

and instead of the promised referendum on independence, the tenth anniversary saw a new agreement to defer decision on the constitutional future for a further fifteen or twenty years. Few expect startling new initiatives under French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who is visiting New Caledonia during 2009. The striking Tjibaou Cultural Centre outside Nouméa is now in full operation, and in New Caledonian politics, cooperation has replaced confrontation. But Tjibaou's principal legacy is the word, and this is what Waddell brings, in English, to a Pacific readership that is overwhelmingly anglophone. A French-language version is planned (the author is as fluent in French as he is in English), but the present book is likely to stand as Waddell's most important contribution to Pacific writing. Tjibaou was a *passéur*, a man who moved between cultures, and Waddell is also a *passéur*, who in his Canadian homeland has moved successfully between French and Anglo-American cultures. This makes him a particularly appropriate biographer. This book deals with topics of immense complexity in a readable manner and convincingly presents the story and contribution of a great man who lived in a critical period of time for all Oceanian people.

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Transpacific Imaginations: History, Literature, Counterpoetics, by Yunte Huang. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0-674-02637-7; xi + 187 pages, illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. Cloth, US\$37.00.

For the past twenty years or so, the field of American studies has undergone a post-national turn that has elicited diverse scholarship that takes hemispheres, regions, areas, borderlands, and the planet as founding critical geographies. This turn, once cutting-edge, has become more or less the norm for the field. In *Transpacific Imaginations: History, Literature, Counterpoetics*, a work of post-national American literary history, Yunte Huang brings together readings of canonical American and Asian-American literature, Chinese historiography, and the faux-Hiroshima writings of Yasusada. Huang argues that transpacific imaginations refer to "literary and historical imaginations that have emerged under the tremendous geopolitical pressure of the Pacific encounters" (2).

The first section of the book, "History: And the Views from the Shores," is divided into three brief chapters on the transpacific travel writing of Mark Twain, Henry Adams, and Chinese historian Liang Qichao. In 1866, Twain was sent as a newspaper correspondent to Hawai'i, where he wrote a series of letters in which he celebrated the Pacific as a space of economic opportunity and expansion. Twain's uncritical endorsement of Orientalist and Pacific pastoral mythologies was complicated, though, when discussing Cook, who represented a violent,

exploitative relationship to native culture. Huang writes, “In spite of his apparent enthusiasm over the new age of the Pacific, we can identify in Twain subterranean layers of reservations, concerns, contradictions, and reversals” (18–19). Like Twain, Henry Adams’s travel writings from Japan and Hawai‘i authorized conventional Orientalist and Pacific pastoral mythologies. For Adams, Japan was a premodern retreat from “overcivilized America” and the Japanese appeared to be “childlike” (25–26). According to Huang, Adams’s racism toward the Japanese was the product of a progressive, teleological view of history. Unlike the euphoria expressed by Twain in Hawai‘i, Adams felt bored while in Tahiti and Sāmoa, and opted to fight off boredom by writing a history of his surroundings. Adams decided to write a history of Tahiti based on oral narratives that, as oral narratives do, changed with the telling. Rhetorical instability and cultural multiplicity frustrated Adams as he unsuccessfully struggled to cook a fixed historical text out of raw Tahitian ingredients. In the end, Huang argues, the Pacific came to symbolize a maze of rhetorical and cultural particularities that resisted Adams’s desire for historical unity. Adams therefore “turned a blind eye to multiplicity and, as a result, excluded these experiences from his classic autobiography” (39). Liang Qichao, a “prominent Chinese political reformist and historian,” traveled from China to Hawai‘i in 1899 and to North America in 1903. Liang’s meditations on traditional Chinese historiography, and his critique of Sino-centered universalism, were triggered by US imperialist

ambitions in the Pacific. In his travels across the Pacific, “Liang feels the increasing need for a historiographical revolution that can serve China, which is no longer the ‘world’ but merely a nation” (47). In his reading of Liang, Huang contends, “The Pacific is the dead end of historical thinking for premodern China, whereas it is a new manifestation of providential design for the United States” (6).

The next section, “Literature: *Moby-Dick* in the Pacific,” is made up of five chapters on the transpacific setting of Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick*, a setting that critics have tended to ignore. Unlike the travel writing of Twain, Adams, and Liang, which was ultimately complicit with imperialism in the region, *Moby-Dick* is much harder to fix in terms of aesthetic, ethical, or political categories. Huang reads Melville through the critical terms of “collection” and “collecting,” shifting attention away from production in order to gauge Melville’s relationship to capitalism. Relying on critical theories of Georges Bataille and Walter Benjamin, Huang argues that the act of collecting involves a withdrawal from exchange: “Ahab wants to take the whale outside of monetary measurement, outside of the system of exchangeability and utility” (63). For Huang, Ishmael’s attitude toward history parallels Ahab’s relation to the whale: “In his dual role of antiquarian collector and antiteleological historian, Ishmael, like Ahab, was a critic rather than a conspirator of nineteenth century economic expansion into the Pacific and its accompanying historiographical rationalization” (72). Antiquarianism, which functions as a critique of chronology and teleol-

ogy, leads Huang to conclude, “In his cetological collection, words are to Ishmael what Moby Dick is to Ahab: Words cannot be exchanged for referential meanings, and Moby Dick may not be regarded as a commodity” (77). Melville’s politics are thus located in the deliberate failure to communicate, to be useful, or to be productive: “The Pacific, then, becomes a Dead Letter Office” (81).

