“World Gone Wrong”:  
Thomas Friedman’s World Gone Flat  
and Pascale Casanova’s World Republic  
against the Multitudes of “Oceania”

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Abstract

This essay tracks the poetics and geopolitics of a “world gone wrong” in two influential forms of the global system articulated as a cultural-political dominant: one, Thomas Friedman’s The World Is Flat, which is Anglo-American and post-imperial in its overall operation, tropes, stories, and tactics; and the other is Pascale Casanova’s The World Republic of Letters (La Republique Mondiale des Lettres), which is seemingly cosmopolitan yet Franco-centric in its over-extended model of how “the world republic of (literary) letters” works as cultural capital and “literary domination” under postcolonialism from Maori New Zealand to decolonizing Ireland and Nobel Prize-seeking South Korea. As an alternative model of globalization more adequate to our “worlding” situation, region, and time, the essay turns, by way of counter-gesture move, towards more Asia/Pacific-based modes of cultural emergence surging up across “Oceania” as theorized and enacted, among others, by Epeli Hau’ofa, the Tongan writer at the University of South Pacific. The transdisciplinary pedagogy and interventions into globalization discourse via “worlding” would help envision and shape what such a global/local, transnational, and borderlands concept of regionalization can do to counter the reign of the neo-liberal world republic of domination and inequity.

Keywords  
globalization, worlding, regionalization, Pacific, Asia-Pacific discourse,  
Thomas Friedman, Pascale Casanova, Bob Dylan,  
Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, Regis Debray, Epeli Hau’ofa
The multitude is working through Empire to create an alternative global society.
--Hardt and Negri (Multitude xvii)

Introduction

If only to shatter US historical amnesia as he cautioned bipartisan members of the Iraq Study Group against perils of Empire in the Middle East, journalist Martin F. Nolan invoked novels of Joseph Conrad, as well as this haunted poem from 1892 written by Rudyard Kipling, the semi-jaded jingoist of white mythologies in Asia,

And the end of the fight is a
Tombstone white with the name of
the late deceased, And the epitaph
drear: “A fool lies here who tried
to hustle the East.”

As we reflect upon possibilities and perils of globalizing cultural circulation in Asia, we might, in another discursive register, invoke the Critical Inquiry, which had what Mark Twain called fits of “American innocence abroad” as it lauded the renewal of “critical theory” in Mainland China at the same time the damages of issues and contradictions in the People’s Republic of China went under-examined, if not repressed as political topics of open discussion or internet search. “Theory is alive and well in China,” if you would believe the globalizing cover-stories of W. J. T. Mitchell and Wang Ning in 2003 in Chicago and Beijing, as they expanded global markets for what the journal called the “critical theory” discourse (267). Opening to the “United States of the West”1 and negotiating what Rey Chow mocks as “the unbearable lightness of postcolonial, postmodern ethnicity (Protestant Ethic 191), China may become another post-melanchoolic theory-land where the “ethos” of choice is often pre-determined by the “ethnos” of racialized nations and cultural divides. Yet, as Steven J. Venturino has critiqued, this U.S. journal was being outflanked in its double-shuffle attempt to sublimate geopolitical factuality, globalize into huge markets of “Sinophonic” Asia, if not disavow the “critical” dimension of theory, and so “to hustle the East” as Kipling warned (Venturino 91-

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1 Here I am referring to Regis Debray’s category of neo-empire in A Modest Proposal for a United States of the West (2004).
96). Still, the sublimity of these new China markets, as well as inter-Asian conjunctions around the nexus of independent publishers form the context for what we will reflect upon as a “global market” future, theorizing possibility and linkage for the “multitudes” from entangled inside/outside China sites like Taiwan and the interior Pacific.

In the face of this “tombstone white” of US/Asia expansionism for critical-theory outlets, I want to track the cultural poetics, ethical dynamics, and implicit geopolitics of what Bob Dylan has called—in a Jeremaic album (in 1993) of gospel, folk, and blues cover-songs named after a Mississippi Sheiks song of broken covenants—our “world gone wrong.” I will do this by examining what I take to be two influential but misguided forms of globalization articulated in much-acclaimed studies of the global system as cultural-political dominant: first, Thomas Friedman’s *The World Is Flat*, which is Anglo-American and post-imperial in its overall operation, tropes, stories, and tactics; and second, Pascale Casanova’s *The World Republic of Letter* (*La Republique Mondiale des Lettres*), which is cosmopolitan yet Franco-centric finally in her over-extended model of how “the world republic of (literary) letters” works as cultural capital and “literary domination” from Maori New Zealand to decolonizing Ireland and Nobel Prize-seeking South Korea. As an alterative worlding model of globalization that gets things more capacious adequacy as fluidly fit to our “worlding” situation, region, and time, I will not only turn beyond the left-leaning provocateur Regis Debray, but also, by way of counter-gesture, move towards more Asia/Pacific-based modes of cultural emergence surging up across “Oceania” as theorized and enacted in Epeli Hau’ofa’s

