

PART TWO



Romantic Temporalities



Deep Time in the South Pacific: Scientific Voyaging and the Ancient/ Primitive Analogy

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I. Temporalities

Deep time is a surprisingly young concept, a product of modern geology and evocative popular science writing. In 1987 Stephen Jay Gould praised “deep time” as “a beautifully apt phrase,” paying tribute to John McPhee six years after McPhee coined the phrase in his book *Basin and Range* (Gould 2). Gould and others have adopted McPhee’s expression along with his definition of deep time as a marker of the unbridgeable gap between geological and historical time scales, between the earth’s gradual changes over millions of years and the rapid changes occurring in even a century of human history. Gould shows that the concept of this gap is older than McPhee’s expression, although, while it was formulated roughly around the mid eighteenth century, it is still young in historical terms. Mobilizing the same gap for evolutionary theory, Charles Darwin pointed out that the evolution of species maps more readily onto geological than human time. More recently, other writers have used “deep time” metaphorically to refer to human cognitive processes or to the lifespan of monuments, among other topics. Geology textbooks trace the idea as far as James Hutton’s *Theory of the Earth*, originally published in 1788 (Putnam 4), and there seems to be a strong consensus that deep time depends on the emergence of modern geology. In this essay, however, I want to propose another historical version of deep time, namely the attempt by eighteenth-century explorers and historians to envision human prehistory and human origins through art. Like evolutionary biology, archaeology today stands on a geological foundation, dealing systematically with the earth’s youngest strata. But the recognition of geological time itself may owe something to the European perception of other living cultures as primitive. By comparing Pacific islanders, among others, to the peoples of ancient Europe, explorers translated cultural difference into an abyss of time. In this context, the term “deep time” captures an unfamiliar aspect of the conventional trope of exploration as “time

travel”: although it is an ethnocentric trope, it also unsettles the history of the species as radically as the “time revolution” later unsettled geology.

Early art historians and Pacific explorers brought expanding temporal frameworks to bear on differing “varieties of the human species,” as John Reinhold Forster called them in his *Observations Made During a Voyage Round the World* (1778). Operating under the aegis of “travel as science,” both Forster and antiquaries such as Pierre Hugues d’Hancarville saw themselves as “exploring the past,” a method formalized by Joseph-Marie Degérando in 1800: “the philosophical traveller, sailing to the ends of the earth, is in fact traveling in time” (qtd. in Fabian 7). Johannes Fabian takes up this substitution of time for space in *Time and the Other*, locating these philosophical travellers of the Enlightenment in the middle of a process that generated “naturalized Time” out of secular time. Anthropology became a modern discipline, Fabian argues, by deriving a strict teleology of progress from evolutionary theory, a development that he terms “intellectually regressive” (16) as compared to experimental Enlightenment practices of “temporalization.” Philosophical travellers such as Forster anticipated the modern synthesis, however, by developing the “comparative method” of situating cultures in time, which depended on the presupposition that “dispersal in space reflects ... sequence in time” (12). “*Primitive* being essentially a temporal concept,” it implied that the traveller’s point of origin was not only geographically central but historically advanced (18). For Fabian, “Typological Time” remains more important in anthropology than “physical” or absolute time (23) because it permits the distinction between traditional and modern societies: “savagery exists ... in *their* Time, not ours” (75).

The philosopher Quentin Meillassoux, by contrast, insists that absolute time (as measured by carbon dating or stellar spectroscopy) is a “time of science” from which “humanity is absent” (26). What I am arguing here is that the current spatial metaphor of “deep time” for nonhuman time recalls the prior temporalization effected by Enlightenment discourses on the primitive. These discourses have well-established implications for the origins of “racial science”; d’Hancarville’s and especially Forster’s pursuit of primitive origins involved incipient racial distinctions, though these were framed within a mono- rather than a polygenetic paradigm of human origins.¹ My somewhat different concern is to show how their conflation of time and space – their “horizontal stratigraphy,” in Fabian’s apt phrase (75) – promoted an empirical attention to artefacts and to customs and manners that joined civil with natural history and disrupted the dominant model of uniform “stages” of human civilization.

Because of the long vista that it seemed to open on both natural and human history at the moment of its European discovery in the 1760s, the Pacific island of Tahiti has been described as “a foundation stone of the romantic movement” (Beaglehole 1:xciv–xcv). J.C. Beaglehole’s description is not so far removed from

the more conventional explanation that derives the Romantic movement from the French Revolution. George Forster, John Reinhold's son and fellow Pacific explorer, also achieved distinction as a revolutionary in the 1790s. The French and American Revolutions transformed the Enlightenment views of human society that inspired them, and likewise Pacific exploration became a testing ground for the philosophical theories of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Adam Ferguson, and many others concerning the origin and progress of society. These Enlightenment philosophers were already armchair travellers: both Rousseau and Ferguson cited descriptions of Native American societies from travel narratives to illustrate their model of the early "stages" of social development. Another would-be historian of humankind, Charles de Brosses, coined the term "fetishism" to describe West African religious practice, based solely on his reading of travel narrative. Though these philosophers did not travel around the world, their books did, and their ideas merged with the observations of real travellers, particularly the philosophical travellers who took part in the voyages of Bougainville and Cook, including the Forsters. By the time that numerous Pacific exploration narratives began to appear in print in the 1770s, the influence of these two modes of travel became thoroughly reciprocal. Travellers became prone to imagining Pacific Islanders as primitive people who resembled what Europeans had been at an ancient, preliterate stage of their history, and philosophers such as Denis Diderot eagerly incorporated details from these narratives into new conjectural histories.²

Voyagers charted their course to "places apparently remote in time," in Neil Rennie's words (1), under the influence of these conjectural histories as well as another body of thought with longstanding connections to travel: neoclassicism. The period's histories of ancient art made a signal contribution to the practice of marking cultural difference as distance in time: many voyagers shared with early art historians, or antiquaries, the focus on artefacts and the conception that primitive art is "wrought out of nature," as the Earl of Shaftesbury had claimed (qtd. in Décultot 53). The propensity to "temporalize difference," in Nicholas Thomas's succinct formulation, led voyagers to imagine their encounters with islanders as glimpses of "remote antiquity," or what we would call prehistory, but the vocabulary available to them came from their study of recorded antiquity, particularly ancient Greece (Forster 422n9). European explorers compared the native peoples they encountered with Greeks and other ancient Europeans virtually from the beginning of the Age of Exploration in the sixteenth century. By the time of Cook's voyages, much more was known about classical antiquity, and the prejudice in favour of classical aesthetics was stronger than it has ever been before or since. The fascination of ancient art produced the earliest attempts at art history and archaeology, and these more empirically driven histories, too, made use of analogies their authors found in travel narratives. These antiquarian authors were

primarily armchair travellers, though some of them visited archaeological sites: Winckelmann and d'Hancarville, for example, were strongly influenced by the recent discoveries at Pompeii and Herculaneum.

European explorers between the Enlightenment and Romanticism saw themselves entering a new order of time in the South Pacific. An anthropological kind of deep time arose from the shock of recognition and the simultaneous reaction that made these voyagers want to suggest that they were encountering only faint traces of themselves, a human past so ancient as to be almost forgotten. Pompeii and Herculaneum had raised new questions about the once-familiar classical past, fostering the kinds of tactics also brought to bear on Pacific encounters: attention to everyday life, speculation on human prehistory, and especially the contemplation of artefacts as a medium of cultural empathy.³ My argument for deep ethnographic time describes a prehistoric turn in the understanding of human time, distinct from the historical turn in the study of nature famously described by Michel Foucault in 1966 as “the breaking up of the great table,” the displacement of “static” natural history by biological concepts around 1800 (275). Paolo Rossi has argued that a “dark abyss of time” was opened even earlier when historical methods were applied to fossils and strata, and more recently Gould and Martin Rudwick (182) have also explored the historical turn in natural science.⁴ These are different kinds of arguments, but they all track a movement of chronological organization from human history into the study of nature. The natural history of Pacific populations, however, had the opposite effect of disrupting *human* temporality. The explorers’ perverse insistence on the antiquity of living cultures and artefacts not only flattered the presumption of European superiority, but also promoted a prehistoric turn in the understanding of human time itself, challenging the short, accepted chronology of the human species without explicit recourse to geological or to what Fabian terms “naturalized Time.”

Darwin still recalled the voyages of Captain Cook to describe his encounter with the “savages” of Tierra del Fuego (Darwin 1:263–4), shortly before he applied the new geological principles of Charles Lyell in his more famous encounter with recently evolved species on the Galápagos Islands.⁵ Similarly, James Hutton incorporated earlier cosmogonies in his analysis of “primitive rocks” before his uniformitarian view was systematized (by Lyell and others) to support a geohistorical understanding of everything from stratigraphic sequence to the archaeological periods of human prehistory. Darwin’s “savages” and Hutton’s “primitive” are traces of a rift within human time itself – my subject in this essay – that preceded the absolute distinction between human time and “nature’s own history” (Rudwick 348). Ethnographic “time travel” in the Enlightenment not only restructures the horizontal space of geography, as Rennie, Thomas, and others have noticed; it also anticipates early geology’s restructuring of vertical space in the pursuit of primitive rocks.

II. Artefacts

Writing in 1768, just months before Cook set sail on his first circumnavigation, the Italian antiquary Octavien de Guasco insisted on the analogy between ancients and “natives” in his history of ancient sculpture:

Nothing could be more appropriate for a correct idea of the state of the arts, customs, and usages of the ancients, as yet little civilized, than to point out the practice of peoples who in our own times still live in a state of barbarism. This should be a rule for antiquaries always to keep before their eyes, in order to judge intelligently the customs, usages, and the monuments of earliest antiquity, because the same situation, the same needs, the same deficiencies in the arts produce the same ideas, the same practices, according to the climate.⁶

Guasco traces the history of sculpture from natural objects, such as sacred trees or standing stones, through carvings with a limited number of human features, all the way up to the Greco-Roman marble statues that were the most celebrated objects in European museums. He wrote this history with a fifty-volume collection of voyage narratives by his side, and followed his own rule so well that every chapter in the book carries multiple footnotes referring to this collection. These references range so widely, however – from Japan to Latin America to West Africa in a single chapter – that it is not as easy to correlate specific ideas and practices with specific situations or climates as he appears to claim in this passage. Moreover, Guasco is a scriptural literalist, so the Hebrew Bible provides a distinct point of origin for antiquity as he understands it. According to Guasco, sculpture and the other arts originate as a form of religious expression, and any polytheistic religion, whether ancient or modern, has degenerated from an original monotheism (9–11).⁷ Though he is intellectually more conservative than other philosophical travellers, Guasco’s vexed commitment to monogenesis and his uneasy identification of apparent lack of progress with degeneration pose problems that also preoccupied younger scholars such as J.R. Forster.

Within the larger group of antiquaries concerned with ancient religion and the origin of the arts, the writer who borrowed the most from Guasco was Pierre François Hugues, aka Baron d’Hancarville. D’Hancarville occupied the opposite end of the spectrum on religious belief, using his analysis of ancient religion to promote relativism and scepticism. While d’Hancarville borrowed Guasco’s ideas in the second half of his work, Guasco or his publisher also borrowed an image from volume 1 of d’Hancarville’s *Collection of Etruscan, Greek, and Roman Antiquities*, a sprawling, richly illustrated history of ancient art that appeared in four volumes between 1766 and 1776.⁸ Two of his engravings (Figures 4.1–2) capture much of the common ground that he and Guasco shared,

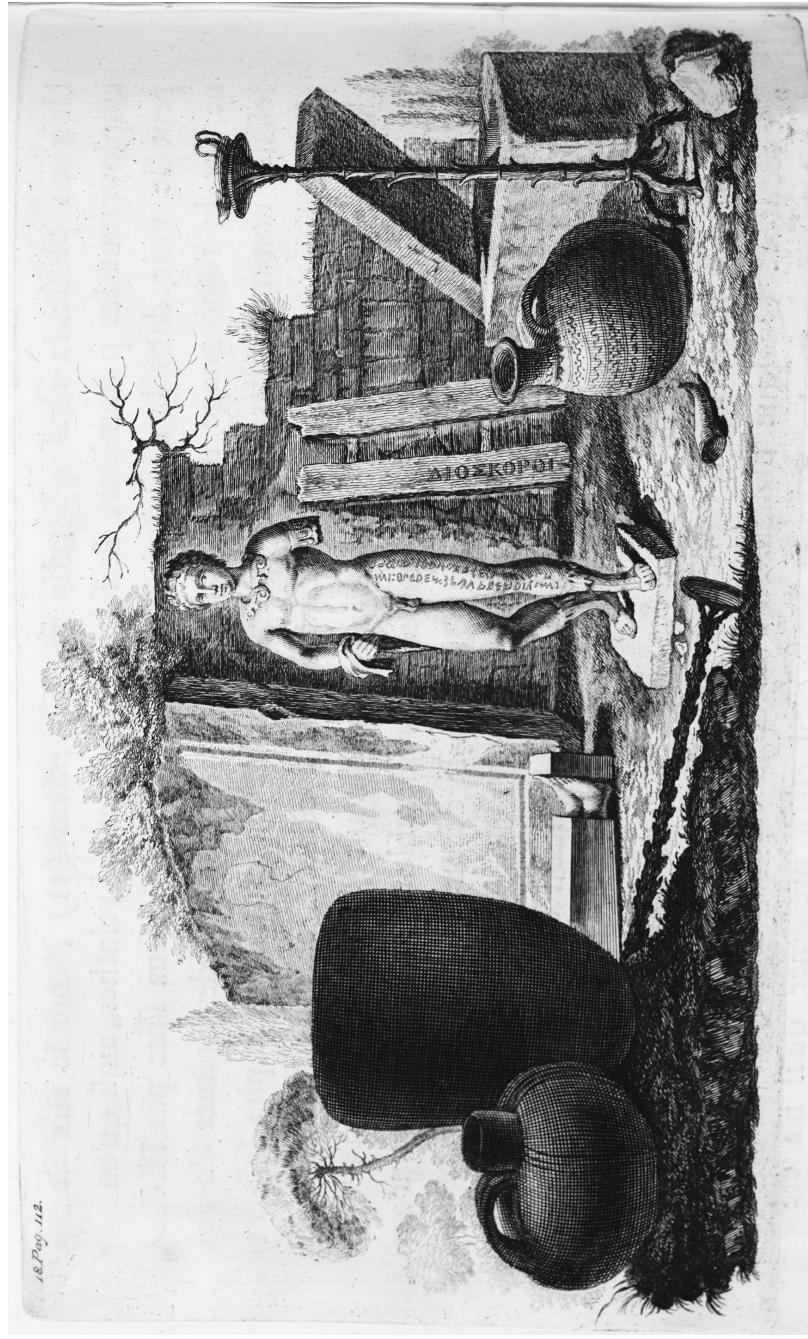


Figure 4.1. Unsigned engraving. *Collection of Etruscan, Greek, and Roman Antiquities* [AEGR], Vol. I, p. 112 (Chapter III headpiece [English text]). Courtesy of Margaret M. Bridwell Art Library, University of Louisville.

