Routes and Roots is the first comparative study of Caribbean and Pacific Island literatures and the first work to bring indigenous and diaspora literary studies together in a sustained dialogue. Taking the “tidal” between land and sea as a dynamic starting point, Elizabeth DeLoughrey foregrounds geography and history in her exploration of how island writers inscribe the complex relation between routes and roots. The first section looks at the sea as history in literatures of the Atlantic middle passage and Pacific Island voyaging, theorizing the transoceanic imaginary. The second section turns to the land to examine indigenous epistemologies in nation-building literatures. Both sections are particularly attentive to the ways in which the metaphors of routes and roots are gendered, exploring how masculine travelers are naturalized through their voyages across feminized seas and lands. This methodology of charting transoceanic migration and landfall helps elucidate how theories and people travel, positioning island cultures in the world historical process. In fact, DeLoughrey demonstrates how these tropical island cultures helped constitute the very metropoles that deemed them peripheral to modernity.

Routes and Roots moves beyond restrictive national, colonial, and regional frameworks and makes a compelling argument for a type of postcolonial sovereignty that is global in scope yet rooted in indigenous knowledge of the land. Fresh in its ideas, original in its approach, Routes and Roots engages broadly with history, anthropology, and literary, postcolonial, Caribbean, and Pacific literary and cultural studies. It traverses diaspora and indigenous studies in a way that will facilitate broader discussions between these often segregated discourses.

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Routes and Roots
Routes and Roots
Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures

Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey

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## Contents

Preface: Genealogies of Place ix  
Note on the Text xv

### introduction

**Tidalectics: Navigating Repeating Islands** 1

### I The Sea is History: Transoceanic Diasporas

**chapter 1** Middle Passages: Modernity and Creolization 51  
**chapter 2** Vessels of the Pacific: An Ocean in the Blood 96

### II Indigenous Landscapes and National Settlements

**chapter 3** Dead Reckoning: National Genealogies in Aotearoa/New Zealand 161  
**chapter 4** Adrift and Unmoored: Globalization and Urban Indigeneity 196  
**chapter 5** Landfall: Carib and Arawak Sedimentation 229

### epilogue

Notes 269  
References 297  
Index 325
The comparative literary geographies mapped in this book are unique and this has generated some interest in the origins of this project and my own particular relationship, as a white woman from Boston, to the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands. On the one hand, it is gratifying that the structures of western academic thought provide for a prefacing acknowledgment in which one may outline an ancestral and academic genealogy, a narrative whakapapa in accordance with many of the indigenous epistemologies engaged in this book. On the other hand, this surprise about my own investment in this project and my accountability to these contexts may also signal assumptions about these literatures’ lack of translatability, their profound localness, and, most worryingly, their lack of significance to global discourse that is, presumably, concerned only with the literatures produced by northern metropoles and continents. Here I would like to outline my own genealogical connections to these texts and contexts, particularly as they have contributed to my own shifting understanding of space and place.

My initial encounters with Caribbean literatures came through the aegis of anglophone postcolonial, feminist, and African-American studies, and it was the signs of orality in these texts, such as the broad language registers of the creole continuum, the self-deprecating humor, the naming practices, the nonstandard English, the trickster stories, and the sinews that connect language, ethnicity, and class that seemed immediate and familiar to my own upbringing. Although the racial and historical geographies explored here are radically different from my own, I recognized these tropes of orality and the historical silences they often stood for in my own extended family. My readings in Pacific Island literatures broadened these links between language and power and also helped me understand, on a more global and comparative scale, the ways in which geography was so vitally important to history and by extension, its literary representations. As a shore dweller from the North Atlantic, a product of an altogether different history of island dias-
PREFACE

...pora, I came to recognize the seascapes of both regions’ literatures and, over time, my own historical and spatial connection to these antipodean archipelagoes. I grew up with a distinct sense of regional and white ethnicity inherited from the working class Irish and Scottish Catholic sides of my family; both were late nineteenth-century migrants to New England and carried their own histories of dispersal and settlement through Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and the greater Boston area. These legacies are necessarily in fragments, but my work on the British empire and its global reaches has helped me to understand why these genealogical narratives were substituted by an emphasis on the present and the silences produced by the process of emigration and assimilation. Through the lens of postcolonial scholarship, I have been able to frame the incomplete and perhaps wishful narratives of these legacies of dispersal; rumors of a deported Irish ancestor for union agitation, reputed involvement in the Easter 1916 rebellion, and insinuating connections to the IRA. On the Scottish side, with roots in the Canadian Maritimes, there are remnants of songs, a bard reputedly filmed by Smithsonian anthropologists, memories of Gaelic language speakers. I am less concerned with the accuracy of these fragments than the ways in which a concentration on the legacies of diaspora and settlement in other parts of the world illuminated my own understanding of my regional home and place in global history. New England, a place I was raised to believe in as a locus of intense resistance to British colonization, was also, as I learned in adulthood, an active participant in the Atlantic/Caribbean slave trade and in the colonization of the Pacific Islands. It is this recognition of the white settlement of the U.S. in its postcolonial complexity—as simultaneous colony and colonizer—that allowed me to shift my own disciplinary boundaries from the British legacies of colonialism to the ongoing and pervasive expansion of the U.S. in this book. Traveling to Aotearoa/New Zealand to pursue studies in Maori literature and language as a graduate student also helped me to understand the British colonial trajectories that led Scots and Irish to the Pacific rather than the transatlantic trajectory of my ancestors. This is to say that while I examine the trajectories of black and indigenous diasporas throughout this book, I came to see the ways in which both histories were constitutive and constituted by the British diaspora—the largest human migration of its time. This is a book deeply invested in deconstructing the “worlding” mechanism of empire (Spivak 1985) and concerned with destabilizing the notion of a transparent universal (read: European) subject. This move is crucial because it allows me to reposition my own genealogy in the complex intersection of multiple
colonial histories and to “unlearn my privilege” as “loss” (Spivak 1990, 10). I had already commenced this unlearning process in my early attempts to reconcile my family’s ambiguity about class mobility, intellectualism, and being labeled “lace-curtain Irish.” As I discovered, the “unlearning” needs to be bridged to a reconstructive effort to remap these histories in ways that highlight what Édouard Glissant calls the “complicity of relation.”

I explore Glissant’s model of relation to the land in detail in this book so in this preface I want simply to foreground a relation to place that accounts for both long-term and short-term settlement, an understanding of space that does not simply conflate territory with ancestry. Although it is utilized for the diasporic model of the Caribbean, I want to emphasize that the history and discourse of diaspora is not engaged here to deflect from indigenous genealogies and articulations, as Teresia Teaiwa warns about the process of drawing facile analogies between disparate regions (2005, 2006). Diaspora in Glissant’s use does not preclude prior and ongoing indigenous presence; his concept uses the platform of shared commitment to place in order to stage a dialogue between the two. As a model of rooting the histories of routed peoples, Glissant’s notion of a “complicity of relation” also demands accountability, a method of reading power relations through narratives of place and displacement. It is a model that is flexible enough to bring together places linked by history and geography, one that we might find in texts such as Derek Walcott’s *Omeros*, in which *genealogies of place* provide the model of rendering history that is at once rooted in local memory and yet can accommodate the diverse and often opposing new settlements. It is a necessary model diversity that does not romanticize indigeneity nor pathologize diaspora. This is the tidalectic model of roots and routes that is traced throughout this book, a vital whakapapa of place that works against the rigid claims of ethnic nationalism.

Geologically speaking, the global south is a space constituted by far more water than land and thus an apt place to consider the ways in which maritime histories and the transoceanic imaginary have been constituted in relation to landfall and settlement. So while this book focuses on the ethnic models of African and European diaspora in relation to indigenous peoples of the Caribbean and Pacific, this model of tidalectics does not preclude the sustained engagement with other diasporas, particularly from South and East Asia. In fact, writers of South Asian descent in both the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands have written extensively about the process of crossing kala pani, or dark waters, to the distant islands of plantation indenture. The model of a “complicity of relation” necessarily includes these other
layerings of settlement and while space limitations prevent me from tak-
ting this up in this particular book, I insist on their vitality to this model of
tidalectics in both regions.

The novels and works explored here extend the complicity of relation
in time and space, a model of political engagement that was already familiar
to me through my own extended family, a legacy provided by my grandpar-
ents that continues to sustain. My academic privileges have been clarifying
and alienating at the same time from the very roots that sustain this project.
Nevertheless I want to foreground the contributions of my paternal grand-
parents, to whom this book is dedicated, whose material circumstances
were deeply circumscribed yet this never impeded the geographies of their
imagination or their hospitality, humor, or the generosity of their spirit.
My maternal grandmother has also been a tremendous teacher about local
engagement and a worldliness discovered through reading. This has been a
legacy embedded in me through my parents, Tom and Judy DeLoughrey,
whose own critical thinking and teasing humor have kept me grounded
and helped me negotiate the broad geographies I was fortunate to travel
through the research and writing of this book.

Routes and Roots was written on various shores of the Atlantic and
Pacific oceans and came into being through the generous efforts of many
friends, family, and colleagues. From the beginning, Chris Harbrant, Peter
Hulme, Radhika Mohanram, and Sangeeta Ray were careful and patient
readers of these chapters. Without their support across multiple seas, com-
pleting this project would not have been possible. The book’s title is drawn
from James Clifford’s work, whose body of scholarship made an impact
on my research well before we had the chance to meet in person at the
University of California, Santa Cruz, where I completed the manuscript
draft. My thanks to him and my hosts in the Center for Cultural Studies for
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routes. I would also like to thank Catherine Rice for stewarding the manu-
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disciplinary boundaries. My interaction with academic presses about this
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lishing stewardship in postcolonial studies as well as the marginalization
of Caribbean and Pacific Island literatures that generated this project to
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My colleagues from Cornell’s Society for the Humanities Diaspora
Fellowship (2001–2002), especially Dominick LaCapra, supplied vital feedback on my first chapter, while Shivaun Hearne patiently answered my questions about her father’s work and influences. My work on the Pacific benefited from the “Re-Imagining Indigenous Cultures” seminar at the 2003 NEH Summer Institute at the East-West Center and the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. I would like to thank my hosts and colleagues for their friendship and stimulating discussions that summer. Mahalo nui loa to the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana for the July 2003 huaka‘i and for allowing me to witness firsthand the devastation and the fragile regeneration of the island of Kanaloa and the navigators. This was an immersion that continues to inspire. My sincere thanks to Lingikoni Vaka‘uta for allowing me to reproduce his stunning rendition of Hina in his painting No‘o ‘Anga (Tied shark).

I was born in a U. S. Naval hospital and while this has probably contributed to my desire to decolonize the trajectories of U. S. militarization across the seas, it has done nothing for my sea legs. My own terrors of deep-water navigation were expanded and confirmed on a Sea Education Association (SEA) trip that helped me understand the bodily rigors and nautical grammar of working on a ship and why one drinks like a sailor upon disembarking. My thanks to Brian Hopewell for providing me with the opportunity to learn the ropes working on the 134-foot steel brigantine, SSV Robert C. Seamans, across a stormy Kaua‘i channel and beyond. I would also like to thank my good friends and colleagues Esther Figueroa, J. Kehaulani Kauanui, A. Keala Kelly, Paul Sharrad, Katerina Teaiwa, and Rob Wilson for engaging and testing the oceanic ideas in this book and for their ongoing and candid feedback.

The second part of this book, on roots, grew from graduate study in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I would like to thank Fulbright for supporting this research, Margareta Gee at the Alexander Turnbull Library for her generous supply of June Mitchell’s archival documents, Briar Wood and Maureen Lander for their insights on flax symbologies, and Ken Arvidson for his support and active engagement with the ideas in this portion of the book. Merle Collins has been patient with her time and feedback during the revisions to the final chapter, and April Shemak has been a tremendous friend and resource for this and many other projects. I would also like to thank Chad Allen, Jon Battista, Martin Bernal, LeGrace Benson, Murray Chapman, Chris Connery, Ralph Crane, Carole Boyce Davies, Vince Diaz, June Ellis, Renée Gossen, George Handley, Wilson Harris, Paget Henry, Susan Najita, Wilsoni Hereniko, Zita Nunes, Marcus Rediker, Te Ahukaramu Charles Royal, Elaine Savory, Teresia Teaiwa, Larry Thomas,
PREFACE

Houston Wood, as well as members of the Caribbean Studies List, the Postcolonial List, and the Oceanic Anthropology Discussion Group for their engagement and insights on the different epistemologies I trace out in this book.

At Cornell, I thank my undergraduate students for traveling to so many places with these texts, the dedicated students of my “Transoceanic Diasporas” class, Michelle Elleray and Jolisa Gracewood for establishing and sustaining the Pacific Island Reading Group, my colleagues Laura Brown, Molly Hite, and Nicole Waligora-Davis for their support, and Krupa Shandilya for her work on the index. Warm thanks to Catherine Burwell, Amy DeLoughrey, Arianne Gaetano, Sarah Mattaliano, and Geoffrey Schramm for their love and humor over the course of this voyage. Finally, I am indebted to Christopher Harbrant, who has been my co-pilot in these transoceanic travels from the Caribbean to the rough shores of Ngarunui. This work would never have been completed without the daily guidance of my navigating star and grounding earth, my own routes and roots, Chris and Grendel.
This book’s comparative focus on native and diaspora literatures aims to uphold these histories and continuing struggles; to avoid privileging any one group over another I have chosen not to capitalize terms associated with ethnicity or place, including the term “native.” At times “native” is used interchangeably with “indigenous.” This interchangeability does not mean that the terms are static; the use varies greatly according to place, history, and political agenda. Where applicable, I try to use specific terms such as “Kanaka Maoli,” which I use synonymously with “Hawaiian.” Like the word “native,” the terms “Hawaiian” and “Tahitian” refer to indigenous peoples rather than later settlers. When possible, I have used the cognate terms “Maori,” “Kanaka Maoli,” and “Ma’ohi” over terms such as “native” and “indigenous” to highlight local terminology and, following the lead of Noenoe Silva, to foreground the cultural connections between these diverse points of the region. In keeping with Pacific publishing protocol, I have not italicized words in Polynesian languages such as Maori, Hawaiian, and Samoan. Due to my own limited knowledge of the languages, and to maintain some consistency with my sources, I have not employed macrons or double vowels for emphasis.
INTRODUCTION

Tidadectics
Navigating Repeating Islands

I am the supple rhythm of the seas;
I recreate the world on islands.
—Eric Roach, “The World of Islands”

In the poem from which this epigraph is drawn, Tobagonian writer Eric Roach inscribes “a shoal of sea-beleaguered lands” bequeathed to the contemporary Caribbean subject. They are “difficult . . . to inherit” due to their violent history of colonization and their complex layering of native and diaspora populations. For Roach, the islands are a space where “indigenous blood still stains the grass,” signifying the corporal residue of history, its localization and merger with natural space, and the landscape’s propensity to absorb and reflect human history. “Those whom bondage bit to bone” are legible for historical recuperation because their artistic abilities transform this “flowering rock” of an island into song, prayer, dance, and music. The speaker quoted in the epigraph emerges in the last few lines; she represents the region as a dancer whose castanet is the moon, a “phoenix Eve” who feminizes the Adamic myth of island origins. She speaks of the Caribbean’s creolization of cultures in fluid and intoxicating terms, as “the mingled wine of the world’s grapes” and, by extension, the product of breakage and reassembly. After establishing this Mediterranean connection, the poem concludes with the lines of the epigraph, a testimony to the natural rhythm of the sea, the cycle of regeneration after unspeakable violence, the oceanic origins of islands and their metonymic worldliness. Roach’s dense layering of geology and human history is cyclical; the tidal rhythm of the sea generates islands, just as the flows of maritime trade and transoceanic diaspora “recreate the world on islands.” In turn, “the world on islands” suggests that each isle might be read metonymically as the globe. Building on the title, we might conclude that this poem reflects “The world of islands” as much as it represents the worldliness of islands (Roach 1992, 147).

I have chosen Roach’s poem to open this book on comparative island literatures because it synthesizes the complex relationship between geography and history, the insular and the global, and routes and roots. The poem
INTRODUCTION

foregrounds our own location on a terraqueous globe, a watery planet that renders all landmasses into islands surrounded by the sea. Nevertheless, we maintain a cartographic hierarchy of space; our cognitive maps do not chart a shared islandness across the globe. Assumptions about size, location, history, and political importance seem to determine how island spaces are mapped so that we are more likely to perceive the islandness of Jamaica than, say, Iceland. Although islands are scattered all over the globe, the spaces that signify as islands are generally the small landmasses close to the equator, lands associated with tropical fertility, former colonies and outposts of empire that are deemed remote, exotic, and isolated by their continental visitors. By recognizing this often arbitrary division between islands and continents, we can pinpoint how geography has been used to uphold a series of cultural and political assumptions. This book seeks to complicate the ways in which certain island spaces have been deemed ahistorical and isolated by foregrounding how the process of colonization has relegated these spaces into museums or laboratories for tourism, anthropological inquiry, or sociological praxis. One of the central but unacknowledged ways in which European colonialism has constructed the trope of the isolated island is by mystifying the importance of the sea and the migrations across its expanse. In order to recuperate the centrality of the ocean in island discourse, I turn to Kamau Brathwaite’s theory of “tidalectics,” a methodological tool that foregrounds how a dynamic model of geography can elucidate island history and cultural production, providing the framework for exploring the complex and shifting entanglement between sea and land, diaspora and indigeneity, and routes and roots.

What is to be gained from a comparative literature project that highlights the intersections between space and time, place and history? Tidalectics engage what Brathwaite calls an “alter/native” historiography to linear models of colonial progress. This “tidal dialectic” resists the synthesizing telos of Hegel’s dialectic by drawing from a cyclical model, invoking the continual movement and rhythm of the ocean. Tidalectics also foreground alter/native epistemologies to western colonialism and its linear and materialist biases. As a geopoetic model of history, Brathwaite images the ongoing and palpable heritage of “submerged mothers” who cross the seas, “coming from one continent/continuum, touching another, and then receding . . . from the island(s) into the perhaps creative chaos of the(ir) future” (1999, 34). I build upon this feminized vision of history to destabilize the myth of island isolation and to engage the island as a world as well as the worldliness of islands. I interpret tidalectics as a dynamic and
shifting relationship between land and sea that allows island literatures to be engaged in their spatial and historical complexity.

The title of this book, *Routes and Roots*, employs these homonyms in relation to the tidalectic between sea and land. The subtitle employs the term “navigation” to emphasize the role of islander agency in terms of “charting” and “steering” a course and to highlight the role of nonwestern epistemologies of time-space. In fact, Brathwaite’s vision of fluid time-space has much in common with the Pacific wayfinding system of moving islands, termed “etak” in the Caroline Islands of Micronesia. As scholars such as David Lewis and Vicente Diaz have explained, Pacific models of ocean navigation differ from western paradigms because they do not flatten and stabilize space through the bird’s eye view of nautical charts. Instead, Pacific navigators have developed a complex system of charting a vessel’s movement through space where the voyaging canoe is perceived as stable while the islands and cosmos move towards the traveler. “Etak is a polydimensional system that involves both direction and time, and therefore movement. The etak conception of moving islands is an essentially dynamic one” (Lewis 1994, 184). This concept of moving islands has provided an innovative model of approaching the intersections of indigenous and cultural studies (see Diaz and Kauanui 2001). In contradistinction to western models of passive and empty space such as *terra* and *aqua nullius*, which were used to justify territorial expansion, the interlinked concepts of tidalectics and moving islands foreground alter/native models of reckoning space and time that require an active and participatory engagement with the island seascape. An emphasis on maritime vessels foregrounds their contributions to the formation of island history. Postcolonial seafaring is invoked here as a practice and as a metaphor for navigating a course that is not overdetermined by the trajectories of western colonization. Attention to movement offers a paradigm of rooted routes, of a mobile, flexible, and voyaging subject who is not physically or culturally circumscribed by the terrestrial boundaries of island space.

In an effort to position island cultures in the world historical process, I examine how these methodologies of charting transoceanic migration and landfall help elucidate the ways in which theories and peoples travel on a global scale. The rationale for this mode of inter-island comparison is to move beyond restrictive national, colonial, and regional frameworks and to foreground shared histories, particularly as they are shaped by geography. Both etak and tidalectics offer an interdisciplinary approach that places contemporary islands in a dialogue with each other as well as their
INTRODUCTION

continental counterparts. In fact, as I will explain, these tropical island cultures have helped constitute the very metropoles that have deemed them peripheral to modernity.

As the first comparative study of Caribbean and Pacific Island literatures in English, this book takes geography as a starting point to argue that the land/sea relationship has been conducive to complex patterns of migration and settlement, creating literatures of diaspora and indigeneity that complicate the colonial vision of isolated tropical isles. Like Brathwaite, Édouard Glissant reminds us that the “island embodies openness. The dialectic between inside and outside is reflected in the relationship of land and sea” (1989, 139). This “openness” reflects a tidalectic between routes and roots, a methodology of reading island literatures that structures this book. Thus the first section examines the literature of maritime routes and what I term the “transoceanic imaginary,” exploring Derek Walcott’s maxim that the “the sea is history.” The second section turns to the land in order to excavate native roots in nation-building literatures. Both sections are particularly attentive to the ways in which the metaphors of routes and roots are gendered, offering a critique of how masculine travelers are naturalized in their voyages across feminized lands and seas. Overall, the comparative frame of *Routes and Roots* navigates uncharted spaces in postcolonial studies, a field that has not adequately addressed the ways in which indigenous discourses of landfall have mitigated and contested productions of transoceanic diaspora.

Most comparative literature projects demarcate their epistemological boundaries through the concept of national difference; this enables scholars to speak of shared history, language, religion, and cultural mores that are bounded by the modern nation state. As a postcolonial study of two regions that cannot be contained by the organizing parameters of one shared language, one colonial history, or one dominant nation-state (or even postcolonial status), *Routes and Roots* shifts the discourse to the concept of the island region and, by extension, problematizes national frameworks. As such, it is a project informed by the contemporary trajectories of migration and globalization. While the focus here is generally anglophone, the complexity of the migration of peoples and texts to and from diverse English-speaking metropoles has necessarily demanded a new paradigm to justify the comparison of such large regions. Diaspora studies has provided a vital and innovative framework for transnational comparison and has been a central influence on this work, but its tendency to focus on a particular ethnic group of (male) travelers limits its applicability. In fact, here I want
to complicate diaspora theory’s substitution of a national framework by an ethnic or racial one.

One of the larger objectives of this book is to examine the ways in which regionalism and diaspora studies, while they seem to offer the potential to dismantle the gendered, ethnic, and class hierarchies of the state, often inscribe remarkably analogous structures. Scholars have pointed out the ways in which privileged masculine subjects imagine citizenship by invoking feminized metaphors of the nation that preclude women’s active participation, yet there is a strikingly similar gendering of diaspora. Like the operative metaphors of national belonging that encode a semantic collapse between women and (mother)land, diasporic discourses often position masculine subjects as normative travelers who rely upon a feminized sea in order to imaginatively regenerate across time and space. This is why, in the language of diaspora and globalization, masculinized trajectories of nomadic subjects and capital attain their motility by invoking feminized flows, fluidity, and circulation, while the feminine (as an organizing concept) and women (as subjects) are profoundly localized. To be localized in this case does not operate with the ideological potential of the dictum “think globally, act locally,” but rather registers as symbolic and physical stasis. We have only to turn to Michel Foucault’s gloss on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* to recognize the pervasiveness of these gendered celebrations of travel. He writes, “Prefer what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems. Believe that what is productive is not sedentary but nomadic” (1972, my emphasis xiii). In a remarkable appropriation of the very terms with which women’s bodies are associated and theorized—difference, multiplicity, production, and flows—the masculine nomad achieves mobility precisely through the erasure of women’s corporeal, ontological, and economic capacity for (re)production. Since the model of (masculine) diaspora has increasingly become a stand-in for the postcolonial predicament, it is all the more important to insist on tracing its points of erasure, particularly its neglect of indigenous studies, which has an entirely different relationship to the history of land, nation-building, and the nation-state. This tension between (feminized) histories of diaspora and indigeneity is explored through the tidalectics of routes and roots.

The broad comparative nature of this book demands an engagement with multiple disciplines, and while it is deeply informed by postcolonial studies, the breadth of the project means that it cannot be categorized easily under a postcolonial rubric. The Caribbean and Pacific Islands do not
INTRODUCTION

fit neatly into a postcolonial paradigm because they do not share simultaneous colonial histories even though they have been (and still are) occupied at different points by Christian, Spanish, French, British, and American capitalist empires. In fact the continuity of indigenous presence in the Pacific when contrasted with the decimation of native cultures in the Caribbean is a testament to the radical historical differences of colonialism in each region. Indigenous activists in the Pacific have pointed towards the epistemic erasures implicit in the linear definitions of the “post” of postcolonialism as they struggle with the ongoing inequities in white-settler states. And while the political methodologies of native sovereignty movements may not suit the Caribbean’s celebration of creolized and composite cultures, the transnational thrust of diaspora theory often poses a profound epistemological challenge to the localizing focus of indigeneity. These challenges to any homogenizing framework of comparison point to the need for a dynamic methodology that engages the intersections of time-space without fixing or freezing either. Thus tidalectics foreground three key ideas: how both regions share a complex history of migration patterns before and after colonization; how the island topos entails an exchange between land and sea that translates into the discourse of “ex-isles” and settlement; and finally, how these vital links between geography, history, and cultural production facilitate a reading of island literatures. This emphasis on geography is not environmentally determinist because it encodes an active, participatory ecology. As the etak or moving-islands model demonstrates, the landscape participates in the historical process, resisting the synthesizing narrative of conquest. It is by insisting on the tidalectics between land and sea and by remapping the Caribbean and Pacific alongside each other that particular discourses of diaspora, indigeneity, and sovereignty can be examined in ways that challenge and complement each other, foregrounding the need for simultaneous attention to maritime routes and native roots.

Navigating Repeating Islands

To understand the contemporary literary production of the Caribbean and Pacific, one must engage with the long colonial history of mapping island spaces. Although it has not attracted much attention in postcolonial studies, the desire for islands—“nesomania” in James Michener’s words (quoted in Day 1987, 1)—was a trademark of European maritime empires. Countless explorers directed their efforts towards the discovery of the “Antilles”; utopian counter-lands or ante-islands that, in my reading, offer a deeper historical model for what Antonio Benítez-Rojo refers to as the “repeating
island” (1992). Benítez-Rojo has famously employed chaos theory to imagine the fractal expansion of the culture of the Caribbean across the globe, transported by contemporary migrants. As helpful as his theory of repeating islands is for a positive and creative vision of diaspora and resettlement, I want to place it in juxtaposition to older and more pernicious models of colonial island expansion.

By turning to the “root” or originary island of what would become a global anglophone island empire, we see that England’s claim to islandness, a suppression of Wales and Scotland, derives from the political establishment of the United Kingdom and its subsequent colonial expansion overseas. England constituted itself as an island by its expansion into the territory of its immediate neighbors and, as many have demonstrated, constructed its earliest formulations of racial difference through the colonization of its first island colony, Ireland. Consequent to a long history of colonial practice, the cultural topography once associated with imperial England (its isolation from continental Europe) then becomes projected onto other island spaces that are reformulated as remote and isolated only in relation to the geographies of industrialized Great Britain.4 This enabled the argument that England’s limited terrestrial space justified its need for island colonies, visible in nineteenth-century British Colonial Secretary C. S. Adderley’s assertion that “this little island wants not energy, but only territory and basis to extend itself; its sea-girt home would then become the citadel of one of the greatest of the empires” (quoted in Hyam 1993, 2). Here Britain is articulated as an expanding isle as it extends its insular geography through global empire-building. The tension between the contained English isle and its propensity to expand outwards by maritime rule draws attention to how conceptions of limited island space were vital to “spawning” an Anglo-Saxon diaspora into colonial territories. Although the population of England (and the rest of Europe) did greatly expand due to the availability of food crops and labor resources from the colonies, the limitations of island space were not the problem so much as the inequitable distribution of territory, the result of an emergent capitalism that turned the terrestrial commons into private property. Thus, England’s “island story,” a narrative of invasion and settlement, is transformed from a space of received colonists (early Anglo-Saxon invaders) to a bounded sovereign entity that refuses migrants while propelling its people outwards to people its island colonies.5 Over the centuries Great Britain is discursively refashioned as a repeating island throughout its colonies in the Caribbean and Pacific, as suggested by the toponyms New Albion, New Britain, New Hebrides, New Ireland, and “Little England,” or Barbados.
The notion of the isolated island has material and metaphorical meanings derived from a complex history of European expansion into contained spaces. This repeating-island story arose from early experiments in deforestation, colonization, enslavement, and plantation monoculture, which were first tested in the eastern Atlantic islands. Demonstrating how island space functioned as a laboratory, Alfred Crosby concludes that European experiments in the Canaries and Madeira taught colonists that they must seek lands that were: (1) remote enough to discourage the epidemiological susceptibility of Europeans; (2) distant enough to minimize the islanders’ defense against western diseases; (3) isolated from large mammals such as horses to ensure colonial military advantage; and finally, (4) lands uninhabited by maritime peoples (1986, 102). In the grammar of empire, remoteness and isolation function as synonyms for island space and were considered vital to successful colonization. Although all islands are isolated by etymological definition, their remoteness has been greatly exaggerated by transoceanic visitors. The myth of the remote isle derives from an amplification of the nautical technologies of the arrivant and an erasure of islanders’ maritime histories. As Greg Dening reminds us, “Every living thing on an island has been a traveller. Every species of tree, plant, and animal on an island has crossed the beach” (1980, 31).

European experiments in the eastern Atlantic archipelagoes coupled with ancient European narratives of mythic islands contributed greatly to the later (re)construction and settlement of the Caribbean and Pacific Islands and a discursive refashioning of their isolation. This model of isolation has led to some strange observations about island space and cultures. For instance, French philosopher Charles de Montesquieu, writing at the height of European expansion, determined that “the inhabitants of islands have a higher relish for liberty than those of the continent . . . the sea separates them from great empires” (1748, Book XVIII). Although the French Navy was by then developing a global empire of overseas colonies from the Caribbean to the Indian Ocean and would soon be claiming territories in the Pacific, Montesquieu argued that “conquerors are stopped by the sea” (Book XVIII). In fact, islands were especially sought for colonization by all of the major maritime powers because their strategic positioning was vital to the flow of maritime traffic, their long coastlines provided multiple access points for trade and defense, they provided necessary stopover points for the refitting and the restocking of ships, and their contained spaces facilitated greater control of colonized and enslaved populations who, without access to maritime vessels, were less likely to escape (see Grove 1995, 63). The fact that islands and their inhabitants are positioned as remote and
isolated belies their centrality to world trade and their consistent visitation by colonials, missionaries, shipwreck, anthropology, and tourism. In effect, the narrative of island isolation is dependent upon these visitors. Popular U.S. television shows and films such as Survivor, Lost, and The Beach continue to capitalize upon the myth of the isolated tropical island, as does the tourist industry. Not surprisingly, there are few if any historical testimonies from Pacific or Caribbean Islanders bemoaning their distance from Europe.

Paradoxically, the island of colonial discourse is simultaneously positioned as isolated yet deeply susceptible to migration and settlement. The construction of isolated island space is an implicit consequence of European colonialism and has a tremendously complex history. The island has functioned in various historical eras as a new Eden, a sociopolitical utopia, a refreshment stop for long maritime journeys, and the contained space where shipwrecked men (or boys) may reconstruct their metropolitan homes. The archipelagoes of the Canary and Madeira islands were the first laboratories for European maritime imperialism and the first sugar plantations of the Atlantic. This experiment in island colonization, deforestation, plantocracy, and slavery was then repeated throughout the Caribbean. The use of one archipelago as an ideological and social template for the next reveals the ways in which the colonial discourse of islands repeated itself, rhizomatically, along a westward trajectory. For example, the eastern Atlantic islands were not only the first laboratories of empire, but also an important cartographic point that caused Christopher Columbus to situate his “discovery” of the West Indies as “off the Canary Islands” (1992, 16). This cognitive mapping is rendered materially visible when we remember that Columbus picked up sugar cane there and transplanted it to the Caribbean.

Tropical islands have not only functioned as colonial or sociopolitical laboratories of experiment, but they have facilitated tremendous ecological, anthropological, and biological theories. As Richard Grove has documented, islands provided the material bases for the establishment of the natural sciences, and the first scientific academies and botanical gardens of Europeans were founded in island colonies. Moreover, European deforestation of the Canary and Caribbean islands positioned these spaces as laboratories for the study of global climate and ecology; the colonial devastation of natural resources created the first environmental conservation laws of Spain, Britain, and France (1995, 6). The European colonization of archipelagoes across the planet was crucial to facilitating Alfred Wallace and Charles Darwin’s separate voyages around the world. Their
INDEPENDENT OBSERVATIONS OF ISLAND FLORA AND FAUNA ENABLED BOTH MEN TO
ESTABLISH THE THEORY OF SPECIES ORIGINS, ADAPTATION, AND EVOLUTION. BUILDING UPON THE LONG NARRATIVE TRADITION OF DEPICTING ISLANDS AS SOCIAL AND
ECOLOGICAL UTOPIAS, JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU TURNED TO THE ATLANTIC, INDIAN
OCEAN, AND PACIFIC ISLANDS TO CONSTRUCT HIS VISION OF THE HOMME NATURALE.6 THE ISLAND CULTURES OF THE CARIBBEAN (AND LATER THE PACIFIC) WERE SOME
OF THE EARLIEST SITES OF WESTERN ETHNOGRAPHY. BOTH ISLAND REGIONS PROVIDED
EUROPEAN OBSERVERS WITH A SPACE TO THEORIZING RACIAL PURITY AND DIFFERENCE,
as they do to this day; CONTEMPORARY THEORIES OF CREOLIZATION DERIVE FROM
THE CONTAINED SPACES OF THE CARIBBEAN JUST AS IDEAS ABOUT INDIGENITY
CONTINUE TO BE DEVELOPED AND CONTESTED IN THE PACIFIC. ALFRED WEGENER’S
THEORY OF CONTINENTAL DRIFT WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE STUDY OF ISLAND FLORA
AND FAUNA (NUNN 1994, 22). ISLAND TOPOGRAPHIES, LABOR, AND RESOURCES HAVE
NOT ONLY MATERIALLY BENEFITED EUROPE (SUCH AS THE SUGAR PLANTATIONS), BUT
HAVE PROVIDED THE BOTANICAL, ANTHROPOLOGICAL, BIOLOGICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL,
AND IDEOLOGICAL SPACE FOR EUROPEAN LABORATORIES, EXPERIMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT. THE TROPE OF ISLAND REFRESHMENT, FECUNDITY, AND EXOTICISM WOULD
BE REPEATED THROUGHOUT PACIFIC ISLAND VISITATION, AND FINDS ITS CONTEMPORARY
MANIFESTATION IN TOURISM DISCOURSE.7 IN FACT, THE COLONIAL ERA PROVIDED
THE IDEOLOGICAL TEMPLATE FOR CONTEMPORARY TOURIST CONSUMPTION OF ISLAND
RESOURCES. BOTH FORCES OVERLAP IN THEIR MUTUAL CONSTRUCTION OF THESE SPACES
AS REMOTE AND ISOLATED, MYSTIFYING THE ISLANDS’ CONTRIBUTIONS TO MODERNITY.
ASS MARSHALL Sahlins EXPLAINS, “THE HERETOFORE OBSCURE HISTORIES OF REMOTE
ISLANDS DESERVE A PLACE ALONGSIDE THE SELF-CONTEMPLATION OF THE EUROPEAN
PAST—OR THE HISTORY OF ‘CIVILIZATIONS’ FOR THEIR OWN REMARKABLE CONTRIBUTIONS
TO AN HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING” (1985, 72).
well known to Columbus; before he departed on his first transatlantic voyage, the astronomer Paolo dal Pozzo Toscanelli recommended Antillia as a stopover on the way to Cathay. This represents a slippage between the nonspace of “utopia” to an idealistic space of expectation—“eutopia”—that would be incorporated into Medieval and Renaissance cartography. This “Columbian hermeneutics of discovery” (Zamora 1993, 136) is articulated in Brathwaite’s poem “The Emigrants.” The Caribbean speaker observes: “Columbus from his after-deck watched heights he hoped for/rocks he dreamed, rise solid from my simple water.” The speaker asks:

What did this journey mean, this
new world mean: discovery? Or a return to terrors
he had sailed from, known before? (1973, 52)

In this dream vision of rocks that emerge from the ocean, Brathwaite, like Roach, invokes a cyclical notion of time and a dynamic model of generative space. The tautological nature of his “dis-/covery” is rhetorically articulated through the consonance of the navigator’s “return to terror.” Historians have argued that to Columbus, discovery meant finding what was “known before”; this cyclical conception of time might be connected to the legends circulating amidst Europeans that anticipated island landfall on the westward passage to “the Indies.” Since Marco Polo’s narrative had already described great archipelagoes in Asia, Columbus’s arrival to the Caribbean seemed to have been predestined in a collapse of time-space between Antillian and Asian islands. This is evident in cartographic representations that erase the Americas so that the Atlantic Ocean merges with the Pacific. This conflation of time and space is strikingly apparent in Columbus’s dual name for the Caribbean as the “West Indies” (Pacific) and the “Antilles” (Atlantic). Although it was less geographic confusion than an ideological one, Daniel Defoe’s conflation of a Pacific island (Juan Fernandez) with a Caribbean one (Tobago) led to a confused geographical setting for Robinson Crusoe (see Grove 1995, 227). Of course, neither could have known that geologically speaking, the Caribbean region did arise out of the Pacific, the world’s originary ocean. These moving and repeating islands then “emerged” in the toponyms of empire: thus we have the Virgin Islands (from the European legend of St. Ursula), Brazil (an Irish island legend), and Tahiti’s reformulation as the island of Aphrodite, or Nouvelle Cythère. In contrast to the notion that islands represent fixed, static spaces, these repeating-island stories highlight how island constructions traveled with
INTRODUCTION

European migration and voyaging. While St. Ursula’s islands and Antillia became cartographically fixed by Columbus in the Caribbean, other imagined islands like the Antipodes (Terra Australis Incognita) moved westward, out of the Atlantic region into the Pacific. Walcott describes this masculine quest for the utopian island as a “near-delirium” for a Nouvelle Cythère, nesomania for what was always “far and feverish”—a feminized utopia that “dilate(d) on the horizon” (1986, 481). Hundreds of explorers, including James Cook, were sent to the Pacific to obtain this illusory counter-island to the northern hemisphere. Of course, these imagined island topographies were never homogenously defined. Within their own time period they represented a system of ante-islands; heterotopias that were alternately idyllic or inhabited by ruthless cannibals. This is apparent in the colonial polarization of islanders into what Bernard Smith (1985) describes as “hard” and “soft” primitives, and in the naming of the Caribbean as the realm of cannibals, a contrast to a presumably more peaceful “Pacific.”

Like orientalism, a system of “islandism” was constructed less through contact with others than through the textual exchange between Europeans. This is visible in the ideological construction of anticipated island landfall and the vast array of artistic and literary depictions of island topoi, shipwrecks, and contact with “Indians” that dominated the colonial imagination. Considering the multiple waves of European voyagers, cartographers, botanists, beachcombers, traders, slavers, missionaries, and colonial officials to every single island in the Pacific and Caribbean, and the resulting eradication of many island inhabitants, the perpetuation of this image of island isolation can best be described as a European myth that seeks to erase the colonial intentionality of the past.

The desire for depopulated islands in which European men could refashion themselves helps to explain why, between 1788 and 1910, over 500 desert-island stories were published in England alone (Carpenter 1984, 8) and why Robinson Crusoe underwent six reprintings in its first year of publication (1719). The Robinsonades, or island solitude and adventure stories so popular in western Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, may have been inspired by Robinson Crusoe, but Defoe’s sources indicate that the genre’s origins extend across space and time to the east. While the desert-island genre did not originate in Europe, it certainly found its most receptive audience there. Widely read in the British colonies, the novel was one of the first secular texts to be translated into Maori (1852). In the Caribbean, Robinson Crusoe is described by Walcott as “our first book, our profane Genesis” (1986, 92). In “Crusoe’s Journal” he observes, “Posing as naturalists, drunks, castaways, beachcombers, all of us yearn for those...
fantasies of innocence” (94). But this innocence, Walcott remarks elsewhere, can be likened to the “hallucination of imperial romance,” a narrative in which the spaces of the most brutal forms of human subjugation, the slave islands, are labeled in sweet utopian terms, as “Fortunate Isles” and “Sugar Islands.” This begs Walcott’s question: “When they named these [islands] . . . was it nostalgia or irony?” (306).

Since the colonial expansion of Europe, its literature has increasingly inscribed the island as a reflection of various political, sociological, and colonial practices; in texts from Thomas More’s Utopia to Shakespeare’s The Tempest, the island is a material and discursive site for experiments in governance, racial mixing, imprisonment, and enslavement. Broadly speaking, European inscriptions of island topoi have often upheld imperial logic and must be recognized as ideological tools that helped make colonial expansion possible. Diana Loxley has shown that the island-adventure genre was central to the indoctrination of British boys into the emerging ideologies of muscular Christianity, British nationalism, and empire. It is not only that the resources and labor of island spaces were vital to the expansion of Europe and its subsequent industrialization; inscribing these islands as isolated suppressed their relationship to the colonial metropole and minimized knowledge of their contributions to the production of British literature. This is apparent in the incredibly popular narratives of accidental arrival to island shores through shipwreck which have a direct—albeit mystifying—relationship to the height of colonial expansion.

The self-made male who accidentally colonizes a desert isle has been a powerful and repeated trope of empire building and of British literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In fact, these Robinsonades have been described as a literary “frenzy” (J. Ballantyne 1994, 267). From these nineteenth-century island-adventure novels—which include Robert Louis Stevenson’s Treasure Island and R. M. Ballantyne’s The Coral Island—we might outline the following general patterns or narrative tropes. First, the accidental arrival, via shipwreck, of a Christian, European male (often a boy) to island shores. The island is deserted, constructed as terra nullius (empty land), tropical, and extremely fertile. (Indeed, there are few Arctic island-adventure stories.) As Loxley has shown, the island’s lack of inhabitants provides a tabula rasa for colonialism and the birth of a new social order. Third, the new landscape is submitted to European rule through domestication and cultivation; the protagonist develops new skills as a result. In fact, the island is often represented as a female body; as Loxley remarks, “an unrelenting feature of island discourse is that the adventurer-hero of this free environment should not be constrained by the hegemo-
nising power of the feminine” (1990, 56). The landscape is then subjected to empirical observation and experiment, which leads to rational control of unknown natural forces. Fifth, the protagonist fears the arrival of indigenous islanders whom he assumes are cannibals; in a reversal of power relations, he believes the islanders desire to consume him. Paradoxically, this presumption is not derived from empirical science but learned through the oral traditions of sailors’ yarns and travelers’ tales, which are invoked for dramatic affect and as a validation of the expanding colonial textuality of island space.

In the sixth step of the successful Robinsonade, the colonist’s experience on the island leads to philosophical reflections on biological, religious, social, and/or political origins. These reflections are vital to counter the fear of regression due to the protagonist’s lack of European books, a language community, woolen clothing, and Christian social mores. If the protagonist is isolated on the island, his fears are realized through trope number eight: the arrival of a non-European, non-Christian subject. This reverses colonial relations by positioning the islander as intrusive arrivant and the European colonist as the natural inhabitant. By bringing together the work of Mary Louise Pratt (1992) and Greg Dening, we recognize their “contact zone” on the beach, a space of “beginnings and endings . . . the frontiers and boundaries of islands” (1980, 32). Since this is a traveling or “restless native,” one of the most feared icons of the colonial archive, this arrival is often associated with violence to the European in the form of kidnapping, infanticide, cannibalism, or murder. This in turn justifies a European moral imperative to respond with technological violence (firearms). After the display of force, trope number ten becomes possible: the assimilation of the islander into European social mores through indoctrination into European language, Christianity, labor, and dress. Through this process “the native” is renamed and becomes the primary source of labor. After a period of the accumulation of wealth and knowledge, the supremacy of European technology is reiterated by the arrival of a large ship, a “floating island” that transports its human and material resources to the metropole. Since the European has conquered his island, he departs to narrate the tale from the northern metropole, usually abandoning his island slaves, servants, mistress, wife, or children. In fact, the pairing of the desert-island-adventure narrative with its first-person inscription from the safety and familiarity of the colonial center is an integral and final trope of the Robinsonade; it assures the reading public of the ability to adapt and even rule in distant overseas territories with the guarantee of return and an uncomplicated assimilation back into the metropole. As Loxley has
demonstrated, the island sanitizes and dehistoricizes the violence of the colonial process, providing “a laboratory for the propagation and nurturing of a perfect masculinity” (1990, 117).

