

The Lingering Impact of Hawkesworth's *Voyages*

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John Hawkesworth's (1720-73) *An Account of the Voyages* (1773) is the edited official account of the four commanders of George the Third's ships bound for the South Pacific Ocean between 1764 and 1771.¹ The most elaborate and notable of the work is the first completed part of it – "Cook's Voyage."² Hawkesworth took the liberty of creating a space of his own to intersperse his sentiments and observations with the account of James Cook (1728-79) into which minute cultural observations from the journal of Joseph Banks (1743-1820) had already been integrated.³ Thus, in the famous account of Cook's first voyage, which was conducted between 1768 and 1771 in the *Endeavour*, the three people are combined into one and the account is given in the first-person narrative of Cook.⁴ According to J. C. Beaglehole, "for a hundred and twenty years, as far as the first voyage was concerned, Hawkesworth was Cook."⁵ This article, sharply focusing on the cultural representation of the island of Tahiti (called "Otaheite")⁶ which had been discovered by Samuel Wallis in 1767, and thereafter visited by Louis-Antoine de Bougainville in 1768 and Cook in 1769, discusses the aspect of Hawkesworth's *Voyages*, which particularly evoked a deeply rooted human preoccupation as found in the subsequent works during the Romantic period. The literary impact of the work is ultimately traced in French dramatist Jean Giraudoux's (1882-1944) *Supplément Au Voyage De Cook* (1937).

As I previously discussed,⁷ the most remarkable literary response to Hawkesworth's *Voyages* can be regarded as Erasmus Darwin's *The Loves of the Plants* (1789) which was subsequently published as the second part of *The Botanic Garden* in 1791. What is particularly relevant here is the fact that Darwin was intrigued by the unrestrained human sexuality exhibited by the primitives of the privileged class in the societies called the "Arioi" in Tahiti.⁸ The nature of the Arioi was first communicated in Hawkesworth's *Voyages* thus:

It cannot be supposed that, among these people, chastity is held in much estimation... there is a scale in dissolute sensuality, which these people have ascended, wholly unknown to every other nation whose manners have been recorded from the beginning of the world to the present hour, and which no imagination could possibly conceive. ... These societies are

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distinguished by the name of Arreoy. (2: 207)

Darwin perceived the Arioi as practising “polygamy” – as they were recognised as virtually bringing into effect the sexual system of Carolus Linnaeus (1707-78). Indeed, Linnaeus classified plants into 24 classes according to the number and arrangement of stamens and pistils which were allegorised as men and women in polygamous nuptials. In *The Loves of the Plants*, the Arioi are designated as belonging to the 24th class called the clandestine marriage, thus:⁹

A *hundred* virgins join a *hundred* swains,
And fond ADONIS leads the sprightly trains;
Pair after pair, along his sacred groves
To Hymen's fane the bright procession moves¹⁰

In his footnote, Darwin explains the scene thus:

Many males and many females live together in the same flower.... The society, called the Areoi, in the island of Otaheite, consists of about 100 males and 100 females, who form one promiscuous marriage. (2: Canto 4, line 490n)

The Arioi society members, however, would never have reckoned themselves as “married,” as they were in fact devout “celibates” who practised religious and sexual congregation to show reverence for gods, the chief of which was Oro the god of war who required human sacrifices in the sacred land of “marae” or temple.¹¹

The idea of the scandalous, polygamous sexuality of the Arioi had further literary responses, ranging from sheer disbelief to imaginative transformation. First, the responses of two influential political and social advocates – Edward Gibbon (1737-94) and Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) – are focused upon.

