

The Many Deaths of Captain Cook

A Study in Metropolitan Mass Culture, 1780-1810

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Abstract

This thesis traces metropolitan representations, between 1780 and 1810, of the violent death of Captain James Cook at Kealakekua Bay in Hawaii. It takes an interdisciplinary approach to these representations, in order to show how the interlinked texts of a nascent commercial culture initiated the creation of a colonial character, identified by Epeli Hau'ofa as the looming “ghost of Captain Cook.”

The introduction sets out the circumstances of Cook's death and existing metropolitan reputation in 1779. It situates the figure of Cook within contemporary mechanisms of ‘celebrity,’ related to notions of mass metropolitan culture. It argues that previous accounts of Cook's fame have tended to overemphasise the immediacy and unanimity with which the dead Cook was adopted as an imperialist hero; with the result that the role of the scene within colonialist histories can appear inevitable, even natural. In response, I show that a contested mythology around Cook's death was gradually constructed over the three decades after the incident took place, and was the contingent product of a range of texts, places, events, and individuals.

The first section examines responses to the news of Cook's death in January 1780, focusing on the way that the story was mediated by, first, its status as ‘news,’ created by newspapers; and second, the effects on Londoners of the Gordon riots in June of the same year. It suggests that the related demands and concerns of mass culture and commerce inform the representation of Cook's death in elegy (such as Anna Seward's *Elegy on Captain Cook*) and visual art (such as John Webber's *Death of Cook*).

The second section discusses the further absorption of Cook's death into metropolitan entertainment culture. The key site for this process was the Leverian Museum, in the centre of London, where artefacts collected by Cook's crew in Hawaii were displayed in a room dedicated to his memory. The section suggests that these objects were presented as sensational or sentimental relics of distant 'Owhyhee.' The techniques by which this took place emerged from similar presentations, in popular entertainment, of antiquities as animated materialisations of a gothic past. These techniques, in often controversial ways, shaped the understanding of Cook's death, not only in the museum but also in travel writing, theatre, poetry and painting.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work. It has not been previously published nor submitted for any other degree at the University of York or any other institution.

What an immense difference there is between hearing of an extraordinary fact – between even believing it [...], and witnessing the same fact in proper person! [...]
We read Captain Cook's adventures amongst various savage islanders, and even his death by their hands, without any very startling or exceptional impression. It is an amusing romance, a terrible tragedy, no more.

*Household Words*¹

Earlier than I could learn
the maps had been coloured in.
When I pleaded, the kings told me
nothing was left to explore.²

Margaret Atwood, from "The Reincarnation of Captain Cook"

¹ *Household Words*, edited by Charles Dickens. Volume 17 of 19 (London: Bradbury and Evan, 1857-1858), p. 141-142.

² Margaret Atwood, "The Reincarnation of Captain Cook" in *The Animals in that Country* (Toronto: Oxford U.P., 1968), p. 61, ll. 1-4.

Introduction

How did white people know about Captain Cook? Only through books, of course: books are notoriously changeable.³

Mourning Captain James Cook: Ditty boxes, medals and mass culture.

On the morning of 14 February 1779, the fifty-one-year-old naval captain and “famous civilizer and secret terrorizer”⁴ James Cook left his battered ships *Resolution* and *Discovery* and was rowed onshore with ten marines at Kealakekua Bay on Hawai‘i Island. They marched to the home of an old man, Kalani‘opu‘u, who was the island’s *mo‘i* (highest ruler) and their own ally, and persuaded or coerced him to return to the beach with them. Cook’s plan was essentially to take Kalani‘opu‘u and his sons hostage, seizing a large number of fishing canoes at the same time, in order to force unknown Hawaiians to return a boat which had been stolen in the night from the *Discovery*. Tension between crew and natives had been building for some time, with a series of thefts and violent incidents building up to this confrontation. The local people possibly resented the huge quantities of food which British sailors had bought or been given, and might also have begun to suspect that the British were planning to settle permanently on the island. Indeed, the shifting

³ Chips Mackinolty in Mackinolty and Paddy Wainburranga, “Too Many Captain Cooks”, in *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions*, edited by Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose (Adelaide: Australian Association for the Study of Religion, 1988), 355-360, p. 360.

⁴ The phrase is Marshall Sahlins’, the idea attributed to Gananath Obeyesekere. Sahlins, *How ‘Natives’ Think: About Captain Cook, For Example* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 1. Qtd. in Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 90.

perceptions and appropriations of Cook and his ships among the different religious and political factions on the island have been contested by Pacific historians ever since.⁵ As Kalani‘opu‘u changed his mind and refused to get into a rowing boat to go to the ships, a huge crowd – perhaps as many as three thousand people – began to gather, and seemed to some of Cook’s men to be preparing for battle.

At this point news probably arrived that a shot from one of the British ships had killed a member of the high-ranking *ali‘i* class as he was canoeing across the bay. The crowd became angrier, throwing stones and coconuts and flourishing weapons. Despite being heavily outnumbered, Cook fired his gun, loaded with smallshot, at a man he considered especially “insolent.” The tiny pieces of lead failed to penetrate his protective mat, and the action seems only to have provoked the crowd. They surged forwards, attacking Cook and his men with daggers, clubs and rocks. The boats in the bay opened fire, while the marines attempted to retreat. When a brief, confused struggle was over, four marines and many Hawaiians were dead, as well as Cook, who was trapped at the rocks at the water’s edge, and had been beaten and stabbed several times before probably drowning in the shallow water. The surviving marines, either to save themselves or to prevent a massacre, retreated back to the ships, with the news but without the corpses.

Following local funeral traditions, Cook’s body was cut into pieces: some were burnt, while others, including Cook’s arms, thighs, skull and hands, were returned to

⁵ See Greg Denning, “Sharks that Walk on the Land” (1982) in *Performances* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 64-79; Marshall Sahlins, “Captain James Cook; or, the Dying God” in *Islands of History* (London: Tavistock, 1985), 104-135; Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1992); Sahlins (1995); K.R. Howe, “Review: The Making of Cook’s Death,” in *The Journal of Pacific History* 31, no. 1 (1996): pp. 108-118; Robert Borofsky et al, “CA Forum on Theory in Anthropology: Cook, Lono, Obeyesekere, and Sahlins”, in *Current Anthropology* 38, no. 2 (1997): 255-282.

the ships wrapped in cloth, and given a naval burial at sea.⁶ The confrontation was a local tragedy, killing and wounding many Hawaiians, and was followed by days of indiscriminate revenge attacks by the British against onshore settlements.

Nevertheless, as many postcolonial Pacific scholars have emphasised, it should not be seen as the foundational or cataclysmic event in Hawaiian history later represented by Eurocentric writers, any more than Cook's visits elsewhere in the Pacific should be seen as having more than retrospective symbolism.⁷

For his crew, who were not unused to losing shipmates, Cook's death was a disaster. George Gilbert, a twenty-one-year-old midshipman whose father had also sailed with Cook, for whom the probability of a successful voyage and future naval career seemed to largely depend on the captain, wrote that "all our hopes centred in him," so that the "loss became irreparable."⁸ Gilbert may have been among the crew members on the *Resolution* who spent some of the voyage back to England crafting a memorial 'ditty box' – that is, a version of the storage chests used by seamen – in the shape of a miniature coffin (Figure 1). The earliest surviving monument to Cook's

⁶ For detailed accounts of the incident, each of which interprets the available evidence slightly differently, see J.C. Beaglehole, *The Life of Captain James Cook* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1974), 660-627; Anne Salmond, *The Trial of the Cannibal Dog: Captain Cook in the South Seas* (London: Penguin, 2004), 408-425; Nicholas Thomas, *Discoveries: the Voyages of Captain Cook* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), 389-401.

⁷ See Alex Calder, Jonathan Lamb and Bridget Orr, "Postcoloniality and the Pacific" in *Voyages and Beaches: Pacific Encounters, 1769-1840*, edited by Calder, Lamb and Orr (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 1-24; Nicholas Thomas, *Discoveries: the Voyages of Captain Cook* (London: Allen Lane, 2003); Robert Borofsky (ed.), *Remembrance of Pacific Pasts: An Invitation to Remake History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 101-169 ("The Dynamics of Contact"); Epeli Hau'ofa, "Pasts to Remember" (2000), in *We Are the Ocean: Selected Works* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 60-79; Matt K. Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds: A History of Seas, Peoples, and Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2012), 136-153.

⁸ George Gilbert, *Captain Cook's Final Voyage: The Journal of Midshipman George Gilbert*, edited by Christine Holmes. (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1982), p. 107.

death, this small wooden box travelled to London before eventually returning to the Pacific, and is now in the State Library of New South Wales in Sydney. It is covered in abstract patterns reminiscent of Polynesian *tapa* and tattoos, and inset with mother-of-pearl and a silver plate charting Cook's 'victories' as on a naval tomb: "Quebec | Newfoundland | Greenwich | Australis." Two more plates read "Lono and the Seaman's Idol" and "Captain James Cook Slain at Owhyhee. 14 February 1779." The box swings open to display a watercolour of Cook's death and a lock of his hair. A memento mori and a compliment to Cook and his widow, a reproduction in miniature of the Pacific curiosities collected by the *Resolution* and *Discovery* for exhibition in London (as discussed the second section of this thesis), and an early, wooden form of what would later be called scrimshaw,⁹ the ditty box is a complex manifestation of several of the characteristic metropolitan conventions and tropes of Cook's voyages, and particularly his death. Unlike many later Cook memorial objects, though, the ditty box is a strikingly personal expression of emotion. It is small and enclosed, demanding close, intimate attention and insider knowledge of the voyages. A cruder inscription carved into the sides announces that it was "Made of Resolution Oak for M^{rs}. Cook by Crew." The inscriptions define the object as a gift, not a commodity, with a value derived from the perception of its unreproducible authenticity.

Most contemporary metropolitan keepsakes and mourning objects, including hairwork jewellery, miniatures, old letters, unpublished elegies and epitaphs, could be

⁹ Defined as artefacts made by sailors during their leisure time, "as mementos of the voyage and especially as gifts for loved ones at home." Stuart M. Frank, *Ingenious Contrivances, Curiously Carved: Scrimshaw in the New Bedford Whaling Museum* (New Hampshire: David R. Godine, 2012), 3-15, p. 3.

described in these terms of ‘sentimental value.’¹⁰ For example, a mourning ring with a painted funeral urn, which Elizabeth Cook had engraved with her husband’s name, is both a unique and a conventional object: in material and form it could easily have commemorated almost anybody, but a closely-defined meaning develops from the object’s personal connection to Cook.¹¹ Yet the increasingly industrialised mass marketplace of the late eighteenth century also produced many objects and texts, sometimes superficially similar to these, which represented specific individual deaths to consumers with no ‘authentic’ connection to the subject. In so doing, in the commodified, often mechanically reproduced, and inclusive forms of newspapers, exhibitions, prints, theatre and material commodities, they worked to construct new, mediated, affective relationships between the ‘celebrated’ subject and the consumer.

A midpoint between these two sorts of commemoration is perhaps the Royal Society’s commemorative Cook medal. This was commissioned after the ships’ return to London in 1780 to be cast in gold, silver and bronze. Although such medals could be mass produced, their value was directly related to their rarity, so only thirteen gold copies were struck. Subscriptions to silver and bronze versions were limited to members of the Royal Society and selected dignitaries. Furthermore, once “a certain number has been struck off,” advertisements promised, “the die is to be broke.”¹² The medal features a portrait of Cook and a figure of Britannia holding a rudder, with the legends *Cook oceani investigator acerrimus* and *Nil intentatum*

¹⁰ See Marcia Pointon, “Materializing Mourning: Hair, Jewellery, and the Body” in *Material Memories*, edited by Marius Kwint, Jeremy Aynsley and Christopher Breward (Oxford: Berg, 1999): 39-71; Christiane Holm, “Sentimental Cuts: Eighteenth-Century Mourning Jewelry with Hair” in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38, no. 1 (2004): 139-143.

¹¹ Both the box and the ring are now in the State Library of New South Wales’s collection of “Cook’s mementoes.” Very detailed photographs can be found at < <http://acms.sl.nsw.gov.au> > .

¹² *Whitehall Evening Post* (29 January 1780).

nostris liquere (“The most intrepid explorer of the seas / Our men have left nothing unattempted”).¹³ Despite the hyperbole, the medal was a conventional form for private commemorations of virtue and loss, the designer, Lewis Pingo, having already created equivalent portrait medals for deceased subjects including David Garrick, the physician Richard Mead, the numismatist Thomas Snelling, and John Manners, Marquess of Granby. Like the ditty box, then, the medal is intended only for members of a clique personally linked to Cook: here the Royal Society, with membership temporarily extended, as the crew of the *Resolution* had been, to include Cook’s widow. This is emphasised by its materials and the use of exclusive language, references and symbolism. Yet, despite its more class-based elitism, this group was considerably larger than the circle of circumnavigators who had participated in the making of the ditty box. Moreover, the production of several hundred silver and bronze copies of the medal, in 1784, suggests that it responded not only to private demands for a memento of a loved one or respected colleague, but to Cook’s increasing appeal to a wider and less personal demographic.

In 1780, however, neither the makers of the ditty box nor Cook’s colleagues in the Royal Society could have expected that their personal sense of loss would be shared by many people in England. Cook was, during his own lifetime, not especially famous, despite his reputation as a “skilful Navigator” at the Admiralty and among professionals and enthusiasts in navigation, geography, and natural sciences.¹⁴

Letters among the close social circles of the ruling elite indicate that news of “the

¹³ Examples of the medal are in the British Museum. See Glyndwr Williams, *The Death of Captain Cook: A Hero Made and Unmade* (London: Profile, 2008), 14-15.

¹⁴ *St James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post* (28 September 1779). See Beaglehole (1974), 689-714; Andrew S. Cook, “James Cook and the Royal Society” in *Captain Cook: Explorations and Reassessments*, edited by Glyndwr Williams (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004), 37-58.

deplorable end of captain Cook” was received with some, but not undue, grief; the king was said to have wept when he heard about it.¹⁵ Cook was known to readers of his earlier Pacific voyage accounts. Nevertheless, other characters in these books – the gallant and wealthy Sir Joseph Banks, Oberea, Omai, even “the able and ingenious Naturalist” Johann Reinhold Forster – were all more obvious figures for celebration than the unglamorous figure of Cook: a “plain, sensible [...] grave steady man.”¹⁶ Indeed, as the first chapter of this thesis shows, the news of Cook’s death was received in wartime London with considerably less public grief than is often suggested.¹⁷ Cook was one dead sailor among many: in London as elsewhere, his distinctive public status was not immediate or inherent but forged over time, by the contingent combination of circumstances and discourses.

Five years earlier, news of Cook and the *Resolution*, “circumnavigating to the Southward,” had been one minor item of shipping news in a newspaper paragraph which also included the now-forgotten Captain Broadley in the *True Briton*, Fortescue in the *Osterly*, and De Vigney in the *Superb*.¹⁸ A little more than twenty years later, Cook’s peers were not contemporary merchant captains but Alfred the Great, Shakespeare and James Wolfe, as one of fifty two “illustrious Britons” in

¹⁵ Sir William Jones to Viscount Althorp (13 January 1780), in *The Letters of Sir William Jones*, edited by Garland Cannon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), vol. 1 of 2, pp. 337-338. See Glyn Williams, *Voyages of Delusion: The Quest for the Northwest Passage* (London: HarperCollins, 2002), 335-336.

¹⁶ *London Evening Post* (22-25 July 1775); James Boswell (Tuesday 2 April 1776), in *The Journals of James Boswell 1762-1795*, edited by John Wain (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1991), p. 296.

¹⁷ An exception is Harriet Guest, “Commemorating Captain Cook in the Country Estate” (forthcoming).

¹⁸ *Lloyd’s Evening Post* (28-30 June 1775). Also in *Middlesex Journal and Evening Advertiser* (29 June- 1 July 1775); *Public Advertiser* (1 July 1775).

William Fordyce Mavor's selected biographies of British heroes. "Distinguished as this country is for its illustrious navigators," Mavor confidently writes,

it certainly derives no small accession of fame from producing such a man as Cook; who, by dint of persevering diligence, and the exercise of useful talents, burst through the impediments of original indigence and obscurity, gained the palm of deserved celebrity, and now ranks high among the benefactors of mankind.¹⁹

By this point, Cook's credentials as "one of the ablest and most celebrated navigators of any country" seemed to have been established forever: the history of sea exploration ran, in Byron's words, "from Captain Noah to Captain Cook."²⁰ The turn of the century saw a song about Cook's resemblance to Alexander the Great sung "at *Vauxhall, Theatres Royal, Convivial Meetings, &c.*" and at least one major tavern with "the sign of the Captain Cook" in east London. Sailors were tattooed with images "illustrating the death of Captain Cook," Chartist writers used the fact that "Captain Cook was a common sailor" as evidence of the potential "Genius of Working Men," and aristocratic women wore costumes inspired by "the Indian who killed Captⁿ Cook with His Club" – a widespread "Pacific craze" which involved, if not the entire spectrum of the British population, at least a broad cross-section of groups not conventionally associated with Cook's elite masculine achievements in

¹⁹ William Fordyce Mavor, *The British Nephos; or, Youth's Mirror: Being Select Lives of Illustrious Britons* (London: R. Phillips, 1798), p. 420.

²⁰ [James Millar], *Encyclopaedia Britannica; or, a Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Miscellaneous Literature*. Fourth edition (Edinburgh: Andrew Bell, 1810), vol. 6 or 12, p. 605. George Gordon Byron, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers: A Satire* (1809), in *Selected Poems*, edited by Susan J. Wolfson and Peter J. Manning (London: Penguin, 2005), 6-48, ll. 353-356.

science or navigation.²¹ It is this shift, from the direct, private memorialisation of the ditty box to the public proliferation of meanings and texts; from the handmade relic to the mass reproduction of the exotic, from obscurity to celebrity, which is the subject of this thesis.

The ghost of Captain Cook

We must clear the stage and bring in new characters. We bring to the centre stage, as main players, our own peoples and institutions. For this purpose we lay to rest once and for all the ghost of Captain Cook. This is not a suggestion to excise him entirely from our histories – far from it. Others, especially in New Zealand and Australia, will still consider him a superstar, so he will be looming large on the horizon. As for us, we merely send Captain Cook to the wings to await our summons when it is necessary to call in the Plague, and we may recall him at the end to take

²¹ Philippe-Jacques de Louterbourg, John O’Keeffe and William Shields, *A Short Account of the New Pantomime called Omai, or, A Trip round the World* (London: T. Cadell, 1785), pp. 23-24; reprinted in *Apollo’s Lyre; being a Selection of Choice Songs, sung at Vauxhall, Theatres Royal, Convivial Meetings, &c* (Huddersfield: Silvester Sikes, 1800), 96-97. The tavern, in St George’s Parish, is mentioned in the trial of Moses Robus (29 October 1800); and Eliza Butler (8 May 1837), both in the *Proceedings of the Old Bailey: London’s Central Criminal Court 1674-1913* <<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org>. > “A specimen of tattooed skin from the breast of a circumnavigator, illustrating the death of Captain Cook” was auctioned in 1828. In Joshua Brookes, *Brookesian Museum: A Prodromus of a Synopsis Animalium, Comprising a Catalogue Raisonné, of the Zootomical Collection of Joshua Brookes, Esq.* (London: n.p., 1828), p. 66. Eleventh day’s sale, 26 July 1828. William Thomson (ed.), *The Chartist Circular* (Glasgow: W. and W. Miller, 1812), pp. 135-136. Accounts of one dress are in Hester Thrale, *Thraliana: The Diary of Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale 1776-1809*, edited by Katharine C. Balderston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), vol. 1 of 2, 481; *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* (19 January 1781); the queen of Prussia reportedly wore a similar costume in 1800; see *Monthly Mirror* (March 1800).

a bow. As long as this particular spirit struts the centre stage, our peoples and institutions will remain where they are now: as minor characters and spectators.²²

Epeli Hau'ofa's conclusions about the place of Cook in a new Pacific historiography may seem pre-emptively to undermine a study in which figures of Cook occupy "the centre stage." The proliferation in the last two decades of scholarly writing about Cook, including that fiercely debating his 'apotheosis' in Hawaii, has been regarded by writers such as Hau'ofa and Lilikala Kame'eleihiwa as both symptom and cause of the Eurocentrism which drowns out local histories of the Pacific in favour of "imperial histories and narratives of passive submission."²³ These histories are based on the elevation of notions of empiricism, progress and "Eurocentered planetary consciousness" of which Cook is often seen as a figurehead.²⁴

Before Cook, "a third part of our globe was hid in darkness," the Swiss politician Andreas Merian told a Basel audience in 1788 – the same year that a fantastic "grand serious-pantomimic ballet" of Cook's death was first produced in Paris. Merian explained that Cook's three voyages had completed the map of the world, and that his life was the price that had been paid in exchange for "an exact and sure account of the north and south countries."²⁵ This vocabulary had changed very little in two

²² Hau'ofa, pp. 64-65.

²³ Hau'ofa, p. 65. See also Lilikala Kame'eleihiwa, review of Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook* in *Pacific Studies* 17, no. 2 (1994): 111-118.

²⁴ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992), second edition (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 37.

²⁵ *The Death of Captain Cook; A Grand Serious-Pantomimic Ballet, in Three Parts* (London: T. Cadell, 1789); Andreas [Andrew] Merian, *An Elogy of Captain Cook Spoken at the Publick Promotion [...] on Thursday the 29 of May 1788*. Translation of *Lobrede auf den englischen*

hundred years when a popular British biography and TV series declared in 2002 that “Captain Cook discovered more of the earth’s surface than any other man. [...] He laid down his finds with exactitude, proving beyond all doubt what did and did not exist and forging the new era of scientific navigation that helped jettison some of the romanticism from eighteenth-century thought.”²⁶ The claim that Cook somehow managed to dispose of “romanticism” by 1780 is less surprising if the writer’s terms of precision, certainty and rationality are taken at face value: irrationality, romanticism, and doubt, in such accounts, are extraneous, archaic loads which must be thrown overboard so that Western thought can continue its progressive voyage towards a modernity defined by Mariano Siskind as “the historical and territorial expansion of reason to the whole world.”²⁷ Today the image of Cook can still be found in the promotion of polar, deep-sea and space exploration, in all of which there are vessels named after Cook or his ships. In 2010, Dr Nicholas Patrick (described in newspapers as inspired to become an astronaut by his childhood experience of a monument to Cook on Easby Moor) carried a postcard of Cook’s portrait and a replica of his flag on a trip on the NASA space shuttle *Endeavour*,²⁸ objects which are now displayed in the Captain Cook Birthplace Museum in Middlesbrough.

Schiffshauptmann Cook gehalten bei der öffentlichen Promotion [...] den 29 Mai 1788. (Basel?: no publisher, c. 1788).

²⁶ Vanessa Collingridge, *Captain Cook: The Life, Death and Legacy of History’s Greatest Explorer* (London: Ebury Press, 2002), p. 5.

²⁷ Mariano Siskind, “Captain Cook and the Discovery of Antarctic’s Modern Specificity: Towards a Critique of Globalization”, in *Comparative Literary Studies* 42, no. 1 (2005): 1-23, p. 2. See David Mackay, “Myth, Science, and Experience in the British Construction of the Pacific”, in Calder, Lamb and Orr, pp. 100-113.

²⁸ Sarah Judd, “Tees-born astronaut takes Captain Cook into space”, in *Evening Gazette* (Middlesbrough, 30 August 2010); NASA *Preflight Interview: Nicholas J. M. Patrick, Mission Specialist* (online press release, 27 January 2010).

Cook's "superstar" status, in Hau'ofa's words, can thus be an assertion of the superiority of Western knowledge, and a myth with an imperial function. Yet to assume that this status is somehow coherent or inevitable is to accept the claims of the texts which produce it – the culture Australian Aboriginal storyteller Hobbles Danaiyarri calls Cook's "book from Big England"²⁹ – to participate in an irresistible progress towards Enlightened modernity, inexorably sweeping past and destroying the cultures and histories in its wake, whether this progress is characterised as evolution or "fatal impact."³⁰ Taking an alternative route, this thesis will stress the multiple, contested and contingent origins of "the ghost of Captain Cook," within metropolitan networks of text, material and performance which are, in the words of another Aboriginal storyteller, not "exact and sure" but "notoriously changeable."³¹

Although necessarily approximate and incomplete, quantitative analysis of digital archives of British books, newspapers and periodicals during the last three decades of the eighteenth century seems to confirm an intuitive narrative of Cook's posthumous accession from minor reputation to something approaching Hau'ofa's "superstar" status, although this was not as early or as instant a process as is often assumed. A breakdown of search result data from *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* shows references to Cook in newly-published books gradually increasing

²⁹ Hobbles Danaiyarri and Deborah Bird Rose, "The Saga of Captain Cook" (1982) in *Australia's Empire*, edited by Deryk M. Schreuder and Stuart Ward (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2008), 27-33, p. 30.

³⁰ Alan Moorehead, *The Fatal Impact: An Account of the Invasion of the South Pacific* (London: Hamilton, 1966). See K.R. Howe, *Nature, Culture, and History: The 'Knowing' of Oceania* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 58-86; Jocelyn Linnekin, "Contending Approaches" in *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders*, edited by Donald Denoon et al (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1997), 3-32.

³¹ Mackinolty and Wainburranga, p. 360. See Healy (1997), pp. 42-72; Chris Healy, "Captain Cook: Between Black and White" in *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art*, edited by Sylvia Kleinert and Margo Neale (Melbourne: OUP Australia, 2001), pp. 92-96.

during the 1770s, with temporary surges in interest after the publication of voyage accounts in 1773 and 1777. Interest in newspapers and periodicals (in the *British Newspapers 1600-1900* and *British Periodicals Online* databases respectively), similarly follows the return of Cook's expeditions in 1771 and 1775 (Figure 2). It is, however, only after 1780 that attention to Cook in all three media indicates a rise to significant cultural impact – that is, to what could dependably be called fame. While references in books to Cook remain at a relatively high level until 1800, there is a predictable decline in more topical media. This nevertheless continues to respond to cultural activity, such as the publication of *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* and the display of paintings of Cook's death in 1784, and the first performances of the pantomime *Death of Captain Cook* in 1789. Cook's "palm of deserved celebrity,"³² in other words, was not an immediate, spontaneous metropolitan reaction to his actions. It cannot be assumed to have been the pre-existing cause of the production of metropolitan texts representing Cook, but was also constructed by the success of these texts.

Scholars as varied as Bernard Smith and Gananath Obeyesekere are in broad agreement that "shortly after his death, Cook's reputation was submitted quite consciously and deliberately to a heroizing process": something which took place in theatres, books, pictures and newspapers, and which promoted the dead Cook to the international role of secular saint, imperial patriarch, and Adam Smith's "global agent."³³ Smith's slightly circular implication that this extraordinary "heroizing" was

³² Mavor, p. 420.

³³ Bernard Smith, "Cook's Posthumous Reputation" in *Captain James Cook and his Times*, edited by Robin Fisher and Hugh Johnston (London: Croome Helm, 1979), 159-186, pp. 161, 179. See also Obeyesekere (1992); Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 252-259; Wilson (2003), 1-91; Anna Neill, "South

the natural consequence of Cook's extraordinary achievements or virtues is common to much writing on Cook until the late twentieth century.³⁴ It has largely been replaced, however, in academic if not popular texts, by the principle that metropolitan representations of Cook as heroic followed an "imperialist agenda," variously defined.³⁵ Most recently, Kate Fullager has reiterated this connection between representations of Cook and debates over British expansionism, stressing the unanimity with which Cook's heroic image was forged "in the service of expansionist ideology," and claiming that "Cook's death solicited only one kind of response" – that of "agreed adoration."³⁶ Probably the most extended and convincing analysis of Cook as imperial hero, in Kathleen Wilson's *The Island Race*, argues that "Cook's personal fame and nationalist significance" was the consequence of the "fulsome encomiums" of "biographies, plays, painting and poetry," driven by a process of "national aggrandizement" and moral reform. For Wilson, "Cook's P/pacific feats" provided metropolitans with a model of British national identity – characterised by ideals of paternalism and selfless courage, and framed by rationalist

Seas Trade and the Character of Captains" in *The Global Eighteenth Century*, edited by Felicity A. Nussbaum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 2003), 296-308; Glyndwr Williams, " 'As Befits Our Age, There are No More Heroes': Reassessing Captain Cook" in Williams (2004), 230-245; Daniel O'Quinn, *Staging Governance: Theatrical Imperialism in London, 1770-1800* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 2005), 74-114; Williams (2008).

³⁴ See Obeyesekere's analysis of Smith, Obeyesekere (1992), pp. 132-133. J.C. Beaglehole's biography has dominated 'Cook studies' since its publication in 1974, and similarly tends to attribute Cook's fame to his "genius", e.g. pp. 3, 702.

³⁵ Obeyesekere (1992), p. 239. See also Chris Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism: History as Social Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1993), 16-41; Rod Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1997), 23-62. A recent bestselling biography, in contrast, simply states that "Without question James Cook was one of the sublimest explorers and discoverers in the entire history of the world." Frank McLynn, *Captain Cook: Master of the Seas* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 2011), p. 411.

³⁶ Kate Fullager, *The Savage Visit: New World People and Popular Imperial Culture in Britain, 1710-1795* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), pp. 156, 151, 156.

taxonomies of race and social progress – to neutralise contemporary anxieties about the over-extension of British colonial scope. This, crucially, “swelled with each voyage,” but only came to “a crescendo in the years after his death.”³⁷

The death of Cook is central to each of these accounts of his fame, as a consolidating manifestation of virtue, and dramatic visual focus. As John M. Mackenzie comments, “the truly mythic figure requires martyrdom fully to achieve its status,” giving the examples of Wolfe, Horatio Nelson, David Livingstone and Charles George Gordon as heroes presented through “a striking and moving icon, invariably the moment of martyrdom,” produced and reproduced through mass culture.³⁸ With a more explicit focus on national and imperial psychologies, John Kucich similarly argues that Cook’s death rapidly became a “foundational myth” of sacred suffering, one of a range of “different crucifixion scene[s] marking the historical gateway to each colonial theater.”³⁹

That Cook’s “mythic persona” in Britain was generally highly idealised, and provided de facto support to increasingly cohesive, acquisitive, and racist British foreign policies, is probably unarguable.⁴⁰ It is, however, considerably more problematic to attribute a single, stable imperialist intention to a diverse and multivocal – indeed multinational – cluster of authors, publishers, artists, showmen and manufacturers, linked less by ideology than by the unpredictable fashions of the metropolitan cultural marketplace. Most historians acknowledge that, in Wilson’s

³⁷ Wilson (2003), pp. 59-60.

³⁸ John M. Mackenzie, “Nelson Goes Global: The Nelson Myth in Britain and Beyond” in *Admiral Lord Nelson: Context and Legacy*, edited by David Cannadine (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 144-166, p. 145.

³⁹ John Kucich, *Imperial Masochism: British Fiction, Fantasy, and Social Class* (New Jersey: Princeton U.P., 2007), pp. 4-5.

⁴⁰ Obeyesekere (1992), p. 132.

words, “[c]ertainly, Cook had his critics,” as did many contemporary imperial activities and philosophies.⁴¹ Furthermore, as I discuss below, recent studies of fame in the eighteenth-century metropolis have argued compellingly that entry to the contemporary pantheon was “neither the reward of supremely gifted individuals, nor simply the product of a cynically manipulative culture industry, but the collaborative construction of individuals, entrepreneurs and audience members.”⁴²

If Kucich’s and Fullager’s cases, therefore, seems somewhat overstated when tested against the textual evidence of responses to Cook’s death – the claim that Anna Seward, Helen Maria Williams, William Cowper and Hannah More “all” emphasised his Christlike status and Hawaiian “veneration,” is, in particular, simply untenable⁴³ – this may be because the function of Cook’s death is primarily understood by these postcolonial studies as the retrospective justification of a nineteenth- and twentieth-century empire. In the 1780s, there was no reason for any of these poets to anticipate with certainty that the Pacific would become a British “colonial theater” requiring a “foundational myth.” Yet, somehow, the scene in Kealakekua Bay had become a “striking and moving icon” dominating eighteenth-century perceptions of Cook, well before the development of a clear discourse of British Pacific imperialism. The accounts given by Kucich and others, then, demonstrate the role of Cook’s mythologized death in the creation of this discourse, without explaining how and why it came to be mythologized in the first place – in a setting which pre-dated its application to a Pacific “colonial theater” of complex European, American and

⁴¹ Wilson (2003), p. 62. See also Edmond (1997), 40-41; Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (New Jersey: Princeton, 2005), 23-100; Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Boston: Harvard U.P., 2006).

⁴² Tom Mole, Introduction to *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750-1850*, edited by Tom Mole (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2009), 1-18, p. 4.

⁴³ Kucich (2007), p. 5.

native activity, including evangelical missions, whaling and other trade, the unification of Tahiti and Hawaii by the Pomare and Kamehameha dynasties, and the foundation of a penal colony in Australia.

It is evident that Cook was adopted as an exemplary colonial figure – both heroic and, less often, villainous – by white settlers in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Hawaii and elsewhere. This process took the form of both private, individual acts of commemoration, such as the writings and pilgrimages of William Colenso in New Zealand,⁴⁴ and of national, state-sponsored activities such as the commissioning of plaques, statues, cairns and obelisks (at Botany Bay in 1822, Kealakekua Bay in 1825, the centre of Sydney in 1869), public holidays and festivals, and the renaming of places – most spectacularly the mountain now known as Aoraki/ Mount Cook, officially named in Cook’s honour in 1851.⁴⁵ Yet as Chris Healy notes of Cook’s status among non-Aboriginal Australians, these colonial adoptions clearly cannot be seen as a “natural” retrospective recognition of Cook’s inherently ‘historical’ achievements.⁴⁶ Rather, I would argue, imperialist discourses in settler cultures made use of Cook’s pre-existing metropolitan celebrity for their own purposes, as, in Rod Edmond’s words, a “great floating signifier”⁴⁷ which could be celebrated, debunked, and shared as common ideological and national cultural property. Thus, in Michael Massey Robinson’s 1816 ode to the origins of the new Australian colony, the forger-poet laureate’s stanzas on Cook’s exploits as one of “ALBION’s Heroes” imitate

⁴⁴ See Jenny Robin Jones, *Writers in Residence: A Journey with Pioneer New Zealand Writers* (Auckland: Auckland U.P., 2004), 43, 57-58.

⁴⁵ See Claud N. Hamilton, “Two Early Monuments to Captain Cook” in *Geographical Journal* 57, no. 1 (1921): 34-36; Healy (1997), 16-41; Stephen Hooper, “Making a Killing?: Of Sticks and Stones and James Cook’s ‘Bones’” in *Anthropology Today* 19, no. 3 (2003): 6-8; Williams (2008), 130-153.

⁴⁶ Healy (1997), p. 13.

⁴⁷ Edmond (1997), p. 24.

Seward's *Elegy on Captain Cook* (1780). Copies of *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* travelled with settlers and missionaries around the Pacific, most famously with the convict ships to Australia in 1788. Indeed, the archetypal late imperial painting of Cook as Australian founder, *Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay* by E. Philips Fox (1902), borrows its central figure directly from John Webber's *Death of Captain Cook* (c. 1781).⁴⁸ The texts discussed in this thesis, in response, span the period between 1780 and 1810 in which this earlier and less coherent mythology was established, and its tropes and narratives outlined.

This, it should be clear, is not to suggest that nascent forms of British imperialism played no part in Cook's metropolitan celebrity. The grand pan-Pacific finale of *Omai*, racially-charged paintings by artists such as George Carter, and triumphalist elegies by poets such as Alexander Schomberg, William Thomas Fitzgerald, and the future Governor-General of India Richard Colley Wellesley, among others, provide ample evidence for metropolitan beliefs in the colonial potential of South Pacific islands (and much more rarely Australia and New Zealand), as well as confidence in the suitability of white Britons as colonisers. Yet even in these texts, expansionism is mediated through genres and images which tend to complicate political bravado, by figuring it in terms of comedy, dance, fantasy, horror, classical myth, and so on. All the same, historical and anthropological accounts have tended to treat these texts – newspaper reports, poetry, parliamentary speeches, travel writing, biography, painting and prints alike – exclusively as evidence of univocal propaganda, with little nuanced analysis in terms of language or genre (with the notable exceptions of

⁴⁸ Michael Massey Robinson, "Ode for the Queen's Birth Day, 1816" in *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* (20 January 1816); E. Philips Fox, *Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay*. Oil on canvas, 1902 (National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne).

pantomime, Seward's *Elegy*, and scientific travel writing). The result is often a somewhat selective and flattened reading, in which the same narrow collection of hagiographic passages and images are repeatedly cited, and more ambiguous texts such as Williams' *The Morai* are either ignored or conflated with more explicitly ideological texts such as eulogies. Aesthetic or generic elements are simply condemned as dishonest, with little consideration of reception. Both Edmond and Obeyesekere call *Omai* a "travesty of the journals," for example: a description which seems to align the performance more closely with, say, early twentieth-century re-enactments of Cook's Australian landing than eighteenth-century harlequinade.⁴⁹ As Obeyesekere acknowledges, "[m]ore research is required to better analyze the popular literature and debates characteristic of the period after Cook's death." Edmond, equally, concedes that "in the years after his death the myth-making around Cook was an active, many-sided process."⁵⁰ I do not intend to contest the existing view of Cook's posthumous imperial role, then, so much as to complicate it with a critical investigation of texts depicting his death, and the circumstances of their production within contemporary metropolitan culture. The claims of this culture to be considered one of "modern celebrity" are considered below.

First, though, it should be clear that my use of the word "metropolitan" is intended to refer less to a stable geographical location, than to a notion of London as a nebulous and porous urban environment producing specific conditions and concerns, a contemporary symbol, and a contact point for networks of cultural production and reception. While recognising the problematic nature of the metropolis/ periphery binary, particularly in a period when London's political relationship to the Pacific

⁴⁹ See Maria Nugent, *Captain Cook Was Here* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2009), 28-36.

⁵⁰ Obeyesekere (1992), pp. 128-129; Edmond (1997), p. 30.

cannot at all be described in these terms, I want to suggest that both the real and perceived cultural dominance of London – its newspapers, publishers, galleries, museums, print shops and theatres – derived from the channelling of externally produced texts and discourses into forms directly accessible to a small population of metropolitan consumers, and indirectly to the provinces and the rest of the world. At the same time, the rhetorical function of the London “metropolis” to cultural producers and consumers who saw Cook’s voyages as extending the centre’s reach to the peripheries is impossible to ignore.⁵¹ With some ventures into provincial or international encounters when these are directly relevant, I therefore focus on texts in terms of their intersections within metropolitan cultural networks, even when, as is often the case, production or consumption took place elsewhere.

Fame, celebrity, sentimentality.

Since the 1980s, social theorists have attempted to distinguish a notion of fame (and occasionally ‘reputation’ or ‘renown’) from its historically contingent counterpart, celebrity. Fame, it is generally accepted, is an ancient, possibly even universal concept. It tends to be associated with ideas of a permanent ‘posterity,’ a transcendent human history composed of unique individuals. Having been immortalised by cultural authorities as figures in this history, the famous usually embody extreme, abstract qualities; dissimilarity to ordinary humans, whether positive or negative. On the other hand, celebrity is seen as characterised by

⁵¹ See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992). Second edition (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1-12; Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2000), 113-114.

ephemeral, parasocial relationships mediated by mass-produced, commodified texts which produce the illusion of equality and intimacy. Celebrities are flawed and human, aspects emphasised in the representation of idiosyncratic details of physical appearance and domestic or romantic life, and in narratives of modest origins, ‘rise and fall’, personal suffering or abjection, and often death. In almost all of these accounts, some version of celebrity emerges as, in Chris Rojek’s words, a distinctively “*modern phenomenon*” of the eighteenth century: the product of some combination of industrialisation, particularly mass printing, reduced state censorship, secularisation, individualism, and ‘democratisation’, that is, the waning influence of court patronage and the growth of a mass consumer class.⁵²

These semantic and historical distinctions are perhaps easier to establish in theory than in practice, but the mechanics of celebrity, however hard to pin down, underlie the process by which Cook came to public attention between 1780 and the early decades of the nineteenth century. They would not, in these words, have been recognised by eighteenth-century readers, who were nevertheless familiar with older discourses contrasting the authentic fame of gods, heroes, saints and kings with the transient, unreliable forms of fame produced by gossip and rumour.⁵³ The period thus sees significant continuities as well as innovation in the development of fame.

⁵² Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion, 2001), p. 16. Original italics. See Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (1986). New edition. (New York: Vintage Books, 1997); Geoffrey Cubbitt and Allen Warren (eds.), *Heroic Reputations and Exemplary Lives* (Manchester: Manchester U.P., 2000); Stella Tillyard, ‘Paths of Glory: Fame and the Public in Eighteenth-century London’ in *Joshua Reynolds: The Creation of Celebrity*, edited by Martin Postle (London: Tate Gallery, 2005), 61-69; Elizabeth Barry, ‘From Epitaph to Obituary: Death and Celebrity in Eighteenth-Century British Culture’ in *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 11, no. 3 (2008): 259-275; Fred Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity* (New Jersey: Princeton U.P., 2010).

⁵³ See Philip Hardie, *Rumour and Renown: Representations of Fama in Western Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2012).

At the same time, as Stella Tillyard warns, the idea that eighteenth-century London can be consistently interpreted as “a world of full of celebrities as we think of them today” is likely to be wishful thinking;⁵⁴ given, for example, the limitations of industrialised mass-production and literacy in the period, as well as the ongoing cultural influence of both organised Christianity and aristocratic patronage.

Moreover, given the lack of a relevant vocabulary, it seems unlikely that there was a clear and exclusive division in the public imagination between ‘celebrities’ and the famous. The promotion of a multitude of contemporary figures, from poets, military officers and ministers to spiritualists, giants, and showmen, opera singers, actresses and murderers, made extensive use of an iconography of exemplarity, posthumous apotheosis, and immortal laurels which continue to “bloom | Round the bright brow, and round the sacred tomb” in defiance of “the tinsel of the hour” – images of permanence which Percival Stockdale confidently applied both to his own and to Sarah Siddons’ future reputations.⁵⁵ Immediately after his death, Wolfe was said to have “purchased to himself a name surpassing all the names of antiquity.”⁵⁶ It is clear, then, that parasocial relationships between a celebrated individual and a mass audience had almost always to be justified with the rhetoric of merited, immortal fame. Conversely, the eighteenth century saw the popularisation and commodification of established pantheons of famous individuals – Shakespeare, Jane Shore, the royal family – increasingly through the images and genres of ‘celebrity,’ such as sentimental anecdotes and individualised portraiture. Eighteenth-century ‘celebrity,’ then, can usefully be seen not as a stable status category within which

⁵⁴ Tillyard, p. 62.

⁵⁵ Percival Stockdale, “Siddons: A Poem” in *Three Poems* (London: W. Flexney, 1784), ll. 63-64, 10.

⁵⁶ [Reverend Mr. Townley] (1759), qtd. in Alan McNairn, *Behold the Hero: General Wolfe and the Arts in the Eighteenth Century* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s U.P., 1997), p. 12.

people could, for the first time, appeal to newly trivial and vulgar appetites (the conservative moralising aspects of discourses of fame proving difficult to shake off), but rather as a mechanism by which mass media created, disseminated and contested famous figures among a new large-scale audience, through new technologies, aesthetics, and philosophies.

The mediation of Cook's death within this process of celebrity illustrates the contemporary metropolitan function, described by Lynn Festa, of mass discourses of sentimentality and "the collective feeling called national mourning by the media." Gesturing explicitly towards Benedict Anderson's formulation of the national "imagined community" – particularly his connection between national self-identification and ideas of sacrifice, "death and immortality" – Festa argues that sentimentality was a "rhetorical practice" for managing and mediating emotions, allowing eighteenth-century Britons faced with an expanding and diverse empire to imagine themselves as part of a cohesive group. This group was linked (despite the "contesting claims of religion, ethnicity, regionalism, rank, and language") by "a shared relationship to a common but excluded object about which the community has feelings."⁵⁷ Eighteenth-century celebrity can be seen as working in a similar way to draw together a divided and ambiguous British nation,⁵⁸ but while the sentimental

⁵⁷ Lynn Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 2006), p. 54, 3-4, 47; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (1983). New edition (London: Verso, 2006), p. 10. See Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1996); and Geoff Quilley's analysis of shipwreck images and national and class identities in the same period. Quilley, *Empire to Nation: Art, History and the Visualization of Maritime Britain 1768-1829* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 2011), 145-164.

⁵⁸ See Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale, 1992); Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1995).

object was defined by both the humanity it shared with the community and the abjection which excluded it, the celebrity figure's common, often suffering, humanity was combined with exalted qualities or talents seen as characteristic of the idealised community.

Thus the image of Cook necessarily slips, within and among texts, between the figure of "Poor Captain Cook" – a human, vulnerable sailor – and the heroic Captain Cook seen by writers such as More as an exemplar of British colonialism's "bless'd Philanthropy" and rational benevolence; between sentimental object and subject.⁵⁹

At the same time as it promotes the virtues of curiosity and sympathy which cultivate sentimentality, then, the representation of Cook after 1780 is also a prolonged "monumentalizing of [the] lost object": a sentimental process which "fosters national unity."⁶⁰ As Stephen C. Behrendt emphasises in his analysis of responses to the 1817 death of Princess Charlotte Augusta, both sides of this process of mass identification are "grounded in – and mediated through – a culture of commodities that is driven by commercial consumerism."⁶¹ Sentimentality, in other words, offers for mass purchase the possibility of identification with the dead celebrity and the community, an association which troubled many of the producers and consumers of images of Cook, even as it prompted more and more production and consumption. Merging the sentimental and the exemplary, in this process of

⁵⁹ References to "poor Captain Cook" can be found in published texts from *Morning Chronicle* (17 January 1780) to Charlotte Barton, *A Mother's Offering to her Children: By a Lady, Long Resident in New South Wales* (Sydney: Gazette Office, 1841), p. 58. Hannah More, *Slavery, A Poem* (London: T. Cadell, 1788), l. 237.

⁶⁰ Festa, p. 54.

⁶¹ Stephen C. Behrendt, "Mourning, Myth, and Merchandising: The Public Death of Princess Charlotte", in *Response to Death: The Literary Work of Mourning*, edited by Christian Riegel (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2005), 75-96, p. 75.

commodified mass celebrity, was conditional upon specific and exceptional circumstances in which private and state representations could be subsumed in the texts of the mass public, without these anxieties becoming too explicit. These characteristics, for the public figure of Cook, are discussed next.

“What did Cook that might not have been done by hundreds?”

I have already suggested that although Cook would be retrospectively attributed the role of “builder of the British Empire,” this role was primarily based on his metropolitan celebrity, and not the reverse. In 1780, in fact, Cook had few traditional claims to fame: no aristocratic connections, no religious authority, poetry, plays, military victories or atrocious crimes. His discoveries were mostly either negative (proving the non-existence of a Great Southern Continent or a navigable northern sea route to Asia), or could seem obscure and mundane (the development of measures to prevent scurvy, for example). Hartley Coleridge, in 1836, borrows a gesture from several of Cook’s eighteenth-century biographers when he begins his account in *The Worthies of Yorkshire and Lancashire* by admitting that “an inconsiderate or uninformed mind might inquire, what did Cook that might not have been done by hundreds?” Cook’s “wild adventures, marvellous sights, appalling privations, hair-breadth-scapes, and terrific daring” were hardly unique, Coleridge argues, while his technical and scientific achievements could not be appreciated by non-specialists. On the other hand, his character and “moral greatness,” defined as the aspects “which

constitute the *man*, apart from the *science* and the *profession*,” could be made triumphantly “intelligible to all.”⁶²

In the absence of strikingly heroic achievements, then, the appeal of his story to a broad non-specialist, non-elite audience rested to some extent on the sentimentality of his death as made “intelligible” through his apparent familiarity. Cook, Coleridge stresses (like Andrew Kippis before him), “was born in a clay-biggin,” educated at a dame school, “familiar with poverty and privation,” and became apprentice to a shopkeeper before escaping to the sea.⁶³ This perceived ordinariness, juxtaposed with the exotic novelty of his story’s distant settings, allowed a mass readership to identify with Cook, and thus project themselves into the extraordinary scenes he described, becoming through media, like James Boswell when he met the “plain, sensible” Cook in person, “carried away with the thing in general, a voyage round the world.”⁶⁴ As such, Cook’s metropolitan currency in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century was necessarily the product of the dynamics of “modern celebrity,” as described by Linda Zionkowski:

Unlike traditional systems of value such as birth and rank, modern celebrity derives its power from alternative registers of worth, particularly those associated with the democratic ethos of personal merit and individual uniqueness. Albeit a public figure seemingly marked by special ascribed or innate qualities, the celebrity remains one of us: not impossibly distant owing to gradations of status, but reassuringly

⁶² Hartley Coleridge, *The Worthies of Yorkshire and Lancashire; Being Lives of the Most Distinguished Persons that have been Born in, or Connected with those Provinces* (London: Whittaker and Co., 1836), 556-664, p. 556-557.

⁶³ Coleridge, p. 557; Kippis, 1-11.

⁶⁴ Boswell, (3 April 1776), p. 296.

available for contact (whether real or imaginary) – and ultimately an object of consumption by an audience eager to identify with some of the celebrity’s distinctiveness.⁶⁵

Cook’s death took place at a time when the Navy’s reputation was threatened by the intensification of impressment, poor conditions on naval ships, and its neglect of disabled seamen; as well as naval defeats, invasion scares, and scandals such as the courts martial of Augustus Keppel and Cook’s patron Hugh Palliser in 1779. It might be expected, then, that Cook was a candidate for what Timothy Jenks calls “state sponsorship for a cult of the hero,” particularly by the institution which had employed him.⁶⁶ Such sponsorship, at least in part, had shaped and promoted the heroic status of figures such as Edward Vernon and George Anson, and would later choreograph that of Nelson. It worked through powerful, though often contested, symbolic mechanisms for the production and protection of naval “institutional identity”: promotions and titles, speeches and reports, medals, uniforms and uniformed portraits, official buildings and monuments, national days of fasting or thanksgiving, funeral processions, rituals such as ship-launching, and even public courts martial and executions.⁶⁷ Yet the Navy’s interest in Cook’s public fame around the time of his death seems to have been fairly minimal, partly because of his

⁶⁵ Linda Zionkowski, “Celebrity Violence in the Careers of Savage, Pope and Johnson” in *Mole*, 168-185, p. 169.

⁶⁶ Timothy Jenks, “Contesting the Hero: The Funeral of Admiral Lord Nelson” in *Journal of British Studies* 39, no. 4 (2000): 422-453, p. 445. For context see N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London: William Collins, 1986); Daniel James Ennis, *Enter the Press-Gang: Naval Impressment in Eighteenth-Century British Literature* (London: Rosemont, 2002).

⁶⁷ Margarete Lincoln, *Representing the Royal Navy: British Sea Power, 1750-1815* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 10. See also Colin White, “Nelson Apotheosised: The Creation of the Nelson Legend” and Holger Hooock, “Nelson Entombed: The Military and Naval Pantheon in St Paul’s Cathedral” in *Cannadine* (2005), 93-143.

obscure family background, and also, as Harriet Guest suggests, because of the political marginalisation of his connections in the Navy.⁶⁸

Cook had been made a post captain and appointed to Greenwich Hospital in 1775. At his death, his widow was provided with a moderately generous naval pension of two hundred pounds a year and granted a coat of arms. These should be compared, though, to the symbolic and financial prizes offered to the family of Captain George Farmer, killed in action against the French the same year as Cook – pensions worth a combined £425 a year and a baronetcy for his eldest son – or to the earldom which would be granted to William Nelson after his brother's death in 1805. The relatively modest compensation offered to Cook's family suggests that the Admiralty and the ministry saw less potential use in the promotion of Cook's "P/pacific feats" than in the ostentatious rewarding of more warlike forms of self-sacrifice.⁶⁹ Similarly, no state-funded public monuments were built to commemorate Cook in Britain until the end of the nineteenth century, despite the increasingly centralised use of Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral to promote a pantheon of approved national heroes.⁷⁰ An ornate marble monument to three naval captains killed at the Battle of the Saintes, for example, was commissioned in 1784 from the sculptor Joseph Nollekens

⁶⁸ See Guest, "Commemorating Captain Cook," 20-23.

⁶⁹ Wilson (2003), p. 59.

⁷⁰ See David Bindman, *Roubiliac and the Eighteenth-Century Monument: Sculpture as Theatre* (New Haven: Yale, 1995); Matthew Craske, "Making National Heroes? A Survey of the Social and Political Functions and Meanings of Major British Funeral Monuments to Naval and Military Figures, 1730-70" in *Conflicting Visions: War and Visual Culture in Britain and France, 1700-1830*, edited by Geoff Quilley and John Bonehill (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 41-60; Joan Coutu, *Persuasion and Propaganda: Monuments and the Eighteenth-Century British Empire* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's U.P., 2006); Holger Hoock, *Empires of the Imagination: Politics, War, and the Arts in the British World, 1750-1850* (London: Profile, 2010), 162-204.

and installed in the north transept of Westminster Abbey.⁷¹ Cook was not universally regarded in the 1780s as an unsuitable candidate for such a memorial. Since “Captain COOK deserves to have a monument raised to his memory, by a generous and grateful nation,” some commenters expected, “Britannia, to his virtues just,” would reward him with an appropriately “immortal” tribute.⁷² The sculptor Thomas Banks went as far as producing and exhibiting a speculative design for a monument in 1780, which was never realised.⁷³

Compositionally, Banks’ design is similar to Nollekens’ memorial. Large figures are arranged around a central column, on a base shaped like a sarcophagus (empty, since those commemorated had been buried at sea), engraved with pictures in relief. In both, the figure of Britannia mourns and memorialises the dead men. Differences in content, however, suggest the problematic nature of the figure of Cook for an embattled Navy attempting to revive morale, and, in particular, to recruit volunteers. The Saintes monument features the triumphant figures of Victory and a British lion, with the subservient figure of Neptune pointing towards the idealised faces of the three captains. In contrast, in Banks’ planned monument the sprawling, defeated nude body at the base is the dead Cook himself, oddly eroticised and vulnerable among what appears to be the wreckage of his ship, and above a bas-relief image of

⁷¹ Joseph Nollekens, stone monument to William Bayne, William Blair and Robert Manners, Westminster Abbey, London (1793).

⁷² James Cook and James King, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean, Undertaken by the Command of his Majesty for Making Discoveries in the Northern Hemisphere* [edited by John Douglas] (London: G. Nicol, 1784), vol. 1 of 4, lxxxix. Hereafter cited as *Voyage*. Anna Seward, *Elegy on Captain Cook. To which is added, An Ode to the Sun* (London: J. Dodsley, 1780), ll. 227-228.

⁷³ An engraving of this survives. Thomas Banks, *Design for a National Monument to the Memory of Captain Cook*. Etching and aquatint, 1781 (British Museum). See Martin Myrone, *Bodybuilding: Reforming Masculinities in British Art 1750-1810* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 2005), 181-186; Guest, “Commemorating Captain Cook,” 9-20.

his own death. Even Banks' Britannia, depicted without a helmet, is less martial than her Westminster Abbey equivalent. The political advantages of the state's reputed four thousand pound investment in the commemoration of the victory at the Saintes, then, were evident; in contrast, a memorial to Cook's defeat and death may have seemed in 1780 to offer only sentimental indulgence in sorrow and failure, without a clear propagandist rationale.

As a result, Cook's memorialisation in Britain began as a largely privately-commissioned and funded process, although as late as 1822, Elizabeth Cook and others were hopeful that the government would intervene.⁷⁴ The idiosyncratic aesthetic, emotional and political purposes of Cook monuments at Stowe (a pre-existing stone globe near the 'Elysian Fields'), at Palliser's estate in Buckinghamshire, and in Jean-Joseph de Laborde's exotic gardens at Méréville have been discussed elsewhere, but their elusiveness and seclusion from the public spaces of the metropolis gesture towards an understanding of the figure of Cook as having individual affective, rather than national, significance.⁷⁵ Each was intended to be only accessible to select groups of viewers; following the advice of the Abbé Delille to build memorials to Cook and other worthies in gardens of contemplation,

⁷⁴ A handwritten copy of a letter from Edward Hawke Locker, secretary of Greenwich Hospital, to Charles Smith (2 May 1822) discusses plans to retrieve Cook's remains in Hawaii and inter them in a new monument. Found in the edition of Andrew Kippis, *Life of Cook* kept in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. Additional research notes by Bill Whelan (2000).

⁷⁵ See Jonathan Lamb, "The Medium of Publicity and the Garden at Stowe" in *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (1996): 53-72; Jonathan Lamb, *Preserving the Self in the South Seas, 1680-1840* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 218-219; David Maskill, "Death in a French Garden: The Laborde and Cook Monuments at Méréville and the Landscape of Loss" in *Experiencing the Garden in the Eighteenth Century*, edited by Martin Calder (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), 145-160; Guest, "Commemorating Captain Cook".

“consecrated to their apotheosis” and “far from profane eyes.”⁷⁶ A more intricate, but equally private, Portland stone monument may also have been erected in the late 1780s by the politician Charles Anderson Pelham on his Lincolnshire estate,⁷⁷ while a description of Cook as “one of the most celebrated Navigators that this or former Ages can boast of” eventually headed the Cook family memorial in a Cambridge church, commissioned by Elizabeth Cook in the form of a stone plaque decorated with a mourning figure and urn.⁷⁸

State manipulation of individual celebrity, however, did not consist only of overt gestures such as titles, monuments and sermons. It could take more subtle forms including the political use of the press, through paragraphs inserted in or excised from newspapers, and the commissioning, support, or censorship of published texts, stage performances and commemorative goods.⁷⁹ It might be tempting, then, to see an institutional hand in poems such as Schomberg’s *Ode to the Memory of Captain James Cook*, and their idealisation of Cook and other British “Heroes of the wat’ry Realm.”⁸⁰ Schomberg was a serving naval captain who published under the pseudonym “A Sea Officer” and publicly donated all profits from the poem to the Marine Society – an independent charity closely linked to the Navy, which in turn funded the publication of Anne Penny’s poem “Written Upon the Death of Captain

⁷⁶ *Montrez-moi des mortels plus chers à notre amour. | En des lieux consacrés à leur apothéose, | Créez un Elysée où leur ombre repose. | Loin des profanes yeux.* Abbe [Jacques] Delille, *Les Jardins ou l’art d’embellir les paysages, Poëme* (1782). New edition (London: Le Boussonnier, 1801), p. 141.

⁷⁷ See John Lord, “Richard Hayward: An Early and Some Late Commissions” in *Church Monuments* 12 (1997): 67-76.

⁷⁸ Stone monument to Cook family, Church of St Andrew the Great, Cambridge. Undated (c. 1800).

⁷⁹ See Lincoln (2002), 1-40; M. John Cardwell, *Arts and Arms: Literature, Politics and Patriotism during the Seven Years War* (Manchester: Manchester U.P., 2004).

⁸⁰ Schomberg, dedication.

Cook.”⁸¹ Yet even these apparently institutional cases are a reminder of the personal and contingent nature of the texts which produced celebrity. Schomberg was an isolated figure in the navy both because of his German Jewish background and his semi-retired position as captain of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland’s yacht. His *Ode* seems likely to have been an attempt at self-promotion, aimed at persuading the Admiralty to allow him to return to active service; while Penny was the widow of a naval officer, and badly in need of income.

Similarly, Glyndwr Williams argues that accounts of Cook’s death in newspapers and periodicals were, at least in their early stages, centrally controlled through the Admiralty’s monopoly on information. Other studies have highlighted the extent to which the hugely influential 1784 volumes of *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, commissioned and subsidised by the Admiralty, were edited and rewritten in line with Admiralty propaganda.⁸² Yet, as I argue in my first chapter, Admiralty control over reports of Cook’s death seems to have been half-hearted and ineffective at best. Dominant representations of the scene – in *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, for example – were shaped by commercial and aesthetic imperatives rather than solely by the interests of the British naval leadership, which were in any case multiple and

⁸¹ [Alexander Schomberg], *An Ode to the Memory of Captain James Cook, of his Majesty’s Navy* (Dublin: William Hallhead, 1780). The *Public Advertiser* (11 November 1780) attributes the poem, which was published under the pseudonym “A Sea Officer” to Schomberg, and praises him for his donation to the Marine Society. Anne Penny, “Written Upon the Death of Captain Cook”, in *Poems* (London: J. Dodsley, 1780), p. 242. See Roland Pietsch, “Urchins for the Sea: The Story of the Marine Society in the Seven Years War” in *Journal for Maritime Research* 2, no. 1 (2000): 64-83.

⁸² See Williams (2008), 1-130; Noel Elizabeth Currie, *Constructing Colonial Discourse: Captain Cook at Nootka Sound* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s U.P., 2005).

fiercely contested.⁸³ I do not wish to suggest a clear boundary between military/ state and private/ commercial discourses, then, so much as to stress the permeability of the two, and in particular the extent to which the latter was implicated in the former. In this I follow the lead of writers such as Gillian Russell, who has traced the close but shifting relationship between the army and navy, and the theatre.⁸⁴ It is nevertheless worth registering the degree to which celebrity in this period could be, and often was, centrally stage-managed by government institutions, and the atypicality of Cook's status as a heroic naval figure *not* primarily produced in this way.

Cook's death can be differentiated from other similar incidents, then, as for various reasons the appropriate subject of private and commercial rather than state representation, a characteristic reflected in the content of its representation. For example, although Philippe-Jacques de Louthembourg's much-discussed design for the *Apotheosis of Captain Cook* superficially resembles the neoclassical national symbolism of paintings of the apotheosis of Nelson by Benjamin West and Scott Pierre Nicholas Legrand, its theatricality and quotation of John Webber's popular iconography of the death of Cook betray its origins as a Covent Garden backdrop and commercial print. As mass mourning image, it perhaps more closely parallels Carter's image of the *Immortality of Garrick*, which incorporates portraits of actors and actresses in their most famous roles.⁸⁵ Within this sphere of public entertainment

⁸³ See Clive Wilkinson, *The British Navy and the State in the 18th Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004); Ruddock F. Mackay and Michael Duffy, *Hawke, Nelson and British Naval Leadership 1747-1805* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009).

⁸⁴ Gillian Russell, *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics, and Society, 1793-1815* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 95-122.

⁸⁵ Anonymous engraver after Philippe de Louthembourg and John Webber, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook*. Etching (London: John Thane, 1794); James Caldwell and Samuel Smith after George Carter, *Immortality of Garrick*. Etching (London: George Carter, 1783).

culture, Cook's celebrity exalted, indeed apotheosised, his figure as commodity as well as patriotic or spiritual hero. As Russell notes, pantomime representations of Cook in the 1780s, of the sort associated with Louthembourg's image, can be contrasted with widespread hostility in 1806 to the idea of depicting Nelson's death or funeral through 'trivial' theatrical forms such as ballet and puppets. Although Russell attributes this to a contemporary rise in anti-theatricality, we could also see a distinction between the two figures in terms of their embodiment of the "aggressive conquering masculinity" (Wilson's term) valued by the state, versus the individualist and sometimes sentimental values of the marketplace.⁸⁶

Though this argument might seem to evoke for Cook the feminised role of the contemporary actress – a figure who "embodied the private-in-the-public even as [she] commodified a simulacrum of intimacy"⁸⁷ – the mechanisms of celebrity which produced the figure of Cook should also be distinguished from those around both Nelson and stage personalities because of their effective exclusion of Cook's individual performative agency. Despite diffuse and often unwelcome representation in commercial cultural forms including newspapers, portraits, fashion, porcelain and even novels, recent work on the eighteenth-century actress has emphasised the active role that these celebrated subjects could have in self-fashioning (and thus in shaping the public sphere).⁸⁸ Similarly, Nelson has been called "his own best publicist,"

⁸⁶ Russell (1995), 82-85; Wilson (2003), p. 52. For representations of Nelson's death see also Quilley (2011), 219-225.

⁸⁷ Felicity Nussbaum, *Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p. 271.

⁸⁸ See Cheryl Wanko, *Roles of Authority: Thespian Biography and Celebrity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Lubbock: Texas Tech U.P., 2003); Kate Williams, "Nelson and Women: Marketing, Representations, and the Female Consumer" in Cannadine (2005), 67-92; Laura Engel, *Fashioning*

having cultivated a “quasi-regal status” through choreographed public appearances, text and visual culture.⁸⁹ While Cook’s journals reveal the development of his attempts to similarly manage his own reputation and legacy,⁹⁰ these seem to have been relatively modest, more concerned with damage control than self-promotion, and were arguably targeted at a relatively small group of influential readers in the Royal Society, government and Admiralty rather than a wider public. Indeed, central to this project was Cook’s self-presentation as less an ostentatious hero than a plain, self-effacing seaman who knew his social place.

This, and its motivation in Cook’s unusual career from “indigence and obscurity”⁹¹ probably unintentionally gave readers a potential sense that Cook was, in Zionkowski’s words, “one of us.”⁹² Any metropolitan man from a common sailor to George III could plausibly imagine themselves conversing with Cook, while his deliberate self-fashioning, in text and conduct, into a figure of almost austere moderation and propriety, had already made him into an unthreatening companion for the most nervously respectable woman. Cook was, Frances Burney had written after dining with him in 1772, “well-mannered, and perfectly unpretending,” if not especially exciting, a description which could also apply to his published prose.⁹³ His social mobility, as a result, was generally unobjectionable to conservative metropolitans, usually suspicious of the pretensions of self-made “West Indians,

Celebrity: Eighteenth-Century British Actresses and Strategies for Image Making (Columbus: Ohio State U.P., 2011).

⁸⁹ Kathleen Wilson, “Nelson and the People: Manliness, Patriotism and Body Politics” in Cannadine (2005), 49-66, p. 56; Russell (1995), p. 8.

⁹⁰ See Thomas (2003).

⁹¹ Mavor, p. 420.

⁹² Zionkowski, p. 169.

⁹³ Frances D’Arblay [Burney], *Memoirs of Doctor Burney* (London: Edward Moxon, 1832), p. 271.

conquerors, nabobs, and admirals.”⁹⁴ Cook’s success could be attributed at each stage of his career to the merited approval of his superiors, had resulted in only moderate financial gain, and, most importantly, was associated with the navy, one of the few areas in which structures of authority could legitimately be relaxed “to admit in a controlled fashion a number of truly exceptional men for the sake of efficiency, and for the sake, too, of preserving the existing order.”⁹⁵ As Geoff Quilley has argued, Cook’s portrait, displayed in the Naval Gallery at Greenwich Hospital, came to be understood as “the incarnation” of a conservative national identity which attributed a unique level of liberty and “meritocracy” to British social structures.⁹⁶

Many of the “refined qualities of a genteel masculinity,” described by Martin Myrone as desirable in contemporary bourgeois heroes such as Wolfe,⁹⁷ might have appeared absurd or even subversive in the son of a farm labourer, a problem suggested by the critical failure of paintings of Cook’s death which portray him as a man of saintliness and sensibility (Chapter 4). In contrast, the personal qualities emphasised by most early accounts of Cook were those seen as appropriate for an ideal labouring class man, from the point of view of this “existing order”:

willingness to work hard, modesty and discretion, self-restraint, bravery, loyalty and undemonstrative self-sacrifice, rather than those which might have characterised him as a social ‘upstart.’ Cook “had no claim to distinction on account of the lustre of his

⁹⁴ Horace Walpole to Horace Mann (3 March 1761). See the article in which this is quoted: Christina Smylitopoulos, “Rewritten and Reused: Imaging the Nabob through ‘Upstart Iconography’” in *Eighteenth-Century Life* 32, no. 2 (2008): 39-59, p. 39; and more generally James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750 – 1800* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).

⁹⁵ Colley, p. 191. Also see S.A. Cavell, *Midshipmen and Quarterdeck Boys in the British Navy, 1771-1831* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2012). 1-93.

⁹⁶ Quilley (2011), 209-217, p. 217.

⁹⁷ Myrone, p. 119.

ancestors” wrote Andrew Kippis in the first lines of his *Life of Captain James Cook* (1788), but had inherited instead the labouring class values of “honesty, sobriety, and diligence.”⁹⁸ This class-based characterisation also had the effect of shielding Cook from the charges of effeminacy and foreign influence which dogged men in polite social elites, especially soldiers and sailors.⁹⁹ Even Cook’s cartographic abilities, Kippis reassured readers, were the result of his “dangerous service” during the American war, rather than anything as suspiciously refined as a drawing master. Before there was a military need to chart the St Lawrence River, Cook “had scarcely ever used a pencil, and [...] knew nothing of drawing,” unlike other officers who were instructed in sketching for naval reasons, but suspected of using their skills for more frivolous purposes, such as landscapes and caricatures.¹⁰⁰

For the broad swathe of British society with experience of working at sea (or with close friends and family at sea), it was instinctive to empathise with Cook’s sailors, dependent on the virtues of their captain as an effective and fair leader, skilled navigator and generous patron, and to feel at second hand the devastating impact of his death – an idea played upon by a later anecdote about the emotional response to a theatrical scene Cook’s death of “an apparently sea-faring man in the gallery,” who

⁹⁸ Kippis, p. 1.

⁹⁹ See Robert W. Jones, “Notes on *The Camp*: Women, Effeminacy and the Military in Late Eighteenth-Century Literature” in *Textual Practice* 11, no. 3 (1997): 463-476; Michèle Cohen “‘Manners’ Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750-1830” in *Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 2 (2005): 312-329; Harriet Guest, *Empire, Barbarism, and Civilisation: Captain Cook, William Hodges, and the Return to the Pacific* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2007), 68-90.

¹⁰⁰ Kippis, p. 6. For drawing and the military, see Stephen Brumwell, *Paths of Glory: The Life and Death of General James Wolfe* (London: Continuum, 2006), 226, 294; H.W. Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy: Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Education for Officers* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007), 49-50.

turns out to be a former sailor on the *Resolution*.¹⁰¹ While cultural representations of sailors were complex and at times ambivalent, there was a general shared sense of the British tar as a symbol of national security, liberty, as well as a potential victim of oppressive practices (such as pressing), poverty, wartime violence and shipwreck.¹⁰² The commercial potential of widespread sympathy with ‘down to earth’ seamen can be seen in the popularity of Charles Dibdin’s songs in the 1780s and 1790s. These celebrated the aggressively ordinary British sailor, often in contrast to officer-class “lords, with such fine baby faces, | That strut in a garter and star” or “live at the stern, without minding the head.” Cook was rarely represented precisely as a “stage tar,” to use Daniel James Ennis’s term, but his humble background, his reputation for “plain and unaffected manners,” and his willingness to eat “the coarsest and most ungrateful food,” seems likely to have placed him on the right side of this opposition between the unpretentious hero and the suspiciously exotic figures of naval officers who “despise English biscuit, to nibble French bread.”¹⁰³

As I have argued, Cook’s cultural impact did not emerge as an unmediated relationship between the individual and the public. The celebrity mechanism, it has been pointed out, was “from the beginning a multimedia phenomenon,” produced in the exchanges and connections between numerous texts and individuals.¹⁰⁴ As Alan McNairn makes clear in his “necrography” of Wolfe, a book which provides something of a model for this thesis, the “mass marketing of the hero” – even the

¹⁰¹ *Theatrical Recorder* 2, no. 11 (November 1805): 250-251.

¹⁰² See Simon Bainbridge, *British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: Visions of Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2003), 1-54; Lincoln (2002); Quilley (2011), 167-188.

¹⁰³ Charles Dibdin, “The Heart of a Tar” and “The Forecastle Man,” in *Songs, Naval and National* (London: John Murray, 1841), 16-17. See Ennis (2002), 77-108; Lincoln (2002), 1-9. *Voyage*, vol. 3, pp. 48-49.

¹⁰⁴ Mole, Introduction (2009), p. 2.

more conventionally well-born and militarily successful hero of Quebec – arose from a period of industrialisation and consumerisation: “the moment when it became possible to reach a huge audience through print, music, theatre, pictures, and other affordable consumer goods.”¹⁰⁵ Wilson notes the “mutually reinforcing” propagation of new media, and of representations of Cook, as “[o]fficial and unofficial accounts and images of the voyages proliferated [and] were endlessly condensed, excerpted and otherwise recirculated in print culture, conversation, letters and diaries.”¹⁰⁶ The image of Cook as exemplary everyman was, it is clear, shaped by the iterative demands of the mass marketplace as well as by his personal background and character. What is less often considered is that contemporary perceptions of these proliferating forms of culture, and their consumption by a “phantasm of a mass, chaotic, alien public,” also affected the representation and reception of the celebrated hero.¹⁰⁷ It is this idea that I will outline briefly next.

Mass readers and mass texts: Consuming Captain Cook.

The late eighteenth-century “mass” consumption of culture is evidently not to be understood as identical to mass markets or readerships today. Participation in the texts discussed in this thesis, however they may have been perceived at the time, was in reality only unevenly accessible to the population of London. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that sociable and public forms of cultural consumption – newspapers read aloud, ballad singing, pantomime, prints displayed in windows – mean that

¹⁰⁵ McNairn (1997), preface, xii.

¹⁰⁶ Wilson (2003), p. 59.

¹⁰⁷ Jon P. Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, 1987), p. 47.

neither a lack of literacy nor poverty were always insurmountable obstacles. At the same time (as I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 4) print piracy, anthologisation, excerpting, installment publication and the practice of hiring out books reduced many well-known texts to a more “moderate and easy price.”¹⁰⁸ I am, however, here primarily interested in metropolitan culture’s perception of itself as ‘mass.’ In contrast to a nostalgia-tinged notion of the past, in which a small, elite class of connoisseurs maintained personal control over “Fame’s high Temple” (for Alexander Pope, already worryingly besieged by crowds in 1715), in the second half of the eighteenth century, celebrity’s “explosive, democratising power” seemed to hand “a central role in recognising and validating fame” to an anonymous and unpredictable public.¹⁰⁹ This development was part of a wider cultural shift, described by Jon Klancher as an “epochal transition to a market economy of the text”; producing both an authoritative “cultivated middle-class public” and a wider “mass audience.”

As a consequence, elements of overwhelming “uncertain[ty]” were introduced, though gradually and unequally, to the production and reception of metropolitan culture, with the two groups proving impossible either to separate or to define.¹¹⁰

Although Klancher’s 1987 analysis is limited by its focus on printed texts, and neglect of the rapidly expanding real and perceived role of women, the significance

¹⁰⁸ George William Anderson, *A New, Authentic and Complete Collection of Voyages Round the World, Undertaken and Performed by Royal Authority. Containing an Authentic, Entertaining, Full, and Complete History of Captain Cook’s First, Second, Third and Last Voyages* (London: Alexander Hogg, 1784-1786), iv. See Cardwell (2004), 1-16, 278-282; William St Clair *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2004), 1-19, 103-122, 307-357.

¹⁰⁹ Alexander Pope, “The Temple of Fame” (1715) in *The Major Works*, edited by Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1993), 103-118; l. 61; Heather McPherson, “Siddons Rediviva: Death, Memory and Theatrical Afterlife” in *Mole*, 120-140, pp. 121.

¹¹⁰ Klancher, pp. 19, 80, 3.

of gender and genre has been addressed more fully in work by scholars such as Julie Carlson on theatre and David Solkin on visual art. These studies indicate that perceptions of a newly diverse consumer ‘revolution’ shaped a huge range of texts in this period. Carlson notes, for example, that “between 1780 and 1840 London theatres experienced a rapid influx of middle- and lower-middle-class patrons who demanded satisfaction,” and that this expanding, powerful audience, alongside the growing roles of women on and off stage, led writers anxiously to identify contemporary metropolitan theatres with the threat of a potentially “democratized and feminized nation.”¹¹¹ The arrogation of cultural power by ‘the mob’ could seem both a symptom and a cause of political subversion: in Thomas Love Peacock’s only mildly exaggerated satire of conservative fears in 1817, critics lament that “the public in general, the swinish multitude, the many-headed monster, actually reads and thinks!!!!”¹¹² Such a monster, especially in the turbulent political context of 1780-1810, seemed impossible to control. Theatre audiences rioted when actors and

¹¹¹ Julie A. Carlson, *In the Theatre of Romanticism: Coleridge, Nationalism, Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1994), pp. 12-14. David H. Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1993). See also John Brewer, “‘The Most Polite Age and the Most Vicious.’ Attitudes towards Culture as a Commodity, 1660-1800” in *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800*, edited by Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (London: Routledge, 1995), 343-361; Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1997); John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (1997). New edition (London: Harper Collins, 2004); Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2000); C.S. Matheson, “‘A Shilling Well Laid Out’: The Royal Academy’s Early Public” in *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780-1836*, edited by David H. Solkin (New Haven: Yale U.P., 2001), 39-53; K. Dian Kriz, “‘Stare Cases’: Engendering the Public’s Two Bodies at the Royal Academy of Arts”, in Solkin (2001), 55-63; Holger Hoock, *The King’s Artists: The Royal Academy of Arts and the Politics of British Culture 1760-1840* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2003), 206-220.

¹¹² Thomas Love Peacock, *Melincourt* (1817), in *The Novels of Thomas Love Peacock*, edited by David Garnett (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1948), vol. 1 of 2, 91-344, p. 280; See Patrick Brantlinger, *The Reading Lesson: The Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Indiana: Indiana U.P., 1998), 1-68.

managers tried to restrain their behaviour. The crowds at the Royal Academy and other shows refused to react to paintings in the polite and high-minded ways demanded by artists, making demands for novelty and spectacle which made long-established values and aesthetics increasingly difficult to maintain.

It was in print, however, with its erosion of even the illusion of authentic contact between writer and reader, that the mass audience came to seem most faceless and threatening. “For the small tribute of 3 pence,” Frances Burney noted nervously, it was “in the power of *any & every* body” to borrow and read her novel. She admitted that this vulnerability gave her “an exceedingly odd *sensation*.”¹¹³ Writers sent their work out into a “a crowded and contested literary marketplace” with no assurances about how it would be received, interpreted and appreciated; indeed, with no guarantees that it would remain their own and not be pirated, excerpted, travestied and reconstituted by the cannibal processes of cheap publishing.¹¹⁴ Individual readers were often remarkably autonomous in their consumption and books were not treated as sacred texts. Naomi Tadmor’s account of mid-century reading practices stresses their active and social nature, and the non-linear, incomplete or “intermittent” reception of books, “entwined with reading of other texts from various genres” and rapidly absorbed into commonplace books or through imitation and quotation.¹¹⁵ Popular circulating-library novels, repeatedly associated with young,

¹¹³ Frances Burney (March 1778), in *A Known Scribbler: Frances Burney on Literary Life*, edited by Justine Crump (Ontario: Broadview, 2002), p. 129. Original italics. For other examples, see Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2000).

¹¹⁴ David Higgins, “Celebrity, Politics and the Rhetoric of Genius” in *Mole*, 41-59, p. 43.

¹¹⁵ Naomi Tadmor, “‘In the even my wife read to me’: Women, Reading and Household Life in the Eighteenth Century” in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, edited by James Raven, Helen Small and Naomi Tadmor (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1996), p. 168. See Ian Jackson, “Approaches to the History of Readers and Reading in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” in

female and ignorant readers, were disseminated to a demographic apparently so broad and inclusive that it could not be named or defined, and seemed, in Catherine Gallagher's term, a mass of "new nobody readers."¹¹⁶ This was perhaps even more true of the jumbled and unreliable contents of newspapers, which required readers to impose their own interpretations on the text, add their own comments and information, and alter their experience of the paper by devouring the news they cared about and ignoring the rest (See the introduction to Section 1 and Chapter 1).

The first half of this thesis, then, traces early metropolitan representations of Cook's death in terms of their production within specific media. In the absence of dependable-seeming information and imagery, prior to the return of the *Resolution* and *Discovery* in 1781, and the publication of an official voyage account in 1784, the vulnerable epistemological status of Cook's fame, the product of mass print culture, was emphasised by the inflated reliance of representations of his death on a textually mediated rumour mill. Accounts and images seemed to reproduce themselves unpredictably in different media, their meanings mutating, sometimes radically and strategically, sometimes more subtly, as they were recontextualised by reading and reception. While I seek to highlight the multiplicity rather than the unanimity of these responses, one common thread of depictions of the Hawaiian crowd as ravenous, monstrous and often cannibal, can also be identified, and can be plausibly linked to their creators' positions as nervous participants in mass culture. As contemporary newspapers were filled with the news of the 1780 Gordon Riots, during which the uncontrollable effects of print seemed to be embodied in

Historical Journal 47, no. 4 (December 2004): 1041-1054; Steven Colclough, *Consuming Texts: Readers and Reading Communities, 1695-1870* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 64-117.

¹¹⁶ Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace 1670-1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 219.

‘primitive’ crowds summoned by printed advertisements and speeches, the anxieties of reporters, poets and artists about handing over the figure of Cook to be ‘consumed’ by unknown and potentially disorderly readers found expression in the same discourse of savagery used to delineate the terrifying British crowd.

If one contemporary fear concerned the effect of an anonymous mass audience on cultural production, however, another wondered what impact mass culture might be having on the minds and bodies of readers and viewers. *Metropolitans* saw themselves as living in (in Erik Bond’s phrase) a “print-saturated city,” at the centre of an overwhelming explosion of new text: newspapers, periodicals, books, pictures, advertisements and pamphlets.¹¹⁷ Since the lapsing of the Licensing Act at the end of the seventeenth century, censorship seemed to have largely broken down, and publishers, armed with new technologies, responded to consumer demand by producing greater and greater quantities of cheaper and cheaper print.¹¹⁸ Warnings about the resulting deceitfulness of metropolitan culture and the dire moral, educational and physiological effects of excessive reading and theatre-going have been well-documented in recent scholarship.¹¹⁹ Moreover, literature on the Cook voyages in particular had in the early 1770s come to act as a focal point for these

¹¹⁷ Erik Bond, *Reading London: Urban Speculation and Imaginative Government in Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Ohio: Ohio State U.P., 2007), 129-137.

¹¹⁸ See Brewer (1997), 125-166; James Raven, “The Book Trades” in *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays*, edited by Isabel Rivers (New York: Continuum, 2001), 1-34.

¹¹⁹ See Terry Lovell, “Subjective Powers? Consumption, the Reading Public, and Domestic Woman in Early Eighteenth-Century England” in Bermingham and Brewer, 23-41; E.J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction 1762-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1995), 51-130; Jeremy Black, *Culture in Eighteenth-Century England: A Subject for Taste* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 101-170; Paul Baines, “The Pleasures and Perils of the Imagination” in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, edited by Christine Gerrard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 500-514; Jack Lynch, *Deception and Detection in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

fears. The corrupting public circulation of John Hawkesworth's account of Cook's first voyage to the Pacific was a "curse," satirists and commentators had written, and would "Fire[...] the bright maid with more than mortal heat," provoking sexual immorality.¹²⁰ Since readers were traditionally suspicious of the truth claims of travel writing, especially that from the South Pacific, the setting of hoaxes, cons, fantasies and romance, Cook and others had worked to distance his later voyages from these scandals, to the satisfaction of observers such as More, who pronounced Cook a figurehead of a newly respectable form of exploration.¹²¹ Yet, as Jonathan Lamb and others have shown, vestiges remained of these associations between South Sea voyaging and the critique of metropolitan culture as a threat to readers' reason and self-control.¹²²

In a 1787 "*Jeu d'Esprit*" in the *Town and Country Magazine*, the knowing presentation of a story from *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* suggests that narratives associated with Cook's death could be characterised by their power to manipulate the

¹²⁰ *An Epistle from Mr. Banks, Voyager, Monster-hunter, and Amoroso, to Oberea, Queen of Otaheite*. Second edition (London: John Swann, undated [c.1774]), p. 13. For discussion of this controversy in the 1770s, see Anne Maxwell "Fallen Queens and Phantom Diadems: Cook's Voyages and England's Social Order" in *The Eighteenth Century* 38, no. 3 (1997): 247-258; Gillian Russell, "An 'Entertainment of Oddities': Fashionable Sociability and the Pacific in the 1770s" in *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire 1660-1840*, edited by Kathleen Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2004), 48-70; Alan Bewell, "'On the Banks of the South Sea': Botany and Sexual Controversy in the Late Eighteenth Century" in *Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany, and Representations of Nature*, edited by David Philip Miller and Peter Hanns Reill (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1996), 173-196; O'Quinn (2005), 77-79.

¹²¹ More (1788), ll. 235-239.

¹²² See David Mackay, "Myth, Science, and Experience in the British Construction of the Pacific" in Calder, Lamb and Orr (1999), 100-113; Lamb (2001), 17-113; Pamela Cheek, *Sexual Antipodes: Enlightenment, Globalization, and the Placing of Sex* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 2003); Guest (2007), 149-168; Vanessa Smith, *Intimate Strangers: Friendship, Exchange and Pacific Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2010).

reader. In the original published account of this story, King describes how, during the running battles which followed the confrontation in Kealakekua Bay, an unnamed Hawaiian man had repeatedly attempted to retrieve the body of his companion, despite his injuries and the continuing British gunfire. Seeing him “return the third time, bleeding and faint” and hearing his story, the British officer “forbad the soldiers to fire,” so that the man could “carry off his friend; which he was just able to perform, and then fell down himself, and expired.”¹²³ The sketch is a chivalric and somewhat disingenuous moment among the scenes of ethically unjustifiable British reprisals which William Cowper was to read as evidence of the “persevering cruelty” of explorers.¹²⁴ The narrator in the *Town and Country Magazine* rather arbitrarily names the two Hawaiian protagonists “Ereeo and Koah,” and transforms the story into a romantic illustration of the sentimental moral that “friendship is divine.”¹²⁵ This version of the story was printed in some later compilations unaccompanied.¹²⁶ In the *Town and Country Magazine*, however, it is framed, and continually interrupted, by the narrator’s attempts to seduce his interlocutor, Sally, “a charming girl of nineteen,” by persuading her to act out the story with him until she appears to faint in imitation of Koah’s death. A figure of the reader who may be innocent or complicit, Sally’s excessive sensibility is regarded as the artificial effect of a manipulative and lascivious narration, and the story of Hawaii as a metropolitan device by which the reader’s subjectivity is suspended,

¹²³ *Voyage*, vol. 3, p. 58.

¹²⁴ William Cowper to John Newton (30 October 1784) in *The Life and Letters of William Cowper*, edited by William Hayley. New Edition (London: J. Johnson, 1812), vol. 2 of 4, p. 250.

¹²⁵ “Friendship. A Jeu d’Esprit” in *The Town and Country Magazine, or Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction and Entertainment*, vol. 19 (1787): 351-352.

¹²⁶ e.g. “Friendship: An Indian Anecdote” in *The Selector: Being a New and Chaste Collection of Visions, Tales, and Allegories, Calculated for the Amusement and Instruction of the Rising Generation* (London: E. Newbery, 1797), 148-150.

putting them in a position of enchantment and insentient vulnerability which “resemble[s] the dead body” of the Hawaiian warrior.

To consume the spectacular sensations and emotions of Cook’s death, in other words, could be uncomfortably similar to seduction or violence. The *Town and Country Magazine*’s image of the woman who swoons like a corpse because she identifies too closely with a fictional Other might point us towards one of the dominant tropes used both in and about cultural forms of entertainment aimed at a mass market in this period. Women (and less often men) fainted in theatres or galleries, or when reading a particularly sensational novel; plays, pictures and books were in turn filled with the unconscious or lifeless bodies of feminine victims of sensibility. This can, of course, be seen as a specifically gothic trope.¹²⁷ Its deployment in texts such as the magazine story outlined above, however, suggest the significant difficulties involved in distinguishing a genre called ‘gothic’ from the broader sphere of mass metropolitan culture in the late eighteenth century. I do not, then, attempt to delineate particular texts or experiences as gothic in formal terms. However, I will suggest in the second half of this thesis that the contemporary fashion for ‘gothicness’ – understood here as a self-reflexive mode of mediating representations of the distant past to elicit and regulate the viewer’s curiosity and emotion – had crucial effects on the sensationalised retellings within mass culture of a story of violence, set in a distant world frequently elided with the prehistoric or historic past. These gothicised reshapings take place during a (roughly consecutive) second stage in Cook’s celebrity, from the anticipation of *A Voyage to the Pacific*

¹²⁷ See Ellis (1996), 5-48, 190-221; Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester U.P., 1992); Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh U.P., 2000), 1-16, 48-80.

Ocean in the early 1780s, to Johann Zoffany's painting of the *Death of Captain Cook* in the 1790s, and beyond to dispersal and reception in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

During this stage, the sudden abundance of material artefacts and information, including in the case of James King's and David Samwell's narratives, the overwhelming experience of Hawaii itself, had to be made comprehensible to the metropolitan viewer. Following the mode of sensational diversity-as-entertainment found in the Sandwich Islands Room, a memorial exhibit of Hawaiian artefacts dedicated to Cook in the Leverian Museum, texts such as King's *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, the pantomime *Death of Cook*, and Helen Maria Williams' *The Morai* evoke difference through the stunning display of curious objects and figures. Fears of the hypnotic effects of these were intensified as artists, novelists and theatrical designers rapidly innovated techniques of sensation and emotional manipulation which seemed to suspend the judgement and will, drawing the metropolitan consumer into a state of artificial sentiment as they devoured dazzling museum shows, tear-jerking theatrical spectacles, and gruesome violence.

Section 1

Introduction

“No person who is capable of reflection ever thought it a remarkable circumstance,” conceded a correspondent for the London *Morning Chronicle* in January 1780, that James Cook had been killed in the course of his voyages.¹ The navy, according to estimates in 1822, had lost 1658 men in 1779, a mortality rate of one in forty two.² Pacific exploration was only marginally safer than wartime engagement. In the course of Cook’s two earlier voyages there had been some extraordinarily dangerous incidents— this was partly what made them popular reading— and many officers and crew had died. Aside from disease, shipwreck, and other accidents, violent confrontations with local people were familiar and widely regarded as inevitable. Interested metropolitan readers would have been aware, for example, that Captain Marc-Joseph Marion du Fresne had been killed by Maori along with twenty six others in 1772, and that the following year ten of Cook’s own crew had been killed and their bodies cooked and partly eaten.

The news of Cook’s death arrived in London at the beginning of January 1780, in a letter from the by-then dead Captain Charles Clerke, delivered to the Admiralty from Kamchatka via St Petersburg. Even by eighteenth-century standards – and despite admiring comments on the civilised state of communications in the Russian Empire³

¹ *Morning Chronicle and Daily Advertiser* (18 January 1780).

² Gilbert Blane, “On the comparative health of the British Navy 1779-1814, with proposals for its further improvement” (1822) in *Romanticism and Science 1773-1833*, edited by Tim Fulford (Oxford: Routledge, 2002), 157-181; p. 177.

³ “The most striking circumstance surely is, that Captain Clerke should sit down in the Bay of St. Peter and Paul in Kamschatka, and write a letter to Mr. Stephens, at Charing-cross, which, in about

– the eleven months that it took for the story of Cook’s death to reach Britain was a long delay. After Wolfe had been killed in Quebec in 1759, for example, it had taken little over a month for the news to arrive in England.⁴ Letters from Jamaica would be expected to travel to Britain within fourteen weeks, from India overland within three or four months, and from China in six.⁵ In contrast, many metropolitan readers had been waiting years for news of Cook’s ships, during which time he had become the subject of gossip and conjecture. In December 1779, for instance, the *Gazetteer* had claimed to be confident that Cook was safe and well, giving as evidence the testimony of an anonymous informant who had “conversed with a gentleman, who was told by the Captain of a Danish East-Indiaman, that Capt. Cook arrived in the river of Canton, in China, in perfect health.”⁶ When reports appeared a month later that Cook had been killed in February 1779, there may not immediately have seemed much reason to think this information was any more reliable.

Cook, as I have suggested, was reasonably well-known for his two earlier voyages, but had not yet achieved widespread fame. There were very few spontaneous displays of public mourning and, at a time of dramatic events on the other side of the Atlantic, the news did not unduly dominate the papers. Nevertheless, sporadic items on Cook’s death appeared in London and then in provincial newspapers from January until the late summer of 1780. This was virtually the only public form in which the majority of metropolitans could find descriptions of the incident for

half a year, reaches him as safely, as if it had been put into a penny-post-office, in the parish of St. Paul, Covent-Garden. This is civilization.” *Morning Chronicle & London Advertiser* (17 January 1780).

⁴ McNairn (1997), 7-19.

⁵ P.J. Marshall (ed), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2001), table p. 13.

⁶ *Gazetteer and Daily Advertiser* (2 December 1779).

several months. The first separately published elegies did not emerge until June, the first full book on the subject was published in May 1781, the first official book in 1784, and, apart from the Royal Society medal (not distributed until 1784), there were no official memorials. The earliest metropolitan mythology of Cook, then, was largely shaped by representations in newsprint. To an extent, of course, this was true of many foreign events, but this incident seems to have had a particular intangibility. The story, as it first appeared, lacked the detail needed to make it vivid; and had taken place on a newly-discovered island which readers struggled to picture. In a metropolitan political culture dominated by personal relationships and theatrical ritual, there could be no spectacular encounter with the living hero, as in the Keppel trial the previous year, or procession of the dead, as when in 1759 “many Thousands of People assembled” to watch Wolfe’s “hapless happy Relicks” be carried from Portsmouth to Greenwich.⁷ Cook, in comparison to these figures, must have seemed ghostly, even insignificant.

Further information continued to trickle back to the metropolis over the course of the year, including slightly more detailed letters from the Cape of Good Hope which arrived in July. The newly-promoted captain of the *Discovery*, James King, travelled to London overland from Scotland in August, where the ships were delayed, reportedly because the crews refused to risk being pressed into war service in London,⁸ with further reports for the Admiralty, and the ships limped back into the Thames by 4 October 1780. This section will give an account of the reporting and reception of this information in 1780, exploring how contemporary perceptions of

⁷ *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer* (17 November 1759). See McNairn (1997), p. 62; Wilson (1998), 255-258.

⁸ *London Packet* (20 September 1780). Also in *Whitehall Evening Post* (21 September 1780); *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (22 September 1780); and others.

newspapers may have shaped Cook's emerging celebrity. This will provide a background for my reading of the representation of Cook's death in the 1780s, first as it appeared in one issue of the *General Evening Post*, and then in the broader context of the news of the Gordon riots after June 1780.

“The Channel by which the above was received”: reporting Charles Clerke's letter from Kamchatka.

In January 1780, a metropolitan newspaper editor's only first-hand source of information about events in Hawaii was Clerke's letter from Kamchatka. This describes how Cook “went ashore to talk with the Chief” following the theft of the cutter from the *Discovery*. Due to its influence, the letter is worth quoting at length:

at his landing [Cook] was received with the accustomed respect they upon all occasions paid him, which more resembled that due to a Deity than a human being, was conducted to the King and they conversed together with their usual sociality, they were surrounded by a vast concourse of the Natives who appeared as upon all these occasions as idle spectators, but there were among them some very insolent ill-disposed fellows, for one of them carried his insolence so far, that Captain Cook fired at him, though in the midst of this mob, with a load of small-shot, which, though it did no mischief, for the shot were too small to penetrate the rascals mat he had about him, still it exceedingly exasperated the whole, producing an universal Murmur and they soon proceeding to acts of violence Captain Cook fired a second time and

killed a man when they immediately made a general attack upon him and his Marines who were drawn up by him; the Soldiers immediately fired, but before they could reload their Pieces the Indians broke in upon them, killed Captain Cook, four of his party, and wounded the Lieutenant, Serjeant and two others.⁹

Clerke was not himself an eyewitness, but acted as the collator of his colleagues' "Exceedingly perplexed" accounts.¹⁰ He describes the Hawaiians as though discussing a crowd of London apprentices, as a "mob" of "insolent ill-disposed fellows" and "idle spectators." Although he includes details of Cook's own "acts of violence" – including killing a man – he is clear that Cook fires "with a load of small-shot" rather than the more lethal ball, inaugurating a humanitarian trope which would become conventional. It is worth noting, however, that in this version it is not evident whether this was a deliberate attempt to do "no mischief" (as later writers would assume) or simply a mistake.

Clerke also includes the ambiguously-worded assertion that the Hawaiian treatment of Cook "more resembled that due to a Deity than a human being." To nineteenth-century evangelicals and twentieth-century postcolonial anthropologists alike, this claim is so shocking or implausible as to become the key point of the episode. In London in 1780, in contrast, Clerke's passing reference to Cook's Hawaiian "apotheosis" does not seem to have generated much controversy, perhaps because the "Western idea of the redoubtable European who is a god to savages" was so

⁹ Charles Clerke, report to the Admiralty (1779), qtd. in *The Journals of Captain James Cook. The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery, 1776-1780*, ed. J.C. Beaglehole, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P./ Hakluyt Society, 1967), p. 1535.

¹⁰ Alexander Home, qtd. in Thomas (2003), p. 394.

embedded in contemporary metropolitan consciousness that it could pass without comment, or perhaps because many early accounts interpreted it as describing respect rather than veneration.¹¹ On the other hand, in his book on Cook's death, Williams argues that the British Admiralty was involved in a deliberate process of "prohibition and censorship" over aspects of the story, especially the claim that Cook was treated like a god. Williams believes that this was, then as later, "one of the most controversial aspects of Clerke's description of the death of Cook." As a result, the idea was "kept from the public" until the end of the month. Williams describes the preparation of a "hurried summary" of Clerke's narrative for the state-run *London Gazette*, which omits any reference at all to deification. This, he asserts, was the only version of events available to the reading public for several weeks:

Capt. Clerke [...] gives the melancholy account of the celebrated Capt. Cook, late commander of that sloop, with four of his private mariners, having been killed on the 14th of February last at the island of O'why'he, one of a group of new discovered islands, in the 22d degree of North latitude, in an affray with a numerous and tumultuous body of the natives.¹²

The problem with William's hypothesis is that at least two different reports appeared on the same day as the *Gazette's*, and several others within a fortnight. Even assuming that what was controversial in the 1850s or 1980s was equally so in 1780, then, if the Admiralty attempted to act as public censor in January 1780, it was largely ineffective. The *Whitehall Evening Post* for 8-11 January 1780, for example,

¹¹ Obeyesekere (1992), p. 177.

¹² Williams (2008), pp. 2, 13.

¹² *London Gazette* (8 January 1780).

includes a reference to Cook's reception in Hawaii which must have derived from the 'censored' details of Clerke's letter:

[T]he celebrated circumnavigator, Captain Cook, and four of his people, were killed by the inhabitants of a new discovered Island in the South Seas, in 22 N.L. and 200 E.I. from Greenwich. The Captain and crew were first treated as deities, but upon their revisiting that Island, some proved inimical, hostilities ensued, and the above melancholy scene was the consequence. This account is come from Kamschatka, by letters from Captain Clarke and others.¹³

The use of the word "deities" here, as well as the detail that the Hawaiian reception had changed only "upon their revisiting that Island," both of which are in Clerke's report but not the Admiralty press release, strongly suggest that a writer at the *Whitehall Post* had access to the original letter from Kamchatka. In the next issue, this narrative was broadly repeated, with the added detail that the Hawaiians "seemed very riotous and rude, particularly one Man, whom the Captain ordered to be fired on with small Shot, which they not regarding, he ordered Bullets to be fired, which killed the most daring Man and another."¹⁴ With some minor changes and elaborations (three of the crew are killed instead of Clerke's four, the Hawaiians are given clubs, and the man shot by Cook in Clerke's account becomes two, killed on Cook's orders but not by him), this account clearly draws from Clerke's original letter, if not directly then via the metropolitan rumour mill.

¹³ *Whitehall Evening Post* (8 January 1780).

¹⁴ *Whitehall Evening Post* (11 January 1780).

Versions continued to appear through the second half of January 1780, sometimes alongside the *Gazette*'s text. The *St. James's Chronicle*, for example, published on the same day as the *Gazette* and the *Whitehall Post* quoted above, regretfully informed their readers that Cook, in the *Endeavour*, had been "cut off, and several of his Crew taken Prisoners, by the Inhabitants of an Island on the coast of Kamtschatca." The details unique to this version, which demonstrate ignorance not only of Cook's death but also of the names of his ships, indicate that that the *St. James's Chronicle* did not get their information only through official Admiralty channels but also made use of gossip and speculation. "[T]he Channel by which the above was received," the newspaper nevertheless concludes "leaves it beyond a Doubt."¹⁵

On 25 January the *London Chronicle* and at least two other newspapers printed a more extensive "recital of the unhappy end of the famous English Traveller," based on information from a Berlin geographical journal, *Wöchentliche Nachrichten*, whose editor Anton Friedrich Büsching had a letter from the scientist Simon Peter Pallas. Pallas had seen and probably copied parts of Clerke's letter in St Petersburg. Versions of the Pallas/ Büsching story were printed in at least seven other newspapers, and add polish rather than concrete detail:

The islanders became every day more bold, and most clearly demonstrated their inclination for theft, which went so far as to steal one of his boats. – Captain Cook, willing to seek justice for this robbery, went on shore with his Lieutenant, and ten or twelve of his crew. He advanced towards a large body of the inhabitants, who always paid him great respect, and accosted their Chief.

¹⁵ *St. James's Chronicle* (8 January 1780).

Whilst the negotiation was carrying on, the insolence of one of the islanders, who was in the throng, obliged him to fire on him with his musket loaded only with small shot, which did not even penetrate the mat with which he was covered. The Indians began then to be enraged, and when the Lieutenant had at length fired and killed his man, the whole troop fell on the body; and as soon as the sailors had discharged their pieces, they did not give them time to load again, but killed Capt. Cook and four of his people, forcing the others, partly wounded, to make their escape, under favour of the fire of the pinnace.¹⁶

What this brief history of the newspaper reports of Cook's death suggests is that these stories were multivocal, scattered, and often self-evidently contradictory and unreliable. Clerke's letter should not be taken as some kind of undistorted, objective ur-text from which subsequent retellings depart either by mistake or in a deliberate attempt to mislead the reader about 'what really happened.' Nevertheless, the gaps between the scene Clerke describes and those presented to metropolitan newspaper readers are a reminder of the extent to which news of this kind was mediated, quite openly, by gossip, guesswork and the demand for entertaining copy. Readers' awareness of this must have inflected their reception of stories, such as Cook's, which could not be externally verified.

Apart from rare parliamentary and trial reporters, British newspapers in 1780 had never formally employed 'journalists' in the modern sense, but relied on outside contributions which were sometimes paid but often not. Their main sources were

¹⁶ *London Chronicle* (25 January 1780); *General Evening Post* (27 January 1780) and others. *St James's Chronicle* (25 January 1780) gives the same account of the voyage, but replaces this narrative of Cook's death with the comment "There [in Hawaii] he was unluckily slain, as already mentioned, in a Dispute with the Natives."

letters, usually anonymous, foreign newspapers, and official or semi-official announcements. These stories were, “at best, vague and unsupported conjectures, but much oftener injurious falsehoods,” according to a commentator in 1784.¹⁷

Communication between London and the distant lands with whom Britain traded, fought or allied was slow and unpredictable, especially during wartime. “It is unnecessary to tell you,” wrote Caleb Whitefoord in the character of a newspaper editor in 1799, “that our foreign correspondence is in a great measure imaginary.”¹⁸

With a large number of pages to fill and a limited stock of reliable information, daily newspapers were inevitably “obliged to become the receptacle of invention and embellishment,” one writer noted in 1780.¹⁹ News was further distorted by the manipulations of censorship, political propaganda, and patronage, as well as the demand for entertainment and sensation. Even by these standards, reports about Cook’s death must have seemed especially suspect. The Pacific islands were inconceivably distant from London, and there were no established routes by which messages from Hawaii could travel via European settlements and trading posts. Even the distance between London and Cook’s “obscure” family in northeast England was an epistemological problem, the location of Cook’s birth proving difficult to establish precisely (the *St. James’s Chronicle* and *Gazetteer* said Great Ayton, while the *London Chronicle* printed a copy of the record of his baptism in the parish register for Marton, “about four miles from Great Ayton”). The desire of provincial

¹⁷ [Charles Dibdin], *The Devil* (London: W.S. Fores, [1785]), p. 44.

¹⁸ [Caleb Whitefoord], *Advice to Editors of Newspapers* (London: Alexander MacPherson, 1799), p. 4.

¹⁹ *London Magazine or Gentleman’s Monthly Intelligencer*, vol. 49 (1780), p. 355.

towns to claim the newly-famous as their own always clouded their biographies, suggested the *Gazetteer*.²⁰

The profound “uncertainty” produced by the conditions of reading the news – “the felt distance from crucial events, the limits of knowledge in a mediated culture, the temporal gaps in the transmission of information” – was, Mary Favret suggests, a crucial mediating factor in Britons’ perception of their place in the world.²¹ As Daniel O’Quinn argues more generally, the “contradictory and often spurious” nature of the information in late eighteenth-century London newspapers, as well as their political bias and “haphazard and often communal” reception, should temper efforts to read them too closely through Benedict Anderson’s idea of the press as “a zone of homogeneous nation making,” or indeed national hero-making.²²

Reception was shaped by the form as well as the content of the news. At the beginning of the century, some London papers had dedicated their entire front page – sometimes even the whole issue – to single long essays, but by the 1780s these had largely disappeared, advertising was increasingly dominant, and the variety of items and registers found in a single newspaper edition was growing rapidly. Newspapers during this period seemed to grow uncontrollably, containing more and more diverse

²⁰ *St James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post* (13 January 1780); *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (25 January 1780); *London Chronicle* (27 January 1780).

²¹ Mary A. Favret, *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime* (New Jersey: Princeton U.P., 2010), p. 11.

²² O’Quinn (2005), p. 22. See also Michael Harris, *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole: A Study of the Origins of the Modern English Press* (London: Associated University Presses, 1987), 155-197; Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (Kent: Croome Helm, 1987); Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Simon Burrows, “The Cosmopolitan Press, 1759-1815” in *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America* edited by Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2002), 23-47.

text with each issue. Attributed and unattributed text travelled between different newspapers and different, even disguised genres.²³ Meaning was often left to the reader's judgement, and often shifted with its reproduction and recontextualisation. Despite the apparent "haphazard contiguity" of newspaper layout noted by O'Quinn, though, it was not the case that eighteenth-century newspapers were thrown together at random, nor that these texts are entirely "insusceptible to analysis."²⁴ Paragraphs of news, comment and satire, Ann C. Dean shows, were often very deliberately placed in relation to other items on the page to produce tacit meaning.²⁵ They were also edited and arranged following broadly commercial lines, promoting, where possible, stories regarded appealing to particular target readers. Indeed, the dizzying shifts and incongruities of the newspaper was itself a selling point, replicating the amusing and unpredictable social mix of urban fairs, pleasure gardens, theatres or museums; the pages of the newspaper becoming, in the words of the *London Magazine* in 1780, a vast "toy-shop, where every one has his hobby-horse; and thus all capacities and descriptions are periodically furnished with instruction, amusement, and information."²⁶

Newspaper readers were likely to be at least semi-conscious of the commercial motivations shaping the text, laughing at the stock comic figures of dishonest, rapacious newspaper editors and writers in contemporary plays such as Samuel

²³ For an account of how newspaper advertising could disguise itself within a dazzling range of forms and genres, see Neil McKendrick, "George Packwood and the Commercialization of Shaving: The Art of Eighteenth-Century Advertising or 'The Way to Get Money and be Happy'" in *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*, edited by Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb (London: Europa, 1982), 146-194.

²⁴ O'Quinn (2005), p. 6.

²⁵ See Ann C. Dean, "Court Culture and Political News in London's Eighteenth-Century Newspapers" in *ELH* 73, no. 3 (2006): 631-649.

²⁶ *London Magazine, or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer* (August 1780): 354-356, p. 356.

Foote's *The Bankrupt*, Arthur Murphy's *News from Parnassus* or Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The Critic* as they demanded "what do we print lies for but to please the public?"²⁷ Pleasing the public, then, was often seen as coterminous with deceiving the public. The intimate interweaving of the news on the page with advertising for pamphlets, lotteries, shows, and in particular for quack medicines – a byword for false claims and for the privileging of the eye-catching, hypnotic 'puff' over rational judgement – inextricably associated newspapers with illusion, empty spectacle and fraud.²⁸ Whitefoord, a newspaper enthusiast, describes newspapers as the ultimate metonym of the modern city's aesthetic and epistemological disintegration into an enjoyable but overwhelming spectacle of "heterogeneous ingredients and discordant combinations"; by which metropolitan readers were daily faced with the paradox of "certain intelligence—totally destitute of foundation; authentic advices—political lies."²⁹

The destabilising experience of the news, then, mediates metropolitan perceptions of distant events such as Cook's death in ways which are difficult but not impossible to trace. This is apparent in the earliest accounts of the incident within overtly political commentary. These discussions were less concerned with the elusive and unreliable details of the specific incident in Kealakekua Bay, than with finding a general narrative by which relationships with the periphery could be framed in legal and ethical terms for public dispute and entertainment. While a majority of writers

²⁷ Arthur Murphy, *News from Parnassus, a Prelude* (1776) in *The Works of Arthur Murphy, Esq.* (London: T. Cadell, 1786), vol. 4 of 7, 391-424, p. 397.

²⁸ See Lisa Forman Cody, "'No Cure, No Money,' or the Invisible Hand of Quackery: The Language of Commerce, Credit and Cash in Eighteenth-Century Medical Advertisements" in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 28 (1999): 103-130.

²⁹ [Caleb Whitefoord], "Cross-readings of news-papers" in *Fugitive Miscellany* 2 (London: J. Almon, 1775), p. 50.

treated Cook as representing the “humane and laudable disposition” of their metropolitan readers, his self-sacrifice could seem excessive: a manifestation of “imprudence.”³⁰ As Guest has shown, a minority of writers also referred obliquely to the wartime context and debates over the legitimacy of British actions abroad.³¹ This critique did not dominate his celebrity in Britain, but never disappeared completely. A contemporary satirical pamphlet, for example, professing to be a letter from ‘Omai’ to the Earl of Sandwich, ironically refers to “the unfortunate fate of poor Captain Cook,” who had been “certainly very cruelly and inhumanly butchered, for nothing more than ordering his crew to fire on a banditti of naked savages; who seemed to look as if they had a right to the country in which he found them.”³² Four years later, the anonymous *Cave of Neptune* imagines Cook among a Virgilian underworld of “warlike phantoms” who have died at sea. Cook appears as a “Shade” haunting the Hawaiian shore, parodying the pose of John Webber’s famous painting to continually “wave[...] its hand | To warn presumptuous mortals from the land.” The narrator explains that Cook had “Lamented died, tho’ Justice drew the dart” because he had attempted to “punish a man for *theft*, in a country where every thing was held in common.”³³

For “Philanthropos” in the *Whitehall Evening Post*, an account of European activity in the region “where Capt. Cook is said to have discovered a Cluster of those Islands on one of which he lost his life,” acts as a pretext for the censure of what he calls

³⁰ *Morning Chronicle* (22 January 1780); *London Chronicle* (20 January 1780).

³¹ Guest, “Commemorating Captain Cook,” 1-3.

³² *A Letter from Omai to the Right Honourable the Earl of (xxxxxxx)*. Translated from the Ulaietean tongue (London: J. Bell, 1780), pp. 24. This pamphlet is discussed in Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific* (New Haven: Yale, 1985), pp. 143-144.

³³ *The Cave of Neptune* (London: J. Walter, 1784), ll. 573-596. This section of the poem is quoted in Worrall (2007), p. 151 and Williams (2008), p. 85. Original italics.

naval “Colonization.” This is defined as “that bad principle [...], viz that a bare discovery gives a property in the land, and in the natives, as their cattle, to be killed or kept alive merely for the use, convenience, pleasure or pastime of the discoverers.” Contemporary events, the writer hopes, “will give the present Rulers of Europe, as well as us their Subjects, and our posterity, a surfeit of Colonization,” concluding that “Colonization has been a raging epidemical madness, which, it is hoped, will now be effectively cured, as it will, like a putrid fever, kill where it is not cured.”³⁴ The newspaper page juxtaposes this piece with a number of vocal attacks from different sources on more specific aspects of British foreign policy, including negotiations in America and “bloody enterprizes” in the Antilles. Its medical metaphor is also echoed by the newspaper’s recommendations for parliamentary reform as “timely remedies” for the “many evils that threaten to overturn the whole fabrick of the British Empire”: a “radical cure to all your State disorders [which will] reinvigorate every member of the body politic.” The story of Cook’s death becomes, then, an illustration of the newspaper’s diffuse critique of the disordered body of the British state, rather than simply an asserted truth.

“Had we been born in an island in the South-Seas,” speculated another critique, in the Whig *Morning Chronicle*, metropolitans would regard Cook as “an invader, a pirate.” If equivalent vessels full of “strange beings, with strange arms, and a strange language” were sighted off Plymouth, he went on,

we should make signs to them, that unless they returned forthwith to the place from whence they came, we should make use of the arms given us by God and nature, to put them all to death. Perhaps the Governor of

³⁴ *Whitehall Evening Post* (29 January 1780).

Plymouth, finding himself better provided than when the French paid him a visit, would not think it necessary to make any signs, but the signal of attack. Had this been the case with Cook, and all of his companions, long before now, who would have blamed the natives? Had we been antient, instead of modern Britons, how should we have behaved to any Roman Captain Cook, who came to explore our island?³⁵

It has been noted that the identification of Britain with the “island races” of the Pacific was a persistent eighteenth- and nineteenth-century political trope.³⁶ Its deployment here is less an attempt to empathise with either Cook or the unknown Hawaiians than to attach the novel image of their encounter to a discussion of modern British politics. The idea of attacks from the sea remained a powerful one for metropolitan readers, conjured up by the writer’s insistent references to the French ‘Armada’ of the previous year, which had threatened an invasion at Plymouth while most of the British navy were occupied elsewhere. The doubts surrounding the story allow the writer to evoke empathy with Hawaii as a means for metropolitans to discuss themselves within the generic location of the South Seas island, like Diderot’s Tahiti or Swift’s Laputa.³⁷ The scene of Cook’s death to metropolitans in 1780, then, was distant and vague enough to make it a useful site for the representation and contestation of local issues and identities, and novel and compelling enough to make this an attractive commercial prospect.

The first part of Chapter 1 will explore this process in a single text, the *General Evening Post* of 11-13 January 1780. With the Gordon riots of summer 1780,

³⁵ *Morning Chronicle* (17 January 1780).

³⁶ See Wilson (2003), 54-91.

³⁷ See Lamb (2001), 17-48.

however, metropolitan attention was focused briefly but intently on the internal threat of the ‘savage’ crowd, mobilised by and reflected in news media. The second part of the chapter will sketch this mutating metropolitan context, and suggest that it significantly shaped reports of Cook’s death after the riots, introducing or foregrounding tropes of mobs, cannibalism, self-destruction, and their opposites. As Chapter 2 argues, these tropes become central to mass cultural elegies to Cook written in the 1780s (although not in the notably elite, unpublished Latin elegy by Wellesley). Seward’s *Elegy*, the most successful of these poems, is the subject of Chapter 3.

Visual representations of the scene, in general, appeared later than written accounts. Cook’s perceived place as the subject of topical mass print, as a result, shaped the production and reception of pictures of his death up to the mid-1780s (Chapter 4). Artists responded to this problematic perception of Cook with a range of images, most famously John Webber’s *Death of Cook*, which, as Chapter 5 shows, was commodified in a wide range of forms and artefacts.

Chapter 1. Interpreting newspaper reports on the death of Cook

The closer analysis of a single London newspaper issue, the *General Evening Post* of 11-13 January, reveals the multiplicity of early responses to Cook's death. The *Post* was a mainstream evening paper printed three times a week in Ludgate Street by the well-known publisher Mary Say, with a circulation of around 4,500.¹ In the late 1770s and early 1780s it was in a minority of papers supporting the ministry and the war in America. Each issue cost three pence and, like most contemporary newspapers, had four pages with four dense columns of text on each (Figure 3).

The news of Cook's death appears in a variety of genres on different pages. The 'official' account, taken from the *Gazette*, is framed by the proceedings at the Guildhall, announcements of births, marriages, deaths, bankruptcies, soldiers' desertions, a ball at St James's Palace, and the story of the accidental shooting of Mrs Cooke, a Gloucestershire landlady. One of the first papers to print an extensive eulogy to Cook, their statement that "this untimely and ever to be lamented fate [...], may justly be considered as an irreparable loss to the public" is similarly surrounded by other appeals to the metropolitan reader: advertisements for medicinal mineral water, "Glass's Magnesia" and "Doctor Steer's Opodeldoc," a course of lectures, a mansion and an alum works, as well as a letter in support of George Gordon's Protestant Association. A short poem on Cook's death, by "Platonicus", is placed in a corner with the lyrics of a patriotic song and a series of announcements of books "this day published." Furthermore, the "postscript" – the end section of the newspaper where the most recent news could be tacked onto each issue – includes

¹ Barker (1998), p. 24.

among war and shipping news, letters, theatrical anecdotes, escaped murderers, stock prices and advertisements, further elegiac comment on Cook, and a summarised biography of his life.

The name of the paper, with LONDON in parentheses and a range of dates underneath, stretches across the width of the front page (Figure 3A). Although there are, of course, no headlines, many items are headed with place names, dates, attributions (*“Extract of a letter from a Midshipman on board the Vengeance Man of War, to a Merchant in Antigua”*), or categories (such as “BIRTHS”) in capitalised or italic text. The only visual illustrations are a stock figure of Mercury on the second page, and the opening capital (in this case the ‘C’ of “Capt. Clerke”), decorated by an image of the dome of St Paul’s Cathedral, and the symbolic technology of newsgathering: a ship, a horseman, and the faces of the four winds. The movement of information which constructs the newspaper is constantly foregrounded through these images, the use of reported speech (“We hear...,” “’tis said...,” “by the Captain we learn...”), and the direct or indirect epistolary framing of stories.

The news of Cook’s death is, then, carefully framed by reminders of the temporal and geographical distance it has travelled: from “the 14th of February last at the island of O’why’he, one of a group of new discovered islands, in the 22d degree of North latitude” to “the 8th of June, 1779, in the harbour of St. Peter and St. Paul, Kampschatka” to the “Admiralty-Office, Jan. 11.” These conventions naturalise the metropolis as a global centre where information converges, but at the same time advertise the newspaper’s own dispersed and mediated nature, rather than its precision, completeness or even truth.

The reader is presented with a number of fragments written by different observers at different times and places – letters from witnesses, announcements, accounts of gossip – and largely expected to synthesise them themselves. The postscript of this issue alone offers two contradictory explanations of Cook’s death: the first presented as a rumour (“The cause of Captain Cook’s death is said to arise...”) and the second as information “from another correspondent.” Most readers were well aware, since it was noted on the front page, that the sole source of original information in London was Clerke’s letter, so the rumour that Cook had been killed because of “a jealousy entertained by the natives of O’Why’he [...] against some of the ship’s crew, in respect to their women” must have been pure speculation. The other version is essentially Clerke’s, relating the “friendly” Hawaiian reception, its alteration into a “different disposition,” with the return of the ships, the theft of the boat, and the “melancholy catastrophe” on the beach. The *Post*, in other words, silently offers the reader two alternative and contradictory explanations of Cook’s death.

This was uncontroversial, since there was little expectation that the newspaper would be read consecutively as a coherent text. The practice of reading “uniformly from the title, to the printer’s name at the bottom of the last page” was, according to the *St James’s Chronicle* a decade earlier, archaic and impractical. The *Post* demanded to be read by a competent “news-reader” who “with a glance of his eye snatches the fresh paragraphs recognising the old ones as he passes,” and deciding how much attention to pay to each.² These strategies of rapid assessment and recognition made meaning out of texts which could otherwise be confusing. Information was often literally encoded: words and especially names were frequently replaced with initials, blank spaces, dashes or asterisks, while nicknames and oblique references provided

² *St James’s Chronicle* (3 March 1770).

clues for what are now called ‘blind items.’ Editors could also hint at the identities of people involved in scandal or political attacks by printing the story ‘blind’, and then inserting the names involved in adjacent, apparently unconnected paragraphs or in the same space in the next issue of the paper. This was done partly in order to protect the writers and printers from charges of libel or sedition. However, as Dean has argued, such practices also offered readers the pleasure of decoding and recognition, providing them with chances to display their status as political or social insiders with “interpretive skills,” and were frequently used in ‘puffs’ and advertisements as well as attacks.³

In the *Post*, the first reports of Cook’s death are boxed into the top corner of the front page by extensive, positive news of British naval battles in the West Indies. The comment that Cook’s death is to be “considered an irreparable loss to the public”, and that “his discoveries will be an everlasting honour to his country” flows seamlessly from the previous item, which describes the repairs to damaged British naval vessels, the commission of ten new ships, and fortification of Plymouth to make “this port the most secure in the kingdom”. Placed in this context, the figure of Cook can be read as a hero of the (much-criticised) British navy. His death “at the island of O’why’he” might function as an allegory of the threat from foreign enemies – the Spanish and French, crucially, as well as the natives and settlers in America routinely depicted in metropolitan propaganda as ‘savages’ – to the vulnerable British tar, as well as to the borders of British identity and “honour.” Similar links could be made on the last page of the newspaper (Figure 3B), where a poem telling

³ Dean (2006), p. 637. McKendrick (1982) includes examples of blanks, dashes, and indirect references used to ‘disguise’ the name of the advertiser.

the reader that Cook was “by the rude Barbarian slain” is juxtaposed with a song addressed to British troops:

Mark where the enemy’s colours fly, boys!
 There some must conquer, some must die, boys!
 But that appalls not you nor me,
 For our watchword, it shall be,
 Britain, strike home! revenge your country’s wrong!

The song is taken from the contemporary revival of the pantomime *Harlequin Fortunatus*, which was being performed with a new finale, designed by Philippe-Jacques de Louthembourg, depicting the recent British “Storming of FORT OMOA in the Bay of HONDURAS.”⁴ The pantomime promotes an ideal of patriotic heroism, based on expertise and benevolence towards the “fallen foe,” which is characteristic of depictions of Cook. His peacetime self-sacrifice is thus legitimised by military ideals for which it will later act as an exemplar.

A letter to Sussex freeholders in favour of parliamentary reform is placed next to the final article on Cook. This is attributed to “his Grace the Duke of R –” at “G – d” (Charles Lennox, Duke of Richmond, at Goodwood). Lennox ends his letter by telling his readers that “The occasion is great, and general exertion alone can save this country,” signing himself “Your most humble and obedient servant.” This is immediately followed by a passage on Cook which begins “By the unfortunate death of Captain Cook, the world has been deprived of a man whose talents and industry were no less eminent than pointed to the good of the community.” In a more

⁴ Qtd in Ralph G. Allen, “Topical Scenes for Pantomime,” in *Educational Theatre Journal* 17, no. 4 (1965): 289-300, p. 297.

reformist newspaper, similar proximity between the two figures could be read as equating the two as heroes, working in different ways to “save this country.”⁵ In the more conservative *Post*, a more likely reading would see a contrast between the self-effacing practicality of Cook and the self-promoting, aristocratic Lennox. Interpreted like this, the text contrasts images of heroism and weakness in the same way as many contemporary satirical prints.⁶

The epistemological vacuity of the news – in which any detail can be present and yet not dependably ‘real’ – allows the specificities of Cook’s voyages to be partially obscured, even as the prose reports seek to clarify them, encouraging Cook’s presentation as a generic archetype of naval heroism. Thus the poem by “Platonicus” in the *Post* describes Cook as a kind of proto-Romantic hero, sailing through wild “unknown main,” without apparently seeking any profit beyond “wonders”. He is isolated from colleagues, sailing the ship alone like a scientific Ancient Mariner:

The curious Sage! who, undismay’d,
 Adventuring o’er an unknown main,
 Through pathless ways, Nature survey’d,
 Is by the rude Barbarian slain.
 Yet shall not Death his course impede,
 New wonders open to his eyes;
 His soul from cumbrous matter freed,

⁵ *St James’s Chronicle* (8 January 1780).

⁶ See for example Thomas Colley (design), *Recruit Francois/ Recruit Anglois or the Contrasted Recruits*, hand-coloured etching (London: William Humphrey, 1781); *The Military Contrast*, etching (London: Matthew Darly, 1771). Similar images depicted famous individuals, especially political, military and naval leaders, e.g. General William Blakeney and Admiral John Byng in *The Contrast: or Britannias Distributive Justice*, woodcut broadside print (Britain: publisher unknown, 1756).

Ranges through worlds beyond the skies.

The writers of pro-ministry newspapers were accustomed to presenting the dubious outcomes of foreign skirmishes as coherent British victories. Something equivalent can be seen here, with the conventions of Christian epitaph exploited not only to dignify the potentially messy realities of Cook's death, but neatly to refigure it as a triumph for his grand project of exploration.

For many readers, on the other hand, the appeal of the poem would lie in an awareness of this refiguring process itself: the satisfying use of poetic vocabulary and diction ingeniously applied to a topical event, with the expected volta in the fifth line. While for some readers a national identity embodied in Cook was based on military conflict abroad, then, for others their imagined community was defined by the shared set of ideas and conventions which constituted vernacular culture.⁷

Furthermore, both the poem and the song are placed in a column which also contains a series of advertisements for recently published books, including plays and poetry, each with its price prominently displayed. This proximity might remind readers of the commercial aspects of this mass identity. Cook, who had, after all, been involved in the production of two of the bestselling books of the last decade, and the besiegers of Omoa could already be seen as commodities to be selected and purchased by the British cultural consumer.

Finally, the *Post* also includes the first of a number of biographies of Cook which would appear at intervals throughout 1780. In this issue, the account is very short and focuses entirely upon his professional life, noting that Cook had "passed through

⁷ See John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 85-133.

all the stations belonging to a seaman, from an apprentice boy in the coal trade to a Post Captain in the Royal navy.” The biographies which appeared later in the month, however, were sometimes longer and began to refer to Cook’s family life as well as his voyages, reworking old, well-known episodes from Hawkesworth’s account or reports of Mai’s travels. These lend the spare and elusive story a reassuring feeling of familiarity and solidity.⁸ Stories about Cook’s childhood (he “spent the early part of his life in husbandry, and very often followed the plough”⁹) and marriage had a similar function. The next issue of the *General Evening Post*, for example, included this widely reprinted anecdote as a single paragraph, without explanation:

The late Capt. Cook, when a very young man, was solicited to be godfather to a female child of a friend, which he consented to; and after the ceremony was over, said sportively to her father, that he intended her for his wife. This resolution, however unlikely to be carried into execution at that time, he lived to perform; and from the mutual affection which subsisted between him and his consort, he seemed to have inured to himself a fund of domestic happiness to cheer the latter part of his life, had he not unfortunately fallen a victim to that intrepid disposition, which, until this fatal voyage, had brought him home safe, to the satisfaction of his friends, who now most sincerely lament his loss.¹⁰

The framing of Cook’s death within stories like these provided readers with a sense of the hero as a feeling, flesh-and-blood man: “one of us,” and thus “ultimately an

⁸ The most comprehensive of these early biographies is in the *Westminster Magazine* (January 1780), which compiles a number of shorter texts from other newspapers and periodicals into a five-page “Sketch of the Life and Services of Captain James Cook,” 3-7.

⁹ *London Chronicle* (13 January 1780).

¹⁰ *General Evening Post* (13 January 1780).

object of consumption,” in Zionkowski’s terms.¹¹ If not quite an introduction to the fully-fledged sentimental hero depicted by Anna Seward a few months later, these newspaper biographies encouraged an affective response to Cook’s death by granting the reader a place among his “friends,” in contrast to his abstract presentation by writers like “Philanthropos.” They presented readers, unusually, with a background with which the middling sort might identify, and reflected values which bourgeois readers were often instructed to emulate: “domestic happiness” and prudence, as well as an “intrepid disposition.” Though an embryonic ideal of the self-made hero was, in 1780, beginning to develop in the works of European political reformers and American revolutionary writers such as Benjamin Franklin, it was still a novelty in mainstream British metropolitan culture.

The newspaper paragraph which comes closest to explicitly promoting Cook’s self-made status appeared in a range of papers in late January and early February 1780. This argued that “Captain Cook’s rising, from being the Son of a Day-Labourer, to the distinguished Rank he held in the British Navy, is a Proof what superiour Abilities can do, when they have a proper Field to display themselves in.” It continued by quoting Thomas Gray’s *Elegy*: “For Want of this, ‘Many a Rose (as the Poet has finely expressed it) blooms unseen;’ and many a Cromwell passes in Silence to the Grave, unknown to the distinguishing Hand of Posterity.”¹² The reference is a predictable one. Published thirty years earlier, the *Elegy* had become by 1780 the standard text for a particular tone of mournful sentimentality and elegiac

¹¹ Zionkowski, p. 169.

¹² *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post* (27 January 1780). The passage seems to have been widely copied, appearing in the *London Chronicle* (29 January 1780); *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (30 January 1780); *Caledonian Mercury* (2 February 1780); and *Craftsman or Say’s Weekly Journal* (5 February 1780).

self-awareness appropriate for discussing heroic national loss. Moreover, Gray's discussion of the lives and deaths of poor British villagers finds an echo in Cook's background as "the Son of a Day-Labourer" and the process of public memorialisation being carried out by the newspapers themselves. If readers need reminding of this, this issue of the *Chronicle* also includes a copy of the record of Cook's baptism kept in the register in Marton Church, a literalised form of the Christian "short and simple annals of the poor" Gray finds in country graves.¹³

In the transition from poem to newspaper, though, the moral of these phrases may be quietly inverted. The *Elegy* does not precisely, as the newspaper might suggest, lament the wasted talents of the poor which result from a lack of "a proper Field," so much as assert by their inevitable obscurity both a tragic deprivation and the privilege of innocence.¹⁴ Newspapers, on the other hand, were seen (and saw themselves) as disrupting this state by bringing to a mass national readership cosmopolitan images of the urban and the foreign, stimulating new ambitions and desires, and advertising ways in which these could be met. In the pages of this *Chronicle* those who might want to escape "the noiseless Tenor of their Way"¹⁵ could read about the opportunities offered by volunteering for the Army or Navy, look for employment as domestic servants in London, or discover potential investments, improving books and exhibitions of exotic objects. By removing a passage from the context of Gray's poem and applying it to Cook, then, the

¹³ Thomas Gray, *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (London: R. Dodsley, 1751), l. 31.

¹⁴ See William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935) (Connecticut: New Directions, 1950), 3-6; Suvir Kaul, *Thomas Gray and Literary Authority: A Study in Ideology and Poetics* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1992), 111-165; Helen Deutsch, "Elegies in Country Churchyards: The Prospect Poem In and Around the Eighteenth Century" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy*, edited by Karen Weisman (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2010), 187-205.

¹⁵ Gray, l. 67.

newspaper appropriates its literary and affective authority to new ends. Cook's career, as well as the newspaper itself, provided readers with an exemplary alternative path to public celebrity.

Some of the poem's ambivalence towards social mobility might also be maintained, nevertheless, in the newspaper's quotation of Gray's reference to Oliver Cromwell as the antithesis of the obscure man who "passes in Silence to the Grave." Almost any famous historical figure would have fitted logically here, and Gray also cites John Milton and John Hampden.¹⁶ By choosing Cromwell the *Chronicle* introduces a potentially coded term. A rough survey of references to Cromwell in the *Chronicle* between 1761 and January 1780 indicates that he was a figure who continued to inspire very strong feelings, although these were almost equally divided between loathing and nostalgia.¹⁷ The name had gained a particular edge in the 1770s as American revolutionaries claimed the English Commonwealth as a political and religious model: it was reported in British newspapers in 1777 that calendars were being printed in America which marked the dates of Cromwell's birth and death instead of the royal anniversaries, and by 1780 there were at least three American privateers with that name. In the *Chronicle*, the writer uses a series of slightly tenuous negatives to tell the reader that because of his distinguished career, Cook is *not* like Gray's peasant, who (in the *Elegy*) is *not* like Cromwell because he is

¹⁶ Gray, ll. 49-51.

¹⁷ Of 150 references (excluding duplicated items), 31 explicitly associate Cromwell with strongly negative ideas such as tyranny, usurpation and hypocrisy, or associate the name with political radicalism in a hostile way. 25 are overtly positive, while only 26 are neutral (these usually use Cromwell's name as a way of dating an event in his lifetime). There are also 31 which refer to or advertise texts about or images of Cromwell, including biographies, books of letters, portraits, medals, busts and plays, suggesting the continued power of Cromwell as a shifting signifier within late eighteenth-century culture.

“guiltless of his country’s blood.”¹⁸ This might mean that Cook *is*, somehow, comparable to Cromwell and thus linked to a sense of violence and social rupture, but there are no positive logical steps to follow. The passage is open to interpretations which would depend a great deal on the political sympathies of the reader.

At the same time, the terms in this widely reprinted piece could be expected to provoke a fairly widespread sense of shared recognition: that Cromwell is ‘history,’ Cook is ‘news’ and “Many a rose” is English culture, and that each are somehow important, belonging to the reader and linking him or her to other readers. Gray’s *Elegy*, as John Guillory has shown, can itself be seen as a highly successful compilation of recognisable references to a “vernacular canon.” As, equally, the “‘common’ property”¹⁹ of every newspaper reader in Britain, in newspaper commentary Cook’s death rapidly becomes part of a shared vocabulary by which a metropolitan reading community recognises itself and contests its own composition.

As Jon Klancher shows, this recognition of a legitimate metropolitan reading public depended on the assertion of its difference from an illegitimate mass of potential textual consumers.²⁰ The story of Cook’s death could also be structured as a confrontation between a highly literate, virtuous individual and an undifferentiated and threatening crowd. This provided a convenient echo of newspaper readers’

¹⁸ Gray, l. 51.

¹⁹ John Guillory, “Literary Capital. Gray’s ‘Elegy,’ Anna Laetitia Barbauld, and the Vernacular Canon”, in *Early Modern Conceptions of Property*, edited by John Brewer and Susan Staves (London: Routledge, 1996), 389-412, p. 389.

²⁰ See Klancher (1987); John Brewer, “‘The Most Polite Age and the Most Vicious.’ Attitudes Towards Culture as a Commodity, 1660-1800” in Bermingham and Brewer (1995), 341-361; Ann C. Dean, *The Talk of the Town: Figurative Publics in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Jersey: Rosemont, 2007).

differentiation of themselves from those who did not read newspapers, or who read them in the wrong way. As a result, the figures of Cook and the Hawaiians were increasingly assigned characteristics and behaviour associated with middle-class ideals or their opposites: irrationality, avidity, lack of restraint. Yet these characteristics, as we have seen, could equally be associated with newspapers and newspaper reading. As metropolitans in 1780 read and rewrote the news, they responded to these pressures by amplifying characterisations of the Hawaiian crowd into a discourse of monstrous savagism in which anxieties about the boundaries of the individual are dramatised and contained within the image of mass cannibalism. This coincided with the metropolitan experience of the Gordon Riots, which produced its own representations of difference and the crowd within mass print media.

Crowds and rioting in contemporary London.

I have studied the mobs of different nations, and they are all alike.²¹

The pleasures and dangers of crowds were a ubiquitous feature of life in the late eighteenth century metropolis.²² London daily presented inhabitants and visitors with a spectacle of massed living human bodies which seemed unprecedented, almost incomprehensible. In 1777 the *General Evening Post* reported with astonishment

²¹ George Walker, *The Vagabond* (1799), edited by W.M. Verhoeven (Ontario: Broadview, 2004), p. 108.

²² See Herbert M. Atherton, "The 'Mob' in Eighteenth-Century British Caricature" in *Eighteenth Century Studies* 12, no. 1 (Autumn 1978): 47-58; George Rudé, *The Crowd in History, 1730-1848* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1981); Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1998); Robert B. Shoemaker, *The London Mob: Violence and Disorder in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Hambledon, 2004).

that, following a wager over the number of people in Holborn, two men in the Blue Boar Inn had counted “no fewer than 1278 persons” in a single hour walking past the inn door in one direction.²³ The iconic spaces of eighteenth-century London were frequently crowded to the point where they became physically dangerous: the Royal Exchange, Vauxhall Gardens, Bartholomew Fair, markets, ports, theatres, and even the law courts and royal palaces were often crammed with people. Newspaper reports of Cook’s death appear alongside reports of domestic crowds and mobs from the entire social spectrum, from St James’s Palace, to the Old Bailey, to the terrifying crush at Covent Garden.²⁴ Crowds gathered to celebrate national victories, anniversaries, and holidays, watch executions, praise heroes, mourn the dead, or protest. They were seen as maintaining and defining British traditions (often in extremely conservative terms), and thus as guaranteeing the special liberties of the British subject.

Crowds, nevertheless, always had the potential to suddenly turn into violent mobs. This was most unambiguously the case when groups gathered on the peripheries of state control, in remote rural areas or colonies. Thus while a 1778 account of an angry assembly of “the People” – presumably mostly London seamen and their families – who followed and beat a naval press gang was largely sympathetic, even gleeful, other forms of mass defiance were less widely acceptable.²⁵ An “outrageous mob” of the Irish rural poor who challenged British revenue officers in January

²³ *General Evening Post* (8 July 1777).

²⁴ See for example *St James’s Chronicle* (11 January 1780); *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (14 January 1780); *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (7 February 1780).

²⁵ *Public Advertiser* (23 April 1778).

1780, for example, was described in the London papers as an irrational and barbaric product of a hopelessly “riotous” region, who had “obliged” the army to shoot at it.²⁶

These concerns were longstanding in metropolitan culture, but were brought into spectacular focus in London in the overheated summer of 1780, six months after the news of Cook’s death was first reported. On 2 June, after the passing of the Catholic Relief Act, sixty thousand members of the Protestant Association marched across London to present a petition in Parliament demanding the Act’s repeal. Over the following five days rioters pulled down, burned and looted chapels, schools, houses and businesses.²⁷ Many Londoners fled to the countryside, and witnesses describe empty streets with buildings boarded up or displaying blue Protestant Association insignia to appease the rioters. Individuals were harassed, beaten and robbed, while symbolic state locations including the prisons and tollgates, Lambeth Palace, Lord North’s house in Downing Street and the Bank of England were attacked. A military effort of more than ten thousand men finally suppressed the Gordon riots, retrospectively named after the head of the Protestant Association. Between eight hundred and a thousand people had been killed over the five days.

At the end of June, the trials of 160 accused rioters were quickly followed by a series of public hangings, many on temporary gallows in different locations around the city. Details of the riots and then the trials, during which minute details of events were repeated and contested, were recorded in official papers, pamphlets, and

²⁶ *General Evening Post* (20 January 1780).

²⁷ See George Rudé, *Paris and London in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Fontana, 1974), 268-292; Ian Gilmour, *Riots, Risings and Revolution: Governance and Violence in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Hutchinson, 1992), 342-390; Ian Haywood and John Seed (eds.), *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2012).

newspapers. A reader scanning the front pages of the *General Evening Post* on 22 June 1780 to find articles about the “the late circumnavigators, Cook and Clerke” would have found them sandwiched between a proclamation by the king offering rewards for information about the “late riots and tumults”, and news articles about the aftermath. Elsewhere in this issue there are lengthy reports of parliamentary debates on the riots and the Catholic Relief Act, rumours of further mobs gathered in Oxford, and a patriotic editorial on the riots with the title “An Engine to quench the Flames.” Anyone looking for yet more writing on the riots would find advertisements in these pages for no less than four newly-published books, with something for every political viewpoint and taste: from *A Sermon on Religious Zeal to Fanaticism and Treason*.²⁸

The Gordon riots were, then, briefly the obsessive theme of commercial print culture, although they were apparently forgotten with a speed that has been attributed to their traumatic social and psychological impact.²⁹ Historians disagree on the effects of the Gordon Riots on perceptions of the crowd and popular politics, but it seems clear that, at the very least, they tended to amplify existing social, political and national discourses on ‘the mob.’³⁰ On the one hand, Gordon rioters and their supporters could present themselves as the disciplined defenders of Protestantism, and thus of a traditional Britishness defined by opposition to ‘popery’ and the

²⁸ *General Evening Post* (22 June 1780).

²⁹ See Carol Houlihan Flynn, “Whatever Happened to the Gordon Riots?” in *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel and Culture*, edited by Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 459-480.

³⁰ See Nicholas Rogers, “Crowd and People in the Gordon Riots”, in *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1990), 39-55; Kathleen Wilson and Robert B. Shoemaker see the riots as adding to increasing hostility to the political actions of ‘the mob’ in mainstream society. Wilson (1998), 264-267; Shoemaker (2004), 111-152.

associated threat of foreign invasion. Dana Rabin suggests that the riots can be interpreted as “the violent and disorderly rejection of imperial difference”: an expression of widespread “discomfort and uncertainty” over Britain’s imperial activities in the rest of the world, with the resulting economic and military costs, cultural tensions, and increasingly cosmopolitan nature of the urban British population.³¹ On the other hand, the experience of social disruption, physical threat, and violence terrorised many observers and left very little room for sympathy with the rioters. “The peaceable inhabitants of London have not yet forgotten the mental hell with all the torments of which they were tortured,” reported one of the books advertised in the *General Evening Post* towards the end of June,³² a politically-motivated claim but one which is supported by private letters and journals. “I was terrified & shocked extremely at the rage, & *licence efrenée* of the Mob,” wrote Susan Burney in a letter-journal which reflects in its hurried syntax the sense of panic growing among London intellectuals:

& my knees went *knicky knocky* like the Frenchman in Harlequin’s Invasion at the sight [...]. Such a Scene I never before beheld! – as it grew dusk, the wretches who were involved in smoak & cover’d wth. dust at the bottom of the street, wth. the flames glaring upon them & the fires between them & us, seemed like so many *Infernals*, & their actions contributed to assist the resemblance they bore, for more fury & rage

³¹ Dana Rabin, “City, Nation and Empire in the Gordon Riots” in Haywood and Seed (2012), 93-114, pp. 95, 93.

³² *Fanaticism and Treason: Or, a Dispassionate History of the Rise, Progress, and Suppression, of the Rebellious Insurrections in June 1780* (London: G. Kearsly, 1780), p. 25.

than they shewed in demolishing everything they met with cannot be conceived [...].³³

Written and pictorial representations acted to project the origins of the monstrous figure of the Gordon rioter outside the metropolis.³⁴ The riots were attributed to Scotland, or to the secret influence of American or French agents.³⁵ The “champion” of the rioters in George Walker’s fictionalised account is a “great-boned Irishman [of] savage appearance,” while black and mixed-race participants were also disproportionately depicted in contemporary news and images.³⁶ These xenophobic metropolitan Protestants could also be rhetorically transformed into foreign agents: Horace Walpole’s letters offer a battery of metaphors for the rioters including “banditti,” “the savages of Canada,” “Spanish missionaries in Mexico,” and, most persistently, “cannibals.”³⁷

The *London Courant* published on its front page an address “*To the misled People, who have lately assembled, under the sanction of the PROTESTANT ASSOCIATION,*” accusing them of “stabbing in the very vitals your [...] unfortunate country, and satisfying your unnatural appetites, by glutting your eyes

³³ Susan Burney, letter-journal written for Frances Burney (June 1780), published as Appendix 3: “Susanna Elizabeth Burney’s Account of the Gordon Riots” in *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, vol. 4, *The Streatham Years: Part II, 1780-1781*, edited by Betty Rizzo (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2003), pp. 546-549. Original italics.

³⁴ For wider examples of the projection of urban monstrosity, see H.L. Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1996), 41-123; Christopher Herbert, *Culture and Anomie: Ethnographic Imagination in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 204-252.

³⁵ *Westminster Magazine* (June 1780), p. 297.

³⁶ Walker (1799), p. 106. See Marika Sherwood, “Blacks in the Gordon Riots” in *History Today* 47, no. 12 (1997).

³⁷ Horace Walpole (June 1780) in *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford*, edited by Peter Cunningham (London: Richard Bentley, 1858), vol. 7 of 9, 395-398.

with the distress of your fellow citizens.”³⁸ This was a trope which would last in discussions of the riots well into the nineteenth century, with Thomas Babington Macaulay in 1847 comparing the Londoners responsible to a “tribe of tattooed cannibals in New Zealand.”³⁹ The rioters were attributed inhuman “unnatural appetites” for violence, but also for food, money and, in particular, alcohol; the image of a “besotted multitude” drinking themselves to death on the raw spirits flowing out of a burning distillery linking the riots to an older idea of the urban underclass depicted in Hogarth’s *Gin Lane*.⁴⁰ Accounts such as Thomas Holcroft’s transformed reports and anecdotes into moralising narratives of the “poetically just,” self-destructive dangers of “wallowing” in “inordinate appetites.”⁴¹ “[U]nconcern about futurity,” Henry Home, Lord Kames had argued “is the characteristic of all savages. To forego an immediate for a distant enjoyment, can only be suggested by cultivated reason.”⁴² By prioritising their immediate appetites over concern for their own safety or reputation, the ‘savage’ rioters in these accounts threaten to subvert all social controls, an idea which could be dramatised as threatening the life and bodily

³⁸ *London Courant and Westminster Advertiser* (15 June 1780).

³⁹ Thomas Babington Macaulay, (19 April 1847) in *Speeches of Lord Macaulay* (London: Longmans, Green, 1866), p. 224.

⁴⁰ See Mark Hallett, *The Spectacle of Difference: Graphic Satire in the Age of Hogarth* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1999), 197-222; Patrick Dillon, *Gin. The Much-Lamented Death of Madam Geneva: The Eighteenth-Century Gin Craze* (London: Review, 2002); Jessica Warner, *Craze: Gin and Debauchery in an Age of Reason* (London: Profile Books, 2004).

⁴¹ William Vincent [Thomas Holcroft], *A Plain and Succinct Narrative of the Late Riots and Disturbances in the Cities of London and Westminster, and Borough of Southwark*. Third edition (London: Fielding and Walker, 1780), p. 29, Walpole (June 1780), p. 397. See also *Fanaticism and Treason*, p. 59; Ian Haywood, “‘A Metropolis in Flames and a Nation in Ruins’: The Gordon Riots as Sublime Spectacle” in *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain*, edited by Ian Haywood and John Seed (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2012), 117-143, p. 118.

⁴² Henry Home Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man* (Edinburgh: W. Creech, 1774), vol. 2 of 2, p. 83.

integrity of representative authority figures such as Cook. Ideas of irrational excess and “fierce and ungovernable” violence were thus important markers of a notion of savagery which crossed national and racial lines. The belief that the riots were motivated by “unnatural appetites” for cannibal violence was an assertion of the rioters’ Otherness; their reassuringly profound difference from the civilised reader.

Yet the trope of cannibalism could equally express the horrifying realisation that rioters were not attacking their opposites but their “fellow citizens” and fellow consumers.⁴³ As Maggie Kilgour has pointed out, the trope of cannibalism always draws attention to the similarity as well as the difference between the bodies of the eater and the eaten. Cannibals by definition must be in some ways like as well as unlike the victims they consume, and this collapse of boundaries is dramatised in the act of cannibalism as it ruptures the imagined integrity of the surfaces of both bodies.⁴⁴ As the *London Courant*’s address to the rioters implies, for the body politic of the contemporary metropolis, the domestic servants, labourers, shopkeepers and apprentices who took part in the Gordon riots were insiders as well as outsiders, newspaper readers as well as the subjects of reports. The struggles of Gordon’s lawyers, during his trial for high treason in February 1781, to distinguish between the sober, “quiet and peaceable,” “decently dressed” crowd – the crowd which is ‘like us’ – and the drunken, alien “mob” – “a different class of people,” “of a very

⁴³ See William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagy* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1979); Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean 1492-1797* (London: Methuen, 1986); Maggie Kilgour, *From Communion to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation* (New Jersey, Princeton U.P., 1990); Marina Warner, “Fee fie fo fum: The Child in the Jaws of the Story” in *Cannibalism and the Colonial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1998), 158-182; Kristen Guest (ed.), *Eating Their Words: Cannibalism and the Boundaries of Cultural Identities* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).

⁴⁴ Maggie Kilgour, Foreword to Kristen Guest (2001), vii-viii; p. vii.

different disposition” – suggests that the boundaries of these ‘two crowds’ were highly fluid, if not non-existent.⁴⁵ The Gordon riots themselves, like other forms of popular protest, had been called into existence through print, in the form of handbills, posters and newspaper announcements: “invitations,” according to Holcroft, by which “the attention of the people was engaged, and their minds were incited,” using the rhetorical “spirit and stile” of print advertising and puffing.⁴⁶ The confrontations on the streets were echoed and encouraged, one writer recalled, by a pamphlet war between anti-Catholic, anti-government “handbills of the most inflammatory kind” and “papers of a different kind, distributed [...] by government, and by the friends of government.”⁴⁷ Such accounts are haunted by a sense of the text’s participation in the annihilation of their own cultural context. The trope of cannibalism, used in newspaper or popular poetry, then, expresses not only horror at the actions of the Other, but a sublimated fear of the text’s own role in these spectacular acts of self-destruction.

Although these dynamics pre-date 1780 and are significantly intensified in the 1790s by representations of the French Revolution,⁴⁸ the ephemeral but somewhat apocalyptic perception of the Gordon riots added urgency to this print cultural self-examination in the early 1780s. This is particularly detectable in new presentations of Cook’s death, since, as I have argued, the figure of Cook and the narrative of his death were regarded as unusually the construction of mass culture. Moreover, Cook’s earlier reports of anthropophagy elsewhere in the Pacific, together with the

⁴⁵ William Vincent [Thomas Holcroft] (ed), *Trial of the Hon. George Gordon, Commonly called Lord George Gordon, for High Treason* (London: Fielding and Walker, [1781]), 60-63, 71.

⁴⁶ Vincent [Holcroft], (1780), p. 12. See Shoemaker (2004), 241-274.

⁴⁷ *Fanaticism and Treason*, pp. 78-79.

⁴⁸ See H.L. Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1996), 41-123.

absence of an account of his funeral, made ‘Owhyhee’ a fertile location for cannibal imagery disguised as ethnographic realism.⁴⁹ This chapter will conclude with an examination of two news reports on Cook’s death published after June 1780, showing how the concerns of the Gordon riots reframe the presentation of this narrative with images of proliferation –the crowd which suddenly multiplies uncontrollably – and irrationality – the malicious, insensible crowd – before finally attaching it to graphic and fantastic images of cannibal appetite.

In July, a month after the end of the riots, a packet of letters sent by the surviving officers of the *Resolution* and *Discovery* from the Cape of Good Hope provided the impetus for a new wave of articles on Cook’s third voyage. These letters confirmed the information already publicised, rather than adding new details, but some significant alterations to popular accounts nevertheless emerge. These changes, I want to suggest, are the result of a channelling of metropolitan anxieties, accelerated by the Gordon riots, into images of the irrational and savage crowd.

The *London Magazine*’s summary, “Compiled from all the authentic Papers hitherto extant,” explains that Cook was treated by Kalani‘opu‘u,

⁴⁹ See Geoffrey Sanborn, “In the Wake of the Resolution: The Post-Enlightenment Discourse on Cannibalism” in *The Sign of the Cannibal: Melville and the Making of a Postcolonial Reader* (USA: Duke U.P., 1998), 21-74; Ian G. Barber, “Early Contact Ethnography and Understanding: An Evaluation of the Cook Expeditionary Accounts of the Grass Cove Conflict” in Calder, Lamb and Orr (1999), 156-180; Gananath Obeyesekere, *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas* (London: University of California Press, 2005); Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, *Empire Islands: Castaways, Cannibals, and Fantasies of Conquest* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Stephanie Denise Smith-Brown, *Gothic and the Pacific Voyage: Patriotism, Romance and Savagery in South Seas Travels and the Utopia of the Terra Australis* (doctoral dissertation, Princeton University, 2007).

with the usual cordiality; but perceived that the natives assembled upon the occasion were far more numerous than usual. They at the same time discovered such marks of insolence as induced him at last to discharge his fowling-piece at one of them. This neither did, or was meant to do any mischief. Nevertheless, a general commotion and attack ensued; in which, notwithstanding the fire and execution of the marines, Captain Cook and four of his people were unhappily killed! Thus ended the life of a man, highly respectable in private as in public life [...].⁵⁰

Unlike earlier accounts, which had attributed “accustomed respect” or “usual cordiality” to all the Hawaiians on the beach, this narrative carefully distinguishes between the friendliness of Kalani‘opu‘u as an individual and the assumed hostility of the crowd. It omits the idea, found in Clerke’s letter, that the Hawaiian assembly on the beach was routine, and mostly composed of “idle spectators,” with a minority of “insolent ill-disposed fellows [...] among them.”⁵¹ Instead, the *London Magazine*’s Hawaiian crowd, imagined post-Gordon riots, is “far more numerous than usual,” presumably gathering with hostile intentions. With their motives minimised – this account ignores any sense that Cook’s actions could have been regarded as threatening or invasive – the crowd seems to act out of pure, irrational malice, in contrast to the “highly respectable,” moderate and rational behaviour of Cook.

⁵⁰ ‘Periplus’, “A Summary Account of the still unfinished Voyages undertaken by Order of Government, in his Majesty’s Ships the *Resolution* and *Discovery*” in *London Magazine* (July 1780), p. 311. Reprinted in *Whitehall Evening Post* (3-5 August 1780).

⁵¹ Clerke (1779) in Cook (1967), p. 1535.

The next major account emerged in autumn, a little more than a week after the *Resolution* and *Discovery* returned to London on 4 October. This lengthy article is an idiosyncratic jumble of existing stories with stereotypes of Pacific voyage literature and fantastic ‘traveller’s tales’ so wild as to border on parody. Several entirely fictional natural curiosities and scientific experiments are described in the manner of Cook’s earlier books. Cook is killed in “Kamskatka,” where he has previously been “treated with great hospitality,” after his ships are forced to leave because of a storm. His return prompts the natives to gather “on the shore as in battle array, with clubs, &c. to oppose their landing, thinking the English meant to do them harm”:

Captain Cook seeing their intentions, and being eager to undeceive them, went ashore with his boat’s crew, and advancing a considerable way before his men, to give signs to one of the Kamskatkan Chiefs of his friendship to the natives, he was surrounded by hundreds, and put to death with their wooden warlike instruments, while many more pursued the boat’s crew, who with great difficulty returned to the ships.⁵²

The narrative departs further from established versions – although it could be seen as more accurately reflecting the reality of the violent reprisals in Kealakekua Bay – by describing how the surviving crew’s rescue of Cook’s body turns into a massacre. This story is worth quoting at length as probably the first overtly sensationalised print version:

The officers aboard perceiving through their glasses their brave
Commander slain, and the natives surrounding the body as with intent to

⁵² *Craftsman, or Say’s Weekly Journal* (14 October 1780). Also in *General Evening Post* (17 October 1780); *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (17 October 1780); *London Packet or New Lloyd’s Evening Post* (25 October 1780).

devour it, while others in canoes attempted to board them, fired at first with powder only, in order to frighten them away, that they might come ashore and carry off the corpse. Those cannibals, instead of being afraid of the guns, advanced to the shore in greater numbers, wrapping themselves up in a sort of a matt, which they always do in time of thunder and lightning, thinking the fire from the guns no other.

The officers seeing them no ways intimidated, immediately fired with ball, killed above a hundred, and reduced their town, consisting of wooden huts, to ashes. They then fled in the greatest consternation, and the crews going ashore, brought off the mangled corpse of their brave Commander, and after the naval funeral ceremony, committed the body to the deep; they then, with heavy hearts, proceeded on their voyage.⁵³

This deluded, cannibal crowd closely echoes the metaphorically cannibal crowd of “*misled People, who have lately assembled*” addressed by the *London Courant* a few months earlier.⁵⁴ Its reluctant violent repression by uniformed “officers,” who find their warnings ignored, and who are forced to shoot “above a hundred,” certainly bears more resemblance to cautionary reports of the Gordon riots than to the stories of Clerke or Pallas. The late summer trials of the rioters had heard numerous stories of savage crowds who seemed “no ways intimidated” by military authority. Mary Roberts and Charlotte Gardiner, for example, were tried for leading a group of more than forty to loot and demolish a public house. Witness statements described

⁵³ *Craftsman, or Say's Weekly Journal* (14 October 1780). Also in *General Evening Post* (17 October 1780); *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (17 October 1780); *London Packet or New Lloyd's Evening Post* (25 October 1780).

⁵⁴ *London Courant and Westminster Advertiser* (15 June 1780).

Gardiner, apparently without motive, working at smashing furniture “as if she had been a horse” and Roberts leaning out of the window, mocking the local militia, who, she said “might fire and be buggered.” Descriptions like these of dehumanised, insensible rioters, “hallooing, shouting, laughing, and making game,” “like wild fire to burn the world down,”⁵⁵ contrast the working class, female, and in Gardiner’s case, black, figure of the rioter to the white, gentlemanly, masculine authorities, who are, like Cook in this account, acutely conscious of the effects of their actions.

This attributed sensibility is manifested in their constant reluctance to use firearms. In response to accusations of an overly severe and oppressive military response to the riots, newspaper writers asserted that, on the contrary, such restraint had been shown that it had almost paralysed the proper responses of the army. When a mob surrounded troops escorting prisoners to Newgate, for example, “One of the soldiers who had been hurt by a stone, turned and presented his piece; but the commanding officer humanely ordered him not to fire, and the soldiers were forced to make a hasty retreat.”⁵⁶ Similar language is used to describe the self-sacrificing “ill-judged lenity” of the Lord Chief Justice, the Earl of Mansfield, whose house was burnt along with its library by rioters. He might have “saved his house”, according to the *Morning Post*, “for the military came in time to have defended it, when his Lordship humanely requested they might not fire upon the deluded wretches, which was in consequence thereof avoided till the last extremity.”⁵⁷ By foregrounding a previously vague idea of Cook as the victim of his own humane responsibilities, in contrast to these “deluded wretches” and their uncontrollable behaviour and appetites, then, the

⁵⁵ Trial of Mary Roberts and Charlotte Gardiner (28 June 1780), *Proceedings of the Old Bailey* <<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org>>.

⁵⁶ *Westminster Magazine* (June 1780), p. 302.

⁵⁷ *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 10 June 1780.

scene of Cook's death replays the confrontations of the Gordon riots in reassuringly distant and racially differentiated form. The internal threat of the riots is both expressed and projected out onto an externalised fantasy of the cannibal Pacific islander. This process of projection can be further identified, I will argue in the next chapter, in metropolitan elegies for Cook – although, significantly, it functions very differently in poetry created outside metropolitan mass print.

Chapter 2. Early elegies

A range of poems on the subject of Cook's death were published in pamphlets, books and newspapers between July and November 1780. Written in 1780, but unpublished until later, was Wellesley's Latin elegy, which will be discussed in the first part of this chapter. I first want to stress, though, that in becoming the subject of this quantity of topical poetry, Cook was by no means unique among contemporary metropolitan figures. Verses to and about celebrated figures, especially elegies, were popular, often formulaic, and increasingly cheap to circulate. Thus, in Penny's volume of collected *Poems*, her lines "Written Upon the Death of Captain Cook" are only the last in a series of poems about famous contemporary men, including Lord Lyttelton, the Dukes of York and Cumberland, Wolfe, Farmer, Gray, Walpole and Garrick. These characters and events, as a result, come to seem like the common property of a national readership drawn together by Penny's sentimental verses.¹

Betty T. Bennett draws attention to the huge quantity of topical poetry published in newspapers and periodicals at the turn of the century.² Following Bennett, Simon Bainbridge notes that by the 1790s the reproduction and recitation of new English poetry spanned different metropolitan cultural spheres and different reading publics, including "the lower class of people" who might be able to listen to a ballad or repeat a song even if they could not read.³ Less attention has been paid to earlier decades, but the 1780s saw the routine publication of topical poetry in response to current

¹ Penny (1780).

² Betty T. Bennett, *British War Poetry in the Age of Romanticism 1793-1815* (New York: Garland, 1976).

³ Simon Bainbridge, *British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: Visions of Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2003), 1-55, pp. 2, 9.

events: battles, laws and political controversies, successful plays, scandals, marriages, births and deaths. These ranged from theatrical ballads and doggerel couplets printed between newspaper paragraphs to the ‘epic elegy’ or ‘monody’ of Seward, and were, it has been suggested, widely viewed as “mass entertainment”: heavily commercialised, associated with advertising and often regarded as “ephemeral: a vehicle of the latest fashion.”⁴ This is not to say that they necessarily lacked ambition: writers such as William Thomas Fitzgerald, Richard Cooksey, and Seward, elevated their vernacular language, forms and references in attempts to produce enduring texts from the raw material of topical news. As Harriet Guest points out in her discussion of Seward’s elegy, the fame and discursive power of “dead British heroes” such as Cook could be appropriated by a writer to enhance and protect their own status, even as poetry was itself a major factor in Cook’s metropolitan celebrity.⁵ These writers also attempted to dissociate themselves from the commercial sphere through declarations like Cooksey’s that “Poetry is not his Profession.”⁶

Yet all these poems were intended ultimately to be printed in quantities large enough for a mass, anonymous readership, with the exception of Wellesley’s *In Obitum Viri Eximii et Celeberrimi Navigatoris Jacobi Cook* (“Upon the Death of the Excellent Gentleman and Most Celebrated Navigator James Cook”). The exceptional

⁴ Barbara M. Benedict, “Publishing and Reading Poetry” in *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, edited by John Sitter (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2001), 63-82, pp. 63, 67.

⁵ Guest, (2000), p. 253.

⁶ Richard Cooksey, Preface to *Miscellaneous Poems* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1796). In relation to Seward in particular, see Brewer (1997), 455-484; Guest (2000), 252-270; Claudia Thomas Kairoff, *Anna Seward and the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 2012), 51-69.

circumstances of this text's production make it a useful point of contrast to contemporary poems on Cook. Rather than being written for money or literary fame, the poem asserts its author's place within a homogeneous, known elite, and thus constructs political authority in textual and practical terms. As a result, I would suggest, Wellesley's elegy markedly lacks the images of savagery or the sentimental characterisation of Cook found in newspaper reports and poetry aimed at a more mass audience, presenting its subject instead as a legitimating patriarchal figure in a classical tradition.

Wellesley, a Christ Church college student from an aristocratic but somewhat impoverished Anglo-Irish family, wrote his elegy for the 1780 Oxford Chancellor's Prize, an annual competition for Latin verses on a set theme.⁷ Poems written for the Chancellor's Prize were not published; they remained as far as possible, as another Cook elegist suggested enviously, "Pure, not commixing" with the mass print culture outside the universities; a seclusion fortified by their being written in Latin and heavily reliant on classical references.⁸ These poems were intended to impress an audience of "Heads of Houses, Doctors, Professors, Noblemen, Proctors," who listened (all in full academical regalia) to Wellesley recite his elegy during the prize-

⁷ The theme was advertised as *In obitum maestissimum JACOBI COOK*. [Upon the most unhappy death of James Cook] in *General Evening Post* (20 January 1780). Cambridge held a competition with the same theme this year, but the winning poem does not seem to have survived. Wellesley's poem was published much later in *Classical Journal* 29 (London: March and June 1824), 396-400; and again in 1840, when the elderly Wellesley brought out a small volume of his own writings. Richard Wellesley, *Primitiae et Reliquiae* (London: William Nicol, 1840), 53-8. All quotations are taken from this edition, translated by Robin Peach (unpublished, 2010).

⁸ Schomberg, I. 68.

giving ceremony on 4 July 1780.⁹ The significance of this undergraduate competition is underlined by Wellesley's assistant at this ceremony: his Eton friend William Grenville, a promising young member of a great political dynasty and the future prime minister, had been the winner of the same prize the previous year. The *Public Advertiser* was probably referring to Grenville when it acclaimed the friendship between a great man's "Heir Apparent," and Wellesley, described as a young man of "fair Promise" who "at College gained the Prize by his Composition on the Death of Captain Cook."¹⁰

Wellesley's *Jacobi Cook*, then, is a deliberate and highly specialised work of self-fashioning, reflecting the "Narcissus-like" attention to image noted by his biographers.¹¹ It follows the classical tradition of the elegy as a "formal expression of aspiring careerism" or "literary initiation ritual" in which the writer asserts his suitability to inherit the place of the dead subject. The elegy, with its demanding form and ancient conventions, proclaims the writers' fitness to speak for the nation, and in Wellesley's case, to inherit the command of what he sees as Cook's unfinished imperial project, and to promote himself as a new *grande decus Britonum*.¹² In marked contrast to contemporary elegies to Cook, Wellesley's poem

⁹ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (6 July 1780).

¹⁰ *Public Advertiser* (4 November 1780).

¹¹ Iris Butler, *The Eldest Brother: The Marquess Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington's Eldest Brother* (London: Hodder & Staughton, 1973), p. 25. See Marie Davis, "Irish Portraits in the Eton College Leaving Collection" in *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* 12 (1996), 61-65; John Kenneth Severn, *Architects of Empire: The Duke of Wellington and his Brothers* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2007).

¹² Celeste M. Schenck, "The Funeral Elegy and Careerism: Theocritus, Virgil, Spenser" in *Mourning and Panegyric: The Poetics of Pastoral Ceremony* (The Pennsylvania State University, 1988), 33-54, p. 34. [great source of pride to Britons] Wellesley, l.109. See also Jacqueline M. Labbe, "Remembering: Memory, Posterity, and the Memorial poem" in *Memory and Memorials: From the French Revolution to World War One*, edited by Matthew Campbell, Jacqueline M. Labbe and Sally

includes only a brief reference to Cook's death at the hands of a *gens hominum effraenis*, in a confrontation which he does not describe.¹³ Instead, the poem focuses on a display of Wellesley's geopolitical and economic expertise, liberally scattering place names from Angola to Kamchatka. In contrast to the vague geography of newspaper accounts, Wellesley's *Imperium oceani* can be followed on a map of the world.¹⁴

This knowledge and precision implicitly asserts his qualifications to take over Cook's perceived role as an engineer of British-led globalisation, exemplified in the search for a Northern Passage to Asia, where *Innumeras offert ultro tota India merces*.¹⁵ Wellesley repeatedly describes the new colonial spaces of the Pacific Ocean as *aquas Aurorae*, characterised by the rising sun, co-opting Cook as a *Pater populi* or founding father of an embryonic national mission.¹⁶ Conveniently, though, Cook had died without finding the Northern Passage, and Wellesley can thus present his project as in process but *imperfecta*—unfinished or imperfect. The reader's attention is drawn to this is by the poem's Virgilian epigraph, taken from Aeneas's speech to his dead father, also the patriarchal originator of a grand but incomplete empire, in the underworld.¹⁷ Wellesley's references to the fifteenth-century

Shuttleworth (New Brunswick and London: Transaction, 2004), 132-146; Brandy Ryan, " 'Echo and Reply': The Elegies of Felicia Hemans, Letitia Landon, and Elizabeth Barrett" in *Victorian Poetry* 46, no. 3 (2008), 249-277.

¹³ [unbridled race of men] Wellesley, l. 134.

¹⁴ [empire of the ocean] Wellesley, l.107.

¹⁵ [Unnumbered goods all India offers of its own accord] Wellesley, l. 71.

¹⁶ [waters of Aurora] [father of the people] Wellesley, ll. 36, 103.

¹⁷ Wellesley, l. 5. Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book 5, ll. 82-3; Wellesley, epigraph. See Suvir Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire: English Verse in the Long Eighteenth Century* (University Press of Virginia, 2000), 1-44; and Norman Vance, "Roman heroism and the problems of nineteenth-century empire: Aeneas and Caractacus" in *Heroic Reputations and Exemplary Lives*, edited by Geoffrey Cubitt and Allen Warren (Manchester: Manchester U.P., 2000), 142-156.

Portuguese explorers Magalhães and Vasco da Gama construct another suitably illustrious genealogy for his project of globalisation.¹⁸

In 1784 Wellesley would embark on a political career, starting with his election as a British MP. By 1797 he had been appointed governor-general of Bengal. After a leading a period of military and political expansion in India, driven by a radical imperialist “sense of national mission,” based on conservative morality, racism, and free trade, Wellesley would become effectively the personal autocratic ruler of a population of 150 million people.¹⁹ While it is difficult to draw a direct link between teenage elegy and later ideals and actions, it nevertheless appears that in this poem Wellesley began to outline a vision of empire that he would later actively promote, ruled by a classically-educated, scientifically-minded, and paternalist European elite embodied by his imagined figure of Cook. At this point, at the beginning of Wellesley’s career, the expression of this vision is aimed primarily at that elite, rather than a wider public. Unlike Wellesley’s classically heroic and abstract *Pater populi*, the figure of Cook within commercial metropolitan celebrity is familiar, vulnerable, and appeals to the reader’s sensibility. As well as defining Cook as a sympathetic individual in opposition to a generally threatening natural world (as “Platonicus” had in January), these poets present a specific manifestation of this threat in the form of the Hawaiian crowd: “th’ insidious savage Band” of “Sons of the savage race.”²⁰

¹⁸ Wellesley, ll. 35, 13.

¹⁹ See C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830* (London and New York: Longman, 1989), 251-252; Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Conquest and Collecting in the East 1750-1850* (London: Harper Perennial, 2006), 149-186.

²⁰ Schomberg, l. 16; Cooksey, l. 29; William Thomas Fitzgerald, *An Ode to the Memory of the Late Captain James Cook* (London: G. Robinson, 1780), l. 93.

“His body now unbury’d lies”: Commercial elegies in 1780.

Following the accounts in post-Gordon riots newspapers, commercial poems in the 1780s depict Cook’s death not as a complex altercation between multiple groups and interests, but a confrontation between an inhuman crowd and an idealised but vulnerable individual: “[g]entle tho’ resolute, tho’ fearless mild.”²¹ “While waving (pity-mov’d) thy hand, | Fair Mercy’s sign,” Cooksey tells Cook, “the savage band | To mercy – death oppos’d!”²² The poets focus their attention on Cook’s “humble birth,” and modest ambitions for “peace and domestic days.” Thus Schomberg emphasises Cook’s unpretentious character, and instructs his naval readers to “Lament a Brother,” while Penny’s Cook is the “lov’d” son of a maternal Britannia, a member of the nation as nuclear family.²³

These poems give particular prominence to the physical fragility of Cook’s body, which the crowd with “rude weapons rending wound.”²⁴ A vulnerable figure, Cook is rarely imagined as aided by his European companions; indeed, in Fitzgerald’s ode the mutinous crew of the *Resolution* foreshadow the Hawaiian crowd by becoming a “bold tumultuous host” who threaten Cook’s authority and safety.²⁵ Cook’s fame, then, is, in these texts, the product of affection and pity as well as admiration. By writing “Cook’s lov’d name” in her poem, Penny asserts, she will “command the grateful tear.”²⁶

²¹ Fitzgerald, l. 49.

²² Cooksey, ll. 28-30.

²³ Fitzgerald, ll. 72, 87; Schomberg, l. 59; Penny, l. 12.

²⁴ Fitzgerald, l. 90.

²⁵ Fitzgerald, ll. 89, 54-58.

²⁶ Penny, l. 12.

This individual is developed in opposition to the Hawaiian mass. Unlike many of the earlier newspaper accounts, in which the crowd is divided into factions and individuals, the post-Gordon riots crowd is largely undifferentiated, acting as an incarnation of irrational, savage malice, a “faithless troop” of “the savage race.”²⁷ The only reference in these poems to an individual Hawaiian, by Schomberg, is not to an identifiable or differentiated subject, but to “A Monster” who embodies the characteristics of the crowd:

Foremost of the Gorgon Band,
A Monster strode with hideous Pace,
In his doughty, Giant hand,
He raised aloft the pond’rous Mace.²⁸

As well as evoking the exotic giants and ogres of classical myth and traveller’s tale, this figure echoes depictions of the summer’s mob violence, later labelled by More the “unlicens’d monster of the crowd,” and by Charles Dickens a “mad monster” which “raged and roared.”²⁹ Resembling the caricatures of “horridly ferocious,” club-wielding Gordon rioters by Walker or James Gillray, Schomberg’s image of the Hawaiian “Monster” equally seeks to express the threat of this disorder through the legibly “savage appearance” of a single participant.³⁰ Fitzgerald’s elegy, in a more

²⁷ Fitzgerald, l. 93.

²⁸ Schomberg, ll. 16-30.

²⁹ More (1790), l. 21; Charles Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, edited by Donald Hawes (London: Dent, 1996), p. 376. See Iain McCalman, “Controlling the Riots: Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge* and the Romantic Revolution” in *History* 84 (July 1999): 458-476.

³⁰ Walker (1799), p. 106; James Gillray, *No Popery or Newgate Reformer*. Etching (London: ‘I. Catch of St. Giles,’ 9 June 1780) British Museum. See Felicity Nussbaum, *The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race, and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2003), 1-22.

extended argument, opposes the Hawaiian “darken’d mind,” which “in mercy found no joy | Who vengeful conquer’d only to destroy,” with a heroically sensitive Cook, who came “[i]n peace” to the Hawaiians, and was killed “by their hands.” The appeal to the reader’s echoing sensibility, here, is a direct route to the poem’s “Raptur’d” vision of the comprehensive British colonisation of “the southern isles,” which promises to draw the Hawaiians within this sentimental community of “gentle sympathy” – although only, perhaps, partially and conditionally.³¹

These sentimental tropes of Cook’s human fragility and emotive fate, however, also seem to undermine the notion of his permanent fame as the founder of empire.

Images of his defeat, death and corpse express instead a sense of the transient and dispersed nature of a form of celebrity based on multiple ephemeral texts and fickle readers. Schomberg’s Cook is compared to a “Summer Insect” “with filmy Wings” floating and dying on the surface of a pond, and a “glitt’ring Spark” which “expires/ And mixes with the empty Air.”³² The lack of a proper burial or monument, replaced by a “barbarous tomb,” however imagined, enacts this idea of celebrity as impermanent and lacking in historical meaning. “[W]hat avails” all the hero’s talent and achievement, Cooksey demands, unanswerably, if “his body now unbury’d lies | On cold Owhyhee’s shore”?³³ Cooksey’s poem is an imitation of Horace’s ‘Archytas’ Ode (1.28), signalled by the use of the same Horatian epigram used on Cook’s monument at Stowe: *Te maris et terrae | Mensorem*.³⁴ The allusion to

³¹ Fitzgerald, ll. 95-139. See Festa (2006), 1-66.

³² Schomberg, ll. 122-131.

³³ Cooksey, ll. 1-6.

³⁴ In its full form *Te maris et terrae numeroque carentis arenae mensorem* [Measurer of earth and ocean and numberless sand]. Horace, Book 1, Ode 28 in *The Complete Odes and Epodes*, translated by David West (Oxford: Oxford World’s Classics, 1997), l. 1. See Richard Wheeler, “Captain Cook’s Long Journey to Elysium” in *Apollo* 160, no. 513 (November 2004), pp. 78-81.

Archytas, a navigator and mapmaker killed during his travels, functions superficially like Wellesley's Virgilian references to place Cook within a classical, heroic register. Crucially, though, it also casts Cook as one of the forgotten, unsettled dead, identifying him with the Horatian figure of a poor sailor's ghost on the seashore, begging passers-by to perform his funeral rites. In a similarly spectral and despairing image, Fitzgerald acknowledges that these elegies may go "unheeded," in which case "COOK [will] be numb'ed with the silent dead," becoming one of many "[u]ncertain shapeless phantoms."³⁵

The imagery of exposure, loss and dispersal reoccurs in an anonymous sequence of rhyming couplets, "To the Memory of Captain COOK, who was Killed, and Devoured by Savages," printed in several newspapers in August 1780. This – clearly ephemeral – poem treats Cook's decaying body as a counterpoint to his "honour'd name," which is preserved "immortal in the rolls of fame." In contrast, the writer insists that the hero's physical "sad remains" are

expos'd to open day,
Till ling'ring time shall moulder them away.
Then to oblivion be thy dust consign'd,
Wash'd by the rain, or scatter'd by the wind;³⁶

The poem's perfunctory promise of permanent "fame" is undercut both by its place on the newspaper page, and by its more detailed focus on the decay by which Cook's "remains," like the names engraved on Pope's Temple of Fame, are eroded by

³⁵ Fitzgerald, ll. 13-14, 34.

³⁶ 'W- D-N', "To the Memory of Captain COOK, who was killed, and devoured by Savages", in *Lloyd's Evening Post* (14 August 1780), ll.3-14. Also in *London Courant & Westminster Chronicle* (19 August 1780), ll. 9-11.

“hostile Time” (although “Poets once had promis’d they should last”).³⁷ Stripped of literary pretensions or references, the couplets are characterised less by the pose of melancholy reflectiveness borrowed by writers like Fitzgerald and Cooksey from their classical sources, than by an appeal to sensation and a visceral sense of physical anxiety.

The poem first appeared framed by a long, graphic account of the drunken beating and murder of a seaman by a group of armed officers, in which witnesses describe the chaotic environment of the Navy docks at Rochester. On the newspaper page, latent fear of metropolitan violence is vividly channelled into the image of exotic cannibalism. Read against these dangerously unruly naval figures, Cook is a passive and painfully vulnerable victim, “by savages o’erpow’r’d,” “butcher’d,” and “devour’d.” The central, startling image is of Cook’s “reeking body [...] by man consum’d, | And in a human sepulchre entomb’d.”³⁸ Cook’s physical and rhetorical “remains,” in other words, are seen as consumed and maintained within uncomfortably equivalent forms: the monstrous body of the cannibal, and the newspaper elegy.

Readers do not seem to have been impressed by these poems, none of which went into more than one edition. “[I]t can be no disparagement to say that we doubt not he is a better Officer than a Poet,” wrote the *Gentleman’s Magazine* of Schomberg’s publication. Reviewers were even more hostile to Fitzgerald’s *Ode*, which gave the *Critical Review* “no kind of pleasure in the perusal,” being “Correctly cold, and

³⁷ Alexander Pope, “The Temple of Fame” (1715) in Rogers (1993), 103-118, ll. 31-34.

³⁸ ‘W– D–N’, ll. 3-6.

regularly *dull*.”³⁹ Indeed, Fitzgerald was never well-treated by critics, and is best known today as the “hoarse Fitzgerald” whose “creaking couplets” are attacked by Byron in the opening lines of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.⁴⁰ Apparently pessimistic about the function and status of contemporary print, its complicity in disorder, and its unstable, anonymous mass consumption, writers such as Cooksey, Fitzgerald, Schomberg and Penny struggle to maintain their cultural authority over their readers. In contrast to Wellesley’s triumphant assertion of the power of the writing subject over the distant, abstract Other, their poems suggest the vulnerability of the (always potentially hack) writer in an often hostile and unpredictable marketplace. This can be seen as dramatised in the physical fragility of their hero and the mindless appetites of the Hawaiian mobs who consume him. On the other hand, the power of this image to elicit sentimental identification could be used by a writer such as Seward to wrest for herself a new kind of authorial role, and indeed significant cultural status, as a national poet of sensibility. It is to Seward’s *Elegy on Captain Cook*, then, that I turn next.

³⁹ *Gentleman’s Magazine* (December 1780): 580; *Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature* (July 1780): 70-71. Original italics.

⁴⁰ George Gordon Byron, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809) in *Selected Poems*, edited by Susan J. Wolfson and Peter J. Manning (London: Penguin Classics, 2005) ll. 1-2.

Chapter 3. Anna Seward's *Elegy on Captain Cook*

Seward's *Elegy on Captain Cook* was published by the London firm of James Dodsley in the summer of 1780, and was an instant critical and commercial success. It has been argued that Seward wrote in English not only because she lacked a classical education, but in order to make her work accessible to a wider national readership, including women.¹ This poem, in particular, is compiled from vernacular print sources such as Cook's journals, which would have been familiar, at least at second hand, to most middle-class readers. In contrast to Wellesley's competitive, masculine exclusivity, or the self-conscious weakness of the elegists examined in the previous chapter, Seward and her admirers can be seen as asserting the value and integrity of a shared vernacular literature, and a notion of celebrity based on sentiment.

Seward succeeds in constructing a discursive distinction between an imagined sentimental community of readers, drawn together by their mediated, mild response to the "moral sublimity" of Cook, and the savage cannibal crowd.² This distinction is based on notions of good and bad consumption: understood as the polite practice of discerning and subduing dangerous passion into pleasurable and productive sensibility, on one side, and mindless "unbounded indulgence" on the other.³ The appeal of this approach, described in Charlotte Beverley's 1792 verse response to the *Elegy*, lay in the possibilities for self-identification it offered to readers. A broad

¹ See Norma Clarke, "Anna Seward: Swan, Duckling or Goose?" in *British Women's Writing in the Long Eighteenth Century: Authorship, Politics and History*, ed. Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 34-47; Brewer (1997), 573-612, pp. 40-1.

² Kairoff, p. 77.

³ Anna Seward, *Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Darwin, Chiefly During his Residence at Lichfield* (London: J. Johnson, 1804), p. 39.

spectrum of men and women could imagine themselves participating in Seward's elevated, implicitly national community, through the simple and enjoyable act of reading and responding to Cook's death. For Beverley, then, Seward's achievement is less the rescue of Cook from "drear oblivion's grave," than her production of a pleasing moment of sentimental communion.

Hail, gentle maid! whose mind the muses fire,
 And Clio robes thee in her own attire;
 While pleas'd we hear the glory thou records,
 And the dire fury of the savage hords:
 We wish – we such a man again may see,
 And that his praises may be sung by thee.⁴

Seward's demonisation of the "savage hords," for Beverley, counterbalances the presentation of both the poet and Cook as "gentle" figures of sensibility. The effect of this contrast on contemporary sensible readers was such that, in the words of a recent Seward scholar, "one is tempted to ask whether the poem was made for Cook, or whether Cook [...] was made for the poem."⁵ Indeed, the widespread perception of Seward's "extraordinary ability to speak for and to the nation," Guest suggests, rested upon this elegiac commemoration of public heroes.⁶

At the same time, the well-received *Elegy* was crucial in the construction of Cook's sympathetic celebrity. "Happy Cook, to be thus celebrated, and thus lamented!"

⁴ Charlotte Beverley, "Verses on the Death of Capt. Cook, inscribed to Miss Seward" in *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects, Composed and Selected by Charlotte Beverley*. (Hull: E. Foster, 1792), 105-108, ll. 40, 45-50.

⁵ Kairoff, p. 74-75.

⁶ Guest (2000), 252-270, p. 254.

exclaimed the *Critical Review*.⁷ An anonymous poet in the *Bath Chronicle* went slightly further, suggesting to Seward that Cook had “Dy’d but to live in thy immortal verse.”⁸ Even readers who had little previous interest in Cook, such as the reviewer who wrote that he had believed Pacific exploration to be “not only useless, but highly ridiculous,” were reluctantly “affected” by the emotional and aesthetic power of “some poetic Passages in this Elegy.”⁹

Seward, at this early stage of her career, seems to have been acutely conscious of the real and potential reception of her work, both positive and negative. Declining David Samwell’s request in 1790 that she write a new elegy for his former *Resolution* colleague James Trevenen, she protested that her “attempt[...] to sing the purposes, the exploits, and the virtue” of Cook had been regarded as having “little value” by many important readers. The Royal Society, for example, had not presented her with the commemorative medal the poem merited. Seward knew that a poem could be dismissed as trivial, especially by readers who preferred scientific texts on Cook’s “moths, butterflies, and curry combs.”¹⁰ A topical pamphlet poem, moreover, was always subject to the changing tastes and interests of its readers. As Walter Scott conceded in his introduction to the 1810 edition of Seward’s works, the “warm interest which they excited” when originally published would inevitably fade as the “melancholy events” they referred to were forgotten, and the “fashion in poetry”

⁷ *Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature* (July 1780), p.70.

⁸ *Bath Chronicle* (29 March 1781).

⁹ *Westminster Magazine*, September 1780.

¹⁰ Anna Seward to David Samwell (16 August 1790); Seward to Samwell (15 May 1791) in *Letters of Anna Seward: Written between the years 1784 and 1807* edited by Archibald Constable (Edinburgh: George Ramsay, 1811), vol. 3 of 6, pp. 31-32; 59-60.

altered.¹¹ At the same time, popular success itself implied some loss of authorial control, in a market where piracy, imitation and anthologisation were common. Sections of *An Elegy on Captain Cook* would be reprinted in collections and periodicals. Elsewhere, Seward recorded her dismay at newspaper versions of her poems, in which misprinted lines “made delectable nonsense” out of her original texts.¹² Seward’s adjective here is one example of the pervasive figuring as consumption of the anonymous reception of her printed poetry.¹³

In this chapter, I trace the *Elegy*’s interlinked notions of identity, sensibility, and the different forms and modes of consumption. Cook’s disciplined suppression of his own appetites qualifies him as heroically humane, nourishing “famish’d thousands” of Pacific natives with domestic animals and plants symbolising the introduction of European culture. At the same time, Seward’s poem feeds its readers with a variety of “delectable” exotic details and emotions. These civilising forms of consumption are inverted in the “inebriate,” cannibal “lust of hunger” which is seen as characterising the savage Other, projecting tropes associated with the metropolitan threat of the Gordon rioter onto the otherwise unknown figure of the Hawaiian.¹⁴

¹¹ Walter Scott, “Biographical Preface” to Anna Seward, *The Poetical Works of Anna Seward* (London: Longman, 1810), vol. 1 of 3, xi-xii.

¹² Seward, *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 252.

¹³ See Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading*, (London: Flamingo, 1997), 170-173.

¹⁴ Anna Seward, *An Elegy on Captain Cook. To which is Added, An Ode to the Sun* (London: J. Dodsley, 1780), ll. 118, 188, 180.

Consuming text

In April 1778, Seward was about to go into dinner with Samuel Johnson and other guests at the house of the London publisher Edward Dilly, when Johnson grabbed a book he wanted to read. James Boswell, also present, describes him reading “ravenously as if he devoured it.” Seward’s friend Mary Knowles commented to the party that he “gets at the substance of a book directly; he tears the heart out of it.” Johnson, Boswell went on,

kept [the book] wrapt up in the tablecloth in his lap during the time of dinner, from an avidity to have one entertainment in readiness when he should have finished another, resembling (if I may use so coarse a simile) a dog who holds a bone in his paws in reserve, while he eats something else which has been thrown to him.¹⁵

Books and food – food with bones and a heart, to be violently torn apart and fought over – are almost literally interchangeable in this scene at the centre of metropolitan literary culture. Johnson’s violent “avidity” for both is tolerated if not entirely approved; while it may, for Boswell, indicate an aggressive, manly intellect, it is also obviously disruptive of the polite sociability of the dinner table, and describing it threatens to dehumanise a portrayal of the great writer into the “coarse” image of a hungry dog.¹⁶

The presentation of this brutal and perhaps undiscerning appetite (it is notable that the book in question was not elevated literature but an account of recent events in

¹⁵ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D* (London: Charles Dilly, 1791), vol. 2 of 2, p. 223.

¹⁶ See Zionkowski, 178-185.

Sweden) may also bring to mind images of “the raging thirst for news” attributed to the lowest of the metropolitan masses. Such readers, it was widely believed, “will swallow almost any thing.”¹⁷ Female readers in particular were thought to show indiscriminating and “voracious appetites,” often linked to sexual self-indulgence:

The booksellers, those pimps of literature, take care every winter to procure a sufficient quantity of tales, memoirs, and romances for the entertainment of their customers, many of whom, not capable of distinguishing between good and bad, are mighty well satisfied with whatever is provided for them: as their female readers in particular have generally most voracious appetites, and are not overly delicate in their choice of food, every thing that is new will go down.¹⁸

Literalised versions of these “not overly delicate” consumers, often but not exclusively women, transfer into accounts of Hawaii in the 1780s. These act, Wilson notes, to define its inhabitants’ place “at the extreme lower boundary of humanity.”¹⁹ *Public Advertiser*, for example, explains that the “Savages of O’why’he, by whom Captain Cooke was killed,”

have nothing to cover them but the Skins of large Fish. The small Fish which they catch, they eat raw, with the Bones, Fins, Scales, and Entrails, and, for the higher Relish, put them by till they stink. The putrefied raw Flesh of a Seal, or Pengwin, is a most grateful Meal, and

¹⁷ *St James’s Chronicle* (3 March 1770); [Whitefoord] (1799).

¹⁸ *Critical Review* 16 (1763), qtd. in Frank Donoghue, “Colonizing Readers: Reviews and the Reading Public”, in Bermingham and Brewer (1995), 54-74, p. 69.

¹⁹ Wilson (2003), p. 78.

the Blubber of a Whale delicious, if putrid. People of Distinction have a Desert of Dog's Flesh, which is a Luxury in Kamschatka.²⁰

The *London Magazine*, similarly, informs their readers that Hawaiians “always eat raw [food], and for the most part in a state of putridity.”²¹

To be “not capable of distinguishing between good and bad” objects of consumption, then, is a visceral marker of the savagery seen as dividing the metropolitan “us” from the alien masses found both at home and abroad; even if this distinction is temporarily threatened by the eccentric behaviour of privileged cultural insiders like Johnson. For Seward, never an unconditional admirer of Johnson or his manners, metropolitan status demanded more restrained expressions of appetite. A few months after the publication of the *Elegy on Captain Cook*, Seward wrote a series of humorous, quasi-romantic letters to Erasmus Darwin (an advisor on or possible co-writer of the poem²²) in the character of a cat. In these letters, Seward's character argues that though the “advantages” of “a refined education” were on her male correspondent's side, “while you give unbounded indulgence to your carnivorous desires, I have so far subdued mine.”²³ Teresa Barnard sees this as a statement of Seward's “self-reliant” and “self-assured” status as a writer, asserting the superiority of a feminine, controlled sensibility over masculine violence.²⁴ Among Seward's imagined sentimental community, then, if culture was to be ‘eaten,’ the act needed to be – as far as possible – refined and feminised by taste, pleasure and moderation.

²⁰ *Public Advertiser* (14 January 1780).

²¹ ‘Periplus’, p. 311.

²² See Teresa Barnard, *Anna Seward: A Constructed Life: A Critical Biography* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 122-123; Kairoff (2012), 71.

²³ Seward (1804), pp. 38-39.

²⁴ Barnard, p. 118.

“No palate, capable of relishing any intellectual food,” she notes of Shakespeare, would refuse to “feed with avidity at the table of that mighty master, upon which, kings and pedlars, ghosts and jesters, witches and tapsters, pathos and obscenity, murder and fun, are served up in exhaustless variety.”²⁵ Indeed, Seward herself, according to Scott, “was one of these gifted minds which catches eagerly at the intellectual banquet.”²⁶ The qualifying “intellectual” clearly seeks to elevate this consumption above a mindless appetite for news and novels, or the craving for “*Meat & Drink & Huzzaes*” disparagingly attributed to the mob in 1780 by another of Johnson and Seward’s social circle, Hester Thrale.²⁷

The “exhaustless variety” of Shakespeare is also a pseudo-commercial image. Readers, Seward suggests, can pick out what they want from his writing, as though from a shop. Similarly, the novel’s “bill of fare” and the newspaper’s “hodge-podge, or mess medley,” with their range of texts and genres, are often described through culinary metaphors in which “*Politicks* are now the *roast beef* of the times [...]; *poetry* is *plumb-pudding*, and palatable only to the lovers of the Muse” and so on.²⁸ In the preparation of her long poems, Seward can be seen as seeking to replicate this sense of appealing variety for discriminating readers. Thus, the *Elegy on Captain Cook* combines elements from newspapers, botanical and travel literature, Shakespeare and *The Seasons*, Orpheus and the *Odyssey*, moral satire, georgic, and

²⁵ Seward in Scott (1810), lxxv.

²⁶ Scott, “Biographical Preface” (1810), v.

²⁷ Thrale declared that the manager of her husband’s brewery had saved the building by “amusing the Mob” with these three. In Balderston (1951), vol. 1, p. 437. Original italics.

²⁸ Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones* (1749), edited by John Bender and Simon Stern (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2008), p. 69; Caleb Whitefoord, “Cross-readings of news-papers” in *Fugitive Miscellany 2* (London: J. Almon, 1775), p. 50; *London Magazine, or, Gentleman’s Monthly Intelligencer*, 49 (London: R. Baldwin, August 1780): 354-356, p. 356.

romance. This approach to composition suited contemporary modes of reading and reviewing, which centred around the selection and reproduction of extracted passages or ‘beauties.’ Seward offers a catalogue of exotic curiosities and elegant imagery aimed at entertaining the metropolitan reader. Like most of Seward’s poems, as disparagingly characterised by Robert Greville in 1785, the *Elegy* is marked by the “luxurious and the dazzling,”²⁹ boasting scenes of icebergs, coral reefs, picturesque rock formations, kangaroos, giant bats and exotic flowers. Cook’s voyages, at the same time, are feminised by a population of beautiful female figures, including the Muses, Humanity, Flora and Fauna, Oberea and Cook’s widow.

Cook’s feeding of Pacific “soften’d brutes” with new animals and plants, for Seward, is a metonymic image of the wider introduction of civilised culture and technology. This process enacts on a global, mythological scale her own provision of softening and “persuasive” cultural “wonders” to the eager metropolitan reader. The parallel is underlined by her extended comparison of Cook to “the Muse-born Orpheus,” a figure of the author recalling Seward’s opening invocation of the Muses as ‘mothers’ of her own project.³⁰ As Geoffrey Miles points out, Seward’s Orpheus is also an “archetype of bourgeois domestic virtue,” asserting the power of civilised cultural texts, like Seward’s, to create and maintain the values of metropolitan modernity in both their own and future Pacific societies.³¹ The new Tahitian landscape produced by Cook’s provision of metropolitan “Wisdom’s lore” is, therefore, a “blooming,”

²⁹ Robert Greville to Richard Polwhele (29 August 1785) in *Traditions and Recollections* (London: John Nichols, 1826), vol. 1 of 2, p. 185.

³⁰ Seward (1780), ll. 185, 167, 100, 181, 1-6.

³¹ Geoffrey Miles, *Classical Mythology in English Literature: A Critical Anthology* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 60.

“smiling Eden,” characterised by softness and “persuasive charm” which mirrors the “soft artillery,” “roseate bow’rs,” and antipodean “summer-ice” of London.³²

Yet, perhaps paradoxically, Seward’s opening description of the metropolis has apparently renounced its refinements, defining Cook’s heroism, as Guest notes, as a movement away from “the sensual luxuries of London.”³³ By leaving the metropolis, though, Seward’s figure of Cook purifies and sentimentalises its forms consumption, transforming them into acts of selfless, civilising benevolence predicated upon the suppression of his personal appetites. Travelling to the desolate regions of the “scorch’d Equator, and th’ Antarctic wave,” Cook’s journey is characterised by self-denial, embodied in the shedding of a single tear – for others, “not for himself.” This restraint is contrasted with the crowd of anarchic personifications which surround him: a howling “giant Danger,” waves that “rave,” and Death who throws “dread darts.”³⁴

Cook’s heroism, then, is based on the denial of his own weakness or hunger, in favour of the humanitarian provision of sustenance to the “shiv’ring natives of the frozen of the frozen zone, | And the swart Indian.” As a result, Seward’s *Elegy* is dominated by the poeticising of Cook’s projects, recorded in earlier voyage accounts, to “Plant the rich seeds” of British civilisation “on each inclement shore”; an image which is both allegorical and literal.³⁵ Like George Forster, who had argued in 1777 that “stocking Tahitee with goats, the Friendly isles and New Hebrides with dogs, and New Zealand and New Caledonia with hogs” was by itself

³² Seward (1780), ll. 165-168, 17-24.

³³ Guest (2003), p. 258.

³⁴ Seward (1780), ll. 26, 155-161.

³⁵ Seward (1780), ll. 32-36.

an achievement which deserved “immortal honour,” Seward finds in Cook’s ecological projects a defining moral purpose for her hero.³⁶ Before the arrival of Cook, Seward asserts, the fertile, tropical landscape of the Pacific island was nevertheless an inherently unproductive, “iron clime,” awaiting civilisation. In this deprived region, Cook arrives like a “modern epic hero”:

the Hero leads his living store,
And pours new wonders on th’uncultur’d shore;
The silky fleece, fair fruit, and golden grain;
And future herds and harvests bless the plain.³⁷

Seward, here, borrows a register from English georgic poetry. Cook’s cargo of “silky fleece, fair fruit, and golden grain,” in particular, could evoke well-known poems such as John Dyer’s *The Fleece* (1754); John Philip’s *Cyder* (1708) and Robert Dodsley’s *Agriculture* (1753), in which national expertise and qualities of industry, patience and self-control promise the reward of “future herds and harvests.” The poem’s “new wonders” also, then, gestures toward the importation into Hawaii of a written British culture represented by georgic poets, through which “the Arts disclose their wond’rous pow’rs, | [...] the Virtues consecrate the bow’rs.”³⁸ If British georgics in the first half of the century, as Juan Christian Pellicer suggests,

³⁶ George Forster, *A Voyage Round the World* (1777), edited by Nicholas Thomas and Oliver Berghof (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2000), vol. 1 of 2, p. 12. See Obeyesekere (1992), 8-34, 127-128; Nigel Rigby, “The Politics and Pragmatics of Seaborne Plant Transportation, 1769-1805” in *Science and Exploration in the Pacific: European Voyages to the Southern Oceans in the Eighteenth Century*, edited by Margarette Lincoln (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), 81-100; Jennifer Newell, *Trading Nature: Tahitians, Europeans and Ecological Exchange* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010), 91-140.

³⁷ Kairoff, p. 83; Seward (1780), ll. 93, 99-102.

³⁸ Seward (1780), ll. 100, 163-164.

attempt from different political perspectives to “demonstrate [...] how the newly unified nation’s productive and imperial energies should be regulated and harnessed,” Seward’s georgic passages in 1780 can be seen as continuing to offer an ordered, industrious, prolific model of national identity and activity.³⁹

In Cook’s 1777 *A Voyage towards the South Pole*, Seward’s primary source, the success or failure of species introduction to Pacific islands is correlated with the ‘temper’ of local societies, made manifest in their willingness to care for animals and gardens after the departure of Cook’s ships. In 1773 in New Zealand, for example, Cook writes that he found pigs and a neglected vegetable garden from an earlier visit, but was told that two goats “had been killed by that old rascal Goubiah,” a Maori man he had met before.⁴⁰ Seward simplifies the mixed and often dubious results Cook records into a contrast between miraculous success among the deserving and docile “famish’d thousands” of Tahiti (who “bless the hand divine”); and not only failure but death among “frowning natives” like Goubiah, who neither “fear the brave, nor emulate the good, | But scowl with savage thirst of human blood!” Direct links between cannibalism and resistance to Cook’s nourishing “new

³⁹ Juan Christian Pellicer, “The Georgic” in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, edited by Christine Gerrard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 403-416, p. 403. See also Rachel Crawford, “English Georgic and British Nationhood” in *ELH* 65, no. 1 (1998): 123-158; Karen O’Brien, “Imperial Georgic, 1660-1789” in *The Country and the City Revisited: England and the Politics of Culture, 1550-1850*, edited by Gerald Maclean, Donna Landry and Joseph P. Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1999), 160-179; Markman Ellis, “‘The Cane-Land Isles’: Commerce and Empire in Late Eighteenth-Century Georgic and Pastoral Poetry” in *Islands in History and Representation*, edited by Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith (London: Routledge, 2003), 43-62; Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters 1760-1820* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 1-56; Kevis Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2008), 1-16.

⁴⁰ James Cook and Tobias Furneaux. *A Voyage towards the South Pole, and round the World* (London: Strahan and Cadell, 1777), vol. 1 of 2, p. 236.

wonders,” which Cook himself tends to deny, are explicitly asserted. Where Cook, for example, argues that Maori cannibalism could not be explained by their lack of domestic animals, Seward, flatly claims in a footnote that “want of better provision, it is supposed, induced them to the horrid practice of eating human flesh.”⁴¹ Maoris and Hawaiians lack “better provision,” for Seward, because they refuse Cook’s civilised food; on the other hand, they refuse this food because they are cannibals.

In Seward’s poem, then, cannibalism is made to act as the extreme manifestation of the savage’s inherent savagery; his inability to appreciate or benefit from civilisation and insusceptibility to the affective claims of “moral sublimity.”⁴² Metropolitan readers asserted their difference to this insensible consumer, and so their place within an opposing sentimental modern community, through a physical vocabulary of sensibility mirroring the poem’s tears, “laments” and “sighs,” in a “heart-rending groan” which “expand[s] in tears” and sting[s] with rapture every vein.”⁴³ A writer in the *Westminster Magazine* claims that “we” – that is, Seward’s sensitive readers – respond to her words in unison, “like mere machines” who “laugh, weep, [and] breathe involuntary sighs” as instructed.⁴⁴

Seward’s status as the poet of “animated feelings warm,” though, depended on responses which could also be condemned as a “wild species of enthusiasm”⁴⁵ The idealisation of Cook’s self-denial works to differentiate the *Elegy*’s appeal to sentimental and sensual pleasure from an appeal to savage passions or an

⁴¹ Seward (1780), ll. 118, 91-94, 100. Cook and Furneaux (1777), vol. 1, 243-245; Seward (1780), footnote to l. 99.

⁴² Kairoff, p. 77.

⁴³ Seward (1780), ll. 205-222; Jane West, “On Miss Seward” in *Miscellaneous Poems* (York: W. Blanchard, 1791), 98-99, p. 99.

⁴⁴ “To Miss Seward,” *Westminster Magazine* 10 (September 1782), p. 494.

⁴⁵ Greville (29 August 1785) in Polwhele, p. 185.

undiscerning appetite for text. More brutal forms of mass consumption, then, are disowned by Seward's gruesome scenes of the "tumult" of a mass, drunken audience as cannibalism:

Near, and more near, with rage and tumult loud,
Round the bold bard th'inebriate maniacs crowd.
Red on th'ungrateful soil his life-blood swims,
And Fiends and Furies tear his quiv'ring limbs!⁴⁶

The distinction between this indulgence in "inebriate" violence, and a refining indulgence in sensibility is most clearly embodied in the doubled, yet culturally and morally opposed figures of Elizabeth Cook and Oberea.

Seward's exotic, "hapless fair-one" is a stock figure composed from descriptions of the Tahitian 'queen' Purea and various Pacific men and women who had alarmed European observers by ritually cutting themselves or performing other apparently excessive mourning ceremonies.⁴⁷ She is also a personification of the natural forces which "rave", "shriek[...]" "groan[...]" "sigh[...]", and cover the sea with a mourner's "darkling veil":

Oh! fly the mourner on her frantic way.
See! see! the pointed ivory wounds that head,
Where late the Love's impurpled roses spread;

⁴⁶ Seward (1780), ll. 187-190.

⁴⁷ Seward (1780), l. 197. For portrayals of Purea, see Maxwell (1997); Greg Denning, "The Hegemony of Laughter: Purea's Theatre", in *Pacific Empires: Essays in Honour of Glyndwr Williams*, edited by Alan Frost and Jane Samson (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 127-146. For European responses to Pacific mourning rituals, see Vanessa Smith, "Performance Anxieties: Grief and Theatre in European Writing on Tahiti" in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 41, no. 2 (2008): 149-64.

Now stain'd with gore, her raven-tresses flow,
 In ruthless negligence of mad'ning woe;
 Loud she laments! – and long the Nymph shall stray
 With wild unequal step round COOK's Morai!⁴⁸

While Cook's widow is depicted watching and listening to her surroundings, Oberea is an object of the reader's sensory observation, no more self-conscious than the wind or waves. Moreover, although she is theoretically identified as a welcoming, redeemed Tahitian, the language of bloody self-consumption in this passage places her rhetorically among the "frantic", "wild" and "ruthless" savages responsible for Cook's death. In the submersion of self-consciousness in "frantic" and self-destructive passion, Seward's Oberea also resembles the figures of female Gordon rioters constructed in contemporary court transcripts and newspaper reports.

Testimony against a young East Londoner called Mary Cook, for example, described her role in the destruction and looting of a public house called The King of Prussia on the last day of the riots. Cook, the court was told, had been drinking with a female friend in the house when a mob arrived.⁴⁹ A witness told the court that the two women:

took a very active part in demolishing the bar and distributing the liquor.

Mary Cook coming out of the house with her arms bloody, she having cut them with the glass, a woman said, for shame, Polly, what have you been doing? The prisoner replied, "D – n the old bloody dog's bloody

⁴⁸ Seward (1780), ll. 213-221, 200-206.

⁴⁹ *London Chronicle* (11 July 1780).

eyes, meaning the man, whose house she was destroying; I would do more for him, if I could catch him.”⁵⁰

Cook was found guilty and hanged a few days later. Quite deliberately, these accusations place the figure of Mary Cook outside the range of humanising sentimentality, not because she breaks property laws, but more dramatically because, like Oberea, she disregards norms of bodily integrity by literally cutting at the boundary of skin dividing her self from the outside world. She is presented as unable to conceal or suppress her irrational hatred of the publican, which erupts into this bloody performance of self-destruction. Yet in both these depictions of scenes of violence, a disciplinary function is accompanied by a role as metropolitan entertainment. Mary Cook becomes, finally, a sentimental object when viewed at her execution by in St George’s Fields by “an innumerable crowd of spectators.” Cook’s “exceedingly penitent” behaviour, her youth and sex, and the grief shown by her brother and sister ensured that “the scene was very affecting,” wrote the *London Chronicle*, sounding, as was often the case when newspapers reported executions, as though it was reviewing a tragedy at Covent Garden.⁵¹

Projecting fears of the metropolis’s own rioters onto the figure of the bloody, “inebriate” Pacific native, the *Elegy* offers a similar caution to the reader to recognise herself in the “softer form” of Cook’s widow, to constrain her “griefs” to the performance of appropriately feminine, private signifiers, and, having suppressed this emotion, ultimately to “raise thy thoughts to yonder starry plain, | And own thy sorrow selfish, weak, and vain.”⁵² Seward’s *Elegy* negotiates a place for itself, and

⁵⁰ *General Evening Post* (11 July 1780).

⁵¹ *London Chronicle* (8 August 1780).

⁵² Seward (1780), ll. 209, 222, 225-226.

thus for the figure of Cook, within what David Solkin calls “the blossoming culture of sentiment.” As he argues, this mechanism acted as a means of negotiating individual sympathy and its relations to a public sphere which seemed increasingly commercial and anonymous. The “prominent public role” Solkin attributes to visual art in the work of sentiment is the subject of the next chapter, which will discuss the production and reception of pictures of Cook’s death during this period.⁵³

⁵³ Solkin (1993), p. 157.

Chapter 4. Pictures of the death of Cook, 1779-1805

Accounts of Cook's voyages and death published in 1780 had not been accompanied by any visual material. By June 1784, though, the Irish tourist Mary Shackleton could admire the "curiosities from Ota heite" in the British Museum, as well as Charles Grignion Jr.'s painting of the death of Cook at the Royal Academy. Finally, while staying at the English home of Edmund Burke, Shackleton was shown "a book of prints, representing the natives, & their customs, of those islands which Capt. Cook had discovered," by two fellow guests, the naval officers Edmund Nagle and James King.

The book was almost certainly the atlas of illustrations to the newly-published Admiralty account of Cook's third voyage. Cook's voyages and death seem to have been familiar and appealing to Shackleton, a young middling-sort woman with more interest in religion, arts and sentiment than science or navigation. King was, Shackleton wrote, an "extraordinary person" who had been "abroad with Capt. Cooke, was in those islands when he was murdered, & had written the third volume of the voyages." She had the privilege of hearing explanations of the images directly from the book's narrator himself. The officer, she wrote, "greatly heightened my entertainment by explaining to me these scenes, which he had been a witness to, & which he assured me were justly represented, & sometimes pointed out his own and Capt. Cook's pictures amongst them."¹ Yet the mediation of art, even here, seems to

¹ Mary Shackleton, "A Tour through Part of England, by Mary Shackleton, in the Year 1784" in *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 40, no. 2 (1916): 129-160, pp. 135, 145, 154, 147. Shackleton's visit to the Royal Academy and her responses to the Grignion painting are in Myrone (2005), 201-202; 211-214.

be necessary: Shackleton records no conversations with King about his experiences in the Pacific, except in the context of these prints.

This chapter will trace the dissemination of the story of Cook's death to both elite and mass audiences in a range of printed texts in the 1780s and 1790s, before going on to look at the paintings of Cook's death in the Royal Academy exhibition in 1784 and their reception as problematically straddling both 'high' and 'low' culture. The last decades of the eighteenth century saw a proliferation of visual representations of Cook's death, following first the popularity of Seward's topical poem in 1780, and then the publicity surrounding the publication of *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* in 1784. The images reveal the inadequacy of centralised narratives of Cook's fame, whereby a mythology created by the collaboration of state institutions and 'high culture' (especially grand oil paintings of Cook's death) gradually filters down to a mass audience. As we have seen, early written versions of Cook's story were shaped by their place within metropolitan mass culture. This continues to influence the design and content of pictures of Cook's death, even by artists who had been present in Kealakekua Bay in 1779. Indeed, many of these pictures were deliberate attempts to participate in the mass print marketplace, as illustrations to *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* and its many precursors and derivative publications. The characteristics of their context already discussed – multiple and unreliable narratives, unknown, heterogeneous and often unpredictable consumers – made it difficult, if not impossible, to picture Cook's death with the confidence of a national history painter, and encouraged the creation of more modest and even enigmatic images.

The first pictures of Cook's death were probably produced by men who had travelled to Hawaii with Cook. James Cleveley, the carpenter on the *Resolution*, seems to have

sketched Kealakekua Bay and his impression of the scuffle there. On his return to England in 1780 he gave these sketches, along with other Pacific landscapes, to his brother John, a professional artist, to work up into paintings.² On the other hand, the Admiralty-appointed voyage artist, John Webber, does not seem to have produced any sketches of Cook's death while still on board the *Resolution*. This was perhaps because he had not been an eyewitness to the event, because he knew that any such sketch would have to be handed over to his employers on his return, or simply because he did not anticipate demand for it. Back in London in the early 1780s, however, he painted several slightly different versions of the scene in watercolours and oils, publishing a print in 1782.³ Webber compensated for his own relative obscurity by hiring two prestigious engravers for this print: Francesco Bartolozzi for the figures, and a landscape specialist, William Byrne, for the background (Figure 6).⁴

Other images of Cook's death were rapidly produced in the wake of Seward's *Elegy*. A crudely engraved version of what appears to be Webber's work-in-progress illustrated an article in the *Universal Magazine* before the end of 1781, while John Rickman's rapidly-produced surreptitious account of the voyage included a fold-out plate with a "Representation of the Murder of Capt Cook at O-Why-ee," in which a crowd of classically-robed Hawaiians chase Cook across the beach.⁵ A number of

² See Adrienne Kaepler, *Artificial Curiosities* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1978), 24.

³ See Williams (2008), 71-72.

⁴ Francesco Bartolozzi and William Byrne after John Webber, *The Death of Captain Cook*. Etching (London: Byrne and Webber, 1784).

⁵ John Webber (after), *Representation of the Death of Captain Cook*. Etching (London: S.A. Cumberlege, 1781). See *Courage and Perseverance: Cook's Final Voyage* [catalogue] (Sydney: Hordern House, 2009), no. 38. [John Rickman], *Journal of Captain Cook's Last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean, on Discovery* (London: E. Newbery, 1781), frontispiece engraving.

paintings followed in the 1780s, some now lost or surviving only as engravings, including works by George Carter, Grignon, and Johann Heinrich Ramberg. Other representations of Cook's death were produced by manufacturers on the peripheries of 'legitimate' publishing, such as calico printers or printers of children's ephemera.

These pictures, it may be too obvious to say, were never simply visualisations of eyewitness experience or prose accounts, even when they presented themselves in those terms. Artists were necessarily selective in the moment or moments they represented, and only a very small minority portrayed Cook at the moment of death, lying on the beach "with his face in the water."⁶ Most pictures, instead, show the minutes before he was knocked down, with a few – most notably Webber's – depicting a number of consecutive episodes happening within the same frame, so that the viewer's eye could follow the story in a single scene. Many followed recent fashions in art, with, for example, a general focus on the marines in the boats probably driven by the recent popularity of John Singleton Copley's dramatic *Watson and the Shark* (1778) showing a desperate crew in a precariously balanced boat, dragging a man out of the sea.

As the second section of this thesis will describe, Hawaiian cloaks, mats, *mahiolo* (helmets) and weapons were publicly exhibited in central London from January 1781. Artists in the 1780s, though, seem to take no more than a token interest in the specific information and artefacts collected in Hawaii. They gestured only roughly towards recognisable details of topography and costume to identify the location, without attempting to create the pseudo-ethnographic settings found in, for example, pantomimes, Johann Zoffany's unfinished painting of the scene in the 1790s, or the

⁶ *Voyage* (1784), vol. 3, p. 46.

ostentatiously realist tableau of “insistently American Indian” artefacts in Benjamin West’s *Death of Wolfe* (1770) and Joseph Wright of Derby’s *The Widow of an Indian Chief* (1783).⁷ For instance, no surviving picture of the death of Cook from the 1780s shows Hawaiians wearing anything which could be identified as a “war-mat,” despite the crucial role these mats play in the major prose narratives of the episode, and despite the display of these mats or ‘aprons’ in metropolitan museums.⁸ In almost every image, on the other hand, Cook holds but does not fire a gun, implying, as in earlier written accounts and elegies, self-restraint and technological superiority. The image of Cook shooting, even with relatively harmless smallshot, and of the Hawaiian’s own technology repelling the shot, did not transfer from the prose accounts and material displays into metropolitan visual image, for reasons which are evidently ideological as well as aesthetic. Like the written texts discussed in the previous chapters, these pictures reuse imagery – such as the unfired gun – familiar from metropolitan tropes of savage crowds and benevolent authority; and most recently from depictions of the Gordon riots: Francis Wheatley’s painting of soldiers dispersing a group of rioters, for example.⁹

Although I do not intend to categorise these pictures in terms of their departures from an imagined notion of unmediated “Fidelity,” such alterations from earlier accounts are a reminder that, in depicting the death of Cook, artists could be

⁷ Stephanie Pratt, *American Indians in British Art 1700-1840* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), p. 72. For both these paintings, see Viven Green Fryd, “Rereading the Indian in Benjamin West’s “Death of General Wolfe” in *American Art* 9, no. 1 (1995): 72-85; Pratt (2005), 70-91, 128-130.

⁸ Clerke (1779) in Cook (1967), p. 1535. Kaeppler (1978), 59-60.

⁹ See James Heath after Francis Wheatley, *The Riot in Broad Street on the Seventh of June 1780*. Engraving (London: Boydell, 1790) Original painting destroyed. See William L. Pressly, *The French Revolution as Blasphemy: Johan Zoffany’s Paintings of the Massacre at Paris, August 10, 1792* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 106-107.

expected to prioritise exotic and sentimental appeal over even the appearance of documentary accuracy.¹⁰ The most successful images embraced and advertised their own intermediality as a commercial advantage, in pictures intended to be viewed alongside or within the pages of various books, profiting from the publicity generated by their publication, as well as gaining complexity and authority from the variety of written narratives.

Visual art and mass print: Illustrating *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*.

The delay between the return to London of the *Resolution* and *Discovery* in October 1780 and the publication of the official account of their voyage in June 1784 was a period of controversy over the legitimate authorship of text, maps, observations and illustrations. Despite attempts by the Admiralty to suppress their sale, the voyage journals of Heinrich Zimmerman in continental Europe, John Ledyard in America, and John Rickman and William Ellis in London were all rushed into print in order to capitalise on their topical interest. Rickman's *Journal of Captain Cook's Last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* (1781), for example, offered some of the earliest available visual illustrations of this voyage, in the form of a map and three engraved plates, including the illustration of "the Murder of Capt. Cook at O-Why-ee." It went into multiple editions in London, Dublin, Berlin and New York.¹¹ Nevertheless, reviewers suggested, the book's dubious provenance and lack of sophistication could have the effect of "excit[ing] the reader's suspicions" over its "authenticity." Such

¹⁰ "The utmost Fidelity" is promised in an advertisement for Webber's print in *Public Advertiser* (13 April 1781).

¹¹ [Rickman] (1781). See David W. Forbes (ed.), *Hawaiian National Bibliography, 1780-1900* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), vol. 1 of 4, 23-27.

accounts were, then, seen as unreliable, while also failing (as I will argue in Chapter 8) to present Cook in the heroic light of Seward's *Elegy*. "On the whole the public must wait for the Journal of the Voyage," concluded the *Monthly Review* in 1781, "which will be published by authority, as soon as the numerous and expensive engravings can be got ready."¹²

The combination of official silence and a continuing drip feed of references in the metropolitan press created optimum conditions for the public anticipation of the *Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, written by Cook and King, edited by John Douglas, and published by George Nicol on 4 June.¹³ The production and reception of the text of this book are discussed in the second section of this thesis, but in this chapter I am mainly interested in the book's status as a material and commercial artefact, around which a cluster of new texts and images develop. "Concerning the importance of this work too much cannot well be said," remarked the *New Annual Register*, adding that, "sufficient sensibility has been shewn, in the rapid sale it has met with, in the large extracts that have been inserted from it in every periodical publication, and even in the dishonourable abridgements to which it has been exposed."¹⁴ Banks recorded that 1,942 copies of the first edition went to retailers in 1784; these sold out fast and second (improved) and third editions followed in 1785.¹⁵

In three quarto volumes and a folio atlas, "this most valuable and splendid publication" was a material embodiment of the status of the Admiralty's Pacific

¹² *Monthly Review, or Literary Journal* (September 1781).

¹³ See Williams (2008), 5-61.

¹⁴ *New Annual Register, or General Repository of History, Politics, and Literature* Vol. 5. (London: G.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1784), p. 258.

¹⁵ Qtd. in Forbes (1999), vol. 1, p. 62.

project.¹⁶ In theory, since the illustrations were subsidised with public money, it retailed at a relatively moderate “4 l. 14 s. 6d. in Boards.”¹⁷ This was still, of course, a prohibitively high price for the majority of the population, and, in practice, demand for limited supplies soon raised prices to a reported nine or ten guineas.¹⁸ It seems impossible that the purchasers of such an expensive book represented more than a tiny, wealthy minority of readers. The high social and economic status of the publication as a commodity, though, together with the book’s own assertions of relevance to a national “Public” (however narrowly it may have intended to define this public), had the effect of raising further interest in Cook’s voyages and death.¹⁹ It was followed by a wave of unauthorised periodical extracts and abridged or pirated editions aimed at poorer or less specialist readers, including women. Very lengthy excerpts were, for example, printed monthly in the *Lady’s Magazine* throughout 1784 and 1785. The publishers Fielding and Stockdale offered a bound single-volume abridgement with a scattering of copper plates for seven shillings, as well as a four-volume octavo edition in twenty four installments for a shilling each. These included an oval portrait of Cook and a fold-out plate of “The Death of Captain James Cook, F.R.S. at Owhyee” engraved after Daniel Dodd “& others who were on the spot.”²⁰

¹⁶ *Monthly Review; or, Literary Journal* 70 (June 1780), 460-474, p. 460.

¹⁷ *General Evening Post* (29 May 1784).

¹⁸ *Whitehall Evening Post* (3 July 1784). The *Monthly Review* wrote that “the third day after publication, a copy was not to be met with in the hands of the bookseller; and, to our certain knowledge, six, seven, eight, and even ten guineas, have since been offered for a sett.” (June 1780).

¹⁹ For example, Douglas, Introduction to *Voyage*, vol. 1, lxxviii.

²⁰ [James Cook and James King], *Captain Cook’s Third and Last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean [...] Faithfully Abridged from the Quarto Edition* (London: Fielding and Stockdale, 1785). [James Cook and James King], *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean [...] Being a Copious, Comprehensive and*

The most ambitious of these was George William Anderson's folio compilation of Pacific voyages, published in eighty weekly instalments, for sixpence each, between 1784 and 1786: a total cost of two pounds over two years for those who chose to buy the whole book. Publication by instalments kept the publisher's potential losses to a minimum, since printing could be reduced or abandoned in the event that the book did not sell well. It was also calculated to appeal to the owners of coffeehouses, pubs, and other places where a cheap, regularly updated library might help to attract customers.²¹ Anderson's *New, Authentic and Complete Collection of Voyages* openly responded to the gap in the market opened up by the expensive scarcity of official voyage accounts, especially Cook and King's. "Some other Editions of these Works," Anderson claimed in an early advertisement, "would cost a Purchaser the enormous Sum of upwards of Twenty Guineas." The result was that "many Thousands of Persons who would wish to peruse the Discoveries [...], have hitherto been excluded from gratifying their eager Curiosity." By reducing his costs through (Anderson claimed) more efficient printing techniques, less wasted paper, and a lower profit margin – the wholesale piracy of text and images presumably also helped – the compilation would be made affordable to this mass of curious metropolitan readers.²²

While Fielding and Stockdale declared that their cheap edition was "published by order of His Majesty," Anderson implicitly claims ownership over Cook and King's text for his readers, arguing that the improvement and entertainment of "all Ranks of

Satisfactory Abridgement (London: Stockdale, 1784-1785). See advertisement in *General Evening Post* (5 August 1784).

²¹ For context, see Raven in Rivers (2001).

²² George William Anderson (1784-1786). Others included *A Compendious History of Captain Cook's Last Voyage* (London: G. Kearsley, 1784), iii-iv.

Persons whatever” was the “the original Intention” of the voyage. Like Stockdale’s editions, Anderson’s *Voyages* were generously illustrated, with plates including “An Exact Representation” of Cook’s death allegedly “Accurately Engraved from a Drawing made on the spot purposely for this Work by A. Hogg,” which was loosely based on Webber’s picture.²³

Later in the decade, publishers sought to market abridged or rewritten versions of Cook’s death to child readers. These included at least one in rhyming couplets (“In an island he lies where rude savages roam, | Far distant, alas! from his dear native home!”).²⁴ A toy-like edition of *Captain Cook’s Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* was part of a set of several brightly-bound miniature books (each around nine by eight centimeters) sold in a wooden box painted to look like a bookcase.²⁵ While such books usually advised “inquisitive Youth” to read about Cook for the sake of the geographic, scientific and ethnographic information they would acquire, others presented him as a moral exemplar, source of entertainment, and in one case, a distraction from toothache.²⁶ The “interesting descriptions and entertaining narrative” of standard abridgements were also promoted as suitable for children.

²³ Cook and King (Fielding and Stockdale, 1785), iv; Anderson (1784-1786), iii-iv, frontispiece.

²⁴ Robert Davidson, *Geography Epitomised; or a Tour Round the World* (London: T. Wilkins, 1786), 45-48, p. 48. See also Richard Turner, *A New and Easy Introduction to Universal Geography; in a Series of Letters to a Youth at School*. Fifth edition (London: S. Crowder, 1792), 195-198; Henry St. John Bullen, *Elements of Geography, Expressly Designed for the Use of Schools* (London: T. Hurst, 1799), 252-261.

²⁵ *Captain Cook’s Voyage to the Pacific Ocean, for the Juvenile; or Child’s Library* (London: John Marshall, 1800). See Emma Laws’ notes to her exhibition, *Miniature Libraries from the Children’s Books Collections* (National Art Library, 2002).

<<http://www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/wid/exhibits/miniaturelibraries/introduction.html>>

²⁶ Robert Davidson, *The Elements of Geography, Short and Plain* (London: T. Wilkins, 1787), 6-7; *Food for the Young, Adapted to the Mental Capacities of Children of Tender Years* (London: W. Darton, 1818), 13- 17; 67-69.

“Those who superintend the education of youth cannot put a more acceptable work in their hands” suggested advertisements for a six shilling Kearsley edition between 1787 and 1792.²⁷ Critics tended to dismiss these “pretended Abridgements and spurious Editions” as cheap “catchpenny” works, as inadequate as “the Iliad in a nutshell.”²⁸ Nevertheless, their continued publication well into the nineteenth century indicates their popularity and central role in disseminating a mythology of Cook’s death, usually lifted verbatim from King’s official account, to a mass readership.

As well as stimulating this production of new books, the publication context of *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* also motivated the creation of pictures of Cook’s death. Although the book included detailed route tables and maps, vocabulary lists, compass variations and an extraordinary eighty-seven illustrative plates by Webber and other artists, an illustration of Cook’s death was not included, despite the centrality of the incident in the text of the third volume. On the other hand, like many books at this time, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* was sent to booksellers unbound ‘in sheets’, enabling buyers to specify the bindings they preferred, and allowing larger illustrations to be either bound into the text or kept separate. New plates, as a

²⁷ The advertisement was printed inside other Kearsley books, such as volume 1 of Elizabeth Helme, *Louisa; or the Cottage on the Moor* (London: G. Kearsley, 1787). An adapted version is in newspapers, such as the *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (21 December 1784), which also calls the book “An excellent Christmas-Box; or, New-Year’s Gift, in which Entertainment and Instruction are united.”

²⁸ *London Chronicle* (21 August 1784); *Gentleman’s Magazine, and Historical Chronicle*, vol. 56 (London: John Nichols, 1784), p. 761.

result, could easily be added to those included by the publisher, a practice encouraged by printmakers and booksellers.²⁹

It seems likely, then, that Webber's picture had always been at least partially intended to accompany *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, and in 1785 a smaller version of Webber's print was published, "reduced [...] to a proper size to bind up with the plates of the voyage, printed under the direction of the Admiralty." To make the picture more appropriate for insertion into an Admiralty-commissioned book, some versions of the large print from 1784 onwards had been dedicated "To the Right Honourable Lords Commissioners for executing the Office of Lord High Admiral of Great Britain." These could be bought at George Nicol's shop on the Strand alongside the official book illustrations.³⁰ Other booksellers and dealers followed suit, inviting customers to add a Webber *Death of Cook* to their purchase, or bundling together the texts in advance.³¹

Customers could equally choose to buy the print alone, or add it to an unauthorised edition such as Kearsley's or Stockdale and Fielding's. They could also opt for different formats and illustrations. A perhaps less reputable publisher on Spur Street offered an edition of Webber's picture cropped into an oval format appropriate for frontispieces, and given a sensationalised caption,³² while Carter's *Death of Captain*

²⁹ See Michael Sadleir, *The Evolution of Publishers' Binding Styles, 1700-1900* (New York: Garland, 1930); Stuart Bennett, *Trade Bookbinding in the British Isles, 1660-1800* (Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 2004).

³⁰ *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (20 July 1785); Bartolozzi and Byrne after Webber (1784).

³¹ See for example *A Catalogue of Several Parcels of Books and Prints* (London: Theophilus Thornton, 1788).

³² [John Webber (after)], *The Death of Captain Cook. In February, 1779, by the murdering Dagger of a Barbarian at Carakakooa, in one of the Sandwich Isles. He having there become a Victim to his own Humanity.* Etching (London: n.p., c.1784).

Cook was also issued in folio size from 1784. More unusually, an advertisement in the *Whitehall Evening Post* offered buyers of “Captain Cooke’s Voyage” an “elegant Print in Metzzo-tinto, of the beautiful POI-BIRD” to be “bound up with the Volume of Cuts,”³³ and portraits of Cook, Clerke and King, or images from Webber’s 1787 *Views in the South Seas* were also possible additions.³⁴

It seems clear, then, that while the publication of *A Voyage to the Pacific* created both “Public Curiosity,” and a sense of communal ownership of the narrative of Cook’s death, public discussion of the book drew attention to the absence of a single authoritative visual image of the incident. This represented a creative and commercial opportunity for metropolitan artists. Yet maintaining Cook’s unheroically private and commercial status in painting would also be a significant challenge, forcing the most ambitious candidates to introduce often unwelcome elements of mass culture into the self-defined elite spaces of the Royal Academy.

Interest in Cook in the 1780s coincided with the growth of a pervasive visual culture, visible in borrowed books and portfolios, print shop windows and other public spaces. Increasing coverage of visual art in newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets included technical criticism, but also satire, commercial and political ‘puffing’ or abuse, advertising, and gossip about artists’ personal and business lives. It therefore tended, as Mark Hallett suggests, to widen the social spectrum of potential consumers of ‘art’ in various forms, but also to associate even the most elevated

³³ *Whitehall Evening Post* (19 June 1784). Forbes (1999) cites a similar advertisement in the *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* (6 July 1784), indicating that the same print was available at Lovell’s, another Lincoln’s Inn book and print-shop. Vol. 1, 67. It was still being advertised at this shop in January, by this time with an appropriate quotation from Anna Seward’s *Elegy* and reference to a specimen in Lever’s Museum (*Public Advertiser* (18 January 1785).

³⁴ Forbes (1999), vol. 1, 67.

forms of painting with the deceptive showmanship, sensuality and corruption of the marketplace.³⁵ After 1784, the production of original public paintings of Cook's death largely ceased, with the exception of Zoffany's unfinished image in the 1790s, until resurrected in the Australian colonies in the mid nineteenth century. The best-known picture of the incident remains Webber's modest version – a painting which, I want to argue, borrows from an English tradition of narrative and religious art, as well as the sentimental, classical or exotic registers used by Carter and Ramberg. As such it had no clear place on the walls of Somerset House or in the private collections of elite patrons, but did appeal to a less prestigious mass audience of middle class consumers.

Too many Cooks: The Royal Academy Exhibition in 1784.

The 1784 Summer Exhibition at Somerset House is among the most analysed single cultural events in recent eighteenth century studies. Only the fifth to be held at the Royal Academy's new venue, it has been compellingly interpreted in terms of the visual and generic interactions staged on the walls of the Great Room (one reason for this critical attention is the survival of Edward Francis Burney's detailed drawings of the north, east and west walls), in the context of the recent loss of the American colonies and the subsequent sense of "national crisis."³⁶ Coinciding with the

³⁵ Mark Hallett, "'The Business of Criticism': The Press and the Royal Academy Exhibition in Eighteenth-Century London" in Solkin (2001), 65-75. See also Louise Lippincott, "Expanding on Portraiture: The Market, the Public, and the Hierarchy of Genres in Eighteenth-Century Britain" in Bermingham and Brewer (1995), 75-88.

³⁶ Mark Hallett, "Reading the Walls: Pictorial Dialogue at the British Royal Academy" in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37, no. 4 (2004): 581-604, p. 597. See also Solkin (2001); Myrone (2005), 211-226; Eleanor Hughes, "Ships of the 'Line': Marine Paintings at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1784" in

publication of *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* and the subsequent resurgence of interest in images of the death of Cook discussed above, the 1784 exhibition was offered no fewer than three paintings of the scene, by Ramberg, Grignion Jr., and Carter. “Poor Cook,” sighed one contemporary critic, “what an unhappy fate, doomed to be murdered all over the world.”³⁷ The Academy perhaps thought that three was too many, as Carter’s was rejected and “lay in the lumber room at Somerset House, for upwards of a month.”³⁸ Carter responded defiantly, by including the picture the following year in a private exhibition at the Royal Academy’s former premises on Pall Mall.

Ramberg, a former pupil of Joshua Reynolds and favourite of George III, was probably the most prominent of these three painters, and his picture was hung on the west wall of the Great Room. A fairly small painting, dwarfed by James Northcote’s vast *Captain Inglefield Escaping from his Ship the Centaur* on the same wall, the *Death of Captain James Cook* was placed below the room’s famous central ‘line,’ implying that it was not viewed as a particularly important work.³⁹ Grignion’s *Captain Cook Attacked by the Natives of O-why-hee in the South Seas, Feb. 14, 1779* was consigned to a less prestigious antechamber, where it was noticed by Shackleton and

Art and the British Empire, edited by Tim Barringer, Geoff Quilley and Douglas Fordham (Manchester: Manchester U.P., 2007), 139-153; Hoock (2010), 117-120.

³⁷ *E. Johnson’s British Gazette and Sunday Monitor* (16 May 1784). See Geoff Quilley, *Empire to Nation: Art, History and the Visualization of Maritime Britain 1768-1829* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 2011), 44-45.

³⁸ *The Artist’s Repository and Drawing Magazine, exhibiting the Principles of the Polite Arts in their various Branches* (London: C. Taylor, 1785), vol. 4 of 5, p. 114.

³⁹ Johann Heinrich Ramberg, *Death of Captain James Cook*. Oil on canvas, c. 1784 (State Library of New South Wales, Sydney). The position of this painting on the wall can be seen in Edward Francis Burney’s drawing of the west wall of the Great Room at Somerset House. Pen and ink and watercolour, 1784 (British Museum).

virtually nobody else (it has since been lost).⁴⁰ Webber, perhaps because of this oversupply of dead Cooks, and perhaps because the picture had already been painted and engraved for at least two years, did not submit his *Death of Cook*. Instead he was represented by *A Party from the Resolution, on Captain Cook's Last Voyage, Shooting Sea Horses*: an image which alluded to Cook's death, both in its title and its position facing Ramberg's painting, but did not represent Cook himself.⁴¹

Popular interest in Cook's death in 1784 – while enough to prompt three separate pictures of the same event – could not easily be made to dovetail with the criteria of high art demanded by the Royal Academy. Myrone, for example, describes how the demands of contemporary history painting led Ramberg to present Cook as a “gentleman” through the opposition of aristocratic virtues of sensibility and the “brute physical strength” of the Hawaiians.⁴² One of the major functions of a history painting, Joshua Reynolds had argued, was to present a hero as “a great man,” in opposition to “vulgar”, “mean” or “little” figures.⁴³ Cook's obscure background, lack of formal education or rank, and commercially-inflected celebrity were difficult to reconcile with these demands. Thus Ramberg's attempt (Figure 4) to visualise the confrontation between a hero of sensibility and the “dire fury of the savage hords,” so successfully represented by Seward,⁴⁴ was attacked by critics in terms which suggested that its synthesis of painting and mass celebrity was unacceptable.

⁴⁰ Algernon Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their Work from its Foundation in 1769 to 1904* (London: Henry Graves, 1905), vol. 3 of 8, p. 326.

⁴¹ See Hughes (2007), 147-148.

⁴² Myrone (2005), pp. 213-214.

⁴³ Joshua Reynolds, *Seven Discourses Delivered in the Royal Academy by the President* (London: T. Cadell, 1778). pp. 111-113.

⁴⁴ Beverley, l. 48.

Ramberg's Cook is passive and vulnerable, spotlighted like an actor on the stage; with his clean white uniform, discarded hat, unused gun, and white European features symbolising his civilised status in the middle of a chaotic crowd of dark, almost naked, violent bodies and scarlet cloaks. Yet where this contrast had prompted tears among Seward's readers, Ramberg's viewers (insofar as their reactions can be inferred from reviews and the lack of demand for an engraving) were more sceptical. The artist, one critic wrote, had attempted to create "an everlasting picture" by following the advice of the song "True Blue Will Never Stain." More tersely, the *Morning Post* imagined that "this picture has met with an accident, from some washer-woman's emptying her blue-bag on it."⁴⁵

The painting is discoloured and faded now, and it is difficult to tell if this censure was justified, but the language in which it was expressed is nevertheless revealing. *True Blue* was a popular tavern ballad most recently associated with the Gordon rioters, and with *The Dragon of Wantley*, a burlesque opera performed at Covent Garden in 1782.⁴⁶ In essence, all this implied, the picture was closer to crude popular showmanship than the "everlasting" and disinterested aesthetic values of the Royal Academy. Another painting by Ramberg in the 1784 exhibition, *The Soldier's Return*, was dismissed as a "pleasing composition" which "savours rather too much of those designs we daily see in print-shop windows by *Lady and Gentlemen*

⁴⁵ *E. Johnson's British Gazette and Sunday Monitor* (16 May 1784); *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (14 May 1784).

⁴⁶ "Song 170" in *The Aviary: Or, Magazine of British Melody* (London: J. Mechell, c. 1745), p. 94; *True Blue Will Never Stain*, broadside ballad ([London]: n.p., c. 1750); *True Blue Will Never Stain, Or Wilkes, For Ever*, broadside ballad (London: n.p., 1768); [Henry Carey], *The Dragon of Wantley* (London: T. Lowndes, 1770), p. 26. See Colin Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England: A Political and Social Study* (Manchester: Manchester U.P., 1993), p. 235.

*Artists.*⁴⁷ Too obviously commercial in their sentimentality and low in their subject matter, Ramberg's paintings seemed to betray their creator as a pretentious common tradesman rather than a disinterested artist; someone whose claims to gentility could be presented in satirical italics. Ramberg would respond to this disappointing reception by designing an image of *Neptune raising Capt Cook up to Immortality*, engraved as a frontispiece to a large part-work geography book in 1787. This abandons the elegantly passive version of Cook as victim in favour of a sturdy, middle-aged, slightly awkward figure, whose heroic significance derives entirely from his surroundings: the allegorical characters of Neptune, Britannia, "a Genius" and Fame, the personified four continents of Europe, Asia, Africa and America presenting tribute, and the ornate surrounds, decorated with symbols of navigation, trade and prosperity.⁴⁸

Carter's painting, one of several copies he had painted since 1781, had more assertive pretensions. In size and composition the picture was designed as a pendant to West's 1771 *Death of Wolfe*, and depicts a more robust Cook standing over the bleeding body of a Hawaiian, wielding his gun as a club. The native figures are heavily racialised caricatures of black 'savages' with the cursory addition of some loosely copied feather garments – a cloak, a helmet – to distinguish them as Hawaiian. They are contrasted with Cook and his ordered, stalwart British tars.⁴⁹ A more reassuring vision of British superiority over the Other, Carter's image was

⁴⁷ *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (14 May 1784). Original italics.

⁴⁸ James Neagle and William Grainger after Johann Heinrich Ramberg, frontispiece to Thomas Banks, *A New and Authentic System of Universal Geography, Antient and Modern* (London: C. Cooke, 1788).

⁴⁹ George Carter, *Death of Captain Cook*. Oil on canvas, 1781 (National Library of Australia, Canberra). See Kaepler (1978), 24.

nevertheless no more acceptable as high art than Ramberg's, prompting scathing comment in the *Public Advertiser*:

His tawny *Captain Cook* in a white Waistcoat, defending himself against a Savage, was perhaps a Mistake in the Inscription under the Plate; and we ought rather to read – the *Captain's Cook* knocking down a Scullion; for the chief Figure bears a stronger Resemblance to the Hero of a Porridge-pot, than to our great Navigator round the World.⁵⁰

With these mock-heroic references to washerwomen, cooks and scullions, criticism of Ramberg and Carter suggests that attempts to attach the status of history painting to the mass topical celebrity of Cook could be perceived as dangerously close to burlesque. Carter's own working-class origins – like Cook, he had reportedly worked as a shop-assistant – did not help to conceal the potentially incongruous, self-made, and weatherbeaten commodity which still threatened to emerge from behind the vague notion of a shared national figure: “our great Navigator round the World.” Carter struggled to sell his original paintings of Cook's death, and seems to have made further losses from his private exhibition, leaving for India shortly afterwards. Some of his costs, though, were presumably recouped through the sales of a self-published print issued immediately before the publication of *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* (Figure 5).⁵¹

⁵⁰ *Public Advertiser* (29 April 1784). Qtd in Williams (2008), p. 75.

⁵¹ Carter's biography, including the shopkeeping claim, is in Mildred Archer, *India and British Portraiture 1770-1825* (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1979), p. 273. The *Public Advertiser* (1 June 1785) also noted that he and Joseph Wright of Derby had been “losers by their experiments of separate exhibitions.” John Hall, John Thornthwaite and Samuel Smith after George Carter, *The Death of Captain James Cook, by the Indians of O,why,ee, one of the Sandwich Islands*. Etching (London: George Carter and Sayer & Bennet, 1784).

This print was ambitious. In collaboration with the major London firm of Sayer and Bennett, Carter employed John Hall, who also worked on the prints of West's history paintings, for the portrait of Cook, and two other respectable engravers to complete the figures and the landscape. It was large and, at a guinea for a standard print, expensive.⁵² Print, then, as Webber's success would demonstrate, offered a less controversial form for the representation of Cook's death, with the potential for the artist of some prestige and relatively high financial security.⁵³

Fine art prints like Carter's and Webber's were followed by more ephemeral commodities. A repeating *toile de jouty*-style calico produced in Salford, for example, showed scenes from Cook's voyages, including his death. The design could be bought in either tobacco-coloured cotton or white linen.⁵⁴ The widespread use by Lancashire printers of designs pirated from London textiles has been documented, and raises the possibility that the surviving fabric may be a cheap plagiarised version of a now-lost metropolitan original.⁵⁵ Still largely a subset of the paper engraving

⁵² *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (17 March 1784).

⁵³ See Sarah Hyde, "Printmakers and the Royal Academy Exhibitions, 1780-1836" in Solkin (2001), 217-228.

⁵⁴ John Slack, untitled printed linen. (Salford, Lancashire, n.d.) Philadelphia Museum of Art. The sources of the images used suggest this was probably designed between 1781 and 1784, although it may have been manufactured later. It is described and illustrated in N.A. Reath, "Printed Fabrics" in *Bulletin of the Pennsylvania Museum* 20, no. 95 (1925): 143-153, p. 152 and plate 4. Another example of the print was sold at Christie's in March 1995 under the description: "A curtain of printed cotton: monochrome printed in a tobacco colour depicting Captain Cook discovering and landing on a native island and subsequently his death, printed beside his head *The Death of Capt Cook who was massacred by the Natives of O Why ... Feb 14 1779--25 x 74in. (64 x 188cm), late 18th century*" (<www.christies.com>).

⁵⁵ See Hazel Clark, "The Design and Designing of Lancashire Printed Calicoes during the First Half of the 19th Century" in *Textile History* 15, no. 1 (1984): 101-118; Lara Kriegel, "Culture and the Copy: Calico, Capitalism, and Design Copyright in Early Victorian Britain" in *Journal of British Studies* 43, no. 2 (2004): 233-265.

trade, textile printers drew most of their designs from books and prints, which had previously included Pacific voyage illustrations.⁵⁶ The vignettes in this design are copied from a number of published images of the Pacific, including scenes from Hawkesworth's 1773 account and William Hodges' *The Landing at Middleburgh*, in Cook's *Voyage Towards the South Pole* (1777). The scene of Cook's death, though has no obvious single source, but slightly resembles the frontispiece from Rickman's *Journal*, with a prone Cook surrounded by club-wielding Hawaiians. Similarly, a vignette captioned "The Death of Capt. Cook at O-why-hee" appears at the head of a 1790 writing blank, on which scenes copied from Webber's illustrations surround a space for a child's writing exercise.⁵⁷ The elaborate image is a composite of two earlier pictures of Cook's death: the figures on land are copied from the frontispiece to John Rickman's illicit *Journal*, while the boat is a simplified version of Webber's. This ephemeral print was one of many to make use of Webber's imagery of Cook's last voyage, as the next chapter will show. His picture of Cook's death, in particular, created an emblem of Cook's celebrity which was widely circulated in a range of forms and genres.

⁵⁶ See Maxine Berg, "From Imitation to Invention: Creating Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Britain" in *Economic History Review* 55, no. 1 (2002): 1-30. Adrienne Kaeppler, *The Pacific Arts of Polynesia and Micronesia* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2008), 159-160.

⁵⁷ Edward Langley, *Captain Cook's Last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*. Hand coloured engraved writing blank (London: Edward Langley, c. 1790). John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library; available in Oxford Digital Library. < <http://www.odl.ox.ac.uk>>. See the description of a copy in *Captain James Cook: The Greatest Discoverer* [catalogue] (Sydney: Hordern House, 2008), no. 117.

Chapter 5. The lives and afterlives of John Webber's *Death of Cook*

Webber's *Death of Cook*, 1781-1784.

Soon after his return to Europe from the Pacific, John Webber wrote a short letter to his cousin in which he described Hawaii. He concluded with a short account of Cook's death:

[S]ome ill-disposed natives abducted our best boat, and in the attempt to recover it, a struggle ensued, in which to our distress five of our people were killed on the spot; of these one loss can never be repaired, this was our most unfortunate Captain, who remained among those killed. Never was an event more tragic. It was the third time that this celebrated and worthy man sailed around the world, and I don't think that any man will be so rightly and universally regretted.¹

Webber was a British-born artist from a German family who had received prestigious training in painting and engraving in London, Paris and Bern. He had been establishing a reputation in the competitive London art market when recruited by the Admiralty as the voyage artist responsible for recording the natural history, topography and ethnography of Cook's third voyage to the Pacific. Webber's career up to this point had been typical of professional, cosmopolitan artists in the metropolis. He had worked on a range of projects as need and opportunity arose, including colouring landscape engravings, interior decoration, and painting portraits,

¹ John Webber, letter to Daniel Funk (4 January 1781). In Rüdiger Joppien and Bernard Smith, *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1988), vol. 3, 223-224, p. 223.

pastoral landscapes, and Biblical subjects. His four years on the *Resolution*, however, proved a something of a turning point. After 1781, Webber exhibited annually at the Royal Academy, although he was not elected a full member until 1791. These exhibitions, nevertheless, effectively promoted his published engravings of Pacific scenes.²

As Geoff Quilley points out, the novel and unstable role of the “artist-voyager” which provided Webber with professional opportunities also produced “the difficult problem [...] of trying to please diverse viewing publics, whose needs were not necessarily compatible.” Quilley is mainly concerned with Webber’s negotiation of “the potentially contradictory requirements” of the generalised aesthetics of the Royal Academy, and the empirical accuracy demanded by the Royal Society, seeing his participation in “the spheres of print-publishing and theatre” as an alternative route by which he could escape this conflict.³ Yet the commercial enterprise of publishing prints, I would argue, subjected Webber to a potentially wider, and equally demanding, cluster of “diverse viewing publics,” and thus demanded further negotiation of artistic roles and values.

Webber’s picture of the death of Cook (Figure 6) promoted itself as authentic eyewitness reportage, while reflecting the one-sided view of the incident found in his letter. An advertisement for the engraving, in 1781, promised that “The Drawing was taken on the Spot; the Landscape is from Nature; and the Circumstances of the most unfortunate Event (of which Mr. Webber was an Eye-witness) are told with the utmost Fidelity.”⁴ There is no evidence that Webber had actually been present at

² See Joppien and Smith, vol. 3, 161-182.

³ Quilley (2011), pp. 42, 49, 45.

⁴ *Public Advertiser* (13 April 1781).

Cook's death, and the announcement seems likely to be an attempt to exploit, like Rickman, Ledyard and Ellis, the information vacuum created by the delayed publication of *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*. The picture, nevertheless, clearly claimed a greater degree of documentary "Fidelity" than the more generalised images of artists like Ramberg or Carter. Yet Webber's composition also presents the scene in the terms of both fashionable and traditional visual art. It gained popularity, as the last chapter suggested, only after 1784, as a highly commodified extra-illustration to the multiple editions of the Admiralty's book.

Famously, Webber depicted Cook in a pose which could be interpreted as an illustration of the claim that Cook had "turned about, to give his orders to the boats [to] cease firing, and to pull in."⁵ This pose, with its connotations of martyrdom, has become a defining visual motif of Cook's – and by extension, white Pacific colonialism's – heroic self-sacrifice. As a result, the gesture has been widely discussed, with Bernard Smith's view that it leaves room for narrative "ambiguity" firmly rejected by critics who see Webber's Cook as an explicitly self-sacrificing hero: "waving, not drowning," in Edmond's words.⁶ On the other hand, while Webber's letter indicates that his sympathies were with Cook, it does not mention an order to cease fire, or the idea that Cook had sacrificed his own life. More fundamentally, in 1781 Webber had no obvious motivation to design foundation myths for colonies which did not yet exist. Despite its evident bias, and its retrospective colonial adoptions, then, I want to suggest that Webber's original figure of Cook might have been based less on the notion of Cook as symbolic

⁵ *Voyage*, vol. 3, p. 45.

⁶ Smith (1992), pp. 233; Edmond, p. 37. See also Thomas (2003), 395-396; Williams (2008), 71-72.

martyr, and more on Webber's attempts to find models for his picture within acceptable traditions of narrative art.

Among these models, certainly, would be Hodges' pictures of peaceful landings at Tanna, Mallicolo (Malakula) and Middleburg (Eua). In these previously successful images of the Pacific, arms on both sides of the beach are frequently shown outstretched as signs of an "uneasy reciprocity" of curiosity and perhaps goodwill.⁷ Webber's echo of this symbolism recalls the established authority of these images as well as the peaceful intentions they depict. An older painting of a naval figure can also be seen as a precursor to Webber's Cook: Reynold's portrait of Augustus Keppel, completed in 1753, depicts the then naval captain (by 1780 a former admiral and national popular hero) standing on a rocky seashore in an unusually active pose, with one arm raised. As Martin Postle points out, this "animated" depiction of British naval heroism was widely admired,⁸ and the portrait is likely to have been an attractive model for Webber, who maintains the setting and energetic stance of Reynold's figure, including, perhaps, a version of Keppel's pointing gesture.

Webber also, however, makes use of tropes and conventions familiar from metropolitan religious art, most clearly images of the arrest of Christ,⁹ with its serene central figure contrasting with the disorderly, often grotesque or exotic Jewish and Roman crowd. In Anthony van Dyck's celebrated *The Taking of Christ*, for example, Jesus steps forward with his arm outstretched, distinguished from the crowd around

⁷ Guest (2007), 91-117, pp. 115-116. See also David Bindman, "'Philanthropy seems natural to mankind': Hodges and Captain Cook's second voyage to the South Seas" in *William Hodges 1744-1797* edited by Geoff Quilley and John Bonehill (New Haven: Yale U.P., 2004), 21-26.

⁸ Joshua Reynolds, *Captain the Honourable Augustus Keppel*. Oil on canvas, 1752-1753 (National Maritime Museum, Greenwich). See Martin Postle, cat. 9 in *Joshua Reynolds: The Creation of Celebrity*, edited by Martin Postle (London: Tate, 2005).

⁹ John 18:1-12; Luke 22:47-54.

him by his red and blue robes, while a threatening figure looms behind him with a raised spear.¹⁰ Many similar versions of the scene would have been known to Webber and his contemporaries from both elite and popular art. Webber's use of the narrative composition of many of these – in which a series of consecutive events are depicted simultaneously – draws specific parallels between individuals and episodes.¹¹ These not only lend the scene the kind of timelessness and weight critics saw as lacking from Ramberg and Carter's versions, but guide viewers' narrative and moral interpretations.

In particular, depictions of the confrontation between Saint Peter and Malchus (in which Malchus, who has arrived to arrest Jesus, is injured before being miraculously healed),¹² seem to offer Webber a visual and moral framework for the inclusion in his picture of Molesworth Phillips, Cook's lieutenant of marines. Phillips had landed with Cook and survived after shooting at least one Hawaiian, reportedly either in defence of Cook or in revenge for his death.¹³ Though attractively active, this episode was difficult to represent without risking the appearance of excessive aggression. The account in *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, which made use of material from Phillips' own journal, omits it entirely and focuses on a second, more selfless "instance of gallant behaviour and affection for his men," when a wounded Phillips jumped into the sea to rescue a marine.¹⁴ By placing Phillips in the role of Peter defending Christ, however, Webber might imply, without obviously departing

¹⁰ Anthony van Dyck, *The Taking of Christ*. Oil on canvas, c. 1620 (Bristol Museum and Art Gallery).

¹¹ See for example Sarah Trimmer, *A Series of Prints taken from the New Testament* (London: John Marshall, 1790), no. XLIII.

¹² John 18: 10-11; Luke 22:51.

¹³ See for example *Gentleman's Magazine, and Historical Chronicle* (London: J.B. Nicols, July-December 1832), p. 385.

¹⁴ *Voyage*, vol. 3, pp. 54-55.

from written accounts, that his violence was not self-defensive as much as a Peter-like defence of his Christ-like leader. At the same time, as an image of ordinary, violent, human heroism – as in many depictions of Peter, Phillips is shown on the ground, while Cook stands upright – the figure of Phillips allows Webber to present Cook’s apparent refusal of violence by comparison as extraordinary and even superhuman, an idea underlined by the fortuitous contrast between Cook’s blue and Phillips’s blood-red uniforms.

Webber’s *Death of Cook*, then, can be seen as a pragmatic negotiation of the claims of written accounts of the episode and a range of aesthetically and commercially appealing visual traditions. By the end of the century Webber’s picture had gained new meanings as well as the ubiquity of what recent writers have termed “an icon, a definition of Cook’s career,” with “a crucial role in the posthumous construction of the death.”¹⁵ The emblematic status of the image can be seen in the alterations made in 1788 to the only other picture of the scene based on on-the-spot sketches of Kealakekua Bay. When John Cleveley’s paintings, based on the possibly eyewitness sketches of James Cleveley, were engraved by Francis Jukes, the foreground figures were changed to resemble Webber’s. The central figure of Cook, in Cleveley’s painting shown striking a Hawaiian with his gun butt, is replaced by a more passive figure facing away from the crowd, with his arm raised. Several other adjustments suggest the deliberate imitation of Webber’s painting, such as the increased size of the crowd visible along the beach, the highlighting of an individual Hawaiian in a feather helmet as Cook’s killer, and the addition of the red-jacketed figure of

¹⁵ Thomas (2003), p. 396; Edmond (1997), p. 36.

Molesworth Phillips, for example.¹⁶ The bold gesture and simple composition of Webber's image produced a shorthand image of the scene which became an emblem of Cook's metropolitan mythology, and thus could be integrated into other prints and printed artefacts, a few of which will be discussed in the next part of this chapter.

Apotheosis and miniaturisation: the afterlives of Webber's *Death of Cook*.

Webber's scene of the death of Cook reappears repeatedly in printed artefacts produced after 1784. An 1800 coloured stipple engraving of Cook (Figure 7), for example, presents a head and shoulders portrait, after Nathaniel Dance, over a miniature, simplified vignette of Webber's figures. The scene is reduced to a few basic elements: the land and sea, the edge of a boat and rifle barrels, Philips shooting from the ground, a dark crowd of Hawaiians on the right, and the uniformed figure of Cook with an oversized right arm raised.¹⁷ The print was one of a long series of similar oval portraits accompanied by rectangular vignettes published by Chapman, from William Blackstone to the Emperor of China. The Cook print, though, departs from convention by using as its subject's 'attribute' a scene of their death. That Chapman regarded Webber's scene as appropriate in this context demonstrates the centrality of Cook's death, as depicted by Webber, to Cook's celebrity by the turn of

¹⁶ John Cleveley, *Sandwich Island, called by the natives O.Wyi.He in the South Sea, the sketch made by Mr James Clevely of the Resolution*. Watercolour, c. 1784. Before 2004 this painting had only been known through the print: Francis Jukes, after John Cleveley, *View of Owhyhee one of the Sandwich Islands*. Aquatint (London: Thomas Martyn, 1788). See Williams (2008), 77.

¹⁷ John Chapman after Nathaniel Dance and John Webber, *Captain Cook*. Coloured stipple engraving. (London: J. Wilkes, 1800).

the century. Indeed, the Cook design proved popular enough to be reissued in black and white, and in an oval format, in the same year, and portraits in a similar format, with the death scene, were produced by different journeyman engravers through the first half of the nineteenth century.¹⁸ Decorative maps from Cook's voyages, such as Giovanni Cassini's 1798 map of Hawaii, could also include adapted versions of Webber's image, as an ornament for texts marking the exact location in the Pacific where Cook died.¹⁹

More elaborate texts incorporating Webber's *Death of Captain Cook* include Louthembourg's *Apotheosis of Captain Cook* (Figure 8) and the 1804 French wallpaper *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique*. Louthembourg's image was originally a large-scale painting which descended onto the stage of Covent Garden during the finale of the pantomime *Omai, or a Trip Round the World* in 1785.²⁰ A print was sold following the success of the pantomime, drawing attention to its "View of Karakakooa Bay [...] from a Drawing by John Webber, R.A."²¹ Underneath the allegorical figures of Britannia and Fame carrying Cook (loosely based on Ramberg's reclining figure) towards heaven, the scene of Cook's death appears, again acting as a heroic attribute. Although viewed at a distance designed to create

¹⁸ Chapman's and several similar portraits can be seen in an album digitised by the State Library of New South Wales. ["Captain James Cook, ca. 1780-1829, 1882 – portraits"] PXA 1002 <acms.sl.nsw.gov.au/item/itemDetailPaged.aspx?itemID=431457> .

¹⁹ Giovanni Cassini, *La Isole di Sandwich Delineate Sulle Osservazione del Cap. Cook*. Engraved map (Rome: Presso la Calcografia Camerale, 1798).

²⁰ See Iain McCalman, "Spectacles of Knowledge: Omai as Ethnographic Travelogue" in *Cook & Omai: The Cult of the South Seas*, edited by Michelle Hetherington (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2001), 8-15.

²¹ Philippe-Jacques de Louthembourg and John Webber (after), *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook*. Etching (London: John Thane, 1794).

the illusion, for theatre audiences, of floating upwards with Cook, the scene acts as familiar shorthand for the narrative of Cook's celebrity.

Loutherbourg's design (most notably in the title and on the front cover of Obeyesekere's 1992 critique) has been interpreted as evidence of metropolitan adoration of Cook as a pseudo-sacred figure. It is clear that such images present Cook in a heroic light, although it is also worth noting the form's increasing frequency and secularisation in the late eighteenth century. Combining neoclassicism with a long tradition of depictions of Christian saints, apotheoses were also linked by convention to royalty— probably most famously in Rubens' *Apotheosis of James I*, displayed in the Royal Banqueting House since the seventeenth century. Recent fashion, however, manifested in paintings like West's *The Apotheosis of Princes Octavius and Alfred* (exhibited in the Royal Academy in the summer of 1784), Carter's 1782 *Apotheosis of Garrick* or Henry Fuseli's *Apotheosis of Penelope Boothby* (1792), prioritised sentiment and morality. At the same time, since apotheosis was also something of a staple of funeral sculpture – for example, in Joseph Wilton's monument to Wolfe in Westminster Abbey (1773) – pictures of Cook's apotheosis can also be seen as presenting themselves as, like elegy, print substitutes for Cook's missing tomb; asserting Cook's secure place far 'above' the violent disruptions of the Hawaiian beach, and claiming their own performative function as memorials.

When reproduced as part of new images, such as the Chapman portrait and Loutherbourg *Apotheosis*, Webber's scene comes to represent in radically simplified but still recognisable form the story of Cook's death and sacrifice. It acts as an "attribute" in the tradition of pictures of Christian saints, which telescoped time "to

provide a visual digest or summary of the whole story or episode for didactic purposes” and prompts reflection on ideas of death and virtue.²² Such an attribute depicts physical suffering, but in a distanced, marginalised form which does not threaten to overwhelm Christian contemplation or polite, restrained forms of sentimentality. Blood and fear are invisible from the viewer’s aerial vantage point far above the beach.

This can be seen as the strategy which governs Jean-Gabriel Charvet’s repositioning of Webber’s *Death* in his 1804 wallpaper design.²³ The French paper shows an idealised Tahitian landscape, in which tableaux of men and women illustrate the different areas of the Pacific visited by Cook. These are based on a combination of illustrations from voyage accounts, ethnographic costume books, and theatrical costumes, with the stated intention (explained in an accompanying pamphlet) of acting as an educational aid for both children and adults.²⁴ The incident in Kealakekua Bay appears at a distance, as an arrangement of tiny figures based on Webber’s composition. Known variously as *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique*, *Les Voyages du Capitaine Cook* or simply *Captain Cook*, the wallpaper was printed and

²² Jules Lubbock, *Storytelling in Christian Art from Giotto to Donatello* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 2006), p. 283.

²³ Jean-Gabriel Charvet (after), *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique*. Woodcut printed and gouache wallpaper in 20 strips (Mâcon: Joseph Dufour et Cie, 1804-1805). National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. Other complete contemporary sets can be found in museums in France and the USA, including the Honolulu Academy of Arts in Hawaii.

²⁴ Joseph Dufour, *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique, Tableau pour Décoration en Papier Peint* [pamphlet] (Mâcon: Imprimerie de Moiroux, 1804). See Susan Hall (ed.), *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique* [exhibition guide] (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2000). For analysis of the paper’s presentation of the Pacific in terms of contemporary French colonialism, see Martin Terry, “A Pacific Panorama” in Hall (2000), 27-31; Christin J. Mamiya, “Nineteenth-Century French Women, the Home, and the Colonial Vision: *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique* Wallpaper” in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 28 (2007): 100-120.

hand-painted at the factory of Joseph Dufour in Mâcon between 1804 and 1805. It was aimed mainly at the American and French markets, since taxes on the import and manufacture of paper wall-hangings in Britain tended to make large scenic papers prohibitively expensive. There were, however, a handful of buyers in England, and a set was also installed at Roseville House in Lisburn in Ireland. While some purchasers were the very wealthy owners of large houses, one of wallpaper's major selling points – even after taxes – was that it was more affordable than tapestries or murals, and it thus also appealed to middling-sort professional families with smaller houses or apartments. The owner of Roseville House, for example, was a doctor and industrial chemist.²⁵

In reproductions of *Les Sauvages*, it is easy to miss the distant scene of Cook's death (indeed, the form of the wallpaper, as a series of interchangeable strips with a constant horizon, allowed buyers to omit the scene entirely if they chose). When viewed on the wall of a room, though, the scene is positioned roughly at eye-level; and the viewer's attention is drawn, by a plume of smoke from a volcano, and by the alien shapes of two British ships, to the Hawaiian landscape and its tableau of tiny figures, each composed of no more than three or four fine brushstrokes. This encourages the viewer to move towards and examine the scene, mimicking the actions of figures in the foreground of the picture, who watch or point towards the battle. Moreover, the stories and tropes of contemporary European encounters with the Pacific are emphasised in the wallpaper's deliberate interactions, through

²⁵ See Odile Nouvel-Kammerer, "Wide Horizons: French Scenic Papers" in *The Papered Wall: History, Pattern, Technique*, edited by Lesley Hoskins (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 94-113; Roger Butler, "*Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique*: in England, America and Australia" in Hall (2000), 15-19. For Roseville House, see Kathleen Rankin, *The Linen Houses of the Lagan Valley: The Story of their Families* (Ulster: Ulster Historical Foundation, 2002), 68-73.

references in Dufour's pamphlet, with written French, English and American travel writing.

The violence of Cook's death, though, does not visually disrupt the paper's pastoral vision of the Pacific as a series of *objets agréables*, but acts as one in a series of curious scenes to which the viewer is guided as they absorb themselves in the scenes which surround them.²⁶ Instead, the scene is represented in the "miniaturized" and thus apparently harmless and "frivolous or ornamental" form of, say, the toy soldiers which, as Harriet Guest and Nigel Leask have discussed, were given to Mai on his return to Tahiti as a means of representing the presence of the metropolis in the Pacific.²⁷ By maintaining the presence of this conflict only in miniature, Charvet seems to retain the sentimental and curious aspects of the story while emptying it of potential moral or epistemological anxiety, creating a text which presents itself as pure sensory pleasure; a decorative, commodified experience of Pacific exotic.

As such the wallpaper can be seen as exemplary of a second wave of representations of Cook's death, which will be discussed in the next part of this thesis. The theatre and the museum, I want to suggest, aimed at effecting similar transformations of Cook's death into dazzling ethnographic and sentimental spectacle. While the absorption of early newspaper reports, poems and pictures of the scene within a mass marketplace seemed to threaten them with overwhelming consumption, such choreographed pleasures of Cook's death maintained unprecedented control over the affective experience and even the subjectivity, of their consumers. These concerns, I

²⁶ Dufour, p. 38.

²⁷ Guest (2007), pp. 158-159; Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2004), 62. See also Harriet Guest, "Ornament and Use: Mai and Cook in London" in Wilson (2004), 317-344.

will argue, come to dominate Cook's celebrity in the decades following the sudden materialisation of the alien artefacts of Hawaii in the centre of the metropolis.

Section 2

Introduction

As the panorama of classical South Seas romance in *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique* demonstrates, the decades after Cook's death saw the transformation of the distant past and the distant Pacific into metropolitan pleasure through forms of sensational (if often purportedly educational) showmanship. In contrast to earlier written and visual representations of the episode, discussed in the previous section, accounts of Hawaii from 1784 onwards responded not to a lack of concrete information but to a perceived overabundance of materiality. Londoners from 1781 were faced with a dazzling array of material artefacts in the museum, both fantastically alien and unquestionably real, adding an intensely material element to what had been a remote, textual experience of the Pacific. This presentation of Pacific materiality, along with the relative absence of the memorialisation of Cook in state-controlled public spaces, meant that the museum was the primary public site associated with Cook. At the same time, the return to the metropolis of Cook's ships, and the publication of illicit and official voyage accounts, involved the processing of eyewitness experience into commercial narrative.

As I have suggested, however, participation in this marketplace could prompt anxieties about the unpredictable and anonymous consumption of culture: the possibility that a text could be ignored, mocked, doubted or misinterpreted, and that the heterogeneous consumers and illegitimate reproductions of a text might transform it in ways which could not be controlled. This was especially true of texts on Cook's death, which was associated with the dubious and disorderly sphere of

newspaper-reading, and the traditionally romantic and disreputable setting of the Pacific. Writers and artists responded to these problems in a range of different ways. One major response, which I want to suggest is characteristic of King's narrative in *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, and to metropolitan representations of Cook which clustered around it, was the adoption of techniques – narrative, aesthetic, technological, sentimental – which sought to manage and direct what *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, quoting Thomas Warton, calls the “feeling imagination.”¹ While Warton equates this faculty with representation of British origins in antiquity, texts on Cook redeploy his terms to suggest that the representation of the present day exotic could have an equivalent function of channelling emotion into the production of a modern national identity.

This section suggests that, first, many creative texts on the death of Cook – including poetry, pantomime and travel writing – were inspired by, illustrated by or otherwise entangled with Pacific “Cook collections” in museums. Second, these texts began, after 1784, to mediate a relationship between the metropolitan cultural consumer, and the images of remote customs and manners provided by such objects. It did this through the mass cultural techniques and discourses developed in the British metropolis's sensible and spectral experience of its own past: that is, through the characteristics of a discourse which would later be termed gothic. The story of Cook's death seemed fortuitously malleable into forms of sensationalism and sensibility, even in the earlier newspaper accounts and elegies looked at in the last chapter. Yet while, in these earlier texts, images of Hawaiian rioting crowds and cannibalism evoked the spectre of proliferating, fragmenting texts and readers, versions from 1784 onwards were more concerned with the possibilities of

¹ John Douglas, Introduction to *Voyage*, vol. 1 of 4, lxx.

animation: transforming curious material into a mediated and controlled form of entertainment. While these tactics, to some degree, reassert the commercial text's apparently magical power to evoke and channel predictable affective responses from the crowd, they also spark fears that such enchantments might threaten the reason and subjectivity of individual readers and viewers. This idea, latent in representations of the museum as a space which dazzles and potentially terrifies the observer, and more explicitly articulated in debates over the morality of legitimate and illegitimate theatre, also found expression in the 1790s and 1800s in narrative tropes of curiosity and haunting.

Gothic tropes place the myth of Cook within the sphere of metropolitan spectacle, and offer an experience of sublime affect closely tied to the "melancholy pleasure" of being enchanted, baffled or grief-struck by the relics of Cook's voyages exhibited in the commercial museum.² Chapter 7 argues that, while maintaining their status as empirical and scientific text, accounts by King and Samwell can be seen as adopting narrative and aesthetic techniques from mass culture; particularly in its emphasis on Hawaiian mystery, the obfuscation of Cook's death, and its shocking revelation through the spectacle of the corpse. As outlined in Chapter 8, the popular theatre of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, at times responding directly to King's text, develops these techniques further in presenting the scene as the object of metropolitan spectacle. Finally, Helen Maria Williams' anti-elegy, *The Morai*, returns to the tropes of one of the first texts in this thesis, Anna Seward's *Elegy*, in order to explore Cook's metropolitan celebrity in a more self-reflexive way. *The Morai*, I will suggest, interrogates the celebration of Cook's heroism led by Seward,

² *A Companion to the Museum, (Late Sir Ashton Lever's) Removed to Albion Street, the Surry End of Black Friars Bridge* (London: n.p., 1790), footnote to p. 7.

as less a transparent process of establishing permanent fame, than of conjuring enjoyably convincing but deceptive phantoms. First, though, it is necessary to establish the context of these texts by tracing some of the links between Pacific ethnography and British antiquarianism, as twin means of articulating distance and difference, always closely entangled with techniques of mass commercial showmanship.

We need not here observe, that the *manners, monuments, customs, practices, and opinions* of the present inhabitants of the Pacific Ocean, or of the West side of North America, form the *strongest contrast* with those of our own time in enlightened Europe; and that *a feeling imagination* will probably be more struck with the narration of the ceremonies of a Natche at Tongataboo, than of a Gothic tournament at London; with the contemplation of the colossuses of Easter Island, than of the mysterious remains of Stonehenge.

Quoting extensively (in italics) from Warton's 1774 *History of English Poetry* in his introduction to *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, Cook's editor John Douglas frames Cook's collection of information and artefacts in the Pacific in terms of a literary-antiquarian project to define national identity by tracing its cultural genealogy. There is an equivalence, he claims, between "the *novelties* of the Society or Sandwich islands" and "the *antiquities*, which exhibit proofs of Roman magnificence."³ Both

³ Douglas in *Voyage*, vol. 1, lxxiv, lxxv-lxx. Original italics. See Thomas Warton, Preface to *The History of English Poetry* (London: J. Dodsley, 1774), vol. 1 of 4, i-viii.

offer an image of Britain's origins, as well as an image of what Britain is not. Yet the point of ethnographic/ antiquarian projects is not, for either Douglas or Warton, simply the scholarly establishment of truth. Rather, if antiquarian or ethnographic research is to have a meaningful national purpose, it must be made to engage a wider national public. Thus the importance of Cook's ethnographic collection is, at least in part, its potential to draw the attention of the "feeling imagination." In the wake of Warton's *History* and Kames' argument that poetic settings require the novelty of being "distant in time, or at least in place,"⁴ Douglas characterises responses to the products of Pacific voyaging – "the curiosities of Sir Ashton's Sandwich-room" – in terms of "rapture," "amusement," and "curiosity" as well as "reflection," and concludes that the value of these curiosities is a question less of scientific expertise than of "taste to admire, or [...] eyes to behold."⁵

Bernard Smith, discussing this passage in *European Vision and the South Pacific*, notes that Douglas attributes the appeal of Pacific ethnographic collections to "the imagination rather than the intellect" and thus suggests a structuring of the metropolitan Pacific within a "romantic taste" for the "hard primitivism" of Ossianic ballads or Viking epic.⁶ The "enchantment" found in romances of "imaginary beings" was better able to engage "the generality of readers," noted Anna Letitia Barbauld in 1773, compared to abstract theories which required high levels of

⁴ Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism* (Edinburgh, A. Millar, 1762), vol. 3 of 3, p. 235.

⁵ Douglas in *Voyage*, vol. 1, lxix. See Nicholas Thomas, "Licensed Curiosity: Cook's Pacific Voyages" in *The Cultures of Collecting*, edited by John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (London: Reaktion, 1994), 116-136; Thomas, *In Oceania: Visions, Artifacts, Histories* (Durham: Duke U.P., 1997), 71-132; Guest (2007), 49-67; Arthur MacGregor, *Curiosity and Enlightenment: Collectors and Collections from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 2007).

⁶ Bernard Smith (1960), pp. 130-131, 150.

education, intelligence and attention.⁷ In 1791, discussing Jean-Jacques Barthélemy's presentation of antiquity through voyage fiction,⁸ Barbauld would wistfully imagine,

the effect which it would have if in the Museum, instead of being shown separately the arms and dresses of different nations, you had figures dressed up and accoutred in them: the Otaheitan mourner walking to a *morai*; the warrior full armed in the attitude of attack; and the priest with all the various instrument of sacrifice before the altar.⁹

Specifically referring to the Tahitian chief mourners' costumes which were among the most emblematically alien of eighteenth-century exotic curiosities,¹⁰ Barbauld's image is at once an imagined urban spectacle (a scene in which museum exhibits become animated was familiar in engraved satires and stage pantomime¹¹), and a textual effect. Specifically, she describes the effect of Barthélemy's narrativisation, which transforms the dry evidence of archaeological relics and ancient manuscripts

⁷ Anna Laetitia Barbauld, "On Romances" (1773), in *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld*, edited by Lucy Aikin (London: Longman, 1825), vol. 2 of 2, 171-175.

⁸ Jean-Jacques Barthélemy, *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce, dans le milieu du quatrième siècle avant l'ère vulgaire* (Paris: De Bure, 1788), 4 vols. Translated by William Beaumont as *Travels of Anacharsis the Younger in Greece* (1790-1791). For the popularity of the book see Martyn Lyons, *Reading Culture and Writing Practices in Nineteenth-Century France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 20-26, 36.

⁹ Anna Laetitia Barbauld, letter to John Aikin (1791) in *The Story of the Life of Anna Laetitia Barbauld, with Many of her Letters*, edited by Grace A. Oliver (Boston: Cupples, 1886), pp. 199-200

¹⁰ See Paul Turnbull, "The Chief Mourner's Costume: Religion and Political Change in the Society Islands, 1768-73" in Hetherington and Morphy (2009), 41-57; Vanessa Smith (2010), 172-178.

¹¹ See for example *The Resurrection: or, an Internal View of the Museum in Windmill Street, on the Last Day*. Etching (London: H. Humphrey, 1782); and for pantomimes: James Messinck, *The Choice of Harlequin; or, the Indian Chief* (London: G. Riley, 1782), 20-21; William Bates, William Reeve and Cornelius Dixon, *Harlequin Mungo; or, A Peep into the Tower* (London: J. Skirven, 1788), 21-29.

into best-selling entertainment. Novelty, sentiment, romance and spectacle, the accounts of Barbauld and Douglas suggest, were seen as having an essential function within national projects which sought to bring the distant Other within the reach of the metropolis.

This would seem to indicate a shift in perceptions of the intellectual project of comparing, measuring and bridging temporal and spatial remoteness often associated with Cook's ethnographic collections. After all, the relationship between the Pacific collections of the Cook voyages and the metropolitan reconstruction of the past is most often described in terms of the production of grand, rational evolutionary narratives, debunking, rather than creating, pleasurable fantasies of the exotic.¹² As Wilson argues, Cook was regarded as the figurehead of a research project "widely heralded as providing the 'facts' about new nations and races of peoples," and thus the raw material for a "new history of humanity."¹³ In Cook eulogies by Enlightenment academicians, Bernard Smith notes, Cook's rational achievements were presented as having made it "possible to trace the ascent of man from the state of the lowest savages of Tierra del Fuego up to that of those Europeans who could give birth to a genius like Cook himself."¹⁴ Partly as a result of such rhetoric, and often in contrast to imperial activities in other regions, the eighteenth-century European exploration of the Pacific is sometimes seen as a bastion of Banksian Enlightenment antithetical to both romance and Romanticism. Leask, for example, specifically distinguishes the "historical nostalgia" and romantic curiosity

¹² See Bernard Smith (1960), 1-132; John Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment: Useful Knowledge and Polite Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1994), 160-175; Joan-Pau Rubiés, "Travel Writing and Ethnography" in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, edited by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2002), 242-260.

¹³ Wilson (2003), pp. 9-10.

¹⁴ Bernard Smith (1992), p. 230. Smith here paraphrases Pierre-Louis Paris's 1790 eulogy to Cook.

characteristic of European representations of Egypt, India and Mexico from what he calls “the enlightenment discourse of the Pacific,” within which Pacific islands are interpreted as largely homogeneous and stable: “proto-historical, Arcadian sites” – the kind of imagined landscape which Dufour’s wallpaper claims to present.¹⁵ Rather than the piecemeal, picturesque representations Europeans produced elsewhere, exploration in the Pacific is supposed to have resulted in a notional accuracy and completeness which would come to predominate in nineteenth-century imperialist discourses.¹⁶

Central to this was the temporalisation of global space as universal human history described by Johannes Fabian.¹⁷ J.G.A. Pocock argues that, while seeing Pacific societies largely as either ahistorical or prehistorical, European theorists in the late eighteenth century were forced by the narratives and information of Pacific voyage literature to reshape their concepts both of history and identity.¹⁸ The philosopher

¹⁵ Leask (2004), pp. 48-49.

¹⁶ See P.J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind: Perceptions of New World in the Age of Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard U.P., 1982); Brian W. Richardson, *Longitude and Empire: How Captain Cook’s Voyages Changed the World* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005); D. Graham Burnett, “Hydrographic Discipline among the Navigators: Charting an ‘Empire of Commerce and Science’ in the Nineteenth-Century Pacific” in *The Imperial Map: Cartography and the Mastery of Empire*, edited by James R. Akerman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 185-260; Quilley (2011), 52-78.

¹⁷ Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1983). See also Nicholas Thomas, *Out of Time: History and Evolution in Anthropological Discourse* (1989). Second edition (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Matthew H. Edney, “Reconsidering Enlightenment Geography and Map Making: Reconnaissance, Mapping, Archive” in *Geography and Enlightenment*, edited by David N. Livingstone and Charles W.J. Withers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 165-198; Keya Ganguly, “Temporality and Postcolonial Critique” in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, edited by Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2004), 162-182.

¹⁸ J.G.A. Pocock, “Nature and History, Self and Other: European Perceptions of World History in the Age of Encounter” in Calder, Lamb and Orr (1999), 25-44.

sought in travel writing and artefacts, according to Adam Ferguson, “as in a mirror, the features of [their] own progenitors,” information which could not, “in any other way, be recalled.”¹⁹ Ferguson’s aim is to integrate these specifics within a single universal narrative, and to delineate standardised points in time with the same precision as Cook was believed to map geographical space. This project aimed at something similar to Edmund Burke’s famous “Great Map of Mankind,” which was “unrolled at once” through European exploration and made visible “at the same instant” every possible variation of human difference.²⁰

The role of Cook’s voyages in testing an effective marine chronometer is a reminder that projects of travelling in real or imagined time and space were intimately and practically connected. The accurate measurement of global space through latitude and longitude depended on the accurate measurement of time, theoretically locating any given point in terms of its temporal and spatial distance from the metropolis.²¹ For this reason, calculation of hours, minutes and seconds was a vital part of middle-class education, for aspiring navigators, but also for anyone who wished to understand the news of global wars, exploration and trade. Children learning mathematics and “*Sacred, Profane, or Natural History, Chronology, Geography, or Commerce*” with the help of a textbook by William Butler, for example, were offered the following lesson:

¹⁹ Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (Edinburgh: A. Millar, 1767) p. 122.

²⁰ Edmund Burke to William Robertson (9 June 1777), in *Selected Letters of Edmund Burke*, edited by Harvey C. Mansfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 101-103, p. 102. Qtd. Quilley (2011), p. 54.

²¹ See Richardson (2005), 20-45; Dava Sobel, *Longitude* (1995). New edition (London: Fourth Estate, 2005), 138-157.

That accomplished seaman and great practical philosopher, Captain Cooke, who had thrice circumnavigated the globe, who had explored the utmost navigable limits of the ocean, whose frame had endured the tropical heat and the polar cold, fell a sacrifice at last to the momentary fury of a nameless savage. This direful event happened on the 14th of February 1779, at Owhyhee, one of the Sandwich Islands. How many minutes are contained between that day and the 14th Feb. 1789? *Ans.* 5,259,600.²²

While calculating “how many minutes are contained” between Cook’s death and the estimated moment of reading, students imagine and absorb the story of Cook and the geographical and social distance between their English classroom and Hawaii, one of “the utmost navigable limits of the ocean.” Butler’s question can be seen as a first step in a late eighteenth-century child’s training in what Fabian calls “the idea of a knowledge of Time which is a superior knowledge,” because it presents itself as objective, distanced and totalizing, and thus underpins a Eurocentric understanding of the world.²³ The modernity of the here and now could be defined in terms of its potential to map and measure such distances: the exact number of minutes between two points in time, or the latitude and longitude of Hawaii compared to Greenwich, the degrees between “tropical heat and polar cold” and the moderate climate of southern England, or the stages of development between a “nameless savage” and the English schoolboy listening to an arithmetic lesson.

²² William Butler, *Arithmetical Questions, Having for the Most Part, A Reference either to Sacred, Profane, or Natural History, Chronology, Geography, or Commerce* (London: Couchman and Fry, 1788), p. 54.

²³ Fabian, p. 10.

A narrower nationalist purpose, moreover, can be identified in the proto-ethnographic project in the Pacific, partly because it was dominated by British-funded and led voyages, and partly because Pacific island societies were regarded as particularly analogous to the stages of British history and thus could be presented as offering an vivid insight into the ‘customs and manners’ of British ancestors, considered as a single indigenous Celtic people.²⁴ Antiquarian investigations into pre-Roman Britain gained prestige as the idea of British resistance to foreign invaders became politically urgent in the 1790s, as external threats seemed to multiply. Like the Tahitians, Maori, or Hawaiians, primitive Britons were frequently contrasted with the degenerate and thus vulnerable modern metropolis in their characteristic “love of liberty” and “bravery.”²⁵ Writings on Pacific islands by Cook, King and Forster were cited for their “striking evidence” of, for example, the capacity of pre-metal societies to build complex wooden structures, travel long distances by sea, or intuit the existence of a god, and thus to aggrandise British ancestors, especially against Roman allegations of barbarism.²⁶

Yet the parallels made between the multiple Pacific societies encountered by Cook and ancient Britons were often scattered and perfunctory. The more ‘facts’ and artefacts were gathered by travellers, the more difficult it proved to fit them into any singular narrative of human progress or decline. The often crowded and confusing

²⁴ See Wilson (2003), 54-91; Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Continuum, 2004), 119-153. For the eighteenth-century “highly condensed account” of Celtic origins see Sam Smiles, *The Image of Antiquity: Ancient Britain and the Romantic Imagination* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1994), 3-4.

²⁵ John Smith, *Galic Antiquities* (London: Cadell, 1780), p. 2. See Smiles, 129-164.

²⁶ See for example Charles Cordiner, *Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland, in a Series of Letters, to Thomas Pennant, Esq.* (London: n.p., 1780), p. 107; James Tytler, *A Dissertation on the Origin and Antiquity of the Scottish Nation* (London: n.p., 1795), p. 16.

arrangement of objects on the walls, floors, and in the cases of museums came to be echoed in written historical and ethnographic texts packed with digressions, notes, appendices, quotations and contradictions. Tahitian, Maori, Hawaiian, Marquesan and Tongan societies, among others, were clearly linked by language, religion and culture, but could hardly be ranked in terms of development towards European modernity without obvious distortions and anomalies. A single early visit to Tahiti saw local people equated with “the ancient Britons [...] before their civilization,” local priests with medieval Catholic monks, and island rulers with both “ancient Patriarch[s]” and feudal kings and barons.²⁷ A single artefact or observation could present striking parallels with multiple moments in European history, and interpretations varied wildly. Hawkesworth’s attempt to universalise tattooing as equivalent to Celtic body decoration, for example, is undermined not only by his own examples of “savages” who do not tattoo, but also by the confusing variety of Pacific tattoos, which could be simultaneously compared to archaic chain mail armour, “the foliages of old Chasing upon gold or silver,” and the cosmetic patches of fashionable metropolitan ladies.²⁸

Indeed, for many historians the epistemological basis for such a project was flawed, replacing as it did reliance upon classical written sources with speculation based on sailors’ reports and assortments of curiosities. David Hume, for example, opens his

²⁷ Sydney Parkinson, *A Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas* (1773) (London: Caliban, 1984), p. 23; Joseph Banks, *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks*, edited by J.C. Beaglehole (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1962), vol. 1 of 2, p. 381; John Hawkesworth, *An Account of the Voyages Undertaken by the Order of his Present Majesty for Making Discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere* (London: Strahan and Cadell, 1773), vol. 3 of 3, p. 117; Banks, vol. 1, p. 384.

²⁸ Hawkesworth, vol. 2, p. 687; Cook, manuscript fragment qtd. in Bronwen Douglas, “‘Cureous Figures’: European Voyagers and Tatua/ Tattoo in Polynesia, 1595-1800” in *Tattoo: Bodies, Art, and Exchange in the Pacific and the West*, edited by Nicholas Thomas, Anna Cole and Bronwen Douglas (Durham: Duke U.P., 2005), 33-52, p. 47; Banks, vol. 2, p. 14, vol. 1, p. 337.

1778 *History of England* by acknowledging that an interest in the “remote origin” of their own forebears is a form of “curiosity, entertained by all civilized nations” – but goes on to insist that attempting to “indulge this curiosity” is *not* the project of a historian. Instead, it is for the (merely) curious hobbyist to “consider the language, manners, and customs of their ancestors, and to compare them with those of the neighbouring nations”; that is, to combine antiquarian study of excavated buildings, artefacts and etymology with the kind of proto-anthropology carried out on the Cook voyages. Hume seems, in fact, dubious that tracing “the adventures of barbarous nations” is worth doing at all, since he believes that such study cannot produce authentic History but only incoherent images of barbarity and “uniformity.”²⁹

Moreover, as Jonathan Lamb shows, a travel account’s assertion of authority was by no means automatically accepted by all or even most of its readers, who in any case did not always share the ideal of empirical accuracy in the first place.³⁰ Horace Walpole’s response to *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, as we will see, was one example of the prioritisation of novelty and the “feeling imagination.” Kelly Eileen Battles’ account of the popularisation of antiquarianism focuses on literary form, arguing that the gothic novel is a “symbiotic” discourse which “mobilizes the antiquarian impulse by locating historical authenticity within the sensations of the body, in direct contrast to the distanced, analytical apprehensions of the Enlightenment philosopher.”³¹ Gothic and medievalist fiction offered a sensual, emotive experience of the past not as a rational series of events but as a series of

²⁹ David Hume, *The History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688* (London: T. Cadell, 1778), pp. 1-2. See Smiles, 8-25.

³⁰ Lamb, (2001), 49-75.

³¹ Kelly Eileen Battles, “The Antiquarian Impulse: History, Affect, and Material Culture in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century British Literature” (unpublished PhD dissertation, Michigan State University, 2008), pp. 2, 58.

prompts to affect or curiosity, a “general sense of past-ness,” in David Punter’s term. Richard Albright points out that in gothic novels (as in gothic plays), “[t]he past must be reanimated again in the present,” through romance narratives which feature the revelation of material relics, such as costumes, weapons and bodies.³² I want to suggest, though, that a yet more direct sensory animation of the remote could be found in the museum exhibitions cited by Barbauld, in which the antique past and the distant present were encountered together through material objects.

The Leverian Museum, for example, (discussed in Chapter 6), was founded upon Sir Ashton Lever’s famously unsystematic and romantic interest in British antiquity. Even before it was moved to London, his collection had included, according to a poetic visitor, “*Helmets* by Warriors worn in Days of old, | And *Mail* of proof which arm’d the *Baron* bold.”³³ The Toxophilite Society, an archery club which claimed descent from sixteenth-century shooting companies, was established by Lever in 1781. It was credited with a revival in fashionable interest in archery in the 1780s and 1790s, but also provided an excuse for pseudo-medieval, Robin Hood-inspired pageantry, feasting, and elaborate costumes. When Frances Burney met Lever at his museum he was “accoutered as a forester,” and the society’s rules insisted that archers wear feathers in their hats.³⁴

³² David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* (London: Longman, 2000), vol. 1 (*The Gothic Tradition*) of 2, p. 46; Richard S. Albright, “No Time Like the Present: The Mysteries of Udolpho” in *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 5, no. 1 (2005): 49-75, p. 56.

³³ James Ogden, *Poem, on the Museum at Alkington, belonging to Ashton Lever, Esq.* (London: n.p., [1774]), p. 3.

³⁴ See Martin Johnes, “Archery, Romance and Elite Culture in England and Wales, c. 1780-1840” in *History* 89, no. 294 (2004): 193-208.

The jumble of antiquities Lever gradually acquired was presented as more authentic than older collections which displayed items such as “Queen Elizabeth’s chambermaid’s hat” and the “flaming sword of William the Conqueror.”³⁵ Nevertheless, they tended to reflect the same mythologised English history, with its emblematic characters and scenes, and focus on monarchy, odd customs, and military violence. As well as “Pieces of ancient Armour,” an “Iron Arrow” dug up at Harwood Castle, and a “Two-handed Sword, which belonged to an antient corporation, the Leverian Museum displayed more idiosyncratic gothic curiosities such as “a man’s hand enclosing the handle of a brass sword, found in Chatham churchyard,” a horseshoe “taken from the old castle of Oakingham, Berks, where it is the custom for every nobleman who passes that way the first time after succeeding to his title to present one to the lord of the manor,” and a “Stake, which was driven down in the Thames fifty-five years before Christ, by the Britons, to obstruct the progress of Julius Caesar upon his invasion of Britain.”³⁶ The image of the distant English past created by the museum, then, promoted sensational and emotional engagement over causal or chronological history. How these modes of presentation and perception were transposed in the museum onto the exhibition of the Pacific, Hawaii and Cook’s death is the subject of the next chapter.

³⁵ *A Catalogue of the Rarities to be seen at Don Saltero’s Coffee-House in Chelsea*. 34th edition (London: n.p., c. 1780), pp. 12-13.

³⁶ “An Act for enabling Sir Ashton Lever to dispose of his Museum, as now exhibited at *Leicester-House*, by way of Chance” in *Anno Regni Georgii III. Regis Magnae Britanniae, Franciae, & Hiberniae, Vicesimo Quarto* (London: Eyre and Strahan, 1784), 309-326, p. 316; *Companion to the Museum*, pp. 4-5; *Gentleman’s Magazine and Historical Chronicle* (July 1789), p. 606.

Chapter 6. “Melancholy pleasure”: The museum experience of Hawaii

As ships arrived in London from the Pacific in the 1770s and 1780s, they brought with them cargoes which expressed the novelty of the places they had been: plants and animals, shells and rock samples. To the disappointment of some collectors, though, the objects imported by the *Resolution* and *Discovery* in 1780 were mostly “artificial curiosities”: ranging from fabric samples, beads and fish hooks to spectacular canoes, sledges, cloaks and costumes.¹ The acquisition, exhibition, interpretation and ownership of these artefacts remain controversial today.²

Their public display in the metropolis, as tangible spoils of voyages to places “never before discovered,”³ continued a process which neither started with Cook’s first voyage nor ended with his death, but encompasses the exhibition of exotic plunder and trade goods from America, India, Barbary, China and the Middle East in earlier decades, and of “idols” and “ethnographia” by later missionaries and explorers.⁴

While these often had overt ideological or economic aims – representing patriotic

¹ See letters from John White to Anna Blackburne (18 October 1780), David Samwell to Matthew Gregson (23 October 1780) in David Samwell, *The Death of Captain Cook and Other Writings*, edited by Martin Fitzpatrick, Nicholas Thomas and Jennifer Newell (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), 103-105.

² See the articles in “Pacific Ethnography, Politics and Museums” edited by Anita Herle, special issue of *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 17 (2007); Paul Tapsell, “‘Aroha Mai: Whose Museum?’: The Rise of Indigenous Ethics within Museum Contexts: A Maori-Tribal Perspective” in *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First-Century Museum*, edited by Janet Marstine (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 85-111.

³ *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* (31 January 1781).

⁴ See Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn (eds), *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture, and the Museum* (London: Routledge, 1998); Troy Bickham, *Savages within the Empire: Representations of American Indians in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2005), 21-64.

conquests, Christian conversions, or European technological superiority – the display of Pacific artefacts in Britain between the late 1770s and the beginning of the nineteenth century was largely a commercial enterprise which offered the pleasures and horrors of the exotic to curious customers for their own sake. The “matchless collection made by the late unfortunate Capt Cooke” created, wrote the traveller Sylas Neville in 1782, created “a *striking picture* of the manners & customs of many of the barbarous nations in the Southern hemisphere.”⁵ Paying visitors could experience a virtual version of Cook’s travels by viewing and handling the material relics of his life and death.

Some attempts were made to display Pacific artefacts in the context of public education. Presented with Sir Joseph Banks’ vast collection, the British Museum somewhat reluctantly established a “South Seas Room” on the upper floor of Montagu House in 1775, which like the rest of the museum was free to enter.⁶ However, this was chronically undercatalogued, unlabelled, and occasionally reduced by the curators’ tendency to sell or give away the artefacts, and few casual visitors and tourists seem to have made a point of visiting.⁷ A French tourist, Louis Simond, noted that the British Museum had a “rich collection of curiosities from the South Pacific Ocean,” but saw it only briefly as “a glimpse of arms, dresses, and ornaments of savages,” barely distinguishable from the crystals and mummies

⁵ Sylas Neville (1782), *Diary 1767-1788*, edited by Basil Cozens-Hardy (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1950), p. 295. Original italics.

⁶ See Neil Chambers, “Joseph Banks, the British Museum and Collections in the Age of Empire” in *Enlightening the British: Knowledge, Discovery and the Museum in the Eighteenth Century* edited by Robert Anderson et al (London: British Museum Press, 2003), 99-113.

⁷ Stephen Hooper, *Pacific Encounters: Art and Divinity in Polynesia 1760-1860* (London: British Museum Press, 2006), p. 69. See also Kaepler (1978), 37-48.

displayed nearby.⁸ There were a few enthusiastic exceptions: Sophie von la Roche in 1786 and Benjamin Silliman in 1805, both of whom had introductory letters which gained them privileged access to the museum, recorded an interest in “the curiosities collected by Captain Cook in his voyages.”⁹ Silliman, however, only viewed this room on his second visit to the British Museum, and records its contents in much less detail than he gives to classical antiquities or scientific specimens. Roche, who was sentimentally attached to the story of Cook and the idea of the Pacific, spent several hours in the South Seas Room, and notes in her letters not only her responses to individual objects, but also that she was moved to remember and mourn Cook, “that luckless, excellent man.” Elsewhere, though, Roche unfavourably compares the British Museum’s South Sea Room to the “complete collection of South Sea curiosities” she found in the Leverian Museum, which she believed to be “much vaster.”¹⁰

Though this is unlikely to be true in terms of the quantity of material owned by the two institutions, Roche’s assessment probably accurately reflects the number of items kept on display and thus the higher value Lever placed on Pacific curiosities. Moreover, the Leverian Museum was open to a far greater number and range of potential viewers, participating in a broad culture of showmanship and publicity. While the British Museum had been deliberately housed on a site on the outskirts of London; Lever’s collection, equally deliberately, was in the centre of the metropolitan entertainment district, close to Covent Garden, the Drury Lane and

⁸ [Louis Simond], *Journal of a Tour and Residence in Great Britain during the Years 1810 and 1811* (New York, T&W Mercein, 1815), vol. 1 of 2, pp. 81-83.

⁹ Benjamin Silliman, *A Journal of Travels in England, Holland and Scotland, and of Two Passages Over the Atlantic in the Years 1805 and 1806* (New York: D. and G. Bruce, 1810), vol. 1 of 2, p. 299.

¹⁰ Sophie von la Roche, *Sophie in London, 1786: Being the Diary of Sophie v. la Roche*, edited and translated by Clare Williams (London: Jonathan Cape, 1933), pp. 109, 114.

Haymarket theatres, and shows such as the Eidophusikon or Rackstrow's waxworks. Like these, the Leverian was open to anyone moderately well-dressed who could afford the entrance ticket, at a time when the British Museum deliberately restricted access to elite men and women of leisure, and recognised scholars.¹¹ The Leverian, a puff in the *Morning Herald* claimed, was a place "where *private* persons of wealth, character and understanding come" and were not regarded as "low." It was not, then, an experience restricted to "the Learned, Curious, and Foreigners" or to "Lords, Ladies, Philosophers", but open to "the rest of the world"; a site where the "learned, and the unlearned, must concur" in visual pleasure, according to a guidebook in 1786.¹²

This was not the only place which offered Pacific curiosities to the metropolitan masses in the late eighteenth century: "Jackson's Museum of Curiosities, Lately arrived with Omai from Otaheite, New-Zealand, and the Rest of the new discovered Islands in the South Seas" were displayed with Mr Pinchbeck's mechanical toys in Cockspur Street in early 1775, for example, while a garden next to the Peerless Pool, an outdoor swimming bath on Old Street, briefly advertised "a great collection of natural and artificial curiosities" from the Pacific, which, with waterworks, could be

¹¹ The museum was known in its London lifetime first as the Holophusikon or Oluphusium, and then variously as Lever's Museum, the Leverian Museum, or the Museum (Late Sir Ashton Lever's). To avoid confusion I have referred to it throughout as the Leverian Museum, even when this may be strictly anachronistic. Detailed accounts are given in J.C.H. King, "New Evidence for the Contents of the Leverian Museum", in *Journal of the History of Collections* 8, no. 2 (1996): 167-186; Clare Haynes, "A 'Natural' Exhibitioner: Sir Ashton Lever and his *Holophusikon*" in *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 24, no. 1 (2001): 1-14; Marjorie L. Caygill, "From Private Collection to Public Museum: The Sloane Collection at Chelsea and the British Museum at Montagu House" in Anderson et al (2003), 18-28; Hermione Waterfield and J.C.H. King, *Provenance: Twelve Collectors of Ethnographic Art in England 1760-1990* (Paris: Somogy, 2006), 27-35.

¹² *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* (12 February 1782); *The Stranger's Guide through London and Westminster* (London: J. Wallis, 1786), p. 196. Original italics.

viewed for sixpence.¹³ Despite being more expensive than these attractions, Lever's exhibition was the largest and longest running, and by a considerable margin the best-documented.

Museums of this kind were, Richard Altick writes, both "an alternative medium to print" and a "supplement" to the printed pages of metropolitan culture. They "illustrated in tangible form" popular texts; enhancing and reshaping the books read alongside them, and providing a substitute means of transferring information to the less literate (often including middle-class women and children as well as sometimes the labouring classes).¹⁴ While scholarship on Romanticism has located notions of the relic within the British Museum and elite print culture in this period, I want to suggest that a comparable elegiac experience, based on the image of Cook, is produced in the commercial museum.¹⁵ This chapter, then, traces the material presentation of Cook as a dead hero through the display of his "artificial curiosities" in the Leverian Museum. It considers how the experience of visitors to the

¹³ *Daily Advertiser* (12 January- 21 March 1775); *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (13 June 1777)

¹⁴ Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1978), p. 1. See also Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995); Dorinda Outram, "New Spaces in Natural History" in *Cultures of Natural History*, edited by Nicholas Jardine, James A. Secord and Emma C. Spary (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1996), 249-265; Anne Goldgar, "The British Museum and the Virtual Representation of Culture in the Eighteenth Century" in *Albion* 32, no. 2 (2000): 195-231; Marjorie L. Caygill, *The Story of the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 2002); Anderson et al (2003); Christine Cheater, "Collectors of Nature's Curiosities: Science, Popular Culture and the Rise of Natural History Museums" in *Frankenstein's Science: Experimentation and Discovery in Romantic Culture, 1780-1830*, edited by Christa Knellwolf and Jane Goodall (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 167-182.

¹⁵ See John Whale, "Sacred Objects and the Sublime Ruins of Art" in *Beyond Romanticism: New Approaches to Texts and Contexts, 1780-1832*, edited by John Whale and Stephen Copley (London: Routledge, 1992), 218-236; Gillen D'Arcy Wood, *The Shock of the Real: Romanticism and Visual Culture, 1760-1860* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 121-170; Christopher Rovee, "Trashing Keats" in *ELH* 75, no. 4 (2008): 993-1022; Eric Gidal, "Museum Elegies" in Weisman (2010), 620-636.

memorialising Sandwich Islands Room was shaped both by the materials displayed, and by the museum's place within competing forms of entertainment and spectacle.

The Leverian Museum.

Sir Ashton Lever, a Manchester landowner, began his museum as a collection of antiquities and natural specimens, which could be visited for free at his home. In 1775, however, he leased a building in Leicester Fields in London, and began to advertise his Holophusicon or Oluphusium. These were "sounding names" one guidebook noted, which suggested the influence of "quackery," and caused "pain to the man of delicacy," but appealed to "the gaping holiday vulgar."¹⁶ During the 1770s and 1780s Lever acquired large collections of Pacific voyage artefacts, including, in 1781, around a thousand manmade curiosities from Hawaii, from the *Resolution* and *Discovery*'s surviving officers and sailors, and Elizabeth Cook.¹⁷ The exhibition of these artefacts was rewarded with an explosion of fashionable interest culminating in royal patronage, a knighthood, and the museum's appearance as a scene in a Covent Garden pantomime. In 1786, ownership of the collection was transferred in a lottery from Lever to James Parkinson, a proprietor of Ranelagh Gardens, who moved the collection to a purpose-built Rotunda on the south side of Blackfriars Bridge. This was a less central address, perhaps indicating Parkinson's confidence that the famous collection and its impressive new home would be enough of an attraction to draw visitors.

¹⁶ James Ralph, *A Critical Review of the Public Buildings, Statues and Ornaments in and about London and Westminster* (London: John Wallis, 1783), pp. 195-196.

¹⁷ After her visit, Roche noted that Lever had told her that "Captain Cook so much admired this good Ashton's intellect, that he gave him a complete collection of South Sea curiosities" (Roche, p. 109).

Advertisements for the museum promised comfortable, well-lit, and elegant accommodation, where by 1800 visitors could rest on sofas, browse a library of newspapers and natural history books, and drink chocolate.¹⁸ An “annual Visit to the Thing with the hard Name in Leicester-square” was seen as particularly appropriate for young women and children, who could bring along their tutors and governesses at no extra cost.¹⁹ Although its popularity seems to have declined a little in the 1790s, it was still enough of a household name at the turn of the century for Charles Willson Peale to extol the museum to an American audience as “a fashionable lounge for the citizens of London,” and for Maria Edgeworth and John O’Keeffe to refer to Lever’s “catalogue of curiosities” as a familiar landmark in their literary fictions.²⁰ As Clare Haynes’ study of its early incarnations has shown, Lever’s museum incorporated both an aesthetic of theatrical “diversity and profusion, on the model of a cabinet of curiosity,” and newer scientific taxonomies.²¹ In 1784, the collection officially consisted of 26,662 separate exhibits, including natural history

¹⁸ *The School-Room Party, Out of School Hours: A little work, that will be for young ladies and gentlemen of every description, a most pleasing companion to the Leverian Museum* (London: T. Hurst, 1800), pp. 53-54.

¹⁹ *Public Advertiser* (5 January 1782). See eg. *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* (23 May 1781). Percival Stockdale in particular urged young women to spend their time in the Leverian museum (Stockdale, “A Poetical Epistle to Sir Ashton Lever,” in Stockdale (1784), 17-23, pp. 22-23). Another poem claimed to have been written to Lever “by a little Boy of ten Years old” (*Gentleman’s Magazine* 49 (1779)).

²⁰ Charles Willson Peale, *Discourse Introductory to a Course of Lectures on the Science of Nature* (Philadelphia: Zachariah Poulson, 1800), pp. 20-21; Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda* (1801), edited by Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1999), pp. 120-121; John O’Keeffe, *Lie of a Day: A Comedy* (London: A. Strahan, 1800), p. 4.

²¹ Haynes (2001), pp. 4-5.

specimens, antiquities, exotic artefacts and costumes, paintings, porcelain, and miscellaneous “oddities.”²²

The 1780s saw intense metropolitan interest in Pacific artefacts, many of which had been made familiar by their repeated description and illustration in voyage literature since the 1770s. Tattooing implements, nose flutes, a shell trumpet and a chief mourner’s costume from Tahiti, woven baskets from Tonga, cloaks and animal masks from Nootka Sound, and stone *heitiki* from New Zealand were all known, if not understood, by metropolitan readers. Hawaiian artefacts were, however, novelties. The year after Cook’s death, Lever embarked on a large-scale advertising campaign in at least three metropolitan newspapers to promote these new exhibits:

Sir ASHTON LEVER has the pleasure to inform the Public, [that] he is now in possession of the most capital part of the curiosities brought over by the Resolution and Discovery in the last voyage. These are now displayed for public inspection; one room, particularly, contains the magnificent dresses, helmets, ornaments, instruments, utensils, &c. &c. of those islands never before discovered, which proved so fatal to that able navigator, Captain Cook, whose loss can never be too much regretted.²³

Displaying the artefacts from Hawaii in a dedicated room, rather than in a diverse *Wunderkammer*-style space, was a novel decision and indicates the perceived importance of these items.

²² “Act for enabling Sir Ashton Lever,” p. 326.

²³ *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* (31 January 1781). Reprinted at intervals in *London Courant* and *Public Advertiser* until mid-May 1781.

It has been suggested that much of the value which metropolitan collectors and viewers attribute to items collected on the Cook voyages is generated by their links, however tenuous, to Cook himself, and particularly to his death. “As Cook was lauded as a martyr and a saint,” Henare writes, “so the objects associated with him gained the status of sacred relics”: an effect also variously described as “a supernatural quality,” “the quality of holy relics” or a kind of “celebrity endorsement.”²⁴ Lever’s reference to the “loss” of Cook in the promotion of his new collections suggests that this effect was already significant in 1781, and that it shaped viewers’ experiences of the Hawaiian artefacts as a form of public memorial. For visitors entering the Hawaiian-themed room “the first thing that [met] the eye” was an “Inscription” reading “To The Immortal Memory of Captain Cook.”²⁵ There was also a black and white printed portrait of Cook, which, a guidebook noted, “so strikingly meets the eye on your looking up on entering it, as to compel you to give a sigh to the original.”²⁶ Silliman described the room as “devoted to the memory of Captain Cook, which is here effectually preserved by a collection of arms, dresses, utensils, idols, &c. which he made in his third and last voyage.” Pacific curiosities, he noted, “recall powerfully to one’s recollection, the memory of that meritorious but unfortunate man by whom they were collected.”²⁷ The powerful commemoration of Cook’s death was, then, a significant function – for visitors like Silliman, the most important function – of the Leverian’s Sandwich Islands curiosities. Individual

²⁴ Amiria Henare, *Museums, Anthropology and Imperial Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2005), 42-43; Kaeppler (1978), p. 38; Hooper (2003); Lissant Bolton, “Brushed with Fame: Museological Investments in the Cook Voyage Collections” in Hetherington and Morphy (2009), 78-91, p. 79.

²⁵ *Companion to the Museum*, p. 6.

²⁶ *School-Room Party*, p. 11.

²⁷ Silliman, vol. 1, pp. 208, 299.

exhibits and their inscribed labels or guidebook entries evoked specific episodes in Cook's life and death, such as a feather cloak and *mahiole* presented to him by Kalani'opu'u, advertised as "the identical articles which were once the property of the celebrated Captain *Cook*" – a property expected to prompt "a melancholy pleasure" in viewers.²⁸

The sensory experience of the room pleased and overwhelmed. Visitors walked through a narrow corridor hung with *kapa* cloth and weapons from Tahiti, New Zealand and other Pacific islands, symbolically reenacting Cook's voyages before reaching, as Cook had, the treasures of Hawaii, crowded into a small room. More than three hundred "Patterns of Painted Cloth, Bows, Arrows, Dresses, Idols, &c." were mounted on the wall or piled on the floor, in addition to 775 objects in "Glazed Mahogany Cases", including "Fishing Tackle, Clubs, Masks, Mats, Bracelets, Utensils, Feathered Cloaks, Helmets, Idols, Neck Ornaments, &c. &c."²⁹ Many of the objects were large and brightly coloured, especially *ki'i hulu manu* (large busts of gods) and *'ahu 'ula* (feather cloaks).³⁰ As the *European Magazine* noted in 1782, the "variety of the objects, and the beauty of the colours, give sensations of surprize and delight."³¹ For many visitors, the appeal of the Hawaiian collection lay in its potential to bring to life the stories, settings and characters they had read about in newspapers, periodicals, books and poems, bringing into intimate proximity "all the pots, weapons and clothes from the South Sea islands just recently discovered [...]"

²⁸ *Companion to the Museum*, footnote to p. 7.

²⁹ "Act for enabling Sir Ashton Lever," p. 325.

³⁰ See Kaepler (1978), 50-116; Roland W. Force and Maryanne Force, *Art and Artefacts of the Eighteenth Century: Objects in the Leverian Museum as Painted by Sarah Stone* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1968).

³¹ "An Account of Sir Ashton Lever's Holophusicon" in *European Magazine and London Review*, 1 (January 1782): 17-21, p. 21.

just as they are shown in the prints illustrating the description of his voyage”, as Roche marvelled in 1786.³² Silliman, Roche, John Evans and John Quincy Adams record that they were reminded by the Sandwich Isles Room of “the last voyage of the unfortunate Captain Cook,” interpolating brief, almost automatic obituaries into their travel journals and letters. “COOKE, that immortal navigator!” scribbled Evans.³³

The School-Room Party, an 1800 children’s guidebook to the museum, suggests that the room also functioned didactically. The character of a young visitor, Miss Thomson, relates her experiences in a series of dialogues with frequent digressions and interruptions. The book’s peculiar structure and description of affect, though artificial and idealised, make it an unusually rich source of information about the intended responses of museum-goers. Introducing the Pacific exhibits, Miss Thomson is asked by a younger girl, from the country, to explain “who this same Capt. Cook was.” In response, the museum, and its textual counterpart offer a summary of Cook’s achievements:

Capt. Cook, [...] was an English gentleman who so much delighted in going to sea, that having been to the East and West Indies, was ardently anxious to sail into what is called the South Seas, in order to discover certain islands, and the inhabitants believed to be situated therein, though at that time wholly unknown to Britain.

³² Roche, p. 109.

³³ John Quincy Adams, letter to Elizabeth Cranch (18 April 1784) in *Founding Families: Digital Editions of the Papers of the Winthrops and the Adamses*, edited by C. James Taylor (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2007) <<http://www.masshist.org/ff/>> ; John Evans, “A Visit to Sir Ashton Lever’s Museum, near Black Friars Bridge” in *Monthly Visitor and Pocket Companion* 5 (September 1798): 53-62, p. 53.

And to what purpose, said the busy Miss Evans, not mere curiosity I hope?

By no means, replied Miss Thomson, but for the benefit of trade, and, of course, the good of his native country. He accordingly visited the island of New Zealand, where the people eat one another.

Brief accounts of Cook's visits to New Zealand and Tahiti follow, before Miss Thomson concludes by explaining that, "on his return home, to his equal surprise and honour, he found out that fine country, called by him the Sandwich Islands, from whence so many rare and beautiful things have been brought to England," and that, tragically, "these very Islanders, who had adored him as a god, put him to death." The "savage," sometimes "beautiful" and sometimes "frightful" objects in the museum are, thus, prompts for both factual and sentimental education.³⁴

This education is, however, structured in terms of pleasure and curiosity rather than rigid discipline. Though the guide's progress from exhibit to exhibit is broadly structured by the layout of the museum and the improving instructions of 'Mamma,' it is dominated by the unsystematic wanderings of Miss Thomson, as she recalls the objects which have "caught and fixed [her] attention."³⁵ Indeed, one of the most common characteristic of accounts of the museum in general is a breathless, enthusiastic listing of sights with little space for explanation or reflection. Many visitors, like Susan Burney, seem to despair of communicating any "idea of [the] entertainment" since they could "scarce remember a dozen names of the thousand"

³⁴ *School-Room Party*, pp. 6-9; 12-13.

³⁵ *School-Room Party*, p. 68.

they had heard.³⁶ Visiting Europe as a teenager, Adams wrote multiple accounts of his impressions of the Hawaiian collection:

[Lever] has a Room full of curiosities all collected in the Countries which were discovered in the last Voyage of Captn. Cook. There are a Number of their Idols made of Wood: others of feathers of bird: and also a kind of Robe which their Chiefs put on upon certain occasions, made of birds feathers, their cloths and their war instruments, and their fishhooks with the ropes. All these things are very curious [...].³⁷

These accounts combine a concern with the materiality of Hawaiian artefacts – wood, stone, teeth, feathers – with a sense of their dazzling variety, their strange or “curious” qualities, and the aura conveyed by their links to Cook. “The copiousness and variety of materials, here collected, furnish an inexhaustible fund of entertainment to the inquisitive spectator,” recorded a German visitor.³⁸

Viewers moving around the room ‘saw’ images of the distant Pacific as though projected from the material artefacts on display, imagining “an idea of the manners of men in distant countries, by the forms of their habits.”³⁹ As he or she “proceeds,” declares the *European Magazine*, “the objects before him make his active fancy travel from pole to pole thro’ torrid and thro’ frigid zones [...]; he sees the Indian rejoiced at, and dancing to the monotonous sound of his tom, tom.” It was, the writer

³⁶ Susan Burney to Frances Burney (16 July 1778), in *The Collector’s Voice: Early Voices*, edited by Susan Pearce and Kenneth Arnold (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p. 281.

³⁷ John Quincy Adams, diary entry (4 November 1783), in Taylor; Adams (18 April 1784).

³⁸ Christian Augustus Gottlieb Goede, *A Foreigner’s Opinion of England*, translated by Thomas Horne (London: C. Taylor, 1821), vol. 3 of 3, pp. 372-373.

³⁹ *A Companion to all the Principal Places of Curiosity and Entertainment in and about London and Westminster*. Ninth ed. (London: J. Drew, 1800), p. 94.

continues, “an opportunity of surveying the works of nature, and contemplating the various beings that inhabit the earth,” but this contemplation could be overwhelming in its kaleidoscopic fragmentation, reducing the viewer to a “wandering eye” which “looks round with astonishment, and though almost willing to doubt, is obliged to believe.”

Like the Eidophusikon (a neighbour of the Leverian Museum in Leicester Fields in the early 1780s) a magic lantern, or a conjuring show, the room offered the viewer a virtual viewpoint from which they could ‘see’ things which were amazing because they were not real: wonders compared to “the enchanted palaces of the Genii, the Fairies, and the other fabulous beings of the eastern romance.”⁴⁰ As Percival Stockdale writes in “A Poetical Epistle to Sir Ashton Lever,” the visitor “view[s], disposed by thee, | Inhabitants of earth, and air, and sea; | The various wonders of our globe explore, | From Siam’s realm, to California’s shoar.”⁴¹ It is perhaps not surprising that in 1784 a magician’s trickbook was dedicated to Lever, as a man who “must be supposed to possess a regard for every thing that is curious and entertaining.”⁴²

Material exchanges in the Museum.

The encounter with Hawaiian artefacts in the museum was an intense sensory experience, mediated by the insistent materiality of objects which surrounded the

⁴⁰ “Account of Sir Ashton Lever’s Holophusikon”, p. 21.

⁴¹ Stockdale, 17-20.

⁴² *Breslaw’s Last Legacy, or, The Magical Companion: Containing All that is Curious, Pleasing, Entertaining and Comical* (London: T. Moore, 1784), v-vi.

viewer and could usually be handled as well as seen and smelled. Visitors expected to investigate texture by stroking items, measure weight by picking them up, examine details closely, or test claims of unusual properties.⁴³ The intimate physical experience of these materials, often loaded with discursive and affective meaning, could reshape the otherwise largely textual relationship between the metropolitan visitor and the mythology of Cook and Hawaii.

Faced in the Sandwich Islands Room, for example, with “False hair, worn about the neck by way of ornament” and a “Breast Gorget [...] which is hung about the neck by fine threads of twisted hair, sometimes doubled an hundred fold,”⁴⁴ a visitor might be struck by the uncanny combination of familiar material and unfamiliar form and meanings. Ornaments made from hair could be read as a measure of the primitive deprivation of a culture lacking silk thread or metal chains, but also as reminiscent of technically advanced consumer goods available in fashionable London shops, such as wigs and mourning jewellery. For readers of Cook’s voyage literature, the cutting of hair was associated with moments of violence such as human sacrifice and especially with the post-mortem division of Cook’s body, when his hair had been cut off and given away, as well as alluding to the “absent body” of the hair’s original owner.⁴⁵ Similarly, a *kahili* (ceremonial staff), labelled as a “beautiful Fly-flap,” was precious, according to a museum guide, not only because of its luxurious decorations of “tortoise-shell, ivory, &c.”, but because it was “made

⁴³ See Constance Classen, “The Sensory Life of the Early Museum” in *Journal of Social History* 40, no. 4 (2007): 895-914.

⁴⁴ *Companion to the Museum*, p. 16.

⁴⁵ *Voyage*, vol. 3, pp. 78-80; Christiane Holm, “Sentimental Cuts: Eighteenth-Century Mourning Jewellery with Hair”, 139-143, p. 141. This article appears in “Hair,” a special issue of *Eighteenth Century Studies* 38, no. 1 (2004), edited by Angela Rosenthal. See also Angela Rosenthal’s introduction to this issue, “Raising Hair”, pp. 1-16; Pointon (1999).

of the arm bone of an enemy slain in battle.”⁴⁶ While the term “fly-flap” mediates the interpretation of this object through Orientalist images of luxury and despotism,⁴⁷ its material also offered a uncanny sense of contact with a physical relic of the distant other, with the moment of violence by which the object had been created, and with the perceived barbarity of people who, like ancient Britons, were thought to “hold themselves entitled to do with the bodies of their conquered foes whatever they please.”⁴⁸

The materials which dominated the Sandwich Islands Room, however, were feathers. There were a large number of featherwork artefacts, including long and short cloaks, *mahiolo*, a famously mysterious “Model of a Temple,” large heads (*ki ‘i hulu manu*), *lei* (called necklaces or ruffs), patterned “aprons” or “stomachers,” “little bunches as prepared for use,” “tabooing wands” (*kahili*), fans, and gourd rattles.⁴⁹ Promoted together for their “same beautiful materials and curious manufacture,” many of these objects nevertheless appeared to contemporary Londoners to be “strangely distorted.” Some, especially *ki ‘i hulu manu*, were described as “frightful” and “mighty ugly-featured things.”⁵⁰ Yet though the original social and religious meanings of Hawaiian featherwork artefacts were undeniably misrepresented and

⁴⁶ *Companion to the Museum*, p. 20.

⁴⁷ See for example *A Complete History of the Arabs: from the Birth of Mohammed to the Reduction of Baghdad; with the Life of Mohammed* (London: T. Osbourne, 1761), vol. 2 of 3, p. 501; William Beckford, *Vathek* (1784-1823), as *Vathek with The Episodes of Vathek*, translated by Frank T. Marzials and Kenneth W. Graham, edited by Kenneth W. Graham (Ontario: Broadview, 2001), pp. 84, 86-87.

⁴⁸ *School-Room Party*, p. 13.

⁴⁹ *Voyage*, vol. 3, p. 17. Also *Companion to the Museum*, p. 20.

⁵⁰ *Companion to the Museum*, p. 19; *School-Room Party*, p. 13.

often denigrated,⁵¹ these objects were rarely, at least in surviving written sources, simply dismissed. Rather, the already overdetermined literary and cultural significance of their materials and provenance prompted their immediate absorption into a complex and sometimes contradictory network of metropolitan discourse within which they could be read as luxurious and fashionable commodities, symbols of state or religious power and pageantry, or markers of chivalry and barbarism.

Feathers could be already seen, of course, in displays of artefacts from Asia, the Middle East and Africa, as well as from elsewhere in the Pacific.⁵² Brightly coloured woven featherwork from South America had been displayed in sixteenth-century *Wunderkammer*.⁵³ Many of the Pacific artefacts in the Leverian Museum, on the hand, had been purchased using coloured feathers, “the most valuable article of commerce” in Tahiti. This commodification of feathers, and its tacit acceptance of local value judgements, troubled some on Cook’s ships, and the terms in which this unease is expressed are predictably revealing of the symbolic weight of feathers in metropolitan discourse. On the second voyage, for example, Johann Forster condemned the demand for red feathers as irrational and corrupting: the “rage after these trifling ornaments was so great,” he notes, echoing British moralists warning

⁵¹ See Nicholas Thomas, *Oceanic Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 151-164; Hooper (2006), 78-117; Kaepler (2008), 111-136. For more general discussion of the display of ‘ethnographia,’ mostly in later museums, see Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (eds.), *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); Barringer and Flynn (1998); Daniel J. Sherman (ed.), *Museums and Difference* (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 2008) .

⁵² Ken Arnold, *Cabinets for the Curious: Looking Back at Early English Museums* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 120-121.

⁵³ Daniela Bleichmar, “Seeing the World in a Room: Looking at Exotica in Early Modern Collections” in *Collecting Across Cultures: Material Exchanges in the Early Modern Atlantic World*, edited by Daniela Bleichmar and Peter C. Mancall (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 15-31.

against the fashionable dissipations of London, that it encouraged extravagance and prostitution.⁵⁴ A number of writers on eighteenth-century British culture, including Gillian Russell, Joseph Roach and Harriet Guest, have shown that, as well as functioning as generic “exotic tokens of otherness,” feathers acted as “signs of superfluity, signs of luxury,” loaded with moral, racial, and gender significance.⁵⁵ Ideas of the primitive exotic and of fashionable femininity were already discursively woven together in metropolitan images of feathers.

These associations, however unwelcome to those who wished to present Cook’s voyages in terms of economically disinterested Enlightenment, became within the metropolitan museum a significant element of the appeal of Hawaiian featherwork. *A Companion to the Museum*, for example, draws attention to the similarity between their intricate surfaces and expensive European textiles such as “the thickest and richest velvets, which they much resemble both as to their delicate softness and glossy appearance.” Replicating such “elegant and singularly beautiful” objects would, it claims in the language of an advertisement, “no doubt be found a work of considerable time and expence in the hands of the most ingenious European artist.”⁵⁶ Miss Thomson’s infallible mother, in *A School-Room Party*, argues that “every

⁵⁴ Johann Reinhold Forster, *Observations Made During a Voyage Round the World* (1778), edited by Nicholas Thomas, Harriet Guest and Michael Dettelbach (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1996), p. 232. See Nicholas Thomas’s introductory essay to this edition, “‘On the Varieties of the Human Species’: Forster’s Comparative Ethnology” in Forster (1996), xxiii-xl, xxxv-xxxvii; Vanessa Smith (2010), 80-82, 172-173.

⁵⁵ Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1996), 119-177, p. 125; Guest (2000), 205-219, p. 209; Gillian Russell, *Women, Sociability and Theatre in Georgian London* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2007), 178-225. See also Peter Mason, *Infelicities: Representations of the Exotic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1998), 16-25; Nussbaum (2003), 140-142.

⁵⁶ *Companion to the Museum*, p. 19.

article has meaning in the design, and merit in the execution – being all of them monuments of native ingenuity and indefatigable industry.”⁵⁷

Both real and fictional viewers seem to have viewed such objects as potential commodities: as early as 1775, the *London Magazine* claimed, metropolitan ladies, who were “eager to be anything but English,” had “adopted the fashions of Otaheite,” ordering coloured feathers and tooth-shaped ornaments.⁵⁸ It may only have been after Cook’s death, though, that such satirical predictions began to be realised. At Queen Charlotte’s birthday celebrations in January 1781, Hester Thrale modelled an “O’why’hee pattern Silk” she had commissioned from her own design based on “a Scrap of Cloth torn from the back of the Indian who killed Captⁿ Cook with His Club,” decorated with “Feather’d Ornaments to keep up the Taste of the Character.” The *Morning Herald* judged the costume “magnificent as well as singular.”⁵⁹ These fashions culminated in 1800 with the carnival dress of the queen of Prussia: “the costume of the Indians of Owyhee, with a cloak of feathers, studded with diamonds.”⁶⁰

The craze for Pacific commodities was not, though, limited to social elites. A provincial chambermaid in a 1796 novel describes a *mahiole* in the Leverian Museum as “a hat made out of painted feathers that she longed for.” The *mahiole* “turned up on one side” and decorated with other consumables such as “a coloured bow, and a *coqlicot* feather,” is a means, for this character, of imitating not just Hawaiians but also fashionable women. Although the novel’s intent is to link such

⁵⁷ *School-Room Party*, pp. 11-13.

⁵⁸ *London Magazine, or, Gentleman’s Monthly Intelligencer* (May 1775): 247-248.

⁵⁹ Thrale (1951), vol. 1, p. 481; *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* (19 January 1781).

⁶⁰ *Monthly Mirror* (March 1800).

aspirations to Forster's notion of the savage "rage after trifling ornaments,"⁶¹ the *mahiole*'s metropolitan consumer appeal was not simply a satirical invention. A Pall Mall hatmaker, for example, advertised in 1781 "new invented Feather Hats [...] manufactured after the manner of the feather dresses from the Sandwich Island, in the possession of Sir Ashton Lever."⁶² Shop-museums such as Daniel Boulter's in Yarmouth, sold Hawaiian curiosities, including a "Beautiful Feathered Cloak, worn by the Chiefs of Owhyhee" and a "Curious Helmet of Scarlet and Yellow Feathers," as luxurious toys alongside jewellery, books and perfume.⁶³ Viewing Pacific artefacts from the perspective of their potential owners constructed and reflected a sense of metropolitan superiority and potential power over their distant, exotic places of origin.

This was an enjoyable sensation, amplified by the promotion of royal or high-status origins of the objects. Children visiting the Lever Museum, for example, were told that these items "are worn by their Kings," and that they "may easily conceive the consequence the wearers derive from them: the same, no doubt [...] as our sovereign Princes from their Coronation Robes, and the gems that deck their Imperial Crowns."⁶⁴ That this royal insignia was made from feathers, though, insistently associated it with imagined barbaric rather than modern Hanoverian pageantry, since images of feathers pervaded stock depictions of medieval chivalry, such as Lever's "round hat with green feathers,"⁶⁵ and Oriental courts. Thus in Cook's personal

⁶¹ 'Matilda Fitzjohn', *Joan!!! A Novel* (London: Hookham and Carpenter, 1796), vol. 4 of 4, p. 264.

⁶² *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* (6 November 1781).

⁶³ Daniel Boulter, *Museum Boulterianum. A Catalogue of the Curious and Valuable Collection of Natural and Artificial Curiosities in the Extensive Museum of Daniel Boulter, Yarmouth* (Yarmouth: n.p., c. 1794), p. 77.

⁶⁴ *School-Room Party*, pp. 11-13.

⁶⁵ Frances Burney (1782), qtd. in Johnes, p. 196.

journal, a Tahitian chief dressed in a “quantity of red Feathers” evokes the figure of “some eastern Monarch adored by his Subjects.”⁶⁶

Finally, as we will see in more detail in Chapter 7, viewers associated the most spectacular Hawaiian feather artefacts with the violent confrontations narrated in the third volume of *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*. The feather cloaks, visitors were informed by their *Companion to the Museum*, were worn only by the Hawaiian warrior chiefs who had killed Cook. These figures had only ever been seen in the during the three dramatic scenes which make up King’s story of Cook’s death:

“namely, in the procession of the King of Owhyhee and his people to the ships on their first arrival; next in the tumult, when Captain Cook fell a victim to their mistaken resentment; and the third time, when two of the principal chiefs brought the unfortunate commander’s bones to Capt. Clark.”⁶⁷

The Leverian Museum, this chapter has suggested, was one of the key sites in which the sensory pleasures and fears of metropolitan consumer culture, clustering around material relics of distant worlds, were introduced as mediating principles for a mass interpretative experience of Hawaii, and of Cook. The next two chapters will focus on how these principles were transferred from the museum, coming to shape the representation of Cook’s death in two more sites: travel literature and the theatre. The museum’s techniques and tropes, used to evoke a sense of the British past, can be identified even in avowedly factual texts on the death of Cook, such as volume three of *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* in 1784 and Samwell’s *Narrative of the Death of Captain Cook* in 1786. This unconscious reshaping of the Hawaiian landscape in the image of commercial fiction is shaped, I want to suggest, by

⁶⁶ James Cook, in Beaglehole (1968), vol. 2, p. 1053.

⁶⁷ *Companion to the Museum*, pp. 11, 19; based on *Voyage*, vol. 3, p. 137.

officially and personally motivated attempts to capture the “feeling imagination” and sympathy of a mass national readership.

Chapter 7. Writing the “fatal island”: Hawaii in *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*

In the second night after Cook’s death a canoe secretly approached the *Resolution* as it lay off the beach in Kealakekua Bay. The men in the canoe were carrying a small bundle of, it emerged, “nine or ten pounds” of flesh cut from Cook’s corpse and wrapped in cloth. According to John Ledyard, an American marine who would later desert the British navy and publish his journal of the voyage, the British were “extremely affected and disgusted” when the bundle was unwrapped. Ledyard reports that there were three Hawaiian men in the canoe, one of whom was shot through the leg by the sentry and treated by the ship’s surgeon. They had, he notes, come despite this practical “hazard,” and left “well satisfied with presents.”¹

This account is characteristic of Ledyard, who in general sees no difficulty in determining the motivations of Hawaiians. Those presented in his story are stereotypes – Ledyard is rare in insisting that the Hawaiians were cannibals and refers to them throughout as “the indians” – but are attributed a straightforward pragmatism also seen as characteristic of the *Resolution*’s white crew. Like the crew, including Ledyard himself, they are motivated by food, material goods, or the fear of physical discomfort and danger.² This approach to “the indians” of the Pacific can be seen as broadly conventional of many eighteenth-century British travel accounts – in the journals of Samuel Wallis, John Rickman, William Ellis, or Cook himself – and

¹ John Ledyard, *A Journal of Captain Cook’s Last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean, and in Quest of a North-West Passage, between Asia & America* (Hartford: Nathaniel Patten, 1783), pp. 150-151.

² Ledyard, pp. 150-151.

ethnographic theorising. “The savage,” Jean-Jacques Rousseau had influentially declared in 1755, was a radically simple creature, with “desires [which] do not go beyond his physical needs; the only goods in the world he knows are food, a female, and repose, and the only evils he fears are pain and hunger.”³ Ledyard’s account can therefore usefully be seen as a baseline from which to measure the discursive alterations made to these conventions in the 1780s by King and Samwell in their narratives of Cook’s death.

For example, in King’s account of the same episode, one of the men in the canoe is “the *Taboo* man,” described “lamenting, with abundance of tears, the loss of the *Orono*.” This religious figure explains that the flesh in the package is emphatically not food, but “had been allotted to Kaoo, the chief of the priests, to be made use of in some religious ceremony.” Although King speculates at various points in his narrative about the meaning of the term ‘Orono,’ and the rituals carried out by figures such as the *Taboo* man and Kaoo, he never reaches a coherent interpretation of the “something highly sacred” he believes to lie at the heart of his encounter with Hawaii. Neither of the Hawaiians in King’s version of this episode is injured by the sentry. The danger they face, rather, is explained in the breathless dialogue which King records after the presentation of Cook’s body, which transforms Hawaiian social structures – about which King knew almost nothing – into a setting for perilous nocturnal adventures and a dramatic but obscure conflict involving pious victims and powerful tyrants, loyal servants, and an inexplicably malevolent villain:

They told us, that, if this transaction should come to the knowledge of
the king, or Chiefs, it might be attended with the most fatal consequences

³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1755), translated by Franklin Philip (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2009), pp. 34-35.

to their whole society; in order to prevent which, they had been obliged to come to us in the dark; and that the same precaution would be necessary in returning on shore. They informed us farther, that the Chiefs were eager to revenge the death of their countrymen; and particularly, cautioned us against trusting Koah, who, they said, was our mortal and implacable enemy.⁴

Ironically, it would be British sailors, rather than vengeful chiefs, who destroyed the priests' "cloisters" a few days later. Yet whether these details of darkness, deceit and potentially "fatal consequences" are literally true is rather less significant to my argument than their effect on the reader. King's readers, unlike Ledyard's, are not "extremely affected and disgusted" by his account. Rather, they are swept up in a sublime adventure story in which obscurity and violence are sources of what James Beattie, a visitor to the Leverian Museum in 1781, would later theorise as the "gloomy satisfaction, or terrific pleasure" of the sublime.⁵

Both King and Samwell were major donors of artefacts to the Leverian Museum, helping to create, at the same time as they were preparing these narratives, an exhibition of the material embodiments of Cook mythology within the "enchanted palace" of the museum. Samwell in particular seems to have spent some time acting as an unofficial showman of Pacific artefacts in the Leverian Museum, offering in 1788 to show a correspondent round, since he had "the privilege of taking a friend

⁴ *Voyage*, vol. 3, p. 69. Original italics.

⁵ James Beattie, "Illustrations on Sublimity" (1783), in *Selected Philosophical Writings*, edited by James A. Harris (Exeter: Imprint, 2004), 183-202, p. 188. For visit to Leverian Museum, see Beattie, letter to William Forbes (1 June 1781), in William Forbes, *An Account of the Life and Writings of James Beattie* (London: Longman, 1807), vol. 1 of 2, p. 339.

there any time.”⁶ The writing and initial reading of *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* therefore took place in the context of the metropolitan creation of a commercial spectacle of the Pacific focused around the artefacts of Cook’s death in Hawaii.

A link can also be made to preparations for the production, the year after publication, of the Covent Garden pantomime *Omai, or, A Trip Round the World*. Louthembourg, John O’Keeffe and William Shields’ 1785 pantomime, is a rich and well-documented example of intersections between genres, technical innovations, and themes, and has been well analysed both by theatre historians interested in its realist ethnographic aesthetic,⁷ and by scholars of imperial discourses in the Pacific. These studies trace its presentation of ethnography through conventions variously identified as comedy, harlequinade, sublime, picturesque, spectacular, or “Imperial Gothic.”⁸ In particular, Wilson and O’Quinn, in their separate studies of the eighteenth-century cultural formation of British national identities, focus on *Omai*’s performance and reception: O’Quinn by tracing the “autoethnographic” or disciplinary function of theatrical strategies he calls “museological,” and Wilson by showing how images of antiquity and technological progress were used to construct a genealogical distinction between British modernity and the Pacific Other.⁹ Like the majority of these writers, they assert the pantomime’s crucial function in “the canonization of

⁶ David Samwell, letter to Matthew Gregson, 15 October 1788, in Samwell (2007), p. 122.

⁷ See William Huse, “A Noble Savage on the Stage” in *Modern Philology* 33, no. 3 (1936): 303-316; Ralph G. Allen, “De Louthembourg and Captain Cook” in *Theatre Research* 4 (1962): 195-211; Roger Fiske, “A Covent Garden Pantomime” in *Musical Times* 104, no. 1446 (August 1963): 574-576; Rüdiger Joppien, “Philippe Jacques de Louthembourg’s Pantomime ‘Omai, or, a Trip round the World’ and the Artists of Captain Cook’s Voyages” in *Captain Cook and the South Pacific/ British Museum Yearbook 3*, edited by T.C. Mitchell (London: British Museum, 1979), 81-136.

⁸ Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2002), p. 142. See Denning (1996), 156-161; Denning (1999); McCalman (2001); Warner (2002), 142-144.

⁹ O’Quinn (2005), 74-114, p. 89. See also Wilson (2002), 54-91.

Cook as the most English of heroes,” transforming the dry science of the Royal Society and the Admiralty, and the dignified heroism of Seward’s elegy, into a popularly enjoyable “vaudeville of topicality.”¹⁰ I do not intend to restate these accounts at length, or to dispute the importance of the pantomime to Cook’s metropolitan celebrity, which was clearly immense. However, it is worth noting, with David Worrall, that in terms of longevity, overall audience numbers and wide cultural appeal, *Omai* was eclipsed by the later staging of *The Death of Captain Cook*, which was also a far more direct representation of Cook as sympathetic hero, and which I will read in detail in Chapter 8.¹¹

I want to stress instead the close parallel between the pleasures of *Omai*’s exotic processions, moonlit crypts, mysterious villains and supernatural forces, and King’s retelling of the story of Cook’s death. Like the pictures looked at in Chapter 4, the pantomime was almost certainly instigated by the contemporary public interest surrounding *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, and was promoted as a “beautiful illustration” or “stage edition” of the book.¹² The design of the production involved Webber,¹³ and it is possible that King and Samwell, who had known the real Mai well and were among the highest-ranking survivors of Cook’s voyages, were also consulted in the early stages. At the very least, the enthusiastic response to *Omai* demonstrates the demand in 1780s London for accessible, emotive, even fantastic spectacle based on the stories and material objects of the Cook voyages. It can be argued, then, that the spectacular aesthetic by which the material curiosities of the

¹⁰ Wilson (2002), p. 63; Denig (1996), p. 156.

¹¹ David Worrall, *Harlequin Empire: Race, Ethnicity and the Drama of the Popular Enlightenment* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007), pp. 139-140.

¹² *Times* (22 December 1785); *Morning Chronicle* (21 December 1785).

¹³ McCalman (2001), pp. 10-11.

Pacific, and especially Hawaii, were presented as dazzlingly glamorous relics of Cook's death in the museum and the theatre can also be identified, though in more partial and understated form, in King and Samwell's accounts. These include the cultivation of uncertainty, quasi-supernatural foreshadowing, the pseudo-naïve presentation of morally polarised figures of good and evil, and a climactic scene of discovery and recognition which has, in pragmatic terms, very little concrete content beyond the sign of the body itself.

As a publication sponsored by the state and the Royal Society, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* claims to represent directly and objectively the realities of "the transactions of the Voyage," shoring up these claims with an unprecedented quantity of maps, topographical engravings, route tables, numbers and dates.¹⁴ Yet, as studies of Orientalist travel writing, for example, indicate, such texts should be seen as shaped by textual and cultural conventions, among which the assertion of straightforward empiricism is one of the most powerful.¹⁵ Indeed, the responses of real and fictional readers of Cook voyage literature suggest that the aesthetic pleasures of the book could be prioritised over its official virtues of accuracy and completeness.

Two months after the publication of *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, on a visit to the mock-ruined gothic folly, Kingsgate in Kent, Horace Walpole refers to King's descriptions of Hawaii. The scene created by Henry Fox, Lord Holland, he wrote,

¹⁴ Douglas in *Voyage*, vol. 1, lxxvii.

¹⁵ See for example James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds.), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Pratt (1992); Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst (eds.), *Travel Writing, Form, and Empire: The Poetics and Politics of Mobility* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Paul Smethurst, *Travel Writing and the Natural World, 1768-1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

was “so odd, and so little resembling any one ever saw, that a view might, to those who were never there, be passed for a prospect in some half civilised island discovered by Captain Cook.” The British castle, he added, was “more novel than any in the new pompous publication.”¹⁶ Perhaps keeping in mind his own intervention into the literature of Pacific voyaging, a bizarre and blatantly fictional report of John Byron’s encounter with Patagonian giants, Walpole concludes that the Admiralty’s book fails to transcend the ordinary.¹⁷ His comments, though, indicate an expectation that the exotic settings of Cook’s voyages *should*, at least, function as an epitome of the “odd” and the never-before-seen. The islands in *A Voyage to the Pacific* fail to please because they are not “novel” enough, like Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron*, which Walpole also condemned as “stripped of the marvellous.”¹⁸

In the case of Walpole, this self-conscious “frivolity” – in particular, the use of a distant past as “little more than a site of diversion or recreation” – has been analysed as a deliberate “strategy of ‘trivia’” or eccentricity, associated with his status as a leisured aristocratic collector,¹⁹ but this does not mean that a wider readership could not have responded in similar though less well-documented ways. As a private reader, William Cowper, for example, describes his “great curiosity” to read the

¹⁶ Horace Walpole to Anne Countess of Ossory (9 August 1784), in *Letters addressed to the Countess of Ossory, from the year 1769 to 1797* (London: Richard Bentley, 1848), vol. 2 of 2, pp. 191, 193

¹⁷ [Horace Walpole], *An Account of the Giants Lately Discovered; In a Letter to a Friend in the Country* (London: F. Noble, 1766).

¹⁸ Horace Walpole, preface to *The Castle of Otranto*, second edition (1765); Walpole, letter to William Cole (22 August 1778). Both in Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto and the Mysterious Mother*, edited by Frederick S. Frank (Toronto: Broadview, 2003), pp. 65, 264.

¹⁹ James Watt, *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1999), 12-41, p. 20; Edward H. Jacobs, *Accidental Migrations: An Archaeology of Gothic Discourse* (London: Associated University Presses, 2000), 123-156, p. 124.

book, and the “great pleasure” he expected from it. He had already concluded, in 1783, that “[t]he principal fruits of these circuits, that have been made around the globe, seem likely to be the amusement of those that stayed at home.”²⁰ An ideal Pacific voyage book, the *Monthly Review* suggested in 1788, “unites the graces of a well-written novel, with the useful and common details of a nautical production.”²¹

In other words, the project’s official and scientific status did not exempt the producers of *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* from the demands of the literary marketplace or contemporary tastes. On the contrary, Douglas and King, the author of the third volume, faced unique pressure to produce a text which would impress and entertain a national public, however nebulous and unknown, because of the state subsidisation of the voyage. King, a grammar school and Oxford educated officer, had been promoted to captain of the *Discovery* following the deaths of Cook and Clerke. He was, according to the *Westminster Magazine*, qualified for his task not just as an eyewitness but as “a very distinguished writer.”²² Reviewers praised the “masterly” style and “warmth” as well as the “novelty and curious observation” of the book. The passages on “the circumstances that attended and brought on the melancholy fate of Captain Cook,” in particular, were recommended to readers as likely to “afford them entertainment.”²³

In his account of events in Hawaii, King skilfully exploits the reader’s familiarity with the well-rehearsed mythology of Cook’s death to produce a narrative marked by

²⁰ William Cowper to John Newton (21 June 1784), in *The Life and Works of William Cowper*, edited by Thomas Grimshawe (London: Saunders and Otley, 1836), vol. 2 of 8, 274-275, p. 275. Cowper to Newton (6 October 1783), in Grimshawe, vol. 2, 164-167, p. 167.

²¹ *Monthly Review; or Literary Journal*, vol. 81 (July-December 1789), p. 465.

²² *Westminster Magazine* (July 1784).

²³ *Westminster Magazine* (August 1784); *Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics and Literature* (London: J. Dodsley, 1784-1785), p. 149; *London Magazine* (July 1784), p. 60.

moments of tension, noting early on that “everything relating to the character and behaviour” of the Hawaiians is a subject of curiosity for metropolitan readers because they will be aware of “the tragedy that was afterward acted here.” King’s narrative is reaffirmed by the much shorter *Narrative of the Death of Captain James Cook* by David Samwell, one of the voyage surgeons. This was published as a pamphlet after King’s death in 1786, and reproduced in Andrew Kippis’s biography of Cook in 1788. The two accounts together came in the nineteenth century to dominate British perceptions of Cook.²⁴

“Wonderful tales of wonderful castles”: Entertaining the public in Samwell and King.²⁵

The *Resolution* had returned to Kealakekua Bay on 11 February to a more subdued reception than it had been given on its earlier visits. As Glyndwr Williams notes, in *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* this change is given a “literary turn.” Adding “an element of foreboding,” King interprets the ships’ return to “no shouts, no bustle, no confusion; but a solitary bay” as a potentially sinister indication that there was “something, at this time, very suspicious in the behaviour of the natives,” although “[w]hether these suspicions were well founded, or the account given by the natives was the truth, we were never able to ascertain.”²⁶ King’s presentation of Hawaiians as figures of mysterious “fraud and treachery” had a specific rhetorical purpose in terms of explaining the murder of Cook. If the behaviour of the Hawaiian ‘indians’

²⁴ See Williams (2008), 82-84.

²⁵ Elizabeth Bonhote, Introduction to *Bungay Castle: A Novel* (London: Minerva Press, 1796), vol. 1 of 2, vii-xix, vii.

²⁶ Williams (2008), p. 31; *Voyage*, vol. 3, pp. 36-37.

was as easy to predict as Ledyard, Rickman or Ellis had suggested, this would quickly raise questions of why Cook and his officers had failed to do so, and if, perhaps, the Hawaiian attack was understandably defensive. For Rickman, for example, Cook's death was his own fault, "originating from an over confidence in [his] own consequences," while Ledyard suggests that hostilities arose because the Hawaiians "had been oppressed."²⁷ There were evident difficulties, especially for King, in suggesting that a state-funded naval expedition had "proved fatal" because of the weakness or inability of any of its commanding officers, let alone its civilised and sympathetic hero.²⁸ His account of the events surrounding Cook's death thus excises any clear interpretation of Hawaiian behaviour or motives. This has the effect of emphasising the obscurity and unpredictability of the Hawaiian crowd, presenting Cook's actions as the most rational possible within a nightmarishly irrational situation (Samwell echoes these tactics, but also takes a third course by diverting much of the practical responsibility to lower-ranked individuals). The gradual intensification of an obscure sense of "uneasiness," then, can be seen as part of the official narrative's attempt to repair and maintain Cook's nascent heroic celebrity.

I want to suggest, though, that this "literary turn" also moves to forestall (if sometimes unsuccessfully) commercial and aesthetic criticism of *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* as dry and inaccessible. King's narration created suspense and held readers' curiosity by maintaining the mystery of the story and its setting. It presents Hawaii as an exotic spectacle which, like the materials in the museum, could evoke

²⁷ [Rickman], iv; Ledyard, p. 141.

²⁸ See Scott Ashley, "How Navigators Think: The Death of Captain Cook Revisited" in *Past and Present*, no. 194 (2007): 107-137.

sensation and emotion among a relatively broad readership, including many middle class women, without being deflated by what Walter Scott, reviewing gothic novels, would call “flat and ridiculous explanations” which undermine the sublime obscurity of “the mystic and marvellous.”²⁹

Thus, King foreshadows Cook’s death with nocturnal “disturbance[s]” and mysterious “creeping” visitors who “approach[...]” and “retire[...] out of sight” when challenged.³⁰ Samwell describes how, the night before Cook’s death, obscure “shrill and melancholy sounds [...] struck the sentinels with unusual awe and terror.” He relates the story of Cook displaying a scar on his hand to a Hawaiian chief, uncannily prefiguring the violence and mutilation the reader knows will follow.³¹ After the catastrophic violence of 14 February, these unexplained night-time episodes continue, with “howlings and lamentations” and “a prodigious number of lights on the hills,” which King and his colleagues suspect are sacrifices or the cremations of their “slain countrymen” but cannot ultimately resolve.³²

The narration of the central incident of Cook’s death, in a parallel move, declines to clearly interpret or even directly describe the actions of either party, but suggests through conditional and reported statements a dramatic contrast between Cook’s calm self-sacrifice and the Hawaiians’ inexplicable malice:

Our unfortunate Commander, the last time he was seen distinctly, was standing at the water’s edge, and calling out to the boats to cease firing,

²⁹ Walter Scott, Review of Charles Maturin, *Fatal Revenge* (1810), in Rictor Norton, *Gothic Readings: The First Wave, 1764-1840* (London: Continuum, 2000), 318-323, pp. 320-321. See Ellis (2000), 66-69.

³⁰ *Voyage*, vol. 3, p. 41.

³¹ Samwell (2007), p. 71.

³² *Voyage*, vol. 3, pp. 65, 70.

and to pull in. If it be true, as some of those who were present have imagined, that the marines and boat-men had fired without his orders, and that he was desirous of preventing any further bloodshed, it is not improbable, that his humanity, on this occasion, proved fatal to him. For it was remarked, that whilst he faced the natives, none of them had offered him any violence, but that having turned about, to give his orders to the boats, he was stabbed in the back, and fell with his face into the water.

As Nicholas Thomas notes, this account is “understandably equivocal,”³³ but it also prompted a strong affective response from most metropolitan readers. The Hawaiians are presented, though only in momentary or disavowed forms, as monsters who “set up a great shout,” and “snatching the dagger out of each other’s hands, shewed a savage eagerness to have a share in his destruction.”³⁴

Given the presentation of Cook throughout *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* as figurehead of what Mary Louise Pratt calls the “European knowledge-building project in the Pacific,” we might expect King to present Cook’s last ‘discovery,’ Hawaii, as a mapped, located and stable site, passively subject to British expertise.³⁵ Certainly, many written and visual details of Hawaii are overtly treated as objective topographic and ethnographic records. Yet, at the same time, the ‘Owhyhee’ of King and Samwell can be unknowable and alienating. The alien landscape is simultaneously “dismal,” “horrid and dreary,” and a beautiful setting of the “greatest

³³ Nicholas Thomas, “David Samwell: Pacific Ethnographer and Historian” in Samwell (2007), 41-57, pp. 52-53.

³⁴ *Voyage*, vol. 3, p. 45-46.

³⁵ Pratt (1992), p. 37.

luxuriance.”³⁶ In part, this is a reflection of the voyagers’ perplexing and sometimes traumatic encounter with a disorienting physical, cultural and religious “indigenous domain.”³⁷ At the same time, though, the written landscape incorporates many features borrowed from the stock backdrops of metropolitan novels and stage spectacles, especially Loutherboung’s productions at Drury Lane, the Eidophusikon, and Covent Garden (see Chapter 8): ruins, stormy seas, secret caves, and a backdrop of “broken and craggy rocks, piled irregularly on one another, and terminating in sharp points.”³⁸ Like the hermitages tucked into the “commodified [...] picturesque landscape for a mass audience” of contemporary pleasure gardens such as Ranelagh and Vauxhall Gardens (and unlike Ledyard or Ellis’s version), King’s Kealakekua Bay includes a hut for a “hermit.” There are also buildings which recall the fictional Catholic monasteries of novels such as *The Castle of Otranto*; “the cloisters of Kakooa in Karakakooa Bay” in which “a society of priests,” drawn from the island’s aristocracy, live in “religious retirement.”³⁹

Hawaii, here, becomes a distinctively “despotic” and superstitious site, which “far exceed[s]” other Pacific islands in the “length and number of their [religious] ceremonies” and “the rapacity and despotism of the great Chiefs.” These qualities of Otherness, for a British readership which regarded itself as distinctively rational and free, are marked on the landscape by alien, oddly temporalised buildings such as the “cloisters” and the Morai (the *heiau* at Hikiau). This is a looming, partially decayed

³⁶ *Voyage*, vol. 3, pp. 104-105.

³⁷ Thomas (2003), p. 381. See Lamb (2001), 49-131.

³⁸ *Voyage*, vol. 3, pp. 6, 104, 73-75, 140-141.