The final section of the book, “Counterpoetics: Islands, Legends, Maps,” brings together three chapters on “Asian American micro-resistance, imaginary crossing, and poetic reterritorialization” (97). In 1970, a park ranger discovered characters etched on the walls of the former Chinese detention barrack on Angel Island in San Francisco Bay. These etchings have been cleaned up for public consumption and are now regularly included in American and Asian-American literature anthologies. Huang reads Angel Island poetry as *tibishi*, “poetry inscribed on the wall,” a form of Chinese travel writing. Angel Island poetry, like *tibishi*, was an “outlet for the large social sector that is denied the right to write history” (102). Like urban graffiti, Angel Island counterpoetics “draw our attention to the act of their saying and not merely to what they say” (109). Huang then turns to the counter-internment poems of Japanese-American writer Lawson Fusao Inada. These poems work to overcome the “remoteness” of history, projecting a “desire to reclaim the transpacific from nationalized interests and to reinscribe it as a space to invoke communal memory and minority survival” (117). This section concludes with a

discussion of Theresa Kyung Cha’s *Dictee* (1982), an experimental novel that addresses many of the issues raised by Huang throughout the book: the relationships between history and literature, between documentary and fiction, and between coloniality and postcoloniality. For Huang, the form of *Dictee*—nonlinear, anti-progressive, historically unreliable—creates an uncomfortable reading experience, one that resists the reader’s desire to “colonize” the text.

Transpacific Imaginations is an important and insightful addition to the growing field of post-national American literary history. The chapters are quite short, ranging from ten to twenty pages. Huang’s writings might be stronger if woven together into longer chapters, while more thorough historical contextualization would help mediate between readings of particular literary texts and the general theoretical claims Huang makes about them. Huang is clearly aware of the tendency of Pacific Rim discourse to empty the Pacific; therefore it is curious that in a book about the transpacific, about the “wars of discourses on the destiny of the Pacific,” Native Pacific peoples and cultures do not appear as combatants. Huang represents the Pacific through a metaphoric of death: “dead end,” “deadly space in between,” “Dead Letter Office.” These metaphors tell an important part, but only a part, of the story of imperialism in the region. Huang writes, “The conceptual gap between the transpacific as the geopolitical and the metaphoric may not, therefore, be bridged or abridged—a Melvillean curse/bless-

ing” (5). For a book that relies heavily on Marxist theory, this is a decidedly non-dialectical statement. One might argue that this gap is always being provisionally and strategically crossed, overcome, or displaced through social movements by Native Pacific peoples fighting wars, both discursive and real, on both Asian and American fronts. *Transpacific Imaginations* is an inspired and wide-ranging book that, like many works of literary history, would benefit from a bit more attention to the social.

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The Future of Indigenous Museums: Perspectives from the Southwest Pacific, edited by Nick Stanley. Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007. ISBN cloth, 978-1-84545-188-2; paper, 978-1-84545-596-5; ix + 268 pages, images, black and white photographs, contributor biographies, bibliography, notes, index. Cloth, US\$90.00; paper, US\$34.95.

“Indigenous” museums in the Pacific are inevitably a source of contention because they are deeply entrenched in colonial legacies. The transformation and evolution from museums representative of colonial legacies into indigenous museums and cultural centers have been concurrent with the independence of Pacific Island nations. If not synchronized with self-determination, the change in museums has been a result of the political shifts to indigenous leadership.

In this collection of thirteen essays focused on the southwest Pacific, the

authors follow Soroi Marepo Eoe and Pamela Swadling’s *Museums and Cultural Centres in the Pacific* (1991) in developing the theme of indigenous museums while also confronting the term “indigenous museum.” Editor Nick Stanley organizes the essays geographically, putting the institutions or programs on equal footing in this volume that redefines assumptions about museums in the Pacific. *The Future of Indigenous Museums* presents prominent museums alongside the unexpected alternatives to museums, such as the long-standing Papua New Guinea (PNG) National Museum flanking Eric Venbrux’s description of the Bathurst and Melville Islands as open-air museums where Aborigines, like the Kanak community of Lifou (explored by Tate LeFevre in chapter 5), orchestrate “exhibitions” of culture for tourists.

The sections on Island Melanesia, Northern Australia, and New Guinea are bolstered by concluding reflections by Robert L Welsch and Christina Kreps about the complex roles and expectations ahead in the future for indigenous museums. The diverse group of specialists Stanley has chosen—scholars and cultural practitioners—makes for a dense volume of experiences, ideas, and anticipation. Invested specialists like Lissant Bolton explain programs, such as Vanuatu Cultural Centre’s Fieldworkers and Women’s Culture Project, with which she has long been involved. Pioneering indigenous professionals, such as Lawrence Foana’ota, director of the Solomon Island National Museum and Cultural Centre, write from personal experience. This combination of museum