

## INTRODUCTION

If we listened attentively to stories of ocean passage to new lands, and of the voyages of yore, our minds would open up to much that is profound in our histories, to much of what we are and what we have in common.

—EPELI HAU‘OFA, “The Ocean in Us”

While the focus of Ruth Ozeki’s novel *A Tale for the Time Being* (2013) is the relationship between a Japanese teenager named Nao and a middle-aged Japanese North American author—also named Ruth Ozeki—who comes across Nao’s journal and letters when they wash up on the shoreline of her island home in Canada, perhaps the most central “character” in the book is the Pacific Ocean that brings them together. The ocean, whose currents bring Nao’s words to Ruth’s attention, emerges in the novel as an entity that possesses its own, distinct modes of agency and temporality. Not only does it serve as a literal medium of communication between the novel’s two protagonists, but its crowded waters, gyres, and tides gesture toward submerged and belated histories that have been ignored or occluded by the capital-driven structures of contemporary transpacific politics, economics, and policy. At various points within the novel, Nao and Ruth imagine the ocean as an animate entity that both exceeds and resists containment by human endeavor. By reflecting on how oceanic circulations highlight the limitations of anthropocentric perceptions of time, space, and self, *A Tale for the Time Being* engages the sea not as an object or metaphor but as an assemblage of material and epistemological complexity.

The tides and currents of the Pacific Ocean are likewise bound together with the violent remnants of transpacific history in Māori (Ngāpuhi) novelist James George’s *Ocean Roads* (2006). As in *A Tale for the Time Being*, the

trajectory of *Ocean Roads* moves through the Pacific wars of the twentieth century—this time through the complex genealogy of the Henare/Simeon family. Etta Henare is an award-winning war photographer, and her partner, Isaac Simeon, is a British nuclear scientist who developed the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; their children, Caleb and Troy, end up on opposite sides of the Vietnam War. While these characters' stories move through London, Antarctica, Hiroshima, Los Alamos, and Saigon, the novel remains centered on the family's coastal home at Rangimoana, just outside Auckland. Rangimoana—a place whose very name combines the heavens and the seas—is a space that invokes the ocean, its moods, and its tides. Throughout the novel, we can see Etta in particular filtering and interpreting the world through this oceanic perspective. For example, when she first photographs Isaac in the ocean near her home, she sees him as “a man of waves and troughs,” reading his scientific accomplishments through his kinesthetic engagement with the ocean around him; near the novel's end, she turns to the sea and perceives it as an “immense book of ocean waves leafing down to the sand.”<sup>1</sup> The novel's other characters and storylines—Isaac's work in nuclear physics, their son Troy's military achievement, their son Caleb's illness, and their daughter-in-law Akiko's choreography—are likewise mediated through an oceanic sensibility that illustrates their interconnectedness and the slow dispersion of their “nuclear” family through the ebb and flow of their lives. In George's novel, history is filtered through an oceanic lens rather than the other way around: instead of representing the sea as an object of study (or even a subjective assemblage, as *Tale* does), *Ocean Roads* posits that the sea operates as both an interpretive framework and a source, rather than subject, of knowledge.

This book attends to these narratives of ocean passage and explores their potential to engage in a deconstructive interrogation of race, subjectivity, and subject formation alongside the Indigenous-centered transnationalism that informs Epeli Hau'ofa's reconceptualization of the Pacific as an expansive, Oceanic “sea of islands.”<sup>2</sup> In so doing, I seek to analyze how these ocean passages disrupt and revise hegemonic constructions of the region. If Ozeki's representation of oceanic space seeks to *deconstruct* hegemonic mappings of the Pacific to reveal the multiplicity of oceanic ontologies, George's novel *reconstructs* these submerged or occluded connections through a place-based, Indigenous-centered aesthetic that begins at a specific site on the North Island of Aotearoa/New Zealand and radiates outward to engage with the fraught and violent transpacific histories of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While the ocean described by Ozeki breaks down and recombines human refuse and remains, returning them to the shore as

so many fragments shorn of context—“fishing lines, floats, beer cans, plastic toys, tampons, Nike sneakers. A few years earlier it was severed feet”—the “ocean roads” described in George’s novel extends the protagonists’ trajectories from Aotearoa/New Zealand outward to the rest of the world. Yet both novels turn to material and metaphoric qualities of the Pacific Ocean not only to critique how the broader region has been made invisible and instrumental in the transpacific conflicts of the twentieth century, but also to construct ways of imagining otherwise.

In what follows I heed Hau’ofa’s call to pay careful attention to these different “stories of ocean passage” as a way to read across the fields of transpacific Asian American and Indigenous Pacific studies for “what we are and what we have in common.”<sup>3</sup> More specifically, I argue that these ocean passages operate as critical and dynamic sites from which to analyze how Asian American and Indigenous Pacific subjectivities have been constructed against and alongside one another in the wake of the colonial conflicts that shaped the emergence of the modern transpacific. While the sea has played a central role in Indigenous Pacific thought for centuries, and much of the work published by Indigenous Pacific scholars has repeatedly emphasized the importance of the oceans to Indigenous activism, art, and theories of globalization,<sup>4</sup> transnational Asian American studies—mapped across the same “sea of islands”—has been slower to address this body of Indigenous critique.<sup>5</sup> Yet as Asian American studies has begun to engage more substantively with Indigenous Pacific studies, particularly around the topics of militarization, nuclearization, and Asian settler colonialism, there has been an increasingly “oceanic” turn within the field of transpacific scholarship.<sup>6</sup> This project seeks to build on and extend this work by exploring what new ideas, alliances, and flash points might emerge when comparing and contrasting Asian and Pacific Islander passages across a shared sea. How might centering the Pacific in transpacific studies foreground points of intersection between Indigenous displacements and Asian migrations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries? How can ocean passages disturb—or reinforce—settler colonial discourses *and* racialized fears of Asian “invasion” that linger as the discursive legacies of European, American, and Japanese imperial projects in the Pacific? How might a range of Indigenous Pacific and Asian American reflections on the meaning and materiality of ocean space serve to rethink and reshape a region that has been constructed largely on its abstraction? And how might a critical engagement with Indigenous studies and decolonial feminisms inform and contribute to theories of relationality emerging in transpacific scholarship in gender studies, science studies, and the environmental humanities?

The stories of ocean passage addressed in this volume highlight kinesthetic, experiential, and nonlinear modes of knowledge drawn from both Indigenous and Asian American histories and epistemologies; they both critique and assemble alternatives to the post-World War II geopolitical formations alternately known as the “Pacific Rim,” “Asia/Pacific,” and—by the turn of the twenty-first century—the “transpacific.” Calling attention to the links between the discursive evacuation of Indigenous presence and anxieties about Asian ascendancy that served as the groundwork for these transpacific formations to emerge, I argue that attending to the ocean passages where Indigenous Pacific and Asian American cultures and communities have been intimately, although unevenly, intertwined is central to reimagining both “a new Oceania” and a “decolonial transpacific.”<sup>7</sup> More specifically, I posit that as the term “transpacific” has become increasingly adopted as shorthand for an Asian American or Asian diasporic critique that seeks to move across national borders and boundaries, transpacific scholars must also be rigorous about insisting on its material and cultural entanglements within the Pacific itself—or risk repeating the colonial evacuation performed by earlier “Pacific Rim” formations.<sup>8</sup> Such evacuations of the Indigenous Pacific from the purview of transpacific scholarship illustrate the persistence of what Danika Medak-Saltzman has called the “specters of colonialism” that continue to haunt transnational studies paradigms that aspire to critique and move beyond the settler colonial stakes of the nation by taking for granted inherited scholarly methodologies that make it “arduous to work across disciplinary and temporal boundaries in attempts to call attention to subjects other than those privileged by conventional periodization.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, scholarship that frames itself as “*transpacific*” *must* engage with Indigenous Pacific histories, frameworks, and methodologies, or else the term loses its unique critical purchase. If the term “transpacific” is to meaningfully distinguish itself from the Pacific regional imaginaries that have directly preceded it, then scholars who pursue this line of study must address not only the sociopolitical dynamics and material and cultural objects that circulate between Asia and the Americas, but also how these circulations have been materially and imaginatively shaped by both colonial legacies *and* Indigenous Pacific epistemologies.

It is for these reasons that I return to the figure of passage to frame this study. By focusing on movement *through*, in addition to travel *across*, the ocean, these passages invoke and engage the dynamic potential that inheres in the prefix “trans-,” speaking not only to the movements of peoples, objects, or ideas between fixed points, but also to how these very acts of circulation create their own epistemologies of passage with the potential to change

and shape the worlds around them.<sup>10</sup> In contrast to neoliberal transpacific frameworks that rely on abstractive or extractive visions of the Pacific, a transpacific studies that remains critically attuned to Indigenous and Oceanic epistemologies can illuminate and emphasize an analytic of *relation*: a mode of comparison malleable enough to note the shifting and relative positionalities of different communities and cultures and the different ways that they continue to be entangled within and responsible to one another's histories. Such a comparative methodology indeed requires, as Hau'ofa observes, careful attentiveness to our varied "stories of ocean passage" in and across the sea, and here his specific focus on the role that *stories* have to play in this process highlights a second meaning of the word "passage": an extract from a book, poem, or other artistic work. Literary study often relies on the extraction of such passages to analyze how texts create and convey meaning, yet in doing so, it is important to preserve the sense of movement and connection that the term "passage" also implies. A text is not an isolated fragment to be explored as an object in and of itself; it also operates as a conceptual *passage*, connected to and emerging from a range of cultural, historical, and aesthetic contexts. Stories of ocean passage ask us to remain mindful of this fluidity and connectivity and to understand how position and context can shape both composition and interpretation. It is to these intersecting and overlapping passages, as articulated in contemporary Indigenous Pacific and Asian American literatures, that this study turns.

### Navigating Ocean Passages

Within the mainstream of transpacific discourse, the Pacific Ocean is a site that is often rendered invisible through its very visibility. Often invoked as a site through which the region itself is imagined and brought into being, it is less frequently engaged in terms of its direct or material mediation of broader networks of trade, transportation, and cultural exchange.<sup>11</sup> This tendency to consider oceanic space as a metaphoric rather than material presence is by no means exclusive to transpacific scholarship. As Hester Blum observes, the ease with which oceanic fluidity gets taken up as a metaphor for cultural or historical fluidity means that the sea is often rendered "immaterial" in any number of transnational ocean-centered paradigms, such as Fernand Braudel's "Mediterranean World" and Paul Gilroy's "Black Atlantic."<sup>12</sup> Yet while this "oceanic turn," as Elizabeth DeLoughrey has termed it, has opened up important discussions of historical and cultural dynamics that move both through and beyond national and continental borders, its tendency to abstraction has often served to occlude the material

impacts of these flows on both the ocean itself and the Indigenous communities whose relationship to the sea is not merely a metaphor but an important part of everyday life.

While ecocritical scholarship has sought to correct for this abstraction and dematerialization of ocean space by explicitly foregrounding the materiality, agency, and alternative ontologies offered by ocean environments and their inhabitants, these projects sometimes overcorrect, viewing the ocean as a “perspective- and self-dissolving” medium where national and cultural particularities are subordinated to the tides of a “universalizing sea.”<sup>13</sup> An emphasis on oceanic materiality in this way can downplay the specific historical meanings of oceanic space to a range of Indigenous Pacific communities, particularly its role in maintaining and preserving a sense of cultural or linguistic community. As Jace Weaver, Alice Te Punga Somerville, Shona Jackson, Teresia Teaiwa, and others have noted, Indigenous histories and cultural productions—including their sustained engagement with oceanic environments—have been largely overlooked in the imagination and articulation of these broader social and environmental networks.<sup>14</sup> Such oversights have worked to implicitly render Indigenous contributions to these transoceanic networks as either absent or relegated to the historical past, bracketing their roles in the unfolding of transnational and ecological exchange and encounter.