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3 As a more measured context, I would invoke the publishing strategy of Lindsay Waters (2006) confronting these US/Asia publishing horizons as peril and as promise: “One of our greatest opportunities (for Harvard University Press) is developing books for the global market, which is why we are so active in Asia and have started publishing books by some of the key intellectuals in China. New England, ever since the days of whaling storied by Melville, has looked to the Atlantic and the Pacific. We have managed growth by resisting the temptation to expand massively. We have tried to rise by increasing quality, not quantity. How can we encompass the globe and not diminish quality?”
5 On this “Nobel complex” emergent across Asia—particularly as propagated in China and South Korea from 1979 to 2000—as a modernization function of trying to catch up with if not surpass Japan (whose novelists, Kawabata and Oe, have won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1968 and 1994 respectively), as well as to secure global recognition from Europe and the US for national literary prowess (“cultural capital”) on a world scale, see Julia Lovell (2006). Casanova (2004) also touches on the Nobel quest of Korea (147).
publications at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji.\(^6\)

Perhaps, I can only gesture towards these emergent forms and modes publishing radically democratizing voices of the “multitudes” within Empire (Hardt and Negri) that are now surging up across Asia/Pacific, but any turn away from the “bad global” models of Friedman/Casanova models will have been worth it: a move towards the region-situating attempt to affirm such innovation and change-from-below. In my account, this is an emergent world of “minor transnational” tactics and trans-locality patterns, and I wish to align my own cultural-political work with via invocations of “Oceania” as we see this framework of critical regionalism elaborated in the works of Epeli Hau’ofa.

**Tom’s World of Globalization 3.0**

If there is a Pollyanna voice of mass-media discourse speaking a sublime brand of American-style innocence, re-mediated techno-euphoria, transnational expansionism, and a kind of grand, Adam Smith-style neo-liberalism gone ludically webby and global, it would have to be Thomas L. Friedman working from the op-ed cultural commentary pages of *The New York Times* and four anecdotally punctuated books that sell so well in English and instant translations from Spanish, Chinese to Arabic. Born in Minneapolis in 1953 and educated at Brandeis and Oxford University, Friedman's bureau chief reporting from Beirut and Jerusalem for *The New York Times* won him the National Book Award in 1988 for this globalized journalism rooted in East/West divides and fusions and US leadership, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*.

Friedman, musing in his gleaming “global” Lexus by the atavistically “local” olive tree, as his binary polarities of global-local would have earlier phrased it for the Middle East, never met a phase of neo-globalization he could not affirm as some kind of post-Marxist triumph, nor an ecological disaster, economic imbalance, financial risk, or mounting inequity of global capitalism he could not explain away and redeem.\(^7\) As Tom Scocca caustically framed (as well as mimed) Friedman's globalization project and the stylistic sublimity of “Tom's World” in the oppositional pages of *The New York Observer*, “Times Columnist Exports Adage,

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\(^6\) In addition, I will mention in passing the *Tinfish Works* edited by Susan Schultz in Honolulu and in a publishing venture based around the Literary Guillotine Bookstore in Santa Cruz, California called New Pacific Press, where a “Worlding Project” collection co-edited by Christopher Leigh Connery and myself will appear in fall 2007.

\(^7\) On these global-local binaries and geopolitical antagonisms, see Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, which won the Pulitzer Prize upon its publication in 2000.
Aphorism, Metaphor: Opening Big Book Market. Mr. Ham—hold the Mao! Explains Much to Beijing: ‘The World Is Flat’”(2006). Tom’s flat-world of “strange things happening like never before” across global modernity is what the Mississippi Sheiks lamented as “a world gone wrong,” and what Dylan calls “these modern times (the New Dark Ages).”

