Two key developments stand out as having shaped the discipline of Pacific history in recent decades. The first was J. W. Davidson’s tenure as Professor of Pacific History at Australian National University (1949–1973). Where earlier historians tended to focus on what have been termed imperialist histories, Davidson stressed the need for “island-centered” histories of the Pacific. The perspective brought new clarity and vitality to the discipline. But with time its vision has dimmed as the problems with writing island-centered accounts—especially the problems surrounding the representation of indigenous perspectives—became clear. As David Routledge suggests, there now exists a certain “pertinacity of doubts” regarding the goals and direction of the approach.

The second development consists of the insightful perspectives generated by the combined works of Greg Dening and Marshall Sahlins during the 1980s. Each author’s writings are distinct. But one can see a subtle interaction occurring between them over time as each shapes the context in which the other works. Dening’s Islands and Beaches is followed by Sahlins’ Islands of History. Sahlins “The Anthropology of History” is followed by Dening’s History’s Anthropology. Part of Dening’s dedication for the book under review reads “For Marshall Sahlins, a gift for many gifts.” Both deal with aspects of Polynesian-Western interchange in new and innovative ways. While each is brilliant in his own right, their combined insights add a special glow to the discipline as a whole.

Dening states, “I would do the culture history of Strangers in their ships, of Natives in their islands, of their possession of one another” (29). Islands and Beaches, a study of the Marquesas from 1774 to 1880, is an account of the “Natives in their island.” “Possessing Tahiti” (an article in Archaeology in Oceania) is a significant statement regarding early British and Tahitian attempts to possess the “Other.” And History’s Anthropology (as well as the recent The Bounty: An Ethnographic History) constitutes a study of the “Strangers in their Ships.”

History’s Anthropology is ostensibly about the life and death of William Gooch—how he came to visit the Hawaiian Islands, why he was murdered there, and what his death subsequently came to symbolize for others. More subtly it is about the construction (or making) of history. It is a reflective, thought-provoking work. The book is written in Dening’s gracious style—with sophistication, scholarship, and a touch of the poetic. It is divided into a prologue and five chapters.

The prologue describes the murders of William Gooch, Richard Hergest, and Manuel at Waimea Beach by Hawaiians in May 1792. For those familiar with Sahlins’ analysis of Cook’s death, comparisons and contrasts immediately come to mind. A
Hawaiian retrospective account of the event teasingly suggests: "We thought they were gods because of their sparkling eyes" (xviii).

Dening writes in the first chapter that "in the death of William Gooch [History's Anthropology] explores the ways in which history is both a metaphor of the past and a metonymy of the present" (1). Dening emphasizes that history is both presented and presented. We interpret texts of the past in terms of our present understandings. And our narration is a staging of the past in a way that gives meaningful form to particular events for us today. The problem Dening sets himself is how to write history within this context.

The second chapter is entitled "Making History." Several of its subheadings convey its import. In "Crafted Experience," Dening discusses how various accountings of the murder, in being transported across cultural and temporal boundaries, have been shaped by their narrators. The "Texted Past" reminds us that we know the past only through our texts of it. Not only is our interpretation of texts "beached" in the present, but the productions of the original texts themselves are "beached" in their own presents in respect to when they were written. "Collapsed Time" focuses on Hawaiian interpretations of the murders—as embodied in their subsequent actions and their later histories. Dening provocatively suggests "the Hawaiian histories were inclusive of earlier and later experiences and all that happened in-between. So their History of the death of Gooch was inclusive of their History of the death of Cook" (12). And "Readings as Theater" discusses Vancouver's dramatic response to the murders.

Vancouver was intent on showing that the Hawaiians could not escape retribution for their actions (though apparently he punished the wrong people). Vancouver, it seems, was making a bit of history himself.

"History in the Making" (chapter 3) is about the texts we have to understand Gooch. "The past survives only in its relics, only in its inscriptions" Dening notes (27). There are some materials relating to the Daedalus, the ship Hergest commanded and on which Gooch served as astronomer. But the primary source of information about Gooch is Gooch's own personal letters. We learn something about the process of Dening's research—his vision, his difficulties, his successes. And we also learn about the Daedalus and the organizational ambiguities that made it a disorderly ship.

"History Made" (chapter 4) begins with a description of Gooch's education at Cambridge University. We learn about the principles behind the organization of certain buildings at the university and the rituals surrounding examinations. We learn something of Cambridge's traditions and how Gooch was part of a transitional era between the formal class structures of old and a new openness in which "social boundaries could be differently set" (60). This is a rich vein to be mined for those interested in comparing Western and Polynesian rituals. We know from Sahlins, Dening, Valeri, and others something of Polynesian rituals. But we seem to know less (or at least less is written) about Western rituals of the time. Whatever the earlier explor-
ers' rhetoric regarding Polynesian superstition, we see from Dening's description that Europeans likewise were surrounded by their share of rituals and traditions. The contrast between "them" and "us" was not as distinct as some Europeans wanted to believe. The chapter continues with a description of the Daedalus' voyage and the chronology that led to its visiting Waimea in May 1792. At the chapter's end, we learn of possible Hawaiian motives for the murders. In each case—at Cambridge, on the Daedalus, at Waimea—we move beyond formal structures to discover ambiguities and ambivalences within which individual people charted their lives.

 Appropriately, the final chapter is entitled "Reflections." "In anthropology, the proper stance before the infinite variety of human experience is a reflective one," Dening states (98). He is concerned to grasp the metaphors that gave meaning to people's lives—to grasp "the experience of past actors as they experienced it, and not that experience as we in hindsight experience it for them" (99). At the same time he realizes we can only know the past through our present understandings of it. As a result, Dening emphasizes, he is interested in what actually happened not what really happened—with the meanings that surround past actions rather than with reality itself. He concludes, "In histories we know ourselves as limited by our given experience and liberated by our contrivance" (101).

 History's Anthropology represents a thickening description and refining discourse about both Hawaiian-Western relations and history in general. One cannot help but notice certain differences between Sahlins' and Dening's perspectives in this respect. Both focus on history as a process, but they stress different aspects of it. For Sahlins, making history refers to the way events interact with structures—the way people's efforts at cultural reproduction can lead to cultural transformation as the structures within which they define events are altered by events themselves. Hawaiian efforts at customary exchange with Europeans led to events that altered the social relationships embodied in customary exchange. The texts from which Sahlins draws his analysis seem set. He collects available material and gives his rendering of it. He has been accused of biased interpretations. But to give him his due, are not all interpretations biased to some degree in their presenting? And Sahlins makes his citations clear so one can go back to them, can see how Sahlins interpreted the data, and why he came to the conclusions he did. For Dening, making history relates more to the interpretation of texts. The cautions that Sahlins sets aside are at the heart of Dening's analysis. Where Sahlins takes the texts as describing historical reality, Dening sees the texts in terms of the meanings we and others give them. The issue is not a matter of who is right. Both represent aspects of historical understanding—of our efforts to step outside our present viewpoints to comprehend the past and the perspectives embodied in it. There is no clear resolution here, rather a refining of historical discourse relating to the tension all historical accounts face.

 There is an interesting comparison between Cook and Gooch. Both are historical figures. One is a pillar of the
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“older” history that details the exploits of heroes. The other is a figure in the “newer” social history which looks at less well known individuals of the past. Both were self-made men, so to speak, who improved their social positions through traits Bernard Smith lists as essential for the coming industrial age: professionalism, thoroughness, and constrained pride in achievement. Both participated in and were products of a period in British history when technological competence was becoming a vehicle for upward mobility. But one succeeded and one did not. Gooch’s life was cut short at Waimea (and he seemingly had limited skills in astronomy). He has been resurrected, in a sense, by Dening’s scholarship. What we have in the comparison between Cook and Gooch is a fuller accounting of British society during this period. We still know far too little about the sailors who manned the vessels. But the descriptions of Gooch (and Hergest) help fill in a broader picture of those in the ships’ upper ranks, especially among those who failed to achieve social prominence at the time.