In the last volume of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88), Gibbon comments on “The *Arreoy* of Otaheite” in response to the Byzantines’ perception of British custom during the 15th century. Those Byzantine visitors were Manuel II Palaeologus (1350-1425) the emperor of Constantinople (in the dying Byzantine Empire [395-1453]) and his followers who attempted in vain to urge Henry IV to wage a holy war against the Ottoman Empire. Their observations, which were preserved by Laonicus Chalcondyles the Byzantine historian, are given by Gibbon in an abridged form. The relevant “rude pictures of ... England”¹² are given thus:

... in the habits of domestic life, they are not easily distinguished from their neighbours of France: but the most singular circumstance of their manners is their disregard of conjugal honour and of female chastity. In their mutual visits, as the first act of hospitality, the guest

is welcomed in the embraces of their wives and daughters: among friends they are lent and borrowed without shame; nor are the islanders offended at this strange commerce, and its inevitable consequences. (6: 393)

Although the Britons were no longer regarded as barbarians by the Byzantines,¹³ the former still remained uncouth strangers to the latter in terms of manners. Gibbon refutes the Byzantines' claim of the Britons' conjugal immorality by stating that the Greeks "confounded a modest salute with a criminal embrace" and attempts to warn his readers against being deceived by the extravagant accounts of remote nations.¹⁴ He further notes thus:

Perhaps we may apply this remark to the community of wives among the old Britons, as it is supposed by Cæsar and Dion (Dion Cassius, l. lxii. tom. ii. p.1007.). ... The *Arreoy* of Otaheite, so certain at first, is become less visible and scandalous in proportion as we have studied the manners of that gentle and amorous people. (6: 393n)

Here, the Britons are perceived as falling between two extreme categories of the primitive and the imperial, encapsulating the prehistoric time to the late eighteenth century. Gibbon suggests that as the imperial Romans spread the tale of polyandry among the ancient Britons,¹⁵ so the imperial Britons circulated the account of polygamy among the remote primitive islanders called the Arioi.

As Susan Matthew points out, Gibbon attributes the decline of the Roman Empire to "a loss of female purity, by a sexualisation of women which came from Asia."¹⁶ Gibbon is considered to have perceived the relationship between the two embattled nations in terms of the prevalent eighteenth-century sexual discourse: one is the masculine and the other the feminine. If the latter resists the former's rape and practises the "serious doctrine of virginity" (as exemplified in Milton's *Comus*),¹⁷ the latter can retain its independence. Thus, as Matthews puts it, "female chastity ensures the integrity of the nation."¹⁸ Gibbon seems to have been reluctant to let the British public believe the account of the Arioi lest they should suffer from a corruption of morals and the resultant loss of female chastity – on whose defence the preservation of the British Empire was supposed to rest.¹⁹

As for Thomas Malthus's response to Hawkesworth's *Voyages*, focus must be on his *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. It was first published in 1798 and in the second enlarged edition of 1803 he renounced his previous anonymity and gave serious consideration to the Arioi society in Tahiti as an example to which his principle of population was applicable.²⁰ As is well known, he asserts that "population increases in a geometrical and food in an arithmetical ratio."²¹ As he admits, however, such a rapid increase in population does not occur due to the existing checks to population.²² He regards those checks as the restrictive law of nature to rescue the human race from "the most wretched and universal poverty."²³ In the work, he describes grim pictures of the uncivilised societies of

the past and the present as illustrations of the checks to population, including the situation of Tahiti as part of the islands of the South Seas. As for New Zealand, while its “thinly scattered” population was, during the Cook’s first voyage, attributed to perpetual warfare conducted among tribes in hostility and also to their practice of eating war victims,²⁴ the mild and fruitful island of Tahiti was referred to as “the garden of the Hesperides.”²⁵ Due to the similarly limited insular circumstances as New Zealand, however, Malthus suspected that there was a very powerful means of checking the increase in population in Tahiti. He says thus:

The successive accounts that we have received of Otaheite and the neighbouring islands, leave us no room to doubt the existence of the Eareoie societies, which have justly occasioned so much surprise among civilised nations. They have been so often described, that little more need be said of them here, than that promiscuous intercourse and infanticide appear to be their fundamental laws. (*Principle of Population* 1: 73-74)