Reflecting on mounting damages of war across the planet in the twentieth century and the new millennium with renewed horror, above all in “the Middle East (which) has the misfortune to be a zone of imperial conflict,” Niall Ferguson must have such subjects of American-style global expansionists (like globe-trotting Friedman) in mind when he warns, “Most Americans will probably always reject the proposition that the United States is (or operates) a de facto empire.” Such squeamishness, (which I have here been branding “neo-liberalism,”) may be an integral part of the problem of the U.S. empire, “as what the ex-British Ferguson sees as a failure to recognize its own imperial aspirations and damaging tactics an empire like Rome embraced as global hegemon and as civilizational center via the Pax Romanum” (71). For quasi-utopian leftists of Deleuzian possibility and radical-democratic ethos, like Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, the forces and forms of contemporary globalization (cum extension of “US unilaterism” into “armed globalization”) cannot be thought of as a form of domination apart from the globalization-from-below forms of resistance they hail as multitudes of migrant possibility, populist energy” (Multitude 99-227), and “nonnational liberation” surging up from below and beyond nation-state enframing “to create regional and even global movements of interdependence.” Their Rome, in other words, looks a lot like the surging and swarming forces of Micronesia or Brazil.

Friedman, not so much fixed on a pragmatic kind of techno-liberationism as fixated on the sublime triumphalism of US-globalization and the quasi-democratic blessings of neo-liberalism and freedom brought willy-nilly to human creativity, even the bust phase of the internet Goldrush can always be explained away as a blessing-in-disguise, another eventual late-capitalist boom time to renewed phases of American innovation and global techno-euphoria. The crisis of this uneven capitalism is perpetually displaced, postponed, deferred to the future via the latest

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8 This is taken from Dylan’s jeremiad liner notes to World Gone Wrong.
9 Ferguson, trying to bring American geopolitics and warfare into open recognition if not into imperial embrace, is Professor of History at Harvard University and Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institute of Stanford University.
10 For a recent application of work after Hardt and Negri’s Empire and Multitude as some kind of quasi liberationist global-local dialectic opening populist possibility and mobility, see Michael Hardt (2006).
Techno-fix and border crossing this US geo-imaginary journalist would affirm. This latest phase is what Friedman calls “globalization 3.0” as he moves the world towards “4.0” (his next book, etc). His upbeat liberalism knows no end, sees no limit, never learns to shut up, get scaled back, calm down, or (as the Eagles wisely put it), "learn to be still."

Writing at the epicenter of the war apparatus and its media containment at the New York Times, the markets for such upbeat portrayals of this American global dispensation keep expanding, bringing it all back home to the latest stage of global exceptionality or American redemption. “Our brave new world is not round, it is flat, well off, and interconnected”, tropes this neo-Columbus on his Apple laptop sailing through, pumping up, and proclaiming this new world order of globalization as just right for our cyber-space world. Post 9/11 subjectivity intact and wearing the guise of a postmodern Columbus who stumbles and bumbles (via myriad interviews and gabby anecdotes) onto a passage to India and China, not the cannibal-ridden West Indies like the Italian explorer, Friedman declares in his latest book of global-speak that this new world of globalization is so even, just, fair, novel, and multi-connected (flat) to all comers, East and West, rich and poor, central and peripheral, minor and major, North and South, that “the world (has become) flat.” As he explains in his boom-selling book, The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century, globality all but achieved on a level playing surface of interfaces and universal methods and codes, “When the dot-com bust came along, those same wrongheaded analysts assumed that globalization was over as well. Exactly the opposite was true. The dot-com bubble was only one aspect of globalization, and when it imploded, rather than imploding globalization, it actually turbocharged it” (111). Within the Bay Area “contado” of Silicon Valley as linked to the finance-scape of San Francisco/San Jose and research formations of the UC/Stanford system, the internet boom-time has been again renewed (“turbocharged”) in this new millennium, as Google.com (for example) buys out the start-up video site of youtube.com with what CNN called “chump change” of 1.2 billion dollars US.

Turbo-charged investment and cyber-innovation in more grass-roots forms of platform integration and pay-and-play forms of access and usage on the web that made networks all the more horizontal, empowering to emergent forces of

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postindustrial buildup, particularly two key nations on the Pacific Rim—India and China. If Columbus came to convert the natives to Christianity and European civilization superiority and integrate their resources and labor into the world market, this second post-9/11 Columbus comes to awaken the natives and the Bush administration as converts to this giddy techno-euphoria of "globalization 3.0," recognizing at last the rise of China and India as global competitors via off-shoring and informational capital. At the core of this will to leadership and post-imperial hegemony, Friedman labors and tropes to assure his fellow global travelers across the informational superhighway and market-speak that the US will not lose its global hegemony as edge-player and hedge-dominator, any day soon, even in this geo-political economy driven by the web investors large and small, near and far.

