

Reenacting Cook's Voyages in Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture

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Art, travel and re-enactment: Captain Cook and the mid-nineteenth-century view of the Pacific

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In this paper, I want to address the themes of ‘exchanges’ and ‘temporalities’ through recourse to the practice of travel, and the historical discourses around it, centred on a particular moment in the mid-nineteenth-century Pacific.¹ Physical and imaginative travel, necessarily involving the exchange of one place for another and the movement through temporalities, is perhaps the ideal trope through which to investigate these themes. Here, however, I am specifically concerned with the relation of travel to the idea of re-enactment, that is, the consciousness on the part of the traveller of following a predecessor’s footsteps, of inhabiting the same spaces, revisiting and looking at associated sites and landmarks, and the exchanges across time that this entails. Of primary importance here is the act of seeing, vision as the instrument of cognition: whereby re-enactment consists not necessarily in the pretence of seeing through someone else’s eyes, but rather in recognizing a place through seeing it as the same, or in the same way, as another traveller who had been there (and recorded it) before. Above all, therefore, I want to focus on the visual culture of travel, both as a register of voyaging and a record of place in the Pacific at that time, but also as a process of re-enactment, as marking the significance of ‘being there’ through the visual representation of the landscape. My discussion will focus on the nineteenth-century significance of Captain James Cook and his three seminal voyages to the Pacific between 1768 and 1780, and the way his ghost-like presence pervades the landscape of Tahiti for naval voyagers and draughtsmen in the mid-1840s, at a particularly conflicted moment in the island’s history.

In *Science in Action* Bruno Latour makes the fundamental observation that repetition is key to the accumulation of knowledge. Taking as an example Lapérouse’s 1784 voyage to the Pacific, he notes:

The first time we encounter some event, we do not know it; we start knowing something when it is at least the *second* time we encounter it, that is, when it is familiar to us.²

Yet, the knowledge thus gained from a voyage of exploration such as Lapérouse's can only become useful if it can be passed on to succeeding voyagers, through familiarizing them with those places even before their setting out, and enabling them to re-attempt the earlier voyage to reap extra levels of knowledge. Through a cycle of accumulation of knowledge, and a parallel process of inscription of that knowledge, for example, through practices such as cartography, in which certain types of data about the world are codified and recorded, 'centres of calculation' are formed that enable laboratories and observatories in Europe to act 'at a distance' on the rest of the world.³

In Latour's analysis, therefore, something akin to re-enactment was fundamental to travel and navigation as processes for accumulating knowledge and establishing European networks of imperial power. Yet, Latour does not describe science 'in action' through reference to re-enactment, and in any strict sense of the term it is not, of course. However, Vanessa Agnew draws attention to a similar pattern within re-enactment, in which the 'central narrative', she argues:

is ... one of conversion from ignorance to knowledge, individualism to sociability, resistance to compliance, and present to past.⁴

It is in this much more expanded sense that I want to use the idea of re-enactment here: as incorporating something of Latour's insights into the collating of geographical, colonial and other forms of knowledge through repetitive iterations, but acted out at a personal and psychological level. More importantly, I also want to tie re-enactment both to the practices of voyaging in the age of empire, and at the same time to constructions of history and ideology. In other words, I want to

use the idea of re-enactment to think of the making of history as itself a historical and ideologically driven process, which in the case I shall be considering was instantiated through individual identification with a shared sense of collective, national history, and through the reiterative practice of voyaging and the making of visual records of the voyage.

Re-enactment is a problematically slippery concept, that has received much theoretical analysis in recent years.⁵ I should clarify at once what I do not mean by using the term as a theoretical and methodological tool: that is, I am not referring to the spectacles of populist public history, which in Greg Dening's celebrated denunciation 'tend to hallucinate a past as merely the present in funny dress'.⁶ Nor do I mean Alexander Cook's idea of 'investigative reenactment', as a tool for scholarly historical enquiry, with a similarity to methods in visual anthropology.⁷ Here, I am concerned rather with R. G. Collingwood's formulation of the philosophy of history, which places the idea of 're-enactment' at its core:

in order to understand a past human action, the historian must not only discover the thought expressed in it, but must actually re-think or re-enact that thought in his own mind.⁸

For Collingwood, the role of the historian, if it is to be meaningful, must be not simply to describe or chronicle past events in the manner of an inventory, but to understand and interpret them, something in the manner of the actor or musician inhabiting the drama or piece of music they are to perform. Indeed, re-enactment is what distinguishes the historian from the mere chronicler or recorder. History in this sense becomes an endless palimpsest of understandings and interpretations by successive practitioners of the discipline. What I want to pick up on in particular is the idea of history as somehow performative, as analogous to acting, in the sense of the historian somehow being required to inhabit the material that is the object of his or her analysis in order to understand it. Aside from anything else, it seems to me that placing an emphasis on the performative within

history allows a similar consideration to be taken of the role of the visual, of visual culture not merely as illustrative of a given set of historical data, but as potentially constitutive of the historical process itself. It is particularly suggestive, I think, for the discrete areas of visual culture with which I am concerned in this paper: maritime imagery and travel imagery. The practice of coastal profiling, for example, that is, drawing the contour of a coastline, for which every officer would have been trained in basic techniques of draughtsmanship, was an essential means of identifying a ship's location: through reference to earlier drawings, either his own or those of others, an officer could specify a landmass and the vessel's relation to it, through a process central to Latour's account of the accumulation of knowledge, and analogous to re-enactment in identifying himself and his ship in the place of the earlier draughtsman, and assuming a necessarily self-conscious cognitive state in seeing through his prior pair of eyes.