Convinced of the veracity of the existence of the Arioi by 1803, apart from wars, Malthus specified such binding laws as “promiscuous intercourse and infanticide” as powerful means of checking population in Tahiti.²⁶ Indeed, it is reported in Hawkesworth’s *Voyages* that if one of the Arioi members – usually an “arii” or a chief of a region – should suffer a baby to live as his heir, he, as a married man, loses both membership of the Arioi and the rank of an arii immediately. Those titles and honours are thereby transferred from the father to the child although the former continues to possess and administer the land.²⁷ Here, it ought to be noted that the arii are highly sensitive to the parentage of children they beget as their heirs – as those Arioi of the highest ranks valued genealogies – as they reckoned themselves as descendants of gods.²⁸

The polygamous sexual relationships among the Arioi in Tahiti are in due course transformed into a legend which is almost reminiscent of the accounts of the imperial Romans and Greeks respectively concerned with the ancient as well as the 15th century Britons. Jean Giraudoux’s play, in particular, glaringly brings to light a long-held literary obsession encapsulated in the polyandrous relationship between man and woman, which can be regarded as the ultimate response to the account of the Arioi in Hawkesworth’s *Voyages*.

Giraudoux’s *Supplement to Cook’s Voyage* (*Supplément Au Voyage De Cook*) was first performed at the Théâtre de l’Athénée in Paris in 1935 and subsequently published in 1937.²⁹ As John Dunmore discusses, Giraudoux closely follows in the play the French Enlightenment philosopher and encyclopaedist Denis Diderot’s (1713-84) “Supplement to Bougainville’s Voyage” written in 1772, which was in turn composed in response to the first French circumnavigator Louis-Antoine de Bougainville’s (1729-1811) *Voyage Round the World* published in the previous year.³⁰

Giraudoux’s *Supplement* stages a night before Cook’s first landing on Tahiti. It is Samuel Banks who is sent as the harbinger to let an arii called Outourou verse himself in the

three virtues of civilised men – “Labour, Property and Morality” – so that the natives might be accordingly disciplined.³¹ Samuel Banks is a natural historian and middle-aged married Presbyterian churchwarden of Birmingham, and his religious and moralistic character departs largely from the historical Joseph Banks in his mid-twenties. Indeed, he is modelled after the “ship’s chaplain” in Diderot’s “Supplement” who is hosted by Orou the Spanish-speaking arii, although the French chaplain is eventually prevailed upon to break a vow of celibacy and completely surrenders himself to the host’s temptation.³² Similarly, in Giraudoux’s *Supplement*, although Banks’ mission is to moralise the arii and his people, his effort is immediately frustrated by Outourou’s counteraction: he presents three half-naked women – his wife, young aunt and daughter – to be coupled with the guest. The host says to Banks, who was baffled by his offer and declined it, thus:

“If I should be invited to your house in England and spend the night without being offered Mrs. Banks, I would feel the same as you do now. Do I get on your nerves? In England, don’t you offer your wives to your good friends?”³³

Those three women who are at Outourou’s disposal are willingly offered to his guest out of seeming hospitality. In the equivalent temptation scene of Diderot’s “Supplement,” however, his pragmatic purpose of offering the host’s wife and three daughters to the chaplain is made explicit thus:

“... if you would like to do me a favor, you will give your preference to my youngest girl, who has not yet had any children.”³⁴

What Diderot gives free rein to in his “Supplement” is his reforming vision of the former French colony of Madagascar. As C. R. Donath points out, Diderot tentatively explored the possibilities of French colonisation founded in “consanguinity rather than coercion” due to mutual desires oriented to reproduction.³⁵ Indeed, for the successful settlement and promotion of civilisation, Diderot thought that intermarriage between the French colonists and the islanders was necessary to increase the number of racially mixed children, about whom, according to his view anonymously expressed as the Abbé Raynal’s,³⁶ most Malagasies were supposed to have felt honoured for the “splendour of the origin.”³⁷ It is into his “Supplement” concerning Tahiti that Diderot translated his cherished idea by letting Orou persuade the chaplain to beget children not only with his daughters but also with his wife. Although we already know that this is unlikely to happen with the Tahitian arii of high rank who are concerned with genealogies,³⁸ in Diderot, promiscuity is allowed for the sake of increasing the mixed-race population.³⁹ He also lets Orou assert that an unmarried girl’s child is her “dowry” for her future husband.⁴⁰ While Diderot apparently jotted down his optimistic legendary tale of Tahiti after being prompted by Bougainville’s *Voyage*, after the subsequent publication of Hawkesworth’s *Voyages*, he seems to have revised the “Supplement” by