³⁹ Deborah Philips, *Fairground Attractions: A Genealogy of the Pleasure Ground* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 12; *Voyage*, vol. 3, pp. 107-108, 159, 13-14 (illustrated in Plate LXI). See Maria Purves, *The Gothic and Catholicism: Religion, Cultural Exchange and the Popular Novel, 1785-1829* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009).

setting which again recalls Loutherboung's scenery and what the Minerva Press author Elizabeth Bonhote would term a metropolitan "prevailing taste [for] wonderful tales of wonderful castles."⁴⁰ The Morai, King writes, is

a square solid pile of stones, about forty yards long, twenty broad, and fourteen in height. The top was flat, and well paved, and surrounded by a wooden rail, on which were fixed the skulls of the captives, sacrificed on the death of their chiefs. In the centre of the area, stood a ruinous old building of wood, connected with the rail, on each side, by a stone wall, which divided the whole space into two parts. [...] At the entrance, we saw two large wooden images, with features violently distorted, and a long piece of carved wood, of a conical form inverted, rising from the top of their heads; the rest was without form, and wrapped round with red cloth.⁴¹

This is an elusive, potentially threatening setting. While acting as an atmospheric memento mori, the presence of human skulls and "violently distorted" or formless artefacts is presented as largely unintelligible. King echoes an earlier visitor to the Leverian Museum, whose pleasure in the use of his "active fancy" – imagining "the manners of men in the forms of their habits," idols, weapons and buildings – produces an anxious sense of "rude deformity" and the "power of fear and superstition over the human mind."⁴²

⁴⁰ Bonhote, vii. See Elizabeth MacAndrew, *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1979), pp. 48-49. See Emily Jane Cohen, "Museums of the Mind: The Gothic and the Art of Memory" in *ELH* 62, no. 4 (1995): 883-905; Watt, (1999), pp. 42-69.

⁴¹ *Voyage*, vol. 3, pp. 159, 3, 157, 6.

⁴² "Account of Sir Ashton Lever's Holophusicon", p. 21.

King's narrative in Hawaii opens with a detailed account of the baffling rituals performed to receive Cook at the Morai, depicting himself, Cook, and the other European participants as curious but almost comically bewildered and passive spectators, for whom the "meaning" and consequences of the spectacle could "only be the subject of conjectures, and those uncertain and partial." If King's editorialising on Hawaiian religion has a moral, it is often simply "how very difficult it is to draw any certain conclusion from the actions of people, with whose customs, as well as language we are so imperfectly acquainted."⁴³ The account nevertheless invites the metropolitan reader to interpret Hawaiian rituals, led by the treacherous showman Koah, and involving elements such as the eating of putrid meat, as sinister and superstitious. A few days after Cook's death, to take another instance from King's account, the ships receive an eerie visit from two armed men who swim from the Morai:

[A]fter they had approached pretty near, they began to chant a song, in a very solemn manner; the subject of which, from their often mentioning the word *Orono*, and pointing to the village where Captain Cook was killed, we concluded to be the late calamitous disaster. Having sung in a plaintive strain for about twelve or fifteen minutes, [...], they went on board the *Discovery*, and delivered their spears; [...].

"Who sent them, or what was the object of this ceremony, we were never able to learn," King concludes.

⁴³ *Voyage*, vol. 3, pp. 9, 72, 37.

His uncertainty is visualised in an illustration of “Karakakooa Bay” by Webber, showing the external walls of the *heiau* at a distance as a massive, blank facade.⁴⁴ King’s note to the picture identifies the building simply as a “pile of stones, with a building on the top” which “represents,” rather than ‘depicts’ the Morai, as if to acknowledge the picture’s failure to reproduce the place. “On the farthest point of land, beyond the ships,” he writes, “is situated the village of Kowrowa, where Captain Cook was killed.” Despite this written precision the village is invisible in the engraving, while the other named locations, such as “the cloisters of the priests,” also seem to disappear into the distance or are dwarfed by the wild, apparently uninhabited hillside, the sea, and the dark shapes of the foreground rocks. Finally, King notes that the “village of Kakooa,” partly visible in the centre of the image, has since vanished from the real landscape, having been “burnt down on the 17th of February.”⁴⁵

The range of figures populating these elusive locations are again presented as direct records of the real, but also provide readers with the stock characters of the novel or pantomime: a villain (Koah/ Coho), a well-intentioned but ineffectual king (Terreeboo/ Kariopoo, whom Samwell usually calls “the old man”), a friendly but superstitious priest (“the venerable Kaoo” or “honest Kaireekea, the priest”), loyal, self-sacrificing subordinates on both sides of the conflict (Phillips, as well as the much-discussed figure of a Hawaiian man who is killed while recovering the body of his companion), and the hero of sensibility (Cook and King themselves). The limits of his task make it impossible for King to include a central female heroine, although

⁴⁴ William Byrne after John Webber, *A View of Karakakooa, in Owyhee*. Etching, 1785. Plate LXVIII in *Voyage*, vol. 3.

⁴⁵ *Voyage*, vol. 3, p. 54, note.

Samwell briefly emphasises the role of the king's young wife, and refers in a footnote at the end of his narrative to an earlier visit by a "queen" and "young princess."⁴⁶ Webber, too, exhibited a portrait of the imprisoned Tahitian princess Poedua at the Royal Academy in 1785.⁴⁷

King stresses that people in Hawaii considered him to be Cook's son and that he and Cook had "always suffered them to believe it." Cook's son both in this sense, and in his inheritance of Cook's paternal authority as captain and author, King casts himself in a sentimental domestic narrative. In opposition to this, the Hawaiian warrior Koah is initially marked out as the villain by alienating physical deformities: he is a "little old man, of an emaciated figure," "exceedingly red and sore" eyes, and skin "covered with a white leprous scurf." These are interpreted as symptoms "of an immoderate use of the *ava*," attributing to Koah the uncontrolled appetites presented by Seward as defining the savage. Yet the narration immediately abandons hindsight and offers an overtly naïve introductory description of "our friend Koah." He "had been, in his youth, a distinguished warrior," and treats Cook "with great veneration," even changing his name, "out of compliment" to the crew, to Britanee. The reader is implicitly invited to suspect Koah's motives and honesty, nevertheless, over the course of "repeated detections of his fraud and treachery," until, to King's "utmost horror," his "principal part" in the death of Cook finally reveals his "malicious disposition."⁴⁸ Koah's gradual unmasking as the "mortal and implacable enemy" of the narrator adds suspense to the narrative, as well as offering the reader the

⁴⁶ Samwell (2007), pp. 78-79, 74; *Voyage*, vol. 3, pp. 17, 58.

⁴⁷ John Webber, *Poedua, the Daughter of Orio*. Oil on canvas, c. 1784 (original in 1777) (National Maritime Museum, Greenwich). See Patty O'Brien, *The Pacific Muse: Exotic Femininity and the Colonial Pacific* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 82-85.

⁴⁸ *Voyage*, vol. 3, pp. 66, 5, 15-16, 31, 63.

opportunities to practise moral judgement and detect hypocrisy often seen as advantages of reading fiction.⁴⁹ His role as villain becomes yet clearer in Samwell's account, in which he is "observed lurking near, with an iron dagger, partly concealed under his cloke," although it is a different Hawaiian, later identified by Samwell as Nooāh, who "stab[s]" the vulnerable Cook "in the back of the neck."⁵⁰ This caricature becomes further established, as Chapter 8 will show, in the pantomime *Death of Captain Cook*.

For a range of reasons, then, King's presentation of Hawaii, through narrative techniques of suspense, sentimental identification, and the evocation of sublime obscurity and horror, adopts the commercial museum's spectacular appeal to the senses. The feather 'ahu 'ula and mahiole which by 1784 were famous from their display in the Leverian Museum, are introduced early in King's narrative, as gifts ceremonially presented to Cook following a "grand and magnificent" parade of canoes in Kealakekua Bay. King describes how 'Terreeoboo' (Kalani'opu'u) "in a very graceful manner threw over the Captain's shoulders the cloak he himself wore, put a feathered helmet upon his head, and a curious fan into his hand." In a detailed Webber illustration of this episode, details of 'ahu 'ula, mahiole, and kahili are clearly visible, as are the ki'i hulu manu in the second canoe. King's detailed catalogue of the participants and their heraldic attributes, reprinted almost in full in a footnote to the *Companion* to the Leverian Museum, evokes an impressive sensory experience of colour, music, and exotic material. After "harbingers with wands," King writes,

⁴⁹ *Voyage*, vol. 3, p. 69. See Carol Stewart, *The Eighteenth-Century Novel and the Secularization of Ethics* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

⁵⁰ Samwell (2007), pp. 75-76.

[i]n the first canoe was Terreeoboo and his chiefs, dressed in their rich feathered clokes and helmets, and armed with long spears and daggers; in the second, came the venerable Kaoo, the chief of the priests, and his brethren, with their idols displayed on red cloth. These idols were busts of a gigantic size, made of wicker-work, and curiously covered with small feathers of various colours, wrought in the same manner with their cloaks. Their eyes were made of large pearl oysters, with a black nut fixed in the centre; their mouths were set with a double row of the fangs of dogs, and, together with the rest of their features, were strangely distorted. The third canoe was filled with hogs and various sorts of vegetables. As they went along, the priests in the centre canoe sung their hymns with great solemnity [...].⁵¹

The conventions and vocabulary here recall the spectacle of metropolitan museums, and theatrical and street pageantry asserting the ancient origins and continuity of political and cultural institutions. These included parades of royal or military figures, organisations such as guilds and Masons, and smaller, private societies like Lever's archers.⁵² Terreeoboo's canoes might also have reminded readers of the processions of boats which were a popular sight on the Thames. A reported 200,000 spectators, for example, had gathered to watch an evening regatta in 1775 on its way to the "Temple of Neptune" at Ranelagh, to the sound of "grand Bands of Music" and cannon fire,⁵³ and similar crowds were drawn annually to the Lord Mayor's show. These public spectacles were reported in newspapers in similarly ordered lists of

⁵¹ *Voyage*, vol. 3, pp. 9, 16-17, plate LXI; *Companion to the Museum*, footnote to p. 19.

⁵² See Colley (1992), 215-236; Wilson (1998), 34-36.

⁵³ *St James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post* (22 June 1775).

arcane figures and symbols, with detailed material descriptions of vessels, weapons, costumes and food.⁵⁴

While these local spectacles implied the inclusion of the spectator or the reader within a shared past, evoked as (often hazily interpreted) theatrical tradition, other texts used similar forms to differentiate metropolitan modernity from an exotic or archaic Other, such as accounts for British readers of Catholic ritual. The papal processions in Rome, for example, could be enumerated in similar terms to King's description of Kalani'opu'u. The pope, metropolitans read, while "continually blessing the people,"

is preceded and followed by above two thousand horsemen divided into squadrons, the variety of which makes a very entertaining show. The most brilliant of these squadrons is that of the cuirassiers; [...] the most curious damask work; the embroidered half-mantle, or paludementum, hanging from the right shoulder; the aigrette and plumage shadowing the helmet [...]: every one is preceded by four pages cloaked likewise, in long hair and embroidery: about the bridle and stirrups walk grooms; and his train consists of twenty footmen in glaring liveries.⁵⁵

Such descriptions, while avowedly objective, provide a "very entertaining show" to the reader by cataloguing "curious" things – weapons, costumes, feathers – which both evoke the scene and assert its exoticism. Yet this kind of "show," to a British readership traditionally suspicious of Catholic spectacles, suggests the problematic

⁵⁴ See for example "A Full and Exact Account of the Ceremonial of My Lord-Mayor's Shew, and of the Entertainment at Guildhall, &c." in *The Universal Magazine* (November 1761), 271-273.

⁵⁵ Pierre Jean Grosley, *New Observations on Italy and its Inhabitants*, translated by Thomas Nugent (London: L. Davis, 1769), vol. 2 of 2, pp. 118, 120.

associations of presenting the national project of Pacific exploration as overtly romantic or entertaining. From the fierce attacks on Hawkesworth's veracity and morality in the early 1770s (when a "disappointed" John Wesley had announced that he could only "rank this Narrative [of Cook's first voyage] with that of Robinson Crusoe"⁵⁶) to the 1780 satires of imperial self-aggrandisement discussed in the introduction to Section 1, attempts to involve a broad non-specialist readership in this project were vulnerable to implications of imposing upon credulous consumers. While there was some enthusiasm, and little explicit criticism following the publication of King's account – Walpole's disgust at its high price and "uncouth" and "unpolished" subjects being a notable exception⁵⁷ – its overwhelming popularity among non-elite readers can be seen as eliciting some misgivings about its cultural and truth claims.

By 1813, for example, reference to "The Voyages of Captain Cook" among the trashy memoirs, compilations and novels of a circulating library suggest that the book was seen as having a place within the sphere of popular print entertainment as well as scientific or navigation literature. In a satirical dialogue in *Poetical Sketches of Scarborough*, a stereotypical leisured female reader, "Miss Wrinkle," exchanges the volumes of Cook's travels she has been offered for more obviously sensational entertainment:

Joe – put them down – and give him, Sir,

The VENIAL CRIME, and MURDERER:

MAID, WIFE AND WIDOW – if you please –

⁵⁶ John Wesley (17 December 1773), *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley* (London: J. Kershaw, 1827), vol. 4 of 4, pp. 5-6. See Lamb, 49-75.

⁵⁷ Horace Walpole, letter (9 August 1784) in Walpole (1848), vol. 2, p. 191.

And give him HORRID MYSTERIES.⁵⁸

While the first of these titles seems to be a generic reference to criminal narratives, Karl Grosse's *Horrid Mysteries* would be used as an exemplar of dubious gothic fiction by Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey* (1817) and Peacock in *Nightmare Abbey* (1818).⁵⁹ *The Maid, Wife, and Widow* is a three-volume sentimental novel by Henry Siddons, an impresario assumed by contemporary reviewers to be the son of Sarah, and the author of such plays as *Tale of Terror, or, Castle Without a Spectre*.⁶⁰ These titles are judged by the undiscerning Miss Wrinkle – who thinks of books in terms of quantities of volumes to be consumed – to be more appealing than the outdated *Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, with its tables and charts.⁶¹ Yet their juxtaposition in the imagined commercial library with Cook's voyages perhaps suggests that, to some extent, King's presentation of the most famous episode of the book in the terms of "entertaining show" risked consigning it to an arena of British culture which was an increasing source of anxiety.

This anxiety can be detected in King's account of one of the last episodes in Hawaii. The scene replicates the exotic materials and pageantry of the canoe procession, a few days after Cook's death, and after the first return of body parts described at the beginning of this chapter. A huge crowd, including drummers and flagbearers,

⁵⁸ John Buonarotti Papworth, Francis Wrangham and William Combe, *Poetical Sketches of Scarborough: Illustrated by Twenty-One Engravings of Humourous Subjects, Coloured from Original Designs, Made Upon the Spot by J. Green, and Etched by T. Rowlandson* (London: R. Ackerman, 1813), pp. 145-146.

⁵⁹ Karl Grosse, *Horrid Mysteries. A Story*, translated by Peter Will (London: Minerva Press, 1796), 3 vols..

⁶⁰ Henry Siddons, *The Maid, Wife, and Widow, A Tale* (London: R. Phillips, 1806), 3 vols. See Francis William Blagdon, *Flowers of Literature for 1806* (London: J.G. Barnard, 1807), lxxv-lxxvii.

⁶¹ Papworth, Wrangham and Combe, p. 146.

parade with a priest “in his long feathered cloak” to a meeting with the officers of the *Resolution*. “[W]ith great solemnity,” the priest presents a bundle “wrapped up in a large quantity of fine new cloth, and covered with a spotted cloak of black and white feathers.” When this is unwrapped, it is found to contain more of Cook’s remains, cut into pieces and partially burned, which the crew then bury at sea in a naval ceremony. In contrast to the perfunctory and subdued accounts of these contents in Ledyard’s narrative, as well as in King’s original unpublished journal,⁶² in a *Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* King produces an extraordinarily detailed catalogue of the material remains of his colleague:

We found in [the bundle] both the hands of Captain Cook entire, which were well known from a remarkable scar on one of them, that divided the thumb from the fore-finger, the whole length of the metacarpal bone; the skull, but with the scalp separated from it, and the bones that form the face wanting; the scalp, with the hair upon it cut short, and the ears adhering to it; the bones of arms, with the skin of the fore-arms hanging to them; the thigh and leg-bones joined together, but without the feet. The ligaments of the joints were entire; and the whole bore evident marks of having been in the fire, except the hands, which had the flesh left upon them, and were cut in several places, and crammed with salt, apparently with an intention of preserving them. The scalp had a cut in the back part of it, but the skull was free from any fracture.⁶³

This passage presents Cook’s body as forensic evidence and ethnographic curiosity, but also as a Hawaiian-produced barbaric material artefact, like the bone *kahili* in the

⁶² See Ledyard (1783), 337-338; King, in Beaglehole (1968), vol. 3, p. 566.

⁶³ *Voyage*, vol. 3, p. 79-80.

Leverian Museum. It is transformed from abject flesh, with the potential, Ledyard claims, to be consumed, into a spectacle which elicits a powerful response in the metropolitan viewer. The “remarkable scar,” which identifies all the artefacts as somehow belonging to Cook, functions like the portrait which dedicates all the objects in the Sandwich Islands Room, focusing viewers’ diffuse sensations into a more specific and articulable sense of loss “to compel you to give a sigh to the original.”⁶⁴ The gruesome nature of this spectacle, though, indicates anxieties about the over-affective possibilities of engaging with these showmanlike technologies of emotion. Concluding his narrative with the discovery of a murdered corpse, recognised by a scar, King offers the reader a version of what Terence Cave has labelled the “exuberant versions of anagnorisis” – foundling plots, detective and ghost stories, melodramatic unmaskings – found in fiction shaped by “the demands of the market.”⁶⁵

A metropolitan reader was unlikely to miss the echoes, in this passage, of the widespread belief that failure to bury a corpse could harm or anger the soul of the dead person.⁶⁶ Numerous ballads, novels and plays revolved around the climactic discovery and recognition of a familiar corpse: in *The Old English Baron* (1777), for example, the hero uncovers the story of his parents’ deaths through the discovery of his father’s “skeleton [...] tied neck and heels together and forced into [a] trunk.” The “last duties” of a son, to have these remains properly buried, naturally exorcises

⁶⁴ *School-Room Party*, p. 11.

⁶⁵ Terence Cave, *Recognitions: A Study in Poetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Poetics, 1990), p. 372. See also Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (New Jersey: Princeton U.P., 1997), 213-229.

⁶⁶ See Ruth Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1987); Grace Karskens, “Death was in his Face: Dying, Burial and Remembrance in Early Sydney” in *Labour History*, no. 74 (May 1998): 21-39.

their ghosts.⁶⁷ It is assumed, in other words, that readers understand, or even share, the idea that unburied, violently treated corpse produces phantoms: representations of the psychological or political disturbance invoked by the body's continued status as visible material exhibit.

These ghosts are sources of metropolitan entertainment – witness the popularity of Matthew Lewis's *Castle Spectre* – but they are also frightening and even pathologically dangerous. The connection is made in fictional episodes of haunting and recognition which reflect the mesmerizing effects of mass cultural techniques on the consumer. As he lies in bed, Lewis's narrator in *The Monk* is visited by the ghost of the Bleeding Nun, whose eyes “seem endowed with the property of the rattlesnake's,” and finds himself mimicking the sleepless readers of sensation novels or the audiences of “horrid” plays: “inanimate,” “fascinated,” “[b]reathless with fear,” and unable to look away. Contemporary and more recent commentators have noted the ways that gothic narrative was thought to keep the reader ‘in suspense,’ paralysing their critical abilities, will, or even identity.⁶⁸

The metropolitan reader's emotions, then, are conjured up and manipulated by King's narration, including the account of Cook's body. Sentiment and entertainment are, on the one hand, the means by which a perceived national emotional community is drawn together around a shared affective identification with Cook and the project of Pacific exploration. On the other, to be ‘haunted’ by this

⁶⁷ Clara Reeve, *The Old English Baron* (1777), edited by James Trainer and James Watt (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2003), pp. 116, 127.

⁶⁸ Matthew Gregory Lewis, *The Monk* (1796), edited by D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf (Toronto: Broadview, 2004), p. 156. See Margaret Russett, “Narrative as Enchantment in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*” in *ELH* 65, no. 1 (1998): 159-186; Clery (1995), 93-130; Brandy Lain Schillace, “‘Temporary Failure of Mind’: Déjà vu and Epilepsy in Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*” in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42, no. 2 (2009): 273-287.

repeated spectacle of affective material is to risk the excessive indulgence of dangerous emotions and to surrender the personal self-control seen as defining civilised heroism in Seward's *Elegy* and elsewhere. While these concerns remain embedded in responses to written and pictorial accounts of Cook's death in the 1780s, they emerge more urgently at the end of the decade with the London and provincial staging of *The Death of Captain Cook*, where they coalesce with debates over the wider affective power of illegitimate theatrical forms such as pantomime. The next chapter argues that the theatricalisation of this story transforms the trope of Cook's death further into sentimental machinery, a "containable and consumable product"⁶⁹ which could, moreover, itself travel around the networks of global trade and colonialism through travelling performances which further reinscribe its meanings. It concludes by suggesting that the influence of theatricalisation can also be detected in visual form in Johann Zoffany's painting of the scene, started and left unfinished in the 1790s.

⁶⁹ Paula R. Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins U.P., 1993), p. 233.

Chapter 8. *The Death of Captain Cook* in theatre

Then his new Scenery! Lord, how you'll look,
 And stare, and clap, Oh! such a Captain Cook!
 You'll bleed when he is stabb'd, die at his fall;
 And yet no copyist, his th'original.
 My next vast merit I must have a word on,
 I'cod! d'ye know – I've got you Mrs. Jordan – ¹

In a 1789 prologue on the opening night of his own Theatre Royal in Richmond, Surrey, the comedian John Edwin listed the innovations to be exported from the central London stage to Richmond following the Theatre Representations Act in 1788. These included a “richly elegant” painted interior, “wonderfully fine” scenery and special effects, and guest appearances from stars such as Dorothea Jordan, then “a great prize at Drury – high in vogue.”² The only reference to a specific play in Edwin’s prologue is to the “grand serious-pantomimic ballet,” *The Death of Captain Cook*. This was devised by Jean-François Arnould-Mussot and performed in Paris in 1788, before being adapted, translated, and shown in London with “The original FRENCH Music, New Scenery, Machinery, and other Decorations” in the spring of 1789.³ It was performed as an afterpiece, with some of the Covent Garden cast, the following summer season at Richmond.⁴ In this speech, the dying Captain Cook comes to resemble an eighteenth-century celebrity actress in his potential to elicit

¹ *Whitehall Evening Post* (20 June 1789).

² *World* (22 June 1789); *Whitehall Evening Post* (20 June 1789).

³ *The Death of Captain Cook; A Grand Serious-Pantomimic Ballet, in Three Parts* (London: T. Cadell, 1789).

⁴ See for example the playbill for Theatre-Royal, Richmond-Green (London, 19 July 1790).

violent emotional sympathy.⁵ Audiences will “look, | And stare, and clap”; will “bleed when he is stabb’d, die at his fall.” Contemporary and retrospective accounts of *The Death of Captain Cook* chime with Edwin’s prologue in suggesting that the pantomime was notable for the enjoyable sentimental excesses it produced in audiences. These responses seem to blur into the heartrending effects of the dramas Edwin goes on to both puff and mock:

But, hold! amid these rows, there may be some,
Whose melting hearts might some times wish to come,
And pay their tear to woe: for them, d’ye see,
We’ll now and then throw in a tragedy –
One with a tale so horrid! – horrid! – deep!
How I shall laugh to see the gall’ry weep [...].⁶

These “horrid” plays, reflected in Edwin’s concluding juxtaposition of laughter and tears, were in the late 1780s increasingly likely to be influenced less by traditional conventions of tragedy than by a combination of tragic elements with music, dance and comedy.⁷ Such hybrid commercial spectacles, historians of “illegitimate” theatrical genres have argued, were believed to produce “excessive, uncontrollable

⁵ See Carlson (1994), 162-175; Jeffrey N. Cox, “Baillie, Siddons, Larpent: Gender, Power, and Politics in the Theatre of Romanticism” in *Women in British Romantic Theatre: Drama, Performance, and Society 1790-1840*, edited by Catherine Burroughs (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2000), 23-47; Betsy Bolton, *Women, Nationalism and the Romantic Stage: Theatre and Politics in Britain, 1780-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2001), 45-140; Nussbaum, (2010); Engel, (2011)

⁶ *Whitehall Evening Post* (20 June 1789).

⁷ See Moody (2000).

emotion” which disturbed the containable, cathartic effects expected of neoclassical comedies and tragedies, and could thus be seen as politically suspect.⁸

The term “grand serious-pantomimic ballet” and the production’s rather bland published summary lead most modern readers to dismiss *The Death of Captain Cook* as polite and sanitised rather than subversive (in one scene Cook’s offstage combat is indicated by his entrance “without his hat”). Yet accounts like Edwin’s prologue indicate a bloodier and more overwhelming spectacle. In his 1830 memoirs, for example, the Covent Garden oboeist William Thomas Parkes describes how the lead dancer and choreographer, James Byrn, accidentally stabbed to death a minor actor called Ratchford during the scene “where the savages attack Captain Cook’s party,” to the audience’s applause and cries of “Bravo! bravo! Ratchford acts to-night as well as Garrick!”⁹ This anecdote appears to be inaccurate, since contemporary newspaper reports specify that the incident in question took place during another the pantomime, *The Shipwreck*, and that Ratchford was seriously injured but not killed.¹⁰

⁸ Steven Bruhm, *Gothic Bodies: The Politics of Pain in Romantic Fiction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), p. 68. See Jeffrey N. Cox, “English Gothic Theatre” in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* edited by Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2002), 125-144.

⁹ William Thomas Parke, *Musical Memoirs; comprising an Account of the General State of Music in England, from the First Commemoration of Handel in 1784, to the Year 1830* (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830), vol. 1 of 2, pp. 114-115. The story is in Greg Denning, *Mr Bligh’s Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1992), p. 295. The magisterial *Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and Other Stage Personnel in London 1660-1800* reconciles conflicting accounts by having Byrn injure (but not kill) “Rochford” during a *The Shipwreck*, “a pantomime about Captain Cook,” which it is not. Philip H. Highfill, *Biographical Dictionary* (Illinois: Southern Illinois U.P., 1973), vol. 2 of 16, p. 457.

¹⁰ *Morning Post* (29 May 1794); *London Chronicle* (27 May 1794); *Whitehall Evening Post* (27 May 1794). For a third version of the story, see also *Morning Chronicle* (16 February 1795); *Oracle and Public Advertiser* (17 February 1795).

Nevertheless, it suggests that the “general combat” of *The Death of Captain Cook* and other similar pantomimes was chaotic, noisy and dazzling enough to make such a violent incident plausible.

Both the English and French versions of *The Death of Captain Cook*, and *The Shipwreck*, were regarded as characteristic examples of the commercialised genre of performance that Parke calls the “new ballet of action” and Robert Southey “the serious pantomimes in our theatres.”¹¹ These were associated with exotic settings, either historical or geographical, but lacked the harlequinade and topical comedy of annual pantomimes like *Omai*. Reviewing a 1792 performance of George Coleman’s *Blue Beard*, a letter writer in the *World* suggested that Covent Garden replace it with revivals of “*Captain Cook*, and *Oscar and Malvina*,” a pantomime based loosely on the writings of Ossian. These pieces, in contrast to Coleman’s low comedy, “can both amuse the indiscriminate *multitude*, and satisfy the claims of the *refined* and *classical* spectator.”¹² Similarly, in a letter to Mary Hays in 1803, Southey cites the “scenery & manners” of “*Oscar & Malvina – or the Death of Captain Cook*” in support of his advice that Hays should focus in her fiction on portraying “the manners & customs of other countries & other times.”¹³ In these texts, the staging of the present-day Pacific and the Ossianic past seem to share an interchangeable appeal. This is reflected in the shared plot of the two pantomimes, in which a marriage is interrupted by a male rival, and followed by violent conflict; the bride is kidnapped and threatened before being rescued and reunited with her husband, there

¹¹ Parke, p. 200; Robert Southey to Mary Hays (23 May 1803) in *The Collected Letters of Robert Southey Part Two: 1798-1803*, edited by Ian Packer and Lynda Pratt. Letter 785 (Romantic Circles Electronic Edition < http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey_letters.html >).

¹² *World* (9 October 1792). Original italics.

¹³ Southey (1803).

is a battle, and the villain is killed. Characters based on gothic archetypes are introduced: the beautiful female victim (Emaï/ Malvina), the virtuous but ultimately helpless hero (Pareea/ Cook/ Oscar), the passive, ageing king (Terreeoboo/ Fingal), and the commanding, passionate villain (Koah/ Carrol). Together, the two pantomimes provided the Byrns with the roles on which their own celebrity was based, after which three of their children, James, Oscar and Malvina, were named.¹⁴

The Death of Captain Cook probably also shared scenery with *Oscar and Malvina's* banqueting halls, caves and towers, and the two certainly made use of the more sublime scenes and effects produced for *Omai*. Special effects in the former suggested darkening skies, thunder and lightning, cannon and, in the finale of the performance, an erupting volcano. As this list suggests, the British “serious-pantomimic ballet” was also shaped by the contemporary fashion for the gothic presentation of difference, then emerging from illegitimate theatrical venues and the “Writings of MISS AIKEN, and the HON. HORACE WALPOLE.” This would come to dominate the London stage for the succeeding four decades.¹⁵ It was in direct competition with *The Haunted Tower* at Drury Lane and *The Battle of Hexham* at the Haymarket, for example, that Covent Garden adapted and performed *The Death of Captain Cook*.

Paula Backscheider describes this gothic theatre as “perhaps the first indisputable example of what we call ‘mass culture.’” She suggests that popular theatre reacted to the turbulent political (and, I would add, colonial) context of the 1780s and 1790s to

¹⁴ See Highfill, vol. 2, 455-458.

¹⁵ Miles Peter Andrews, *The Songs, Recitatives, Airs, Duets, Trios, and Chorusses, introduced in the Pantomime Entertainment of the Enchanted Castle* (London: n.p., 1786), Preface, iv. See Cox (2002), 125-127.

“assimilate change and reestablish ideological, and therefore social, stability,” through performances which “resolve[d] tensions and ambiguities, named and confined the Other, and confirmed or helped create a new moral order with an idealized English self-image.”¹⁶ On the other hand, with their atmospheric settings, sensational and sentimental plots, and increasingly convincing supernatural effects, gothic modes could be accused, as Fred Botting summarises, of “encouraging excessive emotions [...] rather than developing a rational or properly cultivated response,” and thus of “subverting the mores and manners on which good social behaviour rested.”¹⁷ Yael Shapira has shown how complaints about the presence of excessively emotive materials on stage were linked to attempts to differentiate legitimate English drama from the “vulgar, material realm of popular entertainment.”¹⁸ The disruptive potential of theatrical sensation culminated, perhaps, in the extraordinary somatic reaction to Lewis’s monodrama *The Captive* in 1803, a piece which proved so effective at using music and spectacle to elicit emotional displays of fainting, tears and hysteria that Lewis had to withdraw it, to avoid, he wrote, “throw[ing] half of London into convulsions nightly.”¹⁹

Responses to *The Death of Captain Cook*, though mainly positive, reflect these concerns about the potentially pathological relationship between stage and audience: one critic had never seen a story “witnessed with more emotion,” while another

¹⁶ Backscheider (1993), 149-233; pp. xiii, 238.

¹⁷ Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 4.

¹⁸ Yael Shapira, “Shakespeare, *The Castle of Otranto*, and the Problem of the Corpse on the Eighteenth-Century Stage” in *Eighteenth-Century Life* 36, no. 1 (2012): 1-29, p. 12.

¹⁹ Matthew Lewis to Lady Holland (19 April 1803), qtd in Jack DeRochi, “A Feminine Spectacle: The Novelistic Aesthetic of Matthew Lewis’s *The Captive*” in *Prologues, Epilogues, Curtain-Raisers, and Afterpieces: The Rest of the Eighteenth-Century London Stage*, edited by Daniel J. Ennis and Judith Bailey Slagle (New Jersey: Rosemont, 2007), 238-252, p. 238.

suggested that a viewer “might weep for hours” over the “pathetic” story.²⁰ More alarmingly, a writer in 1812 remembered “[t]ears, fainting, and hysterics”²¹ in an audience whose reaction seemed to overstep the boundaries of rational behaviour. An anecdote in the 1805 *Theatrical Recorder* may have been intended as a positive comment on the emotional verisimilitude of the pantomime and the noble simplicity of an old sailor, but also suggests that the pantomime could elicit the kind of naïve audience response expected of the savages it depicted:

When the ballet of the death of Captain Cook was first brought forward at Covent-garden theatre, an apparently sea-faring man in the gallery, frequently annoyed those behind him, by repeatedly rising from his seat during the representation; the consequence of his great attention to the scene as passing. When the savage steals behind Cook, and lifts the dagger to strike the final blow, he rose with violent emotion, and cried out, “You damn’d villain, what are you about?” Then suddenly recollecting himself, he sat down and said to those around him – “I beg your pardon, gentlefolks; but this affects me, for I was with the Captain at the time.”²²

As in Seward’s *Elegy*, the affective experience of the text disrupts the self-control of the metropolitan consumer, whose displays of “violent emotion” comes to resemble those of Seward’s Oberea or even the Hawaiian “savage” more than those of Cook

²⁰ *World* (17 March 1789); *Prompter* (27 November 1789).

²¹ David Erskine Baker, Isaac Reed and Stephen Jones, *Biographia Dramatica; or, A Companion to the Playhouse* (London: Longman, 1812), vol. 2 of 3, p. 155.

²² *Theatrical Recorder* 2, no. 11 (November 1805): 250-251.

himself, and, like the tears and “fainting fits” which accompanied performances by Sarah Siddons or *The Captive*, pose a threat to “the decorum of the house.”²³

At best, the exotic visual spectacle, melodramatic plot, and emotive finale of *The Death of Captain Cook* could be justified as “food for the mind, and scope for reflection,” encouraging the patriotic commemoration and emulation of Cook.²⁴ Yet other viewers saw the sensual, sentimental responses of audiences to Cook’s death as inherently unreflective, unproductive, and callously un-English. “A Frenchman can turn every thing to a song or a dance,” worried Richard Valpy during a performance of the original production in Paris, but “to an Englishman, [...] the subject is too serious and affecting to become a pantomime.” These performers, he informed his British readers, were highly accomplished at manipulating and intensifying the emotions of the audience: “every attitude rouses the attention of the spectator, takes possession of the soul, fires it into indignation, or melts it into tenderness and pity.”²⁵

A letter-writer calling himself “Petronius,” the following year, was more openly critical of the Covent Garden production, complaining that the scene depicting the murder of Cook was a “horrid diversion of butchery” which “instead of gently agitating our feelings, raises them into a storm.” The use of emotionally manipulative music, he went on, “unnecessarily harrows up our feelings.” Pleading with the managers of Covent Garden to act as “men of taste” and follow the authority of “the best judges,” he suggested that a quieter and more restrained telling of Cook’s death would “be more consistent with the just refinements of the present

²³ James Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons* (London: Henry Colburn, 1827) vol. 1 of 2, p. 327.

²⁴ *The New Lady’s Magazine; Or, Polite, Entertaining, and Fashionable Companion for the Fair Sex* (April 1789), p. 203.

²⁵ Richard Valpy, “Sketch of a Fortnight’s Excursion to Paris in 1788” in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (April 1797-June 1798), p. 374.

age.”²⁶ Petronius was in a minority, an editor’s note following the letter insisted (“not one man in an hundred [...] is of the same opinion”), but his protests can be seen as characteristic of contemporary anxieties about the increasing proficiency of mass theatrical techniques for creating “horrid diversion,” seductive exoticism and dazzling illusions.

Such fears were, I want to stress, common to perceptions of most, if not all, contemporary forms of metropolitan entertainment aimed at a broad paying public. As Worrall cautions, to isolate stage portrayals of the Pacific such as *Omai* and *The Death of Captain Cook* in terms of their setting and “racist proto-imperialism” risks decontextualising them from a broader metropolitan culture. Interpretations of Pacific pantomimes which detach performance from their generic context, he adds, have tended to assume that the audience’s perceived relationship to onstage objects was unidirectional, distanced and proprietorial, with spaces of material encounter like the Leverian Museum acting simply as a “handy ethnographic emporium of Pacific life from which pantomime devisers could draw.” Against this idea, Worrall points to the complex and self-conscious staging of the interaction between viewers and artefacts demonstrated by the onstage depiction of the Leverian’s curiosities in the Christmas 1781 Covent Garden pantomime *The Choice of Harlequin*, in which a collection of taxidermied animals is magically animated, causing museum-goers to flee in panic.²⁷ Other dramatisations of the museum experience might include the terrifying sight of the Tower of London’s suits of armour coming alive and firing their guns or “flourishing their Swords” so that the onstage onlookers “run off” or

²⁶ *Diary or Woodfall’s Register* (13 April 1789).

²⁷ Worrall (2007), p. 152. See puffs in *Public Advertiser* (1 January 1782); *Public Advertiser* (5 January 1782). Messinck (1782), pp. 20-21.

“fall down frightened” in *Harlequin Mungo; or, A Peep into the Tower*, at the Royalty Theatre in 1788.²⁸ These scenes suggest an awareness that the urban spectacle of the exotic might act *upon* the metropolitan onlooker, rather than remaining the inert subject of curiosity.

Finding himself surrounded by the “ferocious stare” and “malevolent aspect” of crocodiles, tigers and bears in the Leverian, a nervous visitor from the *European Magazine* was “happy to recollect they are dead,” and thus “deprived of the power of harm.”²⁹ The imagined animation of the material exotic was, as I have suggested, a source of affect – both pleasure, grief, fear – perceived as reducing the metropolitan viewer’s self-control and subjectivity, often at the same time as the texts on stage proclaimed the defining functions of these qualities for civilised identities. With these contemporary responses in mind, then, the next part of this chapter will examine *The Death of Captain Cook*’s mediation of the experience of Hawaii for its audience, through the sentimental and stage technologies celebrated by reviewers and deprecated by Petronius.

“You’ll bleed when he is stabbed”: Technologies of emotion in *The Death of Captain Cook*

The first three scenes of *The Death of Captain Cook* offer a living, dancing tableaux of the artefacts in the Sandwich Islands Room. This, according to a review of the first English performances of *The Death of Captain Cook*, “gives the Savage life.”³⁰

²⁸ Bates, Reeve and Dixon (1788), 21-29.

²⁹ “Account of Sir Ashton Lever’s Holophusicon” (1782), p. 21.

³⁰ *World* (17 March 1789).

The marriage scene is the first of a series of tableaux, linked by mimed narrative sequences, which depict the exchange of gifts with the British, the preparations to execute prisoners, and Cook's funeral. The presentation of Hawaii as exotic pastoral in the opening scenes, then, is replaced by the presentation of Hawaiians as potential colonial subjects, and then as savages in need of European rescue and reformation. Superimposing these images into a composite Hawaiian figure who is at once a ruthless barbarian torturing his enemy, a noble warrior who chooses to die rather than surrender, a sensual pastoralist, and a docile pupil, the pantomime seeks less to make a decisive statement than to exhibit the full range of exotic types available in newspapers, museums, and travel writing.

Using a range of Pacific objects – nose flutes, “*Islanders Huts*,” garlands – a series of pseudo-rituals in the opening scenes deploy tropes familiar from the ethnographic genre described by Lisa O’Connell as “marriage rites” literature.³¹ Yet this purportedly Hawaiian marriage sequence has no clear source in Pacific voyage literature, which notably lacked information about Hawaiian courtship and matrimony.³² The wedding ceremony presented at the conclusion of the third scene’s music and dancing, in which the couple break a “little white stick,” is borrowed instead from travel accounts of North American tribes.³³ The ceremonial movements which recontextualise the artefacts on the stage – including jumping, dancing, a chase, the exchange of gifts, and mimed courtship and rivalry – combine generic

³¹ Lisa O’Connell, “‘Matrimonial Ceremonies Displayed’: Popular Ethnography and Enlightened Imperialism” in *Eighteenth-Century Life* 26, no. 3 (2002): 98-116.

³² “Concerning their marriages, I can afford the reader little farther satisfaction, than informing him, that such a relation or compact exists amongst them.” *Voyage*, vol. 3, p. 164.

³³ See for example Bernard Picart and Jean Frédéric Bernard, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Several Nations of the Known World* (London: Nicholas Prevost, 1731), vol. 3 of 5, p. 82; Thomas Ashe, *Travels in America* (London: William Sawyer, 1808), pp. 275-276.

notions of ‘primitive’ ritual with the acrobatics and mime of the metropolitan harlequinade. The courtship and celebration are interrupted, moreover, by a series of formulaic stage markers of forboding: a challenge and a duel, before “the sky is darkened by degrees – Lightning flashes – Thunder rolls, and the distant sound of cannon is heard.”³⁴ This has the effect of shaping the narrative within the conventions of modern British theatre, in which the spectacle of the (usually disrupted or delayed) historically or culturally exotic wedding was a staple, appearing in pantomime (*Oscar and Malvina*, *Julia of Louvain*), comedy (John O’Keeffe’s *Castle of Andalusia*, James Cobb’s *The Haunted Tower*) and tragedy (Hannah Cowley’s *Albina, Countess of Raimond*; Hannah More’s *The Fatal Falsehood*).

The Death of Captain Cook, then, narrativises artefacts so that their circulation, inspection and active use becomes, especially in the absence of verbal forms of communication, one of the audience’s primary means of experiencing the story of Cook’s death, a form of visual storytelling characteristic of what Jane Moody calls “illegitimate theatre,” but by 1789 widely adopted by politer venues.³⁵ The contemporary Haymarket pantomime of *The Battle of Hexham*, for example, turns on the heroine’s discovery, authentication and use of a “dagger of curious workmanship” which is displayed on stage and passed from actor to actor.³⁶ By the 1780s the sensory properties of such materials had begun to assume a high level of importance and sophistication, with real medieval antiquities from Walpole’s

³⁴ *Death of Captain Cook*, pp. 5-7.

³⁵ See Moody (2000), 10-47.

³⁶ George Coleman the Younger, *The Battle of Hexham. A Comedy* (Dublin: P. Byrne, 1790), p. 49.

collection used in the 1781 Covent Garden production of *The Count of Narbonne*.³⁷

Antiquarian writers criticised commercial spectacles, in more and more detail, on the basis of the authenticity as well as attractiveness of their “specimens of antient splendour.”³⁸

In *The Death of Captain Cook*, the featherwork ‘*ahu ‘ula*, exhibited in the Leverian Museum and presented as a signifier of Hawaiian mystery in *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, reappears as “a piece of red and white stuff” put around Cook’s shoulders during his reception in Hawaii.³⁹ Given the convenient distinguishing function this would have performed, the actor playing Cook presumably continues to wear the cloak for the remainder of the pantomime. It would thus shift from signifying, in the terms of King’s prose account, a suspect “pledge of friendship,” to the revelation of Hawaiian malice of the “spotted cloak of black and white feathers” wrapped around Cook’s dismembered body – a progress the audience is invited to follow.⁴⁰ Similarly, the audience is expected to keep their eyes on a “poinard” or short dagger which appears among the gifts from Cook to Terreeoboo and the other Hawaiians (“a medal, and a bunch or plume of red feathers; [...] axes to the warriors, and nails, knives, &c”). After this, the published account explains retrospectively, it is taken from the king by Koah during the first battle. Koah uses this dagger to kill Cook after his life has been spared:

³⁷ Temple James Maynard, introduction to *The Plays of Robert Jephson*, edited by Temple James Maynard (New York: Garland, 1980), xiv; Horace Walpole to Anne, Countess of Ossory (15 November 1781) in Walpole (1848), vol. 2, p. 69.

³⁸ [John Carter], *Gentleman’s Magazine* (June 1799): 468-472, p. 468.

³⁹ *Death of Captain Cook*, p. 10.

⁴⁰ *Voyage*, vol. 3, pp. 17-18, 79.

Koah, at this moment, treacherously steals behind the Captain, and with the poinard (he wrested from the king's hand in the preceding encounter) stabs him in the back, and flies. The Captain (though mortally wounded) fires his pistol at Koah and kills him, then reels and falls against a tree. One of Koah's party takes advantage of this situation, and stabs him in the side, and this is repeated by each warrior with a savage eagerness, snatching the dagger from each other, and shouting and exulting in his fall.⁴¹

The idea that the dagger which killed him had originally been a gift from Cook is borrowed from travel accounts, including Rickman's illicit journal and Johann Reinhold Forster's *History of the Voyages and Discoveries made in the North* (1786).⁴² The choreographed transfer of this artefact from actor to actor, culminating in the frenzy of "snatching" by the mob around Cook's body, restages the scenes of gift exchange and trade, familiar from voyage literature and productive of the exhibits in the museum, only to ironise them as ominous markers of Hawaiian villainy.

The Death of Captain Cook concludes, as the Hawaiian narrative in *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* begins, in "A MORAI, or Burying Place. Mountain behind."⁴³ As well as recalling King and *Omai*, from which these scenery flats were probably recycled, the setting follows a more general metropolitan fashion for picturesque

⁴¹ *Death of Captain Cook*, pp. 10, 15-16.

⁴² Rickman (1781), p. 319; Johann Reinhold Forster, *History of the Voyages and Discoveries made in the North* (London: G.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1786) p. 404.

⁴³ *Death of Captain Cook*, p. 17.

graveyard scenes.⁴⁴ Cook's body is carried around the stage and placed in the centre, followed by "a pole, having the following inscription on a board, "*To the Memory of Captain James Cook, 14th February, 1779.*" The conventions of a European military funeral are both disrupted and heightened by the sublime effects of a storm and erupting volcano. The scene is completed by the entrance of male and female Hawaiian figures, who take their places as allegorical figures posed "on both sides of the tomb, weeping the fate of their generous departed friend," and by the spectacular installation of four "long perches to which sculptured figures of human heads are fastened, one above another."⁴⁵ These objects may well have been reused "idols" from the set of *Omai*, which a surviving sketch suggests were based on red feather *ki'i hulu manu*, intended to be recognisable from the collections of Webber and Lever.⁴⁶ This display of Cook's murdered body, wrapped in a red cloak, labelled with an inscribed text and placed amongst realist representations of Hawaiian topography, natural phenomena and ethnographia, recalls both King's extraordinary catalogue of Cook's body parts, and the Sandwich Islands Room, with its staged presentation of a memorial "Inscription," *'ahu 'ula, ki'i hulu manu* and rows of weapons.⁴⁷

The viewer's responses to such scenes – curiosity, confusion, enchantment, grief – potentially aligned them in a common sentimental relationship with savage spectators, as we have seen. However, the appreciation, collection and reproduction

⁴⁴ See Worrall (2007), p. 144. See also the characteristic "Repository" with "sepulchral figures" in front of mountain scenery in Andrew MacDonald, *Vimonda, a Tragedy*. Second edition (London: J. Murray, 1788), p. 3.

⁴⁵ *Death of Captain Cook*, pp. 17-19.

⁴⁶ Phillippe Jacques de Louterbourg [after John Webber?] *Drums Otaheite. Idols Sandwich Isles. Paddles. Altar*. Watercolour and ink sketch, c. 1785 (National Library of New Zealand, Auckland).

⁴⁷ *Companion to the Museum*, p. 6.

of such objects, as well as the expertise in light, acoustics, music, perspective and mechanics required to present them in this form on the stage, could also be seen as representing metropolitan civilisation and modernity in opposition to the evoked primitive world. *The Death of Captain Cook*, after all, made ostentatious use of the most sophisticated stage technology available to manipulate the audience's experience. It seems likely that many people came to watch it in order to experience its special effects at first hand. Cook's first entrance, in fact, is in the form of stage machinery. The Hawaiians gather at "The Sea Shore on the Island" and respond with mimed "marks of fear and amazement," as a model ship "appears with English colours." A puppet Cook, identified by his uniform and actions, stands "on the forecastle with a spying glass, with which he seems discovering the country. He then takes a white flag in his hand, which he waves repeatedly towards the shore."⁴⁸

Though this diminutive figure of Cook could not have been especially imposing, puppet ships were often regarded as impressive in their realism, as they were in Louterbourg's naval spectacles at Drury Lane or in the Eidophusikon, with accurate rigging, sails and colours, and lighting, graduated colour and complex moving machinery to produce the illusion of distance. A few moments later, a procession of marines, armed sailors, musicians and flags would land on the beach at the front of the stage, with Cook played by an actor, while military music is played increasingly loudly, simulating the approach of the boat.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *Death of Captain Cook*, p. 9.

⁴⁹ *Death of Captain Cook*, pp. 9-10. For better documented examples of this effect, see George Coleman the Younger, *Feudal Times; or, The Banquet-Gallery: A Drama, in Two Acts* (London: T. Woodfall, 1799); and the account of *Blue Beard* compiled in Backscheider, p. 185. See also Altick (1978), p. 123; Christopher Baugh, "Philippe de Louterbourg: Technology-Driven Entertainment and Spectacle in the Late Eighteenth-Century" in *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (2007):

Such stage effects, as Wilson and O'Quinn note, were a means of promoting metropolitan technological sophistication, and can be compared to the exhibitions of guns, telescopes, electricity machines, music and fireworks produced by European sailors in the Pacific.⁵⁰ Predictably, then, the Hawaiians in *The Death of Captain Cook* respond to its displays of naval power and British technology with gratifying “marks of fear and amazement,” or “wonder and pleasure.”⁵¹ The pantomimed reactions to British sailing ships, guns and looking glasses participate in a myth of savage naïveté and European rationality, presenting the metropolitan audience with technology that they are supposed to understand and Hawaiians are not. The emotional and sensual appeal of stage effects, though, depends in large part on their (at least temporary) inexplicability or magic. This opening scene thus presents a triumphant Cook in the dual roles of civilising European explorer (like Seward's miraculous Orpheus figure), and Harlequinesque theatrical showman, animating himself to the amazement of audiences in London and Hawaii alike. Stage illusions continue throughout the piece, from erupting volcanoes to the realistic stage fighting suggested by Parkes' anecdote. In a perhaps more direct way than in any earlier text looked at in this thesis, the sensational mystery and affective spectacle of the *Death of Captain Cook* thus problematises as well as reinforces a distinction between the rational European subject embodied in Cook, and the irrational savage crowd overawed by his knowledge.

This is underlined by the role in Cook's memorialisation given to a quasi-supernatural figure whose effect on the metropolitan audience restages the allegedly

251-268; p. 254, 261; Julie Park, *The Self and It: Novel Objects and Mimetic Subjects in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 2010), 161-188.

⁵⁰ Wilson (2003), p. 66; O'Quinn (2005), p. 103.

⁵¹ *Death of Captain Cook*, pp. 9-10.

superstitious and self-destructive rituals of Tahitian mourning, and links them to the disorderly reactions of mixed London audiences to “horrid” stories and stage ghosts: the Pacific “Mourner” who “beats the earth with his staff” to begin the concluding dance.⁵² The Mourner’s costume was almost certainly based upon a Tahitian chief mourner’s dress.⁵³ These were familiar from illustrations in the accounts of Cook’s first and second Pacific voyages, and from the costumes themselves, several of which had been brought to Europe in the 1770s and 1780s. One, of course, was displayed in the Leverian.⁵⁴ British audiences had been mesmerised by the figure of the Tahitian chief mourner since Joseph Banks had described participating in a Tahitian funeral in 1769. His account described how the lead mourner would process slowly to the graveside, enacting a violent “phrenzy of grief” by attacking passers-by with a shark-tooth club.⁵⁵ The costumes, generally including a shell mask, a large wooden chest-piece, a long cloak, often edged with feathers, an apron covered in glittering fragments of shell, and a feather headdress, inspired curiosity, desire, and horror. Such a “fantastic dress,” John Trusler had noted in 1778, “in England would convey the idea which nurses affix to a ghost or goblin.”⁵⁶

⁵² *Death of Captain Cook*, p. 19.

⁵³ See costume sketch by Philippe-Jacques de Louthembourg, *Chief Mourner Otahaite*. Watercolour, 1785 (National Library of Australia, Canberra).

⁵⁴ William Woollett, after Sydney Parkinson, *A View of the Island of Otaheite*, in Hawkesworth, illustration to vol. 2, p. 234; Woollett, after William Hodges, *A Toupapow with a Corpse on it Attended by the Chief Mourner in his Habit of Ceremony*. In Cook and Furneaux, (1777), illustration to vol. 1, p. 185. See Kaeppler (1978), 121-126.

⁵⁵ See Vanessa Smith (2010), 140-176, 212.

⁵⁶ John Trusler, *A Descriptive Account of the Islands Lately Discovered in the South-Seas* (London: R. Baldwin, 1778), p. 32.

In *Omai*, Towha's apparition in a moonlit "dismal Woody Place, with a Royal Repository," wearing this costume, is greeted by Otoo, the magician who has invoked him, with the evident terror of a witness to a ghost:

My quiv'ring flesh, my limbs bedew'd all o'er;

Each feeble sense – my eyes – my voice – no more! *[falls prostrate]*

In the tradition of Hamlet's father or the armoured ghost of Alfonso in *Otranto* (a tradition later taken up by the phantoms plays such as *Fontainville Forest* and *The Castle Spectre*) Towha, "the Guardian Genius of Omai's Ancestors, and Protector of the legal Kings of Otaheite," is an ancestor whose impressively gothic apparition reveals secrets and restores family and social order.⁵⁷ It seems likely that this large and elaborate costume was reused in *The Death of Captain Cook*, for a figure again accompanied by striking special effects and lighting. Yet the chief mourner, here, has the role of directing and even embodying metropolitan mourning for Cook.⁵⁸ Responding to the ambivalent quasi-supernatural figure with the "[t]ears, fainting, and hysterics," metropolitan audiences took on the sentimental identity of the Pacific mourner, as well as the characteristics assumed to define the beliefs and behaviour of the savage.⁵⁹

Touring viewers and performers in *The Death of Captain Cook*.

The unstable self-definition of the metropolitan audience is reflected in a cultural preoccupation with the presence and reactions of authentic 'savages' in London

⁵⁷ Louthembourg, O'Keeffe and Shields, p. 2.

⁵⁸ *Death of Captain Cook*, pp. 17-19.

⁵⁹ Baker, Reed and Jones (1812), vol. 2, p. 155.

theatres.⁶⁰ In 1790, for example, the *Public Advertiser* reported that “The Cherokee Chiefs have taken the Stage Box at Covent-Garden Theatre for to-morrow evening, to see the Pantomime of the Death of Captain Cook.”⁶¹ The six “Cherokee Chiefs” were a supposed Cherokee and Creek delegation to London led by William Augustus Bowles; like Mai the subject of a portrait by William Hodges and hospitality from Joseph Banks.⁶² A few days earlier they had watched *The Haunted Tower* and *Don Juan* at Drury Lane, where a “shower of fire” had been attempted for the first time to impress them, and had set fire to the theatre’s curtains. The newspapers emphasised the Native Americans’ pleasure at the sensational or illegitimate aspects of these shows, noting that the “six Indian Chiefs [...] seemed charmed with the performances, particularly the after-piece, and laughed most immoderately at the humour of Dubois, in Scaramouch.”⁶³ Staged relationships to the exotic could develop in unpredictable and complex ways, which could, it should be clear, reach further than Covent Garden or Richmond. Despite its dependence on material stage effects, *The Death of Captain Cook* was a highly mobile and adaptive text.

Having originated in France and been translated for the London stage, the pantomime was almost immediately exported further afield. After the season in Richmond, for example, it was adopted by Samuel Butler’s provincial company for performance on the Yorkshire theatre circuit, as part of a repertoire of sensational metropolitan blockbusters combining music, comedy, action, sentiment and supernatural effects. *The Death of Captain Cook* was advertised as featuring “the

⁶⁰ See Bickham (2005), 21-64.

⁶¹ *Public Advertiser* (11 November 1790).

⁶² See William C. Sturtevant, “The Cherokee Frontiers, the French Revolution, and William Augustus Bowles” in *The Cherokee Indian Nation: A Troubled History*, edited by Duane H. King (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 61-91; Stephanie Pratt (2005), 91-112.

⁶³ *Diary or Woodfall’s Register* (8 November 1790).

Original Music, Scenery, Dresses and other Decorations,” although a full range of stage effects seem unlikely given the demands of travel and the small venues.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, it is clear that the pantomime, already potentially familiar to provincial audiences from newspapers, periodicals, letters and visits to London, could be promoted in terms of the capital’s technological sophistication and novelty. The theatrical figure of Cook, travelling back to his northern provincial origins, had by the end of the 1780s become a figure of London celebrity and entertainment, and performances on the Yorkshire circuit, which often altered scripts locally and topically, would probably have referred to the return of a local hero. On the other hand, an 1801-1802 tour of south-western England, including Exeter and Gosport, may have put emphasis on the role of the navy and Cook’s officer status, given the dominant naval presence in the region.⁶⁵

In the late 1790s, Byrn and his wife took *The Death of Captain Cook* to New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore with “New Scenery, Dresses, and Decorations.” These were presumably smaller and more portable than those at Covent Garden, but are also likely to have diminished the visual emblems of Englishness such as flags and uniforms, making more of the perceived neutral political status of Cook’s voyages and a shared sense of sentimentality. Although it promotes the culturally

⁶⁴ Sybil Rosenfeld, *The Georgian Theatre of Richmond Yorkshire and its Circuit: Beverley, Harrogate, Kendal, Northallerton, Ulverston and Whitby* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1984), 19-29. For eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theatrical touring, see also Helen Burke, “Eighteenth-Century Theatrical Touring and Irish Popular Culture” in *Irish Theatre on Tour*, edited by Nicholas Grene and Chris Morash (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2005), 119-138; Jane Moody, “Dictating to the Empire: Performance and Theatrical Geography in Eighteenth-Century Britain” in *The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre, 1730-1830*, edited by Jane Moody and Daniel O’Quinn (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2007), 21-41.

⁶⁵ See advertisements in *Trewman’s Exeter Flying Post* (3 December 1801); *Hampshire Telegraph & Portsmouth Gazette* (29 March 1802).

authoritative London origins of the pantomime, the playbill advertising the New York production concludes with a resounding “*Vivat Respublica*” asserting the development of a modern and self-sufficient American stage which could collaborate on equal terms with British producers and actors.⁶⁶ While the role of Cook’s heroic (and antiheroic) celebrity in the development of American national identity requires more space for analysis than this thesis allows, the place of *The Death of Captain Cook* within what Roach calls “circum-Atlantic” theatre suggests that Cook’s celebrity lent itself to performances which went well beyond a narrow rehearsal of English patriotism and xenophobia.