These colonial narratives of island adventure were integral to normalizing the crossing of great expanses of space and in naturalizing the British diaspora to its island colonies. By imagining the ship as a nation and the island as a mere extension of the ship (which was already interpellated as a “floating island”), the migration of voluntary colonists was depicted in attractive terms that emphasized the bounded and controlled nature of island space. The great achievement of these hundreds upon hundreds of Robinsonades is that they also imparted a new spatial logic to the British reading public in which time and space were compressed; the presumed primitivism of the island colony was contrasted to the progressive modernity of the metropole, without recognition of the ways in which the uneven exchange of resources, labor, information, and even the Robinsonades themselves made these temporal and economic divisions possible. Over time, metropolitans came to identify the island as a remote, tropical, and geographical ideal divorced from the industrial temperate north, which of course was created by exploitation of the islands of the global south. Robinson Crusoe, we must remember, was a plantation owner on the way to obtain African slaves when his ship wrecked in the Caribbean. The spatial disconnection between a consuming reading public and the island-adventure genre suggests that the timeless and remote island can only signify as such when it is constructed in binary opposition to the history and geography of its continental visitors.

We may very well ask whether the representation of, to draw from one famous American television series, an idyllic “Fantasy Island” is necessarily a cause for alarm. The problem with perpetuating images of island isolation is that they relegate islanders to a remote and primitive past, denying them entrance into the modernity of their colonial “motherlands.” Although these formulaic motifs were vital to the production of two centuries’ worth of Robinsonades, they also appear in the representation of islands by some anthropologists, and they have been used to justify both military and tourist occupation of tropical island spaces. Like the presumably static “native” visited by the traditional anthropologist, islanders are often depicted in western discourse as symbols of the evolutionary past. Scholars have demonstrated that the indigenous association with place (especially in the wake of his/her colonial displacement) is often interpreted as natural confinement. According to Arjun Appadurai, this derives from the “quintessentially mobile” white male anthropologist, who visits
indigenous people in their “natural environment” (1996, 39). James Clifford (1988) and Johannes Fabian (1983) have pointed out that Enlightenment ideology and European anthropological praxis often position native peoples in a homogenous, prepositional time antecedent to the western narrative of linear progress. It is in this way that island societies are dehistoricized and represented as an undeveloped and premature moment in the trajectory of biological and cultural evolution.

The ideological apparatus associated with the Robinsonades may also be traced to anthropological uses of the term “culture island,” which signifies “an isolated group or area; especially: an isolated ethnological group” (my emphasis). Here Webster’s Dictionary highlights an implicit connection between bounded space and culture, a conflation that has been vital to evolutionary anthropological models. As always, the construction of the island as remote is contingent upon the cultural and geographic center that employs it. For example, Patrick Kirch explains that island societies have been “fertile intellectual terrain for anthropology . . . [and] have long provided inspirational material for the advance of anthropological method and theory” (1986, 1). Historian Oskar Spate referred to the “insular” Pacific Islands as “so splendidly splittable into Ph.D. topics” (quoted in Kirch 1986, 2). Kirch cites a number of important anthropological theories that derived from island topography, including structuralism and functionalism. As in other discursive fields, island boundedness is confused with closure to uphold the myth of the hermetically sealed laboratory. Significantly, Kirch points out that anthropologists were so entrenched in island boundedness, isolation, and atemporality (“shallow time depth”) that archeological inquiries were hardly made until recently; interpretations of heavily scrutinized islands such as Tikopia were so focused on “internal processes of change” that “regional [transoceanic] exchange networks” were overlooked (1986, 4). The refusal to recognize the maritime technologies of non-European peoples has prevented the larger scientific community from recognizing the intentional settlement of the Americas by sea rather than by the Bering Strait thesis, which posits herds of animals as the real agents of migration and therefore history.

In fact, the cartographic and ethnic partition of the Pacific into Melanesia, Polynesia, and Micronesia highlights the ways in which ocean voyaging and exchange between the islands were threatening to the continental arrivants. Likewise, spurious cultural divisions were also made between the “peaceful Arawaks” of the Caribbean and the supposedly anthropophagous Caribs. Recent scholarship demonstrates that, like Oceania, the region had been interconnected by maritime trade routes for centuries before
European arrival. This reminds us that most areas interpellated as remote and isolated isles are in fact archipelagoes with long maritime histories of interconnection. This ideological division of archipelagoes into isolated islands traveled westward with the colonists, rerouting their classical Mediterranean roots in the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Geologist Patrick Nunn, remarking on the “continuation of the islands under the sea,” explains that most islands “are no more than the tips . . . of huge ocean-floor volcanoes: to pretend that their formation can be diagnosed solely from looking at those parts above sea level is ludicrous” (1994, 112). In a similar vein, Robert Sullivan’s poem “Ocean Birth” inscribes the emergence of the islands from the sea and imagines their human residents on “the skin of the ocean” (2005, 37). Geologically and symbolically speaking, the earth’s surface cannot represent its deep history; the island poet must plumb the subterranean and the subaquatic layers of human and planetary change. These depths reflect shared experience across time and space in Kamau Brathwaite’s assertion that “the unity is submarine” (1974, 64), positioning the islands as autonomous and geologically, historically, and culturally connected to their neighbors. Glissant builds upon Brathwaite’s vision when he adopts “submarine roots” as a model of regional history. He writes, “[s]ubmarine roots: that is floating free, not fixed in one position in some primordial spot, but extending in all directions in our world through its networks and branches” (1989, 67). It is this fundamental connection between geography and history that allows Glissant to draw insightful parallels between French neocolonialism in Martinique and Micronesia. He upholds “the reality of archipelagoes in the Caribbean or the Pacific provides a natural illustration of the thought of Relation,” a model for a tidal dialectic that engages multiple temporalities, complex and dynamic space, multilingualism, and orally transmitted knowledges (1997, 34–35).

We must question the perpetuation of the isolated isle because it depopulates the islands of those who contributed significantly to the world’s financial, scientific, and ideological development. C. L. R. James and Sidney Mintz have pointed out the error in relegating the Caribbean to an archaic periphery when in fact the earliest machines of industrial slavery were created in their sugar plantations. This is not merely an issue of erasing the past because it can be traced to current imperial expansion. For instance, the U.S. military was able to carry on its 1946 nuclear testing in Bikini (Micronesia) based on the island’s supposed remoteness and insignificant population. Yet Micronesia’s remoteness did not deter President Harry Truman from deciding to create a strategic trust territory that same year in
INTRODUCTION

order to militarize the Marshall, Caroline, and Mariana islands and place them under the governorship of the U.S. Navy. Years later, when Micronesians lobbied for demilitarization and self-governance, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger retorted: “There are only 90,000 people out there. Who gives a damn?” Yet under the People’s Revolutionary Government, Grenada’s population was similar in size and ideals of sovereignty, and the United States certainly did “give a damn.”

In fact, the Bikini Atoll was not remote enough to prevent the neighboring Rongelap Islanders from suffering the deadly effects of nuclear fallout carried by the wind. It was not remote enough to prevent nuclear contamination of the Pacific and its spread to Africa, Antarctica, and Europe. It was not remote enough to prevent its detailed photographic documentation by the U.S. military to ensure that tens of thousands of nuclear test images were distributed worldwide as a testament to their apocalyptic power in the Cold War. This troubling legacy of U.S. imperialism is not only unknown by most Americans, it has been shown by Teresia Teaiwa (2000) to have been eroticized by the two-piece bathing suit that was named after these devastating experiments. In a disturbing full circle from colonial to tourist occupation and consumption, Bikini Atoll has been designated one of the best tourist spots for scuba diving in the military wreckage. One company calls the Bikini trip an “island adventure” and, while admitting the region’s extensive militarization, entices tourists to visit to “get a real sense as to how Robinson Crusoe must have felt.”

Island colonization, land alienation, and indigenous displacement are connected to contemporary tourism in Donald Kalpokas’s 1974 poem, “Who am I?” Writing as a student in Fiji about his home in the dually colonized New Hebrides, Kalpokas was a vital part of the independence movement and ultimately became Vanuatu’s prime minister. His polemic poem explains how his land “was alienated through fraud” and the “Protocols of 1914,” which divided his home between England and France.

I travel abroad with my identity card
For I am stateless and have no right. . . .
Who am I, lost in this ocean of confusion?
. . . I am that third citizen of my country,
The only condominium in the world. (quoted in Subramani 1992, 50)

Kalpokas’s poem raises compelling questions about the connections between colonial and tourist models of the repeating island and how they restructure landscape to mimic other island colonies. Although Pacific voyagers
settled Vanuatu over four thousand years ago, the Portuguese explorer Pedro Fernández de Quiros assumed he had discovered Antillia, the great southern ante-island, so he named the largest island of the group Australia del Espíritu Santo. A century later, the French explorer Antoine de Bougainville interpellated the same islands as Les Grandes Cyclades, naming them after the Greek isles in the Aegean Sea. Less than a decade later, they were renamed the New Hebrides after Scottish islands by James Cook. Although there were important historical differences between colonial powers, this repeating-island story is striking because it highlights an ideological contraction of island space and time between the Atlantic and Pacific as a product of European expansion. Moreover, the British and French used their Caribbean Island colonies as models for the remapping and restructuring of Vanuatu. As such, this became an all-too-familiar colonial island story about plantation monoculture, illegal recruitment and kidnapping of island labor (blackbirding), and native alienation from land, culture, and resources.\textsuperscript{16}

The 1914 protocols that open the first lines of Kalpokas’s poem reflect the dual system of Anglo-French governance called “the condominium,” a historical contract that alienated the region’s indigenous occupants and a reference to the new architectures of tourism, which also relegates ni-Vanuatu to “third citizenship.” His poem demonstrates that native land alienation has been exacerbated by tourism and U.S. militarization, reflecting multiple colonial demands upon the economy and resources. The speaker has no sovereign ship of state in this “ocean of confusion.” He concedes that “at least” he “is still able to swim,” but parodies the Robinsonade in his fear that he may be “washed ashore/On the desert of a French Pacific Republic.” Given the long and complex history of Pacific Island voyaging, Kalpokas’s depiction of an indigenous speaker as flotsam at sea, without a vessel of sovereignty or directionality in navigating a course towards landfall suggests a troubling tidalectic between transoceanic migration and a loss of sovereignty. Moreover, the speaker’s displacement from the land renders him a castaway in his own ancestral ocean. It also makes him a captive of the Robinsonade narrative, in which he fears the depopulation of his own island home, a “desert” space, unoccupied and devoid of sustaining water. Ironically, his island is not represented through indigenous topography but rather is mapped by the dry colonial name, “French Pacific Republic.” Given the metaphorical relationship between the ship and the state, we can interpret Kalpokas’s speaker as deprived of his own vessel of sovereignty due to the dual appropriation of a “French Pacific” Ocean and a Platonic ship of the “Republic.”
INTRODUCTION

Writing in Fiji about the decolonization process at home, Kalpokas’s poem gives us an opportunity to think through the ways in which island literature has been deeply informed by the transoceanic imaginary. Reflecting back to the Eric Roach poem that opened this chapter, we can see that Kalpokas is similarly concerned with the worldliness of island geography and history, and inscribes a tidalectic imagination in which the loss of land is interpreted from the perspective of the sea. His depiction of an “ocean of confusion,” in which rights and citizenship are in flux for the island subject, reflects a maritime imagery of globalization, a grammar of fluidity and flow that is directly connected to the territorial scramble for the seas.

The Transoceanic Imaginary

You want to hear my history? Ask the sea.  
—Derek Walcott, “The Sea is History”

I have emphasized the close relationship between British maritime expansion and the discursive construction of tropical island space to provide a new model for understanding anglophone literary genealogies. A tidalectic engagement with the formulation of British literature demonstrates the ways in which the chronotope (time-space) of the island—from The Tempest to Robinson Crusoe—is as vital to this literary canon as the sea. While postcolonial studies has revealed the ways in which empire-building was a constitutive element of British literature, we are only just beginning to understand that it was the desert-island and nautical-adventure genres that were vital to imagining this transoceanic empire. Where the desert-isle genre emphasizes the boundedness of islands, tidalectics engage with their watery surroundings, foregrounding the routes of the oceanic imaginary. In fact, writers of the Pacific and Caribbean have turned to narratives of transoceanic migration to undermine the myth of the confined islander, an ontological contrast to the mobile European male who produces world history by traversing space. Turning to the sea, we destabilize the myth of island isolation and open up new possibilities for engaging a dynamic history of time-space.

Half of the world’s population lives within a few miles of the sea, and when we include its staggering depths, 95 percent of the earth’s biosphere is ocean. The sea is often described in cosmologies as the space of human origins, a narrative upheld by the biological sciences. Marine biologist Sylvia Earle explains that “our origins are there, reflected in the briny solution
The ocean supports our lives on this planet through its hydrologic cycles and is often described as the earth’s lungs, responsible for the “planetary respiratory rhythm”; Earle asserts that “every breath we take is linked to the sea” (1995, xiv). Despite our complete dependence on this dynamic originary space, it remains one of radical alterity. The sea, to Roland Barthes, is a “non-signifying field.” He exclaims: “Here I am, before the sea; it is true that it bears no message. But on the beach, what material for semiology!” (1972, 112). Barthes’s terrestrial bias may be questioned when we consider how the subject internalizes this alterity by rendering the sea in the blood. For example, Jacques Cousteau observes that “our flesh is composed of myriads of cells, each one of which contains a miniature ocean . . . comprising all the salts of the sea, probably the built-in heritage of our distant ancestry, when some mutating fish turned into reptiles” (1976, 13). According to Elisabeth Mann Borgese, humans may have swum before they walked. Just as the vastness of the sea challenges our limited concepts of space, so the ocean is at once our origin and “our liquid future” (1975, 17), destabilizing our notions of linear human time. Borgese explains, “Every drop of water that existed on the earth or around it billions of years ago is still there, whether in solid form or liquid or gaseous . . . every drop is still there” (18).

The sea is conceptually linked to human origins and exploring these fluid histories offers an alternative to the rigid ethnic genealogies of colonialism and nationalism. In other words, the ocean’s perpetual movement is radically decentering; it resists attempts to fix a locus of history. Focusing on seascape rather than landscape as the fluid space of historical production allows us to complicate the nation-state, which encodes a rigid hierarchy of race, class, gender, religion, and ethnicity for its representative subjects. Because the surface of the ocean is unmarked by its human history and thus cannot be monumentalized in the tradition of colonial landscapes, a turn to the seas as history can produce an equalizing effect, allowing us to recognize the long maritime histories of island peoples prior to the arrival of Europeans. In fact, Caribbean and Pacific Islanders were noted for their massive voyaging canoes, and their ability to navigate thousands of maritime miles during an era when Europeans had not determined longitude and were consistently wrecking their ships. As a chronotope of the moving island and a unifying symbol of routes and roots, I foreground the trace of the word “canoe,” a term introduced to the English language as a transliteration of the Taíno (Arawak) term “canoas.” The Pacific Islands have a
INTRODUCTION

significant parallel in the term “vaka.” As vessels of history, canoes and vaka are vital to the historical genealogy of both regions, a point explored in the first section of this book.

The Pacific and Caribbean islands were first settled about 4,000 BCE by multiple seafaring arrivals from the continental lands to their respective west. Both areas were marked by complex processes of intercultural, trade, and migration, which challenge attempts to determine an originary home for the early island migrants. The process of arrival and adaptation highlights the ways in which land and sea are territorialized by migrant populations, and offers a complex alter/native historiography to European colonial models of the past. This tidalectic approach marks a significant break from colonial maps that depict land and sea as unmarked, atemporal, and feminized voids, terra nullius and aqua nullius, unless traversed and/or occupied by (male) European agents of history.

Placing these island regions in a dialogue with each other allows us to see the complex historical relationships to the waters that surround them. Like the island, the ocean has functioned as a space of human origins; thus the sea and voyaging motifs are prevalent in cosmogenesis narratives of each region. For example, Walcott’s meditation on “Origins” positions his human speaker as “foetus of plankton” (1986, 11). The sea is history in Walcott’s poem “Names,” which begins: “My race began as the sea began / with no nouns, and with no horizon . . . with a different fix on the stars” (305). Drawing attention to how the production of space also produces race—and its naming and therefore its conceptual confinement—Walcott’s poem highlights the aporia between language and its object, mapping and space. The ocean’s incomprehensibility is mirrored cosmologically in deep space (the stars), producing a metaphor of origins that also undermines the structures of language used to represent it. The human employment of language and maps is precisely how, Walcott explains, “the mind was halved by a horizon” (305). In this poem, dedicated to Kamau Brathwaite, “the stick to trace our names on the sand” is merely provisional. Ultimately our creator, the sea, will “erase” all human inscriptions such as language and cartography (306).

Inscribing the sea as origin, while a provisional human effort at historiography, is also an enduring characteristic of island literature. Walcott’s speaker becomes a namable subject only after sharing island space with other artisan-migrants such as a “goldsmith from Benares,” a “stonecutter from Canton,” and a “bronzesmith from Benin” (306). The poem questions how to refashion Old World art forms for newly creolized societies after the dehumanizing wake of slavery and indenture. Ultimately, the
shared history of transoceanic migration to the islands provides an inexhaustible spatial imaginary for reflections on origins. Caribbean writers have inscribed the Atlantic as an originary space for the peoples of the African diaspora, in a tidalectic engagement between continents. To Walcott’s characters in *Omeros*, “Mer was both mother and sea” (1990, 231) while in Grace Nichols’s poetry, the structures of time-space collapse in the traumatic birth through the “middle passage womb” (1983, 5). By tracing a connection to the past through ancestry and genealogy, a characteristic trope of postcolonial writing in that it destabilizes the universalizing (and dehumanizing) narrative of colonial history, these writers make a familial claim to space that naturalizes the process of diaspora.

Since all arrivants to islands before the twentieth century came by water, the sea is often positioned as an origin for the diverse peoples of the Caribbean and the Pacific. Writing from Fiji, Pacific theorist Epeli Hau’ofa has explained, “all of us in Oceania today, whether indigenous or otherwise, can truly assert that the sea is our common heritage” (1997, 142). Jamaican novelist Patricia Powell (1998) has inscribed the nineteenth-century voyages from China to the Caribbean in ways that situate the sea as origin and liken the experience of indenture ships to the brutalities of the middle passage. Trinidadian writer Ramabai Espinet inscribes crossing kala pani or the dark waters between India and the Caribbean in similarly traumatic terms, as “a passage into death and sickness and unending labour, and into a light that was the present” (2003, 284). Fijian writer Subramani opens his novella “Gone Bush” with the words: “In the beginning was the sea... everything came out of the sea... from it came the goddess of life” (1988, 77). Although the Indian protagonist “seemed... [like] someone from a landlocked culture whose people were riders of horses” (77), like Walcott’s narrator, the process of migration to the islands has realigned this character’s relationship towards the sea.

By employing a tidalectic framework, we can highlight the transoceanic trajectories of diaspora to the Caribbean and Pacific islands, underlining their shared similarities in geo-pelagic relation rather than the limiting model of national frameworks. As long as it does not bracket off the referents of history, as Joan Dayan (1996) aptly warns of some theories of the black Atlantic, the transoceanic imaginary can be a powerful metaphor to signal the cultural transition to new island landscapes, complicating the notion of static roots and offering a fluid paradigm of migratory routes. As a constitutive element of tidalectics, the transoceanic imaginary foregrounds the fluid connection between the Pacific and Caribbean islands and the role of geography—and oceanography—in shaping cultural pro-
INTRODUCTION

The focus on island migration as a vital narrative trope of these regions is helpful because it can accommodate any number of arrivals and highlights the process of human sedimentation. Importantly, migration is not valorized as a facile metaphor for masculine agency in history. The cultural and historical production of those who cannot and do not travel, particularly women, must be considered as a constitutive element in the framework of the routing of diaspora. Moreover, a focus on the production of local roots needs to problematize the gendered conflation of women with land and, by extension, the land with national belonging. Engaging a tidalectic model of routes and roots as a comparative frame to connect two different island regions foregrounds the conceptual similarities of geography and history, such as the association of women with space and men with time. This comparative tidalectic also allows for the emergence of historical and social contrast, such as the tension between diaspora and indigeneity, which highlights the distinctiveness between and within the regions' literary production. This book seeks to highlight the ways in which the process of migration and settlement produces diasporic and indigenous subjects in an active relationship with the land and sea.

The transoceanic imagination, produced by “peoples of the sea,” is vital to postcolonial writing of the past two decades and is particularly visible in Pacific and (black) Atlantic studies. Building upon the work of James Clifford (1988 and 1992) and Marcus Rediker (1987), Paul Gilroy has famously rendered the “shape of the Atlantic as a system of cultural exchanges” where “the movements of black people—not only as commodities but engaged in various struggles towards emancipation, autonomy, and citizenship—provides a means to reexamine the problems of nationality, location, identity and historical memory” (1993, 16). Although the ocean is a primary space to imagine the histories of diaspora, it is also a vital space for the production of the indigenous Pacific. This is particularly evident in the work of Hau'ofa, a Pacific anthropologist and director of the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture, who provides an essential theoretical framework to destabilize the myth of island isolation. He asserts, “There is a gulf between viewing the Pacific as ‘islands in a far sea’ and as ‘a sea of islands.’ The first emphasizes dry surfaces in a vast ocean far from the centers of power, exaggerating their smallness and remoteness, whereas the latter places islands “in the totality of their relationships” (1993b, 7). He explains:

The idea that (Oceania) is too small, too poor and too isolated . . . overlooks culture history, and the contemporary process of what
might be called “world enlargement” carried out by tens of thousands of ordinary Pacific Islanders . . . making nonsense of all national and economic boundaries, borders that have been defined only recently, criss-crossing an ocean that had been boundless for ages before Captain Cook’s apotheosis. (6)

Drawing from the western conceit that masculine movement across space produces history, Hau’ofa destabilizes the conflation of the indigenous islander with static land by drawing upon the transoceanic imagination. His theory of a “sea of islands” reorients land and territory-based analysis towards the complex processes of interculturalization generated by ancient and contemporary transoceanic movement. Inspired by the dynamic expansion of the volcanic island of Hawai’i, and quoting Walcott’s aphorism that “the sea is history,” Hau’ofa determines that “our roots, our origins are embedded in the sea,” which is “our pathway to each other” (1997, 147, 148). Hau’ofa’s early anthropological work was conducted in Trinidad and he has maintained an important conceptual connection between both island regions. His theory of island history is remarkably like Glissant’s model of “submarine roots” (1989, 67) and Brathwaite’s postulation that island “unity is submarine” (1974, 64). A view of the archipelagoes as a submarine rhizome is shared by these theorists whose works permeate various linguistic, cultural, and geographic borders.

The transoceanic imagination is a hallmark of island theorists and diaspora discourse. Like Hau’ofa and Glissant, Benítez-Rojo’s work on the repeating island employs aquatic metaphors to focus on the waters of the Caribbean, asserting that the region is a “meta-archipelago” with “neither a boundary nor a centre” (1992, 4). He highlights the diaspora of Caribbean peoples in an effort to destabilize ethnic essentialism and configures the region as being as much in flux as the waters that surround it. By visualizing the archipelago as an island that repeats itself into varying fractal spaces, Benítez-Rojo concludes: “the culture of the Caribbean . . . is not terrestrial but aquatic . . . [it] is the natural and indispensable realm of marine currents, of waves, of folds and double folds, of fluidity and sinuosity” (11). Water appeals because of its lack of fixity and rootedness; as Gaston Bachelard explains, it is a “transitory element. It is the essential ontological metamorphosis between heaven and earth. A being dedicated to water is a being in flux” (1983, 6). Since migration and creolization are so characteristic of island cultural formations, watery trajectories provide an apt metaphor for ethnicities “in flux.” To foreground transoceanic migrations that brought African, Asian, European, and indigenous settlers to
INTRODUCTION

the islands destabilizes rigid genealogical roots and offers a fluid metaphor for dynamic routes. For example, Samoan writer Albert Wendt refers to himself as “a pelagic fish on permanent migration” (1995b, 13). Walcott refers to the Caribbean as “the liquid Antilles” (1986, 44) and charts an “iconography of the sea” (240). This provides an aquatic space that is materially unmarked by European monuments and an alter/native imaginary for postcolonial island history. These “webbed networks” (Gilroy 1993, 29) suggest that bodies of water unite black Atlantic, Caribbean, and Pacific peoples and have the potential to dissolve the artificial boundaries of nation-states.

As helpful as these models are for rethinking the ethnic origins and boundaries of the nation, the recent tendency to configure the sea as a space beyond territorialism can exaggerate the agency of migrants and minimize their experiences of border policing. In other words, these maritime theories often valorize transoceanic diaspora without adequately questioning the historical and economic roots for migrant routes. For example, Benítez-Rojo’s The Repeating Island uses marine currents as its trope for superseding social and political hegemonies where the “peoples of the sea” travel across the globe, and “certain dynamics of their culture also repeat and sail through the seas of time” (1992, 16), seemingly without linguistic or national boundaries. Remarkably, these theorists turn to the borderlessness of the ocean only to imagine a body of migrants who are bounded by the limits of race and gender. This formulation of transoceanic male agents of history has ample historical precedence in British imperialism. Thus while we embrace these new formulations of fluid transoceanic movement, we must be cautious about the ways in which they recirculate discarded paradigms of nationalism and regionalism. Secondly, we must also pay close attention to the ways in which the conceptual move to claim ocean space may derive from neocolonial expansion and a radical new territorialism of the seas. Pinpointing its mechanism is particularly difficult when theorizing the ocean as a space of history. The ocean, as Glissant reminds us of the Caribbean Sea, tends to deflect and refract meaning. As Christopher Connery has demonstrated, the ocean has “long functioned as capital’s myth element” (1996, 289), creating a lacuna precisely where we should be able to trace the expansion of both capital and empire.

Diaspora studies privilege space, so I would like to shift from these spatial theories of transoceanic migration to examine how they have travelled across time. For it is by historicizing these “peoples of the sea” that one finds a surprising—and disturbing—congruence. In the nineteenth century, English travel historian James Anthony Froude had written exten-
sively of whom he had called the “children of the sea,” but he was referring to British settlers and their fleets in his travel narrative *Oceana, or, England and Her Colonies* (1886). In fact, this valorization of transoceanic migration was a crucial component of British empire building. Froude exclaims that “the sea is the natural home of Englishmen; the Norse blood is in us, and we rove over the waters, for business or pleasure, as eagerly as our ancestors” (1886, 18). In his later and more infamous work, *The English in the West Indies* (1888), Froude proudly recites the maritime destiny that allowed the English to claim the Caribbean Sea from the Spanish and French. Although Froude is considered an anathema to Caribbean scholars, his words are clearly reminiscent of Benítez-Rojo when the latter explains, “The Antillean’s insularity does not impel them toward isolation, but on the contrary toward travel, toward exploration, toward the search for fluvial and marine routes” (1992, 25). Froude’s sense that “the sea is the easiest of highways” (1886, 11–12) is echoed in Hau’ofa’s assertion that “the sea is our pathway to each other, and to everyone else” (1997, 148). Once the British girded the globe with submarine telegraph cables and standardized sea travel with steam ships in the late nineteenth century, the ocean became an increasingly accessible conduit for imperial technology and travel. Thus Froude’s interpellation of the ocean was merely attempting to *naturalize* the ways in which British maritime imperialism had achieved their network of submarine cables, shipping lines, and fleets to rule the waves. Froude’s American contemporary, Capt. Alfred Thayer Mahan, in *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* (1894), had argued that “the sea presents itself . . . [as] a great highway; or better, perhaps, of a wide common, [marked by] lines of travel called trade routes [that] reflect the history of the world” (1957, 25). In making what became an influential argument for the rise of the U.S. maritime empire, Mahan invoked those English ancestors of the Americans to argue that “an inborn love of the sea, the pulse of that English blood which still beat[s] in their veins, keep[s] alive all those tendencies and pursuits upon which a healthy sea power depends” (1957, 38–39). Like Froude, Mahan merges the fluidity of the sea with the racialized blood of Anglo-Saxon diaspora to naturalize colonial and military expansion.

In these particular cases, the transoceanic imaginary entails a valorization of international travel, an unmarked male and elite class, and a suppression of the experiences of women, indentured laborers, slaves, refugees, and many other *forced* migrations that represent the majority of nineteenth-century and contemporary diasporas. By naturalizing the “peoples of the sea,” these theories depoliticize and dehistoricize trajectories of migration. Claiming marine travel as cultural or genealogical essence or, in Gilroy’s
INTRODUCTION

terms, “cross-cultural fluidity,” these writers may overlook colonial and neocolonial motives for transnational migrancy. It certainly cannot be a coincidence that theories valorizing transnational migrants emerge during the highest peaks of migration in the nineteenth century and in our contemporary globalized moment. As poetic as it may seem, most migrants do not choose to permanently leave their homes because their saline blood flows like the oceans or because they inherited a maritime sensibility through their ancestors. In fact, while this may be an era of the greatest movements of people in global history, it seems that the only migrants who relocate by sea are the elite on luxury vessels, whose wealth exceeds the constraints of the nation, or the ultradispossessed on makeshift watercraft, whose poverty prevents their navigation of a vehicle of national sovereignty. While clearly my work is aligned with diaspora theory to foreground migrant agency, I suggest that it is problematic to claim “fluvial and marine routes” for peoples that do not have the backing of a military fleet and the type of imperial power that undergirds Froude’s celebration of the late nineteenth-century “Caucasian tsunami” (Crosby 1986, 300).

I want to emphasize what is generally invisible to diaspora studies and racialize the dominant discourse of the “Caucasian tsunami” in order to interrogate its imperial metaphors of migration and regionalism. My invocations of Froude’s geographic imagination are intended to historicize transatlantic discourse and to highlight how the process of migration is integral to regionalist metaphors. In fact, one cannot envision a united region like the Caribbean or Pacific if there are no migrants linking the islands together. Hau‘ofa’s (1993b) vision of Oceania, for instance, was facilitated by his travel to Hawai‘i, just as George Lamming’s (1984) primary identification of the Caribbean as a region occurred on a transatlantic voyage with other West Indians. Yet regional and diasporic paradigms, while they may seem to exceed the limitations of the nation, often reflect their imperial roots and routes. If I may extend this analysis further back into the history of British imperialism, we see that Froude had a political precursor in this quest to unify diverse islands into a federated archipelago. James Harrington’s The Commonwealth of Oceana (1656) is Froude’s primary inspiration. Harrington has the following to say about the recently consolidated (read: colonized) British archipelago: “The situation of these countries, being islands . . . seems to have been designed by God for a commonwealth . . . The sea gives the law to the growth of Venice, but the growth of Oceana gives the law to the sea” (Harrington quoted in Froude 1886, 2–3). Interestingly, Harrington evokes Pliny the Elder’s model of imperial space which positions Rome at the center of the Mediterranean
Sea, a space “chosen by . . . providence . . . to unite scattered empires, to make manners gentle, to draw together . . . the uncouth tongues of so many nations” (Pliny quoted in Leed 1991, 136). Likewise, Harrington’s divine commonwealth attempted to homogenize the unequal political and social relations between Ireland, Scotland, England, and Wales. His theory of a divinely designed archipelago was then appropriated by Froude, who applied this to the islands of the Pacific and then later to the British colonies of the Caribbean. Like current diaspora theories that focus on transoceanic migration, Froude argued that the British empire was primarily connected through maritime routes. “Oceana” he surmised, “would be a single commonwealth embraced in the arms of Neptune” (1886, 2). Froude remarks that Harrington would be “incredulous” to know that two centuries after his treatise more than fifty-million Anglo-Saxons would be spread over the vast continent of North America, carrying with them their religion, their laws, their language, and their manners; that the globe would be circled with their fleets; that in the Southern Hemisphere they would be in possession of territories larger than Europe, and more fertile than the richest parts of it; that wherever they went they would carry with them the genius of English freedom. (1886, 2)

Although all of these theories celebrate migrancy, Froude clearly draws upon the rhetoric of divine destiny, where the Anglo-Saxons are positioned, not in the centralizing metaphors of Pliny’s Roman empire, but as diasporic Israelites, who “settled” and “multiplied” (1886, 2). Their “portmanteau biota,” as Crosby would have it, is ignored in Froude’s emphasis on culture rather than pathogens, democracy rather than enslavement and dispossession. Froude’s vision of white diaspora excludes the material circumstances of British and Asian indentured laborers, African slaves, and the peoples who occupied these lands before the “genius of English freedom” was forced upon them. This freedom, of course, was constituted by these experiments in enslavement and colonial rule.

Juxtaposing these imperial narratives of Anglo-Saxon diaspora alongside contemporary formulations of maritime migration in the black Atlantic and Pacific does not mean that they are equivalent. But their similar imaginaries suggest that we as scholars need to be attentive to the ways in which metaphors of spatial mobility, or routes, are adapted over time and may have colonial roots. Of course, my position as an American, residing in the belly of the beast, so to speak, means that this book is implicated in
INTRODUCTION

its own critique. As we know from Edward Said (1983) and James Clifford (1992), theories travel and change across space and time; the naturalizing discourse of territorial belonging evidenced in diaspora theory demonstrates its effectiveness for diverse populations of different historical eras. The use of aquatic metaphors, a maritime grammar of the “peoples of the sea,” helps us to recognize the importance of the ocean in the transnational imaginary and in diaspora theory in general. Moreover, historicizing the grammar of diaspora demonstrates how the sea is historically and imaginatively territorialized and cannot function as a facile *aqua nullius* or a blank template for transoceanic migration.

Our Common Heritage: The Blue Revolution

Why has there been such recent growth in the field of transoceanic diaspora studies, in viewing social, historical, and political relationships in terms of Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Ocean studies? Why, when our relationship to the ocean is more estranged and distant than in any other period of human history, are academics suddenly concerned with the history of the sea? To give this an ecological frame, we might say that this heightened interest in the sea derives from our participation in its environmental pollution, similar to the ways in which colonists of the past deforested islands and then mystified this through romanticized ecology and conservation discourse. As Carolyn Merchant (1983) has shown, colonial powers fetishize what they have effectively destroyed. In juxtaposing oceanic discourse at the end of the nineteenth century with its contemporary counterparts, I also want to suggest that the rise in naturalized images of transoceanic diaspora derives from increased maritime territorialism. The modern tendency to incorporate and internalize fluid transnational spaces (as the sea in the blood) may suggest less about an attempt to transcend the boundaries of the ethnic nation-state than the desire to imaginatively integrate the nation’s new maritime territory. Tracing the link between literature and empire, we see that this has historical precedence. For example, scholars have demonstrated that the rise of British maritime imperialism in the eighteenth century was reflected and sustained by its nautical literature. The United States, which wrested maritime dominance from the British in the nineteenth century, also naturalized its expanding naval fleets through the maritime novel. I suggest that just as these literary texts reflected military expansion into the seas, our current efforts to rethink the sea as history arise from a new era of global ocean governance and militarization. This is visible in Hau’ofa’s seminal theory of a sea of islands, where the language
that he employs to articulate “our common inheritance” (1997, 124), is derived from an unprecedented remapping of global sovereignty and common space: the 1982 U. N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). While postcolonial studies has been concerned with mapping and territorialism, the field has not been attentive to the radical shifts in governance of 71 percent of the world’s surface. Atlas, we might remember, was a god of the sea, linking the cartographic production of space with human understandings of the ocean. As I explain in the first chapter, the imperial measurement or rule of the ocean produced latitude and longitude and our modern understanding of universal time. By extension, the process of mapping the Atlantic with the passages of slave ships was crucial to rendering global Euclidean space and to our apprehensions of modernity.

To contextualize the significance of the U. N. Convention on the Law of the Sea we have to place it in the broader historical frame of European expansion and the rise of maritime empires. The first voyage of Columbus resulted in the Treaty of Tordesillas (1493–1494), which halved the world between the Spanish and Portuguese Christian empires by placing a vertical border through the Atlantic Ocean. This act catalyzed European debates about ocean space as property in which Renaissance writers such as Hugo Grotius reinvigorated ancient Roman laws about the nature of *mare clausum* and *mare liberum* (closed and open seas) as they were being redrawn in the Dutch East India territories (Anand 1993). With the rise of the colonial powers, a doctrine of “freedom of the seas” prevailed, defined and controlled by naval military forces. By World War II, ocean space was being rapidly armed, claimed, and mapped by the major maritime empires. The Pacific Ocean was particularly susceptible to American allegations that threats to their national security justified the appropriation of the seas for defense and the testing of missiles and nuclear weapons (Anand 1993, 75–77). By 1945, the first year of the Cold War, President Truman violated the freedom of the seas doctrine with his proclamation that the fisheries and maritime mineral resources contiguous to the U.S. coasts were national territory, greatly extending the littoral (coastal) state to 200 miles out to sea. Two years later Truman violated international law by annexing Micronesia, a “sea of islands” as large as the north Atlantic Ocean, an acquisition that more than doubled U.S. territory. When we factor in the 3.9 billion acres of submarine land and resources, 1.7 times the size of onshore territory, Truman actually *tripled* the size of the United States (National Academy of Sciences 1989, 1). Truman’s proclamation had grown out of wartime oceanographic technologies that had revealed tremendous oil and manganese reserves on the ocean floor, subsoil, and
INTRODUCTION

beds; combined with the postwar interest in establishing submarine atomic weapons and the disposal of nuclear waste, the proclamation catalyzed a new territorialism of the oceans, an international struggle over ocean sovereignty that is ongoing today. In fact, at no other time in history are so many transnational oil companies prospecting and drilling for petroleum and hydrocarbons on the seabed floors.

UNCLOS was created by these contestations over ocean governance, and its charter was forged out of complex relations between the emergent postcolonial states and the dominant western powers. Because the number of sovereign territories doubled after World War II, developing states that had comparatively little in the way of economic leverage were able to gain a new majority lobbying power in the United Nations (Anand 1993, 79).

The first U. N. Conference on the Law of the Sea was held in 1958; by the late 1960s, a vital “Third World coalition” became very active, revealing a “surprising cohesion” in terms of lobbying for material access to ocean resources that were dominated by the major maritime powers (Seyom Brown et al. 1977, 25–27).

In 1967, Malta Representative Arvid Pardo made a historic address to the U. N. General Assembly. Using his position as a representative from a recently postcolonial island, he called for a resolution that would configure the ocean and its resources as the common heritage of mankind, shared equally among all nations—landlocked and coastal, industrialized and postcolonial. Likening the military scramble for the oceans to the carving up of Africa, Pardo called to replace the freedom of the seas doctrine with one of common heritage, based on the premise of peaceful purpose (Pardo 1975, ii). Pointing out the great economic inequalities in the former colonies of Europe, the 1982 Convention legalized a provision that the General Assembly had recognized in 1967: the realm of the “high seas” was the “common heritage” of all nations, and revenue generated from seabed mining, exploration, and fishing must be evenly distributed across the globe, with particular recognition of the needs of the poorer nations (Anand 1993, 82; Allott 1993, 65–66).

Because it ratified the interconnectedness of ecosystems and peoples, the 1982 Convention was heralded as the “first comprehensive, binding, enforceable, international environmental law,” which, by establishing the notion of a common heritage, planted “the seed of a new economic order, of a new economic philosophy, and of a new relationship among people and between people and nature” (Borgese 1993, 33).

Importantly for the island writers I have mentioned, the Convention also sanctioned the concept of archipelagic waters, crucial to island nations in that it invested them with greater jurisdiction to protect and manage
seaborne traffic, fish harvesting, and pollution (Van Dyke 1993a, 13). This was a literal and cartographic remapping of presumably isolated isles into a “sea of islands.” The most powerful resistance to the treaty came from the United States, which accused the 1982 Convention of “communism” because it demarcates deep ocean space as a global commons, transforming *mare clausum* into *mare nostrum*. As Borgese points out, these allegations elide the point that the 1982 Convention refuses any territorialization of deep ocean space and thus circumvents future monopolies on maritime resources (1998, 59). Therefore *mare nostrum*, “our sea,” represents a transnational agreement of mutual participation, conservation, and obligation (Allott 1993, 59). In many ways, the 1982 Convention legitimated indigenous philosophemes of environmental guardianship, particularly those drawn from the Pacific Islands (see Moana Jackson 1993a, 1993b).

It is difficult to image the extent to which the entire globe was remapped because of the ocean’s alterity to continental humans and because the land bias of metropolitan centers often considers deep ocean space to be out of sight and out of mind. Yet in this radical territorial shift, the most important remapping of the globe in recent history, the 1982 Convention expanded the sovereignty of coastal nations to 12 nautical miles, their contiguous zones to 24 nautical miles, and established an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 200 nautical miles. All in all, this translates to roughly 38 million square nautical miles of newly territorialized ocean space. The 1982 Convention enabled all coastal states to extend their territories into the ocean and claim seabed resources such as oil and minerals as well as pelagic fish as national assets. (See Figures 1–3.) Of course, many states do not have 200 nautical miles between them and their neighbors, which has caused considerable difficulties in establishing the borders of the new ocean territories. In fact, these maritime boundaries are so heavily contested that it was a significant challenge to obtain maps for reproduction in this volume, particularly ones that represent ocean space to scale. Figure 1, a map of maritime claims and the worldwide EEZ, illustrates the dramatic ways in which all nation-states have expanded into the ocean in the past twenty-five years. Figure 2, reflecting the EEZ of the United States and its Pacific Island territories, demonstrates the vast and strategic stretches of Oceania controlled by the U.S. Navy. Figure 3, of the EEZ in the Pacific Islands, provides an excellent visual representation of the ways in which a “sea of islands” may literally expand its terrestrial borders, remapping what otherwise might be dismissed as insignificant “dots” on the globe or, as Charles de Gaulle described the Caribbean, “specks of dust” (quoted in Glissant, 1989, n.p.). While on the one hand legislators were forced to recognize the
fluidity of the earth’s only ocean and abandon the myth of seven seas, on the other hand the scramble for the oceans fixed this fluid dynamic space to suit a new era of maritime territorialism.

Pardo’s vision for a shared global commons—an international governance that would ensure that 71 percent of the world’s surface would not be polluted, exploited, armed with nuclear weapons, and pillaged of its biotic and mineral resources by industrialized nations—has certainly not been realized. The vast oceanic stretches of Micronesia, those areas even well beyond nuclearized Bikini and Enewetak, have been dumping grounds for U.S. toxic chemicals such as Agent Orange, dioxins, and nuclear radiation (Van Dyke 1993b, 221), a poignant reminder that the Latin for vastus signifies the ocean as well as waste. At least twenty-three naval nuclear reactors rest on the ocean floor, mainly from nuclear-powered submarines, while an additional fifty nuclear weapons have been reported lost at sea (Handler 1993, 420).

This is a dire time for our terraqueous globe, but the island writers discussed in this book have derived some hopeful models from ocean governance. First, in just the most material of terms, this radical remapping of the globe has greatly increased the political and economic viability of
many small island nations, not to mention their literal presence on the world map. Second, island writers have provided new ways to destabilize national and ethnic boundaries by drawing upon a transoceanic imaginary that reflects the origins of island cultures as well as their imbrication in the fluid trajectories of globalization. Reminding us of the irony that the Law of the Sea encouraged a territorialism over those marine areas where none existed before, Hau’ofa turns to those other interpellations of the sea in which it is “an open and ever flowing reality,” envisioning the ocean, like Pardo, as “our waterway to each other” and a “route to the rest of the world” (1997, 143–144).