adding the preceding “The Old Man’s Farewell” in a more pessimistic tone. Diderot gives the “wise old man” (who is referred to in Hawkesworth’s *Voyages* as Owhaw)⁴¹ a powerful anti-colonial speech in which the devastating impact of the arrival of the civilised men at Tahiti is deplored due to the subsequent transformation of the Tahitian life and culture.⁴² Also, given that infanticide was habitually practised in the Arioi society, as Compton Mackenzie puts it, “Diderot could not have chosen a worse illustration for his argument” than “the justification for sentimentalized promiscuity” for the increase of population in Tahiti.⁴³ Diderot’s “Supplement” was only circulated in manuscript copies among his close friends and was posthumously published in 1796.

Returning to Giraudoux’s *Supplement*, he revises Diderot’s ambivalent imperial fantasy: Giraudoux lets the imperial visitor, not the Tahitian chief, preach the “serious doctrine of reproduction” as the civilised man’s morality as he says: “It is immoral to court a woman unless he intends to have children.”⁴⁴ Given that having children with women is the fundamental law of morality, Outourou jumps to the conclusion that Banks has finally chosen his youngest daughter to be his wife, although she attempts to seduce him in vain due to Mrs. Banks’ intervention.⁴⁵ As for Mrs. Banks, on the other hand, who was found childless, Outourou in turn brings his brother, young uncle and son to successfully impregnate her. Outourou’s son – young and handsome Vaitourou – tempts Mrs. Banks and seizes her heart, but in vain due to her husband’s equivalent intervention.⁴⁶ Unlike Diderot’s chaplain who broke a vow of celibacy, the Bankses’ preservation of chastity counteracts Diderot’s colonial fantasy. It, however, rather forebodes the forthcoming arrival of missionaries in Tahiti in 1796 sent by the London Missionary Society founded in the previous year. Indeed, those missionaries achieve the ultimate triumph in converting the Arioi to Christianity up to the point where those converts are turned to missionaries to preach the gospels to the neighbouring islanders. Victor Segalen’s (1878-1919) ethnographic novel entitled *Les Immémoriaux* published in 1907 suggests that the Arioi society and their indigenous culture came to an end 20 years after the arrival of the missionaries.⁴⁷

During the age of the Enlightenment, Europeans sought to discover the universal laws of nature so that their conduct might be aligned with them. The public’s overwhelming interest in Hawkesworth’s *Voyages* can be attributed to their natural inquiry into human beings in the state of nature. This article has explored the literary impact of Hawkesworth’s *Voyages*, which first communicated the knowledge of the society of Arioi in Tahiti. The civilised world understood the Arioi as practising “polygamy” as exemplified in Darwin’s *The Loves of the Plants*. The scandalous human sexuality of the Arioi thus understood as practising “polygamy” had various literary responses, spanning the spectrum from incredulity at one end, as in Gibbon, to imaginative transformation at the other, as in Giraudoux. The legendary tale of the “community of wives” or “communal wives” of the ancient Britons recorded by the imperial Romans haunts those responses. What seems to emerge ultimately in Giraudoux’s *Supplement to Cook’s Voyage* is the polyandric situation

of having a wife in common between a husband and a male visitor. Giraudoux's perception of the dire results of war or peace involved in the polyandric relationship between man and woman seems to be revealed when his *The Trojan War Will Not Take Place* – featuring the most critical polyandric situation of the host's wife being stolen by the male visitor – was staged as a sequel to *Supplement to Cook's Voyage* on 21 November 1935.