Collingwood's theory of re-enactment, therefore, has a particularly rich suggestiveness for maritime travel. It also allows us to reconsider the wider culture of travel: to think both of travel as a form of re-enactment, and of its related visual and verbal records also as forms of re-enactment, as records of the performance of travel. As Agnew observes, re-enactment can be identified not just as a process of making history, but as a process *in* history, and taking place on voyages of exploration such as Captain Cook's, where:

Journal sources, travel accounts, and paintings show that the voyagers invoked earlier models and were thus engaged in a form of reenactment themselves.⁹

This has richly suggestive implications for subsequent voyagers following self-consciously in the wake of Cook. What might it mean, for example, that the mid-nineteenth-century coastal view of Pape'ete on the north coast of Tahiti, by the little-known naval lieutenant Conway Shipley (fig. 1), looks so much like views of Pacific coastlines from the 1770s by Cook's artists, John Webber and

William Hodges (figs. 2, 3)?

It is such views of Polynesia, and specifically Tahiti, between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that I want to use as a case study to consider further the idea of re-enactment in relation to the visual culture of travel and the maritime. I will focus on the figure of Cook and the central place of his voyages in subsequent British attitudes to the Pacific, through reference to three British visitors – all naval officers – to Tahiti during the difficult and violent years of the Franco-Tahitian war, following the establishment of Tahiti as a French protectorate after 1842. I will argue that in their commentaries and images Cook's voyages assume iconic status as the foundation of British history in the Pacific, and Cook himself emerges as the incorporation of re-enacted national history within an imperial sphere. Moreover, this is played out in the visual images these later officers produce of the Tahitian landscape and coastline.

Collingwood's concept of historical discourse has significant parallels with Stephen Bann's account of the early-nineteenth-century development of historical writing as an academic discipline, in which the very principle of history was predicated, like re-enactment, on 'an overpowering sense of loss' and attempted recuperation of the distance of the historical past through 'life-like representation'.¹⁰ In this sense, no form of history could encapsulate 'life-like representation' more closely than Collingwood's idea of re-enactment; and nor could there be any more paradigmatic instance of historical re-enactment predicated on irretrievable loss than that encapsulated in the figure of Captain Cook, whose death in 1779 was represented for at least a century and a half following it as a universal loss inscribed within the discourse of national British history.

John Webber was one of many artists in the early 1780s to represent Cook's death at Kealakekua Bay, Hawai'i in February 1779, but as the official artist on the third voyage (even though he was not present to witness the circumstances in which Cook died) his *Death of Captain Cook*, painted

around 1781 in London and published as a print the following year, was perhaps the most influential image to deal with the subject, inaugurating his iconic image as the humanitarian, peace-loving, self-sacrificing hero. By the time Webber's view of Kealakekua Bay (fig. 3) was published in the official voyage account of 1784, therefore, the location was already inscribed for the volume's readers as the site of the enactment and re-enactment of Cook's death. Furthermore, this re-enactment was predicated on what the theatre historian Joseph Roach has termed 'surrogation', a form of cultural compensation for the 'cavities created by loss through death or other forms of departure' by attempting to provide 'satisfactory alternates'.¹¹ In Cook's case, the 'cavity' caused by the death of the great explorer could never adequately be replaced and instead elevated him into 'Europe's pantheon of immortals', reincarnating him as the iconic embodiment of national British virtue.¹² The coastal landscape of Kealakekua Bay, both actual and represented, and other Pacific sites, as I shall go on to demonstrate, particularly Tahiti and the Society Islands, thus became inscribed as sites of re-enactment of Cook's presence and loss and all that his loss signified in terms of an idealization of British national character.

By 1800, against the backdrop of the wars against Revolutionary France, British maritime enterprise, enshrined in the figure of Cook, had been absorbed into an increasingly trenchant and moralized account of national history. With the advent of the French Wars from 1793 came a much more emphatic assertion of nationalist sentiment that took as one of its principal focal points the nation's maritime prowess, within which Cook's loss was surrogated, to use Roach's term, through being presented as the exemplary epitomization of national British character for subsequent naval commanders to follow. So for one 1842 account of his voyages, Cook was the model of moderation, propriety and progressive enlightenment:

He pursued a steady, upright career; his course was ever forward; as he proceeded he gained knowledge. His knowledge led to a novel discipline on board our 'scientific navy', of which

he was the founder, Captain J. C. Ross being the latest and right worthy follower.¹³

Cook's life here becomes identified seamlessly with his voyages, which are understood as purposeful voyages of scientific exploration whereby the pursuit of knowledge itself provides instruction and direction how to chart a 'forward course' through the creation of a 'scientific navy'. There is nothing here of the uncertainty, messiness, misunderstandings and confrontations of colonial cross-cultural encounter, not to mention the riotous, bloody confusion of the battle on the beach in which Cook died. Instead, James Clark Ross, through his voyage to the Antarctic, begun in 1839, is presented as the 'satisfactory alternate' for Cook: Ross becomes the 'latest and right worthy follower' in a process of surrogation or re-enactment by which the connections are established and perpetuated between nation, history and the maritime.

