THE *RESOLUTION* AND THE *DISCOVERY*, 1776–80

The *Resolution*'s return saw her ever-modest captain and his achievements at the centre of public admiration. This time his glory was undimmed by the presence of Banks, who made a late return from a yachting trip to find renewed friendship and respect, with past differences forgotten. Banks was now on the Council of the Royal Society, which unanimously elected Cook a Fellow and awarded him its prestigious Copley Medal. Royal and naval approbation came with a further visit to the King and promotion to post-captain on the establishment of Greenwich Hospital – an honourable paid retirement – although with Cook's own proviso that, if he wished, he could again request suitable active service. In the meantime there was much to do, including sitting (in his new captain's full dress) for Nathaniel Dance, for a portrait that Banks had commissioned.

At Cape Town, Cook had been 'mortified' to read the published account of his *Endeavour* work. This he had left to be edited by Dr John Hawkesworth as part of a more general publication of recent Pacific voyages, including those of Byron, Wallis and Carteret, who reached home in 1769. He found 'his' contribution to be an erroneous conflation of his own journals with those of Banks and others, prefaced by a misleading claim that he had checked it before sailing in the *Resolution*. This time, supported by Sandwich and others, he collaborated with a more meticulous editor: Dr John Douglas took over and polished his account of his second voyage (and later edited the third), although Cook never saw the fine, illustrated two-volume result, published in May 1777, for a third voyage was being planned and Cook began to realise that, its 'fine retreat and [...] pretty income' aside, 'the limits of Greenwich Hospital [...] are far too small for an active mind like mine'.

With growing knowledge of the Pacific, and old rivalries soon to re-erupt as France and Spain sided with the American rebellion against British rule (1776–83), a new variant on an old theme was being considered in terms of a resumption of the quest for a North-West Passage between the Atlantic and the Pacific, and possibly also a search for a north-eastern one above Arctic Russia. Two north-western straits were rumoured to debouch in Drake' s 'New Albion' (the Pacific north-west of Canada) – that of Juan de Fuca at about latitude 48°, and one attributed to a fictional 'Admiral de Fonte' at about latitude 53°. Finding these had been the discarded object of Byron's 1764 voyage. If they existed, it had been known since 1771 that they could connect with the Arctic Ocean only somewhere north of Hudson Bay, since this had been shown to have no westerly outlets. Much clarification was also needed about the Pacific coasts south-west and south-east of the Bering Strait. Both had been substantially investigated only by the Russians, who were conducting a fur trade there. On the way, a new expedition could also return Mai to Tahiti, after his engaging but rather vacuous career as resident 'noble

savage' in London. With Banks as his protector and patron, he became a celebrity. Opinions of his intelligence varied, but by mixing in the best society, he added genteel manners and improving English to his natural grace and good humour: 'How do, King Tosh!' was reportedly his cheerful greeting when Banks presented him to George III and Queen Charlotte, just days after his arrival. Of several portraits painted during his stay, the most famous is the full-length (now in the Tate collection) by Sir Joshua Reynolds, first president of the Royal Academy.

The *Resolution* was judged fit for another voyage, which Clerke (now a commander) was initially due to lead. Cook advised on the purchase of her new consort, the *Discovery*. At 298 tons and with a total complement of 69, she would be the smallest of his ships, for shortly after her purchase, around the end of January 1776, the Admiralty had been gratified to hear that Cook wished to command once more, with Clerke now taking the *Discovery*. John Gore would be Cook's first lieutenant; the second, James King, and Cook himself would comprise the *Resolution*'s astronomical observers, with Bayly going again in the *Discovery*. The *Resolution*'s previous surgeon's mate, now her surgeon, William Anderson, was also the naturalist, with the *Discovery*'s surgeon's mate, William Ellis, doubling as a natural-history draughtsman. David Nelson, a gardener from Kew, also joined the *Discovery* as a plant collector. Dr Solander then found John Webber, another excellent and sociable draughtsman, landscape painter and portraitist, of Anglo-Swiss parentage, who agreed to join the *Resolution* at short notice.

Cook had another fine navigator, William Bligh, as master of the *Resolution*. His place in the European romantic myth of the South Seas was destined to be secured later as commander of the ill-fated *Bounty* and of a more successful later Pacific voyage with Nathaniel Portlock. The latter at this point was also a *Discovery* 'mid' as, again, was young Vancouver, as well as Edward Riou, later to die commanding Nelson's frigates at Copenhagen. James Burney, their first lieutenant (and brother of Fanny, the novelist), was himself to become a notable historian of Pacific voyages. Once again, on this one, they were all accompanied by 'Mr Kendall's watch', flawlessly ticking away the longitude in Cook's cabin.

