

The Exchanged Portrait and the Lethal Picture: Visualization Techniques and Native Knowledge in Samuel Hearne's Sketches from His Trek to the Arctic Ocean and John Webber's Record of the Northern Pacific

Philippe Despoix

Published accounts of the British circumnavigations from the 1770-80s effect the passage from complex knowledge inscribed in logbooks, astronomical and longitude calculations, charts, and natural history drawings to a new type of illustrated travelogue that associated the art of writing with techniques of visualizing the unknown. This model of maritime exploration and publication remained dominant for at least a century, obscuring other exploratory practices that will be investigated comparatively in this essay. I will contrast the uses of visual media in Samuel Hearne's trek through the plains of Canada (1769-72) with the artistic production developed by John Webber during James Cook's last voyage to the Pacific Ocean (1776-80). In comparing engravings from the two accounts, I will examine the ways in which different forms of expeditions and their specific visualizing techniques affect power relations during encounters as well as the subsequent production of knowledge. The different uses and appropriations of inscription techniques played a decisive role in the relationship established with the natives who were encountered by scientific maritime expeditions and by individual (or small team) explorations by ground.

résumé/abstract

THERE IS little doubt that maritime exploration played a decisive role in the scientific conquest of the planet. Developed in parallel to the European powers' politics of religious, economic, and colonial expansion since the fifteenth century, voyages of discovery reached their epistemological specificity—in the sense of being modern experiments—in the second half of the eighteenth century. Sea expeditions combined accurate cartographic knowledge gained via the improvement of orientation methods with an intensive classification of living species and human mores. Published accounts of the British circumnavigations from the

1770–80s effected the passage from complex knowledge inscribed in logbooks, astronomical and longitude calculations, charts, and natural history drawings to a new type of illustrated travelogue that associated the art of writing with techniques of visualizing the unknown.¹ This model of maritime exploration and publication remained dominant for at least one century and obscured other exploratory practices which will be investigated in this essay in a comparative perspective. I contrast the uses of visual media in Samuel Hearne's trek through the plains of Canada (1769–72) with the artistic production developed by John Webber during James Cook's last voyage to the Pacific Ocean (1776–80).² In comparing the engravings from the two accounts I examine the ways in which different forms of expeditions and their specific visualizing techniques affected power relations during encounters as well as the subsequent production of knowledge.³

¹ Compare John Hawkesworth, *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 Wallis, Captain Carteret, and Captain Cook, in the Dolphin, the Swallow, and the Endeavour*, 3 vols. (London: Strahan & Cadell, 1773); James Cook, *A Voyage towards the South Pole, and around the World, Performed in His Majesty's Ships the Resolution and Adventure, in the Years 1772, 1773, 1774, and 1775, Written by James Cook, Commander of the Resolution, in which Is Included Captain Furneaux's Narrative of His Proceedings in the Adventure During the Separation of the Ships, Illustrated with Maps and Charts, and a Variety of Portraits and Views Drawn During the Voyage by Mr. Hodges*, 2 vols. (London: Strahan & Cadell, 1777); and James Cook, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean, Undertaken, by the Command of His Majesty, for Making Discoveries in the Northern Hemisphere, to Determine the Position and Extent of the West Side of North America, Its Distance From Asia, and the Practicability of a Northern Passage to Europe, Performed Under the Direction of Captains Cook, Clerke, and Gore, in His Majesty's Ships the Resolution and Discovery, in the Years 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779, and 1780*, 3 vols. (London: Strahan, Nicoll & Cadell, 1784). French translation: Cook, *Troisième voyage de Cook, ou Voyage à l'océan Pacifique, ordonné par le Roi d'Angleterre*, 4 vols. (Paris: Hôtel de Thou, 1785).

² Samuel Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort, in Hudson's Bay, to the Northern Ocean Undertaken by Order of the Hudson's Bay Company for the Discovery of Copper Mines, a North West Passage, &c. in the Years 1769, 1770, 1771 & 1772* (London: Strahan & Cadell, 1795). References are to this edition.