By contrast, the preface to the official publication, over half a century earlier, of Cook's third voyage was quick to emphasize that its import was not to do with national history at all, but with the history, comparatively understood, of humanity itself, through the promotion of 'general knowledge, and not with a prospect of enlarging private dominion'.¹⁴ It echoes the naturalist Johann Reinhold Forster, who with his son George accompanied Cook's second voyage, and claimed in his published account of it:

to look upon *mankind* in general, as one large family, and ... to shew, by what accidents and misfortunes men may, for want of mutual support, degenerate to savages; and by what steps they may gradually emerge from the darkness of barbarism, and uniting in social compacts, behold the dawn of civilization.¹⁵

Thus Forster saw all Pacific cultures as interconnected through shared linguistic patterns and other common cultural or anthropological features, and placed them upon a hierarchical scale of

civilizational progress. His highly influential proto-anthropological account was based upon an innovative comparative cultural relativism whereby, in principle, all forms of human society could be related to each other.

It is against this backdrop of shifting attitudes to the European encounter with the Pacific that Lieutenant Frederick Walpole's account of his voyage through the Pacific on *HMS Collingwood* between 1844 and 1848 must be placed. Walpole's narrative, published in 1849, clearly echoes Cook's voyages and is imbued with a sense of emulation of the great national hero, but relates not a journey of exploration and discovery but an affirmative nationalistic claim of moral right to territories in the region, articulated through an anti-French discourse of territorial rivalry and moral and spiritual superiority. The voyage was made ostensibly to report on missionary stations among Pacific islands, but more importantly to assess French activity in the wake of their annexation of the Marquesas and Tahiti in the early 1840s. Walpole shows sympathy for the Protestant missionary project throughout the region, but particularly at Tahiti, where through its interventions he sees the 'dawn of civilization' hoped for in Forster's *Observations* over sixty years earlier; and he is appalled at the threat to the mission by the recent French takeover of the island. Strikingly, however, this nationalistic and religious discourse is overlaid onto a perception of the terrain of Tahiti and its recent history filtered through the eyes of Cook, the Forsters, Hodges and Webber from the previous century. In a rapturous, remarkably painterly description of his first sight of Pape'ete Harbour, on the north-west coast of the island, he notes the houses like 'opals in a setting of emeralds', 'every fantastic form and shape [of] hill above hill, cliff on cliff', the sea beyond the reef reposing in 'bluest silvery calmness' and the vista framed in picturesque fashion by corresponding expanses of trees and hills, until it is closed by the spur of Point Venus, the site of Cook's first landing on the island; which aligns the cultural significance of the place and its aestheticized landscape with Cook.¹⁶ Walpole's writing is a literary description mediated by visual imagery and might equally be a description of Hodges' or Webber's paintings of the same idyllic, luminous scene, with Cook and

his artists forming the originating reference point for his understanding of the visual register of the coastal landscape before his eyes. For Walpole, the national significance of Tahiti – national, that is, in terms of Britishness, not Tahitian-ness – emanates from the island’s very landscape, and from Cook’s being ‘always already’ there, as an irrefutable teleology of British national history. However, such visual ownership of the landscape enshrined in the figure of the great national explorer is disrupted by the French presence:

But what a change since the great navigator’s day! France has seized the rule, her vessels in warlike array fill the harbour, her drum and martial fifes disturb the sweet songs of the groves, and her flag floats in possession from the most matter-of-fact-looking bastions. The politics of the place are no business of mine. While there, as in duty bound, I sided in feeling with the natives, and a strict adherer of Nelson’s code, loathed the French most cordially.¹⁷

The significance of Tahiti memorialized in Cook is interrupted by the historical traces of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, invoked in the reference to Nelson. Hence Walpole sees the enlightened work of the Anglican missions unravelling before the French colonial take-over.

Similar concerns permeate other visual imagery of Tahiti and the Society Islands at this period.

Walpole’s contemporary, Conway Shipley, another naval lieutenant who was also an amateur artist, and visited Tahiti on a similar reconnaissance voyage in 1848, made a drawing of the view of the bay of Pape’ete, which he published in 1851 as part of a series of lithographs, *Sketches in the Pacific* (fig 1).¹⁸ It is a visual counterpart of Walpole’s rapturous description. In their visual register, composition particularly the receding curve of the shore and the use of leaning palms as repoussoirs and treatment of light and sky, Shipley’s views also appear to be self-consciously referencing Hodges’ or Webber’s depictions of similar Polynesian coastlines (figs. 2, 3).