The *Resolution*, with her complement of 112, sailed on 12 July 1776 from Plymouth, a voyage anniversary which all considered lucky. Clerke was detained by family business until 1 August, but the ships met at Cape Town in mid-October, where they reprovisioned for a two-year voyage. This included so much livestock for themselves and as gifts for the islands (including horses) that they seemed a floating zoo. The *Resolution* had already proved wet and leaky thanks to poor dockyard work, and the continuing voyage south-east in cold weather and gales was as unpleasant as ever. Crossing the southern Indian Ocean, Cook confirmed the position of minor recent French island discoveries, the largest being the bleak Island of Desolation, later renamed Kerguelen after its original finder.

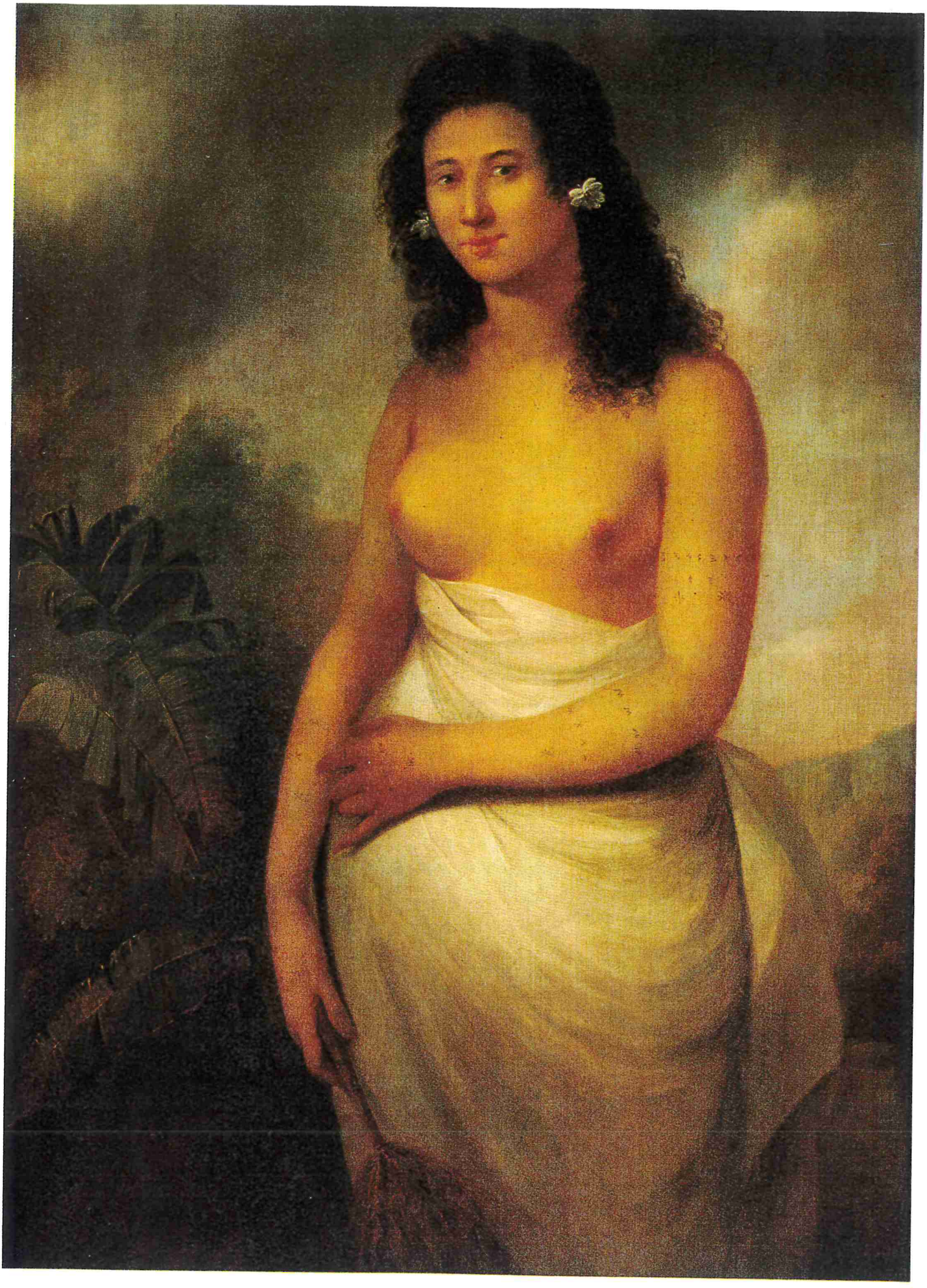
After the *Resolution*'s fore-topmast and main topgallant were carried away in a gale, a brief stop in Adventure Bay on Van Diemen's Land provided a necessary staging post towards the usual anchorage at Ship Cove, in New Zealand's Queen Charlotte Sound. Cook spent nearly a fortnight here, finding the Maori fearful of his possible vengeance for the death of Furneaux's men. He had no such intention, however, and did his best to resume friendly relations, while taking sensible care against surprises. Everyone benefited from the wild celery, scurvy grass and other produce of the place which they left for the last time on 25 February 1777, heading slowly north and east against contrary winds. This delay, based on ignorance of local seasonal variations, was to affect the whole progress of the voyage. By the time they touched on Mangaia in the Cook Islands, Cook was short of fresh supplies and decided that he would have to visit Tonga first, delaying his planned arrival at Tahiti. Arriving at the end of April, he was to stay 11 weeks in the 'Friendly Isles', surveying and observing, and pestered as ever by local theft. Clerke eventually found that shaving or half-shaving culprits' heads and throwing them overboard as objects of ridicule was the most effective deterrent. Thirty years later it transpired that, during this visit, Tongan chiefs plotted to kill the entire party and seize the ships, one of the leaders calling it off at the last moment for personal reasons. Cook, unaware of the danger, considered the visit a success, and eventually sailed for Tahiti on 17 July.