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Notes

¹ The details of the book are precisely shown in the title as *An Account of the Voyages Undertaken by the Order of His Present Majesty for Making Discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere, and Successively Performed by Commodore Byron, Captain Carteret, Captain Wallis, and Captain Cook, in the Dolphin, the Swallow, and the Endeavour: Drawn up from the Journals which were kept by the several Commanders, and from the Papers of Joseph Banks, Esq.*

² Hawkesworth says, "although it ('Cook's Voyage') stands last in the series, great part of it was printed before the others were written" (1: v). W. Strahan and T. Cadell purchased the copyright from Hawkesworth for £6,000 due to the public's huge interest in the most intriguing part of the work. (See Abbott, *John Hawkesworth* 147). Hawkesworth's "Cook's Voyage" is based on the Admiralty manuscript in the Public Record Office, London. (See Beaglehole, *Cook* 1: xix).

³ For details, see Hawkesworth 1: iv-vi. The manuscript journals of Cook (based on Cook's Canberra holograph in the Commonwealth National Library, Canberra) and Banks were respectively published by J. C. Beaglehole in 1955 and 1962.

⁴ See Hawkesworth 1: iv-v.

⁵ See *Cook* 1: ccliii. It was not until 1893 that Captain W. J. L. Wharton's *Captain Cook's Journal* – mostly based on the Mitchell manuscript (in Mitchell Library, Sydney) transcribed by Cook's clerk Richard Orton – was published. Cook was mortified in 1775 to read the *Voyages* on his way home on the second voyage (1772-75) and denied the authenticity of the book. (See Beaglehole, *Cook* 2: 661).

⁶ Teuira Henry states that "o Tahiti" signifies "it is Tahiti" (*Ancient Tahiti* 11). For Beaglehole's explanation of "o" in "Otaheite" as a Tahitian article prefixed to the proper noun, see *Banks* 1: 271n.

⁷ See Wada, "Hawkesworth's *Voyages*" 81-87.

⁸ The orthography of "Arioi" varies. The term was first introduced in English merely as "Bachelor, and a man

without children" in J. R. Forster's (1729-98) translation of Louis-Antoine de Bougainville's *A Voyage round the World* (1772) (Bougainville 470).

⁹ In Darwin's classification of plants, "ADONIS" assigned here to the 24th class, in fact, belongs to "the Ranunculus family ... in the 13th class called Polyandria (or 'Many Males')." (See Wada 85).

¹⁰ Darwin, *The Botanic Garden* vol. 2: Canto 4, lines 489-92.

¹¹ See Henry, 196, 235. Henry records that it was King Tamatoa I who became the first Arioi as Oro's incarnation, organised the Arioi society in Raiatea and spread the religious practice to Tahiti (232). Beaglehole speculates that "the origin of the *arioi* is held to have been no earlier than the sixteenth century" (*Cook* 1: cxc).

¹² Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* 6: 391.

¹³ See Gibbon 6: 390, 392: "In populousness and power, in riches and luxury, London, the metropolis of the isle, may claim a pre-eminence over all the cities of the West."

¹⁴ See Gibbon 6: 393.

¹⁵ After invading Britain in 55-54 B.C., Julius Caesar (100-44 B.C.) reports on the ancient Britons thus: "Groups of ten or twelve men have wives together in common, and particularly brothers along with brothers, and fathers with sons; but the children born of the unions are reckoned to belong to the particular house to which the maiden was first conducted" (*Gallic Wars* 253). Gibbon consulted the excerpt of John Xiphilinus (the 11th century Byzantine scholar) in Cassius Dio's (155?-234?) *The Roman History* which represented the ancient Britons as promiscuous savages not concerned with lineage thus: "They (Britons) dwell in tents, naked and unshod, possess their women in common, and in common rear all the offspring" (9: 263). While T. R. Holms recognises neither matriarchy nor polyandry among the Celts, he thinks it possible to think thus: "certain primitive communities in remote districts had some usage which gave colour to Caesar's statement" (*Ancient Britain* 351-52).