However, Pape'ete Harbour was more immediately significant. For it was there that on 1 September 1842 that the French Admiral Abel Dupetit-Thouars arrived on behalf of the French government to redress what the French regarded as infringements of their rights and interests in Polynesia by the Tahitian queen Pomare, heavily influenced by the British Consul, George Pritchard, representing British missionary interests. Later the same month Dupetit-Thouars issued the Treaty, which was signed by Pomare, turning Tahiti over as a French protectorate. Dupetit-Thouars' British counterpart, Commodore John Toup Nicolas, protested that Pomare been coerced into signing it, drawing attention to her being incapacitated by her advanced pregnancy:

a situation which has ever claimed from Men of every civilized Country in the World, Protection, and Kindness, and Favor, and most of all from those of a Nation, which stands pre-eminent in its Chivalric Gallantry towards that Sex, whom we all regard it to be our highest Honor to guard from Insult, and to shield from Wrong.¹⁹

Toup Nicolas invokes the French reputation for gallantry in order to reinforce the feminization of Pomare and emphasize her helplessness. This was almost a universal strategy of the British missionary protests in the 1840s against what they saw as a French colonial occupation of the island. Pomare herself resorted to the same tactic, portraying herself in letters to the French king and to Queen Victoria, as merely a defenceless woman prey to the rapacious desires of French officers acting improperly and illegally beyond their remit.²⁰ Victoria, as a young queen and mother herself, was held up as a kindred sister spirit, both beneficiary and icon of male chivalrous power – 'A wife – a mother – gentle queen' – and thus naturally empathetic with the plight of Pomare.²¹ Certainly, in the print published by the evangelical George Baxter in 1845 (fig. 4), to publicize and promote the cause of Pomare, Pritchard and the Protestant Missionary movement, Pomare, her husband and children are rendered as afflicted Pacific avatars of Victoria and Albert, very different from contemporary French depictions of the royal family.²² From her ringleted hair to her

fashionable European crinolines, Pomare is clearly intended to resemble Victoria and make evident the parallel between both women's sovereignty and their natural entitlement to it, which in the image is under threat from the ranks of French soldiers landing on the beach visible through the window. The companion print (fig 5) underscores the mutuality between Pomare and the British Mission by showing the imaginary alternative to the Queen's current plight. It depicts a portrait of George Pritchard, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul (and head of the Tahitian Mission, a dual role to which the French took great exception), with the view through the window of his house (further along the coast from Pomare's) showing the state of Tahiti as it would be under the care of the Protestant Church: in the place of invading French soldiers are 'Queen Pomare's palace, the chapel & natives returning from a week-day service'. It is a scene of sunny calm, under the watchful eye of Pritchard. There is a certain level of re-enactment at play in underscoring the ideological bias of this pair of prints, with Pomare represented as 're-enacting' Victoria, the icon of feminine domestic monarchy under masculine protection. Pritchard's own, later account of events invokes the same trope of feminine distress and masculine chivalry, contrasting his own gallant behavior with that of the French, which he claims, 'will be remembered to the reproach of the French nation, even when some of the far greater crimes of Napoleon I are forgotten'.²³ The French annexation of Tahiti is again compared directly with Bonaparte's imperialist ambition and is taken as simply another expression of French colonial politics from the earlier era: Bonaparte for British commentators such as Pritchard becomes almost the negative counterpart to Cook, the determining historical factor in all aspects of French activity in the region.

Of course, this is not how the French themselves saw things. Dupetit-Thouars's own official account of his voyage of 1836-9, published in 1840-1, represented the British missionaries, and especially Pritchard, as effectively operating a colonial government on the island, unchecked and unsupervised, for their own personal profit.²⁴ His history of Tahiti likewise stems from Bougainville, not from Cook, commenting how Tahitian girls bathing in a stream are like classical

naiads, and render the island just the same as in Bougainville's day, with the difference that 'alors elles étaient innocentes et aujourd'hui elles ne sont plus, car elles ont toutes la conscience de ce qu'elles font'.²⁵

Dupetit-Thouars, conventionally enough, makes a nostalgic appeal to naiads and dryads in evoking the longstanding image of the island as the incorporation of a lost state of pastoral blessedness, and subscribing to the mythology of Tahiti that had been established in European consciousness since first contact in the 1760s, and which, despite the actualities of colonial conflict and rebellion, endured uncontested through the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries.²⁶ But the French admiral filters this via Bougainville as a loss of innocence, that is produced by contact with Europeans; and the unspoken implication is that the loss of innocence is the result of extended contact with the missionaries, who have inculcated the Tahitians with the 'full knowledge of what they do.' In contrast, for Walpole, Shipley and their English compatriots visiting in the 1840s, the naiads have been displaced by the French military. And the loss of the island to the French is synonymized with the loss of Cook, whose presence has constantly to be re-invoked within the landscape itself in order to render it legible and able to be appropriated morally and ideologically, if not physically, through representing it as a series of historical signs. It is history – and history stemming from Cook, not Bougainville – that makes the landscape of Tahiti meaningful for British visitors. Yet this is an unstable process of signification, since history does not emanate of itself from the landscape, but has to be, as it were, inserted into it, planted there as though naturalized, and made to appear as if it were spontaneously and independently produced.²⁷ Hence it has to be produced through continual reiteration and re-enactment, above all through the naturalizing medium of topographical landscape representation, which is itself hardly a disinterested mode. Instead, it is, as W. J. T. Mitchell has written:

tailor-made for the discourse of imperialism, which conceives itself precisely (and

simultaneously) as an expansion of landscape understood as an inevitable, progressive development in history, an expansion of ‘culture’ and ‘civilization’ into a ‘natural’ space in a process that is itself narrated as ‘natural’.²⁸

The representation of the Tahitian landscape in the 1840s is more complex than Mitchell’s account allows for, since Shipley’s and Walpole’s visual and verbal renditions were produced not in tandem with an ‘expansion of landscape understood as an inevitable, progressive development in history’, but in protest and frustration at the loss of the landscape and the consequent disruption of their sense of ‘inevitable ... history’. Moreover, the loss of the landscape to French imperial expansion and all that it signifies in terms of history, is surrogated onto the similarly lost figure of Cook, the originating figure of that history, who is continually re-invoked and re-enacted in the landscape, not only through the identification of him with key topographical sites, but also through the adoption of a formal pictorial method of landscape representation distinctively identifiable with the artists who accompanied his voyages.

