorrow* smartly maps the emergence of a new type of subject: the young, affluent Asian American male with a gangsta affect and a double major in computer science and business management. In *21st Century Manzanar*, through the character Gray, Miyake sharply criticizes the tendency of young Asian American males to appropriate the most clichéd and aggressively stereotypical dimensions of urban hip hop culture.

The twentieth century has often been described as America’s “Pacific Century.” American exceptionalism in the Pacific is currently being matched by a vigorous and flexible Chinese exceptionalism, as symbolized by the monumental depictions of the landscape in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and Zhang Yimou’s *Hero* (2003). A powerful frontier narrative set during the Warring States period, *Hero* looks back to the consolidation of the Chinese empire in terms of the violent subjection of peripheral territories by the first emperor, Qin Shihuang, while looking forward to a reunified China. “Indeed, triumphalist discourses of Chinese exceptionalism are today rather commonplace in Asian elite circles and sympathetic Western think tanks,” Ong and Nonini write. “Discourses on cultural distinctiveness are also a way of avoiding or rationalizing the unpleasant realities of increasing class and gender exploitation across the region.”¹³

The critique of Orientalism from an American perspective becomes tricky when reified images of China and Chineseness, which enable mainland China to foster cozy relations with its multiple borders, are actively

supported by both the People's Republic of China and the overseas Chinese mass media. As whiteness becomes delinked from capitalist expansion and structures of neocolonial oppression in the Asia-Pacific region, it is becoming urgent for disciplinary boundaries separating the study of the Americas from Asian Studies and Pacific Studies to be challenged in order to actively confront emergent constellations of power, and, just as importantly, to imagine possibilities for change.

Many of the issues raised in this book, therefore, are still active yet need to be related to very different combinations of political and economic power in and across the Pacific. The era of Whitman's "Passage to India" may be behind us, but the fantasies of the conquering space by time and technology are not. The difference is that now such fantasies confidently emerge from interconnected power blocs in Singapore, Seoul, Taipei, Tokyo, Shenzhen, and Vancouver, as well as New York and Los Angeles. "In a novel reworking of older anti-imperialist rhetoric," Ong writes, "postcolonial leaders see themselves as continuing to resist Western domination through capitalist development."¹⁴

In "Shrinking the Pacific," the poet Lawson Fusao Inada parodies euphoric, consumer-driven images of time and space compression centered on the trans-Pacific area:

All these proximities
and possibilities to deal with, enjoy . . .
Like, it's no big deal for me to simply
drive over the coast now, overlooking
the Pacific Inlet, hop a ferry, a plane,
Or maybe even take the gleaming bridge,
And bop into and around Hokkaido for lunch.

Writing from the perspective of a transnational yuppie on a quest for someplace to eat, Inada creates a fantasy of frictionless movement across the Pacific, a fantasy that, as I have shown, has a very long history. In this regional shopping mall, the old, tired, Orientalist binaries begin to fade as the distant is brought near:

Maybe stay the night, or come back to Oregon,
Which, by now, is full of Hokkaido tourists.
Neighbors, actually—it's hard to tell which.

In *21st Century Manzanar* the blurring and blending of Orientalist racial binaries provide a glimmer of hope amidst a sea of despair. Describing the rich culture being torn apart by reinternment, we learn that "David wasn't surprised

that Pudge had married an Asian girl, no more than any of his friends were surprised that David had married a white girl. Or that Frank Gonzalez married Greg's sister, or that Keith Magwili married Margie Sakaniwa. Everybody in Venice was light brown."¹⁵ Miyake realizes Whitman's utopic vision of the Pacific: "The races to marry / to be given in marriage."

In the last lines of the poem, Inada reminds us:

The Atlantic, of course, is just gigantic—
But, oh, well, that's their problem to deal with.
In the meantime—where am I? Hungry, again.¹⁶

The poem ends on a note of lack, drawing the reader's attention to the persistence of moments of difference and distance that are repressed by dominant myths of regional time and space compression. A critical regionalism exposes dominant spatial myths to reality, to material conditions of inequality, injustice, and exploitation, as well as to the possibility of other ways of seeing things. In this book, I have worked to translate the regional imaginary of the American Pacific back into an area, back to its origins in a "map incognita," as a necessary step toward the imagining of other futures.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION (PAGES 1–24)

1. Lili'uokalani, *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen*, pp. 329–30.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 229–30.
3. On the importance of the concept of the imaginary to understanding the relationship between social, political, and economic processes, Arjun Appadurai writes: “The image, the imagined, the imaginary—these are all terms which direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: the imagination as a social practice. No longer mere fantasy (opium for the masses whose real work is elsewhere), no longer simple escape (from a world defined principally by more concrete purposes and structures), no longer elite pastime (thus not relevant to the lives of ordinary people) and no longer mere contemplation (irrelevant for new forms of desire and subjectivity), the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (both in the sense of labor and of culturally organized practice) and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (‘individuals’) and globally defined fields of possibility.” Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference,” p. 327.
4. See Subramani, *South Pacific Literature: From Myth to Fabulation*. Subramani deploys “American Pacific” in order to synthesize indigenous literary production from areas unified by U.S. imperialism. Here, emphasis will be placed more on the “American” side of this power relation. My ability to read the American Pacific as a space of theory and history is deeply indebted to the work of Arif Dirlik and Rob Wilson. See Arif Dirlik, “The Asia-Pacific Idea: Reality and Representation in the Invention of a Regional Structure”; Dirlik and Wilson, eds., *Asia/Pacific as Space of Cultural Production*; Wilson, “Goodbye Paradise: Global/Localism in the American Pacific”; and Wilson, *Reimagining the American Pacific: From “South Pacific” to Bamboo Ridge and Beyond*.
5. See Kaplan and Pease, *Cultures of United States Imperialism*.
6. On the importance of the region to Americanist cultural and critical theory, see Chris Connery, “The Oceanic Feeling and the Regional Imaginary.” Following Edward Soja, Connery sees regions as spaces that mediate between the nation-state and other geopolitical formations. A regional imaginary keeps the nation-state in play while not essentializing it. The concept of region is therefore more of a para-national, rather than post-national, term. Soja writes: “The regional perspective facilitates the synthesis of the urban and global while remaining cognizant of the powerful mediating role of the national state even as this role dwindles somewhat in the current era.” Quoted in Connery, “The Oceanic Feeling,” p. 286.
7. Dirlik, “The Asia-Pacific Idea,” p. 56.
8. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 38.
9. See Williams, *Keywords*.
10. Koebner, *Imperialism: The Story and Significance of a Political Word*, p. xiii.

11. *Ibid.*, p. xv.
12. *Ibid.*, p. xix.
13. See Hardt and Negri, *Empire*.
14. Koebner, *Imperialism*, p. 2.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
17. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, p. 60.
18. Hobson, *Imperialism*, p. 72.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
20. For the influence of Hobson on the Marxist tradition, see Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey*.
21. As Martin Sklar argues, Conant represented an important, and regularly overlooked, tradition of thinking about imperialism, for he set many of the terms of the debate: "The theory of modern capitalist imperialism as a function of surplus capital generated by a mature industrial capitalist society was an American theory before it was a twentieth-century British or European theory; it was a pro-imperialist and pro-capitalist theory before it was an anti-imperialist or anti-capitalist theory. In short, it was a 'bourgeois theory' before it was a 'Marxist theory.' By the latter 1890s, the bourgeois press and journals in the United States and Europe were filled with discussion of the idea of the relation between surplus capital and modern imperialism. In a more rigorous, theoretical form, its comprehensive statement was laid out, published, and in place in the United States (1898–1900), two to four years before Hobson's *Imperialism* (1902), and more than fifteen years before Lenin's *Imperialism* (1916)." Sklar, *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism, 1890–1916*, p. 79.
22. Conant, "Economic Basis of 'Imperialism,'" p. 329.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 327.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 337.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 338.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 339.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 326.
28. "Platform of the American Anti-Imperialist League," p. 11.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
30. Beveridge, "Policy Regarding the Philippines," p. 455.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 453.
32. Drinnon, *Facing West*, p. 308.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 308–309.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 308.
35. Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire*, p. 87.
36. Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*, p. 1063.
37. G. B. Benham, "Anti-Imperialism," p. 1; J. W. Hoveste, "Uncle Sam's Mission," p. 2.
38. See Tchen, *New York before Chinatown*.
39. On the importance of Taglish in the novel, see Vincent Raphael, *White Love*.
40. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*, p. 32.
41. Barthes, *Mythologies*, p. 142.

42. Ibid., p. 143.
43. Ibid., p. 127.
44. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xii.
45. See Dirlik, "The Asia-Pacific Idea."
46. In London, *South Sea Tales*.
47. See Deleuze, *Foucault*, p. 34.
48. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 12.
49. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xiii.
50. Rowe, *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism*, p. 9.
51. Ahmad, *In Theory*, p. 182.
52. Ibid., p. 41.
53. Ibid., p. 184.
54. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 453.
55. San Juan Jr., *Beyond Postcolonial Theory*, p. 24.
56. Ibid., p. 22.
57. Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, p. 264.
58. Smith, *Virgin Land*, p. ix.
59. Harvey, *Limits to Capital*, p. 415.
60. Smith, "Symbol and Idea in *Virgin Land*," p. 28.

CHAPTER ONE: THE "SUPERLATIVE AND POETRY OF COMMERCE"
(PAGES 25–57)

1. Ong, *Fixer Chao*, p. 211.
2. Ibid., p. 175.
3. For a careful historical study of the social function of *chinoiserie* in nineteenth-century American culture, see Tchen, *New York before Chinatown*.
4. For an institutional analysis of the way the disciplines of American Literature and American Studies have made the problem of the continental frontier foundational to the study of American civilization, see Shumway, *Creating American Civilization*.
5. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 290. This periodization also organizes Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, and David Palumbo-Liu's *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier*. My argument here does not counter the overall arguments of these important works. Rather, I look to push the starting date back for the study of what Palumbo-Liu terms the "Asian/American dynamic."
6. Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," p. 27.
7. See Foerster, *The Reinterpretation of American Literature*.
8. Ibid., p. 142.
9. Myth-symbol critics include Lewis, *The American Adam*; Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*; Miller, *Errand into Wilderness*; Smith, *Virgin Land*. For the revisionist critiques of this work, see Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian Hating and Empire Building*; Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*; Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860*.

10. Drinnon, *Facing West*, p. 272.
11. See Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*.
12. Van Alstyne, *The United States and East Asia*, p. 40.
13. Morison, *Maritime History of Massachusetts*, p. 50.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 318.
15. Luedtke, *Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Romance of the Orient*, p. 23.
16. Tchen, *New York before Chinatown*, p. xv.
17. Morison, *Maritime History*, p. 1.
18. Emerson, "The Superlative," p. 173.
19. Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown*, p. 10.
20. On the debate over Marco Polo's writings, see Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent*.
21. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*, p. 232.
22. Smith, *Virgin Land*, p. 25.
23. Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power*, p. 53.
24. See Rust, "Introduction" to *Astoria*, p. xxiii.
25. Irving, *Astoria*, p. 5.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
29. *Ibid.* p. 24.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
31. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 453.
32. Quoted in Morison, *Maritime History*, p. 55.
33. Schueller, *U.S. Orientalisms*, p. 165.
34. Emerson, *The Selected Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, p. 177.
35. Schueller, *U.S. Orientalisms*, p. 157.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
37. Emerson, "The Superlative," p. 174.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
39. Richardson, *Emerson, Mind on Fire*, p. 8.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
43. Emerson, "Hamatreya," p. 437.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 437.
45. Emerson, "Representative Men," 638.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 637.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 638.
48. Emerson, "Brahma," p. 451.
49. Emerson, "Fate," p. 339.
50. Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia*, p. 148.
51. Schueller, *U.S. Orientalisms*, p. 166.
52. Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia*, p. 232.
53. Emerson, "The Superlative," p. 160.

54. Ibid., p. 162.
55. Ibid., p. 163.
56. Melville, *Moby Dick*, p. 8.
57. Emerson, "The Superlative," p. 160.
58. Ibid., p. 165.
59. Emerson, "The Superlative," p. 171.
60. Ibid., p. 172.
61. Tchen, *New York before Chinatown*, p. 21.
62. Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p. 64.
63. Ibid., p. 51.
64. Ibid., pp. 48–49.
65. Ibid., pp. 168–69.
66. James, *The Bostonians*, p. 81.
67. See Spence, *Chan's Great Continent*, pp. 97–110; pp. 210–211.
68. Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, p. 174.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid., pp. 197–98.
71. Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, p. 174.
72. Emerson, "The Superlative," pp. 172–73.
73. Tchen, *New York before Chinatown*, p. 24.
74. Morison, *Maritime History*, p. 46.
75. Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship*, p. 7.
76. Oliver, *The Pacific Islands*, p. 105. On the profitability of this trade, see Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship*, pp. 11–12.
77. See Spate, *Paradise Found and Lost*, p. 264.
78. Ibid., p. 268.
79. Oliver, *The Pacific Islands*, p. 105.
80. Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, p. 135.
81. Oliver, *The Pacific Islands*, 107.
82. See Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, p. 6.
83. Morison, *Maritime History*, p. 260.
84. Oliver, *The Pacific Islands*, p. 120.
85. Ibid., p. 120.
86. Pease, "Introduction," pp. xxviii–xxix.
87. Melville, *Moby Dick*, p. 297.
88. Ibid., p. 37.
89. See Morison, *Maritime History*, p. 157.
90. Melville, *Moby Dick*, p. 83.
91. Ibid., p. 3.
92. Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power*, p. 35.
93. Melville, *Moby Dick*, p. 172.
94. Ibid., pp. 525–6.
95. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 494.
96. Ibid., p. 478.
97. Ibid.