³ This study has been completed within the SSHRC Research Project "Gestes admirables: La Gravure comme véhicule de l'imaginaire moral dans l'Europe des Lumières" at Université de Montréal and in collaboration with Stéphane Roy (Carleton University). I thank Simon Schaffer for giving me the opportunity to present a first version of this paper at the Royal Society of London in July 2008 and for his response; many thanks also to Izabela Potapowicz for her help with the English translation and to Conor Joyce for his editing work.

Encounter and Ritual: Witnessing in Cook's Voyages

The prestige and success of the three voyages around the world by Captain James Cook, accounts of which were published in 1773, 1777, and 1784, were largely determined by their multimedia form.⁴ The numerous illustrations of the official accounts juxtapose different fields of knowledge within the medium of prints: maps of the regions and of discovered islands, drawings of plants and animals from the naturalists' sketchbooks, plates of human artefacts pictured by artists, and also views of significant moments of the expeditions, bearing witness to the commander's diplomatic ability in negotiating encounters with often unpredictable natives.

The account of the first voyage, edited by John Hawkesworth in 1773, contained thirty-six engravings, very few of which represented any people. (Sidney Parkinson, the artist on board the ship, had died during the expedition.) The engravings mainly depict a detached triple "visibility" as can be seen for the climax of the series: the arrival of the expedition at Tahiti, which offers a map positioned with exact latitude and longitude (for the first time west from Greenwich); a view of Matavai Bay with the British ship in the background as an idyllic landscape in "classical style"; and a naturalist detail of a branch of the bread-fruit tree (See Figures 1a–b).

With its sixty-four plates, half of them devoted to humans, the second voyage of Cook inaugurates in 1777 what Stéphane Roy and I have called a "new regime" of the printed image,⁵ although the very moment of the encounter between the Europeans and the natives is rarely the subject matter for a picture. Produced by William Hodges—who later became a famous artist—the representations were nearly all "drawn from nature," which was not the case for the first voyage.⁶ And yet the only four engravings in the set that portray a face-to-face meeting between the explorers and local inhabitants are not drawn from nature

⁴ See Rudiger Joppien and Bernard Smith, *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages*, 3 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985–88).

⁵ Philippe Despoix and Stéphane Roy, "Patagons et Polynésiens. Premières estampes du Pacifique : un nouveau régime de l'image imprimée," *Etudes Littéraires* 37, no. 3 (2006): 57–75.

⁶ Compare Despoix and Roy with Geoff Quilley and John Bonehill, *William Hodges 1744–1787: The Art of Exploration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

in “plain style,” but rather are a reproduction of a later painting by Hodges. They are thus ennobled according to the artistic canon of the time and bear a strong neoclassical stylization. The celebrated scene portraying the ship’s landing at Middleburgh (one of the Friendly Isles), for example, does not really have a counterpart in the written account.⁷ This arrangement is quite characteristic of the tendency, described by Marshall Sahlins, towards “mythical interpretation” that surrounds the very moment of the first encounter between cultures.⁸

Far less studied—probably because the name of its artist, John Webber, is not as acknowledged in the field of art history as that of Hodges—the visual production of Cook’s third voyage is nonetheless extremely substantial.⁹ Of the eighty-five engravings in this book, about sixty per cent are dedicated to human depiction, and their ethnographic value proves to be greater than the engravings from the first and second voyages both in terms of the number of cultures encountered and of accuracy because they are less aesthetically overworked. Here too, however, the marginal nature of the direct representations of encounters between the British crew and the natives met during the voyage is remarkable. The dealings between natives and Europeans belong to the main subject of the engraving in only four instances.