Thus, in his captions and letterpress to the plates of *Sketches in the Pacific*, Shipley carefully registers all the significant historical landmarks that now comprise the vista and make it legible. So plate 4 (fig. 6), he explains, shows

The settlement or town, and bay of Papeite, Tahiti, – taken from the site of the block house in which the Rev. G. Pritchard, H. B. M. Consul was illegally imprisoned by the French. – The coral reef that surrounds the island may be seen stretching away towards One Tree Hill, Matavai Bay, and Point Venus, where Captain Cook first landed in Tahiti. – On the left is the Mission House, & the Uranie Gardens.

Again, therefore, the very point from which the view is taken is a loaded one, marking the

significant site of Anglo-French rivalry on the island, with regard to the temporary imprisonment of Pritchard by the French, early in their occupation of the island. Then, like Walpole's account, this elision of the spectator's viewpoint with the recent history of the island is in turn linked seamlessly within the field of vision to the point zero of the British historicization of Tahiti, Cook's arrival at Matavai Bay and Point Venus.

Likewise, plate 5 (fig. 7) is also a view of Pape'ete taken, Shipley tells us:

from the signal station at the back of the town. The thatched building inside the fortifications is the palace of Queen Pomare. The building with the verandah is the residence of the French governor; and behind are the Artillery barracks and Hospital.

The same view, encompassing the same landmarks, is described, albeit in less restrained terms, by Walpole:

There is Pritchard's, and the mission ... Down by the beach is a large open native house, where [Queen] Pomare delighted to lounge in the noon-day heat, and survey the lovely realms which owned her sway ... Further back is the house she commonly inhabited, a building very like a fine large cottage in England: the French have made it into a playhouse ... Stores and barracks are rising, and amidst green and peaceful scenery, peer now the bastion and the howitzer. The lanes are fresh and lovely, but a sentry keeps ward on them instead of nymphs and naiads.²⁹

Once again the French presence is seen as an abnormal and violent intrusion into a naturally idyllic pastoral harmony between the queen, her people and the god-given beauty of the Pacific environment, invoked in the reference to the 'nymphs and naiads' displaced by the French military

(and who unmistakably recall not only the mythologization of Tahiti as a pastoral paradise through Banksian or Bougainvillean comparisons between Tahiti and Cythera or Arcadia, but also the nymph-like bathers of Hodges's idealized views of Vaitepiha Bay). By contrast, the ordered social landscape of the era prior to French takeover is conspicuously anglicized: Pomare's house is 'very like a fine large cottage in England': a further evocation of a pastoral landscape tradition associated with the English countryside.

The shared ideological agenda of Shipley's and Walpole's visual and verbal descriptions marks out Tahiti for British visitors as a predetermined set of historically significant sites and landmarks, through which the island's coast and landscape are able to be understood and consumed through a process of re-enactment; and which is held to be in contrast to the vestigial innocence traceable in its pure and unclouded beauty, which connotes in a contrasting sense a landscape of semiotic emptiness. By way of confirmation, a further visitor, Edward Gennys Fanshawe, on his first voyage both to the Pacific and as Captain of the *Daphne*, followed directly in the wake of *HMS Collingwood* and *Calypso* in visiting Pitcairn, Tahiti and the Society Islands, Fiji and the Friendly Isles between July and September 1849, exactly one year after Conway Shipley's voyage on the *Calypso*. His mission, as he explained in his journal and letters home, was also directly related to the prior one of *HMS Calypso* in checking French ambitions in the region:

The French, I understand, wanted to clutch the Society Islands also [in addition to Tahiti and the Marquesas], but Lord Palmerston got them to enter into a joint guarantee of their independence. This was conveyed to them by the *Calypso* last year, and the object of my going to those islands is to advise the several chiefs (for each is a separate state) to preserve it.³⁰

He is thus well aware of the nature and record of his immediate predecessors' travels in the region;

but he too is also steeped in Cook as the *sine qua non* of Pacific history and knowledge, and like both Shipley and Walpole, is proleptically attuned to the visual aesthetic of the landscape tradition as the proper means of representing the Pacific. By way of preparation for the voyage, he wrote to his wife, he would consult:

Wilkes' account of the Fijis and Tahiti, Cook's of the latter, and the correspondence and remarks of my predecessors, Captains Worth and Blake ... I hope to make some sketches.³¹

In addition to his own fellow naval officers' accounts, then, he turns to the American Captain Charles Wilkes' voyage of 1838-42 and Cook's of the previous century to provide the necessary data for him to accomplish his mission; and these are, significantly, tied to his anticipation of the natural beauty of the region and his cognitive appropriation of it through making 'some sketches'.³² Even more than for Walpole and Shipley, word and image for Fanshawe are interchangeable and mutually reinforcing. Like Walpole, his description of his first enchanted view of Pape'ete is suffused with painterly vocabulary and imagery:

Here is tropical scenery in all its glory, bright green fringes on the sea-shore of cocoa-nut trees, bread fruit and oranges; the deepest blue sea outside the reefs and the most delicate green inside, separated by a line of brilliant white surf as far as the eye can reach on either side; the thatched high-pitched roofs and low whitewashed walls of the houses of the Europeans round the shore or peeping out from the cluster of trees, and the bold mountains rising behind, altogether form a scene beautiful indeed, and rendered cheerful by the groups of natives in their bright yellow and red garments.³³

Then two days' touring the island are given over first to visiting Fautaua, the final stronghold of the Tahitian resistance before they were overcome by the French military and a location to which

Walpole and Shipley also paid great attention for its significance in the recent history of the island; and second, to retracing Cook, through the sites and people associated with him, which is again worth citing at length:

Next day we went in the gig to Point Venus, classic ground. This Post is now in charge of a native chief and some native troops, but the former has been to Paris and wears a tight jacket, and the latter are in French pay. There were two huts with fishermen the same tall athletic sort of fellows that Cook might have seen in the same spot, but they were drunk and insolent. We walked round the shores of Matavai Bay till we came to a steep bluff (One Tree Hill), another French Post, thence to Papawa, where is the tomb of old Pomare, the Constantine of Tahiti; but his bones are said to have been carried off and hid by the natives. Queen Pomare has a new house here, built in the old native style, and a good representation of the houses in Cook's time ... We then proceeded by boat to Saonoa, as I was very anxious to see the old lady who recollected Cook ... She is a very fine old woman, 85 years of age or nearly so, for the natives keep no account of their ages. She has a recollection of Wallis and his affray with the natives about 1775 [*sic*], but not very clear. Of Cook she seems to have a very lively recollection, as indeed she may well if, as I understand, she is the daughter of the unfortunate Tupia whom Cook wished to take to England, but who died at Batavia.³⁴

Although his history is a little shaky, the urgency of retracing Cook's steps and acting out his illustrious forbear's presence in the landscape is at once the key to the historical meaning of Tahiti for Fanshawe, as it is for his naval colleagues, but is also fraught with imminent loss through the effects of the French government. So the fishermen, who otherwise would be precise recollections of Cook's era, are now 'drunk and insolent', a corrupted shadow of the idealized presence of the great explorer. Queen Pomare herself is understood to be re-enacting the heritage of Cook, through the building of a 'genuine' traditional Tahitian house on the 'classic ground' of Point Venus and

Matavai Bay. Finally, Fanshawe attempts to get as close as he can to ‘re-thinking or re-enacting ... in his own mind’ the past actions of Cook, by his ‘very anxious’ determination to meet the last surviving Tahitian to have met Cook in person.

He did also ‘make some sketches’ of the significant sites he encountered on his travels in the South Pacific, which are analagous to his journal entries: the text acting as an explication of the image, and the image becoming the iconic incorporation of the text. In this sense, Fanshawe’s drawings may be understood themselves as performative, or as forms of re-enactment: artefacts produced in time as part of a continuously unfolding narrative of the voyage, that is, produced in the knowledge of what he has already recorded visually and textually, and in anticipation of making similar future records. They are also images made both at and of richly meaningful locations, and created in the full consciousness – elaborated in the accompanying text of the journal – of those British visitors who had preceded him, whether recently or in the more distant past, and anchored on the pivotal figure of Cook. So on the one hand, his view of *Matavai Bay and Point Venus, Tahiti*, dated 24 August 1849 (fig. 8), was presumably taken from the ‘steep bluff (One Tree Hill)’ that was the midpoint on his day’s outing described in detail in the journal, between Point Venus and Saonoa, and encapsulates in the panoramic view the full moment of the site’s ‘classic ground’, as Cook’s first landing point on the island. On the other hand, his view of *Eimeo from near Papeiti* (fig. 9), was made the following day from almost exactly the same position where Conway Shipley the previous year had made his own drawing of the same vista (fig. 9) in self-conscious imitation of Cook’s artists, William Hodges or John Webber. Fanshawe’s act of drawing in this sense is a re-enactment of Shipley’s, which was itself a re-enactment of Cook’s artists in Tahiti. And it is through this process of emulation and imitation as repeatedly acted out in their role as visual recorders of the topography of Tahiti (and other significant sites in the Pacific), that visitors such as Shipley and Fanshawe could continually re-assert Tahiti as a *lieu de mémoire* for British imperial interests, against the fraught political and ideological backdrop of the Franco-Tahitian war, through

representing the landscape as a form of historical archive.