As a “Blue Revolution” (Borgese 1998, 14), this model of the ocean as common heritage reflects a new territorialism of the globe as well as a vision of its deterritorialism, making a vital yet unacknowledged contribution to the spatial configuration of diaspora, indigenous, and postcolonial studies. One of the primary ways the ocean can be deterritorialized is through the tidalectic imagination of island literatures. Jamaican author Andrew Salkey is one of the few writers to take up the nuclearization of the seas in his hilarious short story collection, \textit{Anancy, Traveller} (1992). His trickster spider-hero decides to solve this problem of “dread technology” (134) by confronting the ruling powers of the United States, the “Land of the Super-I,” a space of surveillance and hyperindividualism. To do so, Anancy “tief every scrap of tonium” held by the “Holocaust” office in “Washing Town” and in “all the other nukes countries” (19). Then he concocts a “ganja and mushroom tea” to get his military and political opponents “dreamy and nice, like them on the verge o’ making poem” (134). This allows him to “tief way the powers power” (129) from “them that don’t consider island people as real people, no how” (130). He hides these items in a bag at the bottom of an “ocean that see plenty, know plenty and hold secret tight as magnet” (11). Since “is only fish (he) can trust” (21), Anancy and his pelagic companions are the only ones to “know how sea bottom going save the world!” (21). Salkey’s text is a “Blue Revolution” of sorts, a reversal of the rendering of sea as waste that establishes a creative deterritorialism of the oceans through a localizing creole sensibility. He also marshals a different kind of submarine unity between islanders and their nonhuman allies in the seas. Of course, what Anancy and sea bottom do with all of this poisonous “tonium” remains outside the boundaries of the text—suitably, Salkey leaves the seabed unfathomed.

Other Caribbean allegories have not been so hopeful about the new territorialism of the seas and have questioned who benefits from the “Blue Revolution.” I would like to conclude this section by turning briefly to
INTRODUCTION

Ana Lydia Vega’s short story, “Cloud Cover Caribbean” (“Encancar-nublado”) to demonstrate its engagement with these new models of oceanic territorialism, particularly the ways in which the United States has asserted maritime dominance in the region. This Puerto Rican text pinpoints U.S. imperialism as one of the obstacles to Caribbean regionalism and highlights the ways in which the lack of national sovereignty over the seas prevents regional belonging. Moreover, Vega parodies the construction of a masculine Caribbean regional identity through the objectification of women. Her work exemplifies some of the more troubling aspects of the new maritime territorialism and the way in which women’s bodies function as aquatic metaphors while being excluded from regional participation. The publication of her collection in the same year as the 1982 Convention and her depiction of these “Stories of shipwreck” suggest a direct engagement with the colonial castaways of the past and the fate of contemporary “boat people” or balseros in the wake of contemporary models of ocean governance.

Vega opens her allegorical story with the protagonist Antenor escaping his home on a “makeshift vessel” on a “wretched sea adventure” that seems like a “pleasure cruise” compared to his experience of poverty, famine, and terror from the tonton macoutes in Haiti (1989, 106–107). In addition to its Trojan roots, Antenor’s name is playfully drawn from the nineteenth-century Haitian anthropologist, diplomat, and pan-Caribbeanist, Joseph-Anténor Firmin, who had argued presciently for the equality of the races in an era of biological determinism and called for an Antillean Federation half a century before it was attempted in the British West Indies. Antenor then rescues two separate victims of shipwreck, a Dominican and a Cuban, whose disdain for their black Haitian host and competitive behavior suggest the impossibility of a pan-Caribbean union. The failed allegory of Caribbean regionalism is placed in the context of colonial shipwreck narratives, in which Antenor plays “the discoverer while secretly wondering if the world really is round,” who fears that he may plunge off the edge “into the fabled chasms of the monsters” (106). Antenor is unsurprised by the appearance of the “shipwrecked” Dominican, Diogenes, named after the Greek cynic thought to be a founder of cosmopolitanism. After having “established an international brotherhood of hunger, a solidarity of dreams,” the two men are annoyed but unsurprised by the appearance of the Cuban Carmelo, who appears “beside the proverbial plank of the shipwrecked sailor” (107). Although the omniscient narrator switches between the linguistic and cultural registers of their nations, the three men spend much of their time fighting over food, rum, and women, indicating that
even Vega’s narrative framework cannot contain the complexities of Caribbean (male) identity.

Vega places her story in the long colonial tradition of shipwreck and castaway narratives that mystified the process of European maritime expansion. Antenor’s lack of knowledge about the contours of the earth and his fear of monsters aligns him with the founding navigator of the region, Columbus, who is invoked when Antenor determines that “Miami was as far off as China” (110). Yet the author undermines this patriarch’s legacy by juxtaposing these fantastic fears alongside the more pressing terrors of famine and violence by the *macoutes*. This calls into question the models of ethnic diaspora upheld by Froudian “people of the sea” by demonstrating the inability for contemporary “boat people” to effectively navigate or chart their own journeys on land or at sea. Far from being *aqua nullius*, the sea in Vega’s story represents a trickster character, often rocking the boat and upsetting human relations. The sea is also described as an “ugly thing” and a “muscled arm,” a metaphor that becomes clear when the men start fighting, capsize the boat, and are intercepted by an American ship. “The captain, an Aryan, Apollo-like seadog,” has the men pulled on board and barks: “Get those niggers down there and let the spiks take care of them” (110). The refugees are led “to the ship’s hold” (110). The Mediterranean grammar that Vega employs to categorize this seascape, such as Antenor, Diogenes, Apollo, and the confused cartographies of Columbus, evokes the ways in which the Aegean was used as a template for the mapping of the Caribbean, a space historian W. Adolphe Roberts once described as a “potent womb, our sea of destiny, the Mediterranean of the West” (1940, 19).

Fifty years after Roberts, Benítez-Rojo would also imagine the flows of the region in feminized terms, critiquing the capitalist project as “inseminating the Caribbean womb with the blood of Africa” (1992, 5). In Vega’s “ship’s hold,” a clear reference to the middle passage and a new space for the Caribbean’s primary export, human labor, the men encounter an altogether different mapping of the transoceanic imaginary. The Mediterranean model for naming the figures in this story (Diogenes was “a neoclassical baptismal flourish” 107) is juxtaposed to the men’s interpellation into the colonial hierarchies of race (“niggers”) and language (“spiks”). In the hold, the Dominican and Cuban men have the initial “pleasure of hearing their mother tongue spoken,” which even the Haitian “welcomed” (110). But Vega dismantles regional identification based on language and critiques her own omnipotence as narrator when a “Puerto Rican voice growled through the gloom: ‘If you want to feed your bellies here you’re going to have to work, and I mean work. A gringo don’t give nothing away. Not to
his own mother” (111). The “growling” aligns this anonymous vernacular voice with the Aryan “sea-dog” and homogenizes these diverse Caribbean migrants under the rubric of exploited labor. The denial of maternal identification (to motherland or mother tongue) is the price paid to the gatekeeper of the hold, the cost of their assimilation into the U.S. nation-state, metonymically represented by the Aryan ship. Read tidalectically, we can see that the gendering of the land/sea relationship is articulated in terms of a feminized motherland and a fluid Caribbean “womb.” In fact, the only moment the three bickering men had found common “ground” on the boat is when they spoke of the “internationally famous backsides of the island’s famous beauties” (109). As sexualized or maternal objects, women are invoked as the necessary symbolic background to the larger male theatre of national and regional identification. This gendered split between the regional/national is much like the rendering of the global/local, which positions “women and femininity as rooted, traditional, and charged with maintaining domestic continuity in the face of flux and instability caused by global movements that, explicitly or not, embody a quality of masculinity” (Freeman 2001, 1017). Like the concept of a woman in every port, this relation between roots and routes literalizes the sexual tidalectic between a cruder set of homonyms: “land, ho” and “seamen.”

Benítez-Rojo’s ideal that “the Peoples of the Sea (are) traveling together toward the infinite” (1992, 16) is complicated when we consider the limitations imposed on refugees and transoceanic voyagers. Had Antenor been without his Dominican and Cuban companions, his fate may have been radically different. Thanks to an interdiction agreement signed in 1981 between Ronald Reagan and Jean-Claude Duvalier, the United States agreed to intercept Haitian refugees coming by boat and forcibly return them to Haiti, an agreement that violated international law and the refugee interception provisions established by the Law of the Sea. In the face of this history, Vega’s short story brilliantly adopts and then discards all the possible sites of identification for Caribbean “peoples of the sea”: from geopolitical status to masculinity, from linguistic affiliation to the coerced production of global capitalism. In 1962 C. L. R. James declared: “The Caribbean is now an American sea. Puerto Rico is its show piece” (1993, 308). Writing a year after the Reagan proclamation claimed 4 million square miles of the marine space of the continental United States and its island colonies (including Puerto Rico), Vega’s story highlights the ways in which the policies of colonial nation-states engage tidalectically with the fate of those adrift at sea.
As a “Blue Revolution,” the Law of the Sea continues to challenge our notions of time and space, in a continuing and necessary dialogue on ocean governance. As Hau’ofa demonstrates, it is a model for an “oceanic identity [that] transcend[s] insularity,” but it cannot be interpreted without addressing territorial claims from the land. The “sea is our pathway to each other and to everyone else,” but utilizing metaphors of feminine fluidity often suppresses the violence of the crossing and erases the continual military surveillance of ocean space. It is only by addressing the violence alongside the ocean’s hopeful potentials that we might determine that “the sea is our most powerful metaphor, the ocean is in us” (Hau’ofa 1997, 148).

Routes and Roots

In engaging the tidalectic relationship between the homonyms “routes” and “roots,” this study builds upon a body of cultural studies scholarship in an attempt to explore the nexus of time-space in postcolonial island literatures. Because this work destabilizes the national, ethnic, and even regional frameworks generally employed for literary study, it cannot take any of these parameters for granted. As such, it is a work concerned with metaphors of origins and belonging as well as their current political negotiations and even mystifications. My first chapter, “Middle Passages: Modernity and Creolization,” explores how the ocean functions as a metonymic history for the millions of Africans who were transported across the Atlantic. I outline a history of the ways in which British maritime expansion sought to render the vastness of ocean space into temporalized place through a system of cognitive and literal maps that ranged from nautical literature to the charting of longitude. Building upon the work of Atlantic historians and diaspora theorists, I turn to the chronotope of the transatlantic ship, exploring how the multiethnically constituted slave ships that crossed the Atlantic suggest a type of time-space compression prior to industrial modernity. I focus on John Hearne’s novel *The Sure Salvation* (1981), a fictionalization of the middle passage that suggests that if “space is a practiced place” (de Certeau 1984, 117), one may read a narrative “practice” of the Atlantic Ocean. In his revision of Herman Melville’s *Benito Cereno*, Hearne inscribes an illegal English slave ship in 1860, decades after abolition, symbolizing the failures of linearchronologies of progress. Moreover, his depiction of the ship’s stasis, its immobility and timelessness amidst a literal waste of feces, blood, vomit, and sperm that envelopes the ship and the middle passage experience, immobilizes the telos of movement across space needed to render
INTRODUCTION

the progress of history. Consequently, The Sure Salvation renders the sea as history through the metaphor of the sea as waste. The corporeality of the ship, its workers, and its slaves emphasizes an embodied history and the ways in which the bourgeois racialization of dirt and pollution was constituted in the oceanic “waste” of Atlantic modernity.

In this exploration of the sea as a dynamic space of cultural, ontological, and historical origins, I build upon Glissant’s assertion that “the abyss is a tautology” in which the ocean signifies a “vast beginning . . . whose time is marked by these balls and chains gone green” (1997, 6). This beginning is linked to the creation of modern time through the Atlantic slave trade and the construction of longitude, which harnessed the fluidity of the ocean to homogenize the globe into universal time. In this chapter, the ocean is figuratively sounded as a space of black diaspora origins, a gesture that Caribbean writers share with Walcott to “harvest ancestral voices from [the] surf” (1986, 16) and to chart what the “historian cannot hear: the howls/of all the races that crossed the water” (285).

Chapter 2, “Vessels of the Pacific: An Ocean in the Blood,” examines how Pacific Island writers have mobilized precolonial seafaring routes as the historical roots to globalizing fluidity and flows. Inspired by Caribbean writers such as Walcott, and by the fact that the islands are literally growing through geological activity, scholars like Hau’ofa have conceptualized the region as a dynamic “sea of islands,” connected by ancient and modern travelers. Because the transoceanic imagination employs the ship or voyaging canoe as a vessel that sustains regionalism, this chapter traces out a genealogy of Pacific vehicles of sovereignty, the Vaka Pasifika. To recover the voyaging canoe as a vessel of history, I begin with a discussion of how the region has become synonymous with the economic entity, Asia Pacific, and trace how the U.S. military fostered the myth of island isolation as part of its nuclearization and “scramble for the oceans” during the Cold War. Military-funded projects from Pacific anthropology to Thor Heyerdahl’s celebrated Kon-Tiki journey were able to justify these ideas of island isolation only by dismissing the histories of Polynesian seafaring that led to the settlement of every island in the largest ocean on the globe, and by replacing these historic routes with trajectories of Aryan migration.

After exploring the close relationship between the militarization of the Pacific and its epistemic by-products in anthropology and area studies, I turn to the revitalization of indigenous seafaring histories, evident in the 1976 voyage of the Hawaiian canoe Hokule’a to Tahiti and visible in contemporary Pacific literatures. I explore how the concept of the vessel
shifts from its interpellation as empty basin to a corporeal metaphor of a people’s genealogy, history, and sovereignty. In my exploration of Vincent Eri’s novel *The Crocodile* and Tom Davis’s *Vaka*, I demonstrate that like the grammar of diaspora, canoe metaphysics draw from fluid metaphors of kinship and blood. This chapter argues that narratives of Pacific voyaging reflect a complex discourse of indigenous diaspora or native routes that likens the fluidity of the maritime region to ethnic kinship, positioning the Pacific vaka as a vehicle of ancestral and global history and inscribing the “ocean in the blood.” The concept of the vessel renders tidalectics visible—it is the principal way in which roots are connected to routes, and islands connected to the sea. Whether imagined as a voyaging canoe, a naval ship, a raft, or as ethnic blood, the vessel is integral to claims to sovereignty in the region.

In an era of globalization, travel remains a seductive concept that is positively coded along the lines of progress and innovation. It still remains questionable to what extent the shift from national to diasporic literary studies over the past two decades entails a self-reflexive and critical recognition of the contemporary economic, military, and material manifestations of global capitalism. Moreover, the ways in which these theories of travel and diaspora are racialized and gendered have not been fully explored. Although scholars have done much to deepen our understanding of migrancy, nomadology, and diaspora, many have overlooked the ways in which stability and rootedness are often conflated with stagnancy, indigeneity, and women. Mary Gordon has noted that literature in the Americas “connects females with stasis and death; males with movement and life” (1991, 17). Given the fact that the etymological root of diaspora is spore and sperm (Helmreich 1992, 243), it is not surprising that western literary narratives, as Eric Leed demonstrates, produce history through a masculine telos of the “spermatic journey.” Building upon their insights, Janet Wolff has cogently argued that “just as practices and ideologies of actual travel operate to exclude or pathologize women, so the use of that vocabulary as metaphor necessarily produces androcentric tendencies in theory” (1992, 224). As Carole Boyce Davies points out, “It is not an accident that it happens to be men who are asserting the right to theory and travel” (1992, 45). Thus the first section of *Routes and Roots* is particularly attentive to the ways in which masculine travelers are positioned on a ship that is likened to the world, a homosocial rendering of the domestic realm without women. What are the consequences of valorizing a masculine shipboard community as a symbol of transnationalism, labor unity, or creolization? Who benefits from a
discourse in which women are bounded to an archaic nation-state? How do women enter history when it is produced by a migrant community of men?

By raising these questions, the first section highlights the ways in which the concept of a feminine sea is a vital metaphor to generate and sustain the ideologies of masculine reproduction on the ship. With its similar grammar of feminized flows and fluidity, one can extend this to the discourse of globalization as well. Yet this creates a paradox. “The notion of feminine identity as relational, fluid, and without clear boundaries seems more congruent with the perpetual mobility of travel than is the presumed solidity and objectivity of masculine identity” (Wolff 1992, 31–32). Yet it is precisely the lack of ego fluidity in dominant forms of masculinity that makes it necessary to feminize travel as fluidity. By associating women with regeneration and (pro)creation, metaphors of femininity become essential to a masculinist paradigm of travel discourse that pathologizes female travelers themselves. As I explain in the first chapter, the rigid hierarchy of the ship and the vast fluidity of the sea are mutually constitutive elements of the transoceanic imaginary. By extension, the contained boundaries of the masculine subject operate in contradistinction to the vast fluidity of the feminized sea. The ship and the sea are necessarily gendered female so that a contained group of male travelers, a homosocial community, may maintain a heterosexual tidalectic associated with ocean space. Interestingly, the ship has not always been conceived as an exclusively masculine community contained by a feminized vessel; in England the term for ship was initially understood as male (Kemp, 1976, 780). Only in the sixteenth century was the ship attributed with feminine qualities and figureheads, and while we understand it as a homosocial space, it was as late as 1840 that women were banned from living aboard docked British Naval ships (Kemp 302, 800). The phrase “show” or “shake a leg” derives from the need to differentiate sailors from their female companions in the hammocks aboard ship (Kemp 800), while a “son of a gun” refers to the birth of (male) children on the gundecks of British Naval ships (Kemp 816). In most of the novels discussed in this section, actual women are not imagined on the ship, but as in Vega’s story, symbols of femininity are vital to sustain the men’s receptivity to intercultural contact and to maintain their mobile structure of the domestic. In other words, a symbolic grammar of feminized vessels and flows enables the homosocial community on the ship to maintain porous social boundaries and to reproduce, both narratively and as agents of history. If, as C. L. R. James asserts: “the ship is only a miniature of the world
in which we live” (1978, 79), this suggests that the transoceanic imagination may reflect the gendered spatial logic of the nation-state.27

Although the transoceanic focus of the first section of this book seems to privilege routes, my examination of these literary works demonstrates that the discourse of diaspora is constituted in relation to the stabilizing notions of femininity, nation, and indigeneity. This is why it is crucial that we engage a tidalectic between land and sea, examining how indigenous narratives and epistemologies are essential to the constitution of dominant productions of diaspora. This tidalectic helps to complicate theories such as Anthony Appiah’s notion of “rooted cosmopolitanism” (1998), because genealogical roots, in indigenous communities, are vital to ontological and legal claims against the colonial nation-state. Since postcolonial theories have tended to celebrate nomadism and cosmopolitanism without always addressing domestic issues such as cultural and national sovereignty, the second section of Routes and Roots departs from watery trajectories to focus on indigenous cartographies, exploring how island novelists nativize the literary landscape.

This book not only makes the claim that postcolonial and diaspora studies have tended to displace indigenous discourses, it takes one step further to argue that the valorization of “routes” is constituted by a dichotomous rendering of native “roots.” 28 Chapter 3, “Dead Reckoning: National Genealogies in Aotearoa/New Zealand,” discusses the ways in which June Mitchell’s novel Amokura (1978) charts native genealogies—the legacy of the dead—by reconfiguring the narrative structures of novel and nation through the use of Maori spiral time. Like the concept of “moving islands,” which draws upon an indigenous “time sense” (Lewis 1994, 120) charted across distance, the spiral is a trope that symbolizes a dynamic interrelation between the temporal and spatial. As such, this challenges theories of nationalism by revealing that indigenous practices of national belonging are far more layered and inclusive than diaspora theorists would let us believe. This chapter contributes to recent discussions in Pacific studies about native epistemologies by exploring genealogy or whakapapa in Aotearoa/New Zealand, defined as an ancestral and bodily inheritance, a “meta-physics” or corporeal history. Although Maori literature is not associated with the practice of diaspora, I explore how Mitchell’s rendering of an internal migration in nineteenth-century Aotearoa/New Zealand complicates the tidalectic between indigeneity and dispersal and literalizes the definition of whakapapa as to layer. By drawing Mitchell’s spiral genealogies alongside Keri Hulme’s Booker Prize–winning novel, the bone people
INTRODUCTION

(1983), which also engages a rhizomatic layering of place, I foreground how Maori whakapapa is utilized as a paradigm of national settlement or native landfall. Ultimately, I define “dead reckoning” as an indigenous methodology that draws its foundation from the presence of the ancestors in the national landscape, rendering a literal body of history. Because Aotearoa/New Zealand, like many other islands in the Pacific, is understood to be a fish hauled from the sea by the demigod Maui, I explore how this concept of the pelagic or moving island complicates sedentary notions of land and soil.

“Adrift and Unmoored: Globalization and Urban Indigeneity” builds upon the previous chapter to chart how a fluid discourse of roots offers a model of native historiography in the destabilizing wake of the postmodern state. This chapter locates the process of globalization in the Pacific as vital to the unmooring of rural indigenous identities yet also crucial to the political consolidation of pan-tribal, regional, and urban sovereignty movements. I focus on Albert Wendt’s dystopic novel, Black Rainbow (1992), which depicts homeless indigenous peoples who must revitalize their genealogies to resist a global capitalist state that emphasizes the “ever-moving present” over a native past. The novel responds to an unprecedented shift in the Pacific in which the global privatization of state territories catalyzed native migration as well as sovereignty movements that reconfigured the production of local historiography. His protagonist must “confess” his history to the government tribunal in order to be accepted into the “ever-moving present” of the capitalist state. I read this as Wendt’s prescient warning about the ways in which historiography has become a lucrative business and an expanded domain of the state in the wake of land and resource claims submitted to the Waitangi Tribunal, an agency established to ensure the 1840 Treaty is honored. Depicting a protagonist of mixed heritage who attempts to sustain both family memory and national history, Wendt charts how Pacific diaspora might be usefully refashioned in terms of a creolized indigeneity that reflects global cosmopolitanism (routes) while maintaining genealogical continuity for land claims and sovereignty (roots).

Although Caribbean literary discourse has been traditionally mapped in terms of diaspora and “ex-isle,” my final chapter expands the parameters of discussion by addressing how indigenous presence is excavated as a trope of terrestrial historiography in the anglophone islands, particularly in Michelle Cliff’s No Telephone to Heaven (1987) and Merle Collins’s The Colour of Forgetting (1995). Because British colonists arrived in
the region after much of the indigenous population had been decimated, Carib and Arawak historical presence has not factored significantly in the anglophone Caribbean imagination until very recently. “Landfall: Carib and Arawak Sedimentation” investigates the ways in which writers such as Cliff, Collins, Jamaica Kincaid, and Wilson Harris have complicated the discourse of black nationalism to chart an indigenous Caribbean history in a dialogue with later arrivants. These efforts to localize and indigenize Caribbean history must be seen as a resistance to the ongoing pressures of outmigration from the region and as an effort to highlight the importance and viability of small island communities, or local roots in the wake of globalizing routes. They reflect a tidalectic engagement with routes and roots, upholding cultural creolization and offering a poetic corrective to materialist approaches to Caribbean historiography. Like Harris, Collins and Cliff forge complex alliances between African diaspora subjects and the traces of Carib and Arawak presence in their depictions of island colonization, with postcolonial nationalism inscribed as an ideal, but ultimately unattainable, landfall.

The title of this book, which borrows from James Clifford, highlights the central tenet of *Routes*: “Practices of displacement might emerge as *constitutive* of cultural meanings rather than as their simple transfer or extension” (1997, 3). As Davies observes, “Discourses of home and exile are central to any understanding of the politics of location” (1992, 20). The Caribbean and Pacific Islands I investigate here are characterized by a tidalectic engagement with settlement and migration. As I have discovered in the process of writing this book, the relationship between roots and routes is mutually constitutive and this can be imagined in historic and material terms. Writing about Vanuatu, anthropologist Joël Bonnemaison asks: “Can the tree, symbol of rootedness and stability, be reconciled with the canoe, symbol of unrestricted wandering?” (1994, 30). He determines that it can, since in that context the human is perceived as a rooted and fixed tree whereas the people represent a “canoe that follows ‘roads’ and explores the wide world” (30). Using seemingly contradictory terms such as “the land canoe” (43) and “territorial mobility” (48), Bonnemaison and other scholars have explained these indigenous spatial metaphors by emphasizing the profoundly circular patterns of both traditional and modern migration. Indigenous and diaspora epistemologies are crucial interests of this book, and the tree, a source of metaphysical roots and also a vehicle of transoceanic diaspora, represents that tidalectic crossing between space and time. This is why it’s no accident that the opening scene of Walcott’s
INTRODUCTION

epic poem *Omeros* depicts Caribbean trees as ancestral gods who must be felled in order for the Greek-inspired fishermen, Achille(s) and Hector, to fashion them into canoes and retrace their African routes to the sea. The transition from roots to routes suggests an imaginative return to origins in which “the logs gathered that thirst for the sea which their own vined bodies were born with” (1990, 7). It is this tidalectic between land and sea, settlement and diaspora, that these postcolonial island literatures bring to the foreground, as we “catch the noise of the surf lines,” of the “sea’s parchment atlas” (13).
PART I

The Sea is History

Transoceanic Diasporas
The Atlantic is a rass of a history ocean.
—Andrew Salkey, *Anancy, Traveller*

One of the most important Caribbean contributions to the conceptualization of space and time is an originary narrative of transoceanic diaspora. While western scholars are increasingly turning to the Atlantic as a paradigm of transnational crossings and flows, the conceptual implications of this oceanic model have been deeply explored in the Caribbean, where tidalectics reconceptualize diaspora historiography. As I’ve explained, tidalectics foreground a cyclical model of history and resist the teleology of a Hegelian dialectical synthesis.1 Drawing upon land/sea cartography, tidalectics foreground historical trajectories of dispersal and destabilize island isolation by highlighting waves of migrant landfalls into the Caribbean. This dynamic model is an important counter-narrative to discourses of filial rootedness and narrow visions of ethnic nationalism. This chapter explores the fluid metaphors of the Atlantic to theorize a Caribbean originary imagination and its engagement with the chronotope, or time-space, of narrative history. The shift in focus from terrestrial history to the transoceanic spaces that enabled African, Asian, European, and indigenous crossings to the islands complicates genealogical roots and destabilizes the colonial architecture that literally constructed the region as European. In this body of literature, water is associated with fluidity, flux, creolization, and originary routes.

The colonial balkanization of the islands into discrete language regions is destabilized by Kamau Brathwaite’s contention that Caribbean “unity is submarine” (1974, 64). The history and geography of the Caribbean suggest a tidalectic engagement with land and sea and their associated narratives of empire, transoceanic diaspora, and postcolonial nation-building. While most scholars have focused on the slave plantation system as the originary mechanism of creolization in the Caribbean, they have neglected the ways in which the region’s writers have mobilized a fluid oceanic imaginary, positioning the Atlantic as a shifting cultural origin of modernity.
and creolization—in the words of Jan Carew, “on an island your cosmos of the imagination begins with the sea” (1984, 34).

This concern with cognitive (re)mapping, or imaginatively occupying Caribbean and Atlantic seascapes, differs from other theories of reterritorialization because tidalitics are concerned with the fluidity of water as a shifting site of history and invoke the peoples who navigated or were coerced into transoceanic migrations.2 As I have examined the regional maritime imagination elsewhere, this chapter addresses the literary trajectories of the middle passage and the ways in which the ocean functions as a metonymic history for the millions of Africans who were transported across the Atlantic.3 I explore Derek Walcott’s assertion that “the sea is history” in the first Caribbean novel set exclusively in the middle passage, John Hearne’s The Sure Salvation (1981). Here the Atlantic Ocean is figuratively sounded as a space of black diaspora origins and world modernity.

This chapter is also concerned with the ways in which diaspora space is conceptualized in relation to modern time. Spatial theorists from David Harvey to Michel de Certeau have made important contributions to our understanding of time-space compression and how the movement of bodies transforms space into place. These theorists suggest that perceptions of time are constituted by physical and conceptual movement across terrestrial space. My intervention is to broaden this use of space to consider first, how immobility, or the lack of movement across space, can produce history, and second, how one’s location in the perpetually moving ocean may produce alternative renderings of time-space. Turning from terrestrial landscapes to the alterity of the ocean raises questions as to how one may localize and thus historicize fluid space. Therefore the first section of this chapter sketches a history of how British colonial expansion sought to render the vastness of ocean space into temporalized place, while the second part turns to the transatlantic slave ship, building upon the work of Paul Gilroy (1993) and others to position the crossing as a time-space compression that helped constitute modernity.4 To address the latter, I have adopted Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope to explore slave-ship narratives. He explains:

In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. (1981, 84)
Eric Sundquist has used this passage to explore the compressed time-space of Herman Melville’s *Benito Cereno* (1855), a novel that mystifies a shipboard slave rebellion and has provided a structural and ideological template for *The Sure Salvation*. “Melville’s story suggests the essential doubleness of the American ship of state . . . the ark of the covenant that authorized both liberty and slavery, leaving the national mission adrift, becalmed amidst incalculable danger” (1993, 143-144).\(^5\) Hearne revises *Benito Cereno* to highlight the “doubleness” of the British “ship of state” as it sustains and criminalizes the slave trade after its abolition in 1807. In both novels, the slave ship’s stagnancy, its paradoxical *immobility* in fluid oceanic space suspends and “thickens” perceptions of time. Hearne’s text inscribes how time is rendered in the commodified and spatially compressed “flesh” of enslaved Africans and positions the middle passage as a fluid site of African and European modernity.

These transatlantic ships were unevenly situated within what Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker refer to as the “hydrarchy,” defined as “the organization of the maritime state from above, and the self-organization of the sailors from below” (2000, 144).\(^6\) My intervention is to bring the literary inscription of African slaves in relation to the hydrarchy and ship-as-chronotope to gesture to the ways in which the material compression of slaves in the holds of ships may offer a different context for understanding Atlantic modernity and its nexus of space and time. Secondly, and vital to the aims of this book as a whole, I explore how localizing maritime space is the process by which one establishes that “the sea is history.” Walcott’s phrase has appeared as the epigraph to countless Caribbean texts and inspired Hearne’s novel. While the ocean, perhaps more than any other space on earth, has been either ignored or read as a transparent, transitive, and asocial place by the vast majority of spatial theorists, ocean space and the Atlantic in particular contributed to the rise of the novel and its narrative encoding of modern time. For most of western Europe, the Atlantic has been the formative space of maritime imperialism and its literary counterpart, the castaway and nautical adventure narrative. This is why it is no coincidence that the ocean is the driving spatial mechanism of one of the earliest, most influential English novels: *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). As the British colonized territories across the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans, these bodies of water were interpellated as sites of muscular Christianity in nineteenth-century British literature. It was by adopting this template of transoceanic and masculine imperialism that many nineteenth-century Anglo-American nautical fictions helped extend the conceptual and geo-
CHAPTER 1

Thus Hearne’s novel, which inscribes the ebb of British maritime expansion amidst the rising tide of revolutionary subjects in the nineteenth-century Americas, reflects how British nautical literature helped to constitute U.S. political and cultural production. At this point I would like to outline a heuristic genealogy of British maritime narratives, addressing the ways in which, if “space is a practiced place” (de Certeau 1984, 117), one may read a narrative “practice” of the Atlantic Ocean, specifically the middle passage.

**Temporalizing Ocean Space**


"Where are your monuments, your battles, your martyrs?"

"Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,"

"In that grey vault. The sea. The sea"

"Has locked them up. The sea is History."

— Derek Walcott, “The Sea is History”

In his introduction to *The Oxford Book of the Sea*, Jonathan Raban points out that the English language “is littered with dead nautical metaphors” (1992, 7), semantic remnants of transoceanic histories. Another maritime scholar contends that “no language in the world is so replete with nautical terms” (Batchelder 1929, 625). Words of spatial mobility such as navigate, traverse, launch, (a)board, course, moor, anchor, and wake all arose from British maritime activity and, while set adrift from their watery origins, function here as a marked “sea grammar” with which to address the language of ocean time and space. As I will explain, these terms suggest a spatial philosophy, a telos of movement across water that subordinates time to space, rather than the more temporally inflected discourse of terrestrial knowledge. In fact, the rapid emergence of seventeenth-century English nautical dictionaries suggests the necessity to translate a vocabulary of early modern globalization at the moment when Britain began to effectively compete with its European counterparts in transatlantic colonization.

Paradoxically, the expansion of empire led to more entrenched conflations of nation with race, a legacy that continues to nationalize scholarly boundaries, even in fields such as black diaspora and Atlantic studies. As Christopher Connery has shown, an “oceanic feeling” hardly precludes nationalist bias or the expansion of state capital in the service of empire. Because histories, like bodies of water, stream into one another, I want to foreground the complex system of economic and cultural flows from the
Mediterranean to the broader Atlantic. This is especially important given the
nationalist contours of maritime studies that often relegate non-European subjects (and technologies) to the symbolic hold of transatlantic ships. This Mediterranean Sea complex, specifically the spatial logic of the Greek and Roman empires, was often mobilized in the discourse of British empire-building, while its non-European others were submerged. While Atlantic studies are suffused with the language of newness and innovation, they all too often eclipse the contributions of other ocean histories. The maxim “Britannia rules the waves” was incorporated into a teleological narrative of nationalist empire, yet this process was made possible only through contact with more developed African, Arab, and Asian nautical technologies, including the astrolabe and the compass. As such, the Atlantic histories invoked here arose from an earlier fluid space of trade and exchange. These adopted technologies of reckoning one’s position at sea were integral to the ways in which the ocean (space) was harnessed to produce narrative (time).

Unlike terrestrial space, the perpetual circulation of ocean currents means that as a space, the sea necessarily dissolves local phenomenology and diffracts the accumulation of narrative. In other words, the ocean suspends and distorts terrestrial markings of temporality. Although one cannot simply disentangle space from time, the British struggle to establish longitude suggests that European conceptions of the ocean and its navigation were largely spatial until the modernizing (and thus temporal) transformations of the late eighteenth century. As Dava Sobel points out, reckoning latitude, a British inheritance from Ptolemy, is based upon natural markers such as the position of the stars or sun in a given place. Significantly, the Atlantic mapping of latitude was derived from Portuguese slave traders (and their Arab colleagues) off the west coast of Africa. Longitude, particularly the zero-degree meridian at Greenwich, is a political construct, created to protect colonial trade and based on the difference in time between a British ship’s departure and arrival point (Sobel 1995, 4–5). A nautical measurement first accurately calculated by the English clockmaker John Harrison in 1762, longitude is constructed almost exclusively in terms of time. In fact, Harrison’s transatlantic crossing along the well-worn slave route to Jamaica enabled him to establish precise chronometry, contributing to the global homogenization of time-space and its transportability through the proliferation of pocket watches.

The Atlantic Ocean, specifically the routes of the maritime slave trade, was the constitutive space for our modern and global measurement of time. Longitude to this day is based upon the movement of eighteenth-century British ships traversing oceanic space. Thus the universalization of global
space derives from Britannia’s “rule” of the waves, a rule of both dominion and measurement that drew from the most fluid of earth’s surfaces to standardize public space and time. While longitude to some extent reflects distance traveled, the ocean’s propensity for distortion means that the spatial is subordinated to the temporal: “one degree of longitude equals four minutes of time [everywhere], but in terms of distance, one degree shrinks from sixty-eight miles at the Equator to virtually nothing at the poles” (Sobel 1995, 5). The conscription of the earth, and specifically the sea, into Euclidean geometries constitutive of modern linear time suggests a shift in cultural and political constructions of the ocean, a cognitive mapping that attempts to submit amorphous matter to the historical will of empires and nations.

Temporalizing ocean space was a vital objective to the British maritime empire because inaccuracies in time resulted in devastating losses of human labor and material resources through shipwreck. An error in a ship’s chronometer of one minute could result in a spatial miscalculation of fifteen nautical miles—this proved especially deadly for laden ships returning to the rocky shores of Great Britain (Sobel 1995, 54). Anthony Giddens demonstrates that the eighteenth-century “invention of the mechanical clock and its diffusion . . . were of key significance in the separation of time from space” (1990, 17), but he neglects to mention that, paradoxically, the fluidity of ocean space facilitated the homogenization of time and, by extension, labor. The imbrication of transoceanic movement with successful timekeeping, the chronometers and hourglasses that measured distance and units of labor, dictated sailors’ schedules “with a precision unknown to almost every other early modern worker” (Bolster 1997, 84). Accordingly, nautical speech is replete with temporal semantics: for instance, a sailor’s “watch” reflects an assignment of labor (Bolster 1997, 84), while “dead time” and “slack time” describe a sailor’s terrestrial unemployment between ocean voyages (Bolster 1997, 86); this suggests that the measured pace of linear time exists only at sea. While the dominant discourse of the British empire sought to mystify the relationship between slave and maritime labor, sailors coined the ironic term “Negro’s holiday” to describe working Sundays (Kemp 1976, 589) and parodied “Rule Britannia” with the refrain that “on the waves . . . thy darling sons are slaves!” (quoted in Land 2001, 177). The rigid disciplining of nautical time and labor positioned the ship as “a prototype of the factory,” an etymology that Linebaugh and Rediker trace to “factor,” a West African trade representative “where factories were originally located” (2000, 150). As such, the eighteenth-century ship, a “machine of empire” and a “floating factory” (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000, 150) that brought Europe, Africa, and the Americas into uneven
social and economic relations, was the means by which the homogenous, empty time of capitalist modernity was constructed. As Connery explains, “Movable capital is liquid capital” (1995, 40). This suggests the most compelling reason why, in the late eighteenth century, “flow” and “liquidity” suddenly became the “dominant metaphor[s]” for the circulation of capital, information, ideologies, and power (Illich 1987, 43–44).

Compared with the distance of its overseas territories, the encircling Atlantic provides Great Britain’s most spatially proximate engagement with slavery and maritime colonialism; perhaps this geographic intimacy coupled with assumptions of *aqua nullius* help to explain why this ocean was a primary site of narratives of British ethnic nationalism and masculinity. In his reading of Hegel, Connery suggests that “ocean-going activates Western history” in ways that encode “a similar logic of master-slave” (1996, 296–297) and, I would add, a mystification of the vertical power relations that constitute the homogenizing nation-state. The British charting of a humanized, temporal ocean space was enacted across many registers in the eighteenth century, including the marshaling of a broad spectrum of Enlightenment sciences in the search for longitude and the incorporation of African slave traders like Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins into a genealogy of maritime nationalism. The attempts to claim ocean space as territory caused multiple seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European maritime battles and generated legal debates over whether the ocean was essentially a closed (national territory) or open (internationally shared) space. A new legal grammar of the “freedom of the seas” ironically facilitated the passage of slave ships, contributing to the ways in which the Atlantic became a primary space of the dialectic between European colonial sovereignty and African subjection. The eighteenth-century emergence of the nautical adventure novel, a symbolic effect of the ways in which the sovereignty of European male subjects was attained through a narrative temporalization of ocean space, can be understood as a modern product of the ways in which Britannia ruled the waves.

It is no coincidence that English novelists drew from firsthand accounts of transatlantic colonization and thus fictionally expanded a profoundly imperialist—and therefore historical—cartography of the sea. As Laura Brown explains, the rapid rise of British maritime shipping after 1660 contributed to a distinctive shift in the literature where “the sea [became] the national rhetorical topos” (2001, 63) to reflect and sustain British mercantile imperialism. This helps elucidate the extraordinary popularity of *Robinson Crusoe*, which, by the early twentieth century, had been adapted in over five hundred publications in England alone (Carpenter 1984, 8). As I
explained in the introduction, the island-adventure genre, arising simultaneously with the maritime novel, was vital to the expansion of British muscular Christianity. That these narratives conveniently configured islands and oceans as unpopulated only served to mystify the British formula for maritime colonialism: deserted islands were accidentally colonized by shipwrecked children. The project of maritime empire was often reflected in a formulaic genre that marked the broad space of the transoceanic imagination by narrative time through the use of chronotopic elements such as the tempest and shipwreck, punctuated by violent masculine encounters with pirates, buccaneers, or cannibals.  

By the nineteenth century, popular British sea fiction was already well entrenched in a mystification of transatlantic expansion, where boy-adventure narratives such as Charles Kingsley’s xenophobic *Westward Ho!* (1855) and *Water Babies* (1863) were encoding a naturalized and infantilized teleology of Protestant maritime expansion. Once the late Renaissance cartographers began to empty the Atlantic Ocean of imagined islands, antipodes, krakens, sirens, mermaids, and leviathans, it seems that the nautical adventure novel emerged to repopulate it, albeit selectively. The most important contribution to England’s rise to modernity—the trade and enslavement of Africans—is peripheral to most maritime adventure novels of the nineteenth century. This is particularly significant when we consider the British novelist Frederick Marryat, whose popular maritime narratives generally suppress the trade that enabled his familial, professional, and literary success. The rise of a bourgeois readership sustained his writing career, but his father, a West Indian planter, slave trader, and chairman of Lloyds’ (Eric Williams 1944,104), provided the material basis for it.  

In gesturing to these broad narratives of the sea, I suggest that the radical economic and social changes brought about by transatlantic colonialism enacted a gradual sea change in conceptions of ocean space. While this may seem an obvious point, the colonial origins of this new sense of modern time-space have escaped the notice of most scholars working in the grammars of oceanic studies. As such, a metacritical apparatus for discussing the ways in which colonialism constructed the sea as history has been lacking in Atlantic studies. For instance, Alain Corbin (1994) and George Ryley Scott (1939) detail how for centuries the French and English depicted the ocean as a hostile, ungodly place until the rise in therapeutic bathing repopulated European shores; this is the same time that nautical novels reconfigured the sea as a space of romantic adventure and refuge. While both locate this conceptual shift in the late eighteenth century, neither connects this to European maritime imperialism and the ways in
which the sea was rapidly becoming a temporal object of popular knowledge. By turning to Raban’s more recent work, which explores the ways in which the construction of the British literary canon is indebted to the maritime literature of Coleridge, Byron, and others, we can get a better understanding of literary histories of the ocean.

Raban’s interesting chronology suggests that the first two centuries of British naval colonialism produced few narratives of the sea itself—rather, these works depicted the ocean as “merely a space to be traversed” (1992, 5), secondary to the teleology of arrival to exotic lands and material accumulation. With some exceptions, notably images of the tempest at sea, it was only in the eighteenth century that the sea itself emerged as a complex figure in British literature, depicted variously as a space of romance, gothic terror, reflection, the sublime, a “natural” counter to industrialized Europe, or a space of ontological abyss. “The ocean pervades the popular print culture of the eighteenth century” (Laura Brown 2001, 62), yet there’s a peculiar silence in both The Oxford Book of the Sea and British maritime literature in general about a black diaspora experience, or in Robert Farris Thompson’s terms (expanded by Gilroy), a conceptual “black Atlantic.” This is striking because the rise of maritime literature as a genre is coterminous with the development of nineteenth-century maritime technologies that led to an increase in the number of African slaves shipped to the Americas, even after all European states had abolished the trade. Although Raban’s collection includes excerpts from Charles Johnson’s Middle Passage and Walcott’s poem “The Sea is History,” he does not acknowledge—to borrow the first words from Fred D’Aguiar’s Feeding the Ghosts—that “the sea is slavery” (1997, 3).

The two-century gap between Britain’s emergence into maritime colonialism and its belated epistemological engagements with ocean space suggest some of the conceptual difficulties of narrating the sea as a “practiced place.” Since “no other area has manifested its interdisciplinary nature so clearly as marine studies” (Borgese 1975, 33), a broad range of narratives were engaged to remap the ocean as a template of British modernity. While the overlapping discourses of the expansion of empire and “freedom of the seas” were constituted by the practice of transoceanic slavery, their templates leave little room for a phenomenology of the sea that could incorporate the “souls/caught in the Middle Passage/limbo” (Nichols 1983, 16). Caribbean writers asking how to “eulogise/[the] names” of “the dead ones/who are not dead” (Nichols 1983, 17) have questioned the nautical genre’s teleology of maritime progress. Even if “an African American concept of space had its beginnings in the holds of the slave ships during the Middle
Passage” (Diedrich, Gates, and Pedersen 1999, 8), its representability poses an obstacle due to the challenges I have outlined in temporalizing ocean space as well as localizing—and thus rendering historical—this violence of modern history. Brought together, ocean space and the middle passage pose ontological challenges to the representation of the historical process. The abjection of the middle passage may be characterized, to borrow from Julia Kristeva, as an “immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body” (1982, 10). The inability to return to that lost object of attachment produces “a deep well of memory that is unapproachable and intimate” (1982, 6). The impossibility of a spatial return is symbolized by the Middle Passage Monument Project, which at best can only commemorate the losses of the crossing by lowering a memorial into the waters off the coast of New York, a synecdoche of “the world’s largest, yet unmarked, graveyard, the Atlantic Ocean’s infamous Middle Passage.”

To inscribe the sea as history raises questions as to how fundamentally terrestrial beings, unlike the Pacific navigators discussed in the following chapter, can construct a temporal and humanized ocean place. If “movement always seems to condition the production of a space and to associate it with a history” (de Certeau 1984, 118), how does one constitute a practiced place in uninhabitable space? If space is always relational, narrated, corporeally and socially experienced, traversed to be understood, collectively and individually remembered, made historic through cultural sedimentation, “constituted and constitutive” (Tilley 1994, 17), how might we produce a phenomenology of the sea? How do we begin to speak about the middle passage when the monuments that constitute space as a place are “locked” in “that grey vault,” the sea?

The Middle Passage and the Quarrel with History

I met History once, but he ain’t recognize me.
—Derek Walcott, “The Schooner Flight”

Alternately conceived as a spatial boundary or a frontier, the sea invokes both the fear of and desire for diaspora histories and practices. Yet even though transoceanic passages were the means by which most migrants before the mid-twentieth century traveled, the sea itself is rarely theorized as a diaspora space, even when it provides the primary spatial logic of interpretation. This is to say that as much as Atlantic scholars have modeled their work upon the Mediterranean model of Fernand Braudel, few have engaged directly with the aquatic aspects of transoceanic diaspora. On the
other hand, diaspora theorists, by and large, have focused primarily on the dialectical tension between the originary space of dispersal and the space of arrival without pausing to consider tidalectics, or the experience of movement between national/cultural spaces. My examination of Hearne’s work attempts to weave both diaspora and spatial theories together, to foreground the fluid construction of diaspora space and its transoceanic itineraries. Here I’ve taken my cue from de Certeau, who warns that the same mapping process that “collates on the same plane heterogeneous spaces” also creates an “erasure of the itineraries which . . . make it possible to move from one to the other” (1984, 121, my emphasis). That these transoceanic itineraries are continually depicted in the middle passage novel as a distortion of linear time suggests the tautological nature of the memory of the crossing, a point often overlooked in diaspora scholarship.

The two words “middle passage” invoke some of the most abject horrors of modern history, yet the term itself is not subject to localization. Generally the middle passage suggests the claustrophobic “death ships” in the oceanic limbo between Africa and the Americas, connoting a transitional aquatic space of any given point in the 500-year history of the African slave trade. Yet etymologically, the term “middle passage” refers not to a geographic or even specifically historic space of African enslavement and transportation. As a “leg” of the triangular trade, a bodily metaphor that resonates with the term “limbo” and the tutelary god of the crossroads, Legba, the middle passage is defined as the baseline in the economic geometries of colonial relations. In the simplest version of the triangular trade, European ships would travel to West Africa to trade goods for slaves, cross the Atlantic with human cargo to exchange for sugar products in the New World, and return to the northern Atlantic ports with rum, molasses, and sugar. Interestingly, there are few if any other language equivalents for the English expression “middle passage.” The phrase seems to have emerged from eighteenth-century British abolitionist discourse, where Thomas Clarkson’s often-reproduced plan of the HMS Brookes, depicting the terrors of spatial and bodily compression, became synonymous with the middle passage experience. As I will explain, the invocation of the unhealthy “flesh” of the contained slaves and the hold’s unhygienic stench reflected not only abolitionist humanism but also a particularly modern dilemma about the contaminating effluvia of the masses.

This wave of humanizing the Atlantic by narrating slave experiences of the middle passage, while effective for the abolitionist movement, was rarely adopted by other genres. So while the shipment of African slaves to the plantation colonies by some accounts had doubled in the mid-nine-
teenth century, this violent peopling of the Atlantic is peripheral to the ubiquitous maritime adventure novel, which drew upon slave metaphors to advance naval reform for white sailors and grammars of oceanic naturalism that did not include the inhuman and “unnatural” containment of slaves at sea. Although British painters nationalized the Atlantic with depictions of naval captures of illegal slave ships, these images subsume an African experience of the middle passage to the glories of British maritime technology and its civilizing rule of law. Even painters such as J. M. W. Turner who were cognizant of the process of jettisoning live human “cargo” to elude naval capture, famously recorded in his Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying (1840), subordinated this all-too-social seascape to the sublime naturalism of the sea, as Gilroy (1993) and Ian Baucom (2005) have demonstrated. Thus John Ruskin could displace the violence of the event by interpreting the painting to mean that the sea itself, rather than the human horrors of the middle passage, represented the “wild, unwearied, reckless incoherency, like that of an enraged multitude, whose masses act together in phrensy” (1903, 564).

Even if the empire was belated in creating a terminology for the crossing, the African diasporan concept of “crossing the water” or “crossing the river” certainly has existed since the inception of the trade in human lives. Although the term “middle passage” was in usage among abolitionists, it did not reemerge into popular discourse until the late 1950s and early 1960s. The rise of Atlantic diaspora studies coincides with the 1962 (re)discovery by oceanographers that this ocean is expanding. This geographic and conceptual expansion in oceanic studies indicates a new spatial logic that can be said to derive from a number of overlapping factors, such as the Truman-inspired “scramble for the oceans,” a shift in the terrain of area studies, and a global increase in migration that is being rediscovered in the fluid histories of black, labor, and anticolonial movements across the Atlantic and beyond. Due to these complicated contexts, recent scholarship has sought to destabilize genealogies of national purity and to emphasize black diaspora agency by highlighting the ways in which peoples and ideologies crisscrossed the Atlantic in a far less linear manner than middle passage trajectories. While these interdisciplinary dialogues help construct vital new meanings for the conceptual history of the Atlantic and have greatly influenced this book, I suggest that the ideological contours of British maritime nationalism have made a larger impact upon the gendering of ocean space than has been recognized. Thus the mobility of north Atlantic metropolitan men continues to be the dominant metaphor for transatlantic migration, eclipsing the relationship to their often
feminized homelands and minimizing the possibility of women’s agency in transatlantic history. This problematic model of transoceanic diaspora often upholds a familiar colonial model of *aqua nullius* and obscures histories of abjection such as a violent peopling of the middle passage that may have less to say about a “counterculture of modernity” (Gilroy 1993, 36) than modernity’s originary mechanism.

The literary production of the Caribbean, while absent from Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic*, has long been concerned with the ways in which the middle passage provides a complex historiography for creolization and new world modernity. Interestingly, the first Caribbean text to directly invoke the phrase in its title was V.S. Naipaul’s *The Middle Passage* (1962), a travelogue that is decidedly not about the historic trade in African lives, but rather a work that inscribes an inverse trajectory of transoceanic diaspora, an account of tidalectic itineraries, exile, and return. This travel narrative of the author’s return to Trinidad from England on a passenger ship includes Naipaul’s notorious observation that “history is built around achievement and creation; and nothing was created in the West Indies” (1962, 29). By building upon the pro-empire historian and travel writer, James Anthony Froude, Naipaul’s pessimistic account of the anglophone region’s history was perceived as a slap in the face to a vital scholarly movement that, in the early years of independence, was busily excavating the subaltern histories of the region, particularly the creative and creolizing propensities of slave culture. Naipaul took the anticolonial and materialist framework to its most pessimistic extreme: if the history of the region was (over)determined by economic and epistemic colonial violence, then the potential for the creative reassemblage of cultural and political formations was impossible amidst the abjections of the British slave state.

Naipaul’s conflating of the materiality of British colonialism (its absentee planters and short-term architecture) with the *sign* of historiography was parodied in Walcott’s poetic response. “The Sea is History” (1979) challenges the linear framework of Enlightenment progress by repeating the capitalized word “History” to foreground its unappeasable demands. Like Froude and Naipaul, the poem’s catechistic “Sirs” press the Caribbean subject for empirical proof of the Historical process: “Where are your monuments, your battles, your martyrs?” (1986, 364). In response, the poem’s speaker guides the Historians through submarine depths and the “Genesis” of the middle passage, describes “the packed cries, / the shit, the moaning” (364), and historicizes the diaspora through Biblical chronologies such as “Exodus” and “Lamentations.” In each case, the “Sirs” interrupt with their negation: “it was not History” (366).
Ultimately, Walcott’s detemporalizing sea refuses to register a human-centered chronology: “the ocean kept turning blank pages/looking for History” (1986, 365). Consistent with many other works that inscribe the middle passage, Walcott decouples the relationship between space and time, calling attention to the ways in which narrative produces “History.” Like Naipaul, he remains suspicious about the substitution of the progressive discourse of empire with ethnic nationalism, but he does not allow this model of progress to be replaced by a more “natural” narrative that would use the sea to chart an evolutionary chronology of human consciousness. After inscribing the “jubilation” and individualism of independence, when “each rock broke into its own nation” (367), Walcott charts a nationalist devolution to bureaucratic reptiles and insects. Resisting the Enlightenment telos of revolution and emancipation, he concludes the poem with an invocation of Darwinian “sea pools,” not to uphold an evolutionist framework but rather to destabilize the human-centered chronology of History. By returning to the “salt chuckle” of the sea, the presumed origin of all life on earth, the poem completes an oceanic cycle, generating the unrepresentable “sound . . . of History, really beginning” (367).

Ironically, Naipaul’s dismissal of the potential of Caribbean historiography in The Middle Passage catalyzed a creative exploration of transoceanic origins. At the time Hearne was writing The Sure Salvation, a pan-Caribbean dialogue on the “quarrel with history” was initiated at the 1976 Carifesta Forum in Kingston, Jamaica, where Edward Baugh presented his paper of that title.31 In a conference that explored Naipaul’s charges alongside Walcott’s declaration that history is “irrelevant” to the region and that linear temporality must be tempered by myth, Hearne responded in his introduction to the Carifesta Forum by asserting that “history is the angel with whom all we Caribbean Jacobs have to wrestle.” One way to reconceptualize how Caribbean subjects “occupy space but no time,” he felt, was to “emerge from the great sac of amniotic fluid contained in the belly of the Americas” (1976, viii). Pursuing metaphors of oceanic space and time, Hearne advised Caribbean intellectuals to enter into the “voyage of discovery across the longitude, and down into the parallel of a history that has not yet happened” (ix, author’s emphasis). Scholars have tended to overlook the importance of this conference, which I position here as a crucial turning point where the methodologies of Caribbean historiography shifted to transoceanic models of cultural origin.32 As a conference participant and assistant editor of the collection, Édouard Glissant turned to the fluid genesis of the middle passage, characterizing Caribbean literature as “the longing for the ideal of history,” plumbed through an oceanic “primordial source”
In this tidalectic examination of the Caribbean subject “in space and time” Brathwaite declared, in *Carifesta Forum*, that Caribbean “unity is submarine” (1976, 199).

Although writers such as Glissant, Brathwaite, Walcott, and others had been theorizing the poetics of the middle passage for decades, inscribing what Grace Nichols would term “the middle passage womb” (1983, 5), it was not until Hearne’s *The Sure Salvation* that the crossing was fictionalized in the anglophone novel. This is comparatively late in the history of the region’s literature, and I suspect it has much to do with pressing concerns about national sovereignty, rendered in terms of the “folk” and soil, and the ways in which the plantation system was shaping the racialized strata of emergent nation-states. I’ve mentioned that the masculine and mobile bias of transoceanic diaspora studies needs to be examined in a tidalectic engagement with its feminized boundaries and epistemic borders. This relation between land and sea is characteristic of Hearne’s work, which demonstrates how Caribbean theories of plantation creolization may be fruitfully positioned in a tidalectic engagement with transoceanic diaspora.

**The Tidalectics of National Soil**

Strangely, the first novel from the English-speaking region to explore the sea as history has been out of print since its initial publication, along with Hearne’s five previous novels, which were first solicited for publication by T. S. Eliot. Hearne, a member of the first generation of post–World War II writers who migrated to and published in England, has been unevenly incorporated into the Caribbean literary canon and seems to have been a magnet for criticism in similar ways to Naipaul. Many of the region’s primary literary figures, including George Lamming, Sylvia Wynter, and Wilson Harris, have all expressed distaste for the ways in which Hearne’s earlier novels (published between 1955 and 1962) upheld colonial hierarchies or were unsuccessful in their representations of the Caribbean folk. Historical context is crucial here. Hearne’s first novels, explorations of pre-independence Jamaica, were published during an especially vibrant period of West Indian cultural activity. In an effort to destabilize the colonial hierarchies that valorized whiteness and English cultural hegemony, the region’s intellectuals were turning to representations of what Lamming called “the peasant tongue” and experience. As such, Hearne was faulted for his presumed “dread of being identified with the land at the peasant level” and for not being “an example of that instinct and root impulse
which returns the better West Indian writers back to the soil” (Lamming 1984, 46). Writing in London, Lamming concluded that “soil is a large part of what the West Indian novel has brought back to reading; lumps of earth: unrefined, perhaps, but good warm, fertile earth” (46).36

Lamming’s invocation of national soil suggests a particular cultural coding of folk space that may be read alongside Liisa Malkki’s explanation of the ways in which national ties to land are naturalized by the conflation of people with soil. Deconstructing the metaphysical “assumptions linking people to place, nation to territory” (1997, 56), she draws from Deleuze and Guattari to outline the ways in which arborescent metaphors underlie genealogical roots and validate national or ethnic rootedness. As the term “culture” is etymologically linked to “cultivation” (58), Malkki demonstrates why diaspora populations are positioned as so profoundly unnatural, outside the ontological “ground,” so to speak, of being. The impetus to establish a genealogy of belonging to the land (through the folk) in Caribbean discourse must be read alongside Glissant’s reminder that the forced cultivation of the plantation system created a lacuna where “nature and culture have not formed a dialectical whole that informs a people’s consciousness” (1989, 63). Thus Lamming, Glissant, and others are part of a movement to reterritorialize the Caribbean landscape in ways that offer a less colonial and, by extension, a more “natural” dialectic between people and soil. The emergent literary elite of the anglophone Caribbean, often residing in British exile, sought to reconcile their spatial and social distance through the realist novel, a temporally driven narrative that often conflates the soil with the folk.37 Generally speaking, questions about the representability of the subaltern were not in popular circulation at this time.38

It is only by engaging a theory of tidalectics, mutually inflective histories of the land and sea, that we can interpret Hearne’s novels in a constitutive relationship between landscape, seascape, and the corporeality of social space. Like Aimé Césaire (1969), Hearne has often invoked his geography instructor as a major influence on his literary imagination, and his concerns with human spatial relations are evident in all of his novels.39 The Sure Salvation, while it takes place entirely at sea, is equally informed by the spatial imagination. By breaking apart the metaphysical conflation of the folk with landscape, we can position Hearne’s writing in a tidalectic context, with a decidedly ocular contour informed by his engagement with the visual arts.40 As I will explain, Hearne’s folk are not immediately recognizable along the lines of Lamming’s valued “peasant” experience because they are represented at sea in the process of reformulating their diverse African experiences into a creolized aesthetic that will soon be transplanted
to the Caribbean. The slaves’ oceanic disconnection from any “good warm, fertile earth” results in a narrative of their hyperembodiment; their containment in the hold of a transoceanic slave ship produces the substitution of “fertile earth” by its cognates in dirt, soil, and human waste.

Reiterating the concerns of Hearne’s previous novels, *The Sure Salvation* begins by invoking the nexus of time, space, and waste, interconnected narrative threads that are woven throughout the text. In the first chapter, significantly called “The poop,” the novel begins in almost midsentence: “By the tenth day, the barque was ringed by the unbroken crust of its own garbage. And the refuse itself had discharged a contour of dully iridescent grease which seemed to have been painted onto the sea with one stroke of a broad brush” (1981, 7). This “clinging evidence of their corruption, which the water would not swallow” (7), disrupts the linearity of modern time by refusing historic absorption and symbolizes the larger transoceanic implications of this illegal English slave ship, bound for Brazil in 1860, for over three-quarters of the novel. The barque filled with 516 African, English, American, Irish, and Portuguese mariners and slaves is trapped in the transatlantic doldrums, running low on supplies, and sweltering in the windless south Atlantic heat. The ship is framed in “the still centre of a huge stillness: pasted to the middle of a galvanized plate that was the sea” (7). Narrative time, reflecting the stasis of the immobile ship, is particularly distorted. On the first page, between the invocation of the “tenth day” and present “now” time, eleven days have passed in less than a paragraph. The first 189 pages of the novel outline one nonchronologically narrated day on the ship— the final day before the wind mobilizes the ship/narrative. As such, the text undermines the adventure-driven maritime novel in ways that reflect back to Melville’s *Benito Cereno*, supporting Glissant’s observation that the novel of the postplantation Americas is characterized by a “tortured sense of time” (1989, 144). Hearne’s decision to represent a densely packed English slave ship in 1860, decades after the British abolition of the trade and of slavery in its colonies, pinpoints the failures of linear chronologies of progress, sovereignty, and liberation, a critique also embedded in the novel’s ironic title. The final thirty-five pages then recount a slave insurrection orchestrated by the African-American cook, Alex Delfosse, the murder of some of the primary European characters, the ship’s capture by a British naval steamship off the coast of the Americas, and their escort to a riverside settlement in the Guianas where the slaves are released and the Europeans await trial and probable hanging.

I am intrigued by Hearne’s inscription of the temporal/spatial nexus of diaspora because it flatly refuses the chronotope of masculine spatial
motility so evident in maritime narratives and studies. Hearne’s model of diaspora inscribes extreme immobility, stasis, and timelessness, a literal waste of feces, blood, vomit, and sperm that envelops both the ship and the middle passage experience. As such, he inscribes an oppressive spatial logic that attempts to unite with the temporal; a particular challenge I have already noted in the conceptualization of ocean space. For if, as de Certeau and others have observed, our ability to process space is constituted by our movement through it—and a return to a specific point to practice it as a locality or place—this poses a challenge to middle passage narratives in general and more specifically to the stasis of this ship. In other words, like Walcott, Hearne raises the question as to how to mark—and thus materially make meaningful—ocean spaces that were traversed by slave ships when one cannot locate the exact coordinates of the places where, for instance, Africans died in the passage or drowned at sea. In response to Walcott’s question, “Where are your monuments, your battles, your martyrs?” the terrestrial practices of making space meaningful, Hearne’s narrative must extend beyond the sea as metaphor and immobilize the ship in one specific place for three weeks, thus marking time by the growing mass of human waste that encompasses and embodies the social practices of the ship. Paradoxically, the ship’s stasis provides a unique opportunity to capture the illusiveness of the narrative present even though the spatial movement required to produce time is entirely lacking. This is why the only present-time writing occurs in the novel’s first pages, where the captain locates the ship in a static Euclidean nexus of time and space: “Noon, May 17, 1860 — Lat 1° 14” S, Long 32° 16’ W. No distance. Calm continues” (12, author’s emphasis).41

Unlike the maritime discourses of empire that construct a homogenous, universal, and natural oceanic plane as a template for (expanding) human space and time, Hearne refuses to render the ocean as a transparent metaphor for human desire. Nor does he support the empire’s conflation of a universalized sea with homogenized human history. Therefore the ocean’s ontological challenge frames the first page of the novel. In response to the three-week stasis, the multiethnic crew has been struck by “a vague and debilitating panic” (7). The seamen are plagued by “a curious sense of expectancy,” and it “was if each man were trying to fashion for himself some memory of the world’s tumult” (7). Their inability to contextualize both time (memory) and space (the world), suggests not only a lack of recognition of the ways in which the transatlantic slave trade was a globalizing process, but the dehumanizing experience of oceanic stasis and
the dependence upon movement to conceptualize local place and subjectivity itself. Hearne continues:

In this prison of silence and immobility their only proofs of being were the writhing edge of the sun and the nightly fattening of the moon. They were tantalized by the conviction that immediately beyond the walls of opaque blue—on the horizon’s edge, if only they could get there—they would find waves running before the wind, curling at their crests with a hiss of spray, and a sky loud with swooping birds that shrieked beautiful and reassuring discords. (7, my emphasis)

The natural markers of latitude, the “writhing” sun and the “fattening” moon, appear to threaten rather than facilitate human orientation, rupturing the foundations of natural metaphor and thus destabilizing the crew’s ontology. Unlike Gaston Bachelard’s suggestion that natural matter, particularly water, aids the human subject to “plumb the depths of being” (1983, 1), Hearne’s ocean remains a horizontal plane of garbage, refuse, and corruption (1981, 7). Although metaphors of “depth” may have arisen from maritime experience (Springer 1995, 22), the Sure Salvation’s crew remains trapped in a lateral “prison of silence.” Deprived of their own itinerancy and agency, a profound challenge to their sense of being, the crew fantasizes a telos of knowable ocean space (the ubiquitous “running” and “curling” waves of so many maritime narratives) rather than, for instance, arrival in the terrestrial Americas where they will reap the profits from the journey. Their disorientation shows that ontology is naturalized by movement across ocean space. Since they are trapped between “the walls of opaque blue,” the crew struggles to come to terms with the human markers of Atlantic time and space: “the clinging filth” (18) that marks the “tenth day” and the “third week” does not represent the temporality of their voyage from Angola (distance) but rather their immobility. Consequently, the time of stasis is signified by the spatial expansion of human decay and waste. Their inability to experience movement through ocean space and therefore produce a phenomenology of time renders the spatial logic of the boundless ocean, even for these seasoned mariners, entirely illegible.

Although nineteenth-century imperialists like Froude exclaimed that “the sea is the natural home of Englishmen; the Norse blood is in us, and we rove over the waters . . . as eagerly as our ancestors” (1886, 18), Hearne’s sea resists universalizing metaphors and the naturalizing claims by one genealogical root. Like all bodies of water, the Atlantic here is socially
inflected and experienced across a number of broad registers. The ship's captain, William Hogarth (an invocation of the eighteenth-century satirist of the bourgeois will to property), views the ocean in far more metaphorical terms than his crew, as “a huge mirror bursting off his face . . . it was if the ship had sailed into the core of the sun” (16). Ivan Illich observes that “[a]s a vehicle for metaphors, water is a shifting mirror” (1987, 25), yet Hearne’s ocean resists its humanizing reflection. Hogarth’s social privilege allows him to produce a series of oceanic metaphors, but these remain personal abstractions that cannot signify beyond his individual desires. Like his crew, he remains oblivious to the process of modernity, segregating his moral dilemma—the betrayal of his wife Eliza—from the ethics of running an illegal slave ship. While the “barque lay in the dead sea like a needle caught in a bowl of molten silver,” the captain makes parallels between the ship’s failed itinerary and that of his personal life. He determines that both represent “failure,” which “had been waiting for him like an uncharted sargasso here in the open ocean” (17). This is a complex series of social, spatial, and intertextual metaphors. To be positioned in the core of the sun suggests such an extreme interiority to truly universal time that one cannot register the way humans mark natural temporality—from the revolution of the earth. The metaphorical collapse of the sun/sea is associated with the melted needle of the compass, amorphous and unable to signify within a vessel of “molten silver.” The trajectory of his life, as an English aristocrat, a title without property or capital, is likened to the spatial entrapment of the Sargasso Sea: a mariner’s nightmare, a space of aquatic weeds located between the Old and New Worlds that signifies impenetrability, stasis, and in the words of the online OED, a figurative “confused or stagnant mass.” This term enacts an intertextual chain that stretches back to Jean Rhys’s novel that popularized this uninhabitable space, Wide Sargasso Sea (1966). Rhys, in her “prequel” to Jane Eyre, had been concerned with Bertha Rochester’s entrapment in the Victorian attic and, like Hearne, the overall inability for the Caribbean writer/subject to locate herself within the larger narratives of racialized British domesticity and soil. Tracing a genealogy of the Sargasso between these two texts suggests a diasporan aporia, a morass of uninhabitable space for European, African, and Caribbean transatlantic subjects. Trapped among his failed metaphors, in the atemporal core of the sun, amidst an ocean that refuses to reflect, and without a directional needle to guide, one could place Hogarth in the same ontological mire that affects his crew.

European phenomenologies of the sea here are neither homogeneous, nor are they easily categorized by social class or maritime experience.
Although the crew is plagued by the moral repercussions of their participation in the slave trade, and Hogarth sublimates his doubts about the ethics of the trade into an obsession with his betrayal of his wife, these intertwined perspectives function in stark contrast to the philosophy of the ranking officer, George Reynolds, a trickster figure who represents the uneven epistemologies of Atlantic modernity. Consequently, Reynolds manifests an overt critique of the crew who raise moral doubts only once they are trapped in the narrative center of the middle passage and a destabilization of the narrative structure that seeks to create meaning-laden ocean space. In this way Hearne seems to anticipate the textual destabilization that occurs in the conclusion of his good friend Walcott’s epic poem *Omeros*. After richly inscribing nearly 300 pages of “the sea’s parchment atlas” (1990, 13), Walcott dissolves his transoceanic imaginary by determining that the sea “was an epic where every line was erased” and relegates it to “a wide page without metaphors” (296). In a similar vein, Hearne’s misanthropic Reynolds, self-defined by “a hate so consuming that . . . [he] is made ethereal by [his] regard for the truth” (82), has this to pronounce about the sea:

> We cannot distort it into lying shapes as we do the land. No parks, no palaces, no fine cities fashioned from the miserable stunted flesh of the many so that the few may write each other encomiums on their achievements. How many slow deaths to build and keep a gentleman’s manor! . . . But the sea will not be moulded into our excremental falsehoods. It will not record the shape of any keel. Christ could walk it to the end of time and leave no more mark of his passage than will this floating barracoon we choose to call a ship. (82–83)

Being the devilish character that he is, Reynolds concludes his monologue by declaring that once he comes into his “small fortune” from this illegal trade, “the world shall learn the purifying terror of the sea’s indifference. . . . *The world shall learn*” (83, author’s emphasis). Hearne responds to his character’s deconstruction of his oceanic metaphors by decapitating him during the slave insurrection, fashioning Reynolds into a “severed head (with every feature of it broken horribly)” (194). After detailing Reynolds’ misogyny and his proclivity for the young “flesh” of certain women slaves, the author has him figuratively castrated by Tadene, a “dry, thin, oldish” African woman (194). In this case Hearne’s metaphors have the last vindicating word, placing a liberating and violent corporeality at the fluid center of oceanic modernity.
CHAPTER 1

**The Contingencies of Atlantic Modernity**

To overemphasize the transparency of oceanic metaphor in this text would be to overlook the ways in which Hearne has depicted maritime space, the intentionality of social resistance, and modernity itself as profoundly contingent. *The Sure Salvation* destabilizes the discourses that have temporalized the Atlantic, such as the Euclidean geometries of latitude and longitude, the construction of homogenous time through the “watches” of maritime labor, and the telos of movement across ocean space that is deemed necessary for the ontology of the human subject. The immobility of the ship results in the stasis of labor itself—the sailors cannot function in their usual capacity as the faceless “hands” of the “floating factory” and therefore time cannot be measured by labor (see Bakhtin 1981, 207). Moreover, the connection between the plantation system and the slaves’ forced “irruption into modernity” (Glissant 1989, 146) is complicated by a population that, while captive, has not yet entered the degradations of New World labor. While the novel records a slave mutiny, it deconstructs the heroics of the maritime adventure narrative and suspends “adventure-time” itself (Bakhtin 1981, 87), sharing Walcott’s distrust of forms of ethnic national literatures that encode “the hallucination of imperial romance” derived from the nautical “literature of exploration remembered from Captain Marryat” and others (Walcott 1998, 58).

Hearne doesn’t substitute the maritime grammar of colonial heroics with its subaltern reversal; he adopts the genre of the realist novel to implode its chronotopes and fracture its humanist teleology. Accordingly, the slave insurrection does not derive from any subaltern consciousness or black diaspora unity; in fact, the novel repeatedly inscribes the slaves’ mutual intranslatability and their description of the African-American cook as a “white man” (1981, 141). In turn, Delfosse denies a “sense of kinship” (57) with the Africans; while he supplies the slaves with arms, he intends to take them, not back to Africa as they request, but rather “up the Amazon...to start a kingdom” with himself as self-appointed ruler (199). Delfosse is not a modern Toussaint L’Ouverture, liberator of Saint-Domingue, whose name signifies the potential of “the opening.” Although Delfosse was also born a slave, he does not epitomize “the concrete realization of liberty, equality and fraternity...which overflowed their narrow environment and embraced the whole of the world,” as C. L. R. James has characterized Toussaint and the Haitian Revolution (1963, 265). In the languages of the European nations engaged in the slave trade, “del fosse”
translates as the cesspool, gulf, gap, or grave. These terms highlight the lack of translatability within and across the African diaspora, similar to the ways in which discourses of fraternity and unity among the English seamen on Hearne’s ship are contradicted by their overt racism towards their fellow Portuguese and African “brothers.” As such, Hearne resists the universalizing and homogenizing discourses of Atlantic modernity and their twentieth-century legacies in maritime and diaspora studies, which necessarily construct a shared sense of motility and purpose. Consequently, it becomes far more challenging to speak of the ways in which this ship may represent a particular containment of class, racial, or even gendered unity. Instead, history itself actively disrupts any unifying discourse. As a character from one of Hearne’s previous novels observes: “‘History dig a gulf between us . . . an’ it don’t fill in yet’” (1962, 248).43

Hearne’s critique of the heroic and revolutionizing discourses of the black Atlantic reveals how these tropes often construct ocean space as a universal template for masculine history. Unlike diaspora discourses that naturalize masculine movement at the expense of women’s immobility, Hearne encompasses all of his subjects, male and female, in a modern stasis. Far from segregating women from history and modernity, Hearne’s female characters are always vital to the political process (Figueroa 1972, 75). While theories of Atlantic modernity often uncritically position the “ship as a world” despite its absence of women, Hearne includes Hogarth’s wife Eliza on the Sure Salvation, uniting issues of national and private domesticity alongside the presumably more public and political ambits of shipboard life. By bringing together these forms of domesticity on the ship, Hearne helps us to consider how traditional maritime narratives often uphold the ship as a nation by segregating this masculine sphere from the feminized shore and, more importantly, demonstrates that the polarization of the genders is the product of modernity itself. Through the representation of Tadene and her niece Mtishta (Reynolds’s sexual captive), the novel positions women slaves as more vital to the execution of Delfosse’s mutiny than he realizes. Although Delfosse interpellates her as “that dried-up old bitch” (Hearne, 1981, 142), Tadene and a boy described as a “woman-man” (141) are integral to his control of the ship. This is not because women are simply reversed from the sign of reproduction and cultural generation to a destructive opposition to European hydrarchy. Just as he problematizes homogenizing discourses of race that conflate diverse African ethnicities with Delfosse’s “kin” or “brother[s] in blood” (57), Hearne suggests that allegiances across gender (an unstable concept in itself) are also contingent.
Unlike British maritime novels, social and spatial motility—the movement of the wind, ocean currents, or a slave mutiny—neither drive this narrative forward nor constitute its temporality. There are no tempests or battles against nature that would incorporate the ocean as a participant in the human historical process. Rather, Hearne introduces “real time” through the recognition of contingency itself. As mentioned, the first three-quarters of the book are rendered in what Bakhtin might call “extratemporal hiatus” (1981, 91), similar to Benito Cereno where the ship/subjects lack temporal depth and mobility. Hearne inscribes European, American, and African subjects trapped in an oceanic abyss, a space devoid of a recognizable relationship to the temporal. The narrative histories of the ship/subjects are not rendered until Delfosse refutes Hogarth’s assertion that his role in the slave trade is not “by choice.” Hogarth explains, “Had the world been different it would have found a different use for me, and I for it” (1981, 136). Delfosse responds, “Had the world been different, cap’n, you’d have been where you are now . . . like me. . . . We’d have come up on it a different way is all” (136). Delfosse’s response shocks the captain and catalyses the temporal movement of the novel. Hogarth receives this tautological pronouncement like “the strokes of a funeral bell,” which made him “feel helpless; as if [he] had been carried bound to this time and this place to watch over the interment of all purpose and endeavor” (146). Paradoxically, this realization of extreme immobility and the contraction of time and space then opens the narrative into a wider temporality and social place; the novel then inscribes a contractual geography of the Atlantic trade world that connects England, West Africa, the Caribbean, and North American ports.

Immediately after Hogarth’s realization of Atlantic contingency, we become privy to his secret betrayal: by initially refusing to marry “below his station,” he has contributed to Eliza’s miscarriage and has never regained her trust; she continues to deny the exchange of her “flesh” for this marriage. Although he attempts to subvert the privileges of his aristocratic birth through the merchant trade and through sexual exchange with the middle class, Hogarth’s inability to embrace the consequences of bourgeois modernity results in betrayal of those bodies that surround him on the ship. Readers also become privy to the previous itineraries of the merchant ship, The Sure Salvation, Hogarth’s role in securing the East India trade for British aristocrats, and the complex historical relationship between Hogarth and Delfosse commencing with their first meeting in Cuba. Only after this exchange does the wind pick up, the ship begin to travel, and the mutiny
take place. While Hearne’s text departs from Benito Cereno by placing the mutiny in the present time of the narrative, its formal description prevents its interpretation as a causal event. In phrasing devoid of sentiment, the narrator recounts flatly: “At the slaves feeding time on the second day of the southeaster, Alexander Delfosse shot dead Boyo Dolan and the young Portuguese who together had charge of the culverin pointed into the slaves' hold” (194). The impact of the mutiny on the reader is restricted given its rendering as the shortest chapter in the novel. It is not the shipboard revolution, but rather the revelation of spatial and temporal contingency, a mapping of the oceanic abyss by chance, which leads Hogarth to recognize that his “life has been a waste” (146, my emphasis). The invocation of this term is not accidental, and it reiterates my earlier contention that space, time, and waste are constitutively, if not contingently related.

Contingency, like the nation, is a “Janus-faced” ideologeme (Nairn 1977) that invokes the complex process of modernity itself. As a term synonymous to tangentiality, proximity, and chance, it also encodes a conceptual contradiction: an occurrence defined by its dependence upon a prior event in history. The duality of the term becomes vital to understanding the conflict between Hogarth and Delfosse and highlights their unequal relations to modernity. At their first meeting in Havana, when Delfosse offers his services to coordinate the ship’s supplies, Hogarth responds with the liberal paternalism characteristic of Amasa Delano in Benito Cereno. Like Delano, who “took to Negroes . . . just as other men to Newfoundland dogs” (Melville 1990, 73), Hogarth condescends to do “what [he] had never done before,” to shake a black man’s “paw” (Hearne 1981, 158). He resents Delfosse’s fine clothing, his fluency in Spanish, his ability to command respect from the dockworkers who had exploited the ship’s cache, and he struggles to come to terms with the first black subject who does not approach him with “deference” (148). When Delfosse throws Hogarth’s tip into the harbor for local children, Hogarth thinks, “Had Alex proposed marriage, then, to the daughter I did not have—had he suggested that we claim descent from a common ancestor—he could not have done a greater violence to my sensibilities than his contemptuous disposal of my guineas” (153). His inability to interpret the nature of their relationship within the modern discourse of fraternity resurfaces as an epistemic crisis after the mutiny. Delfosse’s suggestion that they were fated to arrive to this point fills Hogarth with “dread and awe close to terror, almost close to superstition” (146, my emphasis). Invoking the very terms of tradition that modernity seeks to supplant, Hogarth adopts the role of victim, concluding that since
the voyage was Delfosse’s idea, Hogarth has always been his “slave” (147). In an inversion of the Hegelian dialectic, Hogarth refuses to recognize his companion’s pursuit of modernity—the birth of the sovereign individual.

Delfosse’s facility with multiple European languages and his fluency in the social grammars of Atlantic trade allow him to justify the mutiny in terms of historical contingency, as a descendant of slaves adopting Enlightenment ideals of progress tinged by social Darwinism. Arguing that “there ain’t nothing owing to a man that he don’t take when it offers” (143), he’s the only character with a sense of futurity, a plan to “take back” the “kingdom” from the white man (142). Significantly his sense of modernity and history is derived from his youthful travels with his white “brother,” Louis Delfosse, who was killed in the midst of a rape in their quest to conquer “the women and the gold and the silver” of the U.S. frontier (53). In Louis’s words, their inability to be rewarded for the violent participation in manifest destiny is attributed to history: “The man is nothing without the time. And this isn’t our time. We’re kings without a crown because of your black skin” (53, author’s emphasis). Delfosse’s earthy lexicon, referring to the slaves as cattle, comparing Reynolds to “any Pawnee or Dakota buck” (121), and carrying a wallet he carved from the “belly-skin” of a “young Apache who figured that he or me was one too many for that whole goddam’ Mex border” (159), demonstrates the violent entanglement between diaspora and indigeneity and positions him as an active agent in a brutal and self-conscious historical process of expansion across the continent. As a complement to the domesticity represented by the women on board, Delfosse’s terrestrial imaginary adds a tidalectic contour to the maritime grammar of this ship. His experience of the “wrong” temporality of the terrestrial frontier catalyzes his decision to take to the sea, perhaps assuming that the spatial logic of the nineteenth-century Atlantic will facilitate his mutiny and his eventual rule of an El Dorado dream—a colony in the Guianas. Yet Delfosse, like Hogarth, is unable to predict the ways in which the era of steam mechanized the Atlantic into increasingly rigidified and disciplinary technologies of time. As many theorists have shown, the civilizing process of modernity, at land and sea, was constituted by corporeal disciplinarity and the hierarchy of social bodies. To clarify this point I must turn to the hydrarchy of the ship.

The “Smells of the Hold”
Ocean space is conceptually replete with contradictions, perhaps necessary aporiae. Therefore it is difficult to envision the vastness of the ocean, a
place of ontological limitlessness and fluidity, a space that cannot be captured by the panopticon, without the constraints of the shipboard hydra-chy. This tension between the ship and the sea means that transoceanic diaspora space is limitless and bounded, naturalized and socially stratified, and is constructed by the telos of home and the anticipation of arrival. The profound entanglement between perceptions of the oceanic and the hydrarchic—a tidalectic flow between the limitless and the structural, the natural and the social—is constituted and constitutive of western discourses of the Atlantic. This is the driving mechanism of fictional and historical narratives of the maritime mutiny, which often evoke social Darwinism as originary naturalism at sea. Thus a troubled modernity becomes enacted in narrative constructions of the sea, where the presumed atemporal and self-determining idiom of traversing ocean space is continually contested and constrained by social hierarchies and the material structure of the ship. Perhaps this is why the middle passage poses such a challenge to seafaring literature that celebrates masculine motility at sea as a metaphor of positive social and cultural expansion—to sustain this Enlightenment ideologeme, one must suppress the shackled passengers in the hold. And perhaps this is why, for all their vital contributions to our understanding of multiethnic communities aboard ships that crisscross the Atlantic, Linebaugh, Rediker, and Gilroy reclaim a subaltern masculine agency in their visions of a revolutionary and black Atlantic. And perhaps, ultimately, this helps explain why the vast majority of literary revisions of the middle passage pursue a telos of mutiny.

In the western narrative tradition, the ship is a profoundly domestic—in the broadest definition of the term—and transnational social space, a place of practiced masculinity, labor, and uneven fraternity. Theorists of the Atlantic who position the ship as a fluid and nonhegemonic space, an alternative to the conservative nation-state, might well be reminded of a tradition of depicting the ship as the republic that dates back to Plato’s Phaedrus. Ships also signify religious, epistemological, and cultural journeys. Many syncretic African religions have adopted a Biblical conflation of ship/church as a structural vessel for black cultural unity, and Afro-Caribbean rituals often invoke a Legba-like, culturally and ontologically transformative enactment of the middle passage limbo. While these narratives are diverse, they share an investment in the ship as a vessel of ontological and social transformation.

I want to focus specifically on the chronotope of the ship as both domestic/national space and the attendant corporeal polity that must constitute this as a place. This is particularly evident in the destabilizing lan-
CHAPTER 1

guage of gender, a sign of modernity that Hearne inscribes in *The Sure Salvation*. I have alluded to the ways in which Hearne’s characters—the “woman-man” translator, the “feminine deftness” of the Portuguese sailors (17), and castrating Tadene—undermine gendered binary axioms. Hortense Spillers has raised the question as to whether we can gender the enslaved persons who were dehumanized as “flesh” in the middle passage experience. Because of the dismantling of African kinship practices, Spillers determines that “the cargo of a ship might not be regarded as elements of the domestic” (1987, 72). Here I quote her at length as she succinctly encapsulates some of the spatial and temporal epistemologies examined in this chapter:

Those African persons in the “middle passage” were literally suspended in the “oceanic,” if we think of the latter in its Freudian orientation as an analogy for undifferentiated identity: removed from the indigenous land and culture, and not-yet “American” either, these captive persons . . . were in movement across the Atlantic, but they were also nowhere at all. Inasmuch as . . . the captive personality did not know where s/he was, we could say that they were the culturally “unmade,” thrown in the midst of a figurative darkness that “exposed” their destinies to an unknown course. . . . [N]avigational science of the day was not sufficient to guarantee the intended destination. We might say that the slave ship, its crew, and its human-as-cargo stand for a wild and unclaimed richness of possibility that is not interrupted, not “counted”/“accounted,” or differentiated, until its movement gains the land. . . . Under these conditions, one is neither female, nor male, as both subjects are taken into “account” as quantities. (72, author’s emphasis)

The prequantifying language of enslaved bodies is inscribed in Hearne’s novel as an undifferentiated and tautological “stench of the hold,” abject corporeality, “waste,” and bodily fluid. Since it is a fictional account, it is not, as Spillers suggests, “ungendered.” In his imaginative vision of the transatlantic crossing, in an immobile space unmarked by time where the oppressive heat threatens the lives of both crew and slaves and thus forces them to circulate on the ship, Hearne has constructed a tiered yet permeable social layering, a profoundly domestic space of the (proto-national) ship, which is most visible in his gendered spatial logic.

By examining the architecture of the ship, we can see that Hearne suggests that European gendered norms arose from transatlantic colonization
and were constitutive components of Atlantic modernity. His use of a fluid imaginary that draws from bodily waste rather than the ocean is effective because it facilitates the dissolution of the disciplinary boundaries between public and private domains. Women, the most obvious subjects marked by the domestic, are rendered corporeally present in both the “head” and “belly” (to borrow two shipboard terms) of social and material hierarchy. For instance, Hearne contains Eliza with her husband in what he terms “the poop.” Tadene resides within the spatial abyss of the hold but emerges to bathe, eat, to assist her niece Mtishta, and to eject Reynolds’s severed head in a scene that symbolizes this space as vagina dentata. Finally, Mtishta is spatially and socially trapped in the strata between these two older women, chosen by Reynolds from among the slaves to be his “little black beauty, [his] heathen bunkmate” (92). She resides in his private cabin and is taught Reynolds’s version of the master’s language, with emphasis on the ways in which it is racialized, sexualized, and gendered. In Hearne’s parody of Prospero and Caliban of The Tempest, a text often claimed as a founding (masculine) narrative of Caribbean literature, Mtishta’s first lesson is to interpellate herself as a “bitch,” and to sexualize her body as “cunt” and “tits” (94). Mtishta functions in a binary but interdependent relation to literate, asexual, “lilac-scented” Eliza who, without any recognition of the slaves that buttress her social position, teaches literacy to the cabin boy, Joshua, through Biblical narratives of the horror of the (sexual) flesh. Interestingly, Hearne locates the nineteenth-century cult of domesticity and its racial codes as a specifically middle passage construction of social space. Unlike most maritime novels, Hearne’s hydrarchy does not encode a naturalized masculine motility grafted upon either a feminized sea or ship—in fact the ocean and ship are not gendered in this text—and women are not external to the historical process by being relegated to distant national shores. Hearne’s “ship is a world” caught in the modern process of being “refashioned” (195) into new meanings of the domestic, foregrounding the racialization of sexual violence and language itself. In returning to Spillers’ question about the production of oceanic “flesh,” one could say that the contained slaves in Hearne’s text are a corporeal mass and quantified as “four hundred and seventy-five bodies” that frighten the sailors with their “moans of bewildered protest” (25). In attributing agency and interiority to a number of the Africans, a type of access rendered impossible by the flattened historical “account” of the trade in “flesh,” Hearne positions these characters as subjects and by extension, as gendered beings. As a structure of containment, the ship, like the nation, represents the architecture of gendered and racial stratification, but its stasis in the ocean of history ulti-
mately forces these structural boundaries to dissolve through the exchange of bodily fluids.

The architecture of Hearne’s ship, and by extension his characters, is determined by the literal production of bodily labor and waste. The first eight of his ten chapters are labeled after socially segregated spaces of the ship such as “The poop,” “Officer’s mess,” “The forecastle,” and “The midshiphouse.” The slaves aren’t located in a specifically titled space since they are corporeally or imaginatively present in all social spaces with the exception of “The poop.” But this term, the most scatological of all the labeled spaces on the ship, brings the abstracted captain and his wife in direct relationship to the flesh of their corporeal cargo. The prevalence of physical metaphor here is not surprising when we consider that, to draw from the appendix of Peter Jeans’s maritime dictionary, “Nautical terms related to the human body” represent the ways in which threats to sailors’ survival were incorporated into the semantic and lexical body of the ship. This resonates with Philip Curtin’s reminder that Atlantic sailors died at rates that in some cases exceeded those of the slaves, and that workers’ compensation was often determined by the loss of limbs, digits, and other body parts (1968). Like Reynolds’s instruction in the reification of the sexual and laboring body, the maritime conceptualization and labeling of shipboard space produces an itemized corporeality of terms that range from buttocks to breast, arse to brow, cheeks to bosom, and poop to crotch (Jeans 2004, 403–409). In his rendering of the corporeality of the ship, its workers, and its slaves, Hearne emphasizes the bodies that produce and are produced by Atlantic modernity.

The segregation of the ship into discrete bodily parts, its spatial compression and its clear racial hydrarchy are ultimately dissolved by the copious production of human waste, which seeps across all social boundaries. The narrative frame of the captain’s space, “The poop” is “ringed by the unbroken crust of its own garbage” (Hearne 1981, 7), and smells that arise from the hold extend outwards of a mile at sea. When Reynolds takes the crew out in the “jolly boat,” attempting to pull “clear of the ever-widening, dully-shimmering band of waste,” he is unable to escape and fears “they’ll smell us clear to the Admiralty” (101, author’s emphasis). The production of bodily waste that might attract the disciplinary apparatus of the naval state can be set alongside Mary Douglas’s assertion that conceptions of dirt and pollution arise from social spaces that are constituted by exaggerated notions of hierarchy and control (1966, 4). “Dirt offends against order” (Douglas, 1966, 2), so its presence viscerally foregrounds the ways in which the hydrarchy of the slave ship constructs a fragile rationality
over a permeating ethical and corporeal pollution. Waste, while related to the majority population on the ship, the slaves, is also produced and circulated by the high-ranking European officers. In keeping with the modern bourgeois “campaign to deodorize bodies and space” (Corbin 1986, 105), a hierarchy of toilets has been established: a “privy” for the officers, a “little booth” for the crew, while the “slaves urinated and defecated where they lay below” (Hearne 1981, 100). When Reynolds emerges from the hold “with a small lump of yellow excrement grained with dark streaks” and carries this on a spatula to the captain’s “poop” for examination (42), we are given an almost visual testimony to the ways in which bodily waste permeates the social strata of the ship, and a reiteration of how the civilizing practices of modernity “authorized the strategy of continual surveillance” (Corbin 1986, 94–95). Like the racial hierarchy that enables Eliza’s cult of domesticity, the production and circulation of waste signifies the ways in which the middle passage was constitutive—rather than external to—a socially tiered modernity.

The term waste, derived from the Latin vastus, signifies uninhabited or uncultivated space and has been semantically linked with European conceptions of the ocean. Waste is also historical; as Alain Corbin has shown, western modernity was coterminous with a new “importance accorded to the circulation of liquid masses” (1986, 91) to maintain the health of the body politic. Laura Brown has detailed the etymological link between “sewer” and “shore” and how this contributed to a shift in British literatures that conflated water with waste during the rise of its maritime empire. Over time, the concept of waste developed symbolic and material connotations with sewage, enacting a disciplining code of hygiene that resulted in the urban sewers built in London in the 1860s (Corbin 1986, 225), the temporal frame of Hearne’s novel. As such, Walcott’s assertion that the “sea is history” is interpreted through the logic of “the sea is waste.” Hearne temporalizes ocean space through the production of human bodies, and waste becomes the only localizable product of transoceanic history as well as the primary signifier of modernity. The antonym to waste, value, is materially constituted by the bodies of the slaves, whose feces are constantly monitored for impurities so that Reynolds and the crew may accumulate a “small fortune” (Hearne 1981, 83). The desire of capital is doubly linked to the slaves by Hearne’s continual references to the exchange of gold “guineas,” a term that arose from the African slave trade itself. Most of the crew are unable to make the semantic and material connections between waste, value, and the transatlantic exchange of African bodies. When they are visibly repelled by “the stench of the hold,” Reynolds retorts, “Don’t you like
Although he overlooks the empire’s racialization of bodies, Corbin historicizes the modern process by which “the stench of the poor” was constructed (1986, 142). In the late eighteenth century, an emergent bourgeois concern with the deodorization and discipline of the masses reflected a fear of corporeal proximity, a construction of “the fetidity of the labouring classes” (143), particularly sailors. This discourse of the corporeal waste of the masses is reminiscent of my earlier discussion of the “folk,” if we consider the semantic resonance between waste and soil. In fact, Illich points out that the term “shit” derives from the same etymological root as “earth” (1987, 29). This connection between the corporeality of the “folk” and the nation-building process has long been a concern in Hearne’s writing. His second novel, Stranger at the Gate (1956), describes urban Jamaican poverty in bodily terms that invoke what the geographer Brian Hudson has categorized as a “smellscape” (1992, 187). Hudson demonstrates that Hearne’s middle- and upper-class spaces and bodies are rendered in normative, acorporeal terms that are constituted in unequal relation to the hyperembodied Jamaican poor. In Stranger, Hearne writes, “Forty thousand people lived in the Jungle [the “Dungle,” in Kingston], and five hundred of them had jobs to go to in the morning . . . . [T]he people gave off the sweetish stink of bodies which don’t get enough food, and it’s like smelling from a distance the room where a man is ill with jaundice” (1956, 74). Here the bodily language of the urban folk, when read against the depiction of slaves in his final novel, suggests that the latter function as a proto-national mass in the hold. For in The Sure Salvation, Hearne describes the middle passage abyss in remarkably similar terms:

The smells of the hold seem to have congealed into one substance denser than the air in which it is suspended: an exudation, foul, tepid and almost phantasmagorial, that clings to the face, hands and nostrils like mucus. Something that does not rise from only the gross discharges or urine puddles, oozing shit, splashed vomit, the constant farts and belches, the sweat, mingled oils and furious heat of near five hundred living bodies packed on shelves as close as corpses from an epidemic heaped into a pit of quicklime. (1981, 137)

Although Hearne’s works need to be positioned in the nation-building era of Jamaica and the broader Caribbean, I do not want to simply assert that the ship here is the Republic, to follow the metaphor of Plato’s Phaedrus
rather, I want to deepen this parallel by suggesting that the constitutive components of modern nation-building can be traced back to the hydrarchy of the slave ship itself. This marks Hearne’s break from Caribbean scholars who situate the pigmentocracy of the plantation as the origin of creolization and the postcolonial nation-state. By extension, Hearne places the middle passage as an originary narrative of creolization and modernity, even as the novel problematizes its temporality and foregrounds its historical alterity. By exploring the antinomy between waste and value, Hearne makes a vital contribution to materialist historiographies of Caribbean modernity which, in Marxist terms, have traditionally drawn from the exploitation of slave labor and the economic expansion of empire. By exploring the (nonlabor) production of bodies, configuring the ocean as waste, and tracing the semantic value of transatlantic “guineas,” Hearne connects economic history to a corporeal Atlantic modernity.

**Orifices of Creolization**

Maritime historians have long argued that “civilization” is “the product of the activities of seamen sailing in ships across the seas,” positioning the ocean as “the great medium” of “dissemination” of “the seminal fluid and the lifeblood of civilization” (Waters 1967, 189; see also Connery 1996, 296–298). These metaphors of fluidity and movement often encode a sexually virile and masculine motility of (etymologically) spermatic “dissemination” of “seminal” waters. Hearne’s emphasis on the *viscosity* of middle passage waste, a “congealed” substance described in the novel as “denser than air,” which “clings” like “mucus” (1981, 137) positions transoceanic history as an unstable and feminized substance that cannot flow towards a linear futurity (see Douglas 1966, 38; see also Grosz 1994, 194). The novel’s corporeality positions the ship as a body politic, but resists the maritime telos of progress and mobility. *Pace* Freud, Hearne explores how “dirtiness of any kind seems to us incompatible with civilization” (Freud 1961, 44), but his novel positions the “dirty trade” (1981, 35) as the inassimilable “waste” of civilizing narratives. Thus the “clinging evidence of their corruption, which the water would not swallow” (1981, 7), registers more than an oceanic sublime characterized by Connery as a recognition that “the ocean is *too* external: its assimilability . . . is always in doubt” (1996, 290). As in Andrew Salkey’s epigraph to this chapter, the Atlantic is a “rass” of a history ocean—a Jamaican creolization of “rat’s ass”—that suggests that abject corporeality of the middle passage is sanitized from the his-
tory of civilization as both event and narrative. Perhaps this is why of all the animals likened to human subjects on board, rendering the ship as a Conradian bestiary, “sea dog” becomes the most privileged metaphor in Hearne’s novel. As Freud has shown, dogs are unevenly incorporated into the civilizing process due to their association with a developed olfactory capacity “which has no horror of excrement, and that is not ashamed of its sexual functions” (1961, 52).

In *The Sure Salvation* the “smells of sweat and heavy sleep, like a coma, of faeces, menstrual blood, baby’s vomit, of closely packed flesh [that] thickened in the air above the hold” (Hearne 1981, 36) pose, in Reynolds’s words, a palpable “problem for the world’s digestion” (37). Just as Hearne resists the homogenizing metaphors of the oceanic, his invocation of waste is specific to the age and gender of particular bodies. The culinary “spatula” that Reynolds carries to “the poop,” described as “a load of yellow waste ringed by pale yellow gravy” (43) is tied to cycles of bodily consumption, remarkably like the crew’s unpalatable food of “stringy meat” and “yellow grease” (31). As a result, the civilizing process of western capital is shown to be characterized by “immediate hunger, lust and ruthless preservation of the self” (63), particularly for the novel’s underclass and racialized characters. Unlike the folkloric novel examined by Bakhtin, Hearne suggests that “consumption” and “productive labor” can be decoupled, rendering waste as their unspeakable result (207). The *Sure Salvation*’s immobility, its entrapment in the corporealized present, implodes the temporal registers of Bakhtin’s chronotope, which, he explains, is more heavily encoded by time than space. Thus the immobility of the ship and its surrounding waste cannot be “responsive to the movements of time, plot and history” (Bakhtin 1981, 84). As such, Hearne’s middle passage is mired in the end-products and consumptive discharges of its own history, destabilizing linear temporality and infusing the present with the viscosity of bodily presence. The bodies “packed” out of historical view into the “shelves” of the hold invoke what de Certeau has noted as the disciplinary quarantine of “ob-scene” bodies, “censured, deprived of language,” and “unnamable” (de Certeau 1984, 191) in the telos of transparent, fluid, civilizing history.

To position the middle passage as a site of historical origins for Caribbean modernity, one must limit the totalizing implications of the “sea as waste.” Waste in this context may also be read as a position of “exile” beyond signification where an imperial rule of law is not overly inscribed on bodies (de Certeau 1984, 191). Since European histories of the middle passage emphasized the crossing as a “social death,” positioning Africans in the New World as a *tabula rasa* upon which to inscribe colonial moder-
nity, Hearne’s generation was pursuing a logic of creolization that argued for the existence of cultural residue and survivals, a history of endurance rising from the horrors of the “civilizing” process.49 The folk culture of the slaves thus became a vital symbolic resource for postwar nationalism and creolization itself. So while Hearne’s invocation of waste must necessarily include the loss of subjects in the middle passage—a narrative attempt at a return to memorialize the unspeakable—it also utilizes the metaphor of waste as a sign of social margins or frontier. As Douglas reminds us, the fluids and substances emitted from the body necessarily highlight the permeability of social and corporeal structures, positioning human refuse in terms of power and danger (1966, 120). Hearne’s inscription of the sea as waste positions the middle passage as the site where corporeal and social boundaries are transgressed. Since “any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins” (Douglas 1966, 121), the expansion of capital—a sign of the civilizing process itself—becomes radically decentered from its Euro-American continental frame and placed in an Africanized Atlantic.

Abject bodies have always been a problem to the metanarrative of modernity because they elude logical rationality (Kristeva 1982, 65). Since spaces of the margin, those “orifices” of the social and corporeal body, signify vulnerability to pollution and permeability (Kristeva 1982, 121), the mouth and “cunt” become Hearne’s privileged metaphors of the violence of the creolization process. I have discussed the ways in which Mtshta enters the master’s language through the process of shipboard rape and her interpellation as a racialized “bitch” (Hearne 1981, 95). As Corbin points out, the response of bourgeois modernity to the perceived filth of the masses was to purify the social body through instruction (1986, 148) and through the deodorization of language (1986, 214). In terms of the body of Africans, Mtshta becomes the first self-conscious, speaking subject of Atlantic creolization. An Irish sailor remarks on the ship’s polyglossia, ironically complaining, “It’s as hard to get an exchange av dacint English on this tub as in the jungles av Africa” (Hearne 1981, 31). Like the majority of Europeans on board, he seems oblivious to the ship’s modernizing process. In contrast, the sexual and linguistic exchange between Mtshta and Reynolds configures them as uneven but active agents of transatlantic creolization. Far from suppressing Mtshta under the weight of her own sexual victimization, Hearne places her narrative in the literal center of the novel, providing brief access to her interiority and her interpellation of her rapist as “Elegwa: evil without a purpose, accidentally embodied; a spirit without a role in the complex exchanges of good and bad; a thing outside the decent order of worship and propitiation” (83). Significantly, she refers
to him by a New World (Cuban) name rather than West African (Eshu, Legba). Since Reynolds is “outside knowledge” and “beyond explanation,” she determines that he is worth “no more than a few expiatory gestures” (83). Although Reynolds has “planted” his penis in “the moist darkness where its new roots might grow and find purchase,” Mtishta ultimately considers herself “safe” from “being consumed” (83). Hearne omits Reynolds’ voice in this violent exchange, so Mtishta’s narrative predominates, exceeding the consuming logic of capital and the exploitation of human bodies. In fact, this violent sexual “moment of passage” catalyzes her memories of home, capture, and exile, her critique of the slave trade as secular consumption without “proper ceremony,” and her commitment to inform the women of Reynolds’s “people” that “a purpose for a woman’s mouth” is not to “uselessly swallow . . . seed and eat . . . children” (93). Admittedly, Hearne’s inscription of Mtishta’s agency is deeply problematic—his indirect narrative voice renders her relations with Reynolds as “making love” (93)—and she and Tadene disappear from the narrative after the mutiny and are absent from New World futurity. One might interpret her terror of forced oral sex, a practice she finds worse than death and slavery (93), as a desire for insemination. Nevertheless, her critiques of the unproductive cycles of capitalist consumption and secular individualism, coupled with her piercing insight into “what his people called woman . . . Bitch” (95), generate a vital counter-narrative to the civilizing process as well as an epistemic site of creolization itself.

As Mary Douglas points out, discourses of bodily pollution are metaphysically conflated with sexual “perversion” and rigidify the boundaries between the sacred and profane. Thus the figure by which Mtishta recognizes Reynolds, Elegwa, signifies a syncretic African deity of the crossroads—a generative sign of the creolization process and the (sexual) initiation into Atlantic modernity. Known as Legba in Dahomey, this figure represents the divine linguist and trickster, illicit and “pervasive” sexuality and was often conflated by Christian missionaries with the devil (Herskovits 1938, 225). In the form of the Yoruba trickster Eshu-Elegba, he is the agent provocateur of “change and transition” (Wescott 1962, 337); he is irreverent towards social and sacred boundaries and is also an explorer (340–341). Similar to Reynolds, he is a figure of “flagrant orality” (Thompson 1983, 32), associated with the spoon (or spatula) and an “insatiable hunger” of the libido (Wescott 1962, 347). Like the transformative codes of creolization, Elegwa ushers in the spirit of change (Thompson 1983, xv), is “the ultimate master of potentiality” (19), and is “one of the most important images of the black Atlantic world” (19). As a deity associated with trade
and commerce (Pelton 1980, 89), his transference to the middle passage, a western border of Africa, suggests that “the limits of this world can be horizons” (88). He highlights middle passage modernity as “a principle of fluidity, of uncertainty, of the indeterminacy even of one’s inscribed fate” (Gates 1988, 28).

In keeping with Glissant’s suggestion that creolization is a mutual process that implicates Europeans and Africans, Mtishta characterizes Reynolds (and his aristocratic ilk) as originary mechanisms of the slave trade and its associated violence. Reynolds is one of the few characters who is unimpeded by the hypocritical boundaries of bourgeois morality and is a gleeful participant in a middle passage modernity that is constituted by the semantic and material exchange of waste and value. He embraces and embodies the abject, that underbelly of modernity, by recognizing that “the sea will not be moulded into our excremental falsehoods” (Hearne 1981, 82). Although he hopes that upon arrival Mtishta will present “one of those yellow Brazilian swells with a blue-eyed mulatto boy” (89), a challenge to the creole planters who he feels “drone on interminably about [their] Visigothic forebears” (89), his decapitation/castration ultimately terminates his patronymic claims on New World futurity. Highlighting the ways in which diaspora is etymologically derived from sperm, Hearne provides a subtle critique of culture models offered by Caribbean theorists such as Denis Williams who have argued that the filial concept of the “ancestor might fittingly be replaced by that of the donor—the donor of the sperm,” reducing Caribbean creolization to “African sperm in various states of catalysis” (1969, 12). Reynolds’s alliance with the patronymic is visible in his anticipated production of a “blue-eyed . . . boy,” a white masculinity that literally frames and occludes the central sign of creolization: “mulatto.”

Hearne’s novel provides a critique of masculinist genealogies of diaspora and creolization, even those secured through mutiny and revolt. This might explain why Delfosse’s plot of mutiny is shown to have a problematic origin (his adaptation of Enlightenment individualism) and ultimately results in failure. This allows creolization, the only generative process to arise from oceanic waste, to become the only remaining narrative of futurity in the New World. Delfosse, who models his future kingdom up the Amazon on the likes of Hernández Cortés, Francisco Pizarro, and the “Emperor Christophe” (Hearne 1981, 200), has only two days of rule at sea before he is intercepted by the HMS Beaver, a British naval steamer that signifies a “revolution” in technology, patrolling for illegal slave ships (204). Lieutenant Michael Honeyball, an adherent of technology as a tool
of empire, is “obsessed” with the machinery of “steam and steel” (205) and its disciplinary rule. This phallic “power throbbing through the connection rod to his twin screws” is what allows him to intercept the Sure Salvation, a ship lost to time and nautical technologies (205). Honeyball also ushers in an age of lost intimacy with the sea and an illusory ideologeme of the temporal conquest of ocean space through science. Although his engine fails while he’s accompanying the slaver to the Guianas, and he is nearly outrun by the wind-driven power of the Sure Salvation, Honeyball believes:

He had learned how to use the sure power of steam against the immemorial energy of the sea that had now become random and helpless against the mind that could demand any direction or make any assertion with absolute assurance of the tireless, utterly obedient servant it was now able to command on a moment’s decision. (205)

In prose almost as torturous as his logic, Honeyball reflects a radical shift in the nineteenth-century maritime world, where the emergence of new technologies feminized the sea and subjected its currents and depths to military science and a new discipline of oceanography. The HMS Beaver, the name of one of Marryat’s transatlantic ships, also invokes Darwin’s Beagle, a vehicle best known for its contributions to an evolutionary rendering of deep historic time. The temporal frame of Hearne’s novel—May to June 1860—is contemporaneous with the publication of the first U.S. edition of Origin of Species and the debate at the British Association for the Advancement of Science between Thomas Huxley and Samuel Wilberforce over special versus natural selection. Publications from the Beagle’s voyage contributed to the rise of U.S. nautical fiction by adapting Darwin’s account of an oceanic origin of life to uphold the genre of naturalism and its chronotopes of violent evolutionary struggle. Importantly, the Beagle’s voyage also catalyzed the field of oceanography, the rise of maritime studies, and the establishment of the first transatlantic submarine telegraph cable (1866), the “spinal cord of the British empire” (Headrick 1988, 101). As a vehicle of imperial measurement and rule, the Beagle’s mission included the surveillance of the Argentine coast, to secure the Falklands as a territory for the empire and, with twenty-four chronometers on board, to tighten the temporal precision of longitude (Browne 1992, 464). This mechanistic rule of the sea is a radical change from Columbus’s attempts to measure the speed of his ship by the pace of his own heartbeat (Gerbi 1985, 22).

Honeyball’s maritime nationalism and his investment in the modern-
izing technologies of empire are depicted, like Amasa Delano of *Benito Cereno*, as a dangerously cloaked liberal paternalism that seeks to distance itself from the “filthy, barbarous trade” (Hearne 1981, 223) it sustains by deflecting that history through the valorization of Atlantic surveillance and corporeal discipline. His “precise command of the oceans he patrolled and protected” for the nation-state is undermined by the nakedness of the newly liberated Africans; their lack of clothing threatens him with “a sense of order overthrown, of blatant challenge to all proper and civilized progress, more serious than the smells and other evidence of slavery that still clung to the vessel” (213). In stark contrast to Hogarth, Honeyball is later “consoled” in “moments of guilt” (211) by Delfosse’s pronouncement that “‘you an’ me could no more help meetin’ up the way we done than we could help bein’ born the way each of us was. It had to happen this way’” (212).

On the one hand, Hearne may be suggesting the ways in which this narrative of interception is already predetermined by the maritime genre itself, particularly *Benito Cereno*. On the other hand, this verbal exchange also demonstrates how quickly Honeyball interprets contingency as absolution from historical responsibility. This is evident in Honeyball’s decision to dump his “prize” in a coastal village of British Guiana that is ill-prepared for its new African residents and has no precedent for legal proceedings against the Europeans. As an Amasa Delano figure who is unable to fathom or “cut the knot” (an image also prevalent on Hearne’s ship), Honeyball remains oblivious to black agency and subjectivity beyond the dialectic of master-slave. As Delfosse explains, “I’se black an’ free an’ you don’ really like neither condition” (209). It doesn’t occur to Honeyball that he has intercepted a ship that is completely under control of agents of the black Atlantic and, given the free movement of all bodies, can no longer be interpellated as a slaver.

Even if he abandons his “prize” in the Guianas, Honeyball and his claim to patriotic progress and social liberalism are no less dangerous. Hearne destabilizes the maritime adventure novel by minimizing Honeyball’s capture of the *Sure Salvation*, denying the chronotope of a dramatic pursuit and battle at sea when Delfosse surrenders voluntarily. Nevertheless, Honeyball still attempts to derive his narrative of technological progress from a patriarchal legacy of maritime nationalism. Although Honeyball had read and dismissed Darwin’s thesis, Hearne’s narrator describes him as a new species—all the more terrible in his potential to alter the development of his kind for good or ill, because he was utterly unaware that his youthful understanding of the new [steam] power he
had inherited . . . made him as different a creature from the heroes of his boyhood (Nelson, Wellington, Rodney, Cook, Columbus, Drake and the great reformers of the Anglican Church) as they had been different from the apes to which that damned Darwin had recently suggested they were linked. (206)

Honeyball, a bourgeois subject who concedes to Hogarth’s aristocratic privilege (refusing to contain him in the forecastle with the common sailors), is all the more dangerous because he idealizes a patriarchal genealogy of empire, entirely English “voyagers of history.” In contrast, Hogarth’s adopted maritime forebears had little investment in religious or secular nationalism. Although both men’s visions of history uphold a masculine genealogy of empire, Hogarth does not feminize the ship and sea as submissive objects like his replacement, who introduces a newly gendered grammar of the oceanic. For example, Honeyball’s response to Eliza’s presence on the ship is to call for a disciplinary “fumigating” of her feminine contamination (207), and he denies African women any subjectivity—Mtishta, discovered in Reynolds’s cabin, is simply “black and naked.” By interpelating the slaves as uncivilized objects, visibly resenting Delfosse’s claims to equality, and invoking a patriarchal genealogy of the sea, Honeyball fashions himself a liberator precisely through his own failure to recognize his complicity in the violent social hierarchies of maritime nationalism. Only by homogenizing transoceanic history can he inscribe a genealogy of aristocratic and patriarchal heroes of the state, an “imagined community” or sperm bank of “seamen” forebears who are sanitized from the trade in flesh.

Although scholars have often cited the 1890 publication of Alfred Thayer Mahan’s *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* as a catalyst for American transoceanic expansion, an era when a “Hegelian oceanic elementalism” became “fused with American manifest destiny” (Connery 1995, 182), Hearne’s novel and its precursor in *Benito Cereno* suggest an earlier collusion between science and the military to sustain the Anglo-American dominance of ocean space. Like *Benito Cereno*, Hearne’s novel encodes transoceanic expansion under the veil of a liberal humanism that attempts to cloak the rising tide of revolutionary subjects in France, Haiti, and the Americas. But as a palimpsest, *Sure Salvation* interjects an African-American subject in a historical era and genre that is primarily dictated by Euro-American characters. As a character and symbol, “Del fosse” signifies the historical aporia rendered by benevolent narratives of historical progress that emphasize the civilizing banishment of the trade and the libera-
tion of the slaves rather than the European construction of these systems themselves. Just as Melville aligned the slave revolt in Benito Cereno with the Haitian revolution (see Sundquist 1993), Hearne shifts his narrative of Atlantic modernity to the eve of the American Civil War; both position the sea as a constitutive space of the liberated subject who emerges only to be immediately subjected to the transoceanic reach of an imperialist nation-state.

The sea change Hearne inscribes in these transoceanic narratives may be better understood if we consider Honeyball’s masculinist claim to technological power as a reflection of the emergent ideologies demonstrated in Matthew Fountaine Maury’s bestselling The Physical Geography of the Sea, first published in 1855. Inspired by the voyage of the Beagle (although, like Honeyball, offended by Darwin’s evolutionary thesis), Maury is often cited as the “father” of oceanography. He was a significant organizer of an international effort in 1853 to increase the speed and profit of transoceanic trade by universalizing marine science. He encouraged naval and merchant ships to expand the rule and measurement of the sea by using their instruments to produce a “floating observatory” (1857, xiii) and envisioned the Atlantic as a “great highway” that needed to be latitudinally expanded for trade, filling those oceanic “blank spaces” on hydrographic maps just as “civilized man” might expand into the “solitudes of the wilderness” in the western migration to Oregon (x). By connecting nationalist expansion across the land and sea as manifest destiny, and flattening both topoi into homogenous resources for the expanding empire of science, Maury anticipated an oceanic “harvest” of knowledge for “the benefit of commerce and navigation.” Similar to Honeyball’s idealization of Anglican reformers, Maury claimed the knowledge was for “the good of all,” but targeted the “maritime states of Christendom” (xiii).

Honeyball’s sea of science, technology, and national discipline is reflected in Maury’s attempt to prove the ways in which the ocean “has its offices and duties to perform,” natural “machinery” that is likened to the “mechanism of a watch” (1857, 53). By de-spatializing the oceanic through the temporal registers of longitude and steam ships, the “clockwork of the ocean,” a synecdoche of “the machinery of the universe” was scientifically determined by “order and regularity” (169). Since the rise of oceanographic surveillance was a national and commercial endeavor, it is no surprise that Maury conscripts the natural rhythms of the sea into “laws of order,” creating a transparent sea grammar. In Maury’s “hand-book of nature, every fact is a syllable,” legible to the (male) subject who is destined to “read aright from the great volume” of the sea (69). This connec-
tion between the perceived legibility of the sea, the rise of oceanography in the service of the U.S. military, and the development of the American maritime novel are inextricably connected. They are all dependent upon a disciplinary Atlantic modernity that subjects its laboring and abject bodies to the mechanism of linear time, dominion, and rule.

Hearne positions Honeyball as “all the more terrible in his potential to alter the development of his kind” because, unlike Hogarth, his social Darwinism is too naturalized to be recognized as a distinct historical development in the trajectory of maritime empire. Although both men are oblivious to the ways in which they have participated in and contributed to Atlantic modernity and slavery, Honeyball, like his name, may seem all the more sweet and natural for his benign intervention. Maury reminded his readers that these new claims to knowledge/power over the ocean meant that we must “cease to regard it as a waste of waters” (1857, 53), but Honeyball’s character makes it clear that the rise of oceanography was engaged with a metaphysical cleansing of the “dirty trade” and the “stench of the masses” from maritime history. In fact the new era of oceanography was seen as an instructive tool for the masses, a practice that would “induce a serious earnestness” in sailors’ work and “teach [them] to view lightly those irksome and often offensive duties” on the ship (Maury 1857, xiv). Marine sciences were pedagogical in their deodorization of the masses and, as I explain in the next chapter, also helped to provide a natural bodily metaphor for economic circulation. This is how oceanic “circulation” became a metaphor for blood in a universalized human body, “complete” and “obedient to law and order” (Maury 1857, 154). Although the ocean, as Connery has shown, has been deemed radically exterior to human comprehension, the fluid metaphors of blood and circulation ultimately provided the way in which it was internalized as ethnicity and nation. Through the new oceanography represented by Honeyball and Maury we can see that the rise of masculine sciences relegated feminized nature, “the womb of the sea” (Maury 1857, 248), to the regulation of measurement and rule. The ocean’s violent and diverse human history was submerged, like the slaves in Turner’s painting, by a scientific naturalism hinged to commerce, producing a sea grammar that has no vocabulary for articulating the sea as slavery.

Between Land and Sea: Limbo Gateways

The journey over water: middle passage: time’s river: was a new initiation: lembe: limbo: legba: god of the crossroads.

—Kamau Brathwaite, “Gods of the Middle Passage"
In the real history that haunts *Benito Cereno*, the slaves who revolted on the *Tryal* were tortured and killed by the crew, and the survivors were resold into slavery. Melville’s novel neglects to mention these details and does not inscribe their futurity. In contrast, Hearne provides a narrative space for his characters that is not overdetermined by Honeyball’s “liberating” regime of discipline and surveillance. By placing the Africans in an English colony, Hearne circumvents the claims on their bodies that would have been made by the neighboring South American slave-states. Ironically, the ship is left in the Guianas, the land of “the Golden Kingdom” (Hearne 1981, 219) that Delfosse had sought as El Dorado. Significantly, Hearne empties the entire village of its European population on the day of the *Sure Salvation*’s arrival; the local whites are in the interior, celebrating a birthday of a monarch whose name they have forgotten. Since Hogarth and his crew are incarcerated and Honeyball has departed, Delfosse and the Africans are left to navigate their own process of acculturation, facilitated by the local “mulatto” Weddington, a transplant from Barbados. The absence of Europeans places the arrivants in a direct dialogue with the Afro-Caribbean residents. Importantly, the Africans disembark onto “the stelling,” a Dutch word for pier and the title of Hearne’s first published short story (1960). On the middle of “the great iron-heart stage,” they begin to dance, unevenly “since they were culled from such a variety of tribes, nations and peoples” (222). Hearne writes:

> And the sound of their feet—stamping into the planks of the landing tacked onto the edge of this new land which they could not even begin to comprehend—made a curious harmony, as of different tongues trying to discover the few important words by which they might discover essential exchange. The black people of Abari, all fifteen thousand of them, gathered at the edge of the *stelling*, and watched with incomprehension, resentment, and visibly mounting interest the dances that were being danced before them by people who looked like them but with whom they could not exchange one meaningful word. (222)

Caught between land and sea, the arrivants are no longer routed, but not yet rooted; the movement of their feet on the ship-like *stelling*, a structure of iron and wood that suggests the transitional regime of the oceanic, highlights a moment of possibility rather than completion. As they are not yet interpellated by the English language and the residual hierarchies of the plantation system, their first movement as a unified body occurs only
when they depart the hierarchy of the ship and are placed on the lateral footing of the _stellng_, a symbol of the potential of this new world.

Hearne’s decision to conclude the novel on the _stellng_, a limbo space at the gateway between the Atlantic and the vast Guyanese interior, metonymically invokes the colonial utopian drive towards El Dorado and the possibilities of reformulating a new understanding of the past in the Caribbean present. Although the “proper” speech and English uniform adopted by the Barbadian Weddington (whom Honeyball repeatedly misnames as “Washington”) suggests the dangers of assimilation, encoding the ways in which “Little England” has taken root,52 Hearne seems to hope that these arrivants will learn from the indigenous inhabitants “who understood that the relationship between the huge, nurturing land and those who lived on it was not one of possession” (219). In this novel, history, as Roberto Márquez points out, will provide no “sure salvation” (1983, 270). But highlighting the creative, diverse, and tidalectic process of creolization offers a different temporal trajectory of possibility.

We may see the dance of these New World Africans in terms of the generative potential of limbo, first theorized by Wilson Harris in his _History, Fable and Myth in the Caribbean and Guianas_. The _limbo dance_, “born, as it is said, on the slave ships of the Middle Passage” (1995b, 157), resonates with the deity Legba, encoding a “pun on limbo as a shared phantom limb” for diaspora communities seeking to remember the losses of the crossing (157). The phantom limb, an absent signifier of a lost corporeal unity brought into being through memory rather than History, offers a bodily trace and memorial of the middle passage crossing.53 The “limbo dance becomes the human gateway which dislocates (and therefore begins to free itself from) a uniform chain of miles across the Atlantic” (28), a counter-memory to the homogenous temporality of longitude and universalized maritime history. To Harris, the dance also encodes “a profound art of compensation which seeks to replay a dismemberment of tribes . . . and to invoke at the same time a curious psychic re-assembly of the parts of the dead god or gods” (28).

Unlike most theories of Caribbean creolization which root the process in the plantation system, Hearne places his subjects at the shores of Guyana, “land of many waters,” at a moment of uneven recognition between the arrivants and black residents, performing a dance that does not insist upon a unity of the social body but rather is a fledgling attempt at diversity of expression before they enter the social and linguistic grammars of colonial plantation culture. In a text that destabilizes the desire to fix the ocean and these shores as cultural origin, the _stellng_ is not the privileged
site of creolization and modernity. To begin to locate the first symptoms of modernity in this novel we would have to turn to the women characters, Mtshta and Tadene, who have undergone the process of displacement and reassemblage first in Africa when kidnapped from their villages, then in the coastal trading ports, and finally in the middle passage itself. Hearne’s novel is far more visionary than his counterparts of the time, who often de-temporalized African culture by locating modernity in the ships and plantations of the western Atlantic as if the continent were outside of the historical process of the middle passage and slavery. In Hearne’s vision, Africa was already modern before its subjects entered the Atlantic, and thus his characters represent not so much a counterculture of modernity as its driving mechanism.

By reading *The Sure Salvation* tidaectically in the complex relationship between land and sea, we see that the novel maps a process of modernity and creolization that is not fixed or rooted in any one place. Thus metaphorically and historically, the middle passage, a process more than a place, signifies that violent and regenerative way in which the sea is history. To fathom the middle passage, we might trace its signifying wake in the aquatic metaphors of *Modernity and Its Futures*; the authors describe the process of time-space compression as a point when “identities become detached—disembedded—from specific times, places histories, and traditions, and appear ‘free-floating’” (Hall, Held, and McGrew 1992, 303). Or, to draw from Anthony Giddens’s definition, modernity entails a “‘lifting out’ of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space” (1990, 21). By inscribing the sea as bodily waste, *The Sure Salvation* warns of the dangers of dehistoricizing a “free-floating” subject who has been forcibly removed from “social relations” by a disciplinary oceanic regime that “thanks to the liquid element itself, leaves no borders, furrows, or markings” (Connery 1995, 177). Hearne suggests that only by forcing chronological movement to stagnate, to examine those places where time might be “tricked, frozen by violence” (1981, 47), will we get a glimpse of its diverse spatial bodies in those limbo moments of possibility and change.
We are sixty-five percent water. . . . Our brains are eighty per cent water. We are more water than blood. So our water ties to one another are more important than our blood ties! We carry within us the seas out of which we came.

— Albert Wendt, *Ola*

Tidal methodology of reading island literatures brings together the rooted discourse of terrestrial belonging with the fluidity of transoceanic migration, foregrounding the process of diaspora and highlighting the complex relationship between national and regional identities. Although Pacific Island discourse is generally associated with indigenous sovereignty and a historic relationship to the land, to read these cultural productions tidalistically one must engage with the vital counter-narrative of transoceanic routes and diaspora. In fact, this chapter shows that contestations over land sovereignty in the Pacific are often mitigated through maritime origins; thus regional aquatic routes often sustain local roots. Like their Caribbean counterparts, writers from the Pacific Islands (Oceania) have turned to the genealogies of transoceanic migration in an attempt to remap the national boundaries imposed by western colonialism. Unlike the enforced Atlantic crossings examined in the previous chapter, ancient Pacific voyaging represents the voluntary settlement of the largest region on the globe, coordinated and orchestrated with indigenous technology. Although their experiences of diaspora and migration are radically different from the Atlantic context, many Pacific Island writers have destabilized myths of island isolation through a transoceanic imaginary that highlights vast kinship networks and the agency of the first indigenous settlers. Here I explore how the histories of Pacific voyaging, symbolized
by transoceanic vessels, have been engaged in different ways by the military, anthropology, and indigenous literatures. I argue that the discourse of routes encodes not only an oceanic imaginary but also the *vēides* and *vessels* of Pacific historiography. Whether rendered as a voyaging canoe, a naval ship, a drifting raft, or metaphorically as ethnic blood, the concept of the *vessel* is integral to territorial claims of indigenous sovereignty as well as (masculine) ethnic regionalism.

The foundation of this chapter is inspired by Epeli Hau’ofa’s vision of “a sea of islands,” a regional imaginary that stresses fluidity and interconnectedness rather than isolation (1993b, 7). By invoking the settlement of Oceania by ancient voyagers, Hau'ofa explains that these historical migration patterns can be used as tropes for a more “holistic” understanding of an increasingly mobile and globalized Pacific. His conceptual mapping of the region has been tremendously influential, cited by scholars across the disciplines as a way to indigenize a regional imagination that is still subject to the colonial legacy of cultural and economic belittlement. Yet this invocation of a particular ethnic migration, generally imagined as masculine Polynesian voyagers, raises important questions about navigating the intersections of ethnicity, gender, and class in the contemporary Pacific.

Hau’ofa’s vision was originally published as a book-length dialogue in *A New Oceania*, but its subsequent circulation in the United States as an isolated article has deflected attention from its original critiques. Importantly, Derek Walcott’s poem “The Sea is History” served as the frontispiece for this Pacific dialogue, but the contributors demonstrated that the best methodology of engaging that history was deeply contested. While agreeing that a new vision of the region was needed, Hau'ofa’s colleagues at the University of the South Pacific (USP) reminded readers that Oceania was still characterized by continuing colonialism, ethnic and racial tensions, gender inequities, and the exploitation of island labor by transnational capital. Ultimately the respondents warned that a romantic recuperation of ancient “people from the sea” (Hau'ofa 1993b, 8) should not eclipse a rigorous examination of contemporary globalization in the Pacific.

To understand the reasons for Hau'ofa’s intervention and how these tensions over regional identity developed across time one has to turn to the spatial mapping of the Pacific. I do so by exploring how indigenous narratives are often relegated to a feminized “Basin” by the military and economic dominance of the northern “Rim” through the symbolism of the transoceanic vessel. A focus on the vessel helps to foreground the Rim/Basin tidalectic that undergirds the transnational economic utopia known as “Asia Pacific.” Moreover, since ideologies of national belonging operate
by conflating women with land, it is surely no coincidence that this era of globalization has drawn from a maritime grammar of flows, circulation, and fluidity, which are constituted by discursive constructions of a feminized and increasingly territorialized ocean. This discourse of diasporic fluidity has not been examined in terms of how the ocean and the male-populated boats that are imagined to cross its expanse reiterate the gendered logic of national belonging. The Pacific, a region interpellated into the desiring flows of twentieth-century global capitalism, is thus an important place from which to begin such an analysis (Connery 1995; Wilson and Dirlik 1995a and 1995b, Dirlik 1993).

The Rim’s construction of the Pacific Basin as *aqua nullius* or empty ocean is founded on a remarkable spatial collapse of the world’s largest geographic region to bring the powerful northern economies into a neighborly alliance. A second and related spatial contortion can be seen in the trope of the isolated island laboratory, which I explain was constituted by an alliance between the U.S. military and its subsidized anthropologists. This island isolation theory could be sustained only by denying the agency of indigenous maritime technology that connected the islands for millennia before the arrival of Europeans. Reduced to a basin, the Pacific was symbolically emptied as a vessel of sovereignty. I then turn to the colonial problematics of Thor Heyerdahl’s *Kon-Tiki* expedition, which undermined ancient Polynesian voyaging histories to uphold a white patriarchal genealogy of the Pacific, ideologically sustaining postwar Rim expansion into the Basin. In the second part of this chapter, I turn to the revitalization of voyaging histories, evident in the region’s literature as well as the reconstruction of double-hulled vaka (sailing canoes), such as the Hawaiian vessel *Hokule’a*, which, since 1976, has sailed over 50,000 miles across Oceania using the wayfinding system of etak. As explained in the introduction, etak represents a complex methodology of navigating space and time, rendering land and sea in dynamic and shifting interrelation. Building upon the work of Vicente Diaz and J. Kehaulani Kauanui, I explore this concept of “moving islands” as the most salient counter-narrative to the belittling colonial stereotypes of isolated, ahistorical isles positioned outside the trajectories of modernity (Diaz 1996; Diaz and Kauanui 2001). By rendering the voyaging canoe as a metonymy of a moving island, this chapter positions the circulation of these indigenous vessels as a tidalectic engagement of routes and roots.

Through the lens of these voyaging canoes, the discourse of Pacific Island indigeneity may be brought in closer focus with a subtext of diaspora and migration that has powerfully emerged in recent decades. These
VESSELS OF THE PACIFIC

migratory narratives recuperate the history of voyagers who crossed the tremendous expanse of the Pacific and settled nearly every island in the cartographic triangulation known as Polynesia, between Hawai‘i, Rapa Nui (Easter Island), and Aotearoa/New Zealand. Interestingly, in the most colonized Pacific Islands, indigenous activists have emphasized the long history of land occupation (roots) in an effort to maintain local sovereignty amidst a powerful resurgence in transoceanic migration narratives (routes). The ethnic contours of this native-diaspora intractability are nicely summarized by Hawaiian scholar and poet Haunani-Kay Trask: “The light of our dawns, like the color of our skin, tells us who we are, and where we belong. We know our genealogy descends from the great voyagers of the far Pacific. And we cherish our inheritance” (1999, xv). Although tensions exist between local and diasporic identities in the Pacific, I suggest that they are not as polarized as they may seem when we consider that contemporary trajectories of migration are often mitigated and expressed through the symbolism of precolonial voyaging canoes. Interest in originary migrants, a discourse that James Clifford terms “indigenous cosmopolitanism” (2000, 96), has heightened in a context in which the economic and political contours of the region are shifting through the tentacles—and I use this word deliberately—of late capitalist globalization.

These voyaging histories are vital to cultural sovereignty in that they highlight indigenous technology and agency, yet are also imbricated in the globalizing shifts in ocean governance. As I mentioned in the introduction, the very language that Hau‘ofa employs to articulate “the ocean in us,” conceptualized as “our pathway to each other” as well as “our common heritage” (1997, 124, 148), is derived from an unprecedented remapping of global sovereignty and common space: the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The notion of an oceanic “common heritage” has been in circulation in different yet overlapping epistemologies of the Pacific, and it is intrinsically linked to the feminized, watery metaphors used to characterize this postmodern era of fluidity, flows, circulations, and currents. The very terms with which we categorize this era are entangled in the shifting conceptions and territorializations of seas.

Since the ocean is historically tied to the vessels that help connect it as a region, this chapter traces the ways in which the Pacific voyaging canoe has been utilized by agents of colonialism and indigenous sovereignty. The systematic erasure of the vaka, a native vessel of sovereignty, has been integral to interpellations of the Pacific as an empty basin or a series of isolated islands. This is why regenerating the transoceanic vaka has been so vital to reconnecting transnational indigenous communities and conceptualizing
the vessel as a “moving island.” Concentrating on the tidalectic between land and sea highlights metaphors of movement and fluidity that ultimately are embedded in the etymology and semantics of the term diaspora itself: sperm and blood. By tracing the connections between these fluid metaphors of dispersal across the ocean, I explore three contiguous forms of Pacific regionalism. First, I turn to late-twentieth-century efforts to consolidate the economic exchange across Asia Pacific through the imagery of a capitalist space of fluidity and flow, a softened product of American military discourses that interpellated the islands as remote and isolated. Second, I explore how the construction of ethnic genealogy, or blood ties evident in some contemporary Polynesian voyaging narratives, reproduce culture by literalizing diaspora as the dispersal of male seed through the motif of what Eric Leed calls the “spermatic journey” (1991, 114). In the final section I turn to what Albert Wendt calls “our water ties,” a language of fluidity that reflects a new era of Pacific Island literature in an ocean of globalization.

An Empty Vessel: The Basin of Isolated Laboratories

To trace a genealogy of oceanic regionalism one must necessarily engage with the vessels that made it possible for human beings to undertake their travels. The Pacific Islands region was first imagined and mapped by its earliest human inhabitants, who by 1500 BCE were well on their way to navigating across the largest ocean in the world; at nearly 7,000 miles in width, this is farther than the distance between northernmost Europe to the southernmost tip of Africa. As befitting a region of such size and complexity, there is no one indigenous name for the Pacific Ocean, even in Polynesian languages, where it is known as moana, the realm of Tangaroa, the Great Ocean of Kiwa (and Hine Moana), as well as the vast or supreme marae of space. To Europeans, the region was interpellated as the South Seas and claimed for Spain by Vasco Nuñez de Balboa as he waded into the Gulf of Panama in 1513. A few years later it was rather inappropriately named the Pacific by Ferdinand Magellan, who crossed the ocean with a mutinous crew and, in a historic first contact between Europeans and Pacific Islanders in Micronesia, killed seven Chamorros before landing on Guam, where he raided their village and burned down their houses in retaliation for the theft of items from his ship. In fact, this startling recognition of the Pacific and its uninterrupted connection to Asia was the last stage, for Europeans, in mapping a complete sphere of the globe. The remoteness of the Pacific Ocean from Europe and its vastness have been the cause
of its belated interpellation into modernity, despite the fact that knowledge of this ocean provided the materials for modern measurement and imperial rule. Over the next two centuries, naval, merchant, and whaling vessels crisscrossed and mapped the Pacific, particularly Enlightenment-minded explorers such as James Cook, who marveled at the Polynesians’ navigational abilities and characterized them as “by far the most extensive nation on earth” (quoted in Finney 1994, 7). Although countless studies have been dedicated to these “Vikings of the Pacific,” peoples who, in the words of Sir Peter Buck / Te Rangi Hiroa, surpassed the achievement of Phoenician, Mediterranean, and Norse sailors to become “the supreme navigators of history” (1938, 13),7 most scholarship either positions Asia as a metonymy for the Pacific or sidesteps these navigational histories by locating the concept of the region as an economic and political byproduct of the Cold War. Even scholars attuned to the indigenous history of the Pacific insist that the region is a Euro-American construct.8

Focusing on the history of transpacific vessels helps elucidate the ways in which regional studies contributed to the erasure of precolonial indigenous histories by substituting the Pacific vaka with the naval vessels of imperial nation-states. The development of region or area studies is conceptually and historically tied to Commonwealth, postcolonial and diaspora studies. After World War II, geopolitical paradigms such as Immanuel Wallerstein’s world systems theory and the categorization of First, Second, Third, and later Fourth Worlds contributed to a new understanding of the uneven economic, social, and geopolitical layerings of humanity.9 Like postcolonial and diaspora studies, the concept of the region has the theoretical potential to challenge national boundaries by focusing on the ways in which people and products flow across diverse spaces. If one considers how European colonialism carved the world into discrete nations that were then politically and economically eroded by the policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), it becomes understandable why a regional “imagined community,” such as the Pacific, Africa, or the black Atlantic could pose a vital alternative to national, colonial, and corporate hegemonies. Yet in its efforts to dismantle the ethnic and political boundaries of the nation-state, postcolonial regionalism shares characteristics with the telos of transnational capitalism. Thus Pacific scholars might be mindful of Misao Miyoshi’s warning that regional studies is “part of the Cold War strategy” (1995, 80), and that has produced disturbing “parallel and cognate developments between economy and scholarship” (81).10

While regional studies are often framed in geopolitical terms, economic and cultural contributions to the constituency of a region must be
considered alongside one another if we are to simultaneously recognize the vessels of native sovereignty and transnational capital. Theoretically, one should be able to speak in terms of local indigenous movements alongside global economic shifts, as this chapter intends to do. Oceania provides a particularly paradigmatic space for these entanglements, given the ways in which the larger, late-capitalist metropoles of the northern Rim quite literally circumscribe the region and determine its monetary and labor flows. As Rob Wilson and Arif Dirlik have shown (1995a), Asia Pacific has been the dominant modality for understanding the region. The Islands, erased from the teleology of the celebrated “Pacific Century” and relegated to a geographic and economic Basin, are producing a differently inflected discourse of migratory flows through the reclamation of Polynesian voyaging histories. My point here is not to draw a simple distinction between the flows of economy and culture, as the division between the Rim and Basin might suggest. Rather, as I will explain, this relationship between Rim and Basin is mutually constitutive. The modernizing Rim is dependent upon historic claims to vessels in the Basin, while conversely, ancient voyaging narratives of the Basin have adopted the globalizing tropes of the Rim to navigate in the economic wake of late capitalism.

Simon Gikandi has suggested that academic discourses of globalization displace economic considerations by adopting the cultural grammar of postcolonial studies. Had he included the Pacific, he would have found that the cultural production of the Islands has been largely subsumed by economic “Rim-speak.” This is not from any lack of effort to complicate the Rim-Basin binary. Wilson and Dirlik’s collection, *Asia/Pacific as Space of Cultural Production*, represents a vital attempt to destabilize these spatial hierarchies and to remap the Pacific to include the millions of Islanders who reside within the largest ocean in the world. This important volume includes a reprint of Hau‘ofa’s “Our Sea of Islands,” which helped broaden its distribution and concludes with a Micronesian poem that also invokes voyaging canoes. Although the editors assert that cartographies of the region “need not belong exclusively to the circulations of hegemonic power” (1995a, 11), they contend that the Pacific is “dominantly a Euro-American formation” (2). As such, they reiterate Dirlik’s earlier assertion that “EuroAmericans were responsible not only for mapping the Pacific, but also for attaching names to the maps” (1993, 5). By gendering the ways in which the “global deforms and molests the local” (Wilson and Dirlik 1995a, 8, authors’ emphasis), and encoding binary Rim-Basin relations in terms of mobile masculine economies overlaid upon feminized local cultures, this influential collection was not able to fully explore the efficacy of indigenous
forms of regionalism and the Pacific vessels that sutured these cultural and economic histories together.

Paul Sharrad has usefully demonstrated that the perceived newness of Asia Pacific was a palimpsest over colonial mystifications of an idyllic South Seas that had interpellated the Pacific Basin as a vast, empty (feminized) ocean to be filled by masculine European voyagers. In strikingly gendered language, Sharrad argued that the Basin suggests “something more akin to a sink than a bowl; a container, a vessel that exists to be filled or emptied” (1990, 599). In terms that resonate with the Caribbean, Hau'ofa warned against the scholarly tendency to describe Oceania as “a Spanish lake, a British Lake, an American Lake, and even a Japanese Lake” (1993, 10). Yet scholars have tended to amplify rather than deconstruct the gendered economic and geopolitical imaginaries of the region. In surveying the Caribbean and Pacific, continental Rim powers often translate “vessel” as an empty Basin rather than an alternative navigation of sovereignty.

Given the importance accorded to the economic and cultural “flows” of the Pacific, I would like to turn to Christopher Connery’s work, because his observations on the emergence of regional studies concur with Miyo-shi’s concerns and include a prescient warning about the epistemological underpinnings of Rim/Basin relations. He writes:

[Regionalism’s origination in the binarisms of developed/under-developed, expansion/contraction, or growth/stagnation is significant. The concept of region, arising as it does within a binary logic of difference, is a semiotic utopia, a “spatial fix” for those faced with analyzing the always differentiating but always concealing logic of capital. The region, less encumbered by the various ideological or mythical mystifications that pervade the state, will be where history and analysis takes place. (Connery 1996, 286–287)]

Connery connects Pacific Rim studies with U.S. imperialism as it continues to fulfill its manifest destiny across the Pacific towards Asian capital, reflecting a similar teleology to that which allowed the United States to invade the sovereign territory of Hawai‘i in 1893. His comparison of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century imperialist discourses of the Pacific-as-destiny suggests that the ocean Basin is “the void that gives substance to what surrounds it” (1996, 288). Thus the logic of capital erases itself through its most elemental metaphor: the ocean. Connery traces a genealogy of ocean modernity by outlining how the simultaneous emergence of capitalism and transoceanic imperialism gave rise to Euro-American per-
ceptions that the ocean was at once the mythopoetic source of evolutionary origins as well as economic destiny. Since the ocean has “long functioned as capital’s myth element” (289), the economic and oceanic sublime are mutually constitutive axioms, newly displaced onto the late-twentieth-century emergence of high capitalist Pacific Rim economies.

I would like to build upon Connery’s ideas to explore how the ocean is placed, as argued in the last chapter, in a complex constitutive relationship with the hydrarchy of the ship. In configuring an empty Basin to erect the Rim, Pacific area studies often eclipse the vessels that make its regionalism possible, neglecting to consider the ways in which transoceanic ships construct the region through migration and settlement, colonialism and violence, as well as cultural and economic trade and exchange. Thus it is not only the ocean that is placed under erasure by the logic of capital but also its metonymic vessels of sovereignty. These vessels include indigenous vaka such as the *Hokule‘a*, the transoceanic container ships that sustain the flow of transnational capital, as well as the naval craft that claimed the region for Euro-America and brought their cargo, including nuclear weapons. Although the links between area studies and militarization are well known, scholars have not fully acknowledged the ways in which Pacific studies arose out of U.S. naval militarization during and after World War II. This is a crucial erasure because the naval and technological colonization of this vast region are constitutive elements in the fashioning of an Asia Pacific discourse that immobilizes the vessels of island historiography.

Although its transoceanic routes are often obscured, an international Pacific studies first emerged in the early twentieth century and solidified as a postwar discipline that largely reflected British and American naval interests in the region. As John Terrell, Terry Hunt, and Chris Gosden have shown, initially the field was coordinated and funded by the U.S. military under the aegis of the National Research Council’s Pacific Science Board (PSB), which declared its intent to address the “glaring lack of scientific knowledge” that “hampered military operations” and “the pressing need of the Navy for basic information” (1997, 156). PSB-coordinated anthropologists working in Micronesia perpetuated the idea that the Pacific Islands were “isolated” from modernity, ideal “laboratories” for the study of bounded cultures, and that their populations had partaken in no deliberate inter-island voyages in the recent or ancient past. As Terence Wesley-Smith’s genealogy of the field has shown, area studies funding was concordant with federal military interests while a “laboratory rationale” partitioned the islands and elided the complexities of regional exchange (1995, 122). These “insular” Pacific Islands that historian Oskar Spate
found “so splendidly splittable into Ph.D. topics” (quoted in Kirch 1986, 2), were segregated from modernity in ways that mystified western naval expansion into the region.

The island laboratory paradigm was a pernicious erasure of the ways in which the region was enmeshed in the violent “Pacific theater,” particularly when we consider that Micronesia was the launching point for Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor as well as the base from which Enola Gay and Bock’s Car departed for Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As a region of more than 2,200 islands, Micronesia was anything but isolated from the effects of the war and hosted some of the most important transportation bases. An incredible expanse of the western Pacific, having already experienced German, French, British, Japanese, and Spanish colonialism, became deeply militarized from the Philippines to the Solomon Islands. In fact, the term “island hopping” was coined by the U.S. Navy to describe the establishment of a system of communications, supplies, intelligence, and transport that involved nearly every archipelago across the 7,000-mile-wide region. The same Pacific region categorized as “isolated” by anthropologists hosted the largest naval war in human history. For example, in only the last six months of the war, the U.S. Navy reported over “17,000 sailings of vessels large and small through the six million square miles of Western Sea Frontier waters” (E. King 1945, 199). The terraqueous nature of the Pacific demanded a new “amphibious” naval strategy from the United States that linked islands as stepping stones, formulating the eastern Pacific as “the most heavily traveled military highway on and above the sea” (E. King 1945, 199). The legacy of these transpacific vessels is still dangerously present: over 1,000 sunken warships, including destroyers and oil tankers weighing over 3 million tons, are poisoning regional waters, while some waterways of northern Australia are still off-limits due to floating mines.13

The regional imaginary of Asia Pacific configures the islands as a Basin by erasing the history of naval battles that ranged from the Aleutian Islands of the Bering Sea to the southern reaches of Port Moresby. As one historian observes: “It proved impossible to draw a line on the map to say where the war should stop”; the desire for transpacific military communications “seemed to dictate the invasion” of any island deemed strategic to Allied interests (I. Campbell 1992, 183). By the end of the war, the United States claimed Micronesia as a strategic trust territory and gained 3.5 million square miles of sea area which, according to a U.S. Army-funded study on Oceania, was “roughly equivalent to the size of the continental United States” (Bunge and Cooke 1984, 295). I suggest that the amnesia in post-colonial studies about the extent of U.S. imperialism is precisely because
CHAPTER 2

the Rim configures the Pacific as *aqua nullius* and its islands synonymous with isolation.

The construction of isolated islands derives from the erasure of the sea as a highway and its traffic in maritime vessels. The discourse of insular islands, sustained by many anthropologists, not only helped to validate nuclear testing in the region but in some cases suppressed its dangerous effects. The U.S. militarization of the Pacific was, by necessity, a naval endeavor, yet these fleets rarely appear in regional scholarship. Operation Crossroads, a mystifying name for the nuclearization of two supposedly isolated islands, was made possible by naval technologies: over 90 ships were sent to the Bikini Lagoon and used as targets for the two atmospheric detonations, while over 150 additional naval vessels surrounded the site for support services. Precisely where anthropologists mapped isolation, the United States detonated sixty-six atomic and hydrogen bombs on Enewetak and Bikini Atolls between 1946 and 1958 (Robie 1999, 143). Pacific Science Board scholars were employed to report their contamination levels. Two years after the United States dropped a fifteen-megaton hydrogen bomb over Bikini (1,000 times more destructive than in Hiroshima), causing the irradiation and diaspora from the surrounding islands, Ward Goodenough’s article, citing the PSB and framed with Margaret Mead’s approving introduction to “Polynesia as a Laboratory,” argued that Oceania “provides . . . instances of ‘pure’ cultural radiation unaffected by external contacts” (Mead 1957; Goodenough 1957, 54; Terrell, Hunt, and Gooden 1997, 157). Goodenough specifically argued that the ocean proved a barrier to Islanders and, against all evidence to the contrary, suppressed its role as a naval highway (150–151). Moreover, his use of the terms “pure” and “unaffected cultures” constituted by “radiation” are particularly meaningful when we consider that the United States, Britain, and France were rapidly nuclearizing the region and that reports had recently been issued that Rongelap Islanders, having been covered with over five centimeters of nuclear fallout from Bikini, were diagnosed with fatal chromosome damage (M. King 1986, 7).

Together, the nuclear powers and many anthropologists categorized the Pacific Islands as remote laboratories and therefore ideal contained spaces for the execution of cultural and radioactive experimentation, testing, and research. Others have alleged, with convincing evidence, that the United States deliberately exposed Rongelap Islanders to nuclear radiation because their contained island environment facilitated a controlled study of its deadly effects (see O’Rourke 1986). K. R. Howe explains that since colonial contact: “The Pacific and its peoples were both a laboratory for
the study of human prehistory and a major testing ground for Enlightenment and subsequent science” (2003, 23; my emphasis). As a whole, the concept of a wartime or nuclearized Pacific region is notably absent from most metropolitan discourses of Basin and Rim, evidencing an amnesia not only in terms of the “cognate developments between economy and scholarship,” but between scholarship and militarization. This lack of historical depth should not, perhaps, come as a surprise, given the ocean’s role “as capital’s myth element,” and the Pacific’s recent appropriation into the utopian telos of late capitalism, which cloaks its dystopian form in nuclear eschatology. As Connery warns: “Pacific Rim Discourse—perhaps the most obvious articulation of Paul Virilio’s notion of the disappearance of space and time as tangible dimensions of social life—will resist the attempt to historicize it” (1995, 56). To sum up, Asia Pacific studies have tended to erase the Basin by configuring the Rim as its metonym; this is made possible by the reluctance to speak in meaningful ways about the region’s militarization, which is mystified by the colonial trope of isolated isles. The myth of isolation can only be sustained by suppressing the long historical presence of maritime vessels—both indigenous and foreign. As such, the transpacifi c voyaging histories of the Polynesians that connected the island region became one of the fi rst casualties of isolationist axioms. As I will explain, the transoceanic vaka was the focal point of Rim-Basin contention, integral even in its erasure to the regional imaginary.

The White Chief-God: Military Drift and Accidental Landfall

In order to substantiate this theory of island isolation, scholars were posed with a particular problem in terms of the enormous size of a culture region named by eighteenth-century Europeans as “Polynesia,” or many islands. It is well known that Cook and other explorers of this period were astonished by the region’s maritime technology and double-hulled voyaging canoes (vaka), which often dwarfed European ships. Because these eastern Pacific cultures were recognized as the product of transoceanic migration, countless studies were devoted to tracing Islander origins. Well into the twentieth century, amateur and professional ethnologists interpellated Polynesians as one of the lost tribes of Israel, a model of Christian diffusionism that was later adapted by Orientalists as an Aryan genealogy that led back to India. Thus even in its earliest racial theories, European discourse constructed human presence in the Pacific in terms of a global network of family—a shared diaspora of Aryan Christian kinship. While this European fascination with Islander origins and mobility positioned Poly-
nesians as technologically savvy agents, it also justified European occupation of the region by positioning indigenous peoples as settlers and thereby undermining native sovereignty. These Polynesian origin theories also had the rather dubious distinction of suggesting that the Islands themselves could not generate the seeds of culture, which were perceived as the birthright of Europeans. As Patrick Kirch points out: “Little consideration was given to the possibility that Polynesian cultures had developed within the Pacific” (2000, 208). This suggests a European ideologeme of *aqua nullius*, upon which continental peoples overlaid their presumably more developed cultures. For roughly 200 years, the European notion of culture dispersion across nearly 7,000 miles of the Pacific held sway with academics, even when in 1947 Thor Heyerdahl attempted to prove that Polynesians came from South America by drifting on prevailing currents from Peru to the Tuamotu Archipelago (French-occupied Polynesia) on his raft, the *Kon-Tiki*. While his journey gripped the popular imagination, few scholars took his experiment seriously, given the cultural and linguistic studies that historicized Pacific Island dispersal from Southeast Asia. Yet Heyerdahl’s famous accidental-drift theories, and his originary vessel of Aryan racial origins, mark a radical shift in the approach to Pacific Island mobility and agency, which has not been conceptually linked to the militarization of the region and its disciplinary byproduct, area studies.

Heyerdahl’s *Kon-Tiki: Across the Pacific by Raft* contributed to the erasure of Polynesian subjects, based as it was upon a western arboreal model of genealogical succession that invests ontological authority in originary founders. In this case, deliberate ocean-voyaging Polynesians are preempted by the *idea* of Incans on a balsa raft, drifting aimlessly on the prevailing currents across 4,300 miles of open sea. In his experiment to prove that proto-Incans settled the Pacific Islands, Heyerdahl is suspiciously silent about Polynesian vessels, substituting the intentionality of the double-hulled sailing vaka for the far less maneuverable log raft, even when native outriggers in the Tuamotu group had to rescue the *Kon-Tiki* from dangerous reefs. I draw attention to this suppression of indigenous watercraft because the ship, as I have explained in the previous chapter, generally functions as an important metaphor of the people—a vehicle of the collective will in the past and present. To dislocate the connection between Pacific seafarers and their originary vessels is to deny the region’s material and cultural history as well as its capacity to navigate the future. Thus I shift the concept of the *vessel* from its Rim definition as empty Basin, absence, and lack, to a crucial bodily metaphor of a people’s connection to their genealogy, history, and sovereignty. A focus on the vessel
renders tidalactics visible—it is the principal way in which roots are connected to routes and islands connected to the sea.

While scholars often point to the error of Heyerdahl’s theory, citing the ample evidence of an eastward rather than westward trajectory of the region’s settlement, I am less interested in examining Kon-Tiki’s empiricism (after all, migrations are always far more complicated than their theories), than in positioning the text as a cultural artifact of the war in the Pacific in which a Euro-American regionalism was already operative. Through the best-selling narrative Kon-Tiki, which was translated into sixty-seven languages and made into an Oscar-winning documentary, the Allied powers were given genealogical authority of the Pacific in a way that undermined Asian antecedents of the region. Heyerdahl’s erasure of Pacific voyaging capacities and the materiality of double-hulled vaka reflects colonial and twentieth-century militarization of the region; in both cases, western powers were particularly threatened by Islander mobility. Alfred Crosby has demonstrated that European empires in the Atlantic developed their island colonization skills by limiting native mobility (1986). Across the Pacific, long-distance indigenous voyaging was discouraged and criminalized by nineteenth-century European missionaries, traders, and colonial administrations who had a vested interest in maintaining a local tax-paying, church-going, and plantation-working population. The remnants of voyaging practices were further circumscribed by German, Japanese, British, French, and U.S. prohibitions during the Second World War. Discouraged by the wartime powers and finding an acceptable alternative in motorized vessels, double-hulled vaka production became increasingly rare. Heyerdahl’s shift of attention from the purposeful vaka to the drifting balsa raft reflected the waning of many indigenous inter-island exchange systems.

This is a genealogical sketch of how military and academic discourses converged to construct an isolated Pacific in the midst of a global war, an ideology constituted by the erasure of Pacific vaka. It is not surprising that a tight military circle funded and supported Heyerdahl’s misconstrued attempt to posit a white patriarchal genealogy of the Pacific region. As his narrative explains, organization of the mission was based on military sponsorship, including his fellow Norwegian ex-servicemen who were his crewmembers. Heyerdahl received an audience at the Pentagon in order to solicit contributions from the American War Department, who enthusiastically supported his “courage and enterprise” by providing his crew with field rations and equipment from the Air Material Command (1950, 49). Describing the project as a “minor military operation,” Heyerdahl prom-
ised to test and report on the equipment’s performance in severe maritime conditions (47). His meetings with the Naval Hydrographic Institute, the British Military Mission, as well as discussions with British, Norwegian, Peruvian, and U.S. Air Force and Navy officers, resulted in funding, communications, supplies, maps, and the connections that were necessary for him to construct and launch the Kon-Tiki from the naval yard in Callao. When the crew anticipated landfall on a small atoll of the Tuamotu group (Angatau), they hoisted the Norwegian, French, American, British, Peruvian, and Swedish flags for the benefit of villagers who spoke no western languages. The Kon-Tiki expedition seemed far less about anthropology than about a particular mission to rediscover the region in terms of an Allied victory, dressed in the flags of Euro-American military occupation of the Pacific.

The Kon-Tiki expedition gained its historical authority by positioning Euro-American presence in the Pacific as the originary narrative from which all subsequent genealogies must derive. Although almost every popular account of his voyage suggests that Heyerdahl was trying to prove that the early Incans migrated across the Pacific, his book specifically argues that a pre-Incan civilization of Euro-Americans, “mysterious white men with beards” (1950, 24), created the stone structures at Lake Titicaca, settled the Pacific Islands, and brought their technology to the temples in Rapa Nui, the Marquesas, and Tahiti. By racializing Polynesian and Incan oral narratives, Heyerdahl determined that both populations were speaking of the same figure when they mentioned “the white chief-god Sun-Tiki,” whom he claimed “the inhabitants of all the eastern Pacific islands hailed as the original founder of their race” (25). His appropriation of native genealogical systems struck at the epistemic core of Polynesian identities. Interestingly, his categorization of racial phenotypes and his narrative of Aryan antecedents for the Pacific Islands, while not new to anthropology, have been promulgated by the Mormon Church, which has broadened his Incan origin story into a white American genealogy for the region. Moreover, some church scholars have attributed the importance of ships and genealogy in the indigenous Pacific to the Book of Mormon.24 As such, Heyerdahl’s imagined vessel of Pacific history reinvigorated old colonial models of blood purity and racial descent, validating western political power through a fabricated history of Aryan diaspora.

To his presumed western audience, Heyerdahl translates the cosmological significance of native genealogy and the deification of founding ancestors. This is a necessary frame because the racial origins that the Kon-Tiki will establish for Polynesians must fit neatly with indigenous
genealogies, while allowing Heyerdahl to invest his own arrivant body as the material manifestation of “the white chief-god Sun-Tiki.” As such, his narrative is strikingly reminiscent of what Gananath Obeyesekere has called the “myth model” of Cook’s deification as the god Lono in Hawai’il, where indigenous cosmological systems were configured with such structural rigidity that “the natives” presumably could not differentiate between a European explorer (or a bearded Norwegian) and their own gods. Heyerdahl consciously draws upon the Enlightenment explorer model in his narrative of events in the Tuamotu group (Raroia), yet he circumvents the structural telos of Cook’s demise by transporting the genealogical origin itself: the vessel Kon-Tiki. Thus his account is a deft blending of purported native superstitions alongside western civilizing benevolence: he contends that his crew’s shipwreck on the reef is understood by Raroians as a supernatural visit from Tiki, “the long-dead founder of their race” (1950, 269); he lectures Islanders about their presumed ancestor and the reason for his voyage; he saves the life of a boy by administering penicillin; he amazes with his radio; and he rechristens the island Fenua Kon-Tiki (Kon-Tiki Land) (272). Since European voyaging narratives and the South Seas fiction they inspired were primarily concerned with a system of (sexualized) exchange, Heyerdahl borrows freely from narratives of Cook, Melville, and other discursive fashionings of the region when he recounts the Raroian’s contributions: the seductive hula-dancing women, “the natives’” desire to possess their material goods and their dazzling white bodies and, predictably, the local chief’s blessing of Heyerdahl with the name of the Island’s founding ancestor. Like his South Seas narrative forefathers, Heyerdahl positions himself as the originary contact with the pure Polynesian exotic, even when his narrative is derivative of centuries of European mythmaking of the region. Barely two years after a devastating war, he determines “this was the South Seas life as the old days had known it” (1950, 283). The revitalization of the romanticized eighteenth-century South Seas, even more visible in Heyerdahl’s contemporary, U.S. naval officer James Michener, suggests a Euro-American alliance in the coding of an increasingly exoticized and touristized regional entity known as the “South Pacific.”

If ritual was thought to provide the means by which Cook was deified and integrated into native cosmology, then Heyerdahl uses it to position himself as an originary presence in the Pacific. As Mary Douglas argues: “Ritual focuses attention by framing; it enlivens the memory and links the present with the relevant past” (1966, 64). Heyerdahl appropriates ritual for racialized ends; after participating in a ceremonial drama with Islanders and his crew, he adopts the deified genealogy of Kon-Tiki by concluding,
“once more there were white and bearded chiefs among the Polynesian people” (1950, 289). Heyerdahl’s self-aggrandizement, narrated on behalf of the western Allies symbolized in the flags that deck his voyaging raft, suggests a recolonization of the Pacific, coded in the typological terms of discovery narratives but with the important added twist of denying any indigenous claims to nonwhite history. As Obeyesekere observes of the colonial myth-model, “this ‘European god’ is a myth of conquest, imperialism, and civilization—a triad that cannot easily be separated” (1992, 3). Heyerdahl revised and even improved upon Cook’s narrative; through the powerful metaphysical symbolism of the vessel Kon-Tiki, he invested himself and his Allies with the originary founding narrative of the region, as well as the (colonial) vēbide of the destiny of the people.

Given the metaphysical and political claims associated with Pacific vessels, it is not difficult to determine why so many western military institutions were ideologically and financially invested in this experiment, which culminated with Heyerdahl and his crew receiving an audience with President Truman, where they presented the American flag under which Kon-Tiki had sailed. By that time Truman’s administration had just annexed most of Micronesia. The President’s support of this transoceanic venture should also be seen in relationship to the international criticism he was facing for greatly extending the littoral state by declaring in 1945 that the continental shelf contiguous to the United States was under exclusive national jurisdiction, a violation of the freedom of the seas doctrine that was immediately followed by a “scramble for the oceans” on the part of many other nations, including Kon-Tiki’s launching hosts, Peru. The Pacific war had proved lucrative for oceanography, and naval experiments had revealed tremendous oil and mineral reserves on the ocean floor. Combined with the scramble to militarize the seas with submarine atomic weapons and to use aqua nullius for the dumping of nuclear waste, Truman’s proclamation catalyzed a radical new territorialism of the oceans. Although Heyerdahl was an active environmentalist, his voyage on the Kon-Tiki became a locus of vital military and corporate interests due to the ways in which the ocean and island space of the postwar Pacific were being carved into discrete territories.

Heyerdahl’s grandiose journey upholds a division in time-space in his polarization of the Pacific Rim and Basin. He constructs a close temporal and racialized genealogy between white America and the indigenous Pacific to validate his theory, yet separates them spatially so that the expedition will seem all the more extraordinary for locating what he repeatedly refers to as “isolated” and “primitive” islands. The largest ocean on the
planet is charted in exceedingly narrow terms; it must serve as a barrier to civilization and a highway to the *Kon-Tiki* crew, but never the reverse. This is why Heyerdahl is thrown into a panic that the Royal New Zealand Air Force (based in Rarotonga) may send a rescue team out to Raroia before he can be welcomed by “the natives”; the culmination of his voyage would certainly have been far less romantic had he been greeted by a relative of the military institutions that facilitated his journey. His need to cognitively and spatially separate the urban militarized Rim from the tropical “South Seas” anticipates the divisive logic of Asia Pacific studies, which has been slow to account for the ways in which the northern Rim militarized the Pacific in the 1940s, and through a network of cable, radio, submarine, naval, and air communication systems, connected the region more regularly and hegemonically than ever in history. The military globalization of the region, often neglected in area studies scholarship, authorized itself through the suppression of the earliest form of Pacific cosmopolitanism—the Polynesian kinship and trade systems that linked communities across thousands of miles through transoceanic vaka. Consequently, one might map a historical palimpsest of the region in which Polynesian voyaging was overlaid by military globalization that, following the logic of capital, inverted its eschatology into the utopian economic entity known as the Asia Pacific. The coterminous erasure of Pacific vaka with the rise of naval militarization has produced jarring effects when one positions these two vessels of contesting authority alongside each other. This is why, many decades later, Pacific Islanders and their supporters delivered a powerful anticolonial message by sailing fleets of modern vaka and outriggers to Moruroa, surrounding French nuclear ships with indigenous vessels.

The rise of indigenous labor, sovereignty, and decolonization movements that followed on the heels of the Pacific war, often symbolized by the cultural vehicle of the people, the vaka, were frequently circumscribed by the collusion of militarization and academic scholarship. Military-funded disciplines like anthropology, through projects like the *Kon-Tiki*, often undermined indigenous histories by projecting the wartime waning of vaka navigation back to the ancient past. These isolationist theories of the Pacific were dependent upon the “accidental” and “drift” voyaging theories that flourished in the postwar Pacific, depicting Islanders as mere “castaways,” despite the sailing experiments that demonstrated the intentionalidad of Polynesian transoceanic navigation. Soon after the *Kon-Tiki* voyage, other scholars rushed to uphold island isolation theories by denying vaka navigation technologies. For example, Ward Goodenough, citing the Pacific Science Board, found his episteme of island isolation in
an “impressive analysis of Polynesian geographical knowledge” which con-
cluded that precolonial Islanders “were often lost at sea, wandering with
the prevailing winds and currents” (1957, 148), having accidentally settled
the far reaches of the Pacific. Following on the ideological heels of Hey-
erdahl, Goodenough was referring to Ancient Voyagers in the Pacific (1956),
a notorious dismissal of indigenous navigational capacities authored by
the New Zealand Civil Defense Officer Andrew Sharp. In this influential
book, Sharp conceded the viability of inter-island voyages in central Poly-
nesian (Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, and the Tuamotus), but by confusing European
difficulties in transoceanic navigation with Pacific practices, and dismissing
the possibility of deliberate landfall without instruments, determined that
successful settlement of islands beyond the 300-mile range was entirely
“accidental” (1956, 14). Sharp concluded that early “Polynesia comprised a
number of little worlds, inaccessible except through accidental migration”
(14). While he has been critiqued for his Eurocentrism, his lack of mari-
time experience, and his inexpert handling of historical materials, Sharp’s
work has not been placed in the context I am trying to outline here—an
embattled Pacific, in which the Euro-American and Polynesian maritime
vessels were vital symbols of sovereignty, vying for historical authority
through contested articulations of the past.

We should note that while Sharp was theorizing accidental Polynesian
travelers, a rapidly industrialized Auckland was attracting a major immi-
grant population of Pacific Islanders, particularly from the New Zealand-
administered Cook Islands and Niue. When Ancient Voyagers was published,
Auckland, with over 10,000 new Pacific Island and Maori immigrants, was
well on its way to becoming the “Polynesian capital” of the world. This was
also an era of unprecedented native urbanization that witnessed the estab-
lishment of the Maori Women’s Welfare League and other organizations
which, gaining momentum from Maori battalions returning from the war,
were building an important political platform in which the sovereignty of
the nation’s tangata whenua was powerfully articulated. Sharp’s dismissal
of Pacific navigational abilities is especially important when one consid-
ers that many Maori tribal identities are derived from a founding waka
(or vaka, of which hundreds exist in oral tradition), or navigating ancestor
of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Because some voyaging ancestors and waka
are shared between Maori and Cook Islanders, this poses a compelling
symbolic imaginary of Pacific regionalism that was being rearticulated in
postwar migrations. Explaining how indigenous “seafaring traditions lived
on in the cultural symbolism of the waka,” Ranginui Walker explains “the
waka of ancestral forebearers took on new meaning as the symbol for tribal identity, territorial ownership and political relations” (1990, 28).

Importantly, just as contemporary Pacific indigeneity was being revitalized through waka symbology, Sharp interjected with this regional theory of “separate worlds” only tangentially connected by “isolated canoes” (1956, 14). His semantic slippage from “isolated islands” to “isolated canoes” suggests the colonial discomfort with what Vicente Diaz has pinpointed as another important oxymoron of the region: “restless natives” (2000, 10). Just as the visibility of mobile, self-determined, and modern Polynesians increased in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Sharp suggested indigenous peoples were unable to navigate their collective vessels of the past and, by extension, their symbolic future. Put in this context, Sharp’s “accidental voyage” theory, like Heyerdahl’s white-bearded gods, disenfranchised native sovereignty by destabilizing the ontological ground on which their claims rested: first—and deliberate—settlement of Oceania.

While Sharp’s attempt to correct the romanticism of the “Vikings of the Pacific” model outlined by his predecessors, S. Percy Smith and Peter Buck, was not unilaterally accepted,31 Ancient Voyagers was profoundly influential. Like Kon-Tiki, the work rendered a passive historical body of Pacific Islanders, caught in the vagaries and flows of the ocean, subject to currents and storms; overdetermined by their seascapes, they “were often lost at sea, wandering with the prevailing winds and currents.” If we consider Albert Wendt’s contention that the literature produced by westerners about the Pacific Island region is “more revealing of papalagi [white] fantasies and hang-ups, dreams and nightmares, prejudices and ways of viewing our crippled cosmos, than of our actual islands,” (1993, 18), then we might conclude that Ancient Voyagers is far less about precolonial Polynesians than Sharp’s postwar Pacific nightmare. New Zealand, which gained full sovereignty from Britain in 1947, felt particularly vulnerable to the rapid military Americanization of Oceania after its colonial “motherland” was defeated by the Japanese in Singapore (Sinclair 2000, 283–284). Although the country was experiencing an economic boom, the nation and broader region were undergoing rapid change as Samoans, Cook Islanders, and Maori negotiated with the New Zealand state for decolonization. Unlike Heyerdahl’s intimation that the “Pacific theater” of the war had left Island cultures untouched, Sharp seems to suggest that the militarization of the Pacific precluded regional unity. Approaching Sharp’s theory through the methodologies of etak, we can trace the “refracted current” back to the originary disruption. That is to say, his images of skeletons in canoes, his
inventory of travelers who cannot navigate the stormy Pacific, his frustra-
tion at narratives that consist of “confusions and inventions” (1956, 127) and
finally, his invocation of the “ghosts of two hundred thousand ancient
voyagers who sank beneath the waves” and who “cannot speak,” (127)
reflect the deadly, consuming, and disorienting anxieties of the postwar
Pacific. Sharp’s narrative of oceanic chaos and consumption sounds like a
skeptical precursor to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s celebration of
the postmodern, where “everything commingles,” all becomes “drift that
ascends and descends the flows of time,” and where “spaces and forms are
undone” to construct a “new order” of the globe (1977, 84–85).

Part Two: Blood Vessels and Regional Circulation

We sweat and cry salt water, so we know
that the ocean is really in our blood.
—Teresia Teaiwa, quoted in Hau’ofa, “The Ocean in Us”

The vaka that crossed Oceania were integral to regionalism before Euro-
pean contact and offer a historical counter to the ways in which Rim-speak
interpellated the Basin as *aqua nullius* and a feminized vessel. Overall we
can describe Rim-Basin tensions as competing claims to the region that are
validated through originary and racialized narratives of diaspora. In both
cases the semantics of the terms “vessel” and “vehicle” are historically and
symbolically operative. To the Rim, the ocean functions as a feminized
Basin or vessel to be filled (or penetrated) by the vehicle of white patriar-
chy that displaces the historic and purposeful trajectories of transoceanic
vaka. Yet in the past few decades the resurgence of indigenous inter-island
voyaging has offered an originary regional genealogy for Oceania as well
as a naturalized precursor to late twentieth-century diaspora practice. The
biggest contribution Andrew Sharp made to Pacific seafaring, much to his
dismay, was to catalyze efforts to prove the possibility of long-distance
voyaging by using traditional navigation systems such as etak and sailing
vast distances across the region without instruments. A revitalization of
voyaging canoes, oral histories, and the native identities that are powerfully
associated with these vessels arose from the Polynesian Voyaging Society’s
1976 project: the building of an oceangoing vaka (wa’a), *Hokule’a*, and its
noninstrument navigation from Hawai’i to Tahiti. American anthropolo-
gist Ben Finney was vital to the conceptualization of the project, and he
recruited Mau Piailug, an initiate of Caroline navigational traditions, to
guide the canoe across 2,400 unfamiliar ocean miles with the system of
etak. Due to the tensions and violence that erupted between some haole (white) and Hawaiian men over their claims to the vaka, Piailug refused to guide the vessel back from Tahiti and reportedly abandoned the crew in disgust.

The lynchpin (to use a nautical term) of this debate hinged on divergent interpretations of the purpose of this vessel and its genealogical relation to the broader region. As such, “blood” became the operative codeword for past and present ethnic belonging, broadening the semantics of “vessel.” I have mentioned that narratives of the nation, rooted in the soil of the “motherland,” shift to the language of bodily fluids and flows when invoking transoceanic regionalism. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, the soil, while symbolically and materially invested with human history, is conceptualized more as a product of the national body—its excess—than the internalized and circulatory semantics of the sea. Laura Brown’s work has shown how the ocean became a vital and ubiquitous trope of the flows and torrents of British expansion and trade in the English poetry of the early eighteenth century, but it had not yet been associated with racialized bloodstream. According to Ivan Illich, the semantics of the circulation of corporeal and social fluids became connected through images of blood, water, and economic goods in late eighteenth-century Europe. Just as western medical practitioners rediscovered that human blood circulated in the body (400 years after their Middle Eastern counterparts), the social came “to be imagined as a system of conduits,” where the “liquidity” of bodies, ideas, and products arose as a “dominant metaphor after the French revolution” (Illich 1987, 43). Through a complex historical process, ethnic genealogies became coded in what Gaston Bachelard calls the “valorization of liquid by blood” (1983, 60) or, in Michel Foucault’s terms, “sanguinity,” a process whereby “power spoke through blood” (1980, 147, emphasis in original).

Literally and metaphorically, social and racialized bloodstream and flows expanded from national estuaries into imperial seas. The grammar of the corporeal fluidity of sperm and blood—rendered here as an outpouring of the ethnic national body into the seas—is an integral metaphor of diaspora. Rather than dispersing their ethnicity into the dissolving oceanic, British imperialist discourse claimed a diaspora in the blood, a bodily metaphor based on the restriction and control of global flow through their ethnic blood vessels. This is why, for example, countless nineteenth-century British travel narratives such as James Anthony Froude’s Oceana identify Anglo-Saxon “blood” as the originary impetus for transoceanic expansion. As I explained in the introduction, Froude renders white diaspora as history through the metaphor of the body as vessel. “The sea is the natural
home of Englishmen; the Norse blood is in us and we rove over the waters, for business or pleasure, as eagerly as our ancestors” (1886, 18). Through the metaphor of blood vessels, white British bodies became naturalized as the empire that ruled the waves.14

Although European discourses of oceanic sanguinity provided natural and corporeal metaphors of the imperialist project, there are correlations to the contemporary Pacific and this broader discussion about the (blood) vessels of sovereignty. Pacific Islanders often trace ancestry to transoceanic voyagers to uphold genealogical networks of sovereignty and to historicize and make meaning out of the modern migration of the descendent. Commenting on her Samoan and European heritage and migrancy to the United States, poet Caroline Sinavaiana-Gabbard determines that “distance and travel are in my blood, in the genes” (2001, 13). Teresia Teaiwa’s epigraph to this section suggests that “the ocean is really in our blood” because it is corporeally and visibly produced through sweat and tears. This invocation of the ocean, unlike “capital’s myth element,” is invested with the legacy of specific cultural and ethnic origins, in similar ways to the middle passage narratives discussed in the previous chapter. Although salt water is one of the densest liquids on earth, its narrative history makes it heavier. “This water, enriched by so many reflections and so many shadows, is heavy water” (Bachelard 1983, 56; author’s emphasis). Read tidally, the “heavy water” of the transoceanic imagination is constituted by the practices of the land; Pacific routes are entangled with ethnic roots. Even though “water draws the entire countryside along towards its own destiny” (Bachelard 1983, 61), one might say that the first voyage of the Hokule’a also drew Pacific waters—and their contested narrative histories—into the language of this (state’s) countryside.

**Hokule’a: (Blood) Vessels of Sovereignty**

I argued in the previous chapter that the vast fluidity of the ocean seems to demand a conceptual opposite in the containment of the ship. Here I have demonstrated how the concept of Asia Pacific has been constituted by the erasure of native vessels of sovereignty, and I would like to explore what these shipboard metaphors signify about indigenous regionalism. The contestations over the early voyages of the *Hokule’a* (1976) are particularly instructive because one can pinpoint a paradigmatic shift whereby indigenous activists subverted the configuration of Oceania as an empty vessel and reclaimed this vaka as a vehicle of extended kinship relations across the eastern Pacific. As I will explain, this epistemology of the ship encodes
the vessel as both body and blood, constructing a pan-Pacific genealogy of kinship networks as an alternative to colonial regionalism.

As cofounders of the Polynesian Voyaging Society in Honolulu, Ben Finney, a white American anthropologist, and Herb Kane, a Hawaiian artist, coordinated the building of a historical replica of a Hawaiian vaka (wa’a) in preparation for the U.S. bicentennial celebration. According to Finney’s account, the Kanaka Maoli sovereignty movement configured Hokule’a as an object of cultural nationalism which overshadowed its scientific goals to counteract Andrew Sharp’s caustic thesis. In his summary of the events in Hokule’a: The Way to Tahiti, Finney recounts how his attempts to integrate Hawaiian customs, blessings by kahuna (priests), and the broader community into the project threatened the itinerary and objectives of the voyage. He traces the origins of the problem to his decision to allow Kane “to take the canoe to the Hawaiian people” on a two-month cultural odyssey through the archipelago that rekindled ancestral pride, facilitated short trips on the canoe, and raised general awareness about the voyage (1979, 32). According to Finney, Kane’s “sailabout,” a term I borrow from Maria Lepowsky (1995) to reflect the kinship networks that sustain Pacific diaspora, generated arguments over proprietorship of the Hokule’a. After one of many incidents of conflict Finney reflects:

[L]ittle did we know that, within the context of modern Hawaii, to join cultural revival with experimental voyaging was to create an explosive mixture, and that so seemingly innocent an effort as trying to launch the canoe in a culturally appropriate way had tapped into a reservoir of jealousy and long-repressed resentments that would threaten to keep us from ever sailing to Tahiti. (1979, 6)

Finney has been a vital contributor to the regeneration of indigenous cultural traditions in Oceania and his groundbreaking work has been crucial to my own understanding of Pacific voyaging histories. Thus my point is not to question his valuable and ongoing legacy but rather to explore his textual interpretation of these events in the 1970s and their implications, decades later, for an understanding of Pacific regionalism. As an artifact of that era, Hokule’a: The Way to Tahiti documents the confusion over the politically coded “Hokule’a for Hawaiians only’ movement” (Finney 1979, 35) and reflects broader tensions about Hawaiian and Pacific regional sovereignty. In his description of the claims to the vaka, Finney’s narrative tends to erect a spatial and racialized hierarchy of authentic and inauthentic subjects, rendered along lines between “genuine canoe kahuna” (33)
versus spiritual charlatans, “shallow-water men” versus deep-water sailors (56), and young urban “half-Hawaiians” versus less Americanized, older Polynesians. Thus Finney and the newspaper accounts of this time racialize Polynesian ancestry by demarcating percentages of Hawaiian blood while putting whiteness under erasure. In an effort to resist mutually constitutive discourses of blood that would mark whiteness and its own historical trajectories of diaspora, Finney’s language shifts to spatial hierarchies. As a result, indigenous distance from urban centers becomes proportional to native authenticity in a way that is not applied to white subjects. Consequently, experiential knowledge of the deep sea and rural Hawai‘i becomes the legitimizing criteria of a depoliticized indigeneity, where “modern change . . . robs Polynesians of their former virtues” (1979, 274).

