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# Making Sea Cucumbers Out of Whales' Teeth: Nantucket Castaways and Encounters of Value in Nineteenth-Century Fiji

## Abstract

This article explores the social biographies of sea cucumbers and whales' teeth, challenging a prevalent tendency among scholars to endow objects with abstract essences. It focuses on encounters of value in which the meanings of material possessions fluctuated across cultural and ethnic boundaries. Such moments of contradiction and coalescence had profound environmental and social consequences and suggest new ways that environmental historians might understand the roles of cultural arbitrage and expropriation in the making of the world system. To illustrate these crucial issues, this article discusses the experiences of David Whippy and William Cary, two Nantucket castaways in nineteenth-century Fiji, and it investigates long-term connections that emerged among Nantucket, Fiji, and the broader ecosystems and cultures of

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the Pacific Ocean region during the 1800s. Both men were involved in the export of sea cucumbers (genus *Holothuria*) from Fiji to China and the importation of sperm whales' teeth to Fiji from various parts of the Pacific. The histories of these two commodities offer potent testimonials about cultural and ecological changes during the nineteenth century.

## INTRODUCTION

When *North American Review* editor Jared Sparks arrived at Nantucket Harbor in 1826, he was astonished to find “whale ships on every side and hardly a man to be seen on the wharves who had not circumnavigated the globe, and chased a whale, if not slain his victim, in the Broad Pacific.”<sup>1</sup> Sparks’s observation encapsulated more than half a century of daily life on the 48-square-mile island. From the 1790s to the 1840s, this crescent-shaped sliver of land off the southern coast of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, was a focal point of North America’s whaling industry. The island sent its first whaling vessel to the Pacific in 1791. Over the next fifty-five years, Nantucket-based crews hunted whales throughout the rich waters of the world’s largest ocean.<sup>2</sup>

The same year that Sparks visited the North Atlantic whaling community, two Nantucket mariners reunited in the South Pacific. William S. Cary, one of the two sailors, recalled the serendipitous reunion: “I saw a canoe coming from Ambow [Bau], in which was a white man. As they came alongside our canoe the white man reached out his hand and addressed me by my name. I was dumb with astonishment. At last he said, ‘Don’t you know David Whippy?’ ‘Yes,’ I answered, ‘I formerly knew him. He was a townsman of mine and an old playmate.’ ‘Well,’ said he, ‘I am that David Whippy.’”<sup>3</sup>

Whippy and Cary were castaways in Fiji, brought together by catastrophe and coincidence. In 1824 Captain Peter Dillon of the brig *Calder* had deposited Whippy, a young man consumed by wanderlust, on a Fijian beach to gather tortoise shell, mother-of-pearl, and sandalwood for sale at the bustling entrepôts of Canton and Manila. Dillon failed to return for thirteen years, leaving Whippy to fend for himself.<sup>4</sup> The year after Whippy’s arrival, Cary’s whaling vessel, the *Oeno*, struck a coral reef and ran aground on the remote Fijian island of Vatoa. A raiding party of Fijian warriors from nearby Ono Levu Island killed all of the twenty-one members of the crew but Cary, who survived by hiding in a seaside cave for two days. A Vatoan headman discovered the stranded sailor, took pity on him, and welcomed Cary to his village.<sup>5</sup>

By the time Whippy and Cary reunited in 1826, the two Nantucket-born refugees had ascended Fiji’s social hierarchies,

making their way into the retinues of prominent chieftains for whom they served as translators, advisers, and mercenaries. Whippy had even attained the position of *Mata ki Bau*, or envoy to the powerful Fijian tribe of Bau.<sup>6</sup> During a period when Fiji rapidly integrated into global networks of commerce and conquest, Whippy and Cary staked their survival on expedient political alliances and dubious profitmaking ventures. Like other castaways in Oceania, they functioned as intermediaries between Pacific Island societies and Euro-American visitors, securing labor and resources for trade ships, settling disputes, and arbitrating interactions across divergent systems of exchange. In the process, these two Nantucket sailors participated in the environmental transformation of the South Pacific and served as the forerunners of more widespread cross-cultural encounters to come.

This article uses Whippy's and Cary's stories to explore long-term connections that emerged among Nantucket, Fiji, and the broader ecosystems and cultures of the Pacific Ocean region during the nineteenth century. Not only were the economic fortunes of nineteenth-century Nantucket dependent on the environments and societies in and around the Pacific, Nantucketers also saw this faraway ocean as a coherent realm for realizing their aspirations and framing their identities. It is no coincidence that Nantucket's cobblestone Main Street Square stretches from the Pacific National Bank—founded in 1804

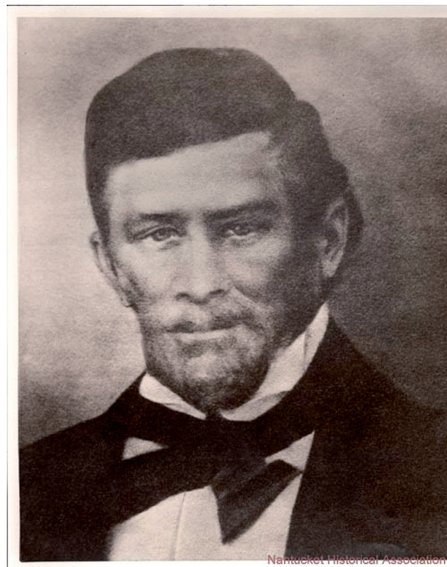


Figure 1. David Whippy, ca. 1860s. According to archivists in Fiji and Nantucket, no photographs of William Cary exist. Credit: Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association Research Library.

when most of the island's investments were contingent on the fortunes of Pacific-bound whaleships—200 yards downhill to the Pacific Club, a social organization established in 1854 by twenty-four whaling captains who had spent much of their lives in the Pacific Ocean. Thus a small island community in the North Atlantic was literally and figuratively linked to a distant sea in myriad ways.<sup>7</sup>

Several decades before the California gold rush of 1849 triggered the migration of at least 650 of Nantucket's 9,000 residents to North America's Pacific shores, Nantucket mariners had become heavily involved in the export of sea cucumbers from Fiji to China and the importation of whales' teeth to Fiji from elsewhere in the Pacific.<sup>8</sup> The histories of these two Pacific World commodities offer potent testimonials about cultural and ecological changes during the nineteenth century. In exploring the social biographies of sea cucumbers and whales' teeth, this article challenges a prevalent tendency among scholars to portray traded goods as autonomous from their historical and spatial contexts. Instead of endowing objects with abstract essences, I focus on *encounters of value* in which the meanings of material possessions fluctuated across cultural and ethnic boundaries. Such moments of contradiction and coalescence had profound environmental and social consequences for both Fiji and Nantucket. For environmental historians, the concept of encounters of value offers a more nuanced vantage point on the factors motivating and influencing resource exploitation. Such perspectives remain hidden in the realm of neoclassical economics, where rigid models of supply and demand frequently efface historical acts of cross-cultural violence, accommodation, and collaboration that underwrite the making of markets and their attendant environmental effects.<sup>9</sup>

## FOREIGNERS ON FIJIAN SHORES

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, periodic shipwrecks had brought foreign sailors to Fijian shores.<sup>10</sup> After the US brig *Eliza* wrecked on the Fijian island of Nairai in 1808, a seaman named Charles Savage retrieved muskets and powder from the derelict ship and used his armaments and marksmanship to support the territorial conquests of Naulivou, the *vunivalu* (paramount chieftain) of Bau Island.<sup>11</sup> Following the introduction of firearms to Fiji, Anglo-American mariners became linked to an unprecedented wave of violence in the South Pacific. Between 1828 and 1850 alone, white traders sold at least five thousand muzzle-loading guns to Fijian chiefs.<sup>12</sup> These weapons—with their range and killing power—intensified the lethality of warfare between rival tribes. Transplanted sailors, like David Whippy and William Cary, served as soldiers of fortune in a twelve-year contest for regional dominance that pitted the dominant sea power of Bau against the land-based kingdom of Rewa, a

protracted conflict that anthropologist Marshall Sahlins has referred to as Polynesia's analog to the Peloponnesian Wars between Athens and Sparta (431–404 BCE).<sup>13</sup>

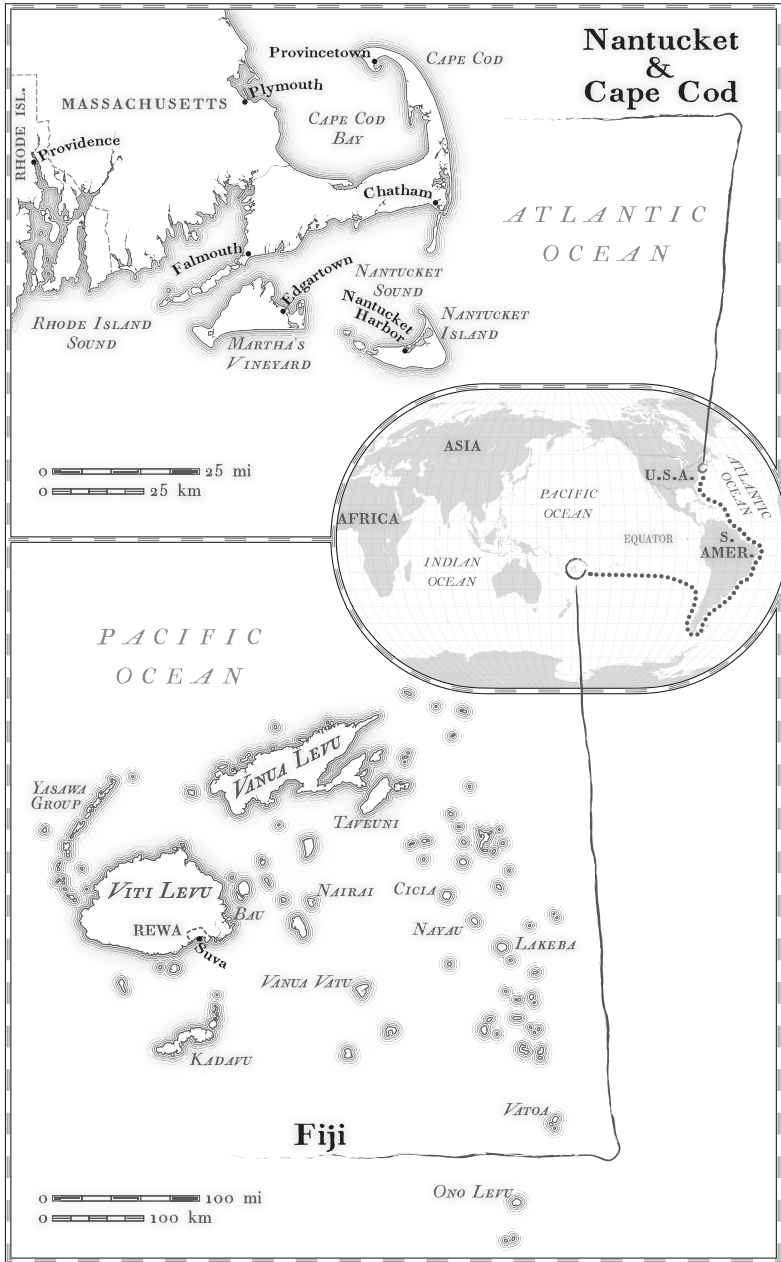
Fiji consists of 332 islands situated approximately 3,000 kilometers (1,864 miles) east of Australia and 1,800 kilometers (1,118 miles) north of New Zealand. Its many beaches and coves presented perils and possibilities to nineteenth-century mariners. As US naval officer George Foster Emmons explained in 1840, Fiji's coral reefs and dense coastal mangrove swamps created "a perfect labyrinth" for deep-draft ships, while the archipelago's volatile tribal politics and complex customs proved baffling and, at times, deadly for stranded sailors.<sup>14</sup>

Despite these environmental and cultural obstacles to colonial intrusion, North Americans were captivated by the vast sums to be made from selling the dried bodies of an ocean-dwelling animal that thrived throughout Fiji's warm coastal shoals. Extensive populations of genus *Holothuria*—or sea cucumbers—flourished in these marine habitats. Like starfish and sea urchins, sea cucumbers are echinoderms. They have slippery collagen-filled skin; feed omnivorously on microscopic aquatic creatures, seafloor particles, and algae; and can vary in length from under an inch to 6 feet. Sea cucumbers are also crucial to the long-term sustainability of coral reef ecosystems. They play key roles in recycling minerals and nutrients, such as calcium carbonate and ammonia, in benthic (ocean-bottom) communities.<sup>15</sup>

Fijians refer to sea cucumbers as *dri*, a term that they also use for the dark-skinned highland warriors of Viti Levu Island. Sea cucumbers are called *bêche-de-mer* ("sea spade") in French, *trepang* in Indonesian, *namako* ("sea rat") in Japanese, and *haishen* ("sea ginseng" 海参) in Chinese. For centuries, these creatures have functioned as a culinary delicacy and a potent medicine in many Pacific World cultures.<sup>16</sup> Since the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644 CE), Chinese doctors have used the dried body wall of the sea cucumber to treat kidney disorders, high blood pressure, constipation, impotence, and other ailments. The *Bencao Gangmu* (本草綱目), a late sixteenth-century medical compendium written by scientist Li Shizhen (李時珍), offered the first written testimonial of the animal's extraordinary healing properties.<sup>17</sup>

By the early nineteenth century, North American merchants had become keenly aware of the sea cucumber's salutary reputation in China as a multipurpose tonic and a sexual stimulant. Benjamin Morrell, a US sealing captain and explorer who traveled in the South Pacific during the 1820s and 1830s, declared, "The Chinese . . . consider *biche-de-mer* [*sic*] a very great luxury; believing that it wonderfully strengthens and nourishes the systems, and renews the exhausted vigour of the immoderate voluptuary."<sup>18</sup>

Most Westerners possessed little knowledge of Chinese medical principles and were less than effusive about the sea cucumber's



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Figure 2. Map of Nantucket and Fiji, showing the principal sailing route between the two island societies during the early nineteenth century. Credit: Map produced by Springer Cartographics, LLC for Edward D. Melillo, 2014.

culinary potential. During his explorations of Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia, British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace described smoked *bêche-de-mer* as “looking like sausages which have been rolled in mud and then thrown up the chimney.”<sup>19</sup> One of Wallace’s contemporaries, Victorian journalist Peter Lund Simmonds, was equally dismayed by the sea cucumber, calling it an “unseemly-looking substance of a dirty light or dark-brown colour, hard, rigid and repulsive, with a strong fishy odour.”<sup>20</sup> Regardless of its incompatibility with Euro-American tastes, the sea cucumber motivated US merchants who rushed to transform Fiji’s natural wealth into commodities suitable for sale to the Chinese. Given the insatiable Euro-American demand for Chinese silks, tea, jade, porcelain, and lacquered goods, North American entrepreneurs stood to gain from the rapid expansion of Pacific trade routes.<sup>21</sup>

The earliest ship to enter the South Seas under the US flag, the *Empress of China*, departed from New York on February 22, 1784. The vessel sailed for Canton laden with 57,687 pounds of ginseng, 38 barrels of tar and turpentine, \$20,000 in silver, and 11 containers of wine and brandy.<sup>22</sup> The ship carried all the diplomatic accoutrements that the newly convened Congress of the Confederation (1781–89) could muster.<sup>23</sup> Unhindered by British blockades, which had previously stifled commercial connections between the colonies and the outside world during the War of Independence (1775–83), Yankee traders began their aggressive expansion into the Pacific. Between the *Empress of China*’s 1784 voyage and 1833—when the British government ended the British East India Company’s trading monopoly at Canton—US ships made at least 1,352 officially recorded visits to China in pursuit of these commercial opportunities.<sup>24</sup>

During these early decades of the so-called China Trade, New England merchants treated Pacific fisheries and island ecosystems as immense apothecaries and vast storehouses for fulfilling Chinese pharmacological and culinary demands.<sup>25</sup> Products such as sea cucumbers, dried fish maws—or swim bladders of large fish (*yubiao* 鱼鳔), shark fins (*yuchi* 鱼翅), and edible bird’s nests (*yanwo* 燕窝) spun by swiftlets of the genus *Aerodramus*—were of little value in the United States and Europe but were prized by Chinese consumers for their medicinal properties and complex flavor profiles. For example, along with abalone (*baoyu* 鲍鱼) and shark fins, sea cucumber was a key ingredient in the celebrated Fujianese soup “Buddha Jumps over the Wall” (*fo tiao qiang* 佛跳墙). Legend has it that vegetarian Buddhist monks were so tempted by the aromas of this concoction that they would leap over monastery walls in order to indulge in its savory broth.<sup>26</sup>