98. Melville, *Moby Dick*, p. 544.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 497.
100. *Ibid.*, pp. 258–59.
101. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 482.
102. Melville, *Moby Dick*, p. 70.
103. *Ibid.*, p. 416.
104. *Ibid.*, p. 333.
105. Whitman, “Passage to India,” p. 531.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 536.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 533.
108. *Ibid.*, p. 532.
109. Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*, pp. 9 and 11.
110. *Ibid.*, 23.
111. *Ibid.*, 67.
112. Parker, “Metaphor and Catachresis,” p. 60.
113. See Derrida, “White Mythology.”
114. *Ibid.*, p. 381.
115. *Ibid.*, p. 367.
116. James, *American Civilization*, p. 59.
117. Schonberger, *Transportation to Seaboard*, p. 5.
118. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
119. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 7.
120. Whitman, “Passage to India,” p. 532.
121. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 500.
122. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power*, p. 8.
123. Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American*, pp. 2–3.
124. See Takaki, *Strangers from a Distant Shore*.
125. McCormick, *China Market*, p. 22.
126. See Ohmann, *Selling Culture*, p. 53.
127. McCormick, *China Market*, p. 25.
128. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
129. *Ibid.*, p. 30–31.
130. Morison, *Maritime History*, p. 63.

CHAPTER TWO: AN AMERICAN PACIFIC JEREMIAD (PAGES 58–85)

1. Norris, “A Neglected Epic,” p. 279.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 279.
5. See Lawlor, *Recalling the Wild*, ch. 5.
6. Norris, “A Neglected Epic,” p. 281.
7. Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*, p. 26.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
9. Martin Sklar, *The Corporate Reconstruction*, p. 34.

10. McElrath and Knight, *Frank Norris*, p. 111.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
14. Kazin, *On Native Grounds*, p. 74.
15. McElrath and Knight, *Frank Norris*, p. 164.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
17. Taylor, *The Economic Novel*, p. 299.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 299–300.
19. Taylor, *The Economic Novel*, p. 297.
20. Kazin, *On Native Grounds*, p. 70.
21. Richard Chase, *The American Novel*, p. 203.
22. See Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 203.
24. Pizer, “Synthetic Criticism and Frank Norris,” p. 536.
25. Taylor, *The Economic Novel*, p. 298–9.
26. Rowe, *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism*, p. 10.
27. Frank Norris, *The Octopus*, p. 220.
28. Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, p. 59.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 41–42.
30. Norris, *The Octopus*, p. 40.
31. Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 410.
32. Norris, *The Octopus*, p. 41.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
36. Lunz, *American Nervousness*, pp. 81–82.
37. Norris, *The Octopus*, p. 9
38. *Ibid.*, p. 5
39. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 44–45.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 45–46.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 50–51.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
50. Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, p. 10.
51. Norris, *The Octopus*, pp. 368–9.
52. Norris, *Moran of the Lady Letty*, p. 22.
53. Norris, *The Octopus*, pp. 24–25.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 129–130.
56. *Ibid.*, pp. 130–131.
57. Michaels, *The Gold Standard*, p. 201.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
59. Norris, *The Octopus*, p. 448.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 577.
61. Pizer, “Synthetic Criticism,” p. 540.
62. Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*, p. 18.
63. Norris, *The Octopus*, p. 305.
64. Beveridge, “Policy Regarding the Philippines,” pp. 434–35.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 435.
66. See Sklar, *Corporate Reconstruction*, p. 54; Williams, *Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, p. 33.
67. Sklar, *Corporate Reconstruction*, p. 63.
68. McCormick and Lafeber, *Beyond the Throne*, p. xi.
69. Conant, “Crises and Their Management,” p. 374.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 376.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 379.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 377.
73. Conant, “Economic Basis,” p. 339.
74. Rowe, *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism*, p. 3.
75. Conant, “Economic Basis of ‘Imperialism,’” p. 326.
76. Norris, *The Octopus*, p. 648.
77. Adams, *The Education*, p. 1077.
78. “Commercial Rights of the United States in China,” p. 427.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 427.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 432.
81. *Ibid.*
82. Norris, *The Octopus*, pp. 320–21.
83. Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American*, p. 2.
84. On the representations of Asians and Asian-Americans in nineteenth- and twentieth-century American culture, see Lee, *Orientalists*.
85. Norris, *Moran of the Lady Letty*, p. 192.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 198.
87. Michaels, *The Gold Standard*, pp. 184–85.
88. Norris, *The Octopus*, p. 651.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 652.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 577 and 641.
91. Adams, *The Education*, p. 1105.
92. Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 21.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
94. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 264.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 266–67.
96. Barthes, *Mythologies*, p. 129.
97. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