This latest phase of global technologization and neo-liberal hegemony is what Friedman (as if miming the language of Microsoft hegemony) calls the mores of "globalization 3.0"—his very language miming the techno-speak his catchy and phrase-mongering journalism (like the military reporters for the same newspaper) has become so "embedded" in. His readers, as if shorn of criticism and baffled by the tropes, would become so many cheerleaders like Friedman himself who dreams of speaking the future to George W. Bush from a chat room to the White House: market subjects are hailed as ludic proponents who are not so much neutral or forlorn as neutralized and languageless when they are not simply euphoric players on the techno-future as is this Friedman-driven “globaloney” discourse-machine as some Language Poets have debunked such willfully euphoric global-speak. This is a techno-euphoric world freed from history and the mere humanism of the past like some cyborg-adman speaking promise, contract, mutual redemption, and the not-so-defunct telos of postmodern liberty.

At Barnes and Nobles Bookstore, for example, The World Is Flat has become the best-selling American book on foreign affairs and international relations for months if not years, and it is still hovers on top of best selling non-fiction books (so-called) from New York to California, and to Taipei. If this is the empire of globalization, US style, it is given a non-Roman, heteroglossic, and much more Indian face speaking hybridity, possibility, prosperity, expansive freedom, even redemption from history, civilizational antagonisms, and war, if such is to be believed in and hoped as neo-pragmatic future. Friedman is offering the plot of what William James once called, in the Edinburgh lectures on The Varieties of Religious Experience, a "counter-conversion" from God to capital, from epiphany to cyber-code, from the antagonisms of world religion (by the olive tree) to the
fusions of market-speak.\textsuperscript{12}

Such a “worlding” offered in a work like \textit{The World Is Flat} is not so much sociological analysis or critical decoding as geo-utopia and sermonic trope, under the techno-color skies of American “shock and awe” and what Bill Gates (gazing from the Pacific Rim in Seattle) still calls “the Internet Goldrush.” We might note here that at the recent meeting of 21 member states of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum held in Singapore, President George W. Bush not only reassured Pacific Rim leaders that the US stands behind the drive to liberalize trade within the region and to secure its geo-strategic stability, he also trumpeted some “Rimspeak” (as did China-gazing predecessors like Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan) “pointing out that the United States does more trade across the Pacific than across the Atlantic (while affirming his administration’s will to) “remain deeply involved in the region.”\textsuperscript{13} Nowadays, the Pacific Rim still calls for entrepreneurial engagement as the vast markets of China and India call versus the nuclear aporia of the DMZ.\textsuperscript{14}

In his world-gone-wrong satire “This Modern World,” political cartoonist Tom Tomorrow gets the global banality of America’s \textit{public-intellectual number one} quite right in a “holiday punditry” cartoon: multicultural parents, crazed with consumer hunger, line up at Toy ‘R’ US outlets across America “since six A.M. for a chance to buy the new ‘Talking Thomas Friedman’ Doll,” shopping for a talking-head doll named Friedman that simply boasts “The World Is Flat! The World Is Flat!” over and over as the world goes to “Hell in a Handbasket” as another pundit (perhaps anti-immigrant globalization scourge Lou Dobbs) laments in another bestseller on the globalization of the life-world.

**Regis Debray’s Mock-Conversion to “the Empire of the West”**

In the post-9/11 America of global empire, to invoke just one caustic contrast, as portrayed in the unstable East/West euro-satire, \textit{Empire 2.0: A Modest Proposal for a United States of the West by Xavier de C***}, ex-radical-turned-novelist Regis

\textsuperscript{12} The premise is that we all long to drive a Lexus or, better, let our cell phones take the wheel while we pump our blissful CDs into techno-overdrive and watch, say, the retro-fitted ethno-capitalist thuggery of \textit{The Sopranos}. I study the genealogy of such "counter conversion" patterns, in early and late modernity, in my project, \textquote{Henry, Torn from the Stomach}: \textit{Towards a Poetics and Politics of Conversion and Counter-Conversion in the US Postcolonial Empire} (forthcoming).

\textsuperscript{13} See Fletcher (2006).

\textsuperscript{14} See Wilson (2007).
Debray shows how what he calls an “agenda Dei” of “conversion-to-Empire” has seemingly taken over the neo-liberal politics of once-democratic but now post-populist America, absorbing "ex-superpower Europe" and Rim-booming Asia into its global hegemony. “Empire 2.0” takes dominion even, as Debray worries, "In places like Dallas, the Bible seems to be the only book of wisdom in circulation" (23). Raising grim parallels to the Roman Empire and Greek domination to challenge this doctrinaire agenda of global Americanization, Debray cautions, through voice of the ex-French subject, Xavier de C*** defending this new world order, “Cosmopolis America must be reinvented” (23), even as this émigré/convert urges submission to this new United States of the West, “with a capital that can be moved [from Washington] to Honolulu or to Athens, or Ankara for that matter” (55). If this politics seems tied to a failure of imagination to go beyond Empire or to invent an adequate cosmopolis wherein difference can be respected, dissent allowed, or democratic-socialist transformation can happen, we need to open up the ethos of alterity to “ethnic” forces other than this plot of "conversion to empire" and its happy-face multitudes presumes. Friedman’s globalization 3.0 needs to come to terms with Debray’s “Empire 2.0,” as “empire of the West,” or all is cyber-speak sublimation and democratic puffery in a time of war, plunder, extraction, and death.