Prior to the heyday of the sea cucumber trade, Fijian sandalwood (*Santalum yasi*) was among the most desirable cargoes for North American ships. The Chinese used the aromatic heartwood of the

sandalwood tree (*tan xiang mu* 檀香木) as ceremonial incense, construction material for decorative items, and an ingredient in perfumes, cosmetics, and medical preparations. Historically, a variety of South Asian sandalwood, *Santalum album*, had filled this market niche. As Indian sandalwood declined due to unsustainable exploitation, the Fijian variant—a shrub known to locals as *yasi dina* or *yasi boi*—became a viable substitute. In 1804 the US ships *Fair American* and *Marcia* loaded their holds with the fragrant wood and inaugurated the exploitation of Fijian groves in the service of foreign commerce. During the following decade, this trade grew rapidly enough that European, North American, and Australian mariners began calling Fiji's second largest island of Vanua Levu "Sandalwood Island."<sup>27</sup> William Lockerby of Liverpool, the first mate aboard the Boston-based ship *Jenny*, recounted how in 1808 Captain William Dorr paid the equivalent of £50 for 250 tons of Fijian sandalwood that subsequently fetched £20,000 in China. Such colossal profits were short lived, however. By 1816 the clear-cutting of Fiji's sandalwood forests was so far-reaching that commercial harvesting became obsolete.<sup>28</sup>

The decline of sandalwood extraction was followed by the emergence of a flourishing market for Fijian sea cucumbers. From the late 1820s through the 1840s, dozens of New England merchants, many of whom sailed from Salem Harbor, built their fortunes upon Fijian *bêche-de-mer*. Benjamin Vanderford, William Driver, Joseph Winn, Henry Archer, Charles Millett, John Henry Eagleston, and Benjamin Wallis were among the Salem captains involved in this profitable trade. Whippy and Cary served as interpreters and labor recruiters for many of these men.<sup>29</sup>

After a trading vessel had arrived at one of the archipelago's coves, the two Nantucket castaways and other bilingual go-betweens negotiated with Fijian chiefs to enlist a workforce of boys and girls who would dive for sea cucumbers in the shallow reef waters at low tide. As one writer described the labor process, "Besides paying, you also feed your laborers, giving them yams or Indian corn or sweet potatoes, with what shellfish they get themselves. They work for two, three, or six months, or even a year; and on a good, calm night an expert fishing-girl will fill what is termed a *qui* case and earn a shilling, occasionally two—not bad for a little thing twelve or thirteen years old."<sup>30</sup>

In mid-nineteenth-century Fiji, sea cucumber collecting, curing, and drying operations were elaborate tasks that involved thousands of native laborers over the decades (1820s–1850s) during which the trade endured. Workers lived in sizable camps that sprang up on island shorelines, especially along the north coast of Vanua Levu. Salem captain John Henry Eagleston even referred to his 1830s sea cucumber operation as "our little city."<sup>31</sup> Despite such images of metropolitan permanence, these labor settlements were transient affairs,



regularly disrupted by departures of workers for more attractive engagements such as feasts, religious ceremonies, or local wars.<sup>32</sup> In addition, outbreaks of violence between ships' crews and island residents were frequent. For example, in September 1833, the crew from the brig *Charles Doggett* clashed with villagers while curing a load of sea cucumbers at Kandora Island. Five sailors died in the ensuing struggle including the mate, Charles Shipman.<sup>33</sup>

Conditions were ripe for such conflicts. Unlike the sandalwood trade, in which the crews of commercial vessels did most of the logging or captains simply purchased wood from coastal communities, the longer-term social arrangements of sea cucumber preparation placed visiting sailors in charge of native workers for months on end. Such measures created infinite possibilities for misunderstandings and imposed exploitative labor hierarchies on communities unaccustomed to being commanded by foreigners. Most visiting mariners were driven by compulsions of commerce and cared little about Fijian traditions and customs.<sup>34</sup>

Selection of the most desirable varieties of sea cucumber to sell at Manila and Canton added to the complexity of the harvest. Writing in the 1830s, New England trader Edmund Fanning explained, "It is very necessary that a person who undertakes to collect [bêche-de-mer] should have experience in the business, and be well able to distinguish the different kinds."<sup>35</sup> These factors enhanced the influence of those who acted as intermediaries between Fijians and visiting ships' crews. After helping Salem captain Benjamin Vanderford and the crew of the *Clay* prepare a cargo of sea cucumbers in October 1827, Cary described the initial stage of processing: "The fish is cut open at the mouth and the entrails squeezed out."<sup>36</sup> Workers then pickled the bêche-de-mer in iron cauldrons, many of which had been designed by a Vermont-based company for boiling maple syrup, only to be repurposed by enterprising New Englanders in the South Pacific.<sup>37</sup> After this bath, workers sun-dried or desiccated the creatures in 30-meter-long smokehouses built of coconut-tree timbers.

In the 1840s, Mary Davis Wallis, wife of Salem captain Benjamin Wallis, accompanied her husband on the bark *Zotoff* and wrote of the ship's stopover "at the Feejee Islands to procure a cargo of 'beech de mer.'" As she described the curing process, "Some of the natives preceded, and others followed us to the building where the 'beech de mer' was drying. A deep trench is usually dug the whole length of one of the houses, which is filled with burning logs of wood."<sup>38</sup> Once adequately smoked, the dried sea cucumbers were packed for shipping by the *picul* (担), a Chinese unit of weight roughly equal to 133 $\frac{1}{3}$  pounds.<sup>39</sup> Charles Pickering, the naturalist with the US Exploring Expedition to the Pacific (1838–42), wrote of sea cucumber processing, "To look at the small size of the prepared animal, reflect on the immense amount of industry there expended in making up a cargo,

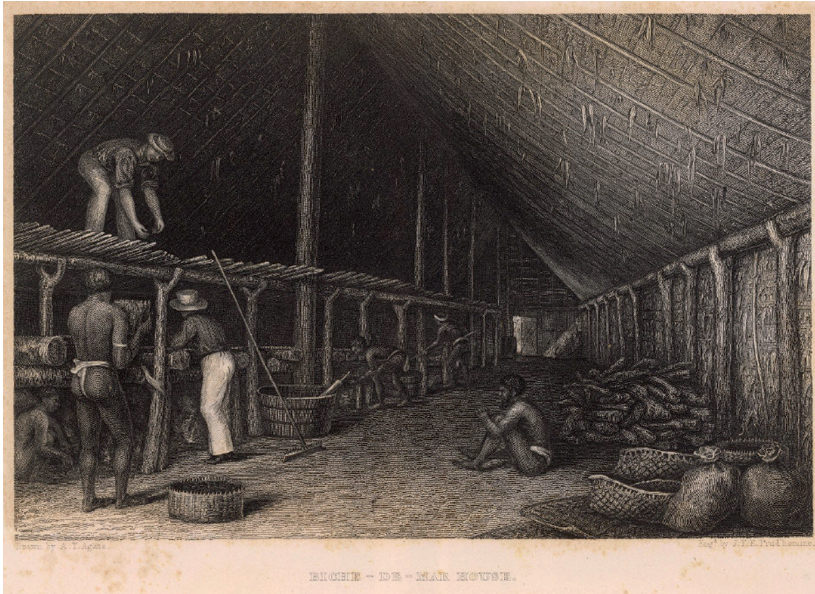


Figure 3. "Biche-de-mar house," 1845. Credit: Drawing by A. T. Agate, engraving by R. H. Pease, in Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, 5 vols. (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1845), 3:220. Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association Research Library.

the complicated process of its preparation. . . . It is certainly one of the most remarkable branches of business in the Annals of Commerce."<sup>40</sup>

Pickering's remark exhibits the proportional relationship between labor and value and demonstrates the incredulity of many Westerners that a thriving market could exist for a commodity that they held in such low regard. Such comments exemplify encounters of value, moments in which acts of exchange reveal profound cultural differences and divergent systems of worth. As sociocultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has put it, "not all parties share the same interests in any specific regime of value, nor are the interests of any two parties in a given exchange identical."<sup>41</sup>

Like the sandalwood trade that preceded it, the relentless sea cucumber harvest severely damaged Fiji's environment. Round-the-clock fires at drying houses—which burned more than 500,000 cubic feet of wood between 1827 and 1835—demanded a constant supply of logs, perpetuating regional deforestation. Logging depleted the forests around Bau and denuded the entire forested regions of several islands off of the north shore of Vanua Levu.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, sea cucumber populations plummeted. Sounding a prescient note, an article in the January 1878 issue of the US magazine *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly* cautioned, "Like many other favorite delicacies, such

as the oyster of Great Britain, the beche-de-mer has been over-fished, and unless the Government establish[es] a close time, the employment of gathering it must cease to exist."<sup>43</sup>

While not unprecedented, this warning about the limited supply of natural resources in a seemingly bottomless ocean of economic opportunities was certainly unusual for its time.<sup>44</sup> From the late eighteenth century through the Second World War, European and North American maritime expeditions coordinated rapacious harvests of whales, seals, sea otters, copra (dried coconut), mother-of-pearl, tortoiseshell (hawksbill turtle backs), sandalwood, sea cucumbers, bird guano, New Caledonian nickel, and phosphates from Nauru Island.<sup>45</sup> Such repeated acts of enclosure—the forceful transformation of locally managed public goods into commodities for private gain—characterize the environmental history of the Pacific World.<sup>46</sup>

In many cases, nineteenth-century merchants derived enormous profits by trading extracted products across vastly different valuation systems. These practices amounted to cultural arbitrage, defined here as commercial strategies that capitalized on divergent meanings ascribed to goods by various societies.<sup>47</sup> So far, environmental historians have made few attempts to engage with the transformations of value across ecological and cultural borders. Further exploration of this concept promises insights into how capitalist commercial relations in the early modern period structured regimes of resource exploitation, international divisions of labor, and patterns of cross-cultural interaction.<sup>48</sup>

To Fijians, sea cucumbers were of minimal economic value, functioning as little more than intermittent supplements to a rich and varied diet.<sup>49</sup> Merchants from the United States capitalized on this lack of local economic value by transporting sea cucumbers to Canton and Manila, where they had a relatively high value. This ongoing act of cultural arbitrage was also an act of large-scale economic theft, transferring Fijian sovereign wealth and degrading the Fijian environment while providing minimal returns to Fijians. In contrast, guns were of enormous cultural significance and thus value to Fiji's chieftains due to the war-making ability and symbolic power that they conferred.<sup>50</sup>

Even more valuable than muskets, however, were *tabua* (pronounced "tambua"). Artisans fashioned these sacred ornaments from the teeth of the sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) and polished them with coconut oil and turmeric to impart a dark hue. They often strung a sinnet cord of plaited coconut fiber through holes in either end of the tooth so that it could be worn, but *tabua* were more commonly cradled in the bearer's hands. Fijian parties exchanged these revered objects to negotiate social debts, ingratiate themselves to others, maintain tribal alliances, validate marriages, and fulfill spiritual obligations.<sup>51</sup> As Fijian scholar Asesela Ravuvu put it, "The



Figure 4. Fijian tabua, nineteenth century. Credit: Artist unknown. Courtesy of Oceania Art Gallery, New South Wales, Australia.

‘whale’s tooth’ represents everything that is valuable and worthwhile in Fijian society. It embodies everything that is chiefly in nature. . . . These qualities cause the intrinsic value of a particular ‘whale’s tooth’ to vary according to the circumstances and the relative status of the offerer and the recipient.”<sup>52</sup> The first tabua exchanged in Fiji came from neighboring Tonga, to the east. Because Fijians had no historical tradition of hunting sperm whales, tabua acquired a supra-social aura.<sup>53</sup>

Most European and American traders failed to understand this depth of local, culturally imbued value, regarding whales’ teeth as commodities to be traded for other commodities. In 1880 Englishman John William Anderson recalled that forty years earlier, “a hogshead of [sea cucumber], as taken on the reefs, could be purchased for a sperm whale’s tooth, these teeth being very popular as neck ornaments.”<sup>54</sup>

Cary and Whippy facilitated many ceremonies in which visiting merchants ingratiated themselves with chiefs by exchanging tabua for guarantees of *bêche-de-mer* laborers. In their capacity as mercenaries, the two Nantucket castaways also received whales’ teeth for their services. As Cary recounted the proceedings of one battle,

David, dressed like a native, led our party. He got shelter behind a stump, singled out one of their chief warriors, fired and shot him through the head. As soon as their chief fell the enemy fled for the woods and mountains. Then we rushed forward, broke down their bamboo fence and entered the village. We killed all who had not made their escape,

plundered the town and set it on fire, then marched back to Navato, singing songs of victory. Here we were paid for our services with hogs, turtle, fishing nets and whales' teeth.<sup>55</sup>

This episode showcases Whippy's and Cary's pivotal roles as musket men in the brutal regional wars that shook early nineteenth-century Fiji.<sup>56</sup> It also reveals the inadequacy of Western ontological categories for understanding the symbolic depth of Fijian exchanges. Tabua were not reducible to currency; they represented a vast array of social interactions across human and nonhuman realms.<sup>57</sup>

Initially, hunters from Nantucket and other whaling ports viewed the whales' teeth as body parts with little intrinsic value. Instead, they focused on extracting other raw materials for an impressive array of commodities. Manufacturers used the whale's oil in streetlamps, candles, and machine lubricant; they made corsets, umbrellas, and buggy whips from whalebone; they also prized ambergris, a waxy substance found in the animal's digestive tract, as a fixative for perfumes.<sup>58</sup>

By 1815, however, whalers were coming to understand the immense value of whales' teeth to some Pacific Island peoples. That year, the Boston merchants Boardman & Pope informed Captain Caleb Reynolds of the ship *Sultan* that he should obtain whales' teeth from whaling ships in the Pacific: "They will be serviceable to you, if in the course of the voyage, you visit any of the Islands of the Pacific to procure Sandal Wood, and they will always be useful in procuring provisions there . . . Formerly the Whalemen considered them of little or no value, and perhaps by the time you might visit the Islands, the supply has been such that the Natives may esteem them less."<sup>59</sup>

Whales' teeth also acquired cultural significance to sailors aboard the ships that pursued whales across the Pacific. Indeed, the ever-growing stockpile of whales' teeth aboard vessels bound for Fiji was a key factor in the emergence of scrimshaw, intricate carvings, engravings, and scrollwork done on pieces of bone and ivory.<sup>60</sup> On long voyages into the Pacific, sailors began creating elaborate artwork on the surfaces of plentiful sperm whale teeth. Although many scrimshaw craftsmen (known as scrimshanders) carved domestic articles—such as pie crimpers, crochet hooks, and corset stays—as gifts for women at home, others produced commissioned works for a burgeoning maritime art market. Among the first to sign their scrimshaw creations were Nantucket whalers Edward Burdett and Frederick Myrick. Burdett, a prolific artist, served as first officer aboard the Nantucket whaling vessel *Montano*. He produced at least twenty pieces of scrimshaw before his untimely death in 1833 from entanglement in a whale harpoon line.<sup>61</sup> Myrick, who sailed aboard the Nantucket whaleship *Susan* during its several voyages into the Pacific from 1826 to 1829, produced a series of twenty-two scrimshaw pieces now



Figure 5. Photograph of Seru Epenisa Cakobau, August 1869. Credit: Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the National Library of New Zealand.

known as “Susan’s teeth.” These are the most widely celebrated scrimshaw carvings in existence today.<sup>62</sup> The contrasts between scrimshaw and tabua encapsulate encounters of value. Sperm whale teeth accrued economic significance in the North Atlantic for the intricately etched designs they bore; in the South Pacific it was their ceremonial and symbolic associations that conveyed their worth.

Curiously, tabua played a role in the cession of Fiji to Great Britain in 1874. That year, the powerful chieftain and self-styled Tui Viti (king) of all Fiji, Seru Epenisa Cakobau of Bau, presented a whale’s-tooth necklace to the Wesleyan missionary James Calvert. This gift to the man responsible for Cakobau’s conversion to Christianity was part of a ceremony in which Fiji became Britain’s Crown Colony.<sup>63</sup>

Prior to relinquishing control of the archipelago, Cakobau had been hounded by US diplomats and pursued by periodic threats from North American naval gunships for payment of US\$43,000 in debts. Cakobau presumably owed this sum for the looting that followed a fire at a July 4 celebration in 1849, in addition to claims from other expatriates. The conflagration burned down the house of US commercial agent to Fiji, John Brown Williams. Facing these mounting pressures and the threat of ascendant Tongan chief Ma'afu, a shrewd leader who also sought regional hegemony in the mid-nineteenth-century Fiji, Cakobau eventually ceded 80,937 hectares (200,000 acres) of Fijian land to Queen Victoria's empire. In return, the British agreed to pay his debts and support his title of Tui Viti. Toward the end of his life, Cakobau wistfully reflected on the apparent inevitability of the cession: "If matters remain as they are, Fiji will become like a piece of driftwood in the sea and be picked up by the first passer-by."<sup>64</sup>

In a sad irony, it was a floating epidemic from across the ocean that devastated Fiji's population in 1875. Measles arrived aboard the HMS *Dido*, the ship that carried home several infected passengers, Cakobau, and his entourage following talks with British diplomats in Sydney, Australia. Within a few months of the *Dido's* arrival in Levuka, over 40,000 Fijians—or nearly a third of the islands' indigenous population—perished in the epidemic.<sup>65</sup>

## INTEROCEANIC CONNECTIONS

In the years prior to the cession and the measles outbreak, Whippy attempted many entrepreneurial ventures beyond sandalwood and sea cucumbers. He received at least 3,500 plant specimens in 1862 from Robert Sherson Swanston, another US expatriate who wandered the Pacific in search of economic opportunities. That year, as Swanston recounted, "Mr. Whippy on Wakaya erected a cane mill and boiled about two tons of syrup; the first attempt on a large scale to turn the sugar cane to account. Samples were sent to Sydney but the sugar companies gave no encouragement to ship."<sup>66</sup> In addition, Whippy experimented with coconut oil manufacturing and cotton growing while also founding one of Fiji's first international businesses, Whippy, Simpsons and Keswick, which built a 20-metric-ton schooner for trading voyages to and from Australia. In 1840, when Lieutenant Charles Wilkes arrived in Fiji with the US Exploring Expedition, Whippy served as guide and interpreter. This crucial role later earned him the title of honorary US vice consul in Fiji.<sup>67</sup>

During his early years in Fiji, Whippy had lived in the town of Levuka on the Island of Ovalau, 24 kilometers (15 miles) east of Viti Levu, the largest Fijian island.<sup>68</sup> News of his dominant presence on

Ovalau was widespread. In 1869 a story in the *New Bedford Whalemens' Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript* noted, "There were about thirty . . . sailors [on the island] who had mostly run away from ships or somehow floated to these shores. The principal man among them, and the one that had the most influence with the chiefs—and in fact was a very respectable and steady man—was David Whippy, who, thirty years before, had left a Nantucket whaler, and making friends with the chief of Libouka, had settled there. He had a number of wives, as a matter of course, and a considerable progeny."<sup>69</sup> Baptist records from the Wesleyan-Methodist Church of Fiji reveal that Whippy had multiple wives and fathered at least eleven children. The many generations of Whippys that followed have become one of Fiji's largest ancestral groups of *kailoma*, or mixed-race Fijians. Whippy remained in Fiji and spent his later years on Wakaya Island until his death in 1871. His descendants inherited portions of a 13,262-acre mountainous tract, known as Yadali, in the district of Wainunu on the western side of Vanua Levu.<sup>70</sup>

Unlike Whippy, Cary returned to Nantucket in 1833. After nine years in Fiji, Cary departed for his home island, signing on as a common sailor aboard the Salem schooner *Tybee*. Cary's fellow Nantucketers were well aware of his adventures in Fiji. Five years earlier, the newspaper *Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror* had published Cary's reminiscences of his time in the South Pacific under the provocative title, *Wrecked in the Feejees: Experience of a Nantucket man a century ago, who was the sole survivor of whaleship "Oeno" and lived for nine years among cannibals of the South Sea Islands*.<sup>71</sup>

By the time Cary returned to his homeland in the North Atlantic, many former inhabitants "of the South Seas Islands" were Nantucket residents. New England's premier whaling community featured a working-class cosmopolitanism characteristic of similar ports of call throughout the world. Nineteenth-century whaleships that sailed on three- to five-year expeditions rarely returned to Nantucket with more than half of their original crew members aboard.<sup>72</sup> At Pacific ports, captains replaced deserters with sailors from these faraway lands. In the 1920s, maritime historian Samuel Eliot Morrison characterized the whaling fleet's new recruits in rather derogatory terms: "To replace them, Kanakas, Togatabooars, Filipinos, and even Fiji cannibals like Melville's hero Queequeg, were signed on for a nominal wage or microscopic lay," comprising "a crew that looked like shipwrecked mariners."<sup>73</sup>

Nantucket was fast coming to resemble its Pacific Island counterparts, half a world away. In 1822 the *Boston Recorder* had reported on a "Heathen School at Nantucket" that had "recently been instituted into which 15 natives of Owhyee [Hawaii] and other islands of the Pacific, have been received."<sup>74</sup> Likewise, the author of a late nineteenth-century account of life on Nantucket stated, "You will find,





Figure 6. Undated photograph of the sign on William Whippy's "Canacka Boarding-House" in Nantucket, Massachusetts. Credit: Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association Research Library.

any day, on the streets of the town, boys and girls and men and women who were 'born round Cape Horn,' at some of the coral isles of the Pacific."<sup>75</sup> In fact, New Zealand-born William Whippy, one of David's distant cousins, was the proprietor of a "Canacka Boarding-House" for Pacific Islanders, located in Nantucket's historically black New Guinea neighborhood. By the 1820s, the term "Kanacka"—Hawaiian for "person"—had become synonymous with "black" in Nantucket ships' crew lists and island census records. William, most likely half Māori, married Maria Ross, the daughter of African-born fugitive slave, James Ross. William and Maria ran their modest guest lodging until William's death in 1847 from tuberculosis.<sup>76</sup>

The stories of William Whippy, his cousin David, and William Cary remind us of the maritime world that connected nineteenth-century Nantucket and Fiji. These linkages left a mixed legacy. Fiji's environment has struggled to recover from successive phases of export-oriented commodity booms that crossed cultural and ethnic boundaries in new encounters of value. Following the devastating decline of the nineteenth century, Fiji's sea cucumber population has experienced a modest revival, in part because of efforts to develop sustainable *Holothuria* aquaculture programs. As of 2013, Fiji's bêche-de-mer trade was worth an annual US\$3 million, but profits from this lucrative enterprise rarely trickle down to villagers who sell their harvests to intermediaries at a small fraction of the prices that the product garners on the international market. China continues to be the major destination for Fijian sea cucumbers.<sup>77</sup> Meanwhile, Fiji's tropical forests remain critically endangered as a result of continuing widespread timber extraction and the extensive conversion of woodlands to plantation agriculture. Since 1967 Fiji has lost 140,000 hectares (345,948 acres) of forests to commercial development.<sup>78</sup>

In addition, neither Whippy nor Cary could have envisioned that a warmer world would pose another pressing threat to the coastal zones

of both Fiji and Nantucket. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, evidence of a rapidly warming planet is accumulating in increasingly palpable ways. Rising sea levels and ocean acidification, combined with increasingly frequent and severe storms, are jeopardizing the integrity of Fiji's coastal mangroves and coral reefs and causing the south shore of Nantucket to lose approximately 3.7 meters (12 feet) per year.<sup>79</sup> In contrast, the impacts of castaways on the global tides of history have proven more vexing to assess. As historian Ronald A. Derrick contended in *A History of Fiji*, "The acts of a handful of traders and settlers make up so much of the recorded history of the years before [the 1874] Cession that it is easy to attach too much importance to them; they were often little more than eddies on the surface of a flood of native life conditioned by the native wars and all that went with them."<sup>80</sup> Derrick was right to challenge the myopic notion that Fiji's nineteenth-century history unfolded as a series of reactions to colonial incursions.<sup>81</sup>

Considering this important caveat, one might easily relegate Whippy and Cary to the margins of history. This would be a mistake. As this article has shown, these castaways facilitated crucial encounters of value that transformed the environments and societies of Fiji and the Pacific World during the nineteenth century. Their stories illuminate transoceanic cultural and environmental processes that would otherwise remain opaque.

## CONCLUSIONS

In a number of ways, the findings presented here resonate with key assertions of historian Richard White's *The Middle Ground*. Throughout the commercial and social relations that developed between New England mariners and Fijians during the early 1800s, both sides adopted and adapted, in quite precarious terms, "values" of the other to facilitate the transpacific trade in sea cucumbers and whales' teeth. Such accommodations characterized the Fijian careers of intermediaries like Whippy and Cary who—much like the fur traders of White's *pays d'en haut* of the eighteenth-century Great Lakes region—acquired many local cultural customs, mastered new languages, and, in Whippy's case, even married into ruling families.

Despite the clear differences between the eighteenth-century Great Lakes region and nineteenth-century Fiji, undeniable similarities exist. Whippy, Carey, and their Fijian counterparts built relationships based on exploitation and violence, but these entanglements occasionally produced mutualistic and collaborative results. At each phase in their intensifying interactions, both sides struggled to understand and manipulate the value systems of the other to acquire wealth, status, and political power. Anglo-Americans were certainly adept at the

business of cultural arbitrage, but Fijians were similarly fierce agents in this exchange. The results of these adaptations amounted to extraordinary environmental, social, demographic, and political changes in Fiji while also shaping the long-term history of Nantucket. However, at least prior to the 1850s, the outcomes of these historic shifts—with the possible exception of the deforestation of Pacific sandalwood groves—were, by no means, imaginable.<sup>82</sup>

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## Notes

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- 1 Jared Sparks, "A Visit to Nantucket in 1826," *Historic Nantucket* 24 (April 1977): 7. In 1849 Sparks became president of Harvard University.
- 2 In 1820 40 percent of the US whaling fleet shipped out of Nantucket. Alexander Starbuck, *History of the American Whale Fishery*, 2 vols. (Waltham: The author, 1878), 665. On the ubiquity of Nantucket whalers in the Pacific, see R. A. Douglas-Lithgow, *Nantucket: A History* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1914), 98.
- 3 William S. Cary, *Wrecked on the Feejees* (Nantucket: Inquirer & Mirror Press, 1928), 27.
- 4 Edouard A. Stackpole Collection, Collection 335, Folder 757, "Whippy Family." Nantucket Historical Association Research Library, Nantucket, Massachusetts; Ian C. Campbell, "Gone Native" in *Polynesia: Captivity Narratives and Experiences from the South Pacific* (London: Greenwood Press, 1998), 62; and J. W. Davidson, "Peter Dillon: The voyages of the *Calder* and *St Patrick*," in *Pacific Island Portraits*, ed. J. W. Davidson and Deryck Scarr (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970), 17. Members of the family's Nantucket branch spell his surname Whippley. See Edouard A. Stackpole, *The Sea Hunters: The New England Whalers During Two Centuries, 1635–1835* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1953), 296–301.
- 5 Cary, *Wrecked on the Feejees*, 10–20; and "Oeno" Ship Log, Collection 15, Folder 146, Nantucket Historical Association Research Library, Nantucket, Massachusetts.

- 6 On Whippy's rank as *Mata ki Bau*, see Parliament of Great Britain, "Inclosure 3 in No. 11: Upon the Native Ownership of Land in Fiji," in *Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons*, 43 vols. (London: Harrison and Sons, 1875), 11:57.
- 7 On the Pacific National Bank, see Robert F. Mooney, "The Forgotten Landmark: Chadwick's Folly 1885," *Historic Nantucket* 36 (Fall 1998): 4–10. For more about the Pacific Club, see James Everett Grieder and Georgen Charnes, *Nantucket* (Charleston: Arcadia, 2012), 17. Recent examples of Pacific World environmental history include Ryan Tucker Jones, *Empire of Extinction: Russians and the North Pacific's Strange Beasts of the Sea, 1741–1867* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Gregory T. Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World: A Global Ecological History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Edward D. Melillo, "The First Green Revolution: Debt Peonage and the Making of the Nitrogen Fertilizer Trade, 1840–1930," *The American Historical Review* 117 (October 2012): 1028–60; and Gregory Rosenthal, "Life and Labor in a Seabird Colony: Hawaiian Guano Workers, 1857–1870," *Environmental History* 17 (October 2012), 744–82.
- 8 Jethro C. Brock, *A List of Persons from Nantucket Now in California . . . Also, Persons Returned, &c.* (Nantucket: Jethro C. Brock, 1850). Nantucket's population was 9,712 in 1840. In 1846 a fire burned much of the island's downtown property, the gold rush emigration further depleted numbers of residents, and the whaling industry began a precipitous decline in the 1840s, causing the island's population to shrink to 6,094 in 1860. The Nantucket Historical Association provides historical population data for the island, <http://www.nha.org/history/faq/population.html>.
- 9 For varied approaches to objects shifting in value across cultural borders, see Kris Lane, *Colour of Paradise: The Emerald in the Age of Gunpowder Empires* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Marcy Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures: A History of Tobacco and Chocolate in the Atlantic World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); and Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981).
- 10 The US schooner *Argo* was sailing from China to Sydney when it ran aground on the Bukutataoa Reef in southeast Fiji. One prominent source gives the possible dates for the *Argo's* arrival as "1802 or 1803." See Basil Thomson, *The Fijians: A Study of the Decay of Custom* (London: W. Heinemann, 1908), 25. Most others agree that it was 1800.
- 11 On Savage's role in Fijian history and cosmology, see Ian C. Campbell, "The Historiography of Charles Savage," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 89 (June 1980): 143–66. For more on the wreck of the *Eliza*, see Michael A. H. B. Walter, "A \$40,000 Question, Or: Some Remarks on the Veracity of Certain Ancient Mariners, Beachcombers and Castaways," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 83 (March 1974): 58–83.
- 12 Ian C. Campbell, *A History of the Pacific Islands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 65. For a comprehensive treatment of musketry in Fijian warfare, see Fergus Clunie, *Fijian Weapons & Warfare*, 2nd rev. ed. (Suva: Fijian Museum, 2003), 189–214.
- 13 Marshall Sahlins, *Apologies to Thucydides: Understanding History as Culture and Vice Versa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 13–124.
- 14 George Foster Emmons, entry for June 7, 1840, in "Journal," 3 vols. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

- 15 Jean-François Hamel, Chantal Conand, David L. Pawson, and Annie Mercier, "The Sea Cucumber *Holothuria scabra* (Holothuroidea: Echinodermata): Its Biology and Exploitation as Beche-de-mer," *Advances in Marine Biology* 41 (2001): 129–223; and Akamine Jun, "Namako and Iriko: Historical Overview on *holothuria* (Sea Cucumber) Exploitation, Utilization, and Trade in Japan," in *Food and Foodways in Asia: Resource, Tradition and Cooking*, ed. Sidney C. H. Cheung and Tan Chee-Beng (New York: Routledge, 2007), 23–36.
- 16 For the dual meaning of the term *dri* in Fijian, see Ronald Gatty, *Fijian-English Dictionary: with Notes on Fijian Culture and Natural History* (Suva: R. Gatty, 2009), 74–75.
- 17 Jiaxin Chen, "Overview of Sea Cucumber Farming and Sea Ranching Practices in China," *SPC Beche-de-mer Information Bulletin*, no. 18 (May 2003): 18. Charles Campbell Macknight has argued that the sea cucumber's properties had already been written about in the sixteenth century. See Macknight, *The Voyage to Marege': Macassan Trepanners in Northern Australia* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1976), 7.
- 18 Benjamin Morrell, *A Narrative of Four Voyages to the South Sea, North and South Pacific Ocean, Chinese Sea, Ethiopic and Southern Atlantic Ocean, Indian and Antarctic Ocean* (New York: J&J Harper, 1832), 401–2. On the historical role of the sea cucumber in Chinese cuisine, see Frederick J. Simoons, *Food in China: A Cultural and Historical Inquiry* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 1991), 434–36.
- 19 Alfred Russel Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago, the Land of the Orang-utan, and the Bird of Paradise: A Narrative of Travel, with Studies of Man and Nature* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1869), 435.
- 20 Peter Lund Simmonds, *The Animal Food Resources of Different Nations: With Mention of Some of the Special Dainties of Various People Derived from the Animal Kingdom* (London: E. & F.N. Spon, 1885), 445.
- 21 For more on how US citizens depended on imagined and real ideas, people, and objects from China in the formation of national identity, see John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776–1882* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), xv.
- 22 James M. Callahan, *American Relations in the Pacific and the Far East, 1784–1900* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1901), 10; Lincoln P. Paine, *Ships of the World: An Historical Encyclopedia* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997); Philip Chadwick Foster Smith, *The Empress of China* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Maritime Museum, 1984); and Clarence L. Ver Steeg, "Financing and Outfitting the First United States Ship to China," *Pacific Historical Review* 22, no. 1 (1953): 1–12. *The Empress of China* sailed to Canton by way of the Cape of Good Hope and Java, rather than rounding Cape Horn.
- 23 Foster R. Dulles, *China and America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), 2.
- 24 Rhys Richards, "Re-Viewing Early American Trade with China, 1784–1833," *Mains'l Haul* 39 (Spring 2003): 14–19. Also see J. Wade Caruthers, *American Pacific Ocean Trade: Its Impact on Foreign Policy and Continental Expansion, 1784–1860* (New York: Exposition Press, 1973), 77.
- 25 On the ecological implications of the China trade for Pacific World environments, see Eric Jay Dolin, *When American First Met China: An Exotic History of Tea, Drugs, and Money in the Age of Sail* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012), 163; and J. R. McNeill, "Of Rats and Men: A Synoptic Environmental History of the Island Pacific," *Journal of World History* 5 (Fall 1994): 319.
- 26 Yu-Jun Chen, "Embodying Nation in Food Consumption: Changing Boundaries of 'Taiwanese Cuisine,' (1895–2008)" (PhD diss., Leiden University,