CHAPTER THREE: THE AMERICAN ASIATIC ASSOCIATION AND THE
IMPERIALIST IMAGINARY OF THE AMERICAN PACIFIC (PAGES 86–104)

1. See Kaplan and Pease, *Cultures of United States Imperialism*; Peyser, *Utopia and Cosmopolis*. The articulation of New Americanist problems and problematics began with two special issues of *boundary 2*. See Pease, “New Americanists: Revisionist Interventions into the Canon” and “National Identities, Postmodern Artifacts, and Postnational Narratives.” See also Cherniavsky, “Subaltern Studies in a U.S. Frame.”
2. See Connery, “The Oceanic Feeling and the Regional Imaginary.”
3. Harvey, *Limits to Capital*, p. 415.
4. Following Arif Dirlik, I am using *area* to refer to physical geography and *region* to refer to ideological construct. See “Introducing the Pacific,” p. 9.
5. See Lorence, “The American Asiatic Association, 1898–1925: Organized Business and the Myth of the China Market.”
6. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
7. *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 6:1 (1899), p. 45.
8. Lorence, “The American Asiatic Association,” p. 24.
9. Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship*, p. 152.
10. Foord, “Current Comment,” *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 1:1 (July 1898), p. 1.
11. Foord, “Current Comment,” *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 2:2 (December 1903), p. 322.
12. Foord, “Current Comment,” *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 7:3 (August 1903), p. 194.
13. Franz Boas, “The People of America and the People of the Far East,” *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 4:3 (May 1903), p. 110.
14. For example, see “Our Interests in China: The American Asiatic Association Organized and Officers Elected,” *New York Times* (17 June 1898); “Asiatic Association Meets: It Declares for Equal Trade Privileges in the Far East,” *New York Times* (21 Oct. 1898); “American Trade in Asia: Associations Formed in China and Japan to Act with New York Body,” *New York Times* (27 July 1899).
15. Foord, “Current Comment,” *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 18:4 (July 1905), p. 108.
16. Lewis and Wigen, *The Myth of Continents*, p. 31.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
18. *Ibid.*, fn. 71 on p. 219.
19. See “Commerce of the Countries of Asia and Oceania, and the Share of the United States,” *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 8:2 (September 1902), p. 205.
20. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 7.
21. Hau’ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” p. 8.
22. Foord, “Current Comment,” *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 3:2 (April 1902): p. 41.
23. See Chris Connery, “Pacific Rim Discourse: The U.S. Global Imaginary in the Late Cold War Years.”

24. Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands," p. 8.
25. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 494.
26. Lewis and Wigen, *The Myth of Continents*, p. 106.
27. Foord, "Current Comment," *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 3:1 (October 1898), p. 15.
28. Barrett, "Our Interests in China-A Question of the Hour," *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 9:1 (March 1900), p. 83.
29. Mahan, "Hawaii and Our Future Sea Power," p. 39.
30. Here we find another historical reference point for the emergence of the Pacific Rim discourse. Reading the political unconscious of this ideological formation, Chris Connery writes, "It was never merely the Rim, though, but rather the Pacific-the Last Ocean-that allowed this pseudo-region to function as a space for revel at the shore of the economic sublime. A rim encircles, and its interior, in rimspeak, is the void that gives substance to what surrounds it. Within the Rim, the Pacific, rather than being simply the largest expanse of the world ocean, becomes subordinate to the Rim's dynamic, though still fundamentally insubstantial, terrestriality" (Connery, "The Oceanic Feeling," p. 288).
31. Foord, "Current Comment," *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 2:2 (February 1902), p. 106.
32. Foord, "Current Comment," *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 4:4 (May 1904), p. 98.
33. Foord, "Current Comment," *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 9:2 (October 1902), p. 234.
34. Foord, "Current Comment," *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 9:3 (October 1903), p. 257.
35. Lorence, "The American Asiatic Association," p. 63.
36. Boothman, "Philosophy of Imperialism," p. 303.
37. Foord, "Special Number," *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 6:1 (June 1899), p. 45.
38. Barrett, "American's Interests in the Far East," *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 6:1 (June 1899), p. 46.
39. Barrett, "Our Interests in China-A Question of the Hour," *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 9:1 (March 1900), p. 84.
40. Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship*, p. 152.
41. Poole, *America in World Politics*, p. 15. See also McCormick, *China Market: America's Quest for Informal Empire*.
42. Varg, *The Making of a Myth*, pp. 27-28.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-42.
44. Hall, "The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees," p. 36.
45. Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, p. 54.
46. Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks*, p. 171.
47. On the equation between market freedom and individual freedom as it relates to imperialism in the writings of Adam Smith, see Williams, *Roots of the Modern American Empire*, p. 61.
48. Marx, "Crisis Theory," p. 455.

49. Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 403.
50. Marx, "Crisis Theory," p. 450.
51. Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 538.
52. See Conant, "The Economic Basis of 'Imperialism,'" pp. 326–40.
53. Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 408.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 410.
55. Negri, *Marx beyond Marx*, p. 105.
56. Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 407.
57. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 232.
58. Dirlik, "The Asia-Pacific Idea," p. 56.
59. Marx, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," p. 476.
60. It should be obvious that the critical vocabulary mobilized here is heavily inflected by the work of Stuart Hall, especially his analysis of Thatcherism in "The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism among the Theorists." My understanding of crisis as a problem of ideological struggle comes from Stuart Hall, et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*.
61. Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 264.
62. Smith, *Millennial Dreams*, p. 14.
63. Wilson, "Towards an 'Asia/Pacific Cultural Studies,'" p. 4.

CHAPTER FOUR: BECOMING HAWAIIAN (PAGES 105–129)

1. Quoted in Desmond, *Staging Tourism*, p. 21.
2. See, for example, the essays included in *Rereading Jack London*. As Leonard Casuto and Jeanne Campbell Reesman note in their introduction, the collection is structured on the premise that the London canon is marked by numerous contradictions. Such contradictions provide the means for locating London in the canon of American Literature next to Emerson and Whitman.
3. For a more detailed discussion of the mixed reception of London, see the introduction to Jonathan Auerbach's *Male Call*.
4. Not to mention hordes of landlocked skateboarders.
5. In *Male Call* Jonathan Auerbach argues that writing was the real adventure in London's life: "Instead of treating his writing as a kind of afterthought to his adventures, I propose instead to begin to understand the formidable power of London's work in terms of the turn-of-the-century institutions of publishing itself—the collective process of composing, typing, sending, rejecting, editing, revising, negotiating, publicizing, interviewing—what London called getting into print" (p. 2).
6. Charmian London, *Our Hawaii*, p. 25. The critical attention of this chapter, while focused mainly on the texts of Jack London, tries to include an appreciation of the fact that Jack and Charmian experienced Hawai'i together. In *Our Hawaii* Charmian makes it clear that she did everything Jack did. It is unfortunate that the Jack London industry, in which attention to details of biography tends to overshadow attention to his fiction, often places Charmian on the margins when discussing issues such as London's masculinity. To his credit, Jack wanted Charmian to participate in every adventure while in Hawai'i. Unfortunately, it is

- beyond the scope of the present work to give Charmian's role in the Hawaiian adventure the attention it deserves. I hope to acknowledge the fact that Hawai'i was mediated by both this couple machine and the proper name, Jack London, hence the casual shifts in attention from "the Londons" to "London."
7. See A. Grove Day's introduction to *Stories of Hawaii by Jack London*. More than any other critic, Day has worked to focus the discussion of London around the literary production of Hawai'i.
 8. On the murder of Vincent Chin, see Takaki, *Strangers*, p. 481.
 9. London, "War Correspondence," in *Jack London Reports*, 44.
 10. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
 11. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
 12. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
 13. *Ibid.*
 14. *Ibid.*, p. 358.
 15. See Lee, *Orientalists*.
 16. London, "War Correspondence," in *Jack London Reports*, 360.
 17. *Ibid.*, p. 345.
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 346.
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
 20. Lewis and Wigen, *The Myth of Continents*, 58.
 21. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 55.
 22. See Coffman, *Nation Within*, especially chapter 14.
 23. The stories included in *The House of Pride* (1912) were "The House of Pride," "Koolau the Leper," "Good-by, Jack," "Aloha Oe," "Chun Ah Chun," and "The Sheriff of Kona." These were the stories that came out of this first trip to Hawaii. The stories produced out of his second voyage in 1915 were published under the title *On the Makaloa Mat* (1919). Here, my attention will be on this first set of stories. Both *The House of Pride* and *On the Makaloa Mat* are collected in *Stories of Hawaii by Jack London*.
 24. See chapter 15 of *The Cruise of the Snark*, "Cruising in the Solomons," where London contrasts the "ugliness" of the black Melanesian to the many beautiful shades of brown to be found in Polynesia.
 25. See Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*.
 26. See Bhabha, "On Colonial Mimicry" in *The Location of Culture*.
 27. Nerlich in *Ideology of Adventure*, 6.
 28. London, *The Cruise of the Snark*, p. 3.
 29. London, "My Hawaiian Aloha," in *Jack London Reports*, p. 384.
 30. Desmond, *Staging Tourism*, p. 4.
 31. Jack London, *The Cruise of the Snark*, 68–69.
 32. Nerlich, in *Ideology of Adventure*, 298.
 33. London, *The Cruise of the Snark*, pp. 5–6.
 34. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
 35. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
 36. For a Foucauldian reading of tourist photography, see Carol Crawshaw and John Urry, "Tourism and the Photographic Eye," in *Touring Cultures*, eds. Chris Rojek and John Urry.