Of course, this was not a history of the Tahitians themselves or of their own making, but a history of European involvement with the island, by which visitors such as Shipley, Walpole and Fanshawe, naval officers engaged in Admiralty missions, invested the landscape with signs that made it legible to a European eye, through a process of graphic re-enactment that continually re-inscribes the historical presence of Cook in and onto the landscape, as the determining reference point for legitimizing British moral claims to the island. And this form of graphic re-enactment is produced not only in the reiterated appeals to Cook through the sites associated with him, but also in the conspicuous adoption of a visual aesthetic deriving from the art produced on Cook's voyages, as the proper or, indeed, as the *only* means for representing the island landscape. For Walpole, Shipley and Fanshawe, the significance of Tahiti is produced through the re-enactment of Cook's presence in the island's topography and landscape, which in turn naturalizes the history of the islands as that associated with Cook and, after him, the missionary movement; as though it were, like the landscape of Tahiti itself, simply the factual basis, the ground upon which other discourses of national character, religion and morality could be articulated through re-enactment. Hence, the landscape views of Tahiti and the Pacific by Shipley and numbers of other visitors at this period come across at first sight simply as innocent, touristic views, transparent and superficial, and disguising the heavy ideological load underpinning them.

The theory of re-enactment, therefore, as the 're-thinking', or the attempt to 're-think', the thought expressed in a past human action, however problematic such a postulation of history may be from a philosophical perspective, offers a potent means of interpreting not only specific topographical images of a particular place at a particular moment, such as the views of Tahiti that I have discussed here. It also opens up potential ways of grasping the profusion of similar views that were produced especially from the early to mid-nineteenth century by western travellers, both amateurs and

professional artists, of locations all around the globe. Applying the theory of re-enactment to visual culture and its processes raises many important questions, which might provide potential for further research: not least, when is representation *not* a form of re-enactment? And, how might such a sense of re-enactment usefully be applied to other areas of visual culture?

With regard to the first issue, I think it is clear that the particular type of highly conservative imagery (both formally and iconographically) that I have considered here, comprising an abundant though art-historically neglected genre of topographical landscape representation, may be contrasted with the radically innovative departures taking place more widely in the fine arts during the same period. By comparison, the ‘avant-garde’ works of Corot, Millet, Courbet or Turner, being produced during the years that Frederick Walpole, Conway Shipley and Edward Gennys Fanshawe were in Tahiti, are clearly *not* forms of pictorial re-enactment in the sense I have outlined.

Fanshawe, for example, and others like him, whose work lies virtually unconsidered in visual and historical archives around the world, produced increasingly competent but highly repetitive landscape images throughout his long career, apparently oblivious to the rapid and controversial developments taking place in Impressionism, Aestheticism, Symbolism and so on. However, re-enactment might offer interesting possibilities for re-thinking the artistic ideologies and practices of their other contemporaries, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, for example, William Holman Hunt’s endeavour to ‘re-enact’ the New Testament in his travels through the Holy Land. Indeed, it is in the context of the visual culture of travel and tourism – visual artefacts produced as a self-consciously time-bound idiom – that the theory of re-enactment and its attendant methodologies appear to open up the most fertile lines of enquiry, whether in terms of taking a fresh perspective on such already familiar phenomena as the imagery of the Grand Tour or William Gilpin’s theory of the Picturesque; or in terms of opening access to little-known, neglected work such as I have analyzed in this essay, where the ramifications are potentially much larger. For it implies the potential to assess from a critical historical vantage point the vast archive of similar material, in the form of prints, drawings

and sketchbooks, that lies awaiting evaluation in libraries, galleries and museums around the globe, and that might radically critique the established orthodoxies of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century art history. For it suggests both that the practices and ideologies of travel, tourism and empire were much more significant for visual culture than has generally been allowed; and also that the apparently innocuous and insignificant touristic souvenirs created in their thousands by the likes of Shipley or Fanshawe are not so simple and transparent as they appear at first sight, and indeed merit and repay serious consideration. This work also now needs urgently to be brought to light, revived and ‘re-enacted’.

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- ¹ This essay expands on a short, exploratory paper I produced for the conference on *Art & Environment* at Tate Britain, 25-26 June 2010, arising out the AHRC Landscape & Environment Programme under the direction of Stephen Daniels, which was subsequently published as: ‘Re-enacting art and travel’, *Tate Papers* 17 (11 May 2012), special issue on ‘Art & Environment’, ed. Stephen Daniels and Nick Alfrey: <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/re-enacting-art-and-travel>. It also develops material considered in the Conclusion of my book, *Empire to Nation: Art, History and the Visualization of Maritime Britain 1768-1829* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), and offers a counterpart to my earlier essay, ‘“By cruel foes oppress’d”: British naval draughtsmen in Tahiti and the South Pacific in the 1840s’, *Journal of Historical Geography* 43 (2014): 71-84.
- ² Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1987), p. 219.
- ³ Latour, *Science in Action*, pp. 223-33.
- ⁴ Vanessa Agnew, ‘Introduction: what is reenactment?’, *Criticism* 46, 3 (2004): 327-39, 330: special issue on ‘Extreme and sentimental history’, ed. Vanessa Agnew and Jonathan Lamb.
- ⁵ See especially the series published by Palgrave Macmillan: *Re-Enactment History*, series editors Vanessa Agnew, Jonathan Lamb, Iain McCalman, which has three volumes thus far: Vanessa Agnew and Jonathan Lamb, eds, *Settler and Creole Re-enactment* (Basingstoke, 2009); Iain McCalman and Paul A. Pickering, eds, *Historical Re-enactment: From Realism to the Affective Turn* (Basingstoke, 2010); and Mark Salber Phillips, Barbara Caine and Julia Adeney Thomas, eds, *Rethinking Historical Distance* (Basingstoke, 2013). See also Jonathan Lamb, ‘Historical reenactment, extremity, and passion’, *The Eighteenth Century* 49, 3 (2008): 239-50; Vanessa Agnew, ‘History’s affective turn: historical reenactment and its work in the present’, *Rethinking History* 11, 3 (2007): 299-312; Agnew, ‘Introduction:

what is reenactment?'.