- 2010, 160); Teresa M. Chen, *A Tradition of Soup: Flavors from China's Pearl River Delta* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2009), 70; and Massimo F. Marcone, "Characterization of the Edible Bird's Nest the 'Caviar of the East,'" *Food Research International* 38 (December 2005): 1125–34.
- 27 On the Fijian sandalwood trade and its eventual decline, see Ryan David Huish, "The Sustainable Management and Conservation of *Santalum yasi* (Sandalwood) in Fiji and Tonga: A Combined Ecological and Genetic Approach" (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 2009, 5–6); Ernest Stanley Dodge, *Islands and Empires: Western Impact on the Pacific and East Asia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), 63–64; and Dorothy Shineberg, *They Came for Sandalwood: A Study of the Sandalwood Trade in the South-West Pacific, 1830–1865* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967), 7.
- 28 William Lockerby, *The Journal of William Lockerby: Sandalwood Trader in the Fijian Islands During the Years 1808–1809: With an Introduction & Other Papers Connected with the Earliest European Visitors to the Island*, ed. Sir Everard Im Thurn and Leonard C. Wharton (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1922), 82. Donald B. Freeman, *The Pacific* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 134–35. Similar sandalwood rushes in the Marquesas and Hawaii had equally devastating effects on island forests. See Campbell, *A History of the Pacific Islands*, 61–63.
- 29 Most of these captains worked for the firms N. L. Rogers & Brothers or Stephen C. Phillips. See Ernest S. Dodge, "Fiji Trader," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Third Series, vol. 78 (1966): 7; and Karl Erik Larsson, "Early Channels of Communication in the Pacific," *Ethnos* 31, nos. 1–4 (1966): 113–14.
- 30 "The Beche-de-Mer," *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly* 1 (January 1878): 51.
- 31 John Henry Eagleston, "Autobiography, 1836–1839," microfilm no. 91, reel 30, p. 328. Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts. On the numbers of Fijian men and women who worked in the sea cucumber trade, see David Routledge, "Editor's Introduction," in Mary Wallis, *The Fiji and New Caledonia Journals of Mary Wallis, 1851–1853*, ed. David Routledge (Suva and Salem: Institute of Pacific Studies and Peabody Essex Museum, 1994), xviii.
- 32 R. Gerard Ward, "The Pacific *Bêche-de-mer* Trade with Speical Reference to Fiji," in *Man in the Pacific Islands: Essays on Geographical Change in the Pacific Islands*, ed. R. Gerard Ward (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 114.
- 33 Charles S. Osgood and Henry Morrill Batchelder, *Historical Sketch of Salem: 1626–1879* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1879), 171.
- 34 Ian C. Campbell, "Race Relations in the Pre-Colonial Pacific Islands: A Case of Prejudice and Pragmatism," *Pacific Studies* 8 (Spring 1995): 67–69; and Ward, "The Pacific *Bêche-de-mer* Trade with Speical Reference to Fiji," 106.
- 35 Edmund Fanning, *Voyages Round the World: With Selected Sketches of Voyages to the South Seas . . .* (New York: Collins & Hannay, 1833), 463.
- 36 Cary, *Wrecked on the Feejees*, 46.
- 37 Dodge, *Islands and Empires*, 66. By 1750 whaling vessels had begun to feature cast-iron pots, or tryworks, for rendering blubber immediately after the captured whale had been hauled aboard.
- 38 Mary Davis Wallis, *Life in Feejee; of, Five Years among the Cannibals* (Boston: William Heath, 1851), 17, 97. The first edition of Wallis's account appeared anonymously, with a cover page that read "By a Lady."
- 39 James R. Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships and China Goods: The Maritime Fur Trade of the Northwest Coast, 1785–1841* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 252.
- 40 Charles Pickering journal, 1838–1841. Ms. N-706, p. 122 of section with entries from May 4, 1840, to November 28, 1841. Massachusetts Historical Society.

- 41 Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 57. Such analyses frequently take as their starting point Marx's insights about how the social relationships that constitute value become objectified through commodity production. See Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, 3 vols., trans. Ben Fowkes (1867; repr., Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1976), 1:125–77. For an extended discussion of Marx and value, see George Henderson, *Value in Marx: The Persistence of Value in a More-Than-Capitalist World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
- 42 Ward, "The Pacific *Bêche-de-mer* Trade with Special Reference to Fiji," 117–18.
- 43 "The Beche-de-Mer," *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly* 1 (January 1878): 51.
- 44 For similar nineteenth-century concerns about unsustainable exploitation of the Atlantic Ocean's fisheries, see Jeffrey Bolster, *The Mortal Sea: Fishing the Atlantic in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 121–68.
- 45 For a survey of Pacific whaling, see Eric Jay Dolin, *Leviathan: A History of Whaling in America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 188–374; for the Pacific seal hunt, see Briton Cooper Busch, *The War against Seals: A History of the North American Seal Fishery* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985); for the Pacific sea otter hunt, see Adelle Ogden, *The California Sea Otter Trade, 1784–1848* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1941); for the copra trade, see Deryck Scarr, *A History of the Pacific Islands: Passages through Tropical Time*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Routledge, 2001), 129–40; on the Pacific pearl and mother-of-pearl fisheries, see George Frederick Kunz and Charles Hugh Stevenson, *The Book of the Pearl: Its History, Art, Science and Industry*, 3rd ed. (Mineola: Dover, 2001), 189–224; for tortoiseshell, see Judith A. Bennett, *Wealth of the Solomons: A History of the Pacific Archipelago, 1800–1978* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987); on the guano trade, see Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World*; on New Caledonian nickel, see Jean-François Dupon, *The Effects of Mining on the Environment of High Islands: A Case Study of Mining in New Caledonia* (Noumea: South Pacific Commission, 1986); for phosphate mining on Nauru, see Christopher Weeramantry, *Nauru: Environmental Damage under International Trusteeship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
- 46 These expropriations were extremely similar to the violent terminations of customary rights to resources previous held "in common" throughout Western Europe during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Known as enclosures, these transformations facilitated a shift from feudal production for use to capitalist production for exchange. See Marx, *Capital*, 1:875.
- 47 Scholars have previously employed the concept of "cultural arbitrage" to suggest country-of-origin effects on marketing strategies. For an example, see Pankaj Ghemawat, "Reconceptualizing International Strategy and Organization," *Strategic Organization* 6 (May 2008): 200.
- 48 A few anthropologists have begun to explore the environmental consequences of value arbitrage. For example, see Josiah Heyman, "Environmental Issues at the U.S.-Mexico Border and the Unequal Territorialization of Value," in *World-System History and Global Environmental Change*, ed. Alf Hornborg, John McNeill, and Juan Martínez Alier (Lanham: Altamira Press, 2006), 327–44.
- 49 Nicholas Thomas, "Exchange Systems, Political Dynamics, and Colonial Transformations in Nineteenth-Century Oceania," in *The Austronesians: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Peter Bellwood, James J. Fox, and Darrell Tryon (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1995), 285; and