¹⁶ Matthew, "Blake" 86.

¹⁷ Milton, *Complete Shorter Poems* 216, line 786.

¹⁸ Matthew 86.

¹⁹ Hawkesworth the renowned moralist was blamed largely for a corruption of morals by spreading the account of sexual immoralities of the primitives in Tahiti and died from stress-induced illness within half a year of the publication of the *Voyages* in 1773. (See Abbott 167-72, 187-89). For a scathing attack launched on Hawkesworth by an anonymous satirist, for example, see *An Epistle from Mr. Banks* 13.

²⁰ Malthus's "considerable use of Cook" was noted by Beaglehole as the point his friend Dr E. G. Jacoby raised to him (*Cook* 1: clxxxviii).

²¹ See Malthus, *Essay* 1: 453n.

²² See Malthus 1: 3-4.

²³ See Malthus 1: 453n.

²⁴ See Malthus 1: 68-69, 72.

²⁵ See Malthus 1: 72.

²⁶ See Malthus 1: 78. For David Hume's optimistic view on the practice of infanticide which leads to the contrary result of an increase in population, see Hume, *Essays* 1: 430-31.

²⁷ See Hawkesworth, 2: 243-44.

²⁸ See Henry 235.

²⁹ An English adaptation of the play was published as *The Virtuous Island* by Maurice Valency in 1954. As for my English translation of Giraudoux's *Supplement* quoted in this article, I consulted both Valency's work and Chiyomi Hara's faithful Japanese translation of the play entitled *Cook sencho kokai ibun* (hereafter referred to as Hara) published in 1958.

³⁰ See Dunmore, "Explorer" 62. Also, for a detailed study of Giraudoux's *Supplement*, see Norwood, "Tahitian Madness" 220-28.

³¹ See Giraudoux, *Supplément* 50; Valency, *Virtuous Island* 21; Hara, *Cook sencho* 31.

³² See Diderot, "Supplement" 194-96, 211-13.

³³ Translation is mine. See Giraudoux 42-43; Valency 19; Hara 26.

³⁴ Diderot, "Supplement" 194.

³⁵ See Donath, "Empire of Eros" 129.

³⁶ Diderot's contribution to Raynal's *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies* was considerable in terms of political and philosophical reflections on past matters. See Jimack, *History of the Two Indies* xii.

³⁷ See Raynal 19-20, 23.

³⁸ J. R. Forster reports a singular case during Cook's second voyage in 1774 when a great arii called Patatou attempted to offer his (second) wife to Cook after a consultation with her to obtain "red (parrot) feathers" brought by Cook from Tongatapu. Those red feathers had talismanic power to locals as the colour was sacred to Oro. (See Forster, *Observations* 391-92; also see Beaglehole, *Cook 2*: 383n).

³⁹ Diderot lets Orou speak to the chaplain thus: "... how important it is to increase the population. ... our women and girls came to draw the blood out of your veins" ("Supplement" 211).

⁴⁰ Diderot, "Supplement" 202.

⁴¹ Hawkesworth 2: 81. See Donath 131: "An old man does not ... appear in Bougainville's original journal."

⁴² Diderot lets the old man say thus, "We are innocent and happy, and you can only spoil our happiness. ... you were plotting, in the depths of your hearts, to steal a whole country!" ("Supplement" 187-88).

⁴³ See Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew* "Introduction" xvii.

⁴⁴ Translation is mine. See Giraudoux 66; Valency 28; Hara 4.

⁴⁵ See Giraudoux 70-76; Valency 34-41; Hara 42-46.

⁴⁶ See Giraudoux 90-109; Valency 30-31; Hara 55-68.

⁴⁷ See Segalen 265, 379. Professor Thomas Schwarz, a historian at Nihon University, brought Segalen's *Les Immémoriaux* to my attention. Also, see Henry iv: "It has been said of the Society Islands that everything pertaining to the old native culture has disappeared more completely than in any other Polynesian group. ... it [Tahiti] was the scene of the first efforts of the London Missionary Society."

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