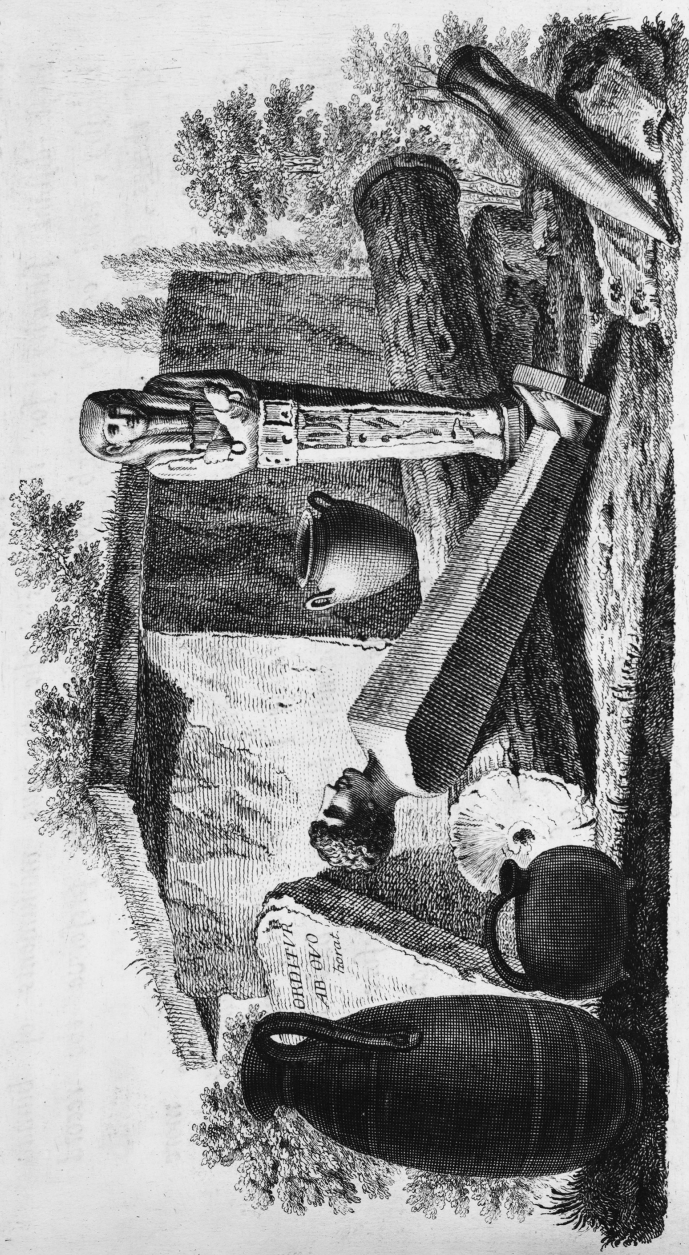


Figure 4.2. Unsigned engraving. *Collection of Etruscan, Greek, and Roman Antiquities [AEGR], Vol. I, p. 113 (Chapter III headpiece [French text]).* Courtesy of Margaret M. Bridwell Art Library, University of Louisville.

documenting some of the earliest stages in the evolution of the arts by means of artefacts that emulate natural objects.

The two engravings together make up d'Hancarville's synoptic exhibition of the kinds of useful and, increasingly, ornamental objects created in response to what Guasco calls "deficiencies in the arts." A revised version of the second engraving appears on Guasco's title page. D'Hancarville points out the formal allusions to natural materials in many of these artefacts, allusions that he describes as "conserving" the prehistory of their fabrication. So the jug in the left hand corner of Figure 4.2, for example, preserves the form of the ostrich egg from which such vessels were originally fashioned, and the cow horn in the foreground of Figure 4.1 recalls the natural history of the drinking horn. The Roman bronze candlesticks (Figure 4.1) include the nubs of branches to recall the prehistoric moment when they were made from canes or young trees stripped of their smaller branches. The faint human profile on the wall in the background (Figure 4.1) alludes to the birth of painting, attributed to the legendary Maid of Corinth who traced her lover's shadow in charcoal on the wall of a cave. The statue with Greek characters engraved on its left leg shows the fourth stage of the emergence of sculpture (Figure 4.1), preceded (in Figure 4.2) by the more "primitive" Egyptian statue without articulated limbs, the "term" or column showing only the head and feet, and finally the standing stone or "symbolic column" evoked by the horizontal log. The log also alludes to the origin of architecture, which originally deployed cut logs before stone columns were devised in the same form, a transformation signalled by the far end of this log/column with its carved necking (cp. d'Hancarville I:177). D'Hancarville develops four elaborate stages out of Guasco's rudimentary stadial sketch (Guasco 1), and although there are four stages, it is notable that he does not correlate them with the four stages of barbarism, pastoralism, agriculture, and commerce familiar from Adam Smith and conjectural history. Though less rigorous than modern archaeology, it is nonetheless d'Hancarville's empirical attention to artefacts that produces a time scale differing markedly from the dominant stadial model.

In the absence of a geologically based archaeology, d'Hancarville's exhibition must pose the question of human origins through artefacts from recorded antiquity, most noticeably Egyptian, Greek, and Roman times. The neoclassical pursuit of Italian antiquities, however, extended to semi-legendary indigenous populations predating classical times, which also created categories for the reception of new South Seas artefacts. D'Hancarville spent six years in Naples, and had some experience of the archaeological sites near Vesuvius and the newly rediscovered temple complex at Paestum. Maybe a kind of archaeological instinct led him to include one genuinely prehistoric artefact, the egg-shaped jug from the first engraving, which survives and has been identified as an Italic

askos made between 2800 and 2400 BC (Jenkins and Sloan 234). When the Italian antiquary Giovanni Giovene described a cache of even older artefacts found in the Kingdom of Naples in the 1780s, he compared them explicitly to the South Pacific artefacts brought back to Europe by Captain Cook. The Neolithic jadeite axes from this site, in Giovene's view, precisely resembled stone tools that were collected on Tahiti and passed on to a collector in Giovene's local network.⁹ D'Hancarville's patron and collaborator, Sir William Hamilton, also referred to Cook's voyages in a natural history of volcanoes that was modelled on the scholarship of the Italian connoisseurs. Hamilton made the point that these stone tools from Tahiti were made of volcanic rock, and thus supported his thesis that volcanic eruptions were geologically formative events not only in antiquity but across the earth and across time.¹⁰

III. Voyages

Maria Toscano points out that Giovene and his colleagues in the Neapolitan Republic of Letters considered themselves "naturalist-antiquaries" and demonstrates their influence on Hamilton. Toscano's formulation helps to make sense of the collecting that was done on Cook's voyages as well. Those who collected stone tools and other artefacts in the South Pacific included Joseph Banks, who is cited here by Hamilton, and others on Cook's first voyage, as well as the Forsters, father and son, who served as naturalists on Cook's second voyage. Many of the arm-chair travellers who theorized human origins debated whether cultural difference should be attributed to differing rates of progress or to degeneration. Guasco, for one, viewed non-European peoples categorically as degenerated (12, 22). Forster senior, the first Pacific voyager who was thoroughly familiar with these debates, saw evidence of both progress and degeneration in his broad historical sketch of Pacific peoples, recognizing on the strength of his first-hand knowledge that the evidence was not sufficient to support either hypothesis categorically. Forster argued that empirical evidence of the diverse populations in the Pacific brought the various so-called "stages" of civil society into focus, and also proved that existing scholarship had no authority for its hypotheses concerning (in modern terms) racial difference or the human evolutionary process:

The History of mankind has often been attempted, [but] ... None of these authors have ever had the opportunity of contemplating mankind in this state [of original simplicity], and its various stages from that of the most wretched savages, removed but in the first degree from absolute animality, to the more polished and civilized inhabitants of the Friendly and Society Isles. Facts are the basis of the whole structure [i.e., Forster's book]. (9–10)

In Forster's argument, the "most wretched savages," exemplified somewhat conventionally by the people of Tierra del Fuego (now southernmost Argentina), reached that state by degeneration, for which Forster assigned the environmental cause of migration from a warmer into a colder climate. Unlike some anthropological explanations that postdate evolution and genetics, Forster's does not take the most apparently primitive people to be at the earliest evolutionary stage. He argues for environmentally driven transformation of human varieties over long periods of time, and compares some living populations to ancient ones, both European and Pacific. Customs and manners, he argues, provide the only evidence concerning human antiquity in cultures without written records. This evidence from customs and manners, along with biogeography, informs his conclusion that "the warm tropical climates seem to have been originally the seat of the human race" (342).

Focusing mainly on Tahitian society, like his predecessors, Forster argued that Pacific "arts and sciences" – including their tools – represented a creative response to the natural setting of the islands and had evolved a great distance from the ancient practices of the population that originally migrated to the island. He also believed, however, that Tahitian religion had degenerated from an ancient Asiatic cult, traces of which survived the process of migration and resettlement. In other words, Forster vacillates between a long and a short time scale in his history of Pacific peoples. This contradictory temporalization organizes Pacific space by means of "heterochronism" – to borrow a term from Foucault's "Of Other Spaces" – as well as "allochronism," Fabian's term for the separation between "savage" and ethnographic time. In some areas Forster recognizes that change is slow, an insight that favours speculation about remote human origins and provides an alternative to the proto-racial distinctions he makes elsewhere (172–90). In other cases, such as religion, he attempts to trace Polynesians (for example) to living Malay peoples. At the same time, however, Forster adopts the habit of other educated voyagers such as Banks and Bougainville, regularly comparing Pacific islanders to Greeks and other ancient peoples.¹¹ This comparative gesture, though it seems to flatten cultural distinctions, also makes some reckoning with human origins unavoidable. One end result is a diachronic turn in the understanding of preliterate societies that precedes the geologically fixed hard dating established by modern archaeology.

Forster's analysis of the different Tahitian "arts and sciences" varies greatly with the subject matter, and does not always support his own general premise that knowledge is cumulative: "The more a tribe or nation preserved of the ancient systems, and modified or adapted them to their particular situation ... the more improved, civilized and happy must that tribe or nation be" (196). While this principle holds in the areas of religion and fine arts, Forster takes a different

approach to “mechanical arts” like textile manufacture, emphasizing local adaptation and the use of natural materials, just as Guasco and d’Hancarville do in their theories of the origin of art:

They beat the cloth with a square instrument of heavy wood, called *toa* ... Their dyes are very fine and bright, and would deserve more attention if they were lasting: the red dye requires a good deal of labour and care in preparing it; the fruit of a small fig called *mattée* (*ficus tinctoria*) affords a small drop of milky juice, when it is broken off from the tree; this juice is carefully gathered in a clean cup of coconut shell, and ... [t]hey soak it in the leaves of the *etoù*, or *cordia sebestena*, which imbibe the milky juice, and soon tinge it of the finest crimson imaginable. (276)

Among the various natural materials detailed here, the coconut shell-cup, in particular, recalls the vessels made of eggs and horns in d’Hancarville’s engravings. In the case of music and poetry, Forster is more strongly influenced by conjectural history and neoclassicism:

The least happy occurrence in life is sufficient to inspire them with a high degree of glee, which sets their whole body in motion: they begin to frisk and DANCE, this makes cadenced or measured breathing necessary; if in this situation man wishes to communicate his ideas to the by-standers, he will naturally give his words that kind of measure or cadence, which he has adopted with his breathing, this, together with the voice of exultation may be considered the first origin of singing and MUSIC [which in turn] gives rise to POETRY. (284)

The ambivalence already apparent in his account of “mechanical arts,” registered in the form of a doubt concerning the permanence of the red dye, becomes more pronounced in this openly paternalistic and idealizing narrative of the fine arts. At the same time, however, their primitive genius Hellenizes the “Taheiteans,” whose spontaneous “verses ... are always delivered by singing, in the true antient Greek style” (286).

The contradictions in Forster’s account support his claim to be testing philosophical conjectures experimentally in the field, but they also reflect the ambivalence inherent in the discourse of primitivism itself. Empirical study of customs and artefacts readily unsettled the orderly sequence of four stages of society partly because the theorists of those stages themselves suspected or recognized that the sequence was not orderly. Nicholas Thomas points out that although both Forsters readily invoke the ancient/primitive analogy to explain violence among the Maori, their response is ultimately ambivalent, mirroring the ambivalence already inherent in stadial histories such as that of John Millar. Thomas notes that Millar

made “liberty” characteristic of both early and late stages of civil society and argues that J.R. Forster shared his anxiety about the slippage from “liberty” to “license” in both stages (*In Oceania* 86). Nostalgia for “savage” liberty casts doubt on the celebration of commerce and progress in Forster as in Millar and even in more conservative theorists such as Adam Ferguson. Harriet Guest notes that “Forster was concerned to develop these theories” – Millar’s in particular – “and adapt them to his novel experiences” (56). In a similar vein, but emphasizing the Forsters’ use of European climate theory, David Bindman points out that “experience made things complex and unstable, challenging the formulae of climate and social life that had dominated views of the ‘savage’ world” (149–50).¹² Richard Lansdown expands this broader European frame of reference by tracing the “bipolar vision” of “cultural” and “chronological” primitivism from classical antiquity down to the Enlightenment, emphasizing “the depth of Rousseau’s ambivalence” as a major influence on the voyagers (69–70). Thus both new empirical evidence and instability in the theories themselves made it far from a “simple matter,” in Thomas’s words, “for Europeans to apply their prior notions of savage or primitive life” to Pacific peoples (71).

Forster’s last example departs completely from his Rousseauvian commonplaces about the origins of poetry, attributing a local and unique origin to Pacific geography, astronomy, and navigation, which represent (for him) the highest achievement of these groups:

The inhabitants of the islands in the south sea have made very considerable navigations in their slight and weak canoes; navigations which many Europeans would think impossible to be performed, upon a careful view of the vessels themselves ... [Therefore it is] probable that the inhabitants of these isles were the inventors of their own astronomy and geography: and if they had strength of mind sufficient to enable them to invent sciences which require accurate observations, and a remarkably strong sagacity; why may we not think them equally capable of being the inventors of the whole cyclus of their knowledge. (318–20)

Here the semi-obligatory condescension of the voyage narrative gives way before an example that implies a “deep,” quasi-evolutionary time scale. Philibert Commerson, the naturalist on Bougainville’s voyage, pointed to the same body of autochthonous knowledge to argue that the Tahitians were “a primitive people” in the literal sense that they did not migrate to the island from elsewhere (Lansdown 84). Forster, although he may have known Commerson’s letter (published in 1769), saw himself as the first to gather empirical evidence for the inquiry into human origins, and his findings were inevitably inconsistent as a result.

Forster sees improvement and degeneration in the same cultures, and alternates between imitative and original explanations of cultural practices. His focus on the

arts remains constant, however, and continually prompts an extension of the time scale that unsettles the stadial assumptions behind the comparison of native and ancient peoples: "It is the work of ages," he writes, "to bring the mind of a whole nation to maturity ... a few years cannot bring on a material change among them" (200). The empirical study of populations and artefacts by explorers such as Forster, inspired by antiquarianism, disrupted the progressive model of four stages of human history and revealed profound variations among "primitive" populations, along with evidence for much longer, open-ended historical processes behind the development of native technologies, arts and customs. The reciprocal relationship of ethnographic voyaging and early archaeology fostered exploration beyond the written record, opening the domain we now call prehistory.

IV. Monuments

Forster is more conservative in the area of religion, in which more innovative work was done by other explorers as well as antiquaries. At the same time, he only spent four weeks on Tahiti, and so his emphasis on Tahiti as the most advanced civilization of the Pacific is sometimes supported more by his reading and presuppositions than by his fieldwork. Forster had very little firsthand exposure to Tahitian religious practice, and other explorers' accounts must be used to contextualize his claim that "they are ... still in the infant state of humanity, not yet ripened to the use of argument and reason in religious matters" (323). The *Endeavour*, in which Cook performed his first voyage, remained anchored off Tahiti for three months, so the naturalists on board had better opportunities to make observations, even if they were not informed as thoroughly as Forster by philosophical reading. The journals from this voyage also offer several distinct approaches. The *Endeavour* journal of Joseph Banks, who collected the stone tools noticed by scholars in Italy, differs symptomatically from that of the illustrator Sydney Parkinson, who was employed by Banks to make a visual record of the full spectrum of plants, animals, people, and artefacts. The classically educated Banks, for example, favoured classical analogies, comparing Tahiti repeatedly to the legendary Greek region of Arcadia (Hawkesworth II:120), whereas Parkinson compared the islanders to ancient Britons (23) and avidly gathered oral histories (125). Parkinson also was the first to recognize the islanders' navigational feats and to speculate about their ancient migrations.¹³

Banks and Parkinson make different kinds of observations concerning Tahitian religion and public space, but they both differ from most theorists of their time in taking these subjects seriously as fields of empirical study. This difference is most apparent by contrast to William Robertson's *History of Scotland*, which Parkinson had on board the *Endeavour*. Robertson declared that "Nations, as well as men, arrive at maturity by degrees, and the events, which happened during their infancy

or early youth, cannot be recollected, and deserve not to be remembered" (I:1). Banks's analogies, reminiscent of Winckelmann's neoclassicism, do privilege the "infancy" of Greece as a way of legitimating the Pacific cultures he found particularly worthy of study. Bindman makes the same connection when he suggests that Winckelmann's Athens is just as "fragile" as the voyagers' Tahiti (150). It is partly the art historians' interest in religion and monuments that makes them, at times, more relevant to the voyage narratives – even if less directly influential – than the conjectural historians are. Robertson, setting himself against the Rousseauvian thesis of the noble savage, is more skeptical about the "infancy" of nations. His Scottish contemporaries, as I have noted, share this ambivalence to some extent, but all of them still rely on travel narrative, as Rousseau had done, for evidence concerning the early stages of civilization (Ferguson 80; cf. Meek 37–67). Fieldwork offered philosophical travelers an even better opportunity to study the ancient past empirically through the "primitive" present, but evidence from their encounters sometimes suggested both a more civilized present and a deeper past than they anticipated.

Parkinson also drew on popular writers and costume books on British antiquity, and Banks participated in the renewed attention to Gothic architecture that later became known as the Gothic revival.¹⁴ The refashioning of the European middle ages as a kind of antiquity merits comparison with the antiquarian approach to Oceania as an example of "barbarous" postclassical culture – more recent than Greece and Rome, if not exactly close to the Pacific present – that gained scholarly currency by this refashioning. The Society of Antiquaries, which sponsored this early research, focused in the 1770s and 1780s on gathering "faithful representations," both visual and verbal, of the funerary sculpture in England's Gothic cathedrals. These material remains, as their director Richard Gough argues in *The Sepulchral Monuments of Great Britain*, offer the most reliable evidence available on "our manners, habits, arts, national taste, and style of architecture" in bygone ages. On the one hand, Gough derives some British traditions from Greco-Roman antiquity, quoting copiously in Greek and Latin (e.g., I:5–6); on the other, he uses Cook's *Resolution* narrative to corroborate Homer's account of Greek customs (I:i), displaying the reciprocal influence of different versions of antiquity. Like Parkinson, however, the illustrators involved in this project lacked both classical education and Royal Academy training, along with the prejudices that accompanied them. The Gothic revivalists insisted on preservation as the ultimate goal of studying material culture, and the same motive can be traced in different ways in Parkinson's and Banks's ethnographic work in the South Pacific. The affiliation between these projects appears clearly in an engraving of "Various Instruments and Utensils, of the Natives of Otaheite" in Parkinson's *Journal* (plate XIII), based on a

drawing by Samuel Hieronymus Grimm, who created a very similar composition of ecclesiastical artefacts discovered beneath the floor of Lincoln Cathedral for Gough's book (II:lxviii).

Banks adopts the idiom of architectural antiquities in his discussion of a monument on Raiatea (or "Ulietea") that he visited on 29 June 1769. Architecture and funerary customs belong to the subset of topics, along with botany, that were of special interest to Banks and Parkinson. Banks was especially active in his investigation of "morai" or *marae*, gathering places first noticed by the British on Tahiti, who understood them primarily as "burying grounds ... [and] places of worship" (Hawkesworth II:166). As Banks and Cook explored the southwestern portion of the main island, they found two sites of architectural interest, the first a smaller burial site containing a pyramid, as well as the first piece of stone carving they had seen in ten weeks on the island. If this was impressive, the second was astonishing: "we no sooner arrivd there than we were struck with the sight of a most enormous pile, certainly the masterpeice of Indian architecture in this Island so all the inhabitants allowd. Its size and workmanship almost exceeds beleif, I shall set it down exactly." This monument, terraced and shaped like a large pitched roof (267 feet long by seventy-one wide and forty-four high), belonged to Porea, or Queen Oberea, as she was known to the British. Banks points out a curvature in the stone steps suggesting that this monument may be much older than its possessor, but he sees the workmanship as "ancient" primarily in a technological sense: "it is almost beyond belief that Indians could raise so large a structure without the assistance of Iron tools to shape their stones or mortar to join them, which last appears almost essential as most of them are round; it is done tho, and almost as firmly as a European workman would have done it" (southseas.nla.gov.au/journals/banks/17690629.html). The use here of "pile" and especially "architecture," which occurs very rarely in the Cook voyage narratives, owes something to contemporaneous antiquarian writing on Gothic architecture and on ancient monuments including megaliths.

In his engagement with this monument, Banks addresses preservation as well as material culture. His insistence on recording dimensions ("I shall set it down exactly"), and on having Parkinson sketch the sites, reflects this effort. Parkinson was, in fact, the first voyager to notice and describe the *marae* (on 6 May 1769). Subsequent discussions and illustrations of funeral rites on Tahiti, which remained central to early Pacific ethnography, incorporate these intertexts – not only Banks's and Parkinson's recorded observations, but also their associations with ancient Britons and classical and medieval antiquities – along with new observations. William Woollett's engraving of a Tahitian funeral (Figure 4.3), based loosely on a watercolour sketch by William Hodges, provides a case in point. Hodges made this sketch in August 1773 shortly after the *Resolution* and *Adventure* landed on

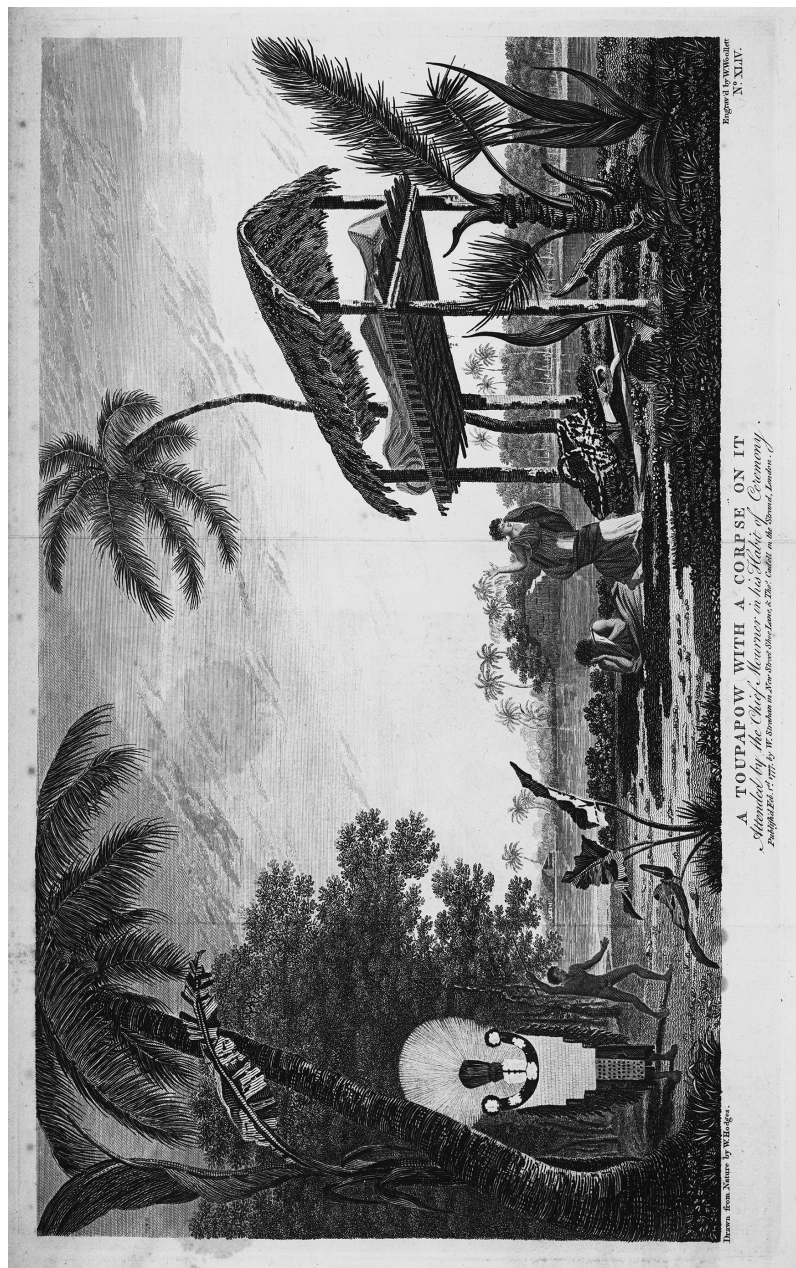


Figure 4.3. *A toupapow with a corpse on it, attended by the Chief Mourner in his habit of ceremony.* Engraving by William Woollet from a drawing by William Hodges. James Cook, *A Voyage towards the South Pole*, second ed. (London, 1777), vol. 1, plate XLIV [p. 184]. Courtesy of the Linda Hall Library of Science, Engineering, and Technology, Kansas City, MO.

Tahiti for the first time, as reported in George Forster's narrative (I:164). The only person present with the corpse on its elevated bier (*tupapau*), according to Forster, was a mourning woman seated like the central figure here. The "chief mourner" with his elaborate headdress, who is not present in Hodges's sketch, was evidently interpolated by Woollett from an image originally drawn by Parkinson (70), a very similar composition engraved for John Hawkesworth's *Account* (plate V). For his journal, Parkinson created a similar landscape without the figures (*Journal* plate X), but then added a separate portrait of the "priest" or *heiva* (XI) in head-dress, along with a footnote describing his role as chief mourner, based on information from Banks. Woollett combines all these images, and his composite is almost surely informed as well by the same Banks journal account, as rendered in Hawkesworth's *Account* of Cook's first voyage (II:234–9) – a text often cited by both Forsters and by Cook himself.¹⁵ Woollett's engraving for Cook's narrative, together with Parkinson's and Banks's descriptions of the "altar" and "sacrifices" employed in these ceremonies, captures something of the antiquarian spirit that informed artists' renderings of trilithons and Druids, such as C.H. Smith's *Arch-Druid in His Judicial Habit* (1815).

Hawkesworth's account of the large monument on Raiatea adds one detail from Cook's journal that escaped Banks in his enthusiasm: the ornaments on top include large carvings in wood and stone, the latter of which is broken (evoking the then-current deterioration of medieval built works) (Hawkesworth II:166). Without making a direct argument concerning their antiquity and preservation here, Banks notes that the *marae* are threatened as well by military devastation, as suggested by a coastal battlefield strewn with human bones very near the site. Banks also participated in a funeral on Tahiti, and gives a vivid subjective account of some of the same "solemnities" there (southseas.nla.gov.au/journals/banks/17690610.html). Unlike Parkinson, Banks puts some of his observations on funerary customs into a systematic concluding description, retaining some of his field notes and altering or omitting others. He incorporates historiographic reflections here as well, comparing Tahitian social organization to "the early state of the feudal laws" of Europe (southseas.nla.gov.au/journals/banks_remarks/185.html). Parkinson's more detached observations emphasize the stages of the funeral process and the construction of the sites, particularly the "sort of stone pyramid" that becomes the permanent resting place of the bones after decomposition (35).

In his concluding "Remarks" Banks argues explicitly that some of these sites are "of great antiquity," citing the use of "immensely large" stones assembled in "rough" fashion without mortar. D'Hancarville uses the same criteria to confirm the legendary antiquity of the walls of Tyrinth (I:108). The antiquarian emphasis on architecture and funerary customs, brought together so neatly in Gough's title, *Sepulchral Monuments*, contributed significantly to the "temporalizing"

classification of Pacific cultures in the Cook era. Parkinson's and Banks's writings on the *marae* demonstrate this influence, and they also enact a substitution by which death becomes a major avenue for understanding the life of another culture. Fabian's concept of temporalization is appropriate here in part because the monuments and their presumed antiquity are overlaid on the existing temporality – a “coevalness” of the dead and the living – that gave meaning to the funeral rites themselves (cp. Fabian 34). Once again, temporal distance, with its attendant objectivity, takes the place of cultural difference. But at the same time, these quasi-antiquarian studies recognize the independent history of Pacific cultures in at least a rudimentary fashion, insofar as the analogy to Western antiquity becomes visible as analogy. This essay is not the place to address more recent developments in paleoanthropology, but it is worth noting the continued importance of burial sites in the reckoning of Pacific antiquity, from the forty-thousand-year-old Lake Mungo site in Australia to the Neolithic cemetery discovered in Vanuatu in 2003.

V. Histories

In the art historical domain, d'Hancarville and Guasco again stand out for connecting close ethnographic attention to religion with speculation about human origins, a concern that recedes into the background with Banks and Parkinson. D'Hancarville, in particular, adopts the premise that customs and manners provide the best evidence concerning prehistory. This is the premise that J.R. Forster brings to bear on Pacific cultures as well, though “arts and sciences” such as *tapa* (barkcloth) manufacture are more central for him than funerary and other religious customs.¹⁶ D'Hancarville combines the close attention to religion that we saw in Banks and Parkinson with theoretical concerns more akin to Forster's. For colonial voyagers, ethnography was part of natural history, and natural history played a significant role for the historians of ancient art as well. Pliny's *Natural History* was crucial for d'Hancarville, who concentrates on ancient sources, though he faults Pliny for subordinating the history of art to the history of nature (III:iii). D'Hancarville also drew extensively on his own observations of Neapolitan customs and manners as a form of field evidence (however indirect) for his interpretations of ancient vase paintings and the religious customs he thought they depicted. Guasco owed a great part of his art history to the ethnographic observations of contemporary voyage accounts, and Friedrich Schlegel, among other contemporaries, spoke casually of the “natural history of art” as an area of study, some vestiges of which survive today in the anthropology of art.¹⁷ D'Hancarville boasts that he will be guided by the “monuments of art itself” (IV:vii) in his voyage into the deep uncharted past,

but Pliny and natural history prove hard to escape. So too does travel narrative, represented heavily in d'Hancarville's as in other histories of ancient art by Pausanias's *Description of Greece*, the only record remaining of numerous ancient works.

The traveller's field notes have a special resonance for the anthropology of art in the era of the scientific voyage narrative. Guasco makes this resonance especially clear by juxtaposing Pausanias regularly with Engelbert Kaempfer, Jakob Roggeveen, and dozens of other contemporary voyagers represented in the fifty-volume (octavo) *Histoire Générale des Voyages* that Guasco owned and duly cited in his notes in 1768.¹⁸ Within five years, the publication of Bougainville's and Cook's voyages made even more material available. D'Hancarville uses modern travel narrative much more sparingly, and his scepticism informs some compelling disciplinary questions that self-consciously scientific voyagers such as Forster must also have begun to ask themselves: does art belong to natural history? does ethnography? do customs or artefacts provide reliable records of the period before writing? D'Hancarville sets himself apart from antiquarianism as well, or at least from its prevalent negative stereotype, by insisting on a critical use of both ancient and modern sources. Even so, he remains deeply indebted to natural history and antiquarian scholarship, and the intensely situated nature of his archaeological work – an aspect of archaeology recovered and embraced by some recent practitioners – suggests that Pliny's fusion of art and natural history may have been more than accidental after all.¹⁹

D'Hancarville's project of recovering history from art and myth commits him above all to a history of religion. His methodical translation of mythic time into human prehistory provides the first stage of this history, what might be called an evolutionary narrative concerning the co-adaptation of religion and art.²⁰ Engraved gems and other types of jewellery evolved, he argues, as increasingly portable forms of the *boetile* or god-stone, as amulets that protected the wearer against evil spirits (*mauvais Génies*) (IV:28). As with many other artefacts examined in the course of the work, these amulets are both "assuredly of the highest antiquity" (27n) and yet – in a temporalizing view of European space – the object of "a custom still practiced today in my native country" (27n), presumably the country around Nancy, where d'Hancarville was born. Ancient vase paintings, in this analysis, show us the context in which *boetiles* and other ritual objects continued to feature not just in private devotions but in public worship. The first *boetiles* were anointed with oil (here d'Hancarville borrows Guasco's illustration from Genesis 28:18) and "wrapped in bands of wool," a practice that accounts for the myth of Kronos eating a stone wrapped in cloth and taking it for the infant Zeus (26–7n). In their capacity as illustrations of traditional practices, even Greek vase paintings

become monuments of a prehistoric phase in the development of art, expanding the historical domain by providing visual and formal cues for conjectures about the “infancy” of art.

By framing art as a “natural writing” and mythology as an “aesthetic religion,” d’Hancarville created “a narrative of the cultural origins of art preceding historical times,” as Pascal Griener has observed (64). To explain the novelty of this approach, Griener fixes specifically on archaeological images, especially the famous engraving of a partially excavated tomb at Trebbia in d’Hancarville’s second volume: “they illustrate perfectly a new conception of history as the resurrection of the past and an approach to art history strictly tied to the history of religion.” “Like many Enlightenment philosophers,” Griener adds, d’Hancarville was secular in outlook (59), and he is sometimes compared to Rousseau in particular. Jenkins and Sloan suggest that d’Hancarville’s “primitive” artist, “like Rousseau’s noble savage, stands intelligent but culturally naked before us” (151).

Like the Forsters, however, d’Hancarville uses Rousseau and the other conjectural historians critically and selectively. His writing shows their influence less strongly than Winckelmann’s, whose art history tends to become “a general history of ancient peoples,” as Elisabeth Décultot has argued (45). Quite possibly with Winckelmann in mind, d’Hancarville makes a point of deriving the history of nations, conversely, from the history of the arts (IV:5): he repeatedly revisits the prehistoric succession of southern Italian peoples, concluding with a long excursus note revised on the basis of new evidence from their monuments (IV:73–96n). Guasco, too, takes “the steps of the human mind” for his subject and likewise insists that antiquarianism becomes philosophical when joined to the history of manners (ii, v). But for Guasco, manners should be progressive, and the history of pagan art is merely the history of superstition. Guasco premises an originary monotheism, of which all forms of polytheism or “fetishism” are merely the decadent descendants (9–11; cf. G. Forster I:170–1). He relies on the history of civil society for his notion of progress both in morality and religion (26–7), and even more on sacred history. Therefore, modern “primitive” peoples who have not yet found their way back to monotheism do not fare well in Guasco’s comparative ethnography: they are “nations naissantes et sauvages” (193) and are, he argues, everywhere the same (12, 22). These ignoble savages place total reliance on their “fetishes,” a term that encompasses everything from the colossal heads of Easter Island (193) to figures of the virgin in Naples (202n). Guasco’s summary rejection of devotional art that “makes philosophy blush” (229) represents a horror of “superstition” that was dismissed more or less successfully by those histories of primitive art – including d’Hancarville’s and that of Forster, among other voyagers – that pursued art and religion more fully into the shadowy domain of prehistory.

While the voyagers were apt to translate distance into time, the comparatively sedentary d'Hancarville translated time into distance in an extended metaphor that maps deep time, in Romantic fashion, as a journey of imagination:

Antiquity is a vast country, separated from ours by a long interval of time; some travellers have discovered its coasts almost waste, others more undertaking have dared to push on to its very heart, where they have found but the dismal rubbish of towns formerly magnificent, and Phantoms of incredible description. My two first Volumes may be looked upon as attempts, to discover unknown lands; I have endeavoured to fix the situation of some places, but for want of instruments, not being able to do it with all the nicety I would have wished for ... I have taken measures to ... rectify the errors. (III:3)

D'Hancarville visited the coasts of Phoenicia, Etruria, Ausonia, Pelasgia, and many other quasi-historical nations that were almost as spectral as Cook's Southern Continent on the contemporary map of prehistory. His absorption in the cultural landscape of Vesuvius, while studying vases recovered from ancient tombs carved into the tuff produced by more ancient volcanoes, gives his speculations a geological ground. Just as Hamilton, by frequent repetitions especially apparent in his commentary on the plates in *Campi Phlegraei*, establishes the abundance of local instances that confirm volcanic evidence of unsuspected antiquity, so too d'Hancarville multiplies instances of artefacts that attest to the development of the arts at periods far earlier than those located by Winckelmann and other predecessors. Debates about the Easter Island heads (*moai*, also made of tuff) among Pacific voyagers similarly suggest that deep ethnographic time emerges where geology and human prehistory meet. Disagreement concerning the putative antiquity of these sculptures in voyage narratives that frequently cited each other – including those of George Forster (I:320) and La Pérouse (II:85–8) – depended as much on debates about cultural degeneration as on geological analyses of the stone heads. “Ever since” the production of these temporalizing voyage narratives, in Fabian's view, “anthropology's efforts to construct relations with its Other ... implied affirmation of difference as *distance*” (16). Deep time, so often constituted in opposition to human historical time, also has roots in the ethnographic and aesthetic experiences of the voyagers, whose “history of mankind” buckled under its efforts to fold in the histories of others.

NOTES

- 1 See J.R. Forster 175 for his most direct approach to this distinction. On the broader issue, see Marks ch. 1. David Bindman offers an insightful reading of both Forsters in relation to ideas about race and aesthetics (123–50, 173–81). See also Schmied-Kowarzik.

- 2 In a curious testament to this reciprocal exchange, Jonathan Lamb declares that “uncertain anthropology ... yields to the theories of cultural difference and change propounded first by the Forsters and then by Adam Ferguson; Henry Home, Lord Kames; John Millar; and Gottfried Herder” (77) – even though all four of these authors’ treatises on the history of civil society were published *before* the Forsters returned on the *Resolution* in 1775. On this exchange of ideas between voyagers and philosophers, see also Lansdown 64–72.
- 3 Bernard Smith has observed that, for some explorers, the Pacific voyage was an extension of the Grand Tour of classical sites in Italy (17). For one set of archaeologically inspired conjectures on prehistory, see d’Hancarville IV:73–6n.
- 4 I refer primarily to Foucault’s argument about Cuvier rather than the related arguments about the human sciences in the same volume. On the historical turn as it relates to early geology, see also Heringman, “Very vain.”
- 5 Thomas points out that pre-evolutionary anthropology was actually *less* likely to regard “primitive” peoples such as the Fuegians as “living exemplars of primeval stone age ways of life” (Forster xxx). The dawning of evolutionary time on the *Beagle* voyage is conventionally ascribed exclusively to the influence of Lyell on Darwin. Darwin is still a long way from evolution, and particularly human evolution, at this point. Evolutionary aesthetics today, however, shows some intriguing parallels to the voyage narratives in its linkage between art and human origins. See Dissanayake and, for a more archaeological approach, Coe.
- 6 Guasco continues: “There, I repeat, is the antiquarian philosophy, but how few antiquaries are philosophers!” (*De l’usage des statues* xiii–xiv; qtd. in Jenkins and Sloan 99). I adopt Jenkins and Sloan’s translation of this passage from their very valuable discussion of Guasco in the context of d’Hancarville’s art history.
- 7 Other historians of ancient art, drawing on some of the same ancient authors and monuments, also made strong connections with religion, but Guasco is unique in his strong emphasis on travel narrative as well as his insistence that all worship involving devotional objects – including popular Catholicism in Italy (202) – is an idolatrous misuse of sculpture.
- 8 Their disagreement on religious issues may be one reason why he took Guasco’s ideas without acknowledgment for the third and fourth volume of this work. D’Hancarville felt justified in his plagiarism partly because he had expressed some of the same ideas in his first two volumes, which appeared before Guasco’s book, and he almost surely noticed that Guasco recycled his engraving. See further Griener 81–2 and Heringman, *Sciences of Antiquity* 159–60.
- 9 “When I saw the hatchets belonging to the Tahiti islanders in the museum of Signor Poli in Naples,” Giovone wrote, “I was surprised to find that they resembled exactly those from Pulo at Molfetta” (qtd. in Toscano 231–2).

- 10 In Hamilton's words, "all the implements of stone brought by Mess. Banks and Solander from the new-discovered islands in the South-Seas, are evidently of such a nature as are only produced by Volcanos" (I:84n).
- 11 For a critical reflection on the comparison to ancient Greece specifically, see George Forster I:232. D'Hancarville's literal interpretation of Greek myth as a record of prehistoric events (III:206–7n) parallels the ancient-primitive analogy deployed in voyage narratives inasmuch as their apparent Greekness confirms the "primitive" or prehistoric character of Pacific peoples.
- 12 I am conflating passages from the very useful introduction to Lansdown's book, an anthology of Pacific writings, in which he discusses the classical legacy (11–12) and introduces his concept of bipolar vision (16), with the introduction to his section on the "noble savage," where he develops his distinction between cultural and chronological primitivism (65) and his reading of Rousseau. Bindman and Lansdown offer a larger European framework for understanding the voyages, which is just as important – especially in the case of continental intellectuals such as the Forsters – as the Scottish Enlightenment framework emphasized by Thomas and Guest. This framework is also in play in Guasco's art historical study of "people who in our own times still live in a state of barbarism," quoted above.
- 13 On Banks's gentlemanly classicism, see further Joppien and Smith I:21. Parkinson was ahead of his time in suggesting that Polynesians were capable of deliberate navigation over long distances (over two thousand miles) (*Journal* 125). Cook himself rejected the possibility, and it was not taken seriously by scholars before the nineteenth century. See Durrans 151, 153.
- 14 Though a member of the Society of Antiquaries, Banks was not allied with the Gothic faction of that body, led by Richard Gough. He did, however, publish *An Elegy on the Demolition of the Spires of Lincoln Minster*.
- 15 The images in Parkinson's *Journal*, along with his plain descriptions (26, 70–1), stand out as the most detailed and exact in this whole body of work on the subject. Cook's description of a *tupapau* closely resembles George Forster's, but since no artist accompanied him in this instance, the Woollett/Hodges image was used to illustrate his description, together with his inquiries concerning human sacrifice (Cook I:184–5). Hodges's original sketch is reproduced in Joppien and Smith, vol. 2, Fig. 52A.
- 16 This modern-ancient trajectory is especially clear when he reconstructs the ancestral culture of Polynesians from the customs of modern Caroline Islanders (*Observations* 352–7).
- 17 Schlegel observed in a letter to his brother August Wilhelm on 5 April 1794 that "the history of Greek poetry is a complete natural history of the beautiful and of art, and for that reason my work is – aesthetics" (229). See also Gell.

- 18 Guasco specifically cites a Mexican voyage from vol. XLVIII of this edition (Guasco 59), but elsewhere he cites the quarto edition of the same text, originally published serially between 1746 and 1759 under the editorship of Abbé Prévost. He cites several other collections of voyages as well.
- 19 D'Hancarville himself criticized Pliny's art history as accidental (IV:119n) – an epiphenomenon of his *Natural History* – yet relied on him exclusively for what he took to be the ancient theory of art (e.g., IV:13–14n). On situated archaeology, see Tilley.
- 20 Though pre-evolutionary, d'Hancarville's thesis that art and ritual are coordinated adaptive behaviours is in some ways quite close to contemporary evolutionary aesthetics as practiced by Dissanayake and Coe, among others (see note 5, above). In a remarkable gloss on the "circle called mythic," d'Hancarville historicizes the period described by Proclus as extending from Uranus to Ulysses (III:206–7n). The names of these characters, like early sculpture, allegorize their essential personal or biographical traits. By pairing this metonymic "discourse" with the infant "forms" of sculpture, he recodes mythical time as human prehistory, as an evolutionary stage in the history of art. On the general problem of dating in d'Hancarville, see Jenkins and Sloan 149–55.

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