Empire, for the mock-believing conversion of Debray, expands the scope and contact zones of this U.S. conversion project to its “agenda Dei” as global redeemer. No latter-day American Jeremiah like Bob Dylan, on World Gone Wrong or Infidels, can easily gainsay this project. But we also live, as Juliana Spahr writes in the post-9/11 eco-poetics of her long poem “this connection of everyone with lungs,” inside the tensions and promises of a “deep unsortable history” which entangles local-indigenous Pacific sites (like her beloved Hawai’i) into the long durations of a global calculus of US national power, transnational commerce, ecology, techno-simulation, and war: “How can we be true to one another with histories of place so deep, / so layered we can’t begin to sort through it here in the middle of the Pacific with its own deep unstortable history” (“January 29” 50). A sustained focus upon the circulation patterns in the region would help better us to hear such emergences, differences, the terms and tropes of counter-formation and social struggle from the Pacific to New England, Latin America, Asia, or the New

15 Further references will occur parenthetically.
16 Debray, in God: An Itinerary, would track the "God Bless America" ideology of prophetic nationhood (cum global redeemer) as it migrates across the Atlantic with Columbus et al to New England Puritans down to the US Constitution (200-05). For Debray, this "redemptive" mandate is epitomized in the language of a 1952 Supreme Court Decision, "We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being" (270).
Europe.

Uneven, unjust, and everywhere coming undone in lines of de-creation, mockery, and flight, this globalization of “Anglo-global” banality and US market fundamentalism is by no means an accomplished fact, destiny or fate, as if this world “globality” has been achieved, and world history has ended with the Anglo-global fusion culture of the shopping mall and the information super-highway.”

“World news worlds the world,” an American cyber-poet living on the Pacific Rim has caustically written, miming the synecdochic reduction of an American-view-of-the-world by mass media like CNN International or Time-Warner that gets commonly taken for the world as such, postmodern resistance to such global stasis not so much lost as stalled in translation (Magajeros 113).

**Literary Domination as Fait Accompli on Desolation Row: The World according to Casanova**

“The more the world changes, the more it stays the same”—that is how one world-weary French saying has it. As if to instantiate this truism by a Franco-global feat of postcolonial Euro-hegemony over theory-markets and genres of world literature and world space, Pascale Casanova’s Bourdieu-influenced *World Republic of Letters* would be another example of such a Euro-centered center-periphery model. Casanova’s vision of contemporary cultural production and cultural formation goes on trying (in later chapters and talks from Cambridge to Seoul) to look postcolonial and *au courant* while everywhere working to keep the meritocracy of Paris (and to a lesser extent the global city of London) at the transnational cum translational center of the world’s cultural-capitalism and what she terms “the world literary system” of literary-political “consecration” (16-17), “the power of consecration [“or anathema” in literary capitals like Paris] [and] critical recognition and translation [serve as] weapons in the struggle by and for

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17 For a rejoinder to the “Anglo-Globalism” of a theorist of global cultural production like Franco Morretti’s over-extended, Euro-centered, and all too top-down model of “world literature” as a late capitalist center-periphery system of formal abstraction and local derivation where the center disseminates the forms, genres, devices and rules as what counts or gets recognized as world literature, see Jonathan Arac’s critique of this huge world-English tendency and system-making, what Arac debunks as the blindness of “Anglo-Globalism.” For a more peripheral based model of “deep time” and criss-crossed global flows making for altered pedagogy, see also Dimock (2007) and Spivak (2003).
literary capital” (23).  