Since his last visit there, Spaniards from Peru had been to and gone from Tahiti in a feeble attempt to reassert their Pacific sovereignty and 'convert the heathen'. Their leader had died there, and despite their pious warnings to the islanders about the British, Cook was made as welcome as before. After his landing at Vaitepiha on 12 August, the old camp at Matavai Bay was recommissioned, fireworks were let off and Cook and Clerke were pleased to land the last of their livestock, with their own appearance on horseback, and Mai's less expert attempts at horsemanship, causing general astonishment. Cook declined to become involved in the continuing local war against Moorea, but he did attend a human sacrifice connected with its poor progress (the victim had, in fact, been killed earlier). He also had to refuse the Tahitian chief Tu's gift of a canoe for King George as too large to take, but had Webber paint his own portrait as a present for Tu. The portrait was much treasured by Tu, and Bligh was asked to repair it in 1788 when he arrived in the *Bounty*. It was last seen four years later. At the end of September, Cook moved on to Moorea, so far unvisited, and where the noticeable shortening of his patience for theft burst out in full fury, as houses and canoes were burned in order to gain restitution of a stolen goat. This was followed just before they reached Huahine by a new escalation: 'in a Passion', he ordered not only that a Moorean pilferer's head be shaved but also that his ears be cut off. The man lost his hair and one earlobe to the barber before Cook relented and made him swim ashore. Another 'hardened Scounderal' who stole

a sextant on Huahine lost both hair and ears, and was put in irons when he threatened murderous revenge. It was nonetheless on Huahine that Mai was finally settled, in a house and garden Cook had built for him, along with two Maori who had joined him from New Zealand and who could not be returned. The final parting when they sailed on 2 November was, as Bayly wrote, 'a very Afecting Scean'.

Cook next made his final visit to Raiatea, an island of delight where several men were tempted to desert and settle, a thought entertained even by Anderson and possibly Clerke, both of whom were prone to consumption and feared the rigours of the Arctic. A simple-minded Marine called Harrison actually did desert there, but was recovered. More serious were the cases of a seaman called Shaw and a lovelorn midshipman and son of a naval captain, Alexander Mouat, both of whom fled to nearby Bora Bora. In response, Cook and Clerke rapidly and hospitably detained the son of the chief Orio, and also his son-in-law and famously beautiful daughter, Poetua, on *Discovery* against his men's return. As with the previous ear-croppings, it was further evidence suggesting that Cook's long patience was finally being more affected by the stresses of his three Pacific commands. Orio sent a message to Bora Bora, but also unsuccessfully planned to counter-seize Cook and Clerke when they were ashore, before finally ordering the return of the fugitives. A positive outcome of this anxiety-provoking drama, which only temporarily disturbed the general friendship, was the opening it gave Webber to make studies of Poetua in preparation for the fine portrait of her which he exhibited in London in 1785. After an emotional farewell, the ships briefly visited Bora Bora, obtaining there part of one of Bougainville's anchors to convert into hatchets for trade, and Cook then left the Society Islands for ever.