- ⁶ Greg Denning, *Mr Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 4
- ⁷ Alexander Cook, 'The Use and Abuse of Historical Reenactment: Thoughts on Recent Trends in Public History', *Criticism* 46:3 (2004): 487-96, 488.
- ⁸ William H. Dray, *History as Re-enactment: R. G. Collingwood's Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 52.
- ⁹ Agnew, 'Introduction: what is re-enactment?': 332.
- ¹⁰ Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clío: A study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 8-14. See also Stephen Bann, 'Antiquarianism, visuality, and the exotic monument: William Hodges' *A Dissertation*', in *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture, and the Politics of Representation, 1850-1900*, ed. Maria Antonella Pellizzari (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 64.
- ¹¹ Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 2-3.
- ¹² Rod Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 40. See also Nicholas Thomas, *Discoveries: the Voyages of Captain Cook* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), pp. 409-13; Glyn Williams, *The Death of Captain Cook: a Hero Made and Unmade* (London: Profile Books, 2008), pp. 71-83.
- ¹³ *The Voyages of Captain James Cook. Illustrated ... With an Appendix, Giving an Account of the Present Condition of the South Sea Islands, &c*, 2 vols (London: William Smith, 1842), 1: xvii.
- ¹⁴ James Cook and James King, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean, Undertaken by Command of his Majesty, for Making Discoveries in the Northern Hemisphere: Performed under the Direction of Captains Cook, Clerke, and Gore, in the Years 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779, and 1780*, octavo edition, 4 vols. (London: John Fielding, 1785), vii.
- ¹⁵ Johann Reinhold Forster, *Observations made during a Voyage round the World* (1778), ed. Nicholas Thomas, Harriet Guest and Michael Dettelbach (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996), lxxviii.
- ¹⁶ Lieut. the Hon. Frederick Walpole, R. N., *Four Years in the Pacific. In Her Majesty's Ship Collingwood, From 1844 to 1848*, 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1849), pp. 82-3.
- ¹⁷ Walpole, *Four Years in the Pacific*, pp. 83-4.
- ¹⁸ Conway Shipley, *Sketches in the Pacific: the South Sea Islands. Drawn from Nature and on Stone* (London, 1851)
- ¹⁹ *A Letter from Commodore Toup Nicolas, C. B. to Rear Admiral Du Petit Thouars, on the Subject of the Late Events*

at Otaheite (Papeite, 1843), p. 7.

- ²⁰ Pomare, *Letter from Queen Pomare to Louis Philippe, King of the French* (Honolulu, Oahu, 1844), p. 18. See also Charlotte Haldane, *Tempest over Tahiti* (London: Constable, 1963).
- ²¹ Sarah Stickney Ellis, *The Island Queen: A Poem* (London: John Snow, 1846), Book 8; Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific*, pp. 118-19.
- ²² For French images of Pomare, see Viviane Fayaud, 'A Tahitian Woman in Majesty: French Images of Queen Pomare', *History Australia* 3:1 (2006): 12.1-12.6.
- ²³ Henry Allon, Preface to Rev. George Pritchard, *Queen Pomare and her Country ... With an Introduction by the Rev. Dr. Allon* (London: Elliot Stock [1878]), viii.
- ²⁴ This is discussed at greater length in Quilley, "'By cruel foes oppress'd'".
- ²⁵ 'then they were innocent and today they are not, for they all have full knowledge of what they do' (author's translation): Abel Du Petit-Thouars, *Voyage autour du Monde sur la Frégate La Vénus, pendant les Années 1836-1838, publié par Ordre du Roi, sous les Auspices du Ministre de la Marine*, 4 vols. (Paris: Gide, 1840-1), vol. 2, p. 425. See also Quilley, "'By cruel foes oppress'd'".
- ²⁶ See Matt K. Matsuda, *Empire of Love: Histories of France and the Pacific* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)
- ²⁷ Here I am reverting to Roland Barthes' analysis of the process of linguistic signification in *Mythologies*, which seems to me to be extremely helpful in this instance, particularly regarding his account of the ideological structure of naturalization. See Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris, 1957), selected and translated from the French by Annette Lavers (London: Cape, 1972).
- ²⁸ W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Imperial landscape', in Mitchell (ed.), *Landscape and Power* (Chicago and London, 2002), p. 17.
- ²⁹ Walpole, *Four Years in the Pacific*, pp. 86-7.
- ³⁰ Alice E. J. Fanshawe, *Admiral Edward Gennys Fanshawe G. C. B.: A Record: Notes Journals Letters* (London: Spottiswood & Co., printed for private circulation, 1904), p. 182, citing journal entry of 4 August 1849.
- ³¹ Fanshawe, *Edward Gennys Fanshawe*, p. 179, citing a letter of 10 July 1849.
- ³² Fanshawe did indeed make many sketches, which are now in the collection of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.
- ³³ Fanshawe, *Edward Gennys Fanshawe*: 195.
- ³⁴ Fanshawe, *Edward Gennys Fanshawe*: 196-7.