37. Desmond, *Staging Tourism*, p. 124.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
39. London, *Our Hawaii*, 73.
40. Desmond, *Staging Tourism*, p. 122.
41. London, *The Cruise of the Snark*, p. 75.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
43. Lacan, *Ecrits*, 2.
44. London, *The Cruise of the Snark*, pp. 6–7.
45. Iyer, *Video Night in Kathmandu*, p. 68.
46. Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics*, p. 158.
47. London, *The Cruise of the Snark*, p. 78.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 90. It is worth noting that Charmian did not just sit on the beach and watch her husband. From *Our Hawaii*, it is clear that she did everything Jack did. Her relationship to her husband, and to the ideology of adventure, can perhaps be summarized by her statement, after a particularly vicious spill off her surfboard: “Sometimes, just sometimes, when I want to play the game beyond my known vitality, I almost wish I were a boy.” *Our Hawaii*, p. 75. The will to masochism that punctuates both travelogues deserves an attention that is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper. Jack and Charmian clearly took delight, at least in retrospect, in the punishments they received from the environment. Pleasurable attention is paid to the number of bruises, cuts, and sunburns that their longing for adventure gives them.
50. Labor, “The Pacific World of Jack London,” in *Jack London*, 211.
51. Slagel, “Political Leprosy” in *Rereading Jack London*, 176.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
53. London, “Good-by, Jack,” in *Stories of Hawaii by Jack London*, p. 56.
54. London, “Koolau the Leper,” in *Stories of Hawaii by Jack London*, p. 40.
55. Here, Koolau is used to refer to the protagonist of London’s story; Ko’olau refers to the Hawaiian protagonist described by Slagel.
56. See Slagel, “Political Leprosy,” p. 180–81.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 185.
58. In my reading of “Koolau,” I have gone over many of the same materials as James Slagel and have come to somewhat different conclusions. Slagel’s reading, though, is directed toward, and the product of, a very different reading formation that the one structuring my own. As a member of the faculty at the all-Hawaiian Kamehameha School in Honolulu, Slagel finds that his students are regularly skeptical of the consumption of Hawai’i by Western writers, yet, “In a story like “Koolau the Leper,” my students see a sympathetic, somewhat indignant white writer speaking to a proud culture and for an otherwise unheard (to the ears of these students) segment of the population” (190).
59. London, *The Cruise of the Snark*, 105.
60. London, “Koolau the Leper,” 40.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
63. Coffman, *Nation Within*, p. 82.

64. See Ray Stannard Baker, "How King Sugar Rules," in *American Magazine*.
65. A. Grove Day, "Introduction," *Stories of Hawaii by Jack London*, p. 6.
66. Rob Wilson, *Reimagining the American Pacific*, p. 11.
67. London, *Our Hawaii*, p. 92.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
69. Coffman, *Nation Within*, p. 124.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 252. "America's annexation of the previously sovereign nation of Hawai'i rested on the votes of fewer than half the members of the United States Senate" (p. 311).
71. Takaki, *Pau Hana*, p. 20.
72. London, *Our Hawaii*, p. 87.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 192.
74. London, "My Hawaiian Aloha," p. 399.
75. Takaki, *Pau Hana*, p. 65–66.
76. Murayama, *All I Asking for Is My Body*. Murayama's novel was initially published in 1959 and is set during a strike by Filipino workers in 1934. Takaki finds that its description of the plantation system is relevant to earlier periods.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 36–37.
79. London, *Our Hawaii*, p. 59.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
82. Takaki, *Pau Hana*, p. 24.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
84. Murayama, *All I asking for is my body*, p. 39.
85. Miyoshi, "A Borderless World?" p. 751.
86. Coffman, *Nation Within*, pp. 237–38.
87. London, *Our Hawaii*, p. 57.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
89. Coffman notes that "a number of grassroots organizations came together with the unified purpose of restoring the monarchy" (*Nation Within*, p. 241).
90. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man," in *The Location of Culture*, p. 89.
91. Bhabha, "The Other Question" in *The location of Culture*, p. 70
92. Lili'uokalani, *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen*, p. 238.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 325.
94. Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, p. 2–3.
95. Craik, "The Culture of Tourism," in *Touring Cultures*, p. 114. Rob Wilson points out that "Some 6.8 million tourists come to Hawai'i each year looking for that special something out there in the remote-yet-near Pacific. In this era of the declining yen and mounting financial crisis in Asia/Pacific, tourism remains the state's largest industry, largest source of jobs, and biggest generator of tax revenues," *Reimagining the American Pacific*, p. 12.
96. Labor, "The Pacific World of Jack London," p. 211.
97. Desmond, *Staging Tourism*, p. 7.
98. Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, p. 3.
99. See Fraser, "From Redistribution to Recognition?"

CHAPTER FIVE: MAXINE HONG KINGSTON'S *CHINA MEN*
(PAGES 130–152)

1. Quoted in “*Crouching Tiger Symbolizes Success of Knowledge Economy*,” p. 1.
2. Raslan, “Thank You, Michelle Yeoh,” p. 7.
3. On the idea of cultural China, see Tu, *The Living Tree*.
4. Quoted in *China Daily* (January 15, 2001).
5. Kingston, *China Men*, p. 14.
6. Lee, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, p. 40.
7. On the “living tree” model of the Chinese diaspora, see Tu, *The Living Tree*.
8. Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*, p. 288.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
11. Kingston, in *Critical Essays on Maxine Hong Kingston*, p. 24.
12. Kingston, *China Men*, p. 133.
13. Lee, *Orientalism*, p. 67.
14. Pan, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor*, p. 55.
15. Kingston, *China Men*, p. 133.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 141–42.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
21. Pease, *Visionary Compacts*, p. 20.
22. Kingston, *China Men*, p. 139.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 145–46.
25. On the concept of racist love, see Frank Chin’s introduction to *Aiiieeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers*.
26. Kingston, *China Men*, p. 148.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
31. On the Vincent Chin case, see Takaki, *Strangers from a Distant Shore*, pp. 481–84.
32. Kingston, *China Men*, p. 63.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
38. Pan, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor*, p. 106.
39. Kingston, *China Men*, p. 178.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

42. Chen, *Chinese San Francisco: 1850–1943*, p. 7
43. Kingston, *China Men*, p. 118.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
45. Takaki, *Strangers from a Distant Shore*, p. 40.
46. Chen, *Chinese San Francisco: 1850–1943*, p. 56.
47. Kingston, *China Men*, pp. 46–47.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 93–94.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
52. Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*, p. 78.
53. Kingston, *China Men*, p. 90.
54. Friedman, “Symbols of Southern Identity,” p. 42.
55. Chen, *Chinese San Francisco: 1850–1943*, p. 12.
56. Kingston, *China Men*, p. 226.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 230.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
59. Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, p. 40.
60. See James, *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways*.
61. Ong and Nonini, *Ungrounded Empires*, p. 326.

CHAPTER SIX: MEMORIES OF A FORGOTTEN WAR (PAGES 153–159)

1. Twain, “To the Person Sitting in Darkness,” p. 170.
2. All comments from Griggers and Dalena are from personal correspondence with the author.

CONCLUSION (PAGES 160–166)

1. Miyake, *21st Century Manzanar*, p. 36.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
5. James, *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways*, pp. 125–6.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
7. Melville, *Moby Dick*, p. 164.
8. The distinction between “racist love” and “racist hate” is made by Frank Chin.
See the introduction to *Aiiieeeee!*
9. See Clifford, “Traveling Cultures.”
10. Ong and Nonini, *Ungrounded Empires*, p. 326.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 329.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 327.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 327–28.
14. Ong, *Flexible Citizenship*, p. 75.
15. Miyake, *21st Century Manzanar*, p. 62.
16. Inada, “Shrinking the Pacific.”

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