From Raiatea they sailed north and on 24 December discovered uninhabited Christmas Island, where Cook remained until 2 January 1778. Here an eclipse of the Sun was observed, English seeds were planted (Cook's invariable practice, for later use) and local supplies such as yams and turtles were gathered in large quantities. On 18 January, about 1,300 nautical miles north of the Equator, they became the first Europeans to sight the western elements of Cook's 'Sandwich Islands' (Hawaii). Canoes quickly came out to trade, and the people who came aboard spoke Polynesian and had the same infuriating talent as their southern cousins for spiriting away items that seized their fancy. When a scouting party eventually landed on Kauai there was an incident in which one islander was shot dead. However, by the time Cook himself landed, the crowds not only seemed friendly but prostrated themselves before him (as they would to one of their own half-divine kings) before he visited a nearby village and sacred site, or *heiau*. Cook rapidly saw that he had encountered a very sophisticated society, stretched over a large island group, but he was almost immediately driven from his anchorage by weather and found it difficult to regain a safe one in the offshore currents.



OPPOSITE POEDUA, THE DAUGHTER OF ORIO (born *c.*1758; died before 1788), by John Webber, *c.*1784.

Poetua (the usual modern spelling) was about 19 and in early pregnancy when Webber made the study of her on board *Discovery* in 1777 that he would use for this portrait, which was painted later in London and shown at the Royal Academy in 1785; he also painted two other versions. Its dreamy romanticism has come to embody the sexual fascination that Polynesia held in the European imagination.

After spending only three days ashore during his fortnight there, he sailed again on 2 February and sighted the coast of 'New Albion' – modern Oregon – on 7 March, at latitude 44° 33' north. This was his most southerly point on a coastline which he was to follow both north and far to the west for over 2,000 miles, until it tailed off in the shoals, tidal races and islands of the Aleutian chain. Although relatively low at first meeting, it was clearly backed by high ground, which further north piled up into the towering, snow-topped ranges of the Canadian Rocky Mountains. The coast below, from which the ships mostly stood well offshore in cold weeks of fog and storm from the west, also soon became as fragmented and complex as north-eastern New Zealand, but on a vastly grander scale. Urgently needing to reprovision and replace some of his spars, Cook tacked north and west in offshore gales looking for a suitable harbour. In doing so he missed the opening south of Vancouver Island which is now called the Juan de Fuca Strait, one of the mythical entrances to a 'north-west passage'; the so-called Admiral de Fonte Strait was to be equally elusive.

On the western side of the island, which he did not recognise as such, he put into what became known as King George's Sound, and later Nootka Sound, where the ships moored safely until 26 April, and where they were refitted. Here they cut new upper masts from the immemorial forest, set up an observatory and accurately determined their longitude, and conducted trade for fish and furs with the friendly local 'indians'. Shortly after leaving, the *Resolution* sprang a leak, which the pumps kept in check as they slowly tacked their way well to seaward across the Gulf of Alaska and put into Prince William Sound, south-west of modern Anchorage. The *Resolution* was recaulked there, but there was a risky incident when armed local people, now resembling 'Esquimaux' (Inuit), stormed the *Discovery* in the hope of easy pickings; they were driven off with cutlasses, resulting in no serious injury. Two weeks of May were subsequently spent in inconclusive probing of the nearby Cook Inlet (which leads up to Anchorage) and which Vancouver, 16 years later, was to confirm as no more than a huge, long bay into the continental hinterland.

They were now in regions known from the earlier eighteenth-century voyages of Bering and the Russians, and there were growing signs of Russian fur-trading

contact amid local people as they sailed outside Kodiak Island and west by south down the Alaska Peninsula. Cook passed through the Aleutian Islands east of Unalaska early in July and landed on the Russian side of the Bering Strait, 800 miles to the north, on 10 August 1778. A week previously, on 3 August, he had lost his excellent naturalist and surgeon when William Anderson died, aged 30, and was buried at sea.

A week after passing through the Strait and heading north-east, the ships began to encounter the familiar dangers of floating Arctic ice, although the presence of large numbers of walruses – or 'sea-horses' as they were called – provided a copious supply of fresh meat. On 18 August, they were stopped by a solid wall of pack ice at their furthest point north, latitude 70° 44', and although Cook then altered his course westward to reach longitude 179° west, well above northern Siberia, ice also stopped them there. He thus resolved to try again at an earlier stage the following summer, and sailed south to Unalaska Island where there was a hospitable welcome from the local Inuit, the Russian fur-trading community and their resident factor, Gerasim Izmailov. Despite language difficulties, Izmailov was able to give Cook more information about the Russian coast, undertook to pass on a letter to the Admiralty via St Petersburg and provided other letters of introduction to the governor of Kamchatka, where Cook could have wintered. By the time he sailed on 26 October, however, Cook had instead already determined to winter in the Sandwich Islands, to enlarge his knowledge of the group and benefit everyone's health from fresh supplies and the warmer climate.