Nor did this mythology simply radiate out from the metropolis towards the periphery. The show reached America before it reached many smaller cities in Britain, for example. Moreover, in 1818 the unnamed Hawaiian roles in the pantomime were played for British audiences by a touring group of American Seneca men led by a chief known as Colonel Thomas, Tommy Jemmy or Soonongise, and the New York showman Augustus Carlton Fox.⁶⁷ These “American Indian Warriors,” had “multifunctional”⁶⁸ motives for their tour, appealing publicly for British political support against white American land seizures, and meeting representatives of Quaker missions as well as taking part in commercial exhibitions of acting, dancing and archery in Liverpool, Leeds, York, Newcastle, Manchester,

⁶⁶ Playbill for New Theatre, Greenwich Street, New York (2 October 1797). See Roach (1996); Jeffrey H. Richards, *Drama, Theatre, and Identity in the American New Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2005).

⁶⁷ See Matthew Dennis, *Seneca Possessed: Indians, Witchcraft and Power in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 194-202. A print portrait of the group was published: Francis Moser after Denis Dighton, *North American Indian Warriors, from Lake Erie, of the Seneca, who were in London in 1818*. Lithograph engraving, 1819 (British Museum).

⁶⁸ Kate Flint, *The Transatlantic Indian, 1776-1930* (New Jersey: Princeton U.P., 2009), p. 60.

Edinburgh, Drury Lane in London, and finally Ireland, where they were billed as “the first instance of American Aborigines having been introduced into this Kingdom.”⁶⁹ Their theatrical pieces included *Robinson Crusoe*, *La Perouse* and a specially written piece called *The Indian Settlers* as well as *The Death of Captain Cook*. While local casts took the main roles, the Seneca men, “in their native costumes, with brilliant feathers, and bright-hued garments, and wild ways,”⁷⁰ played the ‘savages,’ performing dances and “various Ceremonies descriptive of the peculiar Customs and Manners of their Country,” and exhibiting curious “Dresses, Arms, and Accoutrements, [...] brought by them from their Native Country.”

That Kealakekua Bay was thousands of miles from the group’s “Native Country” around Lake Erie does not seem to have detracted from the audiences’ “pleasure and information,” or from the sense that the “novel spectacle” was entirely authentic: “executed in the true savage style, and with all the genuine uncouthness of the barbarian tribes of the western world.”⁷¹ A London reviewer of *The Death of Captain Cook* the following season assured readers that, though the authentic savages had returned to America, English actors’ “finely imitated” performances of the exotic were so close to the real thing that, “had we not missed the Indian names from the bills, [...] we should never have guessed that the company had lost their powerful auxiliaries from the other side of ‘the Great Water.’”⁷² These responses seem to enact Barbauld’s fantasy of the ethnographic museum animated by living figures “dressed up and accoutred” in “the arms and dresses of different nations.” At

⁶⁹ In John C. Greene, *Theatre in Dublin, 1745-1820: A Calendar of Performances* (Maryland: Lehigh U.P., 2011), vol. 6 of 6, pp. 4361.

⁷⁰ Albert Bigelow, *Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society* (1896), qtd. Dennis, p. 195.

⁷¹ *Caledonian Mercury* (1 October 1818).

⁷² *Morning Post* (7 September 1819).

the same time, they could also be seen in terms of Peter Mason's definition of the metropolitan exotic as the discursive construction of a non-specifically distant 'savage' through ethnographic realism.⁷³

Yet the Seneca cast's "animated Representation" of savagery, wrote the *Caledonian Mercury*, also had the paradoxical effect of demonstrating their surprisingly sophisticated familiarity with European culture – enough "to comprehend the nature of dramatic representations, and to perform the parts allotted to them."⁷⁴ After his return home in 1821, Tommy Jemmy would kill a woman accused of witchcraft. This and the ensuing trial was a "contested performance," according to Matthew Dennis, which, like his British theatre tour, appeared to white newspaper readers to represent "the true savage style" but could also be interpreted as a troubling but pragmatic synthesis of native practices with European cultural, social, and religious exports, including the generic notion of the theatrical exotic.⁷⁵

Johann Zoffany: painting the "grand serious-pantomimic ballet."

It has been plausibly suggested that Johann Zoffany's painting of the death of Cook (Figure 9), begun in the 1790s, was prompted by seeing *The Death of Cook* at Covent Garden, and that the pantomime "could have possibly suggested not only the subject but also the treatment of the subject."⁷⁶ Certainly, the picture has elements of sensational theatricality which distinguish it from the earlier depictions of the scene

⁷³ Barbault (1791) in Oliver, p. 199; Mason (1998).

⁷⁴ *Caledonian Mercury* (1 October 1818).

⁷⁵ See Dennis, 53-116.

⁷⁶ Bernard Smith (1960), p. 120.

looked at in Chapters 4 and 5. The painting's unfinished state at Zoffany's death is probably the reason for its relative absence from Cook mythologies since then.

A well-established German painter working in London with court patronage, Zoffany had in 1771 been engaged to travel on Cook's second voyage as part of Joseph Banks' team of artists and naturalists. When this project fell through, he toured Europe instead, before spending most of the 1780s in Bengal, producing Indian scenes for British colonial rulers such as Warren Hastings. At an unknown point in the mid-1790s, having returned to London, Zoffany began painting *The Death of Captain James Cook, 14 February 1779*. It is not clear why Zoffany left this ambitious painting unfinished, although the reasons may include his increasingly poor health and the multiple other works he began in the 1790s. On his death the painting came to be owned by Elizabeth Cook, and after she died in 1835, it was displayed in the Painted Hall at Greenwich. At some point in the nineteenth century it was completed by unknown painters, something which was only discovered during twentieth-century restoration to its original state.⁷⁷

With its obviously artificial composition, distant cliffs and lurid lighting, *The Death of Captain James Cook, 14 February 1779* appears, at least in its incomplete form, unusually theatrical. It reproduces the exaggerated gestural language of pantomime, and may reflect some of Byrn's chaotic and violent choreography in its intricate interplay of contorted bodies across the canvas. As well as the affective technologies of the theatre, though, Zoffany, who maintained connections to Banks and his circle

⁷⁷ Johann Zoffany, *The Death of Captain James Cook, 14 February 1779*. Oil on canvas, c. 1795 (National Maritime Museum, Greenwich). For the history of the painting, see Charles Mitchell, "Zoffany's *Death of Captain Cook*" in *Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 84, no. 492 (1944): 56-63.

and thus to a vast collection of Pacific ethnographia, is clearly influenced by his experience of the display of Hawaiian artefacts. Although most of the Hawaiian figures are naked, the two central warriors wear the famous feathered cloak and *mahiolo*, painstakingly reproduced in motion as though to illustrate Barbauld's "warrior full armed in the attitude of attack."⁷⁸ The vivid red and yellow of these, and a brutal, primitive-looking dagger, form the visual centre of the painting's whirl of sensation, in contrast to the fallen Cook's modern uniform. As in earlier prints and paintings of the scene, Cook holds an unused rifle (rather than the sword carried in the pantomime), emphasising his civilised moral restraint in contrast to the threatening figure of his killer.

A mass metropolitan mythology of Cook's death, then, can be traced in Zoffany's painting. At the same time, the picture is exceptional in its adoption of more prestigious cultural tropes: it has been pointed out, for example, that the pose of the central figure of Cook's killer is based on the ancient Greek statue *Discobolus* belonging to Zoffany's friend Charles Townley.⁷⁹ The dignity suggested by this pose is emphasised by the apparently classical shape of the helmet, and by metropolitan notions of these Hawaiian artefacts as markers of high status, wealth, and craftsmanship. William Pressly argues that Zoffany's use of classical imagery, "large scale", and "heroic terms" made him "the first to raise [the scene of Cook's death] to the level of history painting, elevating his subject."⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Barbauld (1791) in Oliver, p. 200.

⁷⁹ Mitchell, pp. 60-61.

⁸⁰ William L. Pressly, "Genius Unveiled: The Self-Portraits of Johan Zoffany" in *Art Bulletin* 69, no. 1 (1987): 107-113; pp. 108-109.

The effect of *The Death of Captain James Cook*, however, could be seen replicating the tension found in the museum exhibits of Hawaiian artefacts, caught between aesthetic admiration for archaic heroism and beauty, and the anxious assertion of the immorality of barbarism. Thus the upraised arm and vicious dagger of the painted figure cut across the expected heroic lines of the *Discobolus*, and the classically nude or draped figures in the foreground emerge from a dark tangle of violence and dying or dead bodies. Zoffany includes in the background the seated, elderly ‘king’ Kalani‘opu‘u, between two apparently naked women, who calmly watch the massacre from underneath a leafy branch. These figures visualise the narrative, pointing the viewer back to the beginning of the story and the causes of the conflict (as Pressly points out, even the use of what looks like sugarcane as a royal “parasol” has a source in Heinrich Zimmerman’s German account of the voyage⁸¹). At the same time, they evoke the images of Eastern rulers seated beneath canopies amongst their ‘zenana,’ depicted in the miniatures which circulated as fashionable commodities in London.⁸²

This Orientalist imagery recalls Zoffany’s earlier work as a colonial artist in India, which included portraits and scenes of Indian life as a glamorous but often brutal spectacle of tiger hunts, cockfights, and sati.⁸³ The figures of the Hawaiian royal spectators, looking back at the metropolitan viewers of the painting, would have reminded the contemporary viewer of the archaic and despotic power structures associated with the exotic aesthetic, as well as a savage and sensual mode of

⁸¹ Pressly, p. 182, note 9.

⁸² See Natasha Eaton, “Nostalgia for the Exotic: Creating an Imperial Art in London, 1750-1793” in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39, no. 2 (2006): 227-250.

⁸³ See Hermione de Almeida and George H. Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2005), 132-140; 229-230.

spectatorship by which the eighteenth-century metropolis was, as we have seen, both self-defined through difference and morally self-implicated.

Chapter 9. Helen Maria Williams' *The Morai*

“Pantomime like a dream has its quick transitions,” noted the *Public Advertiser* in parentheses in its account of *Omai, or, A Trip round the World*.¹ The astonishing and apparently magical transformations, irrationality and emotional intensity of dream, reverie and madness were highlighted in the newspaper’s extensive coverage of Louthembourg’s spectacle. The same issue of the *Public Advertiser* reported the death of the retired actress Kitty Clive, and that Mary Wells had fainted onstage at Covent Garden and been “carried from the Stage in a state of insensibility.” These stories emphasized the attractiveness of both actresses, presenting their “insensibility” as objects for the readers’ sentimental, horrified gaze, like the unconscious figures in Henry Fuseli’s *Nightmare* or *The Shepherd’s Dream*.² Yet as the review of the pantomime showed, audiences also enjoyed the feeling of being themselves swept up into dreamlike confusion by rapidly developing stage technologies and dazzling, disorienting metamorphoses. Such sequences, it has been pointed out, were characteristic of commercial entertainment’s attempts to please a diverse and unpredictable audience.³

¹ *Public Advertiser* (21 December 1785).

² See Martin Myrone, “Henry Fuseli and Gothic Spectacle” in *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (June 2007): 289-310.

³ Andrei Pop, “Sympathetic Spectators: Henry Fuseli’s *Nightmare* and Emma Hamilton’s Attitudes” in *Art History* 34, no. 5 (2011): 934-957, p. 938. See Iain McCalman, “Mystagogues of Revolution: Cagliostro, Louthembourg and Romantic London” in *Romantic Metropolis: The Urban Scene of British Culture, 1780-1840*, edited by James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2005), 177-203; Ann Bermingham, Introduction to *Sensation and Sensibility: Viewing Gainsborough’s Cottage Door*, edited by Ann Bermingham (New Haven: Yale U.P., 2005), 1-34; Baugh (2007).

Unexpected transitions, intense emotional or dreamlike states, and a preoccupation with mortality, imagination and the supernatural also characterise *The Morai, an Ode*, Helen Maria Williams' lengthy, strange poetic appendix to the 1788 biography of Cook by Andrew Kippis, published a year before the London production of the pantomime *Death of Captain Cook*.⁴ In the last two decades, this poem has been generally dismissed as both "Anna Seward's 'Elegy' revisited" and as straightforward imperial idealisation.⁵ In so doing, critics echo the indifference of Williams' contemporary reviewers, who were mostly "highly entertained" by the poem but did not take it seriously.⁶ Still at an early stage in her career, Williams had already faced suggestions, both positive and negative, that her work was largely shaped by Seward: a 1786 review of Williams' *Poems* in the *European Magazine*, for example, had attributed a number of "turgid and affected expressions" to the older and better established poet.⁷

Williams was a correspondent of Seward and had complimented her 'epic elegy' form in 1783, describing her experience of Seward's writing as a kind of "radiant" sound-and-light show, praising her "warm melodious sigh," and the "precious

⁴ Helen Maria Williams, *The Morai, An Ode*. Appendix 2 in Andrew Kippis, *The Life of Captain James Cook* (London: G. Nichol, 1788), 520-527. Also published, under Williams' name, in the *Edinburgh Magazine, or Literary Miscellany* 8, no. 43 (July 1788): 73-75. Hereafter cited as *Morai*.

⁵ Edmond (1997), p. 27. See also Lamb (2001), p. 251; Josephine McDonagh, *Child Murder and British Culture, 1720-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2003), p. 60; Kucich (2007), p. 5. Deborah Kennedy, in her book on Williams, allocates less than a page to *The Morai*, seeing it as essentially a precursor of her writing on the French Revolution. *Helen Maria Williams and the Age of Revolution* (London: Associated University Presses, 2002), 40-41.

⁶ *Literary Magazine and British Review* (August 1788): 132-136, p. 135; *New Annual Register, or, General Repository of History, Politics, and Literature* (January 1788), p. 244.

⁷ *European Magazine, and London Review* 10 (September 1786): 177-180, p. 180; for earlier accusations see letter in *European Magazine, and London Review* (November 1785): 358-359.

thrilling drops that flow | From Pity's hov'ring soul."⁸ For Williams, here, Seward's poetry acts as a mediating mechanism which transforms the horror and loss into sensual and aesthetic pleasure for a metropolitan readership. This interpretation is, as Chapter 3 has suggested, common to many of Seward's readers. I want to argue, though, that Williams' focus on the "thrilling" sensation of being overpowered by sensibility gestures towards a more complete exploration of this aspect of Seward's work in *The Morai*; which incorporates fragments of the *Elegy* only after it has evoked a series of scenes and figures revealed to be the phantasmagoric projections of "fancy." In particular, Williams creates a phantom figure who appears to resurrect both Cook and Tahiti for the reader. This figure, the poem goes on to insist, not only lacks the identity attributed to it by the reader, but can only ever be a product of "fancy"'s sentimental and delusive indulgence in mourning. In this context, the elegiac and ethnographic assertions of Seward's poem, and sentimental representations of Cook in general, are called into question.

Nearly ten years after his death, Williams' Cook is not a hero of rationality, commerce or empire so much as a harlequin figure who choreographs dreamlike transitions between scenes and sensations – Europe, the Arctic, the Pacific – in a metropolitan spectacle of the global. Cook's voyages provided, as Kippis writes in his introduction to Williams' poem – "new scenes for a poetical fancy to range in."⁹ The wandering movements of "fancy" structure *The Morai*, in sequences of apparently unconnected scenes, often dramatic or suggestive of "half-seen horror."¹⁰ These follow and dissolve into each other in ways which recall the dreamlike

⁸ [Helen Maria Williams], *An Ode on the Peace* (London: T. Cadell, 1783), ll. 67-70.

⁹ Kippis (1788), p. 510.

¹⁰ *Morai*, l. 10.

transitions of pantomime, the Eidophusikon, or conjuring shows. Moreover many of these scenes – shipwrecks, corpses, ghosts, madness, moonlit graves – follow metropolitan fashions for the sensational and the affective. Williams’ impulse is to absorb the story of Cook’s death into sentimental entertainment. In this sense, while Seward can be seen as elegising a topical and patriotic Captain Cook gathered from newspapers, Williams’ poem is an account of the new Cook of the Leverian and the theatre.

The Morai’s apparent conventionality makes it easy to underestimate the ways in which the poem repeatedly surprises or wrong-foots the reader. The first stanza appears to offer nothing new in its scene-setting of the poem in “Fair Otaheite”, and its opposition of a heroic male navigator to personifications of Night, Danger, and Nature. Yet the passage also offers a perplexing loop of oppositions, immediately abandoning Otaheite to describe its opposite, a polar storm, defined negatively as an experience which overwhelms and obliterates the memory of Otaheite:

Fair Otaheite, fondly blest
 By him, who long was doom’d to brave
 The fury of the polar wave,
 That fiercely mounts the frozen rock
 Where the harsh sea-bird rears her nest,
 And learns the raging surge to mock –
 There, Night, that loves eternal storm,
 Deep, and lengthen’d darkness throws,
 And untried Danger’s doubtful form

Its half-seen horror shows!
 While Nature, with a look so wild
 Leans on the cliffs in chaos pil'd;
 That here, the aw'd, astonish'd mind,
 Forgets, [...].¹¹

As the subclauses pile up, the original subject of the sentence— “Fair Otaheite”— is left dangling and forgotten, without a corresponding verb. In the same way, the sunshine of Tahiti is forgotten by “the aw'd, astonish'd mind”: This is the first of a series of curiously disembodied images of subjectivity, which simultaneously represent the navigator in the storm (in the context of Kippis's biography, readers tend to assume this figure is Cook), and the reader of the account of the storm (who may also be Williams herself). When the reader returns to “Otaheite's isle” at the end of the stanza, it is not to close the phrase begun in the first line, but as a place which has been lost in the darkness and chaos.¹²

In contrast to Seward's pentameter rhyming couplets, Williams' iambic tetrameter and complex, irregular rhymes allow swift, almost unconscious movement between images and ideas; echoing the dazzling transitions of shows like the pantomime and the Eidophusikon, as well as the experience of touring a commercial museum such as the Leverian. Williams had already explored the sensational experience of the museum, in her 1786 poem, “Part of an Irregular Fragment, found in a Dark Passage in the Tower” – a title which could function equally as the museum label for a curiosity. This describes a tourist visit to the Tower of London, brought vividly to life as an animated procession of sudden, transitory figures which emerge from the

¹¹ *Morai*, ll. 1-14.

¹² *Morai*, l. 22.

ancient fabric of the building and its relics, prompting the viewer into a “burning frenzy” of emotion.¹³ “An Irregular Fragment” also recalls more overtly theatrical shows, describing its spectres in terms of the airy, mobile images created by the smoke and projected light of the magic lantern:

Ye visions that before me roll,
That freeze my blood, that shake my soul!
Are ye the phantoms of a dream?
Pale spectres! are ye what ye seem?
They glide more near –
Their forms unfold!¹⁴

Amplified by the shifting, self-consciously “irregular” metre and layout of the lines, the floating spectres “roll”, “glide”, “hover[...]”, “shrink[...]”, “rise,” “sink[...] slow,” and “advance” like the projected ghosts, skeletons and grotesques which could be made to expand, contract, disappear or suddenly loom towards the viewer by the manipulation of magic lantern slides.¹⁵ Echoing both this and the magic

¹³ Helen Maria Williams, “Part of an Irregular Fragment, found in a Dark Passage in the Tower,” in *Poems* (London: Thomas Cadell, 1786), vol. 2 of 2, p. 21-44, Advertisement, l. 207.

¹⁴ Williams (1786), ll. 31-36. Sasha Handley notes that during the eighteenth century “Ghosts usually appeared in familiar human form [...]. Contemporary advances in optical instrumentation and chemical knowledge destabilized the iconography of ghosts and slowly rendered some of them incorporeal and shadowy substances.” Handley, *Visions of an Unseen World: Ghost Beliefs and Ghost Stories in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007), p. 9.

¹⁵ Williams (1786), ll. 31, 35, 73, 77, 115, 194, 213. See Simon During, *Modern Enchantments: The Cultural Power of Secular Magic* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard U.P., 2002), 43-106; Mervyn Heard, “Now You See It, Now You Don’t: The Magician and the Magic Lantern” in *Realms of Light: Uses and Perceptions of the Magic Lantern from the 17th to the 21st Century* edited by Richard Crangle, Mervyn Heard and Ine van Dooren (London: Magic Lantern Society, 2005), 13-24.

lantern showman's favourite trick of superimposing skulls over beautiful faces, in *The Morai* images of death sensationally appear in pastoral scenes:

Yet, amid [Tahiti's] fragrant bowers,
 Where Spring, whose dewy fingers strew
 O'er other lands some fleeting flowers,
 Lives, in blossoms ever new;
 Whence arose that shriek of pain?
 Whence the tear that flows in vain? –
 Death!¹⁶

The question which marks this transition also repeats one of the most alarming moments of “An Irregular Fragment,” when the narrator interrupts herself to demand “But whence arose that solemn call?”¹⁷ These disconcerting sights and sounds seem to emerge from nowhere, replicating the disorientations of the showman's illusions.

Williams' imitation of Robert Blair's popular *The Grave* in *The Morai*'s “the central wastes, where Night | Divides no chearing hour with Day,” (“long-extended Realms, and rueful Wastes! | Where nought but Silence reigns, and Night, dark Night”) establishes the themes of mortality and imagination.¹⁸ *The Morai* transports a figure of “daring Fancy” from darkness and “half-seen horror” on a rapid tour of global gravesides “from the shore where Ganges rolls [...] | To Earth's chill verge,” illustrating the ethnographic and antiquarian axiom that “various rite[s]” of mourning were human universals.¹⁹ “That tender and sincere affection which subsists among

¹⁶ *Morai*, ll. 23-29.

¹⁷ Williams (1786), ll. 129-130.

¹⁸ *Morai*, ll. 38-39; Robert Blair, *The Grave* (London: M. Cooper, 1743), ll. 12-13.

¹⁹ *Morai*, ll. 37, 10, 57-59.

near relations and dear friends through life,” wrote Robert Henry in an account of pre-Roman Britain, “hath, in all ages and countries, disposed the survivors to pay certain honours to their deceased friends, and to commit their remains to the earth with some peculiar rites and ceremonies.”²⁰ Williams’ poeticising of this argument introduces a series of four dramatically lit, mobile tableaux: a funeral procession on the Tahitian beach, a bleeding, frenzied female mourner, sunset and twilight at a haunted *fare tupapau* and moonlit ceremonies in the tomb.²¹

While the first and last of these are especially reminiscent of theatrical and pantomime set-pieces (such as the procession and funeral in *Omai*), all four invite a combination of distance and visual immersion familiar from print and stage spectacles. Williams invokes a string of disembodied observers: the wandering gaze of “Sweet Fancy,” the reader repeatedly instructed to watch and listen, the “recording moon”, which “shall gaze upon the lengthen’d rite,” and finally a “disembodied mind” ambiguously designated as the “conscious Shade” or “hov’ring Spirit” of the dead man. Williams’ Tahiti is produced for, and by, observing audiences. In common with Seward’s Tahitians and the ethnographic scenes of *Omai* and *The Death of Captain Cook*, the native figures themselves are presented as unselfconscious and unaware of the observer. Unlike these representations, however, *The Morai* does not naturalise but supernaturalises the observer’s gaze, so that the eye of the Western viewer is uncannily identified with the watching phantoms - “the

²⁰ Robert Henry, *The History of Great Britain, from the First Invasion of it by the Romans under Julius Caesar* (London: T. Cadell, 1771), vol. 1 of 6, p. 463.

²¹ *Morai*, ll. 71-140.

spirit late immers'd in clay," who continues to watch and listen to the mourners – of scenes such as those in "An Irregular Fragment."²²

Unlike the main body of the poem, the lines describing the Tahitian funeral are written in rhyming couplets and mainly in catalectic trochaic tetrameter, a form which mimics the chanting of the mourners and suggests ideas of the savage supernatural traditionally associated with the metre, most famously in *Macbeth's* "Fair is foul and foul is fair," and later in William Shepherd's "Negro Incantation."²³ These are emphasised in anaphora ("Still some human passions sway | The spirit late immers'd in clay; | Still the faithful sigh is dear, | Still belov'd the fruitless tear!") and incantatory refrains ("Five pale moons with trembling light," "Five waning moons with wand'ring light").²⁴

Formal changes partition off these stanzas, with their accumulation of ethnographic detail gathered by European voyagers, as a separate, framed exhibition of "peculiar rites and ceremonies", introduced by an invitation to "See!"²⁵ The cultural globalisation represented by Cook's voyages, according to Kippis, had "opened new scenes for a poetical fancy to range in," among which the "Morais, in particular, of the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands, afford a fine subject for the exercise of a

²² *Morai*, ll. 50, 62, 135, 90, 103, 116, 138.

²³ William Shepherd, "The Negro Incantation" (1797) in *Amazing Grace: An Anthology of Poems about Slavery, 1660-1810*, edited by James G. Basker (New Haven: Yale, 2002), 525-527. See Kirsten Raupach, "'When We with Magic Rites the White Man's Doom Prepare': Representations of Black Resistance in British Abolitionist Writing During the Era of Revolution" in *Monuments of the Black Atlantic: Slavery and Memory*, edited by Joanne M. Braxton and Maria I. Dietrich (Munster: Lit Verlag, 2004), 19-28.

²⁴ *Morai*, ll. 107-110, 89, 111.

²⁵ Henry, p. 463; *Morai*, l. 71.

plaintive muse.”²⁶ European accounts of Tahitian funeral practices published in the first half of the 1780s, in other words, provided Williams with an apparently ready-cleared and colonised literary space. In her cultural history of British ghost beliefs, Sasha Handley notes that this kind of “importation of ghost stories from overseas” into metropolitan entertainment was, like the importation of exotic artefacts, driven by the “commercial ethos” of the eighteenth century.²⁷

Borrowing her commercially appealing image of a Pacific funeral ‘morai’ from pantomime as well as from Seward, then, and extending it to form the bulk of her poem, Williams combines the literary setting of the graveyard with ethnographic details to be scrutinised: the “long, funereal train” carrying the “pallid corse” to the seashore, the sprinkling of seawater near (but not on) the body, the making of garlands, the offerings of hair and blood, the “wasted relics” in the tomb with fruit and feathers. Following travel accounts such as Johann Forster’s, Williams explains that this is done in order to appease and eventually exorcise the conscious spirit of the dead man: each ritual is “Grateful to the conscious Shade,” and through them the ghost will eventually be laid to rest, bringing the mourning to an end:

Be the faithful tribute o’er,
The hov’ring Spirit asks no more!
Mortals, cease the pile to tread,
Leave to silence, leave the dead.²⁸

However, *The Morai* does *not* end with this injunction to the mourner, but continues for another sixty four lines of iambic tetrameter, starting with a question which

²⁶ Kippis (1788), p. 510.

²⁷ Handley, p. 209.

²⁸ *Morai*, ll. 72-96, 118-124, 116, 137-140.

figures continued mourning less as a national or moral duty than as sentimental pleasure:

But where may she who loves to stray
Mid shadows of funereal gloom
And court the sadness of the tomb,
Where may she seek that proud Morai
Whose dear memorial points the place
Where fell the Friend of human race?²⁹

This question begins the elegy to Cook, conventionally understood, as it imitates Seward and the other elegists by celebrating Cook's "philanthropy" in contrast to slavers and conquistadors, and evoking his waiting wife.

Given the poem's publication context at the end of a biography of Cook, the reader is likely to believe that both the voyager and the dead man described in the first two-thirds of the poem are unnamed avatars of Cook. Yet the first explicit mention of Cook, the "Friend of human race" (Williams uses his name for the first time only in line 149), answers the earlier question by abruptly revealing that the Tahitian funeral in *The Morai* is not Cook's, and could never have been for Cook, whose death on the "savage shore" of Hawaii leaves no corpse to be laid in Westminster Abbey or a Tahitian *fare tupapau*. Despite all Cook's achievements and virtue, she emphasizes, "No lavish flowers were ever strew'd, | No votive gifts were ever laid." The idea that the site "where the Hero's ashes rest" is a Pacific shrine marked by "fancy's dear, inventive rite" can only be itself a "fancy" of the reader. In the place of this illusory, phantom presence, Williams insists on the radical absence of meaningful, successful

²⁹ *Morai*, ll. 141-146.

mourning for Cook. Even his friends' consolatory tears and prayers are "hasty" and "cast upon the raging wave" with the gruesome remains of the corpse.³⁰

In the final four stanzas of *The Morai*, then, the consoling rituals described at such length at the beginning of the poem are disconcertingly revealed to be projections, and the ghostly presence of Cook, which had seemed to be summoned as the "hov'ring Spirit" of the Tahitian funeral, is shown to be textual sleight-of-hand: Cook's ghost can only be present in the gaze of wandering "Fancy." Although Deborah Kennedy regards this unbalanced structure as a way of heightening the "pathos" of Cook's death, arguing that "after learning of the funeral rites of the Morai, the reader is all the more moved by the fact that Cook [...] did not receive any type of proper funeral,"³¹ Williams' presentation of mourning for Cook within the dreamlike enchantments and "quick transitions" of popular metropolitan entertainment technologies can also be seen as exposing the naturalised memorialisation of conventional patriotic elegy. By bringing this into the foreground, Williams undermines as potentially false theatrics the memorialising gesture of all elegy, including the conclusion of her own poem, an imitation of the claims of Seward and David Samwell that "Immortal wreaths" belong to Cook and that "The ruder natives of the earth | Shall oft repeat thy honour'd name; | While infants catch the frequent sound."³²

³⁰ *Morai*, ll. 178-183.

³¹ Kennedy, p. 41.

³² *Morai*, ll. 192-205. Compare to Samwell, "The grateful Indian, in time to come, pointing to the herds grazing his fertile plains, will relate to his children how the first stock of them was introduced into the country; and the name of Cook will be remembered among [their] benign spirits [...]." In *A Narrative of the Death of Captain Cook* (1786), reprinted in Fitzpatrick et al (2007), p. 83. This passage also qtd in Kippis's biography, p. 489-490.

This subtle but radical disavowal of the possibility of authentic grief or patriotism may be behind *The Morai*'s relative critical neglect. Even as early as 1786 Williams' reviewers were uncomfortable with their sense that poems which promised to express the "true sentiment of a romantic girl!" were also skilled commercial exploitations of "the pleasures or *gifts* of melancholy and anguish."³³ More recently, Williams' poetry has been generally overlooked as a consequence of the trajectory of her career immediately after its publication: *The Morai* in particular is not an easy text to reconcile with the more politically engaged – and self-evidently sincere – prose writings she produced during and after the French Revolution. Unlike Seward, Williams does not emphasise the political or historic significance – the newsworthiness – of Cook's death, later classifying *The Morai* outside the "four poems only" which she claimed to have written with "any reference to public events."³⁴ Yet in its reflections on the relationship between individual imagination, a powerful but susceptible consumer, and their construction of Cook's continuing presence, *The Morai* articulates a sense of the mechanisms of celebrity within metropolitan mass culture. The figure of Cook it both celebrates and disavows, as thus an image of the modern metropolis, would come to be appropriated and reshaped in new arenas of metropolitan activity around the world.

³³ *European Magazine, and London Review* 10 (August 1786): 89-93, pp. 90, 91.

³⁴ Helen Maria Williams, *Poems on Various Subjects* (London: G. and B. Whittaker, 1823), introduction, x.

Conclusion: Posthumous travels

The spectral and elusive Cook described by Helen Maria Williams in 1788 can be seen as embodying a contemporary sense of the nature of Cook's celebrity, and perhaps of modern fame more widely. The poem evokes a figure of metropolitan entertainment, whose boasted patriotic virtues and civilised achievements seem less real than the pleasures and pains of imagining their violent destruction; a figure who would soon become both a dancing pantomime hero and a miniature flourish on wallpaper. As Aboriginal Australian retellings recognise, the metropolitan representation of Cook and his death has always been marked by a contending crowd of stories: voices which resist reduction to singularity or stability, and which produce out of the moment "[w]hen the old Captain Cook died" a host of "all the new Captain Cooks. [...] Too many Captain Cooks."¹

Patriotism, civilisation and empiricism would reassert themselves as central concepts in the versions of Cook's death which came to dominate nineteenth-century colonial histories. Nevertheless, a sense of the artifice at the heart of these stories continued to manifest itself in tropes of uncertainty and delusion which undercut the confident citation of Cook as a figurehead of imperial knowledge. Thus in an 1819 anecdote with the title "Posthumous Travels," the *Literary Gazette* reported that:

Professor Engel, being once at a dinner-party, where the conversation turned upon Capt. Cook, and his celebrated voyages round the world, an ignorant person, in order to contribute his mite towards social intercourse, asked him, "Pray was Cook killed on his first voyage?" "I

¹ Mackinolty and Wainburranga (1988), p. 355.

believe he was,” replied Engel, “though he did not mind it much, but immediately entered upon the second.”²

Charles Dickens, forty years later, argues that “Captain Cook’s adventures amongst various savage islanders, and even his death by their hands” could only be read as an affective fiction: “an amusing romance, a terrible tragedy, no more.”³ Mark Twain, standing in Kealakekua Bay at “that spot whose history is so familiar to every school-boy in the wide world,” claims to oppose his own “[p]lain unvarnished history” to this metropolitan “romance,” but ends up, in his fictionalised travels, reinscribing the old myths of Cook as pirate, apotheosis and “justifiable homicide.”⁴

Not only written but material representations of Cook’s death have been characterised by the ersatz and the entertaining. P.T. Barnum joked in his autobiography that by the middle of the nineteenth century “the club that killed Captain Cook” had reproduced itself and spread not only to his exhibition of curiosities, but to “half a dozen smaller museums” across America.⁵ In 2003, a year after Cook was voted the twelfth “Greatest Briton” in a BBC poll, a cane claimed to be made from the spear which killed Cook was sold at auction for £135,000, one of a number of dubiously authentic weapons and other relics of Cook’s death to enter the marketplace in the last two hundred years.⁶ Though some museums today are making efforts to demystify the provenance of such items, Cook’s myth remains a

² *Literary Gazette* (1 May 1819).

³ Dickens (1857-1858), p. 142.

⁴ Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (1872), edited by Hamlin Hill (London: Penguin, 1981), pp. 511-12.

⁵ Phineas Taylor Barnum, *The Life of P.T. Barnum* (London: Sampson Low, 1855), pp. 228-229.

⁶ John Cooper (ed.), *Great Britons: The Great Debate* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2002), p. 8. *Sydney Morning Herald* (13 February 1972); *Guardian* (27 March 2003). See Hooper (2003).

commercially appealing “celebrity endorsement”⁷ for institutions from the Birthplace Museum, where a 2009 exhibition on Cook’s death was named “Killing Kuki: A Hawaiian Whodunit” and featured a mocked-up ‘crime scene’ complete with models of his dismembered body parts, to the newly-opened Madame Tussauds in Sydney, in which visitors can pose next to Cook’s waxwork in a diorama of Nathaniel Dance’s famous portrait.

This sense of Cook as a “great floating signifier” of imperial discourses,⁸ I have argued, is the product of the convergence of several different factors in the late eighteenth century. First, Cook’s real or perceived characteristics as a living individual, especially his ‘everyman’ status, allowed viewers to identify with his extraordinary experience of “a voyage round the world.”⁹ Second, there was an absence of significant centralised management of Cook’s fame, either through his own self-presentation, or through government or Admiralty choreography of news reports, rituals of commemoration, public monuments, and so on, in favour of dispersed and contingent representation in the mass marketplace. This resulted in, third, a persistent association between early retellings of Cook’s story and the erratic, fragmentary and commercial nature of the contemporary metropolitan newspaper and other forms of print reproduction and consumption. Finally, the growing, though uneven and contested, sense of Cook’s voyages as a state-subsidised national project which should be available to and enjoyed by a readership of “all Ranks of Persons whatever,”¹⁰ and the value set by many of these readers on sensation and

⁷ See Bolton, in Hetherington and Morphy (2009).

⁸ Edmond (1997), p. 24.

⁹ Boswell, *Journals* p. 296.

¹⁰ George William Anderson (1784-1786), iv.

sentimentality, reshaped narratives of Cook and his death even within self-declared historical texts such as *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*.

These factors were consolidated by two further circumstances in the 1780s. I have suggested that the Gordon riots in 1780 had a focusing effect on ideas of print culture and the mass consumer, and that these ideas and fears were subsequently projected outwards onto imagined Others such as the Hawaiian in poetry and visual art. At the same time, an influx of Pacific artefacts collected by (and thus regarded as representative of) Cook, was exhibited in commercial museums. The presentation of these artefacts, as material embodiments of a notion of the distant exotic, was closely based on the presentation of the distant past as gothic, in museums, the theatre and other texts. By successfully evoking and controlling the metropolitan's sentimental response to Cook's death, writers like Anna Seward and James King, artists like John Webber, showmen like Ashton Lever, and performers like James Byrn could acquire significant cultural status and financial rewards. Yet such a project always risked either seeming excessively commercial and calculating, or not commercially appealing enough, and many other attempts to represent Cook's death would fall by the wayside.

Cook has been seen, of course, as – for good or bad – a pioneer and symbol of free market individualism and metropolitan modernity: “Adam Smith's god” for Bernard Smith, or “a bourgeois Lono” for Marshall Sahlins.¹¹ This account of Cook's celebrity suggests, though, that the figure of Cook in 1810 is exemplary of these concepts not only because of their (often vague and unstable) associations to Cook's Pacific projects, but because they created the conditions in which this figure could be

¹¹ Bernard Smith (1992), p. 209; Sahlins (1985), p. 131.

produced and understood. As such, these eighteenth- and nineteenth-century networks of texts, images and consumers reveal not only the contested and contingent creation of Epeli Hau'ofa's lingering colonial "superstar," "the ghost of Captain Cook,"¹² but also the contested and contingent origins of metropolitan mass culture, and its view of both itself and the world.

¹² Hau'ofa, pp. 64-65.

Figure 1. ‘Ditty box’ made by sailors on *Resolution*. Wood, silver, mother-of-pearl, watercolour sketch and human hair, c. 1779, 90 x 70 mm. © State Library of New South Wales.



Figure 2. Search results (25-30 November 2010) for the terms “Captain Cook” OR “Capt Cook” OR “James Cook” in:

- *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (Gale CENGAGE), for publication dates between 1770-1800
- *British Newspapers 1600-1900* (British Library/ Gale), for publication dates between 1770-1812
- *British Periodicals* (Chadwyck-Healey), for publication dates between 1770-1812

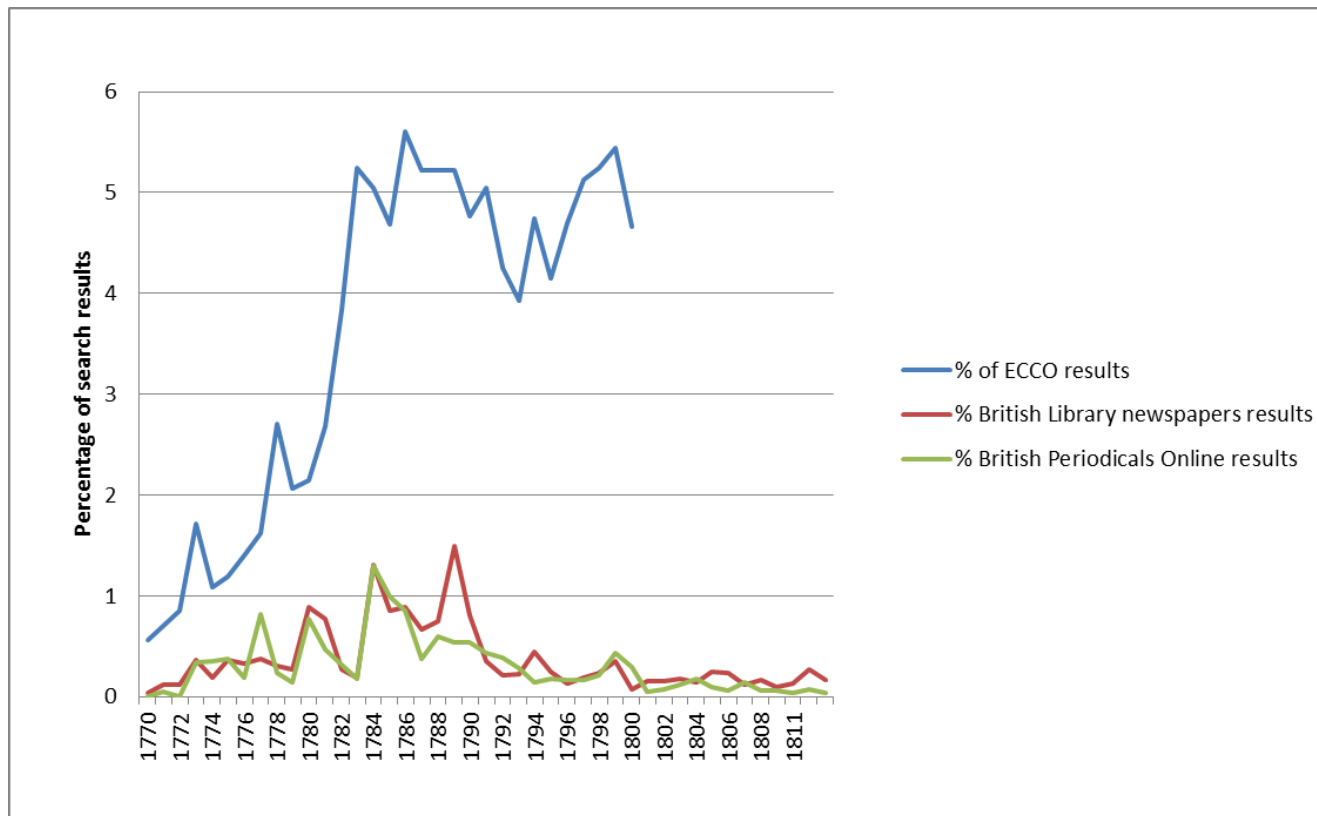


Figure 3A. General Evening Post (11-13 January 1780). Front page. © British Library

The General Evening Post.

(L O N D O N.)

Price Three-pence. From TUESDAY, JANUARY 11, to THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 1780. No. 7181

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 12.

From the LONDON GAZETTE.

ADMIRALTY-OFFICE, JAN. 11.

CAPT. CLERKE, of his Majesty's ship the Resolution, in a letter to Mr. Stephens, dated the 8th of June, 1779, in the harbour of St. Peter and St. Paul, Kamphachat, which was received yesterday, gives the melancholy account of the celebrated Capt. Cook, late commander of that ship, with four of his private mariners, having been killed on the 14th of February last at the island of Owhyhee, one of a group of new discovered islands, in the 22d degree of North latitude, in an affray with a numerous and tumultuous body of the natives.

Capt. Clerke adds, that he had received every friendly supply from the Russian Government; and that as the companies of the Resolution and her consort the Discovery were in perfect health, and the two ships had twelve months stores and provisions on board, he was preparing to make another attempt to explore a northern passage to Europe.

Petersburg, Dec. 14. His Prussian Majesty has sent the Order of the Black Eagle to his Imperial Highness the Great Duke Alexander Pavlovitch.

The news from over a few days ago. The Empress has ordered the bridge of boats, which she annually carries away, to be rebuilt, and to remain during the winter; an attention which not only greatly facilitates the crossing the river, but which probably will save many lives.

Sovereign of 110 guns wants six months to complete her, additional shipwrights and quarten-masters have been lately engaged. Our defensive fortifications, which the cold weather and rain had put a stop to, will shortly be taken up afresh, and when completed will render this port the most secure in the kingdom.

Six more third-rate men of war, two 50 gun ships, and two frigates, are ordered to be commissioned in the course of next week. This untimely and ever to be lamented fate of so intrepid, so able, and so intelligent a sea officer, as the late Capt. Cook, may justly be considered as an irreparable loss to the public, as well as to his family, for in him were united every useful and amiable quality that could adorn his profession; nor was his singular modesty less conspicuous than his other virtues. His successful experiments to preserve the healths of his crews are well known; and his discoveries will be an everlasting honour to his country.

Yesterday at the quarter-sessions at Guildhall, the Right Hon. the Lord-Mayor, Aldermen, Mr. Sheriff Wright, and Common Council, took the necessary oaths of qualification for their respective offices for the ensuing year. After which a Court of Common Council was held, presided the Lord-Mayor, Aldermen Edwale, Townsend, Thomas, Peckham, Hayley, Plover, Kitchen, Sansbury, Woodbridge, Sheriff Wright, Chamberlain, and Recorder.

The minutes of the last Court were read and confirmed, and several orders were read. Then the business for which the Court was called was proceeded on, viz. "to receive the report from the Committee appointed to enquire into the rights of the members of that Court to be Governors of the Royal Hospital;" the said report being read, it was unanimously agreed to empower the Committee to take such steps as shall appear necessary, by the advice of Council, to defend the City Rights, and that they have leave to draw on the Chamber for any sum not exceeding 1000. to carry the same into execution. [The Council remained by the City in this business, Mr. Dunning, Mr. Maddocks, the Recorder, and Common Sergeant.]

A letter from Sir John Griffin Griffin to Mr. Alderman Townsend was read, requesting he would represent the same to the Court, setting forth the great injury he must receive, provided the new navigable cut from the river Stour and Cam are carried into execution, and that he has at different times expended upwards of 60,000l. on his feat and grounds. As several of the Court were of opinion it was proper to present the said letter to the Canal Navigation Committee, to consider and deliver an answer thereto.

BIRTH.] On Monday night the Lady of Sir Wm. Smith was safely delivered of a son at his house in Upper Brook-street.

MARRIED.] On Monday, at St. Mary Magnus church, London-bridge, Silvanus Francis, Esq. a planter in Jamaica, to Miss Susan Wilton, of Thames-street. Sunday, Mr. Pierpont, soap-maker, at Mile End, to Miss Ardeleife, of Woodford, in Essex.

DIED.] On Sunday, Benjamin Branfill, Esq. of Essex-street, Strand, in the 83rd year of his age, Wm. Masby Holte, Esq. of Holte-hall, in the county of Montgomery, at his son's house in Bedford-square. Monday, in Duke-street, Lincoln's-inn-fields, John Hollich, Esq. formerly a brandy merchant, but had retired for years. Sunday night, Mrs. Johnson, wife of Col. Johnson, of Queen-square, Westminster. On Sunday evening, at her father's house in Prince's-court, Westminster, in the 8th year of her age, Miss Gordon, daughter of Col. Gordon, of the 1st regiment of guards. On Tuesday, at Oxford, aged 82, Mr. Thomas Galten, many years master of the Mitre inn in that city, but who had long declined public business. Sunday, at his house at Sydenham, Mr. Edward Bartholomew, merchant, in Tokenhouse-yard. Sunday, at Chelsea, Mr. Charles White, celebrated for his skill in painting flower-pieces.

Sunday night, the lady of Anthony Atwood, Esq. of Fitchfield-street. Yesterday, Mr. Rankin, of Fleet-street, a Scotch-factor. Late-ly, at Chester, Mr. Hugh Whitlaw, attorney at law, and several years feal-keeper of the County Palatine. On Monday, at his house near St. Alban's, John Harcourt, Esq.

From the JAMAICA GAZETTE.

Extract of a Letter from a Midshipman on board the Frigate Man of War, in a Merchant in Antigua.

"We have been cruising with Sir Hyde Parker and the rest of the fleet for three weeks, to the windward of Barbadoes, but without success till yesterday, when we fell in with five sail of French ships, nine of which we sent to Barbadoes, and three by the Portland to Antigua. Three sail of the line are chasing the remaining three, and we have not the least doubt of their being taken;—and hopes fall in with still better luck."

The following are the accounts of the ships sent into Barbadoes by Admiral Parker's fleet; One polacre; three large transport ships, with provisions for nine months for 14 sail of the line; three rich merchant ships; one American vessel with lumber; and one large vessel which had been a 50 gun ship.

The following into Antigua: One large frigate-built ship, three rich merchant ships; two ships from Cayenne.

Kingston, Jamaica, Sept. 18. The following is an extract of a letter from Mr. Stephen Down, to Mr. William Winter, of the Hanover troop, late in this town, dated Round-Hill, in Hanover, Sept. 2, 1779:

Last Saturday, early in the morning, I received an express from leeward that there was a picket-boat in the Cove, and that two negroes had been ashore in the night, and gave information at Barbican edate, that they overheard the Spaniards say they would land at Round-Hill; upon receipt of which, I sent for Roderick Adams and Stephen Lewis, who were up with me in a sloop, and we got the guns loaded just as they came round the Bluff.—She proved to be a top-sail schooner; we let her come just opposite the channel, had our guns pointed, and gave all six before they knew any thing of our being there; we got them loaded again as quick as thought, and as the smoke cleared away, found the hid- ing-boat to put about, and lay with her broad-side to us; we fired at her, and she returned the fire with her six muzzles; she returned the fire with 4 four-pounders loaded with grape and partridge, by which we lost one negro; we gave her the other six, which luckily carried away her main-guy, and rendered her so unmanageable that she drove on the reef. She is a fine schooner, of about sixty tons; there were six Spaniards killed, and we took twenty-five prisoners, without any loss except the negro, and my receiving a market bullet through the calf of my leg, which the doctor says will be of no dangerous consequence. I had the troop to escort the prisoners down to Luca; we released about 50 negroes belonging to different properties; and I believe I have got round to Jobling's bay, where she is safely moored. She mounts six four-pounders, and received only one shot through the hull. Plenty of Cape wine on board, which I am getting up into my possession as fast as the water can draw it; and to my great joy found eight hampers of ale and porter, and one cask of hams, that they had taken out of a petti-coat to the windward, which I have made hold with."

Kingston, Oct. 12. On Sunday last in the forenoon, there fell a very heavy rain, attended with violent thunder and lightning: The Earl Bathurst fore ship, lying off Greenwich, had her fore-top-gallant mast, fore-top-mast, and fore-mast shivered, and the latter fell on fire by the lightning; the Armourer, a Swede, was struck down, and remained insensible for ten minutes.

Kingston, Oct. 23. On Wednesday arrived from a cruise, his Majesty's ship Pallard, with two ships and a schooner; one of the ships is a prize to the Hercules of marque; they were part of a fleet, consisting of near 40 sail, that some time since departed from the Cape for Old France, but meeting with a violent gale of wind, great part of them were disabled, or otherwise so considerably damaged as to be obliged to put back for England; the rest; one of the ships already brought in, is likely to prove a very valuable prize, having a large quantity of indigo on board, and it is probable that others of the same fleet may fall into the hands of our cruizers, of which we are informed there are several on the coast.

Kingston, Nov. 20. On Saturday the letter of marque schooner Endeavour returned from a cruise, with a French brig, her prize, and four small frigates; the schooner, Niger, Robert Lambert, Esq. Commander, conducted into Port-Royal two ships, a snow, a brig, and a sloop, her prizes; they were from Grenada to Curacao, in order to provide themselves with Dutch papers for their protection to some port in France.

Kingston, Nov. 20. Tuesday last arrived at Port-Royal the ship Newbury, Capt. Niven, in 11 weeks from Penzance; by the Captain we learn, that on the 26th of August last he was informed by several people from New-Orleans, who had arrived at Penzance in a large petti-coat, that a few days before they left that place there had been such violent rains, accompanied by high winds, as to blow most of the houses down, and overflow the plain; several vessels were over-set, and some lost, as well as many lives, and property to a considerable amount. These accounts had been confirmed Monday to the 29th of August last, the day Capt. Niven sailed from Ship-Hotland.

About three weeks ago Peter Cabot, a confederator of Montego-Bay, was taken in a canoe coming from Weimoroard, with three negroes and a mulatto, by a Spanish picket-boat, who took him into custody, a box of candles, some chests, Onsburghs, and a great quantity of indigo and cloaths; also the negroes and mulatto, and gave him the empty canoe to get along with. The above plunderers are the vagrant Spanish players who were here about 18 months ago.

From the SUPPLEMENT to the JAMAICA MERCURY, of Nov. 6.

Kingston, Nov. 6. Rear Admiral Parker having intercepted some letters in a prize, addressed to Commodore d'Estaing, advising him that 7 ships of the line, and some frigates, having 69 sail of merchantmen and transports under their convoy, would sail from a certain port in France, and pursue a particular route to Mar-

nico, the whole windward squadron are now in chase a position, that it is almost impossible their important and valuable fleet should escape their vigilance.

Paris in our Mercury Extraordinary of the 2d instant, we informed our readers of the great loss the enemy had sustained by the diligence and success of Rear Admiral Parker's cruizers on the windward side with a particular detail of the ships that were taken, from information communicated by Governor Burt to a gentleman at St. Kitts.

Sent into Barbadoes.

- 1 Polacco.
- 2 Large frigate built ships with provisions for 1000 men for 9 months, for Mr. d'Estaing.
- 3 Rich Merchant ships.
- 4 Large ship (an old 50 gun ship)
- 5 Snow. These two from Cayenne where they had landed troops.

Sent into Antigua.

- 1 Large frigate built ship for Mr. d'Estaing's squadron
- 2 Americans, one of them with lumber, the other with provisions.

As those for the Count d'Estaing were all bound for St. Domingo, it will hardly now, we presume, be any longer a question that he was certainly defined for the reduction of this island, but not meeting with so powerful a reinforcement at Hispaniola as he had been taught to expect, his victuals being intercepted, and concluding that the preparations on our side would be vigorous and effectual, he found himself unable to attempt carrying the orders of his Court into execution.

From the SUPPLEMENT to the KINGSTON JOURNAL of Saturday, Nov. 20.

Jamaica, Nov. 20. The vessels from the Windward-Islands bring advice Sir Hyde Parker's squadron having taken seven disabled St. Domingo ships, and one of the enemy's frigates, which were carried into Barbadoes; one of the frigates in his squadron had likewise made prize of a 22 gun ship, belonging to the enemy, and carried her into Antigua.

BANKRUPT S.

John Swenden and Thomas Robinson, of Bradford, Yorkshire, merchants and operators; to bankrupt Jan. 24, at the Talbot, in Halifax, and Feb 22, at the Old Coach, in Halifax, and Feb 22, at the Talbot, in Chacey-lane, London, or Mr. Parker, in Halifax.

Lancelot Wedgware, of the Borough of Warwick, merchant to bankrupt Jan. 26, 27, and Feb. 22, at the Woolpack, in the Borough of Warwick. Attorney, Miss John Parry, in Warwick.

Overseers to be made.

Thomas Jefferson, of Drury-lane, Middlesex, innkeeper; Feb. 14, at eleven, at Guildhall, London.

James Lodge and John Fenwick, of Little St. Helens's, in the City of London, merchants, packers, and operators; Feb. 15, at ten, at Guildhall.

Richard Blackburn, Michael Cape Hopson, and William Swanwick, of Wood-street, London, merchants and partners; Feb. 4, at five, at Guildhall, London.

Richard Blackburn, Michael Cape Hopson, and William Swanwick, of Wood-street, London, merchants and partners; Feb. 5, at ten, at Guildhall, London.

Final Div.

Richard Blackburn, Michael Cape Hopson, and William Swanwick, of Wood-street, London, merchants and partners; Feb. 5, at ten, at Guildhall, London.

Final Div.

Richard Blackburn, Michael Cape Hopson, and William Swanwick, of Wood-street, London, merchants and partners; Feb. 15, at ten, at Guildhall, London.

Final Div.

Richard Blackburn, Michael Cape Hopson, and William Swanwick, of Wood-street, London, merchants and partners; Feb. 15, at ten, at Guildhall, London.

Certificate to be granted.

John Lighty, of Workington, Moorfield, Middlesex, cabinet-maker; on or before Feb. 1.

Handwriting retainer.

John Parrock, of Oxford-street, in the parish of St. Mary-le-bone, Middlesex, upholster and carpet-manufacturer; to bankrupt Jan. 28, at ten, at Guildhall, London.

ANATOMY.

ON Saturday the 22d of January, at Two o'clock, Mr. HELLIDON will commence his Spring Course of Lectures on Anatomy, Physiology, and Surgery at his Theatre in Great Queen-street, Lincoln's-inn-fields. And on Monday the 22th instant, at Half past Five, the Evening Course of Anatomical and Chirurgical Lectures will begin at the same place.

Further particulars may be known, and prospects had, by applying to Mr. Sheldon, between the Hours of Nine and eleven in the forenoon.

The Terms of attending the Afternoon Course will be Three guineas, the Evening Two. [59

DESSERTERS from Poole, in Dorsetshire, from his Majesty's Corps of Foot late serving in Africa the following Soldiers.

Deleted.

CHAPLAIN and SINGLETON, 16th Dec. 1779.

Private.

TERRY, —	9th Aug. 1779.
HALEY, —	7th Nov. 1779.
MUGGER, —	12th Dec. 1779.
LEE, —	—
RIEFITHS, —	20th Dec. 1779.

Whoever will apprehend, or cause to be apprehended, all or any of the said Deserters, and will lodge them, or any of them, in any of his Majesty's gaols, shall be allowed Fifty Shillings, besides what is allowed by Act of Parliament, by applying to Robert Brown, Esq. Agent, in Duke-street, Westminster; or the Commanding Officer of the corps, at Hill's Barracks, to be applied to on apprehending any of the above Deserters.

N. B. Haley is supposed to be in the environs of Portsmouth. Richard Giffiths is in or about London, was born at Portsmouth, Singlet is from Ireland, he is served in the Revolutionary American Army, King (John Roy) is or about the neighbourhood of Dungeness. Chapman's friends live at or near Marseilles, in Southern France, where he and Singleton went to. [60



Figure 4. J.H. Ramberg, *Death of Captain James Cook*. Oil on canvas, c. 1784, 1016 x 1435 mm. © State Library of New South Wales



Figure 5. John Hall, John Thornthwaite and Samuel Smith after George Carter, *The Death of Captain James Cook, by the Indians of Owhyee, one of the Sandwich Islands* (London: Sayer & Bennet, 1784). © National Library of Australia.



Figure 6. Francesco Bartolozzi and William Byrne after John Webber, *The Death of Captain Cook* (London: Byrne and Webber, 1784).
© National Library of Australia.



Figure 7. John Chapman after Nathaniel Dance and John Webber, *Captain Cook* (London: J. Wilkes, 1800). © National Library of Australia.



Figure 8. Philippe Jacques de Louthembourg and John Webber (after), *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook* (London: John Thane, 1794). © National Library of Australia.



Figure 8. Johann Zoffany, *The Death of Captain James Cook, 14 February 1779*. Oil on canvas, c. 1790, 1372 x 1829 mm. © National Maritime Museum

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