These methodological oversights have created their own kind of temporal “drag” on the production of transpacific scholarship that engages the Pacific Islands. While scholars working in postcolonial and Indigenous studies have done important comparative work engaging the literatures of the Pacific Islands,<sup>15</sup> such work has come more belatedly to transpacific Asian American literary studies. This belatedness is in direct contrast to the ease and speed with which the category of “Pacific Islander” has been collapsed into “Asian American,” especially in a U.S. academic context. Over the past two decades, the field of Asian American studies has increasingly taken the Pacific Islands into its purview, both domestically, where the demographic category of “Asian American” has increasingly come to include and absorb “Pacific Islander” communities, and abroad, where the field’s “transpacific” turn has extended its geographic span through and across the region.<sup>16</sup> Yet even as the changing dynamics of the fields of Asian American and transpacific studies have opened up new ways for scholars and authors to think more critically and creatively about how the literatures, cultures, and histories of Asia and the Americas have mutually influenced one another, for the most part these fields continued to overlook or set aside the role that Pacific Island cultures and communities have played in that pro-

cess of circulation and exchange, in this way replicating settler colonial erasures of Indigenous presence that form the groundwork for the very imperial mappings that transpacific scholarship challenges and contests.<sup>17</sup> For this reason, many Pacific scholars have expressed ambivalence about, if not outright objection to, the prospect of having their work included within the rubric of Asian American or transpacific studies. As J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, Lisa Kahaleole Hall, and others have pointed out, such inclusion tends to superficially invoke issues that are important to some Pacific Islander communities—particularly Indigenous rights and decolonization—only to subordinate them to critical frameworks that tend to be more hostile to postcolonial forms of nationalism.<sup>18</sup> And while other critics, including Candace Fujikane, Jonathan Okamura, and Dean Saranillio, have drawn attention to how Asian American studies' focus on experiences of diaspora and migration exhibits a tacit acceptance of national narratives, racialized categories, and global networks based on the erasure or appropriation of Indigenous lands, these important discussions of Asian settler colonialism in the Pacific have thus far been most robustly focused on the specific historical and cultural formation of Hawai'i and not directly linked to other sites or modes of transpacific passage where Asian and Pacific Island communities have been drawn together.<sup>19</sup>

As a consequence of these disciplinary omissions, the primary theoretical and intellectual interventions in these two fields—Pacific Islander and Asian American studies—have remained largely separate from each other. Important exceptions include the work on Asian settler colonialism in Hawai'i mentioned earlier and an emerging body of scholarship that explores comparative studies of Asian and Pacific Islander experiences of militarization, nuclearization, and colonial occupation.<sup>20</sup> However, Pacific Islands studies' investment in political and cultural decolonization for the most part has aligned the field more closely within the scholarly home of global Indigenous studies, while Asian American studies' focus on deconstructing racial formations in their historical, economic, and embodied human and nonhuman iterations tends to situate itself within the paradigm of a U.S.-based American studies. By and large, literary and critical works by Asian American and Pacific Island authors tend to reflect these different commitments and trajectories.

Given these disciplinary difficulties, trying to compile a comparative framework for studying Asian American and Pacific Island literatures necessarily struggles against a long history of how these fields (and communities) have been constructed beside, against, or on top of one another. This history, including the more recent history of Asian American and transpacific over-

writings of Indigenous Pacific projects, bespeaks the need for care in attempting this comparative critique. As Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang have pointed out, there is a need to attend to the fundamental “incommensurabilities” between these positionings and to remain aware and critical of the “settler moves to innocence”—in particular, the “homogenizing of various experiences of oppression as colonization,” a tendency that has been called out in debates around Asian settler colonialism.<sup>21</sup> Yet I argue that reading the transpacific in terms of both Indigenous Pacific and Asian Americanist frameworks not only has the potential to contribute to critical discussions in both fields but is a project that is both ethically and intellectually necessary for transpacific studies in particular. Such a move to critically engage Indigenous studies and histories in the emerging discipline of transpacific studies can be seen in recent scholarship on transpacific militarism and imperialism that have remained attentive to their effects on both Indigenous Pacific and Asian/American communities. This scholarship does not render these communities’ experiences commensurate or equivalent but foregrounds how they may be *interrelated* through military, commercial, and communication networks.<sup>22</sup> *Ocean Passages* builds on and extends such work by turning to comparative literary and aesthetic representations as a way of reframing critical questions about the relationship of the local and the global as matters of perspective, as well as agency—a move that connects the critical work that has been done on formations of the transpacific with Indigenous critiques of empire and modes of ethical engagement with the region that have framed it as a deeply entangled and interconnected ecosystem that survives, adapts, and recalibrates in striking new ways. To do so, I trace out a literary theory of transpacific entanglement that places the deconstructive critiques foregrounded in Asian Americanist texts in dialogue with the intellectual, social, and aesthetic frameworks based on perspective and relationality that have been addressed in literary and scholarly works by Indigenous scholars and artists. As transpacific Asian Americanist scholarship turns to queer, feminist, and science studies frameworks to reconceptualize intimacies among differently situated human (and nonhuman) communities in ways that disturb the processes of subjectification and commodification responsible for producing a racialized Asian subject,<sup>23</sup> engaging more directly with Indigenous Pacific concepts of relationality is a necessary step in decolonizing transpacific critique.<sup>24</sup> It is to this end that I attempt my own scholarly passage among these incommensurate, yet interrelated, bodies of work.

In thus triangulating Indigenous Pacific, transpacific, and Asian American scholarship, *Ocean Passages* engages a reading practice that draws

inspiration from Vicente Diaz and J. Kēhaulani Kauanui’s invocation of *etak*—a Carolinian wayfinding technique that requires the navigator to triangulate one’s position against known landmarks or phenomena—as a model or metaphor for a comparative Pacific studies that remains focused on local contexts and concepts while also using those terms to navigate and intervene within broader, more global discourses around colonialism, militarization, and late capitalism. The close attention to subtle shifts in context and relation so critical to *etak* and other open-sea navigational techniques operates not as a set of unchanging rules but, instead, as a framework within which different islands (and ideas) may be identified and evaluated in terms of their relationships to one another. Such a sense of place and positioning—in terms of navigating both the open oceans and the practices of everyday life—requires attentiveness to land and sea in equal measure, for just as ideas or concepts about island space cannot be fully imagined in isolation from the seas that surround them, so the oceangoing migrants or vessels also cannot be separated from the grounded histories that serve as their starting points, guidelines, or destinations. Such a “tidalectic” consciousness, as DeLoughrey (citing Kamau Brathwaite) calls it, provides a useful framework for “exploring the complex and shifting entanglement between sea and land, diaspora and indigeneity, routes and roots.”<sup>25</sup> Yet in addition to the complex awareness of interconnection and interrelationality that *etak* and tidalectic perspectives engage, in reading these stories of ocean passage I seek also to call up critical moments of disconnection, disruption, and disunity, of passage as not only a mode of connection but also as *impasse* or *trespass*. Particularly in the context of modern Pacific histories of colonialism, conflict, and capital circulation, it is particularly important for transpacific partnerships and frameworks arrayed against hegemonic understandings of the region to remain critically aware of these moments of disjuncture and differentiation.<sup>26</sup>

### On Passing, and Not Passing, through the Pacific

Spanning more than a third of the globe, the Pacific Ocean is one of the largest and most culturally and linguistically heterogeneous regions in the world. In addition to being home to a diverse range of Indigenous cultures and communities, the Pacific has also been claimed as a home or as a territory by migrants and settlers from Asia, the Americas, and Europe. The contemporary geopolitics of the Pacific Islands reflect this uneven modern history of settlement, colonial affiliation, and ongoing neocolonial entanglements. While some Pacific states, such as Sāmoa and Fiji, achieved official

political independence in the second half of the twentieth century (or, in the case of Tonga, had always retained their political autonomy), other Indigenous Pacific communities—including Kānaka Maoli (Hawai‘i), Māori (Aotearoa), Mā‘ohi (Tahiti), and Chamorro (Guam)—continue to live under conditions of direct colonization. In addition, there are Pacific states that are politically independent but carry the status of “associated states,” such as the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands (in association with the United States) and the Cook Islands and Niue (in association with New Zealand). The difficulties that emerge in generalizing about “Pacific” cultures are often tied to the very different histories and cultures of these island communities, as well as to the legacies of colonialism that persist throughout the region.

Indigenous oral histories throughout the region indicate a long history of travel, settlement, and trade; even cultural communities whose origin stories focus on autochthonic creation in situ (rather than arrival from elsewhere and settlement) often indicate their position within broader Oceanic networks of trade, warfare, and alliances.<sup>27</sup> However, while these maritime networks long predate European contact, the tendency to categorize *all* such cultures and communities under the singular geopolitical category of the “Pacific” is, as Te Punga Somerville, Matt Matsuda, and others have observed, a “historically European” concept.<sup>28</sup> The name “Pacific” was first used by the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan during his circumnavigation of the globe; its eventual dominance—overshadowing other Indigenous names that referred to specific or local areas of the ocean, such as Te Moananui-a-Kiwa (Māori, North Island), Eon Woerr (Marshall Islands/Ailingalaplapp), and Thakau Lala (Fiji)—paralleled the increasing influence of European and then American power in the region. Yet even as the “Pacific” came to both aggregate and eclipse these particular or localized sites, it also worked to create new networks and possibilities of exchange. In this context, even the name by which the region is called reenacts some of the same alliances and tensions among local, regional, and global commitments that continue to influence policy and practices in the contemporary Pacific Islands.

One way to reclaim these colonial namings and groupings emerged in the period of decolonization in the late 1960s and 1970s, when Indigenous activists and academics began to articulate the concept of a “Pacific Way.” The Pacific Way—a term popularized by Fiji’s Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara in 1970—highlighted the shared elements of a range of Pacific cultural practices and sought to engage and reclaim a historically grounded sense of coalition and commonality among diverse Pacific Island communities. Sina Va‘ai points out that, at its best, the Pacific Way was a powerful

force for anticolonial organizing and a “phenomenon that fostered institutions such as the University of the South Pacific and held together regional cooperation amongst former colonial territories . . . recognising the commonality in developmental problems that required a unity in cooperation by communality, collegiality, consensus and working together.”<sup>29</sup> Yet it is also a term that became troubling for many of the region’s writers and intellectuals, as they saw local elites take advantage of the Pacific Way concept to enrich themselves in a neocolonial global marketplace that increasingly viewed “authentic” traditions and cultural diversity as so many commodities to be “preserved,” consumed, or traded. One of the sharpest critics of the Pacific Way ideology was the Tongan scholar and author Epeli Hau’ofa, whose short story “The Glorious Pacific Way” (1983) focused on the comic character “Ole Pasifikwei,” a collector of oral histories and tales, to satirize the shift from celebrating and honoring one’s cultural background to selling it out to Western development agencies. Yet today Hau’ofa is known less for his cynicism about the possibility for a trans- or pan-Pacific coalition than he is for his influential vision of the region as a networked “sea of islands,” which he referred to not as the “Pacific Islands” but as “Oceania.”<sup>30</sup> This deliberate renaming, Hau’ofa argues, is not incidental but in fact central to his (re)visioning of the region and its networks: while the term *Pacific Islands*, most commonly used in Anglophone political and economic discourse, foregrounds the geographic smallness and isolation of individual island nations, the Francophone *Oceania* imagines a mapping that “denotes a sea of islands with their inhabitants” and places those cultures and communities firmly at its conceptual center.<sup>31</sup> The “grand and somewhat romantic”<sup>32</sup> implications of the term *Oceania* also marks it out as a more literary or imaginative (as opposed to academic or social scientific) conceptualization of the region; something that Sāmoan novelist, playwright, and poet Albert Wendt also highlights in his essay “Towards a New Oceania”:

So vast, so fabulously varied a scatter of islands, nations, cultures, mythologies and myths, so dazzling a creature, Oceania deserves more than an attempt at mundane fact; only the imagination in free flight can hope—if not to contain her—to grasp some of her shape, plumage, and pain.<sup>33</sup>

For Hau’ofa and Wendt, “Oceania” invokes a dynamic, Indigenous worldview that exceeds the flattening epistemology of “the Pacific.” If “the Pacific” served as an equalizing term, seeking to bridge differences and bring diverse people together through the homogenization of space, “Oceania” sought

to restore a sense of depth and perspective to those new networks. The re-emergence of the term “Oceania” in contemporary Pacific studies discourse speaks to this need to think about contemporary politics and policies in the region not only in terms of fiscal and statistical measurements, but also in terms of local and regional affiliations, habits, genealogies, and practices that long predate the modern nation-state. In other words, Oceania is a term that emphasizes the importance of communities and cultures in *relation*, as opposed to in *aggregation*.

This conceptual shift from thinking through the Pacific as an abstract geopolitical concept to a more multiply sited, relational space has likewise informed the transformation of contemporary Asia Pacific or “Pacific Rim” studies. If, as Rob Wilson and Arif Dirlik have argued, the very concept of the “Asia Pacific” was “dominantly a Euro-American formation” that, from the age of Magellan through the present day, has “shaped and integrated the peripheries and multiple cultures and polities of the region to serve Euro-American interests in the name of God, imperial glory, catapulting profit, and national (/transnational) management,” it is a construction that has also seen a significant shift in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.<sup>34</sup> In the second half of the twentieth century, as European colonial powers began to recede from the region, Asian nations such as Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea began to emerge as major forces in the global marketplace. This shift in the global capital economy represented by these newly industrializing, non-Western nations led many Western academics, politicians, and policy makers to reconceptualize the “Pacific” as the “Pacific Rim.” While imperialist imaginings of the Pacific had posited the region as a boundless expanse filled with territory to be claimed, Pacific Rim discourse, by its very naming, delimits the possibilities of territorial expansion. As Chris Connery points out, the focus on the idea of a “rim” rather than a region is theoretically more egalitarian, as it “presumes a kind of metonymic equivalence” among the nations in its circuit and calls into being “an interpenetrating complex of interrelationships with no center.”<sup>35</sup> Yet even if Pacific Rim discourse made concessions to a model that rhetorically decentered Euro-American national interests to take into account the growing economic and political power of East Asian nations, it nevertheless adhered to a teleological framework that continued to promote a capital-driven universalism that focused more on maximizing financial and capital gains. Thus, it privileged the nations that developed a robust industrial or financial infrastructure while continuing to neglect the nations that lacked the means or opportunity to do so—particularly the island nations of the Pacific, which were located off the “Rim” entirely.

This market-driven elision and erasure of the Pacific “Basin” is a direct legacy of colonialism in the region. Paul Sharrad notes that, just as the Pacific had historically been represented as a “passive receptacle of observation, a space for European adventuring, an area of natural science, history, anthropology, and ‘development studies,’” these habits of erasure persist in the contemporary juxtaposition of an active, economically vibrant Pacific Rim against a passive, economically dependent Pacific Basin.<sup>36</sup> Teresia Teaiwa highlights the gendered dynamics of this formation in her analysis of “militourism,” which she defines as “a phenomenon by which military or paramilitary force ensures the smooth running of a tourist industry, and that same tourist industry masks the military force behind it.”<sup>37</sup> In her analysis of this phenomenon, Teaiwa argues that the circulation of images of a “Polynesian body”—usually manifested as a light-skinned and scantily clad female body—operates as a legacy of the colonial, masculinist gaze that continues to be used to promote tourism industries throughout the region. This fetishized “body” not only eclipses and erases the living conditions and cultural and ethnic diversity of the different Indigenous Pacific Island communities throughout the region by homogenizing them as universally feminized and generically “Polynesian”; its seductiveness and promise of leisure also serve to mask the massive military force and military infrastructures required to sustain the hegemony of capital throughout the Pacific. By making the argument that both military projects and capital-driven developments hide in plain sight behind this historically fraught image of the desirable “Polynesian” body, Teaiwa addresses the multiple ways that these ongoing military and touristic projects draw from an explicitly gendered and racialized colonial legacy that continues to place the material cultures, histories, and concerns of Pacific Islands communities under erasure. In short, while “Pacific Rim” discourses initially encouraged a shift away from understanding the region in terms of Western territorial hegemony, by the end of the century they had in many cases been co-opted by the neocolonial dynamics of an emergent neoliberalism that arose as the Cold War era drew to a close, falling back into a rendering of the Pacific as absent or dependent in ways that reiterated and reified the gendered geopolitical assumptions of settler colonial hegemony.

In the years following the “Asian” financial crises of the late 1990s, scholars and policy makers alike shifted away from the capitalist teleology of Pacific Rim discourse and introduced a different term, the “transpacific,” as an attempt to think through the region as being composed of a number of intersecting and overlapping relationships rather than as an aggregate of its parts. For scholars and intellectuals critical of U.S. hegemony in the

region, this transpacific turn invoked a palimpsestic history of the region that drew attention to its multiple histories of colonization and migration.<sup>38</sup> Yet at the level of international policy making, “transpacific” became a term that attempted to *restore* the balance of powers articulated by “Pacific Rim” formations in ways that adjusted for political and economic changes after the Asian financial crises. Viet Nguyen and Janet Hoskins address these tensions between divergent “intellectual” and “corporate” interpretations of the transpacific, noting that while the latter—exemplified by the politics and policies of capital-driven multistate networks such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership—can be seen as the latest, finance- and trade-driven iteration of an unfolding teleological narrative of “exploration, exploitation, and expansion” in line with earlier colonial discourses, the former opens up to include “alternate narratives of translocalism” that have the potential to challenge and critique those capital-driven networks.<sup>39</sup> I stress the word “potential” here because the porous nature of these multiple transpacifics mean that they, like the many other geocultural constructions and formations discussed in this introduction, necessarily overlap and inform one another in ways that indicate the region’s interrelationship and complexity. In other words, while some of these critical transpacific networks, texts, and travelers may challenge certain dominant assumptions about cultural borders and boundaries, they may at the same time become implicated in the creation of other hegemonic attitudes and formations. In particular, as the term “transpacific” has increasingly come to serve as shorthand for transnational Asian American or Asian diasporic cultural and political formations, we must attend to and be cautious about how the *elision* of Pacific history, theory, and scholarship from such frameworks might perform the same discursive evacuation of the “Pacific” in “transpacific” that pertains to “Pacific Rim” models of regional formations.

Given these rapid shifts and changes in Asian American and Pacific Islander alliances and cultural productions, what new transpacific networks, formations, and alliances might emerge when we attempt to view the Pacific through the Indigenous mappings and modes of knowledge production about the region rather than in terms of the top-down approaches favored by the economists and military strategists whose “Rim”-based visions have often resulted in both the erasure and exploitation of the Pacific Islands? How might we use an aesthetics of ocean passage to reflect on the ethics of alterity and assimilation that so often lies at the heart of Asian/Americanist work? How could engaging these Oceanic passages bring together these interrelated concerns around deconstruction and decolonization and aid us in imagining alternative futures for the region? These are

some of the questions that push toward the methodological stakes of this work. In this context, my particular interest in *literary* representations of oceanic space in transpacific texts highlights how the intersections and friction points between Pacific Islander and transpacific Asian American literary and cultural praxes might work to complicate the apparent seamlessness of the “Pacific” central to dominant constructions of the region as a “geo-imaginary hallucination” of neoliberal capitalism.<sup>40</sup> As Wilson observes, it is literature that “can help us see . . . links and affects between ocean, self, and planet”; such an “ecopoetic” approach can serve to disrupt the binaristic, “taken-for-granted view of an Asia/Pacific imaginary with Asian cultures and sites cast as transnational capital forces of globalization and set relentlessly against the interior Pacific.”<sup>41</sup> While Wilson’s essay persuasively emphasizes the strong potential for transpacific ecopoetics to assert important transoceanic affinities and solidarities between Pacific Island and Asian and Asian American communities resistant to the normalization of neoliberal flows through the region, I also want to consider how articulations of difference, disruption, and incommensurability play an important role in the construction of these alternative transnational and transcultural networks. While literature works as a medium through which one encounters ideas, peoples, and situations with which we can empathize and forge new solidarities, it also—as David Palumbo-Liu argues—challenges us to confront our entanglement with forms of alterity that *cannot* be reduced or converted into the “systems and discourses of ‘sameness’” that assign value to “others” insofar as their experiences can be understood as somehow commensurate with or related to our own.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, it is precisely the challenge of articulating or expressing different epistemologies and perspectives alongside more dominant viewpoints—and resisting attempts to collapse the former into the latter—that many artists and scholars in and around the Pacific have cited as being central to their aesthetic and activist projects. In contrast to the leveling forces of the policies and proposals that drive modern globalization, literature opens up a space for us to think through the way we establish relationships and affinities with people and entities that are not necessarily bound to the logics of liberal subjecthood.<sup>43</sup>

These interrogations of the liberal subject and its formation are likewise key to transpacific and Asian Americanist interrogations of how the project of liberal subjectification tends to place ethnic and cultural difference under erasure in ways that nevertheless affirm a racialized hierarchy where the Asian subject is always perceived as lacking. As the Indigenous Studies and Asian Americanist critics Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Jodi Byrd, and Iyko Day have argued, the possessive logics that laid the groundwork for settler

colonialism and the erasure or overwriting of Indigenous bodies, histories, and epistemologies are also responsible for the racialization of Asian bodies and communities as an alien *threat* to that possession, aligning them with fears of dissolution, abstraction, and formlessness.<sup>44</sup> Kandice Chuh's observation that the very concept of the "Asian American" operates as "a term *in difference from itself*—at once making a claim of achieved subjectivity and referring to the impossibility of that achievement"—reclaims and reverses the critical potential of this racializing gesture, proposing to reconceptualize the field itself as a "*subjectless discourse*" that works to "prioritize difference" by critically analyzing the discursive mechanisms and "regulatory matrices" that make individuals legible (or illegible) as national subjects.<sup>45</sup> This centering of difference in Asian Americanist critique complements Yunte Huang's call for a "poetics of acknowledgement" as a venue for transpacific discourse that seeks to "recogni[ze] the ontological status of the Other and the epistemological gaps in our knowledge."<sup>46</sup> Huang's transpacific operates as a kind of spatial representation of subjectless discourse, described as a "deadly space between" diverse epistemologies and representations that "resist[s] narrative closure and historical teleology as enunciated and projected in transpacific space."<sup>47</sup> In this analysis, the space of the Pacific itself works to destabilize universalizing narratives and abstractions by confronting them with their own contingent and ambivalent constructions.