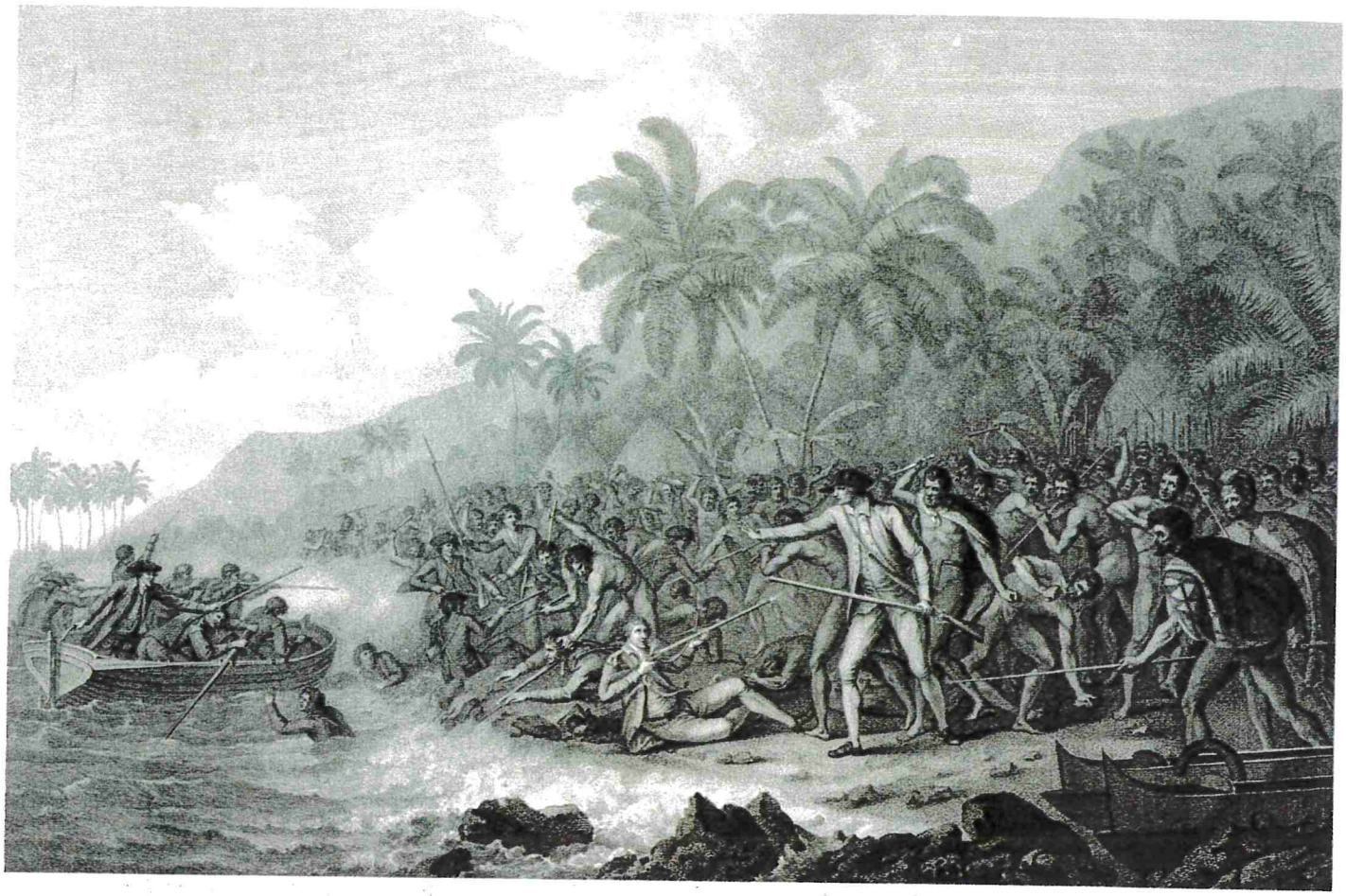
The passage began with a fearful storm in which a seaman on the *Discovery* was killed when rigging gave way, but a month later they sighted Maui and, on 31 November, Hawaii itself for the first time. Cook did not land, however, until the middle of January, preferring to avoid island entanglements and to trade with canoes that came off to do so as he recorded the group. Another storm at the end of December separated him from the *Discovery*, and by the time they rejoined on 6 January 1779, they urgently needed to find a harbour for repairs to ships with leaking decks, split sails and shattered rigging. On 17 January they anchored off Hawaii, in Kealakekua Bay.