In contrast to Hodges, who made from the very pathos of the encounter subject matter for “historical painting,” Webber’s similar images all depict an artistic or religious ritual in which the explorers are incorporated into the native audience. The two first examples portray the dance and music performances on the Hapae Islands where the Europeans appear as spectators and

⁷ Cook (1777), plate 54; Nicolas Thomas, *In Oceania: Visions, Artifacts, Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 101–102; Despoix and Roy, 66–67.

⁸ See also Cook (1777), plates 59, 60, 62; Marshall D. Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); and Philippe Despoix, *Le Monde mesuré: Dispositifs de l’exploration à l’âge des Lumières* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 2005), 95–96.

⁹ As Geoff Quilley points out: “Despite being appointed official artist to James Cook’s third voyage to the Pacific (1776–80), and producing in that capacity an extraordinary thorough, varied and extensive visual record of its progress and encounters, [John Webber] has received virtually none of the detailed attention that has been given, for example, to his immediate predecessor with Cook, William Hodges.” Quilley, *The Captain’s Artist: The Career of John Webber R.A., Smoking Coasts and Ice-Bound Seas: Cooks Voyage to the Arctic*, Catalogue to the Exhibition at the Captain Cook Memorial Museum (Whitby: Captain Cook Memorial Museum, 2008), 13–21.

listeners alongside the natives (Cook 1784, plates 16–17). The position of the future spectator of the engraving (see Figure 2) is determined by the integration of the expedition members, seen from the back, into the audience of the dance and music ritual. The pictures actually illustrate Cook's involvement in the Inasi festival of Tonga during which the balance of power between islanders and crew was at stake.¹⁰ The other two similar occurrences of encounters also portray particularly important religious rituals in which Cook himself appears facing the spectator—the only cases of such a depiction of him within the entire set of engravings. The subjects here are the human sacrifice that Captain Cook partially witnessed in Tahiti and the offering ritual in honour of the God Lono, in which Cook was invited to take part upon his landing in Hawaii (Cook 1784, plates 25 and 60). This famous document (see Figure 3) can be considered—as Marshall Sahlins and Anne Salmond have convincingly shown¹¹—indicative of the very beginning of the chain of events that would eventually lead to the ritualized murder of Cook by the Hawaiians. The mere fact that Cook is exclusively depicted by Webber in a sacrificial context could in itself be a matter for a longer investigation. Let us merely note that the privileged frame in which the interactions between the European and the native cultures become visible in John Webber's pictures from Cook's third voyage is that of ritual.

Exchanging Portraits: John Webber, Otoo, and Visual Representation

In contrast to the strong neoclassical staging of similar moments by Hodges in the second voyage, the more naturalistic character of the representation of encounters in Webber's work for the third expedition needs to be stressed. The subject matter is never elevated to the level of great historical painting, and the drawing technique still “acts as a witnessing device.” In their standard

¹⁰ Cook (1784), plates 16–17. Cook responded to it with a visual performance of fireworks. For further analysis and details on these pictures, see Vanessa Agnew, *Enlightenment Orpheus: The Power of Music in Other Worlds* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 99–103.

¹¹ Cook (1784), plates 25, 60. See also Sahlins, *Islands of History*; Sahlins, *How “natives” Think: About Captain Cook, For Example* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); and Anne Salmond, *The Trial of the Cannibal Dog: The Remarkable Story of Captain Cook's Encounters in the South Seas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

work on the art of Cook's voyages, Rudiger Joppien and Bernard Smith describe Webber as the "Captain's artist":

[Cook] regarded Webber as his visual collaborator in that undertaking from the beginning ... Webber is frequently on the spot with Cook and often depicts incidents, scenes, or portrait of individuals, mentioned by Cook in his Journal ... In Webber's drawings, with their emphasis upon description, the recording of notable events, and linear accuracy, we may see something of Cook's guiding hand and the eventual publication that was already in his mind. Webber is both in his own nature and under Cook's guidance more factual, less fanciful and imaginative than Hodges ... In consequence his total oeuvre became a much greater achievement in visual documