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# Strangers in the South Seas

## *The Idea of the Pacific in Western Thought*

AN ANTHOLOGY
EDITED BY
Richard Lansdown

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IN MEMORY OF
*Jim Thorogood and Alex Wilson,*
FATHERS AND
GRANDFATHERS,
WHO LOVED THE SEA


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Tokyo
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Okinawa
Bonin Islands
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Volcano Islands
Iwo Jima
Minami Tori Shima
Kure
Midway
Parece Vela
NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
Wake
Johnston
Saipan
GUAM
MARSHALL ISLANDS
Kwajalein
Ratak Chain
Ralik Chain
Yap
PALAU
Chuuk
Pohnpei
Kosrae
Majuro
FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA
Line
Kiritimati
Equator
NAURU
Tarawa
Gilbert Islands
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Banaba
K I R I B A T I
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PAPUA NEW GUINEA
INDONESIA
New Britain
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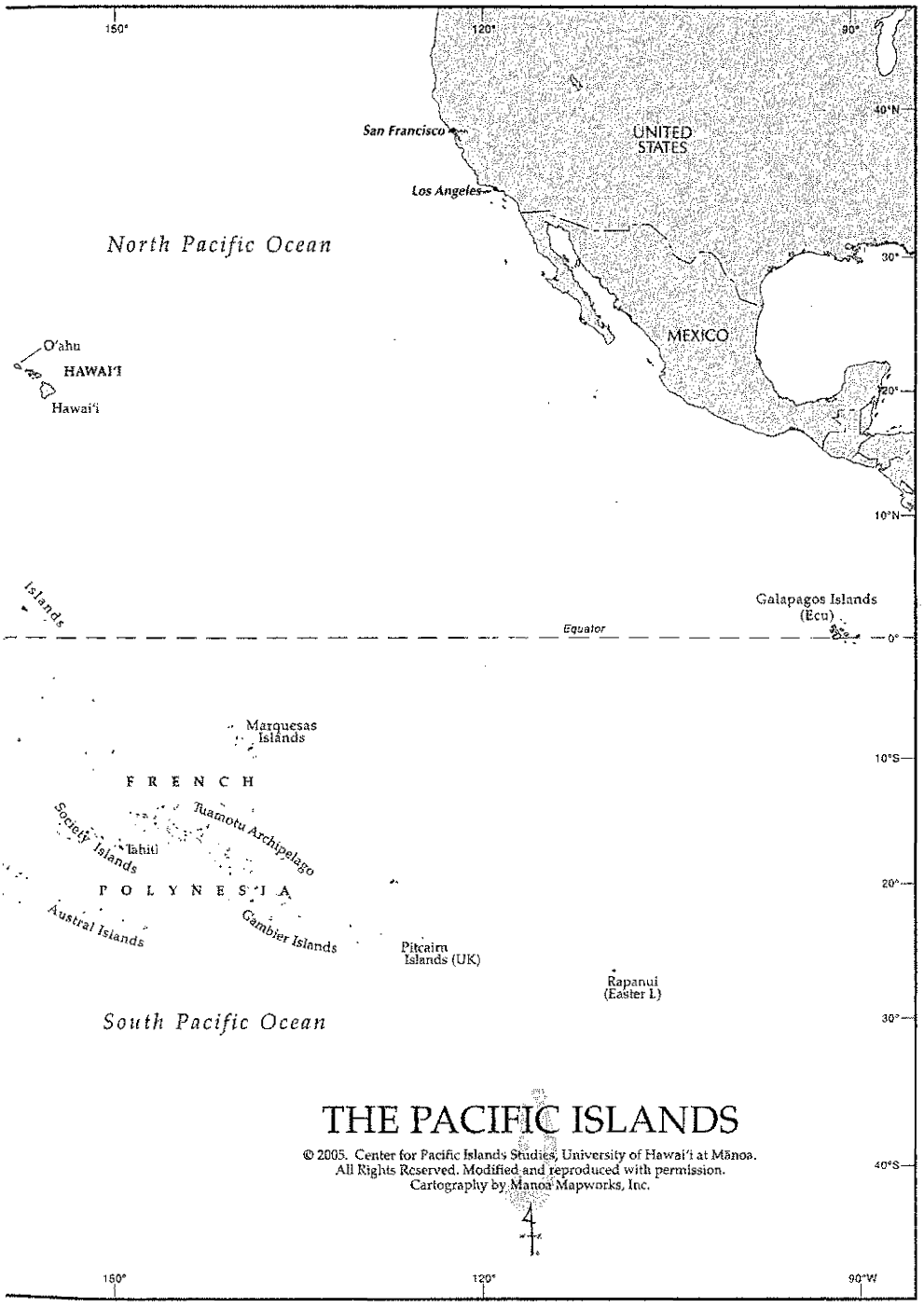


# THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

# CONTENTS

## 2. The Noble Savage



## 3. "Dark Parts of the Earth"
## *The Voyage of the* Duff*, 1796–1798*



## 4. The Island as Crucible
## *From The Great Chain of Being to Evolution*

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First, last, and at all stages in between comes my family, who have had to put up once again with the apparently endless business of a book coming about. Thank you Angela, Sam, and Holly for your patience, love, and support; at least the books were better to look at and more interesting than last time.

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A number of publishers, agents, libraries, and art galleries were kind enough to reduce or to waive permission fees for materials and images held in their trust, and so to reduce the author's financial exposure: Yale University Press (Pigafetta's *Magellan*), the Australian National Library (Cook's journal, 1769), the Bibliothèque Centrale of the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris (Commerson's "Postscript"), the British Library (Cook's journal, 1773), Victoria University Press (Dumont d'Urville's *New Zealanders*), the Council for World Mission (Puckey, Hassall, and Harris documents at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London), the State Library of New South Wales (the Missionaries' journal, Wilks' letter to Mrs. Cover, and Paula David's photographs of Samoa), the Sutro Library at the State Library of California (Haweis' letter to Joseph Banks), HarperCollins Pty Ltd. (Banks' journal), the Blubber Head Press, Hobart (Péron's Maria Island observations), the Library at the London School of Economics (Malinowski's tent and sketch map), John Murray Publishers (Grimble's *A Pattern of Islands*), Norman Mailer and the Wylie Agency *(The Naked and the Dead),* and the University of Queensland Press (Peter Medcalf and Nancy Phelan). Despite my best efforts, I could not find the copyright holders of two texts: the late Vern Haugland's *Letter from New Guinea* (1943) and the late Jonathan Griffin's translation of Gauguin's *Noa Noa* (1961, reprinted under license in 1985). The author and publisher would gladly hear from copyright claimants on those materials.

Jane Eckelman, at Manoa Mapworks, Honolulu, drew the map, then gallantly added fiddly territories at my insistence. The Captain Cook Backpackers Resort in Cairns, Far North Queensland, allowed me to photograph their concrete mascot for my cover. The reproductions staff at the National Library of Australia pictures, maps, and books departments produced the lion's share of the illustrations here: their standard of service is a model. Last but not least, Susan Stone undertook the copyediting task with huge professionalism and an eagle eye, Wendy Bolton handled the proofs, and Ann Ludeman was managing editor for the project. My thanks go to all these people for making the book look good and make sense.

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# NOTE ON TEXTS

Many texts printed below come either directly or indirectly from manuscript sources; others from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, when spelling, punctuation, syntax, and typesetting varied widely from modern norms. Generally speaking the texts are reproduced as they originally appeared; on a very few occasions—among the missionaries and in Captain Cook's journals, for example—I have silently corrected some spelling or supplied a letter passed over in the writer's haste. Sources for each text are given at the end of each chapter.

Almost every text below is an extract, or this book could never have been contemplated. Frequently, too, the reader will find cuts *within* extracts: these are marked by ellipsis within square brackets: [. . .]. Ellipses without square brackets are the authors' own, except in quotations in introductory material that I have written. Simple terms are glossed within the text in square brackets; longer glosses and explanations appear as footnotes. When necessary, I have occasionally added linking passages, in italics in square brackets, for narrative consistency.

# Introduction

## Diaspora, Discovery, and Settlement

Exactly how long ago *Homo sapiens* entered northwestern Australia and the colossal island of New Guinea to its north we do not know. (The major constraint on knowledge here is the fact that radio-carbon dating is unreliable for objects older than about 40,000 years.) Suffice it to say that 40,000 years ago humanity had settled both Australia and coastal New Guinea, and had evolved cultures of great diversity in response to the diversity of environments it discovered. Then, 10,000 years ago, the Ice Age receded, water locked in glaciers escaped, and sea levels began to rise. The land bridge between northern Australia and New Guinea sank beneath the waves, and ocean-going trips between the Indonesian archipelago and both Australia and New Guinea began to lengthen. The Australians were left alone, as were the New Guineans; contact between them was limited to the islands now formed in the Torres Strait; and humanity in the region evolved along different trajectories as its experience dictated. The New Guinean population was in the process of adhering itself to either one or the other of two relatively fixed forms of life: agriculture in the interior highlands, fishing by the sea. The Australians were adapting to a more diverse habitat, from grasslands and deserts to eucalyptus woods and rainforests. All the Australians were settled—all knew their environment as intimately as any people on earth has ever done—but most of them moved, over distances long or short as need be, in search of resources. Settled agriculture was not practiced, simply because conditions made it relatively inefficient as a food source.

What happened next is so hard to establish that even the word "next" may be inappropriate. Two theories are currently available. The first has its

intellectual origins in the work—sampled in Chapter 5—of late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century explorers like Johann Reinhold Forster and Jules Sébastian César Dumont d'Urville. The second, which is essentially a revision of the first, is in the process of emerging as a result of modern archaeological and linguistic discoveries in the region.

New Guinea became more isolated as the Ice Age waned. But it appears—and this is theory number one—that around four thousand years ago people began arriving in northwestern New Guinea from Asia. The evidence for this is bound up less with archaeological remains than with the languages these people spoke: "Austronesian" languages, as distinct from the "Papuan" group of languages that continue to be spoken by the majority of mainland New Guineans. Papuan languages are overwhelmingly based in New Guinea (though some are found elsewhere); Austronesian languages are found in Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Taiwan. They are also found throughout Polynesia, in the island communities of Melanesia, and in coastal communities of New Guinea itself. The explanation appears to be that certain peoples, ultimately originating in continental Asia, spread into the Asian archipelagos and from there through coastal New Guinea to find their way out to island Melanesia and then to Polynesia beyond. It is as if the bucket of humankind had tipped over once more and sent a further flood of individuals out among the original inhabitants. But this second flood was not flowing unaltered over a solid surface: the dispersal took hundreds of years, and it took place at all times through the coastal New Guinean people, involving a constant mingling with them, making new peoples as the dispersal took place. The nineteenth-century missionary-anthropologist Robert Codrington found an appropriate analogy for this process: "We may conceive of the peopling of Melanesia and the settlement of its languages," he wrote,

> as the filling with the rising tide of one of the island reefs. It is not a single simultaneous advance of the flowing tide upon an open beach, but it comes in gradually and circuitously by sinuous channels and unseen passages among the coral, filling up one pool while another neighbouring one is dry, apparently running out and ebbing here and there while generally rising, often catching the unwary by an unobserved approach, sometimes deceiving by the appearance of a fresh-water stream on its way to the sea, crossing, intermixing, running contrary ways, but flowing all the while and all one tide till the reef is covered and the lagoon is full. (Codrington 1885: 33)

The Austronesian speakers were accomplished sailors, as their origins in archipelagical Asia dictated. They were the inventors of the double-hulled oceangoing canoe, which aided their movement through island Melanesia and beyond. Another thing it seems they developed was pottery, and the spread of "Lapita ware" (named after the site in New Caledonia where it was first excavated) has been used by theory number one to chart what happened "next": the movement of the always-evolving Austronesian speakers out beyond the Papuan linguistic sphere. The first Lapita items appear to be about

three thousand years old; 1,500 years later Lapita ware had traveled so far and so widely as essentially to lose its cultural distinctness as it was copied and traded. But during that period it helps trace the movement of the Austronesian-speaking New Guineans out to the Fijian, Tongan, and Samoan island groups where settlement paused.

By tracking the Austronesian group of languages back we can—the theory proposes—see a series of linguistic offshoots that accompanied the movement of populations: from China to the Philippines and Sulawesi; from Sulawesi to northern Maluku; and from Maluku to modern-day Irian Jaya (about four thousand years ago); from there along coastal New Guinea to the Bismarck Archipelago; thence to the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia (about 3,200 years ago); and from Vanuatu to Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa (about three thousand years ago). From the Bismarck islands in the north to New Caledonia in the south, the interisland distances are often short and never truly long—for navigators as talented as the Austronesian speakers at any rate. But the jump between Vanuatu and Fiji is 700 miles. So it was that while the Austronesian New Guineans were great sailors, the amount of interchange that could take place between the Vanuatu region and the Fijian one was limited, whereas the amount of interchange that went on within those two regions was large. Inevitably the two areas grew apart, and Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa began to develop in a degree of isolation. Five hundred years after arriving in Fiji, these people had begun to evolve a culture sufficiently distinct from their western Austronesian cousins to require a different name. This culture was the antique form of Polynesia.

Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga are among the largest of the Pacific island groups, and the Polynesians took time to establish themselves among them. But some eight hundred years after their arrival and two hundred years BC, the Polynesians began the series of voyages that took them over stretches of open sea previously unexperienced by humankind: 1,700 miles to Tahiti (by AD 800), and 2,400 miles to the Marquesas (by AD 500). They also began to filter back toward Melanesia, and in so doing they made settlements anomalous to Western eyes, like Bellona in the Solomon Islands or Tikopia to the north of Vanuatu. Nor did the Polynesians rest on these tiny islands (gigantic though they may be compared to the minuscule atolls of Kiribati and the Marshall Islands of Micronesia, which they settled between AD 1 and 500) but by AD 600 had completed the 2,600 mile voyage north to Hawai'i, and by AD 1000 the 2,800 mile one south to New Zealand.

Theory number two proposes that there is no need to look for a new people coming into New Guinea from the archipelagos of Asia—and perhaps less evidence for such a development than was at first thought. First, the linguistic evidence is less clear-cut than it has seemed. Second, the makers of Lapita ware might have had their origins not in Asia but in western Melanesia itself: probably in the Bismarck Archipelago (where the oldest such pottery has been found), from whence their manufactures spread far out across the islands to the south and east. That is to say, the movement of pottery

may simply reflect the movement of pottery by trade and exchange, rather than the movement of some particular ethnic group. The theories concur that the Polynesians had their origin in the Fiji-Tonga-Samoa triangle and that eastern Polynesia and Micronesia have been settled very recently. It is the "previous step" that remains subject to dispute.

The story of indigenous humanity in the Pacific is a long one; the story of Western humanity there is correspondingly short. (It takes up more room here only because this is a book about Western attitudes to the region as opposed to indigenous ones.) In 1473 Portuguese explorers reached the equator by traveling down the West African coast; in 1492 Christopher Columbus (an Italian working for the Spanish court) discovered America. As a result of such developments, the Portuguese and the Spaniards entered into the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494, whereby a line was drawn down the middle of the Atlantic Ocean: the "West Indies" (America, north and south) would belong to Spain, the "East Indies" (whatever they should prove to be) would belong to Portugal. No one knew where these two hemispheres would meet, but the treaty did set further developments in train. In 1497 Vasco da Gama (Portugal) rounded the Cape of Good Hope and reached India; in 1511 Antonió de Abrea (Portugal) sighted New Guinea; and in 1513 Vasco Núñez de Balboa (Spain) crossed the Isthmus of Panama, sighted the "Mar del Sud"—the South Sea—and claimed it for Spain.

So at the beginning of the sixteenth century the Pacific lay between the jaws of two great Catholic imperial enterprises bent on gold, spices, and heathen souls. Yet there were good reasons why those jaws failed to snap shut immediately. First and foremost, the two powers concerned had plenty to be getting on with in South America, India, and the Spice Islands of Indonesia. But the Pacific was also protected by natural barriers that made further penetration difficult. In the east, the South American coastline stretched fifty degrees south below the equator. Further north, the continent was very broad. So the Spaniards faced either a long voyage round Cape Horn or the establishment of a settlement on the western shores of South America. The Portuguese in Indonesia were much closer to the insular Pacific, but they, too, faced barriers. Travel south of the equator came up against the remote and inhospitable shores of Australia and New Guinea, and the only keyhole providing entry to the ocean beyond was the treacherous Torres Strait. Travel eastward on or just north of the equator meant confronting prevailing winds and currents blowing and flowing full in the face of any exploratory voyage.

So the Portuguese and the Spaniards paused before capitalizing on their discoveries. But in time the inevitable happened. In 1520 Ferdinand Magellan (a Portuguese captain of a Spanish fleet of five vessels) entered the Pacific through the strait that bears his name, above Tierra del Fuego. Then he was swept up the western coast of South America and crossed the breadth of the Pacific Ocean, initially a little to the south and then a little to the north of the equator, seeing land only once before making landfall at Guam, 1,200 miles

FIGURE 1. "Isles des larrons" [Island of Thieves: Guam] from Antonio Pigafetta, *Navigation et Descouvrement de la Inde Superieure et Isles de Malucque . . .* (1525). The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

east of the Philippines (see Figure 1). Magellan himself was killed by Islanders in the Philippines, and in September 1522, three years after setting out from Spain, one ship limped home, the vast majority of the crew having died of starvation on the endless trip across the great South Sea: the first circumnavigation of the globe. Magellan had sailed over 12,000 miles, from Cape Horn to Guam—the sixteenth-century equivalent of flying to the moon—*and seen only one coral atoll along the way.* The Pacific had begun to reveal its first and most overwhelming mystery: its gigantic size and desolation.

Small wonder the Spaniards waited some time before making a similar attempt; but in the second half of the sixteenth century they would make three voyages, each with the aim of founding colonies somewhere in the void Magellan had discovered. In 1567 Álvaro de Mendaña de Neira sailed due west from the Peruvian coast until he reached the Solomon Islands—which he named as such because he believed he had found the islands from which the biblical king Solomon reputedly drew his gold. After a six-month stay Mendaña recrossed the ocean to the north until he returned to Peru. He was given permission for another voyage in 1595. This time he found the Marquesas Islands in easternmost Polynesia. (It gives us some idea of the state of European navigation at this time, where longitudinal travel (west to east) as opposed to latitudinal (north to south) was concerned, that Mendaña thought he had rediscovered the Solomon Islands, lying in fact about 4,000 miles to the east.) From the Marquesas he sailed west again and started a colony on the Santa Cruz Islands (between the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu), where he died before the pilot of the expedition, Pedro Fernández de Quirós, took the remaining ship on to Manila, which had been colonized by the Spanish in 1569.

Now it was Quirós' turn, and in 1605 he set out from Peru once more. Because he sailed south of the lines followed by Magellan and Mendaña, he encountered islands in significant numbers and eventually landed at what we call Vanuatu, which he called La Australia de Espiritu Santo (The South Land of the Holy Ghost). The colonists soon gave up here, too, and sailed home; but two of Quirós' ships, under Luís Vaéz de Torres, carried on west from Espiritu Santo and, finding themselves trapped beneath the southern coast of New Guinea, made a painstaking passage through the strait that bears Torres' name before finding their way to Manila. No European would pass that strait again until James Cook in 1770.

After Torres the Spaniards made no more colonial attempts in the central Pacific and confined themselves to South America, the Philippines, and the galleon trade that plied between them: South American silver for Chinese goods. But the Spanish voyages illustrate a vital fact about the early European exploration of the Pacific. From the poles winds travel toward the equator and are diverted in a westerly direction by the earth's rotation; the currents follow a similar pattern. A ship rounding Cape Horn will be swept up along the South American coast before finding westerly sailing directly along the equator—as Magellan did. Conversely, to cross the Pacific from

west to east, you must head north from the Philippines or south from Indonesia. Nobody at this stage went south from Indonesia; European shipping, therefore, normally went west along the equator and east to the north of Hawai'i. On both routes there is practically no land at all. It is no suprise, therefore, that Spanish discoveries in the Pacific were close to the equator. Only as explorers began to go south from Indonesia would Australasia begin to be revealed, and only as navigators rounding the Horn sailed below the equator would the island groups of Tahiti, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, and the rest be discovered by Europeans.

If the sixteenth century had been the Spanish century in the Pacific, then the seventeenth would belong to the Dutch. In 1606, 1616, and 1627, respectively, Willem Jansz, Dirk Hartog, and Pieter Nuyts had close encounters with the northern, western, and southern coasts of Australia. In 1642 Abel Tasman sailed way down to the south from Java before heading east and hitting the southern coast of Tasmania. He went on to find New Zealand, Tonga, Fiji, and the New Britain Archipelago off New Guinea before returning to Batavia (modern-day Jakarta): yet Tasman landed hardly anywhere, presumably because he could see no opportunities for trade or settlement. Finally, in 1721 Jacob Roggeveen came around the Horn and, keeping well to the south of the equator, encountered Easter Island (sighted at Easter 1722), Bora Bora (near Tahiti), and Samoa. But the Dutch East India Company that stimulated exploration also eventually stifled it. Like the Portuguese they had displaced in the East Indies, the Dutch were more concerned with holding on to the Spice Islands, where ready profits were to be made, than with finding new worlds in the south.

The British and French between them undertook in the eighteenth century the roles previously carried out by the Iberians and the Dutch, though a series of wars kept their attention nearer home until 1763. The Spaniards had been interested in founding colonies and converting the heathen but were half-hearted explorers nonetheless; the Dutch were positively reluctant to undertake such voyages. The British and the French were ready, willing, and financially able to muster expedition after expedition, with the stated aim of rolling back the frontiers of European ignorance—and the unstated one of empire-building.

The English captains Samuel Wallis and Philip Carteret circled the Horn together in 1767, only to split up thereafter. Their discoveries were small but out of all proportion to their physical size. Carteret found tiny Pitcairn Island, and the discovery was duly recorded in a compendium of English Pacific voyages that Captain Bligh took aboard the *Bounty* in 1787. When the famous mutiny took place two years later and the chief mutineer, Fletcher Christian, was looking for a bolthole in the ocean, he found the record from Carteret's log and promptly set sail. But Carteret had misrecorded the location of Pitcairn by three degrees of longitude, and the compendium had compounded the error by five degrees of latitude, so Christian's escape hatch was itself an invisible one. It was 1790 when the mutineers landed on Pitcairn

Island and 1808 before they were found, by accident, by an American whaler. Carteret did well enough, then, in terms of South Sea legend; but Wallis did even better. On 23 June 1767 he found Tahiti: the pearl, navel, and epicenter of the oceanic myth and the focus for fifty years thereafter of European imaginative constructions of the Pacific. Within ten months the Frenchman Louis Antoine de Bougainville had also paid a call. But Bougainville's voyage was important in another respect, too. Sailing due west from Vanuatu after his visit to Tahiti, he ran up against the Great Barrier Reef, off Australia's east coast, and was convinced that a major landmass must lie behind it.

By the time Wallis and Bougainville got back to Europe, the island groups and landmasses of the Pacific were beginning to emerge from obscurity. The really important areas of European ignorance were Antarctica, the east coast of Australia, New Zealand, Hawai'i, and New Caledonia. These matters would be settled by James Cook's three voyages of 1768–1779. In his first voyage Cook rounded the Horn to Tahiti, where he was under orders to observe the transit of Venus across the sun (an experiment that would help establish the distance of the sun from the earth by measuring how long it took for Venus to make its eclipse); but from there he entered upon the more secret phase of his expedition, discovering the eastern coast of New Zealand in October 1769 and completing the six-month task of circumnavigating and charting the coastline of both North and South Island. Leaving New Zealand, he headed west and found the great south land at last, turning into Botany Bay on 29 April 1770, before sailing up the entire east coast, passing through the Torres Strait and turning for home—having stopped off at what he named Possession Island to claim the continent in the name of His Britannic Majesty George III. (This was not the arbitrary process it might appear: Cook had strict definitional instructions about those lands he might claim and those he must leave to their indigenous inhabitants. Because Australian Aborigines seemed not to farm, practice religion, build permanent homes, or gather in social groups larger than the family, they seemed to meet those requirements, and his legal (or legalistic) view of the continent subsisted until an Australian High Court decision of the mid-1990s; because New Zealanders did not meet the requirements, the British entered into the Treaty of Waitangi with the Maoris in 1840.)

Cook's second trip was hardly less revelatory. He visited New Zealand again in March 1773, was in Tahiti in August, traveled west to Tonga in October, and turned to New Zealand once more before heading south in the polar summer to visit Antarctica, whose waters no one had entered before. He sailed south until ice blocked his path. Coming up below Cape Horn in Feburary 1774, he then visited Easter Island, the Marquesas (not seen since Mendaña in 1595), and Tahiti once more, made a thorough circumnavigation of the New Hebrides, discovered New Caledonia in September 1774, Norfolk Island in October, and visited New Zealand again before an easterly passage round Cape Horn to home.

It is hardly surprising that Cook was fending off ill health by the time he

set out for the third time in July 1776. It had been Terra Australis the first time and Antarctica the second; on the third occasion it would be the legendary Northwest Passage that would absorb his massive sense of purpose. Sailing north from Tahiti, he discovered Hawai'i in January 1778. Pressing far to the north, he sailed into the Bering Sea before ice made progress impossible and he turned south again, this time finding Hawai'i's eastern islands in November 1778. What happened next is subject to historical dispute. It appears that his slow clockwise circumnavigation of Hawai'i, combined with the fact that his masts and sails bore a resemblance to certain seasonal votive symbols, may have convinced the Islanders that Cook was a god, Lono, making his annual progress. Or it may be that no one thought of him as a god but only as a great visitor. In any event, his departure coincided with the end of one religious season and the beginning of another. Eight days later he returned with a broken mast, and this time there was no welcome. A series of violent incidents followed, and when on 14 February Cook attempted to take a local chief hostage to ensure the return of a stolen boat, he was surrounded by an angry crowd on the beach. Cook fired a pistol and killed a man; then he was stabbed and clubbed to death. His body was taken by the Islanders and divided among the chiefs; in due course some bones were returned to the English commanders. Then the ships sailed away.

On his first voyage Cook had secret instructions to watch for opportunities favorable to the British government. Little came of this aspect of the expedition until the loss of the American War of Independence in 1783 brought the practice of exporting British criminals to Maryland to a halt. It was then that the government was reminded of Botany Bay by Cook's "scientific gentleman" and fellow traveler Joseph Banks. So it was that the first real colony in the South Seas was a penal one—appropriately enough, given Australia's reputation as a nightmarish antipodean other world. In January 1788 the First Fleet arrived in Australia, carrying 750 convicts and 250 officers, marines, and sailors. They swapped Botany Bay for Port Jackson and made their landfall alongside the point where Sydney's Opera House now stands.

It was the beginning of a new era. Now the white man was no longer passing through as a bird of passage, explorer, or buccaneer: he was here to stay. Now he had his own settlement in a land he had decided was empty and thus belonged to him outright. From this settlement others would follow. Until now, although Europeans had discovered many foreign shores, the actual extent of contact was highly restricted. Even Tahiti had no settled European population in 1788: when missionaries came to stay in 1797, they found only a few beachcombers. After Sydney, the second biggest European settlement in the Pacific in 1788 was the unknown one of Pitcairn—also populated by criminals, nine in number. The overwhelming majority of Islanders had never seen the white man, and those who had might have seen a ship pass, call for water, or briefly land a boat and fire a gun: no more. But the founding of Sydney was an event of a different order.

## The Island Imagined

The discussion so far constitutes a necessary introduction but an outsider's perspective: quintessentially, some might argue, a Westerner's perspective, implying a particular view of history. Those periods of time in which nothing is believed to have happened shrink almost to nothing; those periods of time packed with "events" (the period since Magellan entered the Pacific, say) enlarge in corresponding fashion. The summary offered also displays the Western fascination with "discovery," whether by indigenous peoples or by Europeans. Not only is the emphasis on what happened "next"; it is also only on what happened next at the pioneering fringe. Indeed, it is assumed that nothing happened in the lands safely gathered in behind the advance parties of humanity.

Where the human story in the Pacific is concerned, distance makes these patterns of historical attention highly persuasive—to Westerners. That is one of the things this anthology seeks to record: not only the European story of the Pacific and its peoples but the story *of* the story. Why did Europeans come to look for certain things in the Pacific and therefore come to see those things even if they were not there? Why should it be that two thousand years or so of Polynesian culture should absorb more of the Europeans' imaginative attention than forty thousand years of Melanesian culture? How, indeed, did those adjectives ever get coined? Conventionally, the Pacific peoples are parceled out into three regions: Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia. But these words do not describe the same thing. Polynesia (Greek: *polys,* "many"; *nisos,* "island") and Micronesia (Greek: *mikros,* "little") are linguistic and cultural entities with genuine structural integrity because their settlement has been so recent. Melanesia, by contrast, is useful only as a geographic category since the peoples of that region are more culturally diverse than any other human group. In fact, the word has its roots in early-nineteenth-century European ignorance (Greek: *melas,* "black"). It is not the contrast between Polynesia and Melanesia that modern authorities reject, therefore, but the suggestion implicit in such terms that the latter has a culture as uniform as the former. "Polynesian," in short, is a legitimate adjective to use in describing a culture; "Melanesian" is not.

Long before the British started their penal colony on the shores of Sydney Harbour, Europeans had entertained notions of seas, islands, and settlements at the opposite end of the earth. "Consider the Island," a recent historian of the region writes: "the *idea* of the island" (Scarr, 1). Unless we follow his advice, the actions and attitudes of those Westerners who came to the Pacific are only half explicable. The idea of insularity, for example, is itself a European fixation projected onto the Pacific: that in that ocean there were an almost infinite number of tiny communities, utterly isolated from each other, whose shores never saw a stranger, and so on. What Westerners brought with them governed what they saw, and the ideas they brought with them

were deeply entrenched. Myths of the "Islands of the Blest," the Hesperides, the islands where King Solomon found or kept his gold, the Garden of Eden as an island, Atlantis, sunken kingdoms, and ideal states are old enough and common enough to be mocked by Lucian in *The True History* of AD 150:

> Instead of wheat, their eares beare them loaves of bread ready baked, like unto mushrummes: about the citie are three hundred threescore and five wells of water, and as many of honey, and five hundred of sweet ointment, for they are lesse than the other: they have seven rivers of milke and eight of wine: they keepe their feast without the citie, in a field called *Elysium,* which is a most pleasant medow invironed with woods of all sorts, so thicke that they serve for a shade to all that are invited, who sit upon beds of flowres, and are waited upon, and have every thing brought unto them by the windes, unlesse it be to have the wine filled . . . (Lucian, 29)

Again and again the island has figured in the European mind as a place where human potential would emerge unhampered by the conventional life, where a passage over the sea would involve leaving behind items of cultural, moral, social, psychological, or historical baggage and allow a new experiment in living. On islands, too, the strange and unfamiliar—be it within the voyager's mind or outside it, animate or inanimate, human or natural—would and could be confronted.

"Those of us involved in Pacific studies," writes another historian, "have been too impressed with the apparent novelty of the eighteenth-century Pacific dream island. But that Tahitian mirage was at the end of a very long imaginative tradition, one that long predated the Enlightenment, and even the Renaissance. Indeed it goes back to the very beginnings of Western civilization" (Howe 2000: 14). Nor was the dream island the only such mirage Westerners saw; there were nightmare islands, too. Imaginative visions of these kinds were connected to similar ideas about ideally good or ideally bad places: utopias or dystopias. ("Utopia" is a term invented by the sixteenth-century English humanist Thomas More and derived from Greek *topos,* "place," and the prefix *eu,* "good," but also the prefix *ou,* "not" or "none." So it is a good place that does not exist.) "Basically, utopia is a place where one is *not* at the moment; therefore its qualities are naturally the opposite of current, unpleasant conditions," J. W. Johnson advises. "Northern climates tend to cause physical discomfort; mammals need warmth, and icy winds result in more than mere bodily discomfort. Food supplies grow scarce and require great exertion to obtain. Hunger and disease become further burdens. Death intervenes and grief accompanies it. This was the reality of cold climates, as prehistoric European man . . . knew it." Johnson goes on: "In contrast, the south was the Land of the Sun, the kingdom of the immortal gods." "It is strikingly apparent," therefore, "that from Homer on, writers most often turned toward the south to seek the sweet golden climes where the traveller's journey was done" (Johnson, 43).

Among classical writers like Lucian, therefore, the utopian island in the

south is commonly a dream of physical sufficiency or an agricultural land of plenty (whereas Renaissance writers like Thomas More stress social innovations like egalitarianism and primitive communism). In 20 BC the Latin poet Horace, for example, wrote of leaving a homeland wracked by civil war for an ideal island away to the south:

> The girdling sea calls us; lets seek out strait
> Those fields bleste fields and islands fortunate,
> Where the earth untilld each year her fruit doth give,
> And vineyard never prund doth ever live;
> And the nere-failing olives branch doth sprout,
> And the ripe fig her native tree sets out.
> From hollow oaks drops honey, from high hills
> The nimble spring with ratling feet distills
> There goats uncalld unto the milk pailes come,
> And the faire flock their full swoln bag brings home . . . (HORACE, 134)

One element of physical sufficiency remained to be supplied on such destinations: free love; and that was delivered in bulk in the epic celebration of Vasco da Gama's discoveries, *The Lusiads,* published by Luis de Camoëns in 1572. Here Venus provides the homesick and exhausted Portuguese mariners with "an *Isle* divine": a hyperfeminine landscape copiously stocked with willing sea nymphs:

> The *second* Argonauts now disembarke
> From the tall *ships* into an Eden green.
> *There,* in this *Isle,* this *Forest,* or this *Parke,*
> The fair *Nymphs* hide, with purpose to be seen.
> Some touch the grave *Theorba* in shades darke,
> *Some* the sweet *Lute,* and gentle *Violeen:*
> *Others* with golden *Cross-bows* make a show
> To *hunt* the *Bruits,* but do not *hunt* them though.
>
> Thus counsell'd them *their Mistress,* and her *Arts:*
> That so, the more their own desires they Master,
> And seem a *flying prey* to their *sweethearts,*
> It might make *them* to follow on the faster.
> *Some* (who are *Conscious* that their *skins* have *darts,*
> And put their trust in *naked Alabaster*)
> Bathe in *Diaphane* streams, their *Roabs* by-thrown,
> And ask no *Ornament* but what's their own. (CAMOËNS, 290)

This is a dream from which Westerners will perhaps never wake up.

"There is a conviction, subliminal in most of us," writes William Peck, "that a few primal instincts determine the course of events on an island and that by immersing ourselves in simple island ways we can avoid the complications, the stresses and agonies of an over-wrought civilization and thus benevolently renew our lives. By this interpretation an island is a refuge

and a beatitude." "But the reverse is true," Peck continues. "An island is a miniature universe, complete unto itself. It is a compressed universe with all the complexities of our disordered world: its treacheries, its conflicting ambitions, its dishonesties, its follies, as well as its kindnesses and pleasures, all brought unrelentlingly into one's daily life" (Peck, 1). The idea of the island and the idea of the utopia or dystopia have often overlapped. "The first common feature of utopias is natural isolation. Utopias are by nature, if not always nowhere, at least far away, separated. They have a particular affinity with islands" (Garagnon, 93). The number of utopian or dystopian fictions that are set on islands is correspondingly large—some well-known examples in English being *Utopia* itself (1516), *The Tempest* (1611), *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), *The Swiss Family Robinson* (1812), *The Coral Island* (1857), *Erewhon* (1872), *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), and *Lord of the Flies* (1954).

A pattern emerges from stories such as these whereby storm, shipwreck, and landfall lead to eventual transformation:

> During the storm the sailors do not know where their ship is going and lose all sense of direction; during the shipwreck they nearly drown and lose consciousness; and then they are thrown into a new world. Storm and shipwreck can therefore be described as the equivalent of a temporary nowhere, followed by the arrival to an elsewhere; temporary disorder followed by the emergence of a perfect order; a temporary death followed by the rebirth to a new life; a kind of no man's land where a rite of purification is performed (the travellers are "washed" ashore), before the higher truths can be revealed. (Garagnon, 94)

More's Utopia was once a peninsula, turned into an island by its first king, Utopos. It is shaped "like to the new moon" with arms of land enclosing a lagoon behind rocks that are "very jeopardous and dangerous." In social terms it goes beyond egalitarianism toward homogeneity: "As for their cities, whoso knoweth one of them knoweth them all." In personal terms it goes beyond a lack of private property to a lack of privacy: "there is nothing within the houses that is private, or any man's own"; "all the void time that is between the hours of work, sleep, and meat, that they be suffered to bestow, every man as he liketh best himself; not to the intent that they should misspend this time in riot or slothfulness, but being then licensed from the labour of their own occupations, to bestow the time well and thriftily upon some other science, as shall please them" (More, 65, 69, 71, 75).

Like More's Utopia some of these "elsewheres" or "miniature universes" can produce feelings of ambivalence; others can be highly remote, bleak, or forbidding. During his circumnavigation of Australia between 1801 and 1803, Matthew Flinders entered shallow Nepean Bay on Kangaroo Island, off present-day South Australia—a massive roost for pelicans:

> Flocks of old birds were sitting upon the beaches of the lagoon, and it appeared that the islands were their breeding places; not only so, but from the number of skeletons and bones there scattered, it should seem that they had

> for ages been selected for the closing scene of their existence. Certainly none more likely to be free from disturbance of every kind could have been chosen, than these islets in a hidden lagoon of an uninhabited island, situate upon an unknown coast near the antipodes of Europe; nor can any thing be more consonant to the feelings, if pelicans have any, than quickly to resign their breath, whilst surrounded by their progeny, and in the same spot where they first drew it. (Flinders, 1:183)

What Flinders saw to be sentimentally appropriate in isolation others might see as a nightmare of centrifugalism. Rufus Dawes, the convict hero of Marcus Clarke's Australian classic *For the Term of his Natural Life* (1874), is at one point in the novel left in chains on Grummet Rock, off Sarah Island, off Tasmania, off Australia, at the very end of the world. (This pattern in dystopian literature is inverted in utopian fiction, which often emphasizes centripetalism: perhaps having, as in Denis Veiras' 1677 South Seas utopia *L'Histoire des Séverambes,* a jet of water in the middle of a basin, in the middle of a yard, in the middle of a palace, in the middle of a capital, in the middle of an island, in the middle of a lake, in the middle of a continent, and so on. A similar pattern is to be found in Plato's Atlantis utopia, the *Critias,* from the fourth century BC.) Being at the other end of the world can seem like an opportunity, a freedom, and a release, or like a punishment, a rejection, and an excommunication.

"In imagining the Pacific Europeans imagined from a reality that they had to come to terms with, not a fancy or a fantasy that might eventually disappear" (Smith, 1992: ix); and this is true even though Westerners' idea of the Pacific was for a long time extremely vague. (The "South Seas" have at times encompassed two oceans [the Pacific and the south Atlantic] and sometimes a third [the Indian], stretching from the Brazilian coast of South America to the Malay Archipelago and the shores of Western Australia, and from Hawai'i, twenty degrees above the equator, to the tip of the South Island of New Zealand, forty-seven degrees below it.) The islands were real places, composed of real rock and soil, flora and fauna, men and women. Even Westerners grow tired of fantasies if such fantasies never encounter reality, and the overwhelming majority of the texts collected here are concerned with that encounter. One of the most important such encounters was the scientific one. Whatever dreams were entertained by the men who sailed with James Cook, the ships under his command charted coastlines, established the whereabouts of terra firma in a waste of water, collected botanical and zoological samples by the thousand, drew pictures of many thousands more, and observed stars and planets from previously inaccessible platforms. Into the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century intellectual perplexity concerning the origins and variety of species, the South Seas flung a cornucopia of bewildering variety: animals and plants that seemed to come from a different world, and people of apparently limitless diversity. Protoevolutionary and protoanthropological disciplines cut their teeth on this explosion of

data. It was a "South Sea" set of islands—the Galapagos—that gave Charles Darwin a crucial set of stimuli toward a theory that would explain biological diversity in the context of time. Thus the South Seas have contributed not only imaginative stories to Westerners but also hard facts.

The first influential attempt to impose reality on the idea of the southern hemisphere was that of the second-century Greek geographer Ptolemy, who believed that a large landmass must exist in the earth's south to balance the north, or else the planet would roll over like a top-heavy ball. Accordingly, Ptolemy is the origin of the myth of the Antipodes, or the Great South Land (Terra Australis). "From the Tropick to 50° North latitude," as an eighteenth-century exploration lobbyist put it, "the proportion of land and water is nearly equal; but in South latitude, the land, hitherto known, is not ⅛ of the space supposed to be water. This is a strong presumption, that there are in the southern hemisphere, hitherto totally undiscovered, valuable and extensive countries, in that climate best adapted for the conveniency of man, and where, in the northern hemisphere, we find the best peopled countries" (Dalrymple, 91). It followed that "the space unknown in the Pacifick Ocean, from the Tropick to 50° S. must be nearly all land" (Dalrymple, 94). In fact hardly any of it is.

The antipodes (Greek: *anti,* opposite; *pous,* foot) were inevitably opposite to the European world. In Richard Brome's comedy *The Antipodes* (1623) they are simply a place where women dominate men, servants rule households, lawyers refuse to charge a fee, and old men go to school, leaving children in parliament. In Amerigo Vespucci's *Mundus Novus* (1503) they presented much more of a challenge, particularly in theological terms:

> I found myself in the region of the Antipodes. . . . This land is very agreeable, full of tall trees which never lose their leaves and give off the sweetest odours. . . . Often I believed myself to be in Paradise. . . . This land is populated by people who are entirely nude, both men and women. . . . They have no law, nor any religion, they live according to nature and without any knowledge of the immortality of the soul. They have no private property, everything is owned communally; they have no borders between provinces and countries, they have no king and are subject to no one. (quoted in Eisler, 16)

Vespucci's remarks—about windy and treeless Patagonia, at the tip of South America—are in marked contrast to the English buccaneer William Dampier's reports from the coast of western Australia, published in 1697. "The Land," he wrote, "is of a dry sandy Soil, destitute of Water . . . yet producing divers sorts of Trees; but the woods are not thick, nor the Trees very big. . . . There was pretty long Grass growing under the Trees; but it was very thin. We saw no Trees that bore Fruit or Berries." If the environment is disappointing, compare Dampier's inhabitants with Vespucci's:

> The Inhabitants of this Country are the miserablest People in the World. The *Hodmadods* [Hottentots] of *Monomatapa* [a mythic kingdom of central Africa], though a nasty People, yet for Wealth are Gentlemen to these; who

> have no Houses, and skin Garments, Sheep, Poultry, and Fruits of the Earth, Ostrich Eggs, &c. as the *Hodmadods* have: and setting aside their Humane Shape, they differ but little from Brutes. They are tall, strait-bodied, and thin, with small long Limbs. They have great Heads, round Foreheads, and great Brows. Their Eyelids are always half closed, to keep the Flies out of their Eyes. (Dampier, 312)

So the idea of the antipodes greatly exaggerated the utopian/dystopian pattern. The result was "a bipolar vision of Terra Australis prior to the great Pacific voyages of the late eighteenth century: on the one hand, that of a generally barren region inhabited by brute savages; on the other, a more beautiful, plentiful land with a far more attractive and hospitable population" (Eisler, 2).

This bipolar vision is much the most influential intellectual inheritance Westerners brought to the Pacific. A later and more sophisticated form of the antipodean myth was the belief frequently voiced by European travelers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that to travel in space was to travel in time. Vespucci and Dampier had different views of the indigenes they found, but both felt they had traveled *back:* either to the Garden of Eden or to humanity's primitive early condition. Antipodeanism exaggerated such sensations: it made Vespucci's forest dwellers greatly more fortunate than Europeans who no longer lived "according to nature" and made Dampier's Australians greatly less fortunate than "civilized" people. Had humankind fallen away from what Vespucci saw in Patagonia, or had it risen up from what Dampier saw in New Holland? For centuries the "bipolar vision" forced peoples apart: the European from the inhabitant of the South Seas but also certain Pacific peoples from certain others (the Polynesians from the Melanesians, for example).

"The Pacific did not provide an answer to the problems that faced Western man":

> Rather, it raised questions about himself that he had never asked before. Travelers went to the Pacific with varying assumptions and values, and returned with new questions which demanded new answers. Some found a golden age in which the laws of nature pointed to the proper rules of life. Some found a brutal land in which man had to improve upon nature to be human. Sometimes the same areas and the same peoples evoked two contrary sentiments. (Washburn, 334)

Entertaining "two contrary sentiments" about the same people is one thing. To expand a bipolar vision to bear on compatriots and foreigners alike is quite another. One of the first people to do it consistently was the Frenchman Michel de Montaigne in his essay "On the Cannibals" (1580). Montaigne was not discussing what we would call the Pacific at all, but the indigenous inhabitants of a colony on the Atlantic coast of South America—"Antarctic France," as he called it. But so vague was the European sense of "the South Seas" at that time that (like Vespucci's) his comments can find a place here. "Now . . . I find," Montaigne wrote,

> that there is nothing savage or barbarous about those peoples, but that every man calls barbarous anything he is not accustomed to; it is indeed the case that we have no other criterion of truth or right-reason than the example and form of the opinions and customs of our own country. There we always find the perfect religion, the perfect polity, the most developed and perfect way of doing anything! Those "savages" are only wild in the sense that we call fruits wild when they are produced by Nature in her ordinary course: whereas it is fruit which we have artificially perverted and misled from the common order which we ought to call savage. It is in the first kind that we find their true, vigorous, living, most natural and most useful properties and virtues, which we have bastardized in the other kind by merely adapting them to our corrupt tastes. (Montaigne, 231–232)

"So we can indeed call those folk barbarians by the rules of reason," Montaigne concluded, "but not in comparison with ourselves, who surpass them in every kind of barbarism" (Montaigne, 236). Antipodeanism can be confronted only by an act of responsible cultural relativism of this kind (that inverts the binary opposition) or by the historical process that transforms intellectual superstition into a discipline like anthropology (so dissolving the opposition). And that process of confrontation is not over yet. "At the very heart of all Pacific history, whether imperial or postcolonial," as Kerry Howe argues, "lies a morality tale. It is about the meeting of two perceived entities—the West and Pacific peoples. . . . Pacific history is fundamentally about the idea of Western civilization, its perceived rise and fall, its fears and triumphs, and its creation of a Pacific Other onto which are projected and tested its various priorities and expectations" (Howe 2000: 85).

This anthology is not a revisionary one. It does not attempt to reduce the imaginative distortions Western people have visited upon the Pacific region but to record those imaginative fabulations so that we can more easily recognize them for what they are and more easily understand the intellectual and imaginative origins of European and American interventions in the insular Pacific. In such a project "imaginative," "literary" sources are as useful as "factual" or "historical" ones, as I hope readers will discover for themselves.

## Contact

So it was that when the Pacific islands were discovered by Europeans, an abundance of ideas existed by means of which to comprehend them. No stranger in the South Seas could ever see only what was in front of him: he (it mostly was a "he" at this stage) also saw what it was he had inherited from his cultural tradition. Some blinded themselves to anything else. (There are some important exceptions to this rule, needless to say. Robert Louis Stevenson's Pacific writings and Paul Gauguin's Pacific paintings remain vital treatments of Pacific colonialism because they frequently go against the grain of Western habits of thought and representation.) So it was, too,

that Pacific islands, which proved themselves negligible in resource terms for Westerners, had on a number of occasions an intellectual influence out of all proportion to their physical size. When Tahiti was discovered in the 1760s, for example, the Europeans encountered for the first and only time in their experience a group of people whom they were forced to concede—albeit only for a matter of years—might be living a life better than their own. Some American settlers had admired the American Indians they saw, and the myth of the Noble Savage is older than the discovery of Tahiti. But Tahiti seemed to prove that this was no myth or that the myth had been proved true. Nothing Europeans had seen in Asia, Africa, and America had a remotely similar intellectual effect.

The noble savage soon found its opposite incarnation: the ignoble savage. What unites those ideas, and is a core principle of primitivism in any guise, is the Western belief (mentioned at the beginning of the previous section) that for certain peoples of the earth progress had come to a stop or never started. This was not true. When humanity made its way to Australia and New Guinea so many thousands of years ago, time did not stand still. As Austronesian-speaking New Guineans (ultimately of either local or Asian origin) spread down the Melanesian archipelagos to the doorway of what would become Polynesia, time did not stop behind them; nor did it for the Polynesians themselves as they fanned out across the ocean. Visitors came and went; trading patterns evolved and mutated; natural resources blossomed and withered; populations grew and left their mark on the environment; technological changes were introduced, refined, and finally superseded; political structures grew up; infractions, wars, and truces followed in turn: in short a historical sequence was laid down, just as detailed and just as momentous for those caught up in it as anything Europeans had experienced. Yet when the Europeans arrived, they often jumped to the conclusion either that these were peoples who had no history or society, or that the history and society they possessed could be explained only in European terms. Thus Australia was decided by James Cook to meet the definitional requirements of *terra nullius* (an "empty land"), whereas Tahiti was the most civilized nation of the South Seas not only because the people's physical appearance coincided with European taste, but precisely because it seemed to *be* a nation, apparently governed by dynastic kings and queens, possessing both a priestly class and an aristocratic one, and having a history of civil war and an architectural record of religious buildings to match. Pacific peoples were sometimes regarded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as living beyond the touch of time; just as often Westerners strove to design histories for them, out of the Bible or from secular sociohistoric theories of their own devising, like "degeneration" or "evolution."

What would happen, then, when the white man's great canoes burst the bubble? Nothing less than catastrophe, many white men predicted. The childlike natives, absolutely defenseless in the face of the Europeans' guns, diseases, religion, and alcohol, would reach the end of history in another sense:

they would be annihilated even if no one meant them any harm. This is the essence of another great myth about the people of the South Seas, nearly as widespread as the Noble Savage one it complements: "Fatal Impact." Here the story goes that a timeless yet fragile way of life, wholly unprepared by past experience for any form of change more rapid than the passage of the seasons, would literally disappear in the face of the brutal and technologically superior European. As Alan Moorehead put it in the book that gave the idea its name: "All these visitors—perhaps intruders is a better word—were going to make their separate contributions to the transformation of the Tahitians, whether by firearms, disease or alcohol, or by imposing an alien code of laws and morals that had nothing to do with the slow, natural rhythm of life on the island as it had been lived up till then" (Moorehead, 3).

Historians nowadays tend to be critical of the attitude represented by Moorehead. "To see Islanders as passive, helpless, and always persecuted and suffering at the hands of Europeans . . . denies the Islanders their humanity" (Howe 1984: 351–352). It is becoming clearer now that the Islanders did not live a life of primeval innocence, that their cultures did not simply crumble away, and that they accepted Western ideology to an important extent on their own terms. In short, Pacific Islanders were and are human beings like the rest of us, met the challenge the white man presented, and in doing so mitigated and altered it. The peoples of the Pacific had had a history before white intervention and had always had one. Thus the admittedly dramatic and momentous arrival of the European was not a wholly unprecedented and apocalyptic catastrophe; it was an event different in degree, rather than in kind, to their experience up to that time.

Still, even as we must see the justice of this argument, we should not run to the opposite extreme from Alan Moorehead—especially as doing so could be interpreted as a revisionary move in the other sense, amounting to an exculpatory palliation of European activity in the Pacific. The Islanders' ability to absorb and divert the impact of European interference was not the same everywhere. From the imperialist period on, in particular, Islander peoples found it progressively more difficult to cope with cultural and political forces beyond their control. They never stopped trying; they have not stopped now. But "an indigenous cultural logic" (Thomas 1989: 114) has become increasingly difficult to sustain since the middle of the nineteenth century.

Moreover, there have been occasions when the impact of strangers has been fatal indeed. One hundred fifty years after first settlement in Australia, the Aboriginal population had fallen by 90 percent (Denoon, 244). According to Donald Denoon, the population of Vanuatu was halved in the ninetenth century (Denoon, 114); according to Malama Meleisa and Penelope Schoeffel, the population of Yap fell from between 30,000 and 50,000 to 7,500 in approximately the same period (Denoon, 127). The Marquesas experienced 90 percent depopulation in the hundred years after 1798; the Tahitian population fell by three-quarters between 1767, when Tahiti was first discovered, and 1797, when missionaries arrived (Scarr, 144, 114). Three thousand people

lived on Kosrae in Micronesia in the 1820s but only three hundred or so sixty years later (Denoon, 244). In 1837 every male Islander on Ngatik, near Pohnpei, was killed by the crew of a Sydney ship seeking tortoiseshell (Scarr, 139). "Aneityum, the southernmost of the New Hebrides . . . had about 4000 people in 1848, collapsing by two-thirds in a generation, then to 680 in 1895 and 186 in 1940" (Denoon, 244). The indigenous population of Hawai'i fell from 50,000 in 1872 to 35,000 twenty years later (Scarr, 135). Measles arrived in Fiji in 1875, and 40,000 from a population of 150,000 succumbed (Denoon, 245). Easter Island experienced a population crisis before strangers arrived, caused by the locals deforesting the land. But that crisis was intensifed by the introduction of foreign diseases, and the remnants of the population were carried away to Peru holus-bolus in a slave raid of 1862 (Scarr, 173). The Chamorro people of Guam, in the Mariana Islands, met a similar holocaust at the hands of the Spanish, who reduced their numbers from 50,000 to 5,000 between 1676 and 1695 (Howe 1984: 77). On tiny Banaba in the Gilbert Islands (Kiribati) in August 1945, Stewart Firth recounts, the invading Japanese gathered the population together, told them the war was over, and shot the entire population of one hundred, bar one (Denoon, 299). These are only the disasters we know about.

Nor is a body count all there is to fatal impact. European technology, morality, foods, and firearms also had far-reaching effects on Islanders' work patterns, diets, and social organizations. In the nineteenth century tobacco rapidly overtook trade goods, guns, and alcohol as the major currency of the Pacific, for the simple reason that it is far more addictive than those other mediums of exchange. "The whole population of Pohnpei were addicted smokers by the 1840s" (Denoon, 158), and what was true of them was true of many other island communities. The indigenous Hawaiians suffered appallingly in terms not only of population loss but of alienation from their land, their customs, and (ultimately) their language: a pattern repeated in Australia and New Zealand. According to Jocelyn Linnekin, "Christianity and capitalism almost succeeded in reducing Islanders in the eastern Pacific to caricatures of the colonizers" (Denoon, 430)—which was essentially Alan Moorehead's point in the first place. This process was resisted where possible and always subject to negotiation, but its destructive force was often very great.

The significance of this argument about fatal impact is greater than any conceivable resolution of it because the discussion suggests that there are European ideas, on the one hand, and the pressure those ideas come under by contact with Islanders, on the other. As the age of eighteenth-century exploration reached its end, contact between Pacific Islanders and European navigators was under way, and contact would thereafter become a fact of life for all concerned: a different matter from disputes in far-off Europe about utopias and antipodes.

The difference contact can make to Western thinking is illustrated by William Dampier's description of the indigenous inhabitants of Western

Australia quoted earlier: "The Inhabitants of this Country are the miserablest People in the World. . . . Setting aside their Humane Shape, they differ but little from Brutes." So the Aborigines appeared in Dampier's best-selling book of 1697, *A New Voyage round the World;* but that is not how they appeared in the original entry in his ship's journal: "They are people of good stature but very thin and leane I judge for want of foode[;] they are black yett I believe their haires would be long if it was comed out, but for want of combs it is matted up like negroes haire" (quoted in Williams and Frost, 124). The journal account is balanced by contrast with the published one: the Aborigines are people of good stature but lean; and they are lean from lack of food, not deformity. They are black, but their hair is "like negroes haire" only for want of combing. The movement from Dampier's journal to his book suggests the power of the "bipolar vision," which emphasizes the contrast between Europeans and Antipodeans. But it also suggests that bipolarity is culturally conditioned: it asserts itself at home but is less confident abroad. Reading back, from the published account to the journal, we find the antipodean vision losing focus and the rhetoric giving way to an objective impression; reading forward, from the journal to *A New Voyage round the World,* we find bipolarity coming to the fore and the complexities of contact giving way to racism.

The power of the "them-and-us" bipolar vision is such that Western writers rarely deviate from it. Islanders appear as travesties of themselves by virtue either of their winsome childishness or their barbaric degradation; the possibility of their being normal moral agents "like us" was normally the last thing admitted or even speculated about. So we have to look very carefully to see Pacific people actually behaving *as* people rather than being forced into preconceived roles and preconceived positions. The event most bitterly fought over by historians in this regard is the labor trade that brought Melanesians to work in sugar plantations in Fiji and Queensland, north Australia. Nineteenth-century missionaries called this trade "blackbirding," and it may be that by doing so they sought to bring into disrepute a mutually beneficial practice in which sugar farmers got labor and Melanesian Islanders got money and a chance to see the world. Here is a case in point: if you find it hard to accept that such a trade was a positive development, what are the reasons for your skepticism? Surely that power corrupts, that white traders were unlikely to have put industrial best practice before the chance of making a profit, and that the Islanders—ignorant of the value of money, the distances concerned, and the lengths of time at issue—were unlikely fully to understand the nature of the contracts they were entering into. This is a "fatal impact" point of view insofar as it involves a pair of stereotypes: the unscrupulous trader and the ignorant Islander. It could be argued that such a view depends more on modern guilt by association with colonialism than on real knowledge and that it represents colonial influence as monolithically consistent and prepotent, and Islanders as universally weak and passive.

But the side of the coin that stresses Islander initiative has problems, too. The very facts we most need to know—the attitudes of Western and

Islander actors on the scene—are the ones most deeply in dispute. "While plantation life in Queensland and Fiji might appear harsh by our standards, with its long hours and hard physical labour, and while the incidence of ill health and mortality may seem high, the Islanders themselves appeared relatively unconcerned about these matters" (Howe 1984: 339). To what moral position exactly does an appeal like this—"might *appear* harsh"; "may *seem* high"—take us? With whose eyes is the historian asking us to see these events? Moreover, whereas Islanders' willingness to become involved in labor schemes is an important factor in our evaluation of those schemes, it can hardly be the deciding one. Fully conscious moral agents do many things we cannot approve of. Thus the assertion of indigenous agency in the face of "fatal impact" can tilt the balance too far the other way.

Readers might be asking themselves whether we are bound to choose "between only two [Islander] archetypes: either 'happy campers' who manipulated the foreign guests until they moved on, or helpless prey for brutal aliens and germs" (Chappell, 316). The argument about contact presents a pair of interpretive alternatives vital to this anthology and our response to its contents: what Bronwen Douglas calls an anticolonialist position (stressing foreign impact) and a postcolonialist one (stressing indigenous agency). "From the venerable anticolonial perspective which represents the colonised as powerless victims of irresistible structural forces," she writes,

> arguments in favour of indigenous agency seem naïvely utopian. . . . A postcolonial rejoinder would decry this classic position as ethnocentric, essentialist, hierarchical and teleological, pointing out that hindsight is the luxury . . . of those who think they know the outcome, including historians, but that it was unavailable to actors, who had only culturally and strategically conceived experience to go on. Outcomes, anyway, like all discursive constructs, are always contested and unstable.

Not if you're dead, perhaps. But Douglas goes on:

> On the other hand, arguments in favour of indigenous agency can be insidious when the concept is appropriated by reactionaries to deflect the shame of colonialism ["blackbirding," for example] by invoking the responsibility of the colonised for their own oppression. This same motivation is sometimes imputed to postcolonialist advocates of the concept of agency by anticolonial sceptics. A further postcolonialist riposte would insist that postcolonial positions do not discount the always humiliating, sometimes tragic fact of colonialism, or the immorality of its drive for domination, but seek *as well* to contest the *a priori* assumption that colonialism always operated and signified locally in the ways its proponents intended. (Douglas, 186–187)

We cannot resolve the argument between anti- and postcolonialists here, but we can acknowledge that writers like Douglas are trying to achieve a way of looking at contact that makes room for the complexities involved: "social

actions," as she calls them, "observed in particular situations and in terms of actors as subjects, enacting culturally conceived roles and manipulating ritual, political and ideological elements for personal and group advantage" (Douglas, 72). In such situations the Islander may confound our expectations by "appropriating" the Westerner's plan of action, and the Westerner may confound us by failing to play his or her role according to the script. By breaking the identification of victimhood with passivity and the identification of colonialism with some uniformly operative system, historians may be able to break the double bind of Western historical perceptions.

This intellectual project also has difficulties to overcome, however. First, as Douglas herself says, "my interest is the existential one of what people did and what it meant, rather than the teleology of causes or wider functional relationships" (Douglas, 124). But causes and relationships of this kind surely help constitute the "particular situations" in which the actors engage, and such causes and relationships in turn are illuminated by what people did. If that is not so, then the expression "what it meant" has little meaning. Second, Douglas has to proceed by what she calls "textual archaeology" or "against-the-grain critique and exploitation of colonial texts" (Douglas, 120, 159). The "history," after all, is in the hands of the colonial powers, whereas the colonized were generally illiterate at the time of contact and arguably "contaminated" by Western education thereafter. Indigenous oral history aside, therefore, Douglas and historians like her have only two sources where contact is concerned, both basically in Western hands: anthropology (which seeks to reconstruct the "particular situation" as Islanders might have seen it) and the accounts produced by Westerners themselves.

The first of these problems—the "existential situation" versus the "bigger picture"—would be a serious one if Douglas took herself at her own word and restricted her attention to existential situations alone (which no historian has ever done). The second—the "Westernization" of the Pacific record—is less a problem than an opportunity, and a crucial one for this anthology. Indigenous histories of contact are rare, Douglas points out, but they do exist:

> Together with ethnographies, they provide vital clues for identifying and systematising ethnohistorical inscriptions in contemporary colonial texts—the inadvertent, partial, shadowy traces of local agency, relationships and settings. Such textual traces are keys to exploring the preliterate worlds and colonial engagements with which they were contemporaneous: colonial tropes and classifications at once "invented" *and were partly shaped by* particular indigenous actions, desires and contexts which, filtered through screens of colonial prejudices, fantasies and phobias, dialectically helped constitute the very images in which they were themselves constituted historically. (Douglas, 162)

This is a vital statement, for generally speaking the only indication we are likely to get of local agency from "contemporary colonial texts" (everything, that is, from Magellan onward) is precisely that which Douglas describes:

something won against the grain, something noted inadvertently, something "shadowy." It follows that the tools of literary criticism are as useful in such an enterprise as those of history and anthropology: "the idea of the island" (including the island's inhabitants) is part of the textual archaeology we must uncover.