Their landing brought large numbers of people and ecstatic demonstrations of honour. The unfathomable earlier prostrations resumed. Koa, a chief and a priest whom Cook had already met, led elaborate rituals of welcome at a nearby *heiau*, where Cook was draped in red cloth and had a hog offered to him. Cook also learnt that he had had the title of 'Orono' bestowed on him. Although the matter is still much debated, what he failed to understand – fatally, as the early stages in a tragedy of cultural cross-purposes unrolled – was that the islanders may have believed his 'second coming' to be that predicted for Lono, a Hawaiian year god.

Throughout the rest of the month he was consequently honoured like a returning deity, with visits from the Hawaiian king, Kalini'ōpu'u, and other chiefs, as well as ceremonies and such a quantity of 'offerings' and supplies that his hosts naturally began anxiously to hope for his early departure.

On 4 February Cook therefore set sail to survey the coast and find a new anchorage, sped on his way with further gifts and a fleet of canoes as a final escort. Two gale-filled nights, however, split his sails and the *Resolution*'s foremast; no other harbour could be found, and on 11 February he regretfully re-anchored at Kealakekua Bay. It proved strangely deserted, and while mast repairs ashore were permitted and the king again paid a formal visit, there were soon signs of increasing local hostility. For the Hawaiians, a disorientating and unwelcome third return for Lono was not in the script as they understood it. A spate of thefts, at which Cook protested, raised the temperature and led him to double his guards. Then, on the night of 13 February, the *Discovery*'s cutter was stolen (and in fact broken up for its iron).

BELOW A PARTY FROM HIS MAJESTY'S SHIPS *RESOLUTION* AND *DISCOVERY* SHOOTING SEA-HORSES, LATITUDE 71 NORTH, 1778; oil painting by John Webber. Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1784, Webber's painting shows a walrus hunt from the ships, north of the Bering Strait. The third voyage, in particular, generated great commercial interest in the exploitable natural resources of the Pacific.



THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN COOK AT KEALAKEKUA BAY, HAWAII, 14 FEBRUARY 1779.

Francesco Bartolozzi's print of 1784, after Webber, is probably the best representation since the latter was a distant witness of it by telescope from the *Resolution*'s deck and spoke to those more closely involved. Sudden violence broke out amid general misunderstandings triggered by a separate fatal incident on the other side of the bay. In addition to Cook, four Marines and 17 Hawaiians died.

The next day Cook led an armed party to 'invite' King Kalini'ōpu'u aboard against the cutter's return, following his Tahitian practice. The chief came willingly enough as far as the beach but was backed by an armed crowd, who prevented him going further. Seeking to avoid bloodshed, Cook abandoned his attempt to negotiate for the boat's return and was about to re-embark. At that moment news broke that another important chief had been shot and killed in an incident on the far side of the bay, and the infuriated crowd began hurling stones. Cook was violently threatened by one man, replying first with a charge of buckshot that caused no serious harm and then shooting dead another assailant. As the mob charged, his Marine party opened fire, but four of them were killed before they could reload or reach the boats. Cook was struck down and knifed from behind, then hacked and clubbed to death into the shallows.

Clerke, a sick man but no less clear-headed or humane than Cook, now took

command of both the stunned expedition and the immediate situation. When a watering party was also attacked it immediately set fire to a village, but he would allow no further premeditated acts of vengeance. A truce was quickly established in which repairs to the *Resolution*'s foremast were finished and the ship was re-embarked, Clerke's firm requirement being the return of Cook's body. His bones (though not the Marines') were ceremoniously restored six days later by Kalini'ōpu'u. The Hawaiians had sustained considerable losses themselves (17, including four chiefs) and regretted the incident equally, and they had treated Cook according to their custom for great men. His body had been largely burnt and the flesh stripped from the bones, of which the longer ones, together with the skull and the preserved hands and feet, were handed back. Many small bones were beyond retrieval, having already been distributed as honoured relics. On 21 February Clerke consigned his captain's last remains to the waters of the bay, with full naval honours. The following day, with Clerke in command of the *Resolution* and John Gore, her first lieutenant, taking *Discovery*, they weighed anchor and departed from the beautiful but tragic scene.

Clerke, too, never returned home. He made a gallant attempt to complete Cook's Arctic mission, sailing north once more and making port on the Kamchatka Peninsula, where the Russians helped him both with supplies and with repairs to his increasingly weather-worn ships. On 22 August 1779, while returning to Kamchatka from a fruitless second foray beyond the Bering Strait, he died, aged 38, of the tuberculosis he had carried from England. He was buried ashore at Petropavlovsk, where the Russians again gave notable assistance and sent home the ships' reports: their grim news broke in London seven months later. Gore succeeded to the command of the *Resolution*. Lieutenant James King, the most adept manager of encounters with indigenous populations apart from Cook, took over the *Discovery*, and after a stormy passage down the coast of Japan both ships reached Macao, in China, in the first week of December. From there they trod the well-worn paths of the East India trade homeward, through the Sunda Strait to Cape Town, arriving there in good health on 9 May 1780.

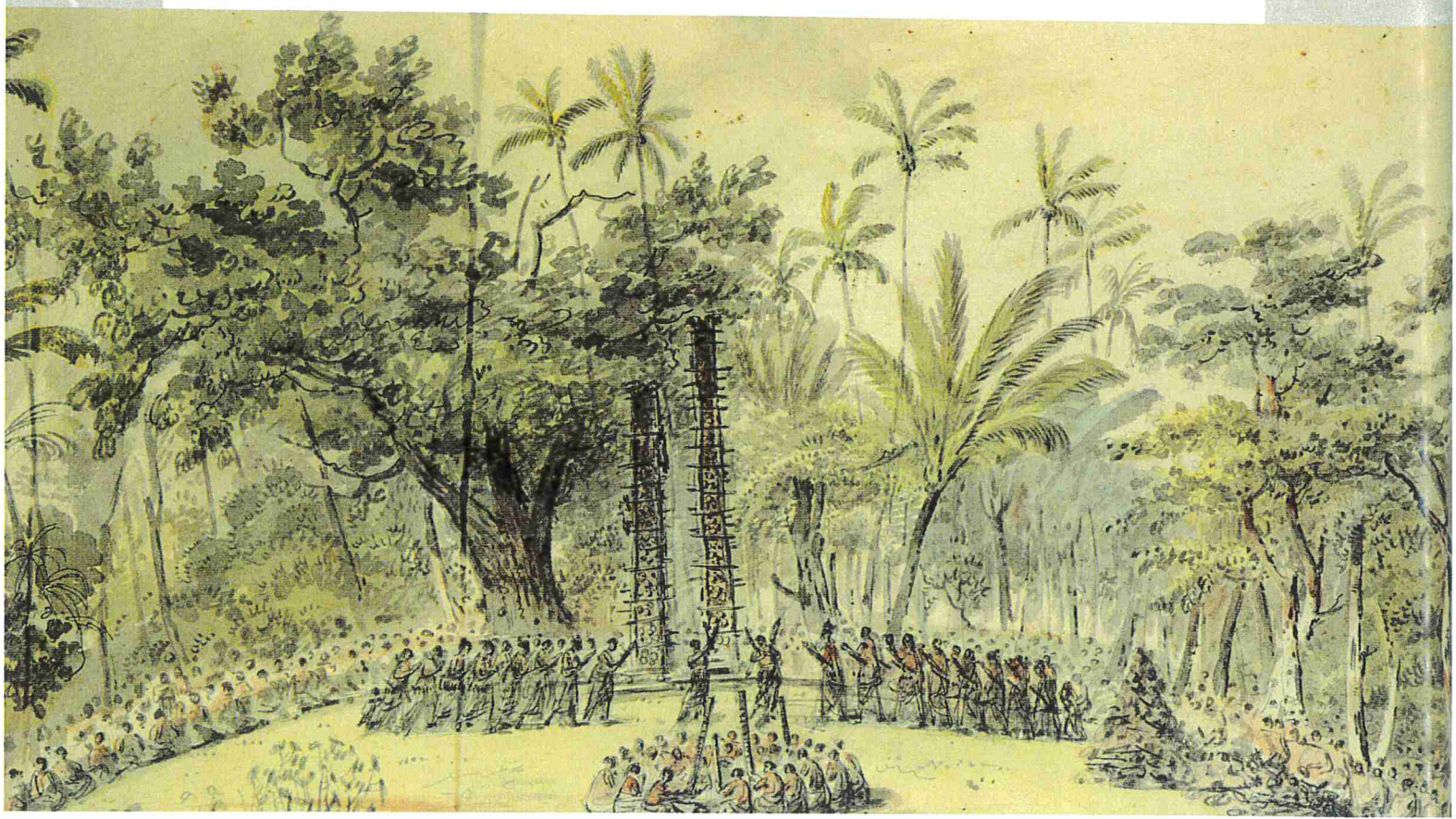
Three months later, an Atlantic gale blew them so far north that their British landfall was at Stromness, in the Orkneys. Sailing 'north-about' and down the English east-coast route to the Thames, on which Cook first learnt his trade, they anchored off Sheerness on 4 October, after a voyage of nearly four years and three months. The news of the deaths of Cook and Clerke was already old and, whatever the private welcomes, the return of the ships was both less noticed and more sombre than those of 1771 and 1775. In an idiom of that age rather than of our own, a homecoming crowned with the cypress of mourning rather than with laurels of triumph closed Cook's unique chapter of success in the history of European discovery of the Pacific.

JOHN WEBBER (1751–93): A SWISS AT SEA

'Mr Webber excels equally in Oil, & in watercolours…'
— DOROTHY RICHARDSON, A VISITOR TO WEBBER'S STUDIO IN 1785

By training, John Webber was the best suited of the Cook voyage artists for an expedition-recording role. He was born in London in 1751 to a Swiss sculptor father from Bern and an English mother; financial hardships led to his being raised from the age of six by an aunt in Bern, where his family had long-standing merchant connections. She recognised his talent, and in 1767 he was apprenticed for three years to Johann Aberli, a leading Swiss topographical draughtsman, before going to study painting in 1770 at the Académie Royale in Paris, where he added rustic figure groups and portraiture to his skills. He returned to London in 1775, enrolled in the Royal Academy Schools and first exhibited at the Academy in 1776. The three works he showed, two landscapes and a portrait, were spotted by Daniel Solander – Banks's botanical assistant on the *Endeavour* – and this led to his appointment as artist for Cook's third Pacific expedition at 100 guineas a year, sailing that July.

Webber was well liked on the *Resolution* and very methodical, working closely with Cook in recording landscape and coastal views, with publication in view. He proved adept at rapidly sketching ethnographic figure subjects and combining these into more finished scenes, and did portraits of Pacific people. Encouraged by the surgeon, William Anderson, he also expanded his range into natural-history drawings, often



with the assistant surgeon, William Ellis, who was amateur artist-recorder of the voyage. Webber worked mainly in pen, wash and delicate watercolour, with acute observation of detail, good atmospheric effects and a tendency to produce idiosyncratically elongated figures. When the expedition returned in 1780, after the deaths of Cook and Anderson, he brought back over 200 drawings and about 20 small portraits in oils, and showed a selection to George III. The Admiralty then re-engaged him at £250 a year to direct the engraving of illustrations for the voyage account, published in 1784, and to paint further Pacific oil subjects until 1785. They include his famous portrait of Poetua – romantic icon of the eighteenth-century South Seas (see p.78) – painted from a now lost oil study. He exhibited these and others at the Academy from 1784 to 1791, successfully published a set of Pacific views as prints, and in 1785 helped his friend P.-J. de Loutherbourg with the scenery and costumes for the famous pantomime *Omai, or, A Trip Round the World* at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. Tours in Britain, France and the Alps provided the subjects for his later work and in 1791 – the year he was elected a full Royal Academician – he presented 101 ethnographic items he had collected under Cook to the library at his childhood home, Bern (where they are now in the museum). He died, still a bachelor, in London in 1793, leaving bequests to his servants, Swiss relatives and artistic friends, though his main heir was his younger brother Henry, a sculptor who did much work for the potter Josiah Wedgwood. Webber first painted a small oil portrait of Cook at Cape Town in 1776, which is now in the National Portrait Gallery, London. Three other later versions (and two of his portrait of Poetua) are still known; another of Cook, painted at Tahiti for Chief Tu, was last seen there in 1792.

above A VIEW IN ULIETEA [Raiatea] (detail); this Society Islands watercolour of 1787 is an example of Webber's Pacific subjects made after his voyage. He exhibited an oil version of 1786, at the Royal Academy in 1787. This followed, with two known copies, and prints made from one of them.

opposite A TONGAN DANCE; a rough watercolour study by Webber, probably made on 21 June 1777, of which no other version is known. The tall structures are 'yam posts' – square columns of yams supported in a framework of four tall poles about 30 feet high, which Cook described in his journal.