- Sharyn Jones, *Food and Gender in Fiji: Ethnoarchaeological Explorations* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), 79.
- 50 Dorothy Shineberg, "Guns and Men in Melanesia," *Journal of Pacific History* 6, no. 1 (1971): 61–82.
- 51 Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 67; Fergus Clunie, *Yalo i Viti: A Fiji* (Suva: Fiji Museum, 1986), 160–61; Andrew Arno, "Cobo and Tabua in Fiji: Two Forms of Cultural Currency in an Economy of Sentiment," *American Ethnologist* 32 (February 2005): 46–62; and Matt Tomlinson, "Passports to Eternity: Whales' Teeth and Transcendence in Fijian Methodism," in *Flows of Faith: Religious Reach and Community in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Lenore Madnerson, Wendy Smith, and Matt Tomlinson (New York: Springer, 2012), 215–31.
- 52 Asesela D. Ravuvu, *The Fijian Ethos* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1987), 22–23.
- 53 Marshall Sahlins, "The Discovery of the True Savage," in *Culture in Practice: Selected Essays* (New York: Zone Books, 2000), 410, n. 22; and Thomas, "Exchange Systems, Political Dynamics, and Colonial Transformations in Nineteenth-Century Oceania," 281.
- 54 John William Anderson, *Notes of Travel in Fiji and New Caledonia: With Some Remarks on South Sea Islanders and Their Languages* (London: Ellissen & Co., 1880), 79. Charles Wilkes noted a similar ratio of whales' teeth for hogsheds of sea cucumbers. See Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, 5 vols. (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1845), 3:220.
- 55 Cary, *Wrecked on the Feejees*, 53.
- 56 Gananath Obeyesekere, *Cannibal Talk: The Man-eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 166.
- 57 Andrew Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart, "Religion and Violence in Pacific Island Societies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence*, ed. Mark Juergensmeyer, Margo Kitts, and Michael Jerryson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 170–71. Among the most comprehensive English-language sources on tabua is Steven Hooper, "'Supreme Among Our Valuables': Whale Teeth Tabua, Chiefship and Power in Eastern Fiji," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 122 (June 2013): 103–60.
- 58 On the use of whalebone in corsets, see Valerie Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 1–34. For more on the background of ambergris, see Karl H. Dannenfeldt, "Ambergris: The Search for Its Origin," *Isis* 73 (September 1982): 382–97.
- 59 Letter from Boardman and Pope to Captain Caleb Reynolds (1815), as quoted in Stuart M. Frank, *Ingenious Contrivances, Curiously Carved: Scrimshaw in the New Bedford Whaling Museum, A Comprehensive Catalog of the World's Largest Collection* (Boston: David R. Godine, 2012), 11.
- 60 Paul Van Der Grijp, "Tabua Business: Re-Circulation of Whale Teeth and Bone Valuables in the Central Pacific," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 116 (September 2007): 346; and Frank, *Ingenious Contrivances, Curiously Carved*, 11–13.
- 61 Joshua Basseches and Stuart M. Frank, *Edward Burdett, 1805–1833: America's First Master Scrimshaw Artist*, Kendall Whaling Museum Monograph Series No. 5 (Sharon: The Kendall Whaling Museum, 1991).
- 62 Frank, *Ingenious Contrivances, Curiously Carved*, 22; David E. Ridley, Stuart M. Frank, Paul Madden, Paul Vardeman, and Janet West, *Frederick Myrick of Nantucket Scrimshaw Catalogue Raisonné*, Kendall Whaling Museum Monograph Series No. 13 (Sharon: The Kendall Whaling Museum, 2000); and Everett Uberto



- Crosby, *Susan's Teeth, and Much about Scrimshaw* (Nantucket: Tetaukimmo Press, 1955).
- 63 This whale's-tooth necklace is one of the objects discussed in Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, "The Cultural Biography of Objects," *World Archaeology* 31 (October 1999): 169–78.
  - 64 Cakobau, as quoted in Brij V. Lal, *Broken Waves: A History of the Fiji Islands in the Twentieth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1992), 11. For an explication of the role of ritual and symbolism in the cession, see Martha Kaplan, "The Magical Power of the (Printed) Word," in *Magic and Modernity: Interfaces of Revelation and Concealment*, ed. Birgit Meyer and Peter Pels (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 183–99.
  - 65 David M. Morens, "Measles in Fiji, 1875: Thoughts on the History of Emerging Infectious Diseases," *Pacific Health Dialog* 5, no. 1 (1998): 119–28.
  - 66 Evelyn Stokes, "Early Plantation Experiments in the Fiji Islands," *Agricultural History* 43 (July 1969): 388–89. Fiji's sugar industry took off in the 1870s. Its major developments are described in Michael Moynagh, *Brown or White? A History of the Fiji Sugar Industry, 1873–1973* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1981).
  - 67 For more on Whippy, Simpsons, and Keswick, see Sera Whippy, "Family Reunites," *The Fiji Times*, August 28, 2010, 4. On the Wilkes Expedition's visit to Fiji, see Jason W. Smith, "The Bound[less] Sea: Wilderness and the United States Exploring Expedition in the Fiji Islands," *Environmental History* 18, no. 4 (2013): 710–37. Curiously, Smith does not mention Whippy. Also see Ann Fabian, *The Skull Collectors: Race, Science, and America's Unburied Dead* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 123–55. For Wilkes's appointment of Whippy as honorary US vice consul in Fiji, see W. Patrick Strauss, *Americans in Polynesia, 1783–1842* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1963), 101. For more on the "cotton rush" to Fiji, see John Young, *Adventurous Spirits: Australian Migrant Society in Pre-Cession Fiji* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1984), 163–214; and Gerald Horn, *The White Pacific: U.S. Imperialism and Black Slavery in the South Seas after the Civil War* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 63–76.
  - 68 The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) named Levuka a World Heritage Site in 2013. For an explanation of the debates over this status, see David Harrison, "Levuka, Fiji: Contested Heritage," in *The Politics of World Heritage: Negotiating Tourism and Conservation*, ed. David Harrison and Michael Hitchcock (Buffalo: Channel View Publications, 2005), 66–89.
  - 69 New Bedford *Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript*, April 6, 1869, 2. This story was reprinted in the *Sacramento Daily Union*, April 13, 1869, 3.
  - 70 Stanley Brown, *Men from Under the Sky: The Arrival of Westerners in Fiji* (Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle, 1973), 115. Among the most comprehensive published sources on the Whippy clan and their inherited property is Annelise Riles, *The Network Inside Out* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 96–103. Also see Sera Whippy, "David Whippy's Long Journey Home," *Fiji Times Online* (September 19, 2010), <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=156316>.
  - 71 The book's text was compiled from Cary's logbook, which had first been published in 1887. A typescript version of the log is available at the Nantucket Historical Association's Research Library. On the second page of its September 27, 1828, issue, the *Nantucket Inquirer* printed a letter from Cary that told of the *Oeno's* shipwreck and the subsequent massacre of the crew. I have avoided engaging with the long and acrimonious exchange between Gananath Obeyesekere and Marsall Sahlins about the topic of cannibalism in Fijian history. For a comprehensive summary of this debate, see Tracey Banivanua-Mar,

- "Cannibalism and Colonialism: Charting Colonies and Frontiers in Nineteenth-Century Fiji," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52 (January 2010): 225–81.
- 72 Elmo Paul Hohman, *The American Whaleman: A Study of Life and Labor in the Whaling Industry* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1928), 316–17.
- 73 Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783–1860* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1921), 323.
- 74 *The Boston Recorder*, as quoted in *The Religious Intelligencer* (New Haven), May 4, 1822, 779.
- 75 Edward K. Godfrey, *The Island of Nantucket: What It Was and What It Is . . .* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1882), 70.
- 76 Francis R. Karttunen, *The Other Islanders: People Who Pulled Nantucket's Oars* (New Bedford: Spinner, 2005), 64–65; and Francis R. Karttunen, personal communication, October 31, 2012. Commenting on an earlier version of this article, historian Nancy Shoemaker suggested that William Whippy might have been a common sailor who took the surname of one of the Whippy family's several whaleship captains. Even if this is the case, William's association with the Whippy/Whippley clan on Nantucket has remained intact over many generations.
- 77 "Fiji's \$3 Million Export," *Papua New Guinea Post-Courier*, March 25, 2013, 27; "Report of the FAO Workshop on Sea Cucumber Fisheries: An Ecosystem Approach to Management in the Pacific: Naji, Fiji, November 15–18, 2011," *FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report, no. 1003* (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2012); and Steven W. Purcell, "Managing Sea Cucumber Fisheries with an Ecosystem Approach," in *FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper No. 520*, ed. Alessandro Lovatelli, Marcelo Vasconcellos, and Ye Yimin (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization, 2010), 1–157.
- 78 Fiji Department of the Environment, "Fiji's Fourth National Report to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity," May 31, 2010, 18, [www.cbd.int/doc/world/fj/fj-nr-04-en.pdf](http://www.cbd.int/doc/world/fj/fj-nr-04-en.pdf).
- 79 On climate change and shoreline erosion of the Nantucket coastline, see Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, "Shoreline Change and the Importance of Coastal Erosion" (last updated August 9, 2013), <http://www.whoi.edu/seagrant/page.do?pid=51817&tid=282&cid=88713>. On Fiji's coral reefs and mangroves, see Ove Hoegh-Guldberg et al., "Vulnerability of Coral Reefs in the Tropical Pacific to Climate Change," in *Vulnerability of Tropical Pacific Fisheries and Aquaculture to Climate Change*, ed. J. D. Bell, J. E. Johnson, and A. J. Hobday (Noumea: Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2011).
- 80 Ronald Albert Derrick, *A History of Fiji*, 2nd rev. ed. (Suva: Printing and Stationery Department, 1950), 52.
- 81 For a similar argument, see Shelley Ann Sayes, "Paths of the Land: Early Political Hierarchies in Cakaudrove, Fiji," *Journal of Pacific History* 19 (January 1984): 3–20.
- 82 Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).