Finney’s account of the first Hokule‘a voyage reflects an important shift in how the vessels of Pacific regionalism are represented and a more conscious racialization of white and indigenous diaspora. Unlike Heyerdahl’s grandiose narrative of a white genealogy of the region, Finney’s account of the thirty-five-day trip to Tahiti is probably the least romantic of any American text produced in the Pacific. While the all-male, multinational crew face stormy seas, unmitigating heat, boredom, spoiled food, sharks, a loss of bearing, illness, and a near mutiny, these dramatic components of the sea story are detached from their narrative tropes because of Finney’s contested claims to the Hokule‘a. He explains that a “sea drama” erupts between Hawaiian members of the crew over the haole Voyaging Society members due to their hierarchical likeness to “the colonial administration and administrators” (181). While the voyage had been characterized by animosities throughout, it erupts into violence on the last night at sea. Anchored off the coast of Tahiti, and timing their arrival into the harbor to coincide with the holiday that has been declared in their honor, the tensions over racialized blood are manifested in bloodshed when one of the younger “part” Hawaiian men, attacks Finney and the “non-Hawaiians” on board (Haugen 1976, A2). When they arrive the next day to tens of thousands of anticipant Tahitians (including Bengt Danielsson of the Kon-Tiki), Finney is sporting a black eye and their local sponsors become concerned about the fractious behavior of the crew. Voyaging Society board members fly in from Hawai‘i to mediate, Mau Piailug departs hastily, the crew is sent home, and an entirely new group is flown in to guide Hokule‘a, the name for Hawai‘i’s zenith star of joy, back home.

Finney explains that it was “naive . . . to think that scientific research and cultural revival could be easily combined in today’s Hawaii” (1979, 37), segregating the temporal trajectories of science and indigeneity. This
VESSELS OF THE PACIFIC

masks a more striking incongruity: the celebration of the bicentennial anniversary of the United States by reawakening one of the most important cultural symbols of precolonial regionalism in Hawai‘i. The bicentennial itinerary, which reenacts a historical and genealogical trajectory between two Polynesian archipelagoes under continuing colonial rule, apparently did not seem problematic to the Voyaging Society and its federal U.S. sponsors until struggles over Hokule‘a made media headlines. This national celebration, articulated along the racialized lines of “part,” “pure,” and “non” Hawaiian identities, is particularly striking when one considers that Hawai‘i, deemed by some white Americans as too multiethnic to integrate into the union, had at that time experienced less than twenty years as a state. Thus Finney’s repeated use of the term “cultural revival,” the presumed antithesis of U.S. patriotism, is notable in this context of self-conscious statehood, increasing tourism, and sovereignty activism. Haunani-Kay Trask has commented upon the mystifications of “cultural revival” narratives, arguing that “anthropologists and politicians readily use this term because it has no political context: the primary emphasis is usually on trivializing quaint practices and beliefs rather than on supporting conscious Native resistance to cultural imperialism” (1993, 115). The racial language in which these narratives interpellate degrees of authentic Hawaiianess draws from a colonial grammar that J. Kehaulani Kauanui has called “blood logics.” She explains that this is not only a matter of “deracination” but a “logics of dilution” that delegitimizes genealogical claims to land, resources, and sovereignty (2002, 118). “Blood quantum inherently mobilizes racial categories as a proxy for ancestry” in ways that disenfranchise Hawaiians from ancestral and contemporary presence (120).35

Although the Hokule‘a’s route from Hawai‘i to Tahiti retraced ancient genealogical and political allegiances between Pacific Islanders, Finney’s narrative does not actively engage an anticolonial regionalism that links these archipelagoes in the present. Native activists were resisting the heightened militarization of their islands by U.S. and French naval vessels, but the text does not reconcile contemporary political sovereignty activism with the genealogies rekindled by the voyaging canoe. This gap is important because the first voyage of the Hokule‘a occurred precisely when Pacific Islanders were articulating a counter-narrative to colonial balkanization through an indigenous regionalism called the Pacific Way, visible in institutional bodies organized around economic, political, antinuclear, and environmental concerns.36 While postwar Islanders lobbied their respective colonial administrators for independence, Hawaiians faced severe “militourism,” a term Teresia Teaiwa borrows from Louis Owens and
defines as “a phenomenon by which military or paramilitary force ensures
the smooth running of the tourist industry, and that same tourist industry
masks the military force behind it” (1999, 251). By turning Hawai‘i into its
Pacific Command Center, the U.S. military was already putting a strain on
land and water resources. Increasing transnational corporate investment
led to concern that the 600,000 acres of Native Trust lands that had been
confiscated by the military during World War II, as well as lands appropri-
ated during the Vietnam War, would be transferred from state to cor-
porate hands without consideration of Kanaka Maoli claims (Trask 1993,
91–92). Rapid development of tourist complexes, hotels, and golf courses
compounded the land alienation that had begun with the militarization
of the state in the late nineteenth century. That *Hokule‘a* was launched as a
bicentennial canoe is all the more poignant when we consider that July 4th
is also the anniversary of the 1894 establishment of the (illegal) provisional
government by white plantation interests and their seizure of 1.8 million
acres of Kanaka Maoli lands. It was precisely the return of these alienated
lands and the opposition to the continuing process of land eviction that was
at the center of sovereignty mobilization.37

Trask pinpoints 1976 as the moment when Hawaiian “concern had
exploded over Kaho‘olawe Island,” which had been used as a U.S. Navy
bombing practice site since World War II (1993, 91). The continued
destruction of this island was considered an affront to its sacred history
(and a palpable threat to nearby Maui residents), so activists petitioned
for its return to Kanaka Maoli guardianship. Read dialectically, terrestrial
U.S. military expansion and the subsequent land evictions of Hawaiians
increased attention to the legitimacy of sovereign vessels of the sea. Since
naval activities on Kaho‘olawe were under intense scrutiny, one might
categorize this as a contest between radically different vessels of cultural,
political, and state authority. Given the widespread colonial suppression
of indigenous mobility, it is not surprising that precontact Kaho‘olawe
was considered to be the center of navigational and priestly training for
transpacific voyaging, and it is the only island in Oceania named for the
Polynesian deity of the ocean, Kanaloa.38 The sea channel leading from
Kaho‘olawe to the open Pacific is called “Ke Ala i Kahiki”—the way to
Tahiti invoked in Finney’s title—which *Hokule‘a* was to rechart. As potent
symbols of a indigenous Pacific revival, the “age of ethnicity,” and the
vitality of ancestral roots (Kanahele 1982, 6), the *Hokule‘a* and Kaho‘olawe
were positioned as the frontispiece and framing images of what George
Kanahele has termed the *Hawaiian renaissance*.39
VESSELS OF THE PACIFIC

A week before they were to set sail for Tahiti, the crew was asked if the Hokule’a would transport Kanaka Maoli elders to Kaho’olawe to protest military violence and naval occupation. Finney remarks that the activists provided a “fiery appeal to Hawaiian patriotism that gripped the crew” and apparently “set the slight amount of Hawaiian blood in first mate Dave Lyman’s blood racing” (1979, 85). One crewmember declared that “going to Kahoolawe will really make Hokule’a a Hawaiian canoe,” but Finney refused due to his fear that media headlines would report “Hawaiian Bicentennial Canoe seized Liberating Island” (85). Because the Coast Guard had already threatened Finney with Hokule’a’s confiscation if it were used to protest U.S. Navy operations, tensions about maritime sovereignty, coded in terms of indigenous versus nation-state vessels, became the focal point.

Thirty years later Finney concedes that it seems questionable to what extent the voyaging canoe, a precolonial vessel of sovereignty, could represent a multicultural and creolized Hawai‘i amidst a decolonization movement that was not only Pacific but global in scope. Consequently, my question as to why a Polynesian vessel should have been expected to symbolize the U.S. nation-state might be better understood if we consider the ways in which indigenous icons are often appropriated as markers of national identity, coextensive with the state’s boundaries as long as they are relegated to the past. This is obvious in white settler spaces such as Hawai‘i and Aotearoa/New Zealand because indigeneity is a unique cultural difference often amplified to generate historical distinctiveness from the colonial homeland and to sustain the tourist economy. Yet the presence of modern, active indigenous subjects often challenges the temporal segregation of native culture from the colonial state. This often positions white settlers, and haole voyagers on the Hokule’a, uneasily within a state that is purportedly celebrating its national bicentennial while also distinguishing itself through the native past. The inability to reconcile these positions is evident in a 1976 editorial of The Honolulu Advertiser that declared, in the midst of a vital Kanaka Maoli movement, that “the canoe trip reminds us that we are all immigrants here in Hawaii” (June 4, 1976, A12). As Trask has famously declared: “Native land belongs to Native people; they are the only residents with a genealogical claim to their place. . . . We are not all immigrants” (1993, 174). While Finney’s text categorized the voyage in terms of a linear itinerary between Hawai‘i and Tahiti that would revitalize indigenous seafaring technologies, his narrative seems challenged by the present/presence of native activism. Thus the movement across ocean
space results in a direct conflict with a deeper indigenous time, precisely because the canoe, as a vessel of the people, cannot contain the competing histories, knowledges, and practices of 1976 Hawai‘i.

The spatial and temporal complexity symbolized by indigenous seafaring vessels helps explain why, six days after the arrival of the Hokule‘a, anticolonial demonstrations erupted in Tahiti. The French occupation of Te Ao Ma‘ohi has been vital to their transoceanic empire; French nuclear vessels have benefited from the Truman-generated expansion of the littoral state, which increased colonial claims to Pacific waters. Yet French defiance of the 1966 Partial Test Ban Treaty spurred a series of anti-nuclear conferences, declarations, and constitutions across the region and beyond. By rendering Oceania as aqua nullius and by denying inter-island networks and sovereignty, the French could conduct massive nuclear detonations at Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls, islands chosen for their “remote” and “isolated” location. And yet by 1974, radiation contamination was registered 2,000 miles away in Samoa where it contributed to local casualties. As a demonstration of the power of their maritime vessels, the forty-six atmospheric explosions conducted from 1966 to 1974 were primarily orchestrated and launched from French naval ships and barges.

As a historical reenactment and as an expression of indigenous political solidarity, the Hokule‘a represents an essential vehicle for regional sovereignty. Finney’s text observes that the success of the Tahitian demonstration “and the political reforms that have followed owed a debt to Hokule‘a’s grand entrance into Papeete Harbor and her uplifting impact on the Tahitian people” (1979, 271–272). Hokule‘a regenerated oral traditions that connected Hawaiian and Tahitian voyaging genealogies, reinvigorated precolonial forms of regionalism, inspired over 200 Tahitian songs, and catalyzed indigenous activism against European and U.S. imperialism. Inspired by the Voyaging Society, Tahitians established similar vaka organizations that sponsored flotillas of indigenous vessels to protest nuclear testing at Moruroa. As a vessel of Hawaiian and Tahitian sovereignty, the Hokule‘a became a vehicle of genealogical history, regional identity, and an important symbol for contemporary political struggle.

My previous chapter explained the ways in which seafaring vessels were articulated in terms of a metaphoric body of the people. Just as Atlantic sailors conceptualized the ship in terms of discrete body parts, from ribs to the head, an analogous language exists in many parts of the indigenous Pacific that conceptualizes the material components of the vaka in corporeal terms; these often symbolize the present and future trajectories of the local or national community. For instance, according to David
Malo, the “body of the canoe” in Hawaiian tradition is described as the topknot of hair or neck (maku‘u), the mouth (waha), and the bones (iwi kaela) (1903, 128–129). Other Pacific languages similarly conceptualize the vaka in terms of a material human body, a social body, and as a metaphor of the community’s ancestry and leadership. Over 200 tribal identities in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the Cook Islands are derived from an originary voyaging canoe, reflecting a social structure of routed roots that is remarkably similar to Vanuatu, thousands of miles away. While it is crucial to note, as Vanessa Griffen and Margaret Jolly have, that many Pacific Islanders do not have transoceanic genealogies, in the cases where this mode of travel was vital to communal history, the vaka is invested with the metaphysics of origins, leadership, autonomy, and destiny. Like the grammar of diaspora, canoe metaphysics also draw from fluid metaphors of kinship and blood. As Joakim Peter points out of the Chuuk Islands of Micronesia, “waa,” the cognate of “vaka,” operates dually as “blood vessels that carry life through the body and as canoe, the centerpiece of navigation traditions that moves islands” (2000, 266). Drawing from navigator Celestino Emwalu, Vicente Diaz remarks that “like veins in our body, the canoe is the carrier of life.” As a vehicle of history, a vessel of blood, and a moving island, the voyaging canoe represents diaspora origins and the capacity to navigate the future. Read in this way, the Pacific is not simply the planet’s originary ocean; for its first peoples, its generative fluidity is essential to the grammar of indigenous ontology.

As a vehicle of movement and flow that links the past to the future, the voyaging canoe continues to be a marker of genealogical and historical continuity. Although Pacific seafaring vessels are profoundly diverse, even when they are superseded by introduced technologies they continue to be vital to the symbolic economy of many Island identities and are crucial to rendering the sea as history. In many Island languages the cognate of “vaka” translates as “vessel” and is applied to airplanes, automobiles, submarines, and satellites, suggesting an indigenization of modernity and technology that does not minimize its traditional invocation as a powerful metaphor for the people. As such, the airplanes, steamboats, and passenger ships that connect the Pacific Islands are semantically incorporated into metaphors of regionalism. In this sense the vaka becomes a far more historical and spatial vehicle of multiple communal interests, from ontological and metaphysical discourses of blood and body to the globalizing and diaspora contingencies of Pacific migration. This is why it is significant that when Tahitians genealogically connected some of the Hokule‘a crewmen as “long-lost relatives” (Finney 1979, 270), Finney observes that whaling vessels and other west-
CHAPTER 2

ern vehicles facilitated these ancestral migrations. The familial networks of kinship, blood, and sovereignty activism that connect Pacific peoples are rendered through ancient and modern trajectories of transoceanic vehicles. Nevertheless, Herb Kane reported that even “if the biggest French warship and the supersonic Concordes landed in Tahiti at the same time as the \textit{Hokule'a}, there is no question about what the Tahitians would go to see. The canoe” (\textit{Honolulu Star-Bulletin}, June 18, 1976, C7).

By comparing two Honolulu newspaper articles printed the day the \textit{Hokule'a} arrived at Tahiti, we can see that on the one hand, the voyage reproduced the sea as history by regenerating indigenous trade and kinship networks across Oceania. On the other hand, the Rim’s claims to the Basin symbolically empty this vessel in the interests of U.S. expansion. In a piece entitled “\textit{Hokule'a} & our Pacific,” the editors of \textit{The Sunday Advertiser} printed a detailed political map of the region and argued that the vaka’s voyage would encourage stronger economic investment between French and U.S. territories. Belittling the \textit{Hokule'a} as “a nice emotional glow for Hawaiians and others in the Islands,” the article emphasized U.S. political and economic expansion couched in proprietary terms as “minding the store” to counteract “Communist giants” looming on the other side of the Rim (August 1, 1976, B2). This replicates the logic of \textit{aqua nullius} that bolstered Truman’s annexation of Micronesia and the (nuclear) militarization of Oceania, literally and figuratively supplanting the vaka with the wartime vessels of the U.S. Navy.

In the same edition, columnist Sammy Amalu posed an alternative vision of regionalism: the \textit{Hokule’a} as a (blood) vessel of Hawaiian and Polynesian sovereignty amidst an era of Cold War expansion exacted between Rim powers in the Pacific. Imagining Oceania as a brotherly network of kinship, he encouraged the vaka to “sail the seas of Kanaloa as if they are our own—which they are” (A15). Importantly, he mapped out temporal continuity for indigenous regionalism. While citing the opposition to French, British, and U.S. colonial and military activities in Polynesia and Micronesia, Amalu reminded readers that the precolonial kinship networks rekindled by the \textit{Hokule'a} had already been utilized by Hawaiian monarchs such as King Kalakaua in his nineteenth-century vision of “an empire of Oceania.” Although largely forgotten by historians, David Kalakaua, the first monarch to circle the globe and a key figure of Hawaiian cultural revival, responded to the rising threats of German, American, British, Spanish, and French annexation of the Pacific Islands in the 1880s by attempting to establish political ties with the kingdoms of Japan, Samoa, Tonga, and the Cook Islands and to consolidate a “Polynesian Federa-
tion.” He described it as a mission of philanthropy in response to “repeated calls” from Samoa and other islands for a “Confederation or solidarity of the Polynesian Race” (Kalakaua in Kuykendall 1967, 339). His first and only naval vessel, Kaimiloa, was dispatched to Samoa, yet while a treaty of federation was signed, the trip was a political disaster. The scandal it created was a precipitating factor in Kalakaua’s concession of sovereignty to white American businessmen in the 1887 Bayonet Constitution. In referencing this incident, Amalu offers an alternative regionalism that has been overlooked in the Rim-speak of Asia Pacific: he suggests that the Hokule’a might reawaken “one vast empire not of conquest or of political power but one of culture, and of common ancestry” (Amalu 1976, A15).

Since I have argued that one cannot segregate regional political power in the Pacific from culture and “common ancestry,” I now turn to how the (blood) vessels of sovereignty have been used to signify an indigenous regionalism in contemporary literary texts. This destabilizes the idea of the region as a Euro-American construct and engages with the complex mapping of a watery network of blood vessels and history to inscribe what Trask calls an “ancestral ocean” (1993, 51). This complement to terrestrial-based identities leads her to describe Pacific Islanders as “more the children of the sea than the land” (69). As a tidalectic engagement between land and sea, this upholds the roots of indigenous sovereignty as they are routed through the watery metaphors of diaspora as an “ocean in the blood.”

Vaka Pasifika: Regional Identity and Other Cargo

Since the Hokule’a’s initial noninstrument navigation to Tahiti, the Pacific voyaging canoe and its navigational system of etak have provided vital and sustaining metaphors of indigeneity in Oceania. In those areas that are marked by long oceanic histories, the voyaging canoe has figured prominently as an icon of indigenous renaissance. As a symbol that registers ethnic, national, and regional identity and history, the canoe features in multiple flags (French Polynesia, Guam, the South Pacific Commission) and seals (Solomon and Marshall Islands). As an embodiment of this living tradition, the Hokule’a has inspired many other voyaging replicas across the Pacific and is considered a “floating classroom.” The vessel’s revitalization of regional knowledge and indigenous science led to the “Seafaring Pacific Islanders” theme chosen by Cook Islands premier Sir Albert Henry for the 1992 Festival of Pacific Arts. An early architect of Pacific Way practices and policies, Henry emphasized the “great ocean voyagers” at a festival which featured the gathering of Hokule’a and seventeen additional vaka
in Rarotonga (Cook Islands). Since the 1970s, voyaging canoes and etak navigational modes have provided the inspiration for a new generation of Pacific cultural production, including poetry, novels, music, visual arts, film, methodologies for Pacific regionalism (Hau'ofa), and a Native Pacific Cultural Studies (Díaz and Kauanui).

Although the metaphors produced by indigenous maritime traditions are complex, it is not difficult to determine why they are so appealing to regional and local identities. As icons of native movement, of rooted routes, the voyaging canoe naturalizes migration and avoids the pathologizing language reserved for refugees that Liisa Malkki has documented in the grammar of diaspora. Except by Andrew Sharp, ancient Pacific travelers are not depicted as rootless “boat people,” but rather as cosmopolitan “people of the sea.” Just as the English language demarcates positive progress through metaphors of self-determined movement, indigenous seafaring provides an imaginative reservoir for “charting,” “navigating,” and “plotting” a course that is not overdetermined by the trajectories of western colonization. Moreover, the etak concept of moving islands destabilizes the myth of isolation and renders the indigenous peoples of Oceania as active participants in the world historical process. The semantics of the canoe itself encode the body of the ancestors, providing a genealogical rendering of place as an alternative to colonial historiography in a way that is conceptually tied to the continuity of the social body. Moreover, the fluidity of the ocean allows for a dynamic mapping of social and political territory and a shared regional unity based on the decolonizing ideology of the Pacific Way.

With the decolonization of many island nations, the notion of a “Pacific Way” arose to encourage the viability of precolonial history, native communal and familial values, consensus building, reciprocity, indigenous arts, and inter-island cooperation and unity (see R. Crocombe 1976). Gathering postcolonial and regional momentum, this movement was vital to the literary arts movement generated by Ulli and Georgina Beier’s writing seminars and publishing venues at the University of Papua New Guinea which, due to their connections to Nigeria, were already in a dialogue with African writers. The Pacific Way ideology informed the construction of the regional service and outreach model for the University of the South Pacific (USP), established in Fiji in 1968 and modeled after that other inter-island educational center, the University of the West Indies. According to Marjorie Crocombe, institutional support for Pacific literature was lacking until a broad spectrum of Melanesian literary initiatives was showcased in Fiji at the first South Pacific Arts Festival in 1972. In response, Crocombe and
VESSELS OF THE PACIFIC

others, inspired by the Beiers, established the South Pacific Creative Arts Society and helped steward an incipient literary movement with support from scholars such as Ken Arvidson, Satendra Nandan, Albert Wendt, and many others.

Just as transatlantic literature was forged through the process of maritime expansion, many Pacific narratives are characterized by this complex entanglement between transoceanic voyaging and cultural identity. The nautical vessel has been a (literal) vehicle for transpacific travel and helped catalyze and conceptualize a regional “way” in the cultural and literary arts. In fact, Wendt suggested the indigenization of the term “Pacific Way” as “Vaka Pasifika,” to highlight the regional translation of “vaka” as causative prefix and vessel or vehicle of Pacific identity (see R. Crocombe 1976, 1). The decade of the first Hokule’a voyage was characterized by a tremendous expansion in regional literary production, a movement, in Wendt’s words, “towards a new Oceania.” By the mid-1970s, the first creative writing journals, novels, poetry collections, Pacific Island anthologies, and a regional literature conference were established. The vaka, and the transoceanic imagination that it represents, are key to placing these emergent literatures in history. As Paul Sharrad has shown: “Polynesian navigation has supplied what has perhaps become a master trope for Pacific literary production” (1998, 97).

Just as Euro-American literature of the “South Seas” was a maritime endeavor, established by naval officers and sailors in their “island hopping” across the region, the first wave of indigenous fiction was also deeply informed by the movement of ships and the ocean, establishing a tidalectic between land and the sea. The fact that these early fictions were also collaborative helps us sketch a genealogy between the construction of nautical South Seas fiction after World War I and the use of maritime vehicles and tropes to “craft” the region’s native literature. One of the region’s first indigenous texts, the autobiography of Cook Islander Florence “Johnny” Frisbie, was cowritten with her white American father and detailed her shipboard travels with her family across a wartorn Pacific (1948 and 1959). Frisbie’s compatriots, Tom and Lydia Davis, coauthored the region’s first published indigenous novel, Makutu (1960), a story of white maritime travel to Polynesia that centers on the character Tangaroa, the deity of the ocean. These early texts present a maritime narrative legacy that, in addition to raising more localized concerns, can be directly connected to the South Seas nautical adventure genre that Frisbie’s father adopted from his predecessors, Robert Louis Stevenson and Herman Melville.

Thus, well before Hau’ofa’s theory of a “sea of islands,” Pacific writ-
ers were using ships and the ocean to conceptualize regional identity. In Samoa the first literary journal was entitled *Moana*, while in Fiji, Sano Malifa mapped the region from an airplane in his poetry collection *Looking Down at Waves* (1975). Wendt’s groundbreaking regional anthology *Lali* was “nursed,” he felt, “by the warmth and love of our mother, the Pacific” (1980, xviii–xix). Similarly, the cover of the first issue of the regional journal *Mana* featured a carving from the prow of a Solomon Islands canoe. In the second issue, Marjorie Crocombe declared “the canoe is afloat. . . . *Mana* is just a vehicle to help carry the rich cargoes of individual talent” across the Pacific (1974, n.p.). This transoceanic imagination has often been sustained by those whom Albert Wendt describes as “scholar-shipers,” who have crossed the region for educational reasons. In fact, Wendt’s first novel, *Sons for the Return Home* (1973), emphasized what he called the “pelagic” nature of the region’s literary figures. More recently, Hau’ofa noted approvingly of a USP student journal called *Wansolwara*, “a pidgin word . . . translated as ‘one ocean—one people’” (1997, 139–140). It is this entanglement between regional literary production and a continuous history of transoceanic migration that Sharrad describes, in his meticulous survey of Pacific literature, as a “pelagic post-colonialism” (1998).

Yet while the tidalectic between land and sea has helped to constitute the regional imagination, little attention has been paid to the ships and the seas that are so often a vehicle for Pacific literary production. In this early “wave” of Pacific writing, Vincent Eri’s novel *The Crocodile* (1970) is particularly significant because it employs maritime vessels to signal the transition from sovereign to colonized island status. As one of the first indigenous novels of the region and a tremendous influence on subsequent literary production, the narrative inscribes a coming-of-age story in Australian-governed New Guinea during World War II in which temporal movement is directed by the trajectories of ships. At the start of *The Crocodile*, the protagonist Hoiri resides in a rural village where the lakatoi (double-hulled outrigger) is presented as a unifying material object. In his revision of the inter-island networks rendered famous by Bronislaw Malinowski’s *Argonauts of the Pacific*, Eri emphasizes how building the canoe unites members of the community in shared labor, just as the canoe’s long sea voyages connect island villages through trade and exchange networks (kula). These canoes provide sustaining goods and materials and when one lakatoi is retired, its hulls are transformed into the floors of the community meetinghouse and the coffin of Hoiri’s mother (1970, 25). Hoiri’s first voyage includes a stop in Port Moresby, the center of colonial modernity, where he is disturbed by the overwhelming presence of steel ships and
the incomprehensible practice of white people who withhold the cargo sent to him by his “dead ancestors” (46). This new association of the ship with injustice and material inequity is then developed in later scenes when Australian colonizers force Hoiri and his companions to labor as cargo carriers for the difficult upriver trips to the diamond mines. Indigenous watercraft and labor are appropriated without compensation, particularly in the Allied effort against the Japanese invasion.

Caught between the racialized “white” and “yellow” people’s war, Hoiri’s community is pressed to help Australia win so that “the brown men would be treated as brothers and would sit at the table with the white men” (1970, 140). Hoiri is forced to unload cargo from Allied barges and to help build a military base where, significantly, he supplements his meager income by carving “toy canoes” for American troops as souvenirs (159). This dramatic reduction of the community-building lakatoi to a child’s toy of militourism becomes all the more devastating when an Australian officer confiscates his supplemental funds, and Hoiri is accused of lying and stealing. While his maritime travels with the Allies open his perspective to a broader regional understanding of what will become the 600-island nation of independent Papua New Guinea, his last sea voyage is described in terms of bewitchment and terror. Although he has been informed of the approach of massive American ships, when one does appear on the horizon he cannot assimilate it as a vessel, describing it instead as a “dark green island” with “thick black smoke” (163). This “moving island” becomes “a metal cave,” a “sinister version of Noah” and the Ark, where he and his fellow Papuans become “the creatures” that are “watched” and “counted” as they board like “human cargo” (165, 167). As a closing frame to the novel, the massive steel ship transports them to their home villages after three years’ absence working for the Allies; this is a stark contrast to the equitable trade relations of the kula ring that open the book.

The ship’s overwhelmingly industrial presence signals a new era of reification of native labor in New Guinea. After exposing the closely linked apparatauses of colonial, capitalist, and military occupation of the Pacific, Eri neither resuscitates the voyaging canoe nor accepts its substitution by these steel vehicles of a violent modernity. Reading the novel in terms of the tidalectic relation between roots and routes, we see that the men’s forced migration away from their home has greatly disturbed the economic and social equilibrium of the village. Hoiri’s absence has contributed to the death of his wife and father, and Eri concludes the novel with the community’s neglect of their own gardens and their dependence on imported capital rather than the indigenous kula ring that was symbolized and facili-
tated by the voyaging canoe. As an important transitionary text of native literary production, *The Crocodile* records the epistemic violence of western military expansion in the Pacific, demonstrating how its naval power appropriated and supplanted native vehicles to configure *aqua nullius*.

Eri’s novel is significant because it foregrounds why the maritime vehicle is a crucial icon of territorial claims between Rim and Basin, just as it details the process by which indigenous sovereign vessels were substituted for the steel machinery of naval occupation. At the forefront of discussions about the Melanesian and Pacific Way, Eri’s configuration of voyaging culture in western Oceania reflects an era of a vibrant regional dialogue and its placement here helps to counter a recent trend, in literature and cultural studies, of focusing exclusively on Polynesian seafaring and cultural production. In the decades after the publication of *The Crocodile*, attention has shifted towards indigenous literary production in white-settler-states such as Hawai‘i and Aotearoa/New Zealand, eclipsing the formative and historic influence of the western Pacific. Because Polynesians represent only 15 percent of the total indigenous population of the Pacific Islands and Australia (R. Crocombe 1992, 6), I would like to make an effort to sustain a dialogue across the region, even if, as I will explain, emerging etak islands such as Hawai‘i and Aotearoa/New Zealand are becoming new centers of regional activity. In order to maintain a regional tidalectic, I want to turn to Fiji as a vital crossroads of Pacific political, cultural, and academic exchange and one that, tectonically and historically, has linked the eastern (Polynesian) Pacific with its western (Melanesian and Micronesian) counterparts.

Hau‘ofa’s theory of a new Oceania has been promulgated as a model for theorizing Pacific cultures, but in an effort to sustain the breadth of this regional dialogue, I would like to highlight its dialogue with an earlier era of the Vaka Pasifika, its Melanesian sources, and its contemporary Fijian contexts. As a Tongan raised in Papua New Guinea who resides in Fiji, Hau‘ofa was certainly aware of the publication of Bernard Narokobi’s *The Melanesian Way* (1982), a series of articles and dialogues between the writer and fellow Papuans about the vitality of precolonial history, the need for regional unity, the problems of colonial belittlement and small island size, and the natural metaphors of land and seascape that sustain postcolonial models of identity. Although this connection has not been noted, Hau‘ofa published *A New Oceania* ten years after Narokobi’s text with the same press, and he addressed remarkably similar concerns (Waddell, Naidu, and Hau‘ofa 1993). In fact, like *The Melanesian Way*, his text incorporated the challenges of his compatriots about theorizing inter-island identity in the
wake of regional inequities of gender, class, and ethnic privilege. In their responses, writers suggested that “the reality is that Epeli’s Oceania is characterised not by pan-Pacific unity but by intense national and subnational ethnic divisions” (Borer, 1993, 86). Like the Melanesian Way, the Pacific Way ideology was eventually complicated by internal divisions along the lines of ethnicity, political status, social class, and chiefly privilege. The 1987 coups in Fiji, where an indigenous military elite overthrew its democratically elected government to disenfranchise Fijians of Indian descent, cast a pall over utopian regional initiatives and brought into sharp relief the conflicts of ethnicity that threatened the Vaka Pasifika. On the heels of these coups, Subramani’s pioneering South Pacific Literature warned of a “strong jingoistic accent [that could] nullify the ‘ideology’ of regionalism and the ‘Pacific way’” (1992, xiv).

Although Hau’ofa now refers to the Pacific Way as “a shallow ideology that was swept away by the rising tide of regional disunity in the 1980’s” (1997, 127), “Our sea of islands” has to be contextualized as an antidote to that disunity, reflecting an engagement with Melanesian theories of the Vaka Pasifika to counteract the fragmentation engendered by the Fijian coups. By 1990 the Fijian constitution had been rewritten in ways that were deemed discriminatory to nonindigenous residents, and by 1992 the leader of the coup, backed by the chiefly elite, was elected prime minister. Violence against Indo-Fijians created a rift in the Vaka Pasifika, leading the region’s intellectuals to question how the Pacific Way might invoke a unifying past that contributes to contemporary discrimination. These events are vital to consider in contextualizing the creation and circulation of “Our sea of islands,” and another self-conscious attempt to uphold the unity of regional identity, Tom Davis’s novel Vaka: Saga of a Polynesian Canoe (1992b). Here I position Fiji and the coups as absent signifiers that are vital to understanding a new era of regionalist discourse that represented an indigenization of the utopian and globalizing contours of Asia Pacific as well as the shifting ethnic divisions between Pacific Islanders.

Vaka Pasifika: Ethnic Blood Vessels and the Spermatic Journey

Nicholas Thomas asserts that voyaging projects “recover tradition, but they are special because they do not affirm particular peoples in a nationalist mode as much as they celebrate the connections between people” (1997, 5). In the narratives of white and Polynesian diaspora discussed here, these regional connections have generally been articulated in terms of masculine ethnic kinship, blood vessels, and political alliance. Yet as alluring as
diaspora and regional identifications may be in providing a fluid alternative to the terrestrial limitations of the nation-state, they often present, as Connery has shown about the ocean, a utopian “spatial fix.” Destabilizing western notions of the Pacific as an empty vessel to emphasize indigenous vehicles of sovereignty does not necessarily lead to a unifying model for regional identity. In fact, the concept of the region, even when stitched together by the transpacific vaka, cannot provide a panacea for the ethnic and gender hierarchies that flow over from colonial and national frameworks. In this context it is helpful to remember the common metaphor of the nation as a ship; a semantic connection relevant to some Pacific narratives of the transoceanic vaka.55

As I will explain, configuring the voyaging canoe as the vehicle of an anticolonial Pacific Way has resulted in a rescripting of imperialist histories that, in some cases, naturalize contemporary political and social hierarchies by projecting an originary model of ethnic purity onto the region’s past. By upholding a chiefly masculine elite as the progenitors of the region, these narratives demonstrate remarkable parallels to a type of anticolonial nationalism that Partha Chatterjee has shown was characterized by the gendered segregation of time and space (1989). He demonstrates that women represent tradition and purity through their presumed isolation from the corrupting (yet dynamic) public realm of transnational trade, colonization, and exchange. Restated in terms of this project, Pacific women function as the roots to stabilize transoceanic masculine routes. This is why it is no coincidence that the voyaging canoe in these modern narratives is often referred to as “she,” even though Polynesian languages are not gendered. By turning to Davis’s Vaka: Saga of a Polynesian Canoe, I interrogate how the text displaces the anxieties about contemporary ethnic migrations in the globalized Pacific onto a fictive historiography of the transoceanic (blood) vessel. This line of inquiry raises questions about relations of power in the Pacific and problematizes the concept of the region as a gendered utopian space that transcends the limitations of the nation-state and ethnic nationalism.

Written by the former prime minister of the Cook Islands, Vaka represents the only historical novel that attempts to chart Polynesian settlement of Oceania.56 As a genre and a discursive mode of decolonization, historical novels are integral to postcolonial literature, but they serve a specific function in indigenous communities by outlining an ontology that is vital for contemporary social and political allegiances and for sustaining sovereignty. In a paper delivered at the Pacific Historical Association, Davis spoke of this forthcoming novel, explaining that it was an attempt
to excavate the oral traditions of the region (1992a, 69). Arguing for the importance of those oral voyaging histories transcribed by early anthropologists but dismissed by Sharp and others as fabrications, Davis positions his novel and the Pacific narrative process in a lineage with tumukorero, “expert keepers of the records of history and its fragments” (70). By turning to the voyaging histories narrated by “Polynesian elders” and anthropologists such as Te Rangi Hiroa, Davis described Vaka as an effort to “write a history of a people who did not consider it isolation to live on an island surrounded by an ocean which to them was a highway to everywhere” (1992a, 70). Emphasizing the cultural, political, religious, and especially genealogical commonalities between Polynesians, Davis’s paper made an argument for intercultural contact that contributed to a regional “oneness” (71).

I take up the layering of indigenous genealogy and history in subsequent chapters, so here I will merely emphasize the fluid network of kinship that buoys the regional imagination, the Vaka Pasifika. These filial networks are vital to precolonial as well as globalized Oceania and are manifested in myriad formulations which cannot be represented in all their complexity here. What I would like to question is a practice, to borrow again from Kauanui, of “blood logics” that reduces the history of transoceanic voyaging into a story of racial purity; this utilizes colonial ideologies of race as a mystified proxy for Pacific genealogy. Overall, my work seeks to foreground Islander-based recovery projects and native histories, knowledges, and narratives of unity. Yet I concur with Nicholas Thomas that when indigenous discontinuities are suppressed in favor of a homogenizing racial “oneness,” then those projects require some scrutiny, particularly when these texts bear a discomforting relationship to western romance narratives that are the antithesis of “decolonizing history” (1997, 46).

As a meticulously researched and documented account of precolonial Polynesian cultures, Vaka is at once an ethnographic and historical rendering of ocean origins. The author’s foreword lists dozens of archives, printed texts, and sources of oral history, and the book includes Davis’s illustrations of material objects, an orthography and pronunciation guide, genealogies of the principal characters, and an index. The cover represents the author’s illustration of a fully manned double-hulled vessel at sea, and the novel is dedicated to those whom Davis describes as “descendants of the principle characters who brought this great canoe through twelve generations of history” (1992b, v). Like the Pacific texts discussed in the following chapters, the novel represents a weaving together of genealogy and history that decolonizes the hierarchy between objective and subjective
narratives of the past. Although it is the first indigenous Pacific maritime novel, it is not the first text written to destabilize Euro-American visions of the region by upholding the genealogical origins of the Polynesians. Structurally, Davis borrows much from Maori anthropologist Te Rangi Hiroa, who dedicated his epic ethnography, *Vikings of the Pacific* (1938), to his “kinsmen in the scattered isles of Polynesia.” Davis’s text shares with Buck an effort to “draw [Polynesians] together in the bond of the spirit . . . for we come of the blood that conquered the Pacific with stone-aged vessels” (Buck 1938, xi).

The presence of these vessels of sovereignty, whether “stone-aged” or contemporary, is crucial to interpreting ontological claims to the region. Just as Europeans in the Pacific authenticate their presence through familial narratives of “founding fathers” like Magellan, Tasman, Bougainville, and especially Cook, indigenous writers of the region can destabilize these claims by excavating originary navigators and vessels. Davis, president of the Cook Island Voyaging Society and a respected mariner who sailed his yacht from the Pacific to New England to attend Harvard University, understandably places the Pacific vaka at the center of his novel. In fact, its first words assert that “Polynesians are people of the outrigger canoe” (1992b, xvii). Unlike the bildungsroman that traces the trajectory of one individual’s development, this novel inscribes the history of one *vaka* as it was passed down from father to son during the height of Pacific voyaging and settlement from 1000–1300 CE. As a protagonist, the canoe is humanized—the nineteen chapters of the novel are organized around its “conception,” “birth,” “taming,” “migration,” and “death.” Although the novel does not pose one central human protagonist, it does offer a succession of masculine heroes, who embody chiefly leadership and who represent the canoe’s human progeny. Overall, the individualist contours of historical narrative are altered because the vaka provides continuity across 300 years; this is extended farther through the genealogical relationships the book establishes with its Pacific author and his indigenous readers. The canoe literally becomes a (blood) vessel of Pacific history. As a mobile vehicle of history, its significations are dynamic and its placement shifts over space and time. The vessel changes names nearly ten times depending on its owners and circumstances, and it travels widely from its origin in Upolu (Samoa) to Fiji, Tonga, Tahiti, Rarotonga, and then it is retired as the well-known founding waka *Takitumu* in Aotearoa. Held together by the “roots” of its “conception” forest in Upolu (where the trees are felled for its construction according to the well-known story of Lata/Rata), this vaka establishes an originary Pacific cosmopolitanism of transoceanic routes.
Published a year before Hau’ofa’s “Sea of islands,” Davis demonstrates that “Polynesians living on islands never feel isolated because Te Moana Nui a Kiva is perceived as a highway to everywhere” and that the vaka has been integral to Islander communication for over three thousand years of history (1992b, xviii, 274).

For all of its investment in decolonizing history and offering an indigenous model for Pacific regionalism, Davis’s novel has been largely ignored, perhaps because it tries too self-consciously to inscribe “explorers, adventurous reading freebooters, and the restless wanderings of our canoe people” (1992b, 6). I agree with the otherwise indefatigable Paul Sharrad, who concedes that “it reads like an interminable school history text” (1998, 97).

The Davises’ first novel, Makutu, was accused of drawing too heavily from romantic South Seas fiction (see Subramani 1992, 14), and we can extend that claim to Vaka’s inscription of the maritime adventure novel which valorizes masculine motility over feminized stasis and constructs racialized others for narrative tension. Consequently, Vaka does less to decolonize history than to construct regional identity by literalizing the etymology of “diaspora,” producing the voyaging canoe as a vessel of what Leed calls the “spermatic journey” across space and time. Moreover, its partitioning of Oceania into hierarchies of Polynesia over Melanesia mitigates Thomas’s argument that the divisive “ethnic typifications that have been generated over the past two centuries” by Europeans “have had a negligible impact” on cultural production in the region (1997, 155), suggesting a larger rift in the Vaka Pasifika.

Activating the metonymic relationship between the (blood) vessel and ethnicity, Davis inscribes “heroic adventurers” whose migrations, like Froude’s, are generated by the bodily presence of “the ancestral salt of the sea strong in their blood” (1992b, 172). It places “Samoa and Tonga” as the “seat of the Polynesian race” and conceives of the region as “one large extended family throughout Te Moana Nui a Kiva” (173). Although Davis’s prologue concedes that not all Islanders were aristocratic ocean voyagers (xviii), the novel, like its chiefly protagonists, seems to be a “stickler for the protocol of purity of blood and lineage of royalty” (227). This is literalized at the end of the canoe’s voyaging life when it sails with the “Great Fleet” to settle Aotearoa/New Zealand. After a succession of chiefly owners across twelve generations, the last guardian, the priest Ta’u Ariki, sanctifies the vaka’s burial in Aotearoa with his own blood and founds the Ngati Ta’u (Ngai Tahu/Kai Tahu) community.

To fully engage with the vessel’s gendered symbology of bodily fluid, we have to turn to the ways in which the grammar of diaspora often
invokes blood and sperm as originary essence. Davis’s depiction of an ancient Pacific diaspora draws on many causes for the migrations, such as family disputes, political turmoil, boredom, and resource limitations, but the vast majority of his voyagers reflect the telos of the “spermatic journey,” defined by Leed as travel “stimulated by a male reproductive motive, a search for temporal extension of self in children, only achievable through the agency of women” (1991, 114). In this way the “blood of their sea-going ancestors” that “surged hotly” in their bodies (Davis 1992b, 8) may be seen as a substitution for those other bodily fluids that are etymologically linked to diaspora. Leed derives these observations from the oral epics of Greek and Viking travel, whose voyagers have been valorized as determining “agents of history” and civilizing empire (1991, 15, 115). Significantly, these same texts inspired Malinowski’s “Argonauts,” Buck’s “Vikings,” and Davis’s “Saga.” In fact, Buck referred to these men who “surpassed the achievements” of the Phoenicians, Mediterraneans, and Vikings as “the supreme navigators of history” (1938, 13). In the “spermatic journey,” travel “broadcasts the male seed that founds lineages” and simultaneously determines the “boundaries that contain women” (Leed 1991, 114). Thus in Vaka’s detailed inscription of 300 years of Polynesian voyaging in a canoe that transports over 100 people at a time, women are never represented on board. It is not that women do not voyage on the vaka, they occasionally do, but Davis neglects to depict them textually, preferring to inscribe a homosocial community of seafarers.