In thinking broadly about Euro-American attitudes to the other cultures and peoples the West has encountered, we might come to feel that such peoples were always ingested, assimilated, or incorporated in some way, as circumstances permitted. In America, North and South, this process was carried on by the horse, the cutlass, and the gun, with catastrophic effects. Many people died at the hands of Westerners in the Pacific, too; but the process of ingestion has been more peaceable and prolonged in this case. And it has mostly been an ideological and intellectual process, which permits a degree of negotiation and exchange rather than the mere exercise of brute force. This anthology attempts to show how Western attitudes to the Pacific have changed in the five hundred years since Magellan entered the Mar del Sud. It is important that the contents suggest the importance of local dramas to the big picture: "colonial tropes and classifications at once 'invented' *and were partly shaped by* particular indigenous actions, desires and contexts" on particular occasions, as Bronwen Douglas suggests.

Among the earliest stories of which we have a written record is an ancient Egyptian one called "The Shipwrecked Sailor," dating from nineteen centuries before the birth of Christ. In it the hero lands on a deserted island and meets an "indigenous" snake, thirty cubits long, who surprises him by saying: "What has brought thee, what has brought thee, little one, what has brought thee? If thou sayest not speedily what has brought thee to this isle, I will make thee know thyself; as a flame thou shalt vanish, if thou tellest me not something I have not heard, or which I knew not, before thee" (Petrie, 84). The snake goes on to make the fisherman's fortune: it is a contact narrative. As we shall see in Chapter 1, Antonio Pigafetta's account of the Magellan circumnavigation contains another contact narrative, mostly involving ethnocentric arrogance. But it also contains abject superstition ("several of our sick men had begged us, if we killed man or woman, to bring them their entrails. For immediately they would be healed") and a kind of reluctant, almost wistful recognition of a common humanity ("And we saw some of those women weeping and tearing their hair, and I believe it was for love of those whom we had killed"). Many other writings excerpted here can be subjected to "textual archaeology" in the same way, to reveal unexpected consequences of contact.

## FURTHER READING

There are two excellent encyclopedias of the Pacific: Richard Nile and Christian Clerk's *Cultural Atlas of Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific* (New York: Facts on

File, 1996); and Brij Lal and Kate Fortune, eds., *The Pacific Islands: An Encyclopedia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000). Colin McEvedy's *Penguin Historical Atlas of the Pacific* (London: Penguin, 1998) packs a great deal of information into a small space and involves the entire Pacific rim.

Further detail is provided by six modern histories: Kerry Howe, *Where the Waves Fall: A New South Sea Islands History from First Settlement to Colonial Rule* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1984), supplemented by Kerry Howe, Robert C. Kiste, and Brij Lal, eds., *Tides of History: The Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1992); I. C. Campbell, *A History of the Pacific Islands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Deryck Scarr, *The History of the Pacific Islands: Kingdoms of the Reefs* (London: Macmillan, 1990); Donald Denoon et al., eds., *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Steven Roger Fischer, *A History of the Pacific Islands* (London: Palgrave, 2002).

The issue of prehistoric settlement of the Pacific is contextualized in Brian M. Fagan, *People of the Earth: An Introduction to World Prehistory,* 10th edn. (Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 2001). The theory of movement through New Guinea by an ethnic group out of Asia is summarized in the histories listed above but also by O. H. K. Spate in *The Pacific since Magellan,* volume 3: *Paradise Found and Lost* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1988), chapter 1, and by Patrick V. Kirch in Alan Howard and Robert Borofsky, eds., *Developments in Polynesian Ethnology* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989). See also Peter Bellwood, *Man's Conquest of the Pacific* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), and *The Polynesians: Prehistory of an Island People* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987). Alternative arguments are mounted by John Terrell, in *Prehistory in the Pacific Islands: A Study of Variation in Language, Customs, and Human Biology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), and a neutral eye is cast by Philip Houghton, *People of the Great Ocean: Aspects of Human Biology in the Pacific* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

For Western attitudes to other peoples encountered since the classical era, see Mary B. Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400–1600* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); David Hadfield, ed., *Amazons, Savages, and Machiavels: Travel and Colonial Writing in English, 1550–1630. An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Stuart B. Schwartz, ed., *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

The literature on utopias is huge, but see John Ferguson, *Utopias of the Classical World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975); David Fausett, *Writing the New World: Imaginary Voyages and Utopias of the Great Southern Land* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993); Gregory Claes, ed., *Utopias of the British Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and (particularly good) Helen Wallis et al., *Australia and the European Imagination* (Canberra: Humanities Research Centre, 1982).

Many books deal with the European exploration of the Pacific. See George H. T. Kimble, *Geography in the Middle Ages* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1968); Geoffrey Badger, *The Explorers of the Pacific* (Sydney: Kangaroo Press, 1988), which makes an excellent introduction; J. C. Beaglehole, *The Exploration of the Pacific* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966); John Dunmore, *French Voyagers in the Pacific,* 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965); Philip Edwards, *The Story of the Voyage: Sea*

*Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Miriam Estensen, *Discovery: The Quest for the Great South Land* (London: Palgrave, 1999); Herman R. Friis, ed., *The Pacific Basin: A History of its Geographical Exploration* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1967); Andrew Sharp, *The Discovery of Australia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963); O. H. K. Spate's monumental *The Pacific since Magellan,* 3 vols. (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979–1988); and Glyndwr Williams and Alan Frost, eds., *Terra Australis to Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988). Three valuable works of reference are John Dunmore, *Who's Who of Pacific Navigation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1991); Peter Kemp, *Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); and Raymond John Howgego, *Encyclopedia of Exploration to 1800* (Potts Point, NSW: Hordern House, 2003).

Intellectual and imaginative responses to the Pacific are discussed in Bernard Smith's *European Vision and the South Pacific,* 2nd edn. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Neil Rennie's *Far-Fetched Facts: The Literature of Travel and the Idea of the South Seas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Kerry Howe's *Nature, Culture, and History: The "Knowing" of Oceania* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000); and Jonathan Lamb's *Preserving the Self in the South Seas, 1680–1840* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001). On "the idea of the island" see the stimulating set of essays edited by Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith, *Islands in History and Representation* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

For contemporary approaches to Pacific historiography, see two essays in the first volume of the *Journal of Pacific History* (1966): J. W. Davidson's "Problems of Pacific History" (which turned historians' attention to "island-centered" history, as opposed to seeing the region as a theater for Western interests), and Greg Dening's "Ethnohistory in Polynesia: The Value of Ethnohistorical Evidence" (which inaugurated the convergence of historical and anthropological perspectives on the Pacific, represented by Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985]). A group of historians' reflections chart developments from that date: H. E. Maude, "Pacific History—Past, Present, and Future," *Journal of Pacific History* 6 (1971); Kerry R. Howe, "Pacific Island History in the 1980s: New Directions or Monograph Myopia?" *Pacific Studies* 3:1 (Fall 1979); and the essays collected in Brij Lal, ed., *Pacific Islands History: Journeys and Transformations* (Canberra: Journal of Pacific History, 1992), and Brij Lal and Peter Hempenstall, eds., *Pacific Lives, Pacific Places: Bursting Boundaries in Pacific History* (Canberra: Journal of Pacific History, 2001). Doug Munro has edited a special issue of the *Journal of Pacific Studies* 20 (1996): *Reflections on Pacific Historiography.* Finally, see the essays collected in Aletta Biersack, ed., *Clio in Oceania: Toward a Historical Anthropology* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); Alex Calder, Jonathan Lamb, and Bridget Orr, eds., *Voyages and Beaches: Pacific Encounters, 1769–1840* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999); and Robert Borofsky, ed., *Remembrance of Pacific Pasts: An Invitation to Remake History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000).

The discussion of Pacific contact is now very lively. Apart from works cited above, compare W. H. Pearson, "The Reception of European Voyagers on Polynesian Islands 1568–1797," *Journal de la Société des Oceanistes* 26 (1970), with I. C. Campbell, "European-Polynesian Encounters: A Critique of the Pearson Thesis," *Journal of Pacific History* 29:2 (Dec. 1994); and see Jonathan Lamb, Vanessa Smith, and Nicholas Thomas, eds., *Exploration and Exchange: A South Seas Anthology, 1680–1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Klaus Neumann, " 'In Order to Win

Their Friendship': Renegotiating First Contact," *Contemporary Pacific* 6:1 (Spring 1994); Edward L. Schieffelin and Robert Crittenden, *Like People You See in a Dream: First Contact in Six Papuan Societies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); and two items by Nicholas Thomas: "Partial Texts: Representation, Colonialism and Agency in Pacific History," *Journal of Pacific History* 25:2 (Dec. 1990), and *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991). On "blackbirding," see Peter Corris, *Passage, Port and Plantation: A History of Solomon Islands Labour Migration, 1870–1914* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1973); and Kerry R. Howe, "The Fate of the 'Savage' in Pacific Historiography," *New Zealand Journal of History* 11:2 (Oct. 1977).