There is also the issue of structures as determinant of human action. Was Hawaiian behavior at Kealakekua Bay (in respect to Cook) and Waimea Bay (in respect to Gooch) determined by certain cultural structures—by Hawaiian conceptions of foreigners as deity-like? We have two sets of murders. But if Cook’s death represents the maka-hiki in historical form, what can be said of Gooch’s? Perhaps he was seen as Lonoikouali‘i. But perhaps he was not. The Hawaiian historian Kamakau attributed Gooch’s murder to chiefly politics and arrogance. Dening reminds us of the contradictions in structures—both on the Daedalus and at Cambridge. We know of the power of personalities. Hergest’s impulsiveness certainly had something to do with the Daedalus’ anchoring at Waimea and his walking inland without armed guard. And we know that chance occurrences can seem more orderly in hindsight. Structures there certainly were in the interchange between native and stranger in Hawai‘i. But to what degree these shaped, versus simply provided, a meaningful context for human action remains an open question.

The insights embodied in the subtle interchange between Dening and Sahlins—and in the space between their two positions—are particularly important at this juncture in Pacific history. They provide renewed vitality and direction for the discipline as a whole. They encourage us to perceive people’s perspectives, Western as well as Polynesian, in more sophisticated ways—in terms of metaphors (for Dening) and structures (for Sahlins) that perhaps guided actions. We see the interchanges between “stranger” and “native” not simply as a question of fatal versus nonfatal impact, but as a complex set of interactions in which each group affected the other as well as itself with its efforts at cultural reproduction. And we have a greater overt sensitivity to the ambiguities of the data—how they were shaped in the past and how we shape them today.

History’s Anthropology, in summary, is a thoughtful, important book. Read in relation to Sahlins’ recent work, it is an extremely powerful one. Together the two authors represent the cutting edge of what is happening in
Pacific history. We can be thankful to Greg Dening for publicly sharing his gift with us.

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In March 1779, Lieutenant King of HMS Resolution penned a lengthy summary of observations on the newly discovered Sandwich Islands, including some speculations on the size of the archipelago's population. His rough tallies for various islands "collect'd together give half a Million for the population of these Islands." In a later published account, King attempted a more elaborate calculation—based on the supposed extent of inhabited coastline—arriving at a figure of 400,000. Subsequently, virtually every scholar who has considered the subject of Hawaiian population at the eve of Western contact has taken King's estimate as a maximum, and most have lowered it by 100,000-200,000. The eminent modern authority, State of Hawai'i Statistician Robert Schmitt, puts the 1778 population at 300,000 or less.

In a provocative book that deserves to be read by anyone concerned with precontact (or, as he insists on calling it, "pre-haole") Hawai'i, Professor David Stannard of the University of Hawaii now challenges this orthodox scholarly position. The gist of Stannard's argument is that King's projection was in fact an underestimate, and "that a population for Hawai'i of about 800,000 at the time of Western contact seems a restrained and modest figure" (80).

The book is organized in two parts. In the first, consisting of three chapters, Stannard presents his case, commencing with a reconsideration of the King estimate, moving then to demographic models for possible rates of population growth in Hawaiian prehistory, considerations of carrying capacity, and the anticipation of "some likely objections." Part 1 is followed by 21 pages of detailed notes documenting sources and elaborating certain points. Part 2, titled "Critical Commentary and Reply," consists of two comments on the preceding section by Eleanor C. Nordyke and Robert C. Schmitt, both leading authorities on Hawaiian demography. Their responses to Stannard's arguments make it clear that the orthodox position they represent will not readily accede to this new heresy. The book ends with a reply by Stannard, a final section of notes, and an index.

Stannard makes a conscious effort to break out of the narrow mold of often parochial and "arrested" scholarship (xvii) that has characterized the literature on Hawaiian and Pacific Islands historical demography. In contrast to Schmitt, who in his comment accuses Stannard of "trendiness" and jumping on a "scholarly bandwagon" (119), I found the frequent references and comparisons to research on historical demography in the Americas and