This reflects an unfortunate legacy derived from Pacific anthropology in which the settlement of Oceania was configured as an adventurous masculine endeavor with spurious arguments that women were not allowed on board, which of course begs the question as to how new settlements reproduced without them. For instance, fifty years before Heyerdahl’s bearded white gods, J. Macmillan Brown (a teacher of Peter Buck) theorized Aryan diffusion to the Pacific as a “masculine expedition.” Brown argued “a few hundred miles of sea were sure to daunt primitive woman from venturing her children and her household gods upon so dangerous an element; the thousands of miles between resting places in Polynesia made such ventures impossible for them” (1907, 261). To Brown, reproduction derived from the “masculine infiltration” of islands that, mysteriously, were already populated with women (Brown 1907, 263; see Howe 2003, 135–136).

This gendered segregation of space, projected ahistorically onto the past, also informed debates over whether the presence of women onboard the Hokule’a would contaminate the canoe’s sanctity. The infrequent representation of women in Pacific maritime narratives is not an accurate
reflection of the region’s orature. In fact the scholarly archive records countless Pacific women travelers including sea deities (Hīne Moana, the wife of Kiwa), female voyaging companions (of Tangi’ia, Ru, Tane, and Rakanui), autonomous women voyagers (Hineraki, Pele, and Nafanua), and a few female navigators (Hīne, Nēi Nim’anoa). These women appear in Davis’s original sources, directing and organizing transoceanic voyages, yet he excludes them from his historical novel.59 I am not concerned with representing the historical accuracy of female presence in transoceanic voyaging, as that is self-evident. Instead, I ask why are women’s routes suppressed? What is gained by these deliberate efforts to masculinize Pacific seafaring?

One way to approach these questions is to deconstruct the land-sea binary and engage tidalectically with the complex gendering of space. This approach refuses the homogenization of aqua and terra nullius and foregrounds the ways in which specific places in the land and sea (the mountain, lagoon, or deep ocean) may be gendered relationally and historically, destabilizing the assumed synecdochic relationship between place and space. To pursue the complexity of place one would recognize that a tree in a forest, for instance, might be gendered female, only to be masculinized once it is refashioned into a voyaging canoe, as Shirley Campbell’s research suggests about Vakuta.60 On the one hand, this may suggest that the sea is associated with mobility and masculinity while the land represents femininity and heaviness (S. Campbell 2002, 154–156), a symbolic arrangement sustained by the conceptualization of the “long” canoe as phallus in multiple Pacific contexts.61 Yet this masculinization of the vessel needs to be considered alongside the fact that the sailing canoe is often interpellated as a female witch (147) and in other cases as a bird.62 I suggest that the western homogenization of space has tended to suppress the more complicated and dynamic vehicles of gender relations in the Pacific.

In fact, women’s bodies are not exclusively rooted to the land when we consider that aspects of the feminine are generated and indeed integral to men’s successful routes at sea. To pursue the trace of mobile women subjects, we must examine how they are transformed and transported into feminized objects of desire. For example, early in Davis’s novel, the young chiefly male, Te Arutanga Nuku of Samoa, pursues his father’s voyaging canoe, Tarai Po, as a love interest, demonstrating the way in which penetrating masculine subjects often reduce women to symbolic vessels (or basins). Described as a “beckoning temptress” (1992b, 17), a vessel with “a shapely hull,” he determines that it was “love at first sight” (24). In his gaze, the canoe “took on the physical qualities of a beautiful beckoning woman
and his desire for her grew immensely” (25). Conveniently, he remembers that his father secretly desires his wife, Te Pori, so he arranges her sexual exchange for the canoe. Once he obtains the vessel, he names it after his wife and thereafter the narrator must refer to her as “the woman” to differentiate her from the new subject of the novel, *Te Pori*, the voyaging canoe. Arutanga is “stimulated” by the sight of his new property in the lagoon; “he realized that the canoe had the same effect on him as that of a woman” (42). He returns to his sleeping wife, sees that she is “as beautiful as the canoe” and that sexually, she can “give [him] what the canoe cannot” (42). Although his wife “was not able to follow his demanding passion, [she] was happy to satisfy it, for she sensed that the canoe had aroused him” (43). In this incident Davis rather helpfully outlines the conflation of heterosexual desire for women with a need to possess and master this vessel. This demonstrates the ways in which the circulation and exchange of that desire leads to the substitution of an actual woman for the wooden vehicle and how the animation of that vessel (or vehicle of history) is obtained by sexualizing her body. Therefore it is not surprising that Te Pori (“the woman”) feels sexually competitive with her new namesake, the canoe (43). Like maritime novels in general, the homosocial decks of the voyaging canoe maintain a precarious hold on their heterosexuality by gendering the ship as an accessible female body.

Like the trees that are felled, uprooted, and transformed into the wooden voyaging canoe (Davis 1992b, 14), the sacrifice of a woman’s body makes the vaka—and the subject of Davis’s novel—possible. This is upheld in another oral tradition in which the well-known Tahitian voyaging hero, Iro (Hiro), murders his wife underneath his docked canoe and buries her under its wood shavings. Davis justifies this gynocide by suggesting that Iro’s protofeminist wife questioned his virility.63 We might interpret the trope of sacrifice as the originary mechanism by which nature is transformed into culture which, as Sherry Ortner has shown (1974), generally occurs through the agency of women (as vehicle). But in this Levi-Straussian transition from the raw to the cooked, Davis attributes the lifeblood of the vessel to cultured masculinity. His narrator argues that it is “craftsmen . . . who build part of the soul that goes into a vessel and makes her a living being. It is the men who command and sail her who complete the process. If these men are good at their jobs and are in empathy with her, a boat comes to life and evokes a soul and personality of her own” (1992b, 48). Davis upholds a familiar process of gendered cultural generation in which women, like the trees, provide the raw primitive materials for the vessel while masculine artistry and history refine the vehicle into
VESSELS OF THE PACIFIC

a meaningful form. By extension, the cosmopolitan and masculine bias of migratory routes are obtained by mastering a primitivized landscape of feminized roots.

If we pursue this broader network of regional exchange, we begin to comprehend Vaka’s investment in constructing masculine maritime histories. After obtaining Te Pori, Arutanga and his wife (“the woman”) determine they will participate in a malanga, a visiting tour across the Samoan Islands. Te Pori is interested in reestablishing her kinship connections, to see “their royal counterparts” (52), while Arutanga looks forward to the trade. The malanga, Davis emphasizes, entails a tidalectic relationship between land and sea in which the visitors must transport vast quantities of gifts for their hosts, who must respond with “unstinting generosity” in kind (57). As he explains: “In Polynesian terms it was generosity—each side must outdo the other in free giving, but in effect it was barter or trade. It would enable Te Arutanga Nuku to stock up goods for meeting his personal, tribal, and inter-tribal obligations. This should do wonders for his mana [power]” (57). Interestingly, of all the goods traded, Davis emphasizes that “fine mats were the currency of the region” that “determined individual and community wealth” (57). In anticipation of receiving these particular goods, Arutanga “inwardly thanked his wife for obtaining the canoe for him” (57). He benefits from the fact that her sexual sacrifice has been recorded in songs and “made the canoe’s fame spread more rapidly” (55), opening broader channels of trade. In terms of women’s participation in these trade networks, Davis mentions that women weave the sails of the vaka, with “care, gossip and chanting” (23). He neglects to explain that women are also responsible for the creation and production of these fine mats, of transforming nature into one of the highest valued objects of culture. If we isolate how gender functions in this regional exchange, we see that the protagonist exchanges a woman (his wife) for a feminized vehicle of inter-island bartering (the canoe) in order to acquire the valuable product of women’s domestic labor (fine mats). Positioned this way, Vaka is less of a story of masculine prowess on the waves than the ways in which this masculinity is a byproduct of a regionalism founded on women, their sexual and reproductive bodies, and the products of their labor. In essence, the object of desire, Arutanga’s mana, is obtained by accumulating the domestic products of women’s labor. The impetus for his voyage, like that of the many men in this novel who sail for sexual relations and to spread their seed, is valorized, but it is a mystification of the ways in which women truly “weave” the region together.64

Read in these terms, Davis’s masculine voyagers appropriate women’s
power by feminizing the canoe and depicting their travels in terms of mas­tering this feminine vessel or body. This explains why the canoe and its master represent a heterosexual hierarchy; this deflects from the canoe’s signification as a more powerful—and perhaps consuming—maternal object. Seen this way, transoceanic voyaging is not so much about the exchange of women’s bodies that Davis wants to suggest, even if Arutanga’s trade “amassed a fortune in his warehouse.” Instead, like the twentieth-century globalization that informs the novel’s transoceanic imagination, the novel is about an exchange of masculine bodies across the region. Men are thus positioned as “routed” objects of exchange between feminized “roots”; they enter history and genealogy only by appropriating and collecting women’s power and productions (from mats to children). This is significant when we consider that Davis exaggerates the virility of travel at the expense of the Polynesian tradition of hospitality, a practice that was not, historically speaking, feminized.

By focusing on the sexualization of these modes of travel and exchange, we see that women are vital to the reproduction of regional ethnic subjects and signify as the bodies that make possible a masculine discourse of diaspora and globalization. These semantic connections are embedded in the term “diaspora” and arise from a complex metaphysical association between sperm, blood, and spatial dispersal (for trade and racial regeneration). In her exploration of the gendered metaphors of nature and industrialization in Europe, Carolyn Merchant demonstrates how seventeenth-century medical sciences (facilitated by the raw materials of colonialism) established new theories of heterosexual reproductive relations (1983). This new empiricism attempted to validate the Aristotelian logic of the passive female whose womb is activated by the dynamic male along the lines of culture’s transmogrification of nature. With William Harvey’s (re)discovery of the circulation of the blood, a new language emerged to describe a sexual economy of bodily fluids. Semen, as Thomas Laqueur has shown, was already semantically imagined in terms of oceanic metaphors of water, foam, and froth (1990, 46, 120, 146). In Harvey’s theory of generation, masculine sperm functions as the “spirit” or “logos” in its god-like act of (pro)creation (Laqueur 1990, 146–147). Although modern ideas of sexual difference had not yet formed, even Aristotle’s theory of the one-sex body of masculine and feminine ejaculate was gendered—the male produced a “thicker, whiter, frothier quality of . . . semen” (Laqueur 1990, 38). Despite its whiteness, Aristotle argued that the sperm represents that first fluid of the body; it “is made from the purest part of the blood, from the essence of life” (quoted in Laqueur 38). Later writers sought to explain the
contrast between whiteness and sanguinity by suggesting that “the semen of the male is the foam of blood according to the matter of water, which, when beaten against rocks, makes white foam” (Isidore quoted in Laqueur 56). This “fungibility of fluids” means that semen may “stand in the same relationship to blood” (40), just as their perceived saltiness may connect both to the ocean (103).

This notion of a gendered economy of fluids—or, in Elizabeth Grosz’s terms, a “sexualization of ontology,” (1994, 103), is relevant to Vaka’s own mediation of the region’s transition to modernity. Here I explore two further connections that elucidate this complex entanglement between blood, sperm, and transoceanic diaspora. Laqueur has demonstrated that the fungibility of fluids contributed to the modern notion of sexually distinct bodies, of gendered difference. Vaka demonstrates not only a gendered regionalism but one that constructs female “roots” in order to ensure a type of racial purity, engaging the voyaging canoe as metaphoric “blood” vessel or, to borrow from Laqueur, a “vascular pathway” (1990, 105). Thus scrutinizing Davis’s construction of the region as gendered difference reveals this is a proxy for racial difference, a sign of that regional problematic of “blood logics” that bifurcated the Pacific Way in the 1980s. Secondly, I want to explore Merchant’s suggestion that the grammar of sexual fluids and exchange established by Harvey and others reflected a larger colonial and commercial context of mechanical philosophy in which “the passive role . . . assigned to both matter and the female in reproduction is consistent with . . . the trend towards female passivity in the sphere of industrial production” (1983, 156). As I will explain, Davis projects the “tentacles” of these globalizing shifts of an emergent economic and political entity—Asia Pacific—back onto Polynesian voyaging history.

Feminist scholars have demonstrated the ways in which women’s reproductive bodies are made to bear the responsibility of ethnic and racial regeneration. This suggests a second reason why Davis overlooks the histories of women migrants and associates almost all of his female characters with the land. Like the Euro-American beachcomber narratives that constructed an idyllic “South Seas,” Davis fabricates his Pacific on the migratory routes of men who depend upon the welcoming arms of receptive women to acculturate them into their new island homes. This is visible in the way Arutanga’s travel companions “left behind some girls and gained some new ones” in their “profitable voyages” (1992b, 66), which place a sexually receptive woman in every port. Te Pori and Arutanga’s male descendants inherit the canoe and construct a masculine regionalism based on sports (traveling to compete at inter-island regional “champion-
ships” (78), elite voyaging societies (85), to “assist in the chiefly wars” (94), and to respond to the “urgent call of adventure” (97). Like the fictional Polynesian women who always seem to swarm Euro-American ships with their desire for unwashed sailors, Arutanga’s traveling son, Rangi, finds on arrival to Tonga that he is “sought after by the royal young ladies, for it would be considered a matter of envy if one of them conceived a child from this handsome affluent cousin from Upolu” (101). Although he has a wife at home, he exchanges sexual fluids with local women as readily as he accepts lavish gifts (102). Since he is on a “spermatic journey,” spreading the seeds of diaspora, Rangi “hoped the alliances he made with his female hosts would bear positive results” (106).

Definitions of the region, like the family, nation, and ethnicity, necessitate the demarcation of borders. In constructing a regional web of kinship through the voyaging vessel, Davis’s text demonstrates severe anxiety about crossing the western frontier of the Polynesian Triangle. The European partition of the region into racialized culture regions of Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia is tied to a long history of what Bernard Smith has shown as an ideological hierarchy between “hard” and “soft” primitives of the indigenous Pacific. But such divisions work only if one categorizes the region in terms of isolated islands rather than exploring the complex process of trade and exchange that was made possible by maritime vessels of history. Ethnographic histories of the Pacific interpellated the “soft” primitives of Polynesia into a familial narrative of Aryan diaspora, but the eastward trajectory of this migration posed a racial problem in terms of incorporating the “dark” islands and peoples of Melanesia as stopovers in this telos of a white civilizing migration. As a result, the western boundary of the Polynesian Triangle, popularized by the nineteenth-century mapping of Jules-Sébastien-César Dumont d’Urville, has isolated Fiji from its neighbors, Tonga and Samoa. This rigid cartography also pathologizes those Polynesian “outliers” to the west of the triangulated border, as if they lost their way in island Melanesia. Although arguments can be made for a shared history that has produced a relatively culturally unified Polynesia, the Melanesian Pacific is far too diverse to signify much beyond a geographic rubric. Although it is generally ignored by the metropoles of the eastern region, a remarkable 80 percent of the Pacific population consists of Melanesian people, and one-third of all the world’s languages are found there (Kirch 2000, 211, Lal and Fortune 2000, 58). Since the early works of Malinowski’s Argonauts, this diversity has been vital to the construction of modern anthropology and its mapping of culture and space. Sailing into
this region of ethnic difference causes tremendous anxiety in Davis’s novel, because the first stop, Fiji, like its series of coups since 1987, poses a challenge to the unifying family ethic of Vaka Pasifika.

Gender and ethnic difference are key determinants in understanding the mapping of culture regions in the Pacific. The racial partitioning of the region was popularized by d’Urville, who, in 1832, described Melanesians as “much closer to a barbaric state than the Polynesians and the Micronesians . . . , [who] have no governing bodies, no laws, and no formal religious practices. All their institutions seem to be in their infancy. Their aptitudes and their intelligence are also largely generally inferior to those of the copper-skinned race” (2003, 169). Melanesian women, d’Urville contended, “are even more hideous than the men, especially those who have suckled children, as their breasts immediately become flaccid and droopy” (169). Gender was key to European racialization of the Pacific just as it has been crucial to Davis’s mapping of Polynesia. Harriet Guest and Margaret Jolly have shown that women were essential to the “racial plots” constructed by eighteenth-century European explorers who fabricated an idea of a progressive Polynesian civilization that they opposed to a degenerating Melanesian savagery (Guest 1996). Pacific women’s receptiveness to European sexual advances was interpreted as “an index of civilization” just as the agency of Pacific women was seen as “catalytic to the process” of the European civilizing mission (Jolly 2001a, 36–37). Consequently, the stereotype of the sexually accessible “dusky maiden” of eastern Polynesia helped European men position these islands in a racial hierarchy over the women of Melanesia who, in their lack of receptivity to European male advances, were substituted by that colonial icon of fear and otherness: the dark-skinned cannibal male. It is precisely this fear of corporeal consumption and the lack of women’s sexual receptivity in Melanesia that constructs its ethnic difference, posing a genealogical challenge to Davis’s model of familial regionalism as his protagonist enters the waters of Fiji.

For a novel that relies so extensively on regional history and ethnography, we may find Davis’s stereotypes and inaccuracies about Fiji surprising until we recognize them as part of the colonial legacy about Melanesia. Like the South Seas fiction that derives its narrative tension from the threat of racialized others, Davis warns us that his Polynesian hero Rangi is sailing “into the gruesome territory” of Melanesia, known for its “stories of savage cannibalism, endemic in all of the Fiji Islands” (1992b, 93). As he approaches the islands, Rangi becomes increasingly agitated, wondering if “the warlike propensity of Fijians” has been “exaggerated” (108), and
fearing that their phallic “big canoes” might be “bigger and faster than Te Pori” (107). Upon meeting the Fijian tui or ruler, he confirms that the stereotypes are correct and that this reputation of savagery and violence is well founded (108). Reiterating the treatment of women as an index of civilization (or its lack), Rangi is positioned as the noble foil to a nation of warmongering rapists (138). We are told repeatedly that Fijians systematically crushed human beings as rollers for their voyaging canoes (36, 39, 93), indulged in cannibalism, and were bloodthirsty savages who spared neither women nor children (138). Far from an arrival narrative in which Rangi may disperse his reproductive seed and depart with valuable goods, he is terrorized by the idea that his host nation may literally consume his bodily fluid (and organs). Like the Robinsonades that deflected the violence of European land and resource consumption onto indigenous cannibalism, Rangi’s narrative constructs racial difference through a grammar of inequitable consumption. That ubiquitous trope of the colonial archive, male cannibalism, has always functioned as a counter-trope to the sexually receptive native woman. This explains why Rangi never encounters Melanesian women in his many years in Fiji. They are substituted by either sexually receptive women of Tongan descent or, more commonly, by Melanesian male anthropophagists.

By regenerating the gendered colonial myths of “soft” and “hard” primitives, Davis faces a particular problem in that he is constructing the region through kinship relations that are stitched together by the voyaging canoe. The character’s anxiety is less a plot device than a signal of the strain on kinship relations posed by asserting a blood relationship between his Polynesian heroes and these “savage” Melanesians. Thus he places the action of the novel in Bau, a small eastern island called the “stronghold from which Polynesian influence spread to Fiji” (97). The tui of Bau claims Tongan blood, thereby establishing kinship to Rangi through Polynesia and sidestepping the thorny question of racial admixture. Thus, like South Seas fiction, the novel benefits from its adventurous peppering of savagery and bloodshed without contaminating the genealogies or cultural practices of its Polynesian heroes. In order to ensure there is no ethnic cross-contamination, Davis fabricates a division between the “Melanesian Fijians” and their elite “Polynesian rulers.” This reflects back to an inaccurate partitioning of Fiji that many anthropologists, including Peter Buck, used to circumvent the question of racial hybridity. In order to control the contaminating effect of the black-skinned masses, Davis adopts a colonial model for Fiji where “Melanesian people [are] ruled by chiefs of
Polynesian descent, mostly in a Polynesian way” (1992b, 93). To ensure these transplanted Polynesians would not degenerate (as Robinsonades and anthropologists once feared), Davis insists that they “did not indulge in human sacrifice as did the Fijian Melanesians” (39).

We must ask why Davis manipulated the historical record to reflect not only the superiority of Polynesian culture but its civilized distinction from Melanesia. This inquiry helps us to understand a vital component of imagining Oceania: that like its colonial (and anthropological) antecedents, Davis’s novel upholds a progressive eastern culture of Polynesia that depends for its advance on a Melanesian primitivism. Thus the space of the eastern Pacific is constituted in terms of a temporal and cultural telos towards a deracialized civilization. This imbrication helps to explain why Davis reiterates so many of the racial mythologies of Fiji. His protagonist Rangi, like later Methodist missionaries, argues that addiction to cannibalism was the “cause of continuous strife” in Fiji, and that peace was not possible since the “need for bokola [was] constant and murder, strife and war were the means of its supply” (115). Bokola, or edible human flesh, becomes a synonym for Fiji itself, a site of blood violence and terrible “consumption” (115). In a page drawn from the civilizing Robinson Crusoe, Rangi intervenes to stop the Fijians from this practice (130). Traditions of Polynesian cannibalism are deliberately excised from his revision of the region’s history, even those that appeared in his primary sources, such as the narrative of Tangi’ia and Tutapu. In that story, Davis racializes the maritime battles between these famous half-brothers as an epic struggle between Polynesia and Melanesia. In his version, the dark-skinned Tutapu, a descendant of a lowly commoner, is configured as the cannibal consumer of his light-skinned foe, who ultimately settled Rarotonga and from whom many Cook Island families, including Davis’s, derive their genealogy.66 Borrowing much from S. Percy Smith’s Aryan vision of Polynesian history, including the legend of the “Great Fleet” of canoes that settled Aotearoa, Davis denigrates Melanesian difference and denies regional kinship by posing Polynesians as their rightful colonizers.67 In racializing these tensions, Davis unknowingly extends the semantic registers of the vaka to suggest a violent rupture in the familial “blood vessel” that ordinarily should “flow” like the ships and waters that link the region in a vast network of kinship.

Given the importance of the vaka to cultural, historical, and genealogical relations in the Pacific, and Davis’s extensive experience in maritime history, we must be troubled by the fact that he denies that Fiji is
an originary source for the double-hulled voyaging canoe (drua). Despite the evidence of his own sources, he attributes the body and sail design of this vessel to Tongan (Polynesian) history and positions the Fijians as simply the suppliers of timber and other raw materials (132). Although he has adopted the well-known beachcomber myth that Fijian autocrats used men for canoe rollers, Davis neglects to mention that the same practices were also attributed to Polynesians in Tahiti. Fiji’s role as an indigenous center for pan-Pacific trade and exchange is minimized by Davis denying “Melanesian Fijians” their agency in this process. Against all evidence to the contrary, Davis even erases Fiji as the originary dispersal point for that vital communal drink of the eastern Pacific: kava. His depiction of the island region resonates with d’Urville, who, in conceding the long history of exchange with Fiji, had difficulty in justifying its cartographic segregation from its eastern neighbors. Consequently d’Urville’s admission of some vestige of civilization among (male) Fijians, like Davis’s, is attributed to the “proximity of the Tongan people” (2003, 170).

To summarize, Davis’s novel reiterates the ways in which European cartographies of the region used women as the index of civilization to uphold their ethnic partitioning of Oceania. Fiji, with its long history of trade and exchange, has always challenged these ethnic maps of the Pacific, a position that became more salient after its series of racialized coups. While Davis was writing his novel, the Vaka Pasifika was challenged by the ways in which the discourse of Pacific indigeneity was taken to a disturbing extreme in Fiji. This is why Vaka, I believe, spends so much textual space inscribing this island nation, only to utilize colonial history to reduce it to a site of violence and primitivism. The way that ancient Fiji becomes a proxy for the ethnic strife of the contemporary Pacific is an important reminder of the ways in which discourses of regionalism are no substitute for the hierarchies of the nation-state. Moreover, the anti-Asian sentiment that has characterized some mappings of the Pacific region (from Heyerdah’s postwar denial of Asiatic origins to the diaspora from Fiji of its citizens of Indian descent) is indicative of the palpable tensions emerging out of the economic rise of Asia Pacific and its migration across the Island region. In order to understand why Davis would reinscribe the colonial and especially Aryanist models for masculine migration, we have to position his novel in the context of a rapidly globalizing Pacific. Consequently, I turn now to the intersections of race and gender in the regional imaginary, exploring how the radical socioeconomic shifts signified by diaspora catalyze the valorization of masculine agents of history.
Hawaiki: Hubs of the Globalizing Octopus

I have argued that migration theories of the Pacific, from Heyerdahl and Sharp to Finney and Davis, often reflect more about regional shifts in the socioeconomic power of the writers’ contexts than the past they wish to inscribe. To this end I would like to turn to a paradigmatic image of migration in the eastern Pacific (Figure 4). Taken from Te Rangi Hiroa’s *Vikings of the Pacific*, this visual representation of the inter-island octopus also encapsulates some of the challenges of regionalism and gestures towards its globalizing potentials. Like Tupaia’s map, drawn two centuries earlier, it represents an indigenous cartography of the region based on relations of trade, narrative, and kinship. This untitled picture of Polynesian migration represents the legendary homeland of Hawaiki (Havaiki, Hawai‘i) as the head of an octopus in the Society Islands (Te Ao Ma’ohi), with its eight tentacles radiating across eastern Oceania. Like the routes charted

Figure 4. Te Rangi Hiroa/Sir Peter Buck’s Map of Polynesia.
in Davis’s novel, the limbs of the octopus stretch to the far corners of the Polynesian Triangle, connecting Aotearoa, Hawai‘i, and Rapa Nui into one unified body rather than an abstract geometric symbol. While Fiji is not included in Davis’s or Buck’s labeled map of Polynesia, it is signified by the unnamed endpoint of the limb that stretches eastward past Samoa and Tonga.

Buck’s choice of an octopus to represent the movement of the pre-colonial Pacific is significant in multiple ways. First, like Davis’s novel, it naturalizes migration and highlights how the islands are genealogically and corporeally connected, much like the arboreal metaphors of ancestral roots and branches. Although he does not comment on the image, Buck was certainly cognizant of the complex symbolization of the octopus to Polynesia, particularly in Samoan and Hawaiian cosmologies, where it was seen as the god of fishing and the sea (Tangaroa/Kanaloa), as the divine ancestor of priestly navigators at Ra‘iatea (Hawai‘i), as a symbol of navigation and its teaching centers such as Kaho‘olawe and Opoa, and finally, its importance as a navigating symbol whose movement has been likened to that of a canoe.70 Like the stories throughout the region that depict the land as a fish that must be hauled out of the sea by demigods (Tahiti-nui, Aotearoa, Aitutaki),71 the octopus also foregrounds the movement and dynamism of islands as they rise and fall through geological and political change. This brings us back to the concept of etak, in which the islands are dynamic and moving and, like Hawai‘i, represent both the origin and destination of the traveler. As Albert Wendt has written, “We are all in search of that heaven, that Hawai‘i, where our hearts will find meaning” (1993, 9). The process of constructing an origin and hub of the Vaka Pasifika is a constitutive part of regionalism. Te Rangi Hiroa places the head in the Society Islands, the Tahiti group which was “the nucleus for exploration and the dissemination of learning throughout central Polynesia” (1938, 66). Drawing from the work of Teuira Henry, he argued that Hawai‘i (a former name for Ra‘iatea) was the “mother of lands” and “the hub of the Polynesian universe” in terms of the training in arts, religion, and navigation sciences (87). In his poignant recounting of his 1929 visit to the sacred marae there (Taputapu-atea), Buck configured this temple as the vital center of Hawai‘i, “the head of the octopus of Ta‘aroa,” the place where canoes were built and navigation was taught. In fact, the first voyage of the *Hokule‘a* made a pilgrimage to this exact spot to reinvigorate the historical and genealogical connections that this “hub” facilitated across Polynesia and, with the help of Tom Davis, it returned in 1992 for the South Pacific Arts Festival and celebration of voyaging culture.72 In his day Te Rangi
Hiroa remarked that his own attempt to visit the originary space of his Maori ancestral “seed” was dependent on a New Zealand naval vehicle. The double-hulled vaka was replaced by “a steel-clad British man-of-war” that, like the steam ships of the previous chapter, “controlled” the seas and regulated the exact hour of arrival (1938, 82). Faced with “a modern French village,” unattended stone ruins, and indigenous peoples celebrating “the fall of the Bastille,” Buck mourned that “it was all wrong.” (83). In his search for a Polynesian Hawaiki, he concluded that “Taputapu-ātea was a mute symbol. It was something that we Polynesians have lost and cannot find, something that we yearn for and cannot recreate” (85). Despondent about the literal and symbolic “foreign weeds” (85), Te Rangi Hiroa concluded his chapter about this Pacific “hub” by attempting to “keep down the riding tide” of despair by responding “briskly in the American vernacular, ‘Let’s go’” (86).

Diaspora narratives, like precolonial histories, are often characterized by nostalgia for an originary homeland, and this is apparent in Buck’s configuration of French-occupied Polynesia as a cultural origin, a Hawaiki that he hoped would produce the monumental evidence of precolonial history that he felt was lacking in his own deeply colonized home. As a Maori scholar trained in Aotearoa/New Zealand and employed by the Bishop Museum in Hawai‘i, Buck’s transnationalism provided an alternative interpretation of that globalizing octopus and its broadening tentacles across the Pacific. Given the radical postwar shifts in the Pacific Islands, it is not surprising that metaphors likening corporate globalization to an octopus were already circulating in Buck’s context. The alarming consolidation of U.S. corporate control of Hawaiian plantations and politics (ushered in under the aegis of the statehood movement) led Te Rangi Hiroa’s contemporary, Fred Buckley, to refer to the Bishop estate as a “landed octopus,” likening it to the other capitalist “tentacles of the ‘Big Five’ octopus of King Sugar’s oligarchy” (quoted in Daws 1968, 334). In fact, Buck’s shift to the American vernacular while visiting a precolonial Pacific hub is significant when we consider that in his personal correspondence from Honolulu, he remarked that American-occupied Hawai‘i was “really the hub of the Pacific” (Sorrenson 1986, 1.75).71

As a figure who adopted S. Percy Smith’s model of an Aryan Hawaiki for Polynesians and who, ironically, was later denied American citizenship because the United States categorized Polynesians as Asians (Howe 2003, 192), Te Rangi Hiroa serves as an important example of the ways in which diaspora narratives presuppose an idealized origin that can be only partially recovered in that complex tidalectic relationship between home and migra-
CHAPTER 2

tion, roots and routes. Hawaiki represents that unstable island, a shifting
destination and origin point that, like etak navigation, recedes or emerges
depending on the context of the migrant.74 Vikings and Davis’s Vaka are
texts that engage western models of historiography and diaspora in order
to reestablish Polynesian kinship relations across the region in dynamic
relationships of governance and administration.75 In his correspondence,
Buck imagined a type of “Ministry of Polynesian Affairs,” a pan-Polyne-
sian entity much like Kalakaua’s vision, except it would be administered by
Maori liaisons to New Zealand’s inherited colonies, such as Samoa and the
Cook Islands.76

These narratives of locating an originary Hawaiki often refl ect politi-
cal struggles over which masculine migrants can claim to be the subjects of
history. Because some Polynesian migration histories mention an originary
homeland of Hawai‘i, many have pondered where this location may be
fixed. Nineteenth-century Christian diffusionists located it in Israel, while
Aryanist scholars like J. Macmillan Brown and S. Percy Smith turned to
India to posit Caucasian origins for Maori and Polynesians in general. In
his theory of a transoceanic Aryan globalization, Macmillan Brown argued
vigorously that “the only section of mankind” that is truly “maritime is
Caucasian” (1907, 7) and incorporated Polynesians as part of this “Rob-
inson Crusoe of a race” (262). Like migration theories that claimed the
Americas as Hawaiki, these models of history were inspired by a refusal
to naturalize Asian presence in the Pacific. As M. P. K. Sorrenson points
out, the rise of these Aryan origin stories occurred at the moment when a
“vicious anti-Chinese campaign” was lobbied to uphold a “White New
Zealand” immigration policy” (1979, 29). Aryan origin theories often inter-
pellated indigenous peoples as settlers in the same vein as British colo-
nists, destabilizing native land and resource claims against the white colo-
nial state. Moreover, incorporating Polynesians into an ancient narrative
of prehistoric Aryan diaspora minimized European anxieties about racial
degeneration in the antipodean Pacific colonies (see Sorrenson 1979, 29).
Overall, any fears generated by racial mixing might be alleviated by these
origin stories—as Sorrenson quips, “What better myth could there be for
a young country struggling for nationhood and for the amalgamation of its
races than this reunification of the Aryans?” (30).

Buck’s adaptation of the Aryan migration model for Pacific settlement
led him to argue that the ancient Polynesians sailed thousands of miles
northwards into Micronesia in order to avoid the direct route through
Melanesia. When faced with contradictory archaeological evidence, Te
Rangi Hiroa created a secondary and illogical migration route for plants
through Melanesia in order to prevent any racial contamination of the Polynesians from Melanesians (see Buck 1938, 43–51; Howe 2003, 55–56). The discredited southern route through Melanesia, he argued, would have had to conclude that Fiji was “the rallying place of the Polynesians, from whence they scattered east, north, and south to explore and settle the far-flung islands within the Polynesian triangle” (Buck 1938, 43).

Aryan diaspora theories reflect a deep resistance to considering a Fijian Hawaiki, a dynamic space of Polynesian and Melanesian exchange, despite the fact that these islands were one of a few “strong genetic bottlenecks” of eastward migration (Kirch and Green 2001, 73). These regional theories formulate vaka historiographies of the Pacific Way in which the originary space of Hawaiki might be charted in terms that are congruent with its political and ethnic destination. Just as the shifting tentacles of colonial power were reflected in Buck’s image of the Pacific octopus and were vital to theorizing a space of origins, Davis’s novel adopts precolonial trajectories to map the globalizing routes of migrant destinations. Drawing from Vikings of the Pacific, Davis’s Vaka inscribes regional history as performative genealogy, emphasizing those figures, migrations, and settlement routes that partially engage his own family ancestry. Outside the bounds of the novel, Davis performed and revitalized these histories by organizing the building of an ancestral replica canoe, the Takitumu, which sailed to Taputapu-atea and other regional festivals. Just as the Hokule‘a charted “Ke Ala i Kahiki”—a vehicle of return to the ancient homeland or Hawaiki—Buck and Davis were also mapping routes of return, spaces of origin. Like the term Hawaiki, the trajectory and definition of “Ke Ala i Kahiki” is not fixed. Although it is commonly defined as “the way to Tahiti,” scholars have pointed out that “Kahiki” or “Tahiti” may refer to any island outside of the speaker’s orbit, just as it may reflect the way to “Iti,” or Fiji (Viti). And while much has been written about the ethnic hierarchies that led to the segregation of Fiji from its Polynesian neighbors, and scholars have shown the vital role this archipelago played in shaping eastern Pacific cultures, the works discussed here have not pressed the boundaries of these colonial maps. My intention is not to uphold Fiji as the origin but rather to ask what it would mean to consider a deeper, more ethnically complex model of the Vaka Pasifika, to produce a regional imagination that does not uphold Hawaiki as a narrowly defined model of belonging.

Hawaiki represents an unstable place of origin that changes depending on the population and context in which it is used, as well as the destination place for the transmigration of the human spirit. It is this point of destination, in what Stewart Firth has pinpointed as a second era of globalization
in the Pacific, which informs Davis’s cartography of the region and helps us to understand the racialized “seeds” of diaspora that he is sowing. A large part of Vaka details the settlement of Davis’s home, Rarotonga, while the conclusion describes the congregation of Islanders there who decide to settle Aotearoa. While Te Rangi Hiroa and others have discredited the idea of a “Great Fleet” to New Zealand, it is important to consider why Davis would regenerate this particular model of history decades after it had been dismissed as a homogenization of Maori genealogies and oral histories. To do so we must consider the circumstances in which Davis was writing, when more Cook Islanders were living overseas than at home, and nearly 70 percent were residing in Aotearoa/New Zealand (R. Crocombe 1992, 7). As subjects who retain dual citizenship, Cook Islanders may be considered as some of the original migrants to Aotearoa as well as active participants in contemporary transoceanic globalization. In fact, Davis’s upholding of a fleet of mobile Pacific Islanders not only anticipates the 1992 South Pacific Festival of the Arts, but also becomes a way of unifying and naturalizing trajectories of migrant labor towards emerging Hawaiki or etak destination points in a globalized Oceania. The model of kinship networks suggests the reality of MIRAB (migration and remittance) societies and helps to naturalize a process that in its contemporary context is about the scattering of families as they seek a Hawaiki of economic opportunity. Thus the “strife” over “territory and power” that pushes Davis’s precolonial Polynesians into “a migration to the new world” of Aotearoa (1992b, 287) creates a new generation of “canoe people” (288) that anticipates late twentieth-century Cook Island migration patterns. In many ways, Davis’s novel naturalizes Polynesian migration to Aotearoa/New Zealand and deflects the racial hierarchies that may posit indigenous migrants as “aliens” in their own sea of islands.

Towards a New Vaka Pasifika: Our Water Ties

In this genealogical sketch of the Vaka Pasifika, I conclude with a gesture to the ways in which a new era of Pacific literature has revisioned the regional imagination to chart alternative vehicles of sovereignty. By emphasizing “water ties” over “blood vessels,” these works destabilize an ethnic partitioning of the region and engage with more dynamically imagined spaces of origin and destination. For example, in an effort to rethink the masculine trajectories of Pacific migration, Teresia Kieuea Teaiwa’s poetry collection, Searching for Nei Nim’anoa, calls upon “one of only a few female figures in the male-dominated field of Pacific Island navigational
traditions” (1995, ix) as she moves between the Gilbertese, Fijian, and Hawaiian Islands, placing women at the center of these origin stories. Similarly, the narrator of Sia Figiel’s *Girl in the Moon Circle* defines her modern Samoan community as “Sea people. Sea clan. Travelling from Samoa to Tonga. To Fiji. To Aotearoa. To Rarotonga. To Tahiti. To Hawai‘i. To other parts of the Moana. Guided by stars. Guided by the moon. The sun. Birds. Sharks. Different fish” (1996, 104). As a text charting the American globalization of the Pacific Islands and the networks of kinship that extend to the United States and New Zealand, Figiel’s narrative of coming of age in Samoa offers a challenge to the island isolate model of Margaret Mead and, like Davis and Buck, maps the region as genealogy.

A playful and creative interpretation of the meanings of vaka, vessel, and vehicle is visible in Robert Sullivan’s *Star Waka*, a collection of 100 poems from Aotearoa/New Zealand named after voyaging vessels. Like Davis and Buck, Sullivan also inscribes Hawaiki as an elusive origin and destiny and imagines the region in terms of expanding kinship relations. Similar to Teweiariki Teaero’s poetry collection *Waa in Storms*, Sullivan’s text is conceived as a waka, a vehicle of exploration, memory, and indigenous history of the region. In his preface he explains, “This sequence is like a waka, members of the crew change, the rhythm and the view changes—it is subject to the laws of nature” (Sullivan 1999, n.p). Drawing upon the broad range of metaphors associated with the term waka and vessel, Sullivan inscribes “Honda waka” (8) and “computer waka” (59); he imagines waka as “a great living Library of people” (74) and declares they are “vehicles for a revival” (28). The waka is conceived as a vehicle for sovereignty in Aotearoa and in a broader, regional sense of the globalized Pacific.

In a similar vein, *Alchemies of Distance* (2001), Caroline Sinavaiana-Gabbard’s collection of poetry, structurally adopts the metaphor of the voyage, utilizing Pacific vaka in her modern migration from the U.S. South to Pacific metropoles in California, Honolulu, and Amerika Samoa. This circular pattern of departure and return is invoked through originary narratives, freed from their material and literal interpretations. Past and present, poetry and myth, land and sea are all dynamic and constitutive elements of the writer’s genealogy, a term defined not as a simple racial lineage but as the presence of the past in the present. Sinavaiana-Gabbard imagines subjectivity through the metaphor of the vessel, explaining in her preface of “hard years with the feel of crossing strange seas in a smallish boat. Still afloat in my memory, this boat has sails of frayed pandanus, woven strips of fala battered by the crossing, makeshift patches straining to hold until landfall” (2001, 11). Explicating that “culture itself is the boat
that can cross the va, the space between then and now, here and there, the
distances between time and space” (24), Sinavaiana-Gabbard regenerates
the Samoan woman warrior, Nafanua, whose function as leader and vessel
represents a female-centered voyaging tradition in which she “consents to
act as a vessel for the divine . . . she’s not only the traveler and the vehicle,
she becomes the path as well” (25, see also 43).

While there are creative new visions of the wakes left by ancient voy-
aging canoes, I would like to conclude by turning to the possibilities also
generated by “our water ties,” the terms that formulate the epigraph to
this chapter and that will bring us back to Hau’ofa’s notion of “the ocean
in us.” In “Sea of Islands,” Hau’ofa outlines a connection between ancient
voyaging trajectories and migrant globalization:

The new economic reality made nonsense of artificial boundaries,
enabling the people to shake off their confinement and they have
since moved, by the tens of thousands, doing what their ancestors had
done before them: enlarging their world as they go, to Australia, New
Zealand, Hawai‘i, mainland United States, Canada and even Europe,
they strike routes in new resource areas . . . , expanding kinship net-
works through which they circulate themselves, their relatives, their
material goods, and their stories all across the ocean, and the ocean is
theirs because it has always been their home. (1993b, 94)

Uncannily predictive of Hau‘ofa’s vision of the Pacific process of “world
enlargement,” Albert Wendt’s novel Ola (1991) inscribes his Samoan
woman protagonist as a “world traveller” who visits Japan, Israel/Pales-
tine, Aotearoa/New Zealand, and the United States—some of the broad-
est migrations of any Pacific Island novel. This maps a global cartography
and, like Johnny Frisbie’s autobiography, also includes Asia (Japan) in this
vision that brings Oceania to Asia Pacific. The Christian pilgrimage to
Jerusalem described in the novel can be seen as a challenge to diffusion-
ist models of Polynesian origins. This positions an alternative mapping
of colonial relations that includes Palestine and suggests that models of
diffusionism may contribute to the rendering of a Christian Hawaiki and
generate a new trajectory of pilgrimage.

As a “Permanent Traveller,” Ola admits she’s “permanently in motion,
a pelagic Samoan” (Wendt 1991,155). Her experience of travel reflects
Hau’ofa’s “world enlargement,” particularly because Wendt employs the
sea as the source of her fluctuating identity. Ola comes to recognize her-
self as a subject in a Lacanian moment when she sees her reflection in the
VESSELS OF THE PACIFIC

ocean. She observes, “Yes, it was me, I existed, I am, I am separate. I was myself” (1991, 35). Years later, on the coast of Aotearoa/New Zealand, she explains that she “felt at home, remembering: the sea which cups my islands, washes each night through my dreams, no matter what shore I reach” (76). These same “water ties” encourage Rawiri, the narrator of Witi Ihimaera’s The Whale Rider (1987), to return from his visit to Papua New Guinea, articulated through a seashell that whispers “bōki maɪ, bōki maɪ ki te wa kainga” (1987, 59), return to your home. Although Ola’s complex journeys are facilitated by modern vehicles such as airplanes and automobiles (which figure heavily in the text), Wendt relates these to early colonial and aquatic migrations. Like Hau’ofa, he privileges water as the site of transcultural connection. His character observes: “We are sixty-five percent water. . . . Our brains are eighty per cent water. We are more water than blood. So our water ties to one another are more important than our blood ties! We carry within us the seas out of which we came” (1991, 124). This reflects what Hau’ofa will later describe as a “regional identity that is anchored in our common inheritance of . . . the Pacific Ocean” (1997, 124).

In an effort to move away from the ethnic hierarchies of belonging, Wendt seems to be upholding Hau’ofa’s sentiment that “all of us in Oceania today, whether indigenous or otherwise, can truly assert that the sea is our common heritage” (Hau’ofa 1997, 142).

In writing about Pacific regionalism, Hau’ofa explains the process of his own complex migration through the region and highlights the importance of roots in the wake of globalizing routes. He emphasizes that most Polynesians “have Havaiki, a shared ancestral homeland that exists hazily in primordial memory.” But its location, like the floating islands of etak, cannot be fixed in either time or space. Like Walcott’s far Cythera, “it, too, is far and feverish, / it dilates on the horizon” (1986, 481). To Hau’ofa, Havaiki is “far into the past ahead, leading on to other memories, other realities, other homelands” (2000, 470). Hawai’i is at once the past and the future, it is originary rather than origin, a gateway rather than destination.