Casanova’s skewered world reflecting a quasi-Catholic literary system of eternalized centrism reflects what Dylan has called, in a caustic backward-looking album of that name during the same era, that ”world gone wrong.” Whether we take our title from the Mississippi Sheiks (as did the jeremiad Dylan) or our tactics from more Pacific-based authors like Epeli Hau’ofa, as I will proceed to do, we need to conjure a world otherwise and elsewhere, locating the terms and modes of exchange and interaction elsewhere and otherwise, if only in trans-local modes of "minor transnational" circulation, to use that helpful term from Francois Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, who would themselves challenge the Anglo-global from more discrepantly Francophonic and Sinophonic angles of vision, modes of production, circulation, linkage, and recognition. We might invoke these rueful lines from the carnivalesque post-Beat world of Dylan’s “Desolation Row” to offer some uncanny lyric rebuke to Casanova’s grand centrism and the eternalized power of cultural capitalism to do its work, “They’re [artists] spoonfeeding Casanova To get him [her] to feel more assured / Than they’ll kill him with self-confidence / After poisoning him with [postcolonial] words.” If Dylan’s bohemian-plundering yet powerless Casanova is ultimately rebuked and “punished for going to [the Beat Beatitudes] of Desolation Row,” cultural rebukes to the Franco-literary system of Pascale Casanova have been offered by Louis Menand and James English, who expose the workings of her “world republic of letters” system as one of de-democratizing modalities of eternal repetition disguised as postcolonial innovation.

Casanova’s “world” consists of just one literary work from the Pacific (120), Keri Hulme’s myth-and-trauma drenched novel bone people, which won the Booker Prize in 1985 after it had won the ExxonMobil-sponsored Pegasus Prize as well as the New Zealand Prize for literature in 1984, despite charges of “faux Maoridom” and its having been published by only a small nonprofit feminist press, Spiral

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18 Further references will occur parenthetically.
19 See the Introduction to and multi-sited essays in Minor Transnationalism, 1-23.
20 Lyrics from these stanzas to Dylan’s hyper-poetic world of “Desolation Row” are taken from the website bobdylan.com (accessed November 24, 2006). The prophetic Jeremiad tendencies of Dylan as critic of American empire appear in lyrics like “When I Paint My Masterpiece” and “Jokerman,” as I discuss in Henry, Torn From the Stomach. See also the “wild weird America” of democratic possibility and outer-national becoming as theorized and renewed in Greil Marcus (2006).
21 Menand offers a semi-caustic review of Casanova’s The World Republic of Letters as measured against the prize-system economy outlined in James English, The Economy of Prestige; Casanova’s system of “legitimation” and uneven world recognition is more favorably outlined in Deresiewicz’s review.
Collective. In the global literary system, as Menand summarizes its generic workings, *bone people* was a “world-readable” novel comprising “a hybrid of postmodernist heteroglossia (multiple and high-low discursive registers, mixed genres, stories within stories) and premodernist narrative (conventional morality, the simulation of an oral story telling tradition)” telling “a trauma-and-recovery story, with magic-realist elements, involving abuse and family dysfunction, [and] that arrives at resolution by the invocation of spiritual or holistic values (Menand 179). This all makes Keri Hulme sound like a global operator, some literary magpie playing the devices and conjuring the postcolonial codes; but Susan Najita (trenchantly attuned to the poetics and politics of indigenous struggle in Aoteroa/New Zealand) shows how Hulme uses deep-time modes of Maori myth, legend, and narrative-device to tell a counter-history of nation and to reclaim genealogical belonging for her people and tribe.  

For his generic prototype of the “world-readable,” Menand draws upon and endorses both Casanova and English to essentialize the global workings of Hulme’s novel and this approach serves to delink it from its indigenous “decolonizing” politics of nationhood, language, and the locality of place. “Oceania” in effect gets drained of all relevance and geopolitical purpose as a crucial site of production, formation, and circulation: the *bad global*, in other words, offers the “world gone wrong” written from an ExxonMobile lit-crit office.

Epeli Hauo’fa’s Critical Regionalism: The Pacific As “Oceania”

If, following upon the dialectics of conquest in Hegel, we still need to see the world oceans as capital’s main element and transnational conduit (as elaborated in the work of Christopher Connery, Paul Gilroy et al); we need to see that the trans-Pacific oceanic imaginary and region-building does not just belong to transnational capital. The global/local Tongan anthropologist and novelist of evangelical fervor and pragmatic opportunity, Epeli Hau’ofa has figured “Oceania” into a Pacific

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22 See Susan Najita, especially Chapter 3; and "Decolonizing Pacific Literatures in English" (forthcoming), as well as the cross-regional linkages of minor-to-minor global sites proposed in Elizabeth DeLoughrey.

23 Invoking the Nobel Prize quest of South Korea which has reviews and government funding devoted to this literary outcome, Casanova does try to empathize with the plight of a “minor nation” such as Korea using a “minority language” like Korean in the global system to secure recognition (“consecration”), Please see Uchang Kim, “Le prix Nobel: une consécration littéraire Mondiale,” in *Writing Across Boundaries: Literature in the Multicultural World* (223-40).
counter-formation in big, interconnected, and upbeat terms reeking of de-colonization and counter-conversion from social science frames of world-mapping that are non-expansionist and reciprocal, rooted in alternative modes of linkage and exchange, as seafaring is seen as a kind of network building or writing on and across waters of Oceania.

Epeli’s own much-cited fictional works which are taught all over California (and in those booming centers of Pacific studies, Ithaca, NY and Ann Arbor, Michigan). His short story collections, Tales of the Tikongs and Kisses in the Nederends would serve to counter, estrange, and mock this neo-capitalizing ocean with fables of anti-development and satires of failed development, as the Protestant work ethic flips over into a Pacific ethos of mockery, play, leisure, prayer, joke, and dream. Conversion has gone awry in sites like Tonga and Fiji and the micropolitical Pacific, and Epeli works with tropological power on a quasi-Rabelesian order to invent an “ecumene” of counter-conversion troped around what “Oceania” might stand for as a flow and form not just TNC/APEC bound in its minor transnationalism from below. (The University of Hawai‘i Press will be publishing a collection of Hau’ofa’s far-flung visionary essays in cultural criticism, many of which are hard to find or get.)

Although this body of Hau'ofa's fictional work is small, it remains an uncanny, caustic, progressively cosmopolitical representation of dynamics in the de-colonizing Pacific. Kindred at times in recuperated aboriginality and orature to the Pacific-based novels of Keri Hulme, John Dominis Holt, Sia Figiel, Robert Barclay, and Albert Wendt, if more raucous in style and voice, Hau'ofa's carnivalesque mode of oppositional story telling, as Najita has suggested, can help "provide self-conscious retellings of the history of popular resistance to colonization, multinational capital, and to the proposed marginalization of Pacific islands in the age of globalization” (forthcoming). Hau'ofa offers a comedic vision of people and place with generosity, self-mockery, and capaciousness, putting (global) megatrends and (local) micropolitics into contentious, global/local dialogue.  

Hau'ofa intervenes into our prior understandings of conversion and counter-conversion, and makes strange the taken-for-granted discourse of globalization from above and from below. He offers translational feedback to the Protestant work ethic

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24 For an American-Pacific based version of such postcolonial tactics of global/local engagement, see Reimagining the American Pacific: From 'South Pacific' to Bamboo Ridge, especially chapter 3. For the discussion of Hau'ofa's works, please see 112, 139, 89, 109; Tales of the Tikongs is read as a counter-geography of smallness, dialogical multiplicity, and place-based contestation. (Somehow I think we should incorporate these textual readings of Hau’ofa into the main body of the essay. Then the problem is: how can we do this w/o being repetitive?)
and to the very vision and language of redemption and vocation that had been irrevocably spread into the Pacific with the coming of Captain Cook and the generations of missionaries, traders, and offspring of Empire who, like the American "likes to walk tall, even though he may be short, and . . . occasionally takes a giant step or two for mankind even though mankind may not have asked him to” (in "Blessed Are the Meek").

While it may seem odd to invoke a Tongan writer here in this US global or Asian-Pacific context, we should recall that, first, due to the labor diaspora that has amplified in the past fifteen years, there are now more overseas Tongans (93,000+) than there are Tongan residents in Tonga (91,000+); and there are some 8,100 Tongans in the San Francisco Bay Area alone and that they still claim to culturally practice the *anga fakatonga* (Tongan way). And, second, that during the recent pro-democratic, youth, and labor protests in Tonga in November 2006 in which six died, some of the destruction that took place in the Tongan capital of Nuku'alofa was directed against Chinese-owned shops, to such an extent that 200 Chinese nationals had to be flown out of the country on a plane chartered by Beijing. So, as with the ethnic antagonism directed against settler Indians in Fiji during the coup, although Asia/Pacific may forget the Pacific, the Pacific is not forgetting Asia, and we need to deal with these struggles in a timely, situated, and capacious framework. Ethnic figuration becomes an ethical obligation in how we frame our globalization models and the worlds they would narrate and inter-connect into being.

Furthermore, in this era of so-called internet democracy which is booming in inter-Asian sites like South Korea of the "Korean Wave" and China of the 2.5 billion consumers wanting into bigness and geopolitical clout, how can the ever-mounting “digital divide” and technological unevenness be overcome? Singapore is wired with a half million computers, versus Papua New Guinea (Hau'ofa's birthplace as son of a Tongan-Christian missionary) with less than 1% on the World Wide Web. By many accounts, the interior Pacific Islands are entangled in a far-flung web of globalization forces, many of which emanate from Asia via Manila, Tokyo, Taipei, and Hong Kong, Singapore. The global-tourist industry enlists sites of fascination, even as automobile, garment, and mining industry expand offshore networks across the Pacific with its cherished dreams and nostalgias for what used to be called (as in the Rogers and Hammerstein musical still playing on Broadway) "*the South Pacific.*”

While activating interior regional linkages called “Inter-Asia,” or the “Asia/Pacific” of APEC, we cannot just sublate the resources and myths of the interior Pacific into “*Asia as such*”: turning the refiguration of the interior Pacific
Basin/Rim into "Oceania" means a critical transnational region and counter-global vision of cultural studies from interior, small, or "minor transnational" Pacific sites that might prove to challenge via globalization-from-below. Such a regional reformation, along South-South lines of linkage and exchange, can take encouragement from a figure like Hugo Chavez who speaks truth to power and challenges the US empire of preemptive force with minor forms of transnationalism and a geo-imaginary situated from the South and occluded multitudes that are now awakening with cultural-political force and trope-as-hope: “What we now have to do is define the future of the world. Dawn is breaking out all over. You can see it in Africa and Europe and Latin America and Oceania. I want to emphasize that optimistic vision [from the peoples of the South rising up against the Empire of neo-liberal globalization,...” This world is not flat, but uneven, minor, and round and full of emergent creativity: not a “world gone wrong” with the same old news, but a ‘worlding world’ of newness and multiple possibilities.

**Works Cited**


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**About the Author**

Rob Wilson is a professor of literature at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He has also been a visiting professor at National Tsing Hua University in Taiwan, Korea National University of the Arts and Korea University in Seoul. His published works include *American Sublime*, *Waking in Seoul*, *Reimagining the American Pacific*, and the co-edited collections *Global/Local* and *Asia/Pacific as Space of Cultural Production*. His study “Henry, Torn From the Stomach”: Towards a Poetics of Conversion & Counter-Conversion in the Postcolonial US Empire” is forthcoming from Harvard University Press; and a collection of cultural criticism from Asia/Pacific (co-edited with Christopher Connery) called *The Worlding Project: Doing Cultural Studies in the Era of Globalization* will appear with New Pacific Press and North Atlantic Books in fall 2007.

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Thomas Friedman's best-selling The World is Flat has exerted much influence in the west by providing both an accessible analysis of globalisation and its economic and social effects, and a powerful cultural metaphor for globalisation. In this review, we more closely examine Friedman's notion of the social contract, the moral centre of his hopeful vision of a globalised world. While Friedman's social contract holds a more generous view of social and state obligation than his neoliberal economic analysis might otherwise allow, his fallacious assumptions about education rest on poor quotes from Thomas L. Friedman: 'Pessimists are usually right and optimists are usually wrong but all the great changes have been accomplished by optimists.', 'In my world, you donâ€™t get to call yourself â€œpro-lifeâ€ and be against common-sense gun control â€” like banning public access to the kind of semiautomatic assault rifle, designed for warfare, that was used recently in a Colorado theater. You donâ€™t get to call yourself â€œpro-lifeâ€ and want to shut down the Environmental Protection Agency, which ensures clean air and clean water, prevents childhood asthma, preserves biodiversity. The World is Flat. Thomas Friedman. Designed by Jonathan D. Lippincott www.fsgbooks.com I 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2. To Matt and Kay and to Ron.Â Developing Countries and the Flat World. Nine: The Virgin of Guadalupe Companies and the Flat World Geopolitics and the Flat World. Ten: How Companies Cope. Eleven: The Unflat World.Â Columbus reported to his king and queen that the world was round, and he went down in history as the man who first made this discovery. I returned home and shared my discovery only with my wife, and only in a whisper. "Honey," I confided, "I think the world is flat.â€ How did I come to this conclusion? I guess you could say it all started in Nandan Nilekani's conference room at Infosys Technologies Limited. McKinsey and the World Economic Forum. Overview. Action Groups.Â The New York Times foreign affairs columnist, three-time Pulitzer winner, and author of Thank You for Being Late, Thomas L. Friedman and McKinsey Global Institute chairman James Manyika build on their multiyear dialogue by engaging on the impact of connectivity, globalization, digitization, and artificial intelligence on work, skills, incomes, and prosperity. They discuss the opportunities and challenges that these technologies and profound â€œclimate changesâ€ (as Tom calls them) pose for society as well as the implications for individuals, businesses, and governments. The discussion also explores Friedmanâ€™s worldview as taught in introductory economics classes became more dominant, policymakers emphasized the effect of incentives and individual skills. Economists focused on assessing how much more productive an individual could be if she faced a lower marginal tax rate or had more education. Studying, instead, how much more productive an individual could be if she worked at Company A instead of Company B, or lived in City X instead of City Y, went out of fashion. And yet the evidence over the past few decades shows the importance of the