Yet while Chuh's and Huang's centering of alterity in discursive, spatial, and temporal modes is useful for an Asian Americanist and transpacific theory that thinks through the deconstructive and potentially radical applications of the Asian as a racialized figure of absolute difference, a "subjectless" transpacific critique nevertheless relies on some of the discursive premises that work to erase Indigenous presence in the region. For example, Huang's transpacific imagination represents the region primarily as a manifestation of discursive gaps or aporias, an "unfathomable chasm filled with perilous water."<sup>48</sup> Rendering place into space in this way problematically forecloses on Indigenous epistemologies that exhibit an entangled and intersubjective relationship to the lands and seas, where social constructions of Oceanic space are tied to its currents, tides, winds, and other phenomena: transforming this ecosystem into discourse renders such Indigenous epistemologies likewise "unfathomable." Similarly, Moreton-Robinson and Byrd have qualified Chuh's call for a subjectless discourse, noting that the very attempt to move away from the requirements of subjectivity inadvertently fixes or reifies those requirements as the domain of the possessive individual subject. By contrast, Moreton-Robinson argues that Indigenous subjectivity "is embodied, it is ontological (our being) and epistemological

(our way of knowing), and it is grounded within complex relations derived from the intersubstantiation of ancestral beings, humans and land. In this sense, our sovereignty is carried by the body and differs from Western constructions of sovereignty, which are predicated on the social contract model, the idea of a unified supreme authority, territorial integrity, and individual rights.<sup>49</sup> Byrd points out that this entangled Indigenous subjectivity means that Indigenous peoples “cannot be made subjectless, because they are the site of difference from Western delineations of citizenship, rights, and inclusion that the settler state proffers as possession.”<sup>50</sup> In an Indigenous context, then, the quest is not for subjectlessness but for an expanded conception of what subjectivity might entail.

While Asian Americanist and transpacific feminist criticism in particular have turned to new materialist and science studies frameworks to likewise think through what it might mean to expand the concept of subjectivity beyond the frame of the liberal individual,<sup>51</sup> Indigenous Pacific feminist and gender studies critics have long grounded their critiques of settler subjectivity in place-based epistemologies that decenter the assumptions and gaze of the male settler subject. Such practices are inextricable from the process of cultural and political decolonization and contain many of the formal and theoretical tools for articulating a worldview that considers human and nonhuman entities as always already in entangled relation. While such practices vary across different sites in the Pacific, there are a number of concepts that many Oceanic communities hold in common, including “spiralic” rather than linear conceptions of time; the use of genealogy as rhetorical praxis and strategy; the deployment of resonant metaphorical imagery that carries different meanings in different contexts; and the practice and art of weaving and/or cloth making as both literary trope and metaphor for community formation.<sup>52</sup> In terms of representing oceans, ocean passages, and terraqueous environments in particular, these Oceanic literary tropes and critical praxes emphasize an engagement with alterity, albeit one that is slightly different from the ethics of “otherness” addressed in Asian Americanist critique. Alterity in Oceanic discourse is engaged by the dynamic interactions of human and nonhuman agents in and around the ocean: a “seascape epistemology,” as Karin Amimoto Ingersoll calls it, that speaks to a form of knowledge linked to a “visual, spiritual, intellectual, and embodied literacy of the ‘aina (land) and kai (sea): birds, the colors of the clouds, the flows of the currents, fish and seaweed, the timing of ocean swells, depths, tides, and celestial bodies all circulating and flowing with rhythms and pulsation.”<sup>53</sup> The embodied quality of this knowledge means that it cannot be entirely abstracted from experience and practice and is less concerned with “know-

ing” (in a Foucauldian sense—that is, abstracting and claiming) the sea as with being able to *live within* and *alongside* it, a practice that includes being able to live with its vicissitudes and uncertainties. While the particular seascape epistemology that Ingersoll describes is connected to a Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) context and culture, its “approach to life and knowing through passageways” clearly resonates with a number of other Oceanic cultures and traditions.<sup>54</sup> As a number of Pacific scholars have observed, many Indigenous Pacific understandings of and relationships to the ocean similarly understand it as coextensive with—rather than separate from or opposed to—environments and peoples on the land, an expansive space that serves an important connective function between island cultures and communities.<sup>55</sup> As Hau’ofa puts it, “The sea is our pathway to each other and to everyone else, the sea is our endless saga, the sea is our most powerful metaphor, the ocean is in us.”<sup>56</sup>

If transpacific Asian American literatures and scholarship have sought to assert the critical value of alterity or “otherness”—particularly by drawing attention to how the ocean’s unknowability marks the limitations of contemporary colonial, postcolonial, and neoliberal discourses—Indigenous Pacific scholarship has addressed how a grounded engagement with otherness can work to produce decolonial forms of discourse by shifting the terms and frameworks for transnational (and transpacific) engagement. It is my hope that bringing these transpacific Asian and Indigenous Pacific literary and cultural texts into dialogue will help us to understand how a subject shaped by oceanic passage cannot be defined entirely through state-sanctioned forms of subjectification (such as citizenship status, ethnicity, or blood quantum); nor can it exist entirely independently of such forms (as in the idea of a “postnational,” “postracial,” or purely nomadic individual). Instead, the texts I explore in this book foreground the flexible and enduring nature of cultural practices, community formations, and legal regimes across periods of significant political and social change. Tracing these trajectories across space and time, these varied representations of oceanic passage index the many ways that these diverse forms and practices are not only deconstructed but also *reconstructed* at moments of cultural crisis and creative transgression.

Such a comprehensive project could certainly span the length of several books, and it is my hope that the comparative frameworks and reading practices initiated here can serve as a starting point for future investigations and scholarly endeavors. My own limitations as a scholar have served to determine the limitations of this particular project. First and foremost, I do not have reading fluency in Indigenous Pacific or Asian languages, so my

archive has been limited to English-language sources. Fortunately, a number of other scholars have already begun to address these important bodies of literature.<sup>57</sup> Even thus delimited to the English language, I still have an immense number of texts with which to work; in consequence, *Ocean Passages* focuses primarily on literature and texts produced after World War II, a historical period that, as discussed earlier, saw formal decolonization, heightened militarization, and the emergence and development of neoliberal networks of trade and finance throughout the region. This body of contemporary Indigenous Pacific and Asian American literature is, of course, vast and continually growing and is well beyond the scope of a single project. Earlier iterations of this project included analyses of a number of works and texts that, while certainly relevant to the governing concept of ocean passage, unfortunately could not be comfortably included within the frameworks that I set out here. I have excerpted and published, or plan to publish, some of this work elsewhere.<sup>58</sup> I also want to both acknowledge and regret the glaring absence of Pacific literature from western Pacific sites such as Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands from this project and refer readers to scholars who have discussed the literary and cultural dynamics of the western Pacific, as well as their role in the decolonization movements of the 1960s and 1970s, in greater detail.<sup>59</sup>

Each chapter of this book addresses a different, yet interrelated, form of oceanic passage. Chapter 1, “Militarized Passages: Securing the Sea,” begins with an exploration of militarized oceanic passages, emphasizing how the (U.S.) occupation and militarization of ocean space and environments from the Cold War through the present connect racialized colonial power dynamics in Asia and the Pacific Islands. In the chapter I read George’s *Ocean Roads* alongside James Michener’s *Tales of the South Pacific* (1947) to analyze how the space of the ocean, and the experience of its crossing, might serve as a potential site of resistance against the militarized claims of nation-states that seek to reterritorialize and secure the space of the ocean for the interests of “liberty.” The chapter interrogates how these writers use oceanic imagery to explore the connections that emerge among different communities affected by militarized violence in its various forms to foreground the range of new networks, communities, and alliances brought into being by the legacies of postwar militarization. Chapter 2, “Refugee Passages: In the Wake of War,” builds on this analysis of militarized ocean space to focus on the specific trajectories and experiences of refugee passage across the ocean and to consider how they take shape in the “wake” of war. Here, I read Vietnamese American writer lê thi diễm thúy’s novel *The Gangster We Are All Looking For* (2003) alongside Marshallese poet Kathy Jeñtil-Kijiner’s work exploring

the history and experiences of peoples displaced from the Pacific Islands by both nuclearization and climate change to explore how their representations of oceanic passage emphasize the entanglements and interconnections between environmental trauma and global migration. Together, these texts outline the occlusions and intersections of refugee experience in and across the Pacific—whether spurred by wartime atrocity or economic and environmental crisis—and amplify the necessity of placing these differently situated experiences into dialogue with one another.

Chapter 3, “Commercial Passages: On Cycles and Circulations,” explores comparative representations of the passage of labor across and through the ocean—particularly the migratory circuits traced by remittance laborers, as described in the work of Chinese American fiction writers Ken Liu and Maxine Hong Kingston and Tongan authors Epeli Hau’ofa and Konai Helu Thaman—to analyze how these authors’ focus on the *labor* required for the oceanic passage of peoples, communications, and commodities draws attention to the materiality of ocean space that often gets overwritten in more abstract discussions of transpacific trade. The chapter explores how both Asian and Pacific Island writers critique the neocolonial dynamics that emerge out of the capitalist deterritorialization of the Pacific in the late Cold War era, as hegemonic representations of the transpacific begin to shift from viewing the region as a theater of war to reimagining it as a space of capital. If, as Connery has observed, “water is capital’s element,” these texts emphasize how the ocean may *also* be understood as an integral conceptual and material medium that works to bridge heterogeneous cultures of circulation that run alongside or counter to dominant flows of transpacific capital.<sup>60</sup>

Moving from an analysis of these broadly transpacific movements across and through the Pacific to a specific site where these Indigenous and immigrant circulations intersect, Chapter 4, “Embodied Passages: ‘Local’ Motions and the Settler Colonial Body Politic,” focuses on Hawai‘i to analyze how discourses around state multiculturalism become enfigured (and commodified) as a multicultural “local” body that simultaneously invokes and evacuates Indigenous (Kanaka Maoli) presence. Turning to the work of Hawai‘i-born Japanese American author Lois-Ann Yamanaka and Kanaka Maoli poet and scholar Brandy Nālani McDougall, the chapter explores the possibilities for communities that have been differently shaped by their experiences of settler colonialism to identify themselves with projects of Indigenous sovereignty that fundamentally reject the racialized assumptions of settler colonial nationalism. To this end, I focus on these authors’ representations of the experience of moving through and with the ocean—of

ocean passage as an embodied act—as a way of either opening up or closing down new possibilities of imagining a “local” or emplaced identity that meaningfully engages and supports, rather than simply gestures toward, Kanaka Maoli sovereignty.

Chapter 5, “Virtual Passages: Pacific Futures,” analyzes how these varied forms of ocean passage, in tandem with a range of contemporary technologies, articulate different ways of imagining the future of the region as a whole. Although scientific, industrial, and communications technologies are often closely aligned with visions of transpacific futurities connected to a progressive temporality that aspires to increasing security, accumulation, and profit, in this section I return to *A Tale for the Time Being*, considered alongside texts by Pacific Island poets Robert Sullivan (Māori), Emelihter Kihleng (Pohnpei), and Craig Santos Perez (Chamorro), to articulate how these alternative speculations inspire, disrupt, and repurpose imaginations of economic futures bound to the securitizing of the Pacific as a region. In line with the cyclical nature of the oceanic aesthetics featured in these texts, and the methodology of this study as a whole, the chapter illustrates how perceptions of time itself are meaningfully shaped not only by the introduction of contemporary technologies, but also by Oceanic ecologies and epistemologies. By concluding with these explorations of oceanic temporalities, I hope to show how these varied aesthetics of oceanic passage might help us to situate our own varied passages through and across the Pacific in time as well as space. The ocean passages laid out in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been indelibly marked by our modern histories of colonialism, militarization, extraction, and pollution—yet they are also marked by a number of other histories and experiences of passage that have pushed back against the seeming inevitability of the present system. As seen through an Oceanic imaginary, these passages are not fixed lines on a map but operate as contingent passageways, navigated through a firm understanding of one’s position and standpoint measured in a constantly changing relation to a fluid, dynamic world.<sup>61</sup> By remaining attentive to how their unfolding calls attention to context *as* trajectory—that is, understanding where we, and they, stand *in relation to* the past, the present, and one another—these ocean passages can help to chart the way forward to what, as Albert Wendt once declared, we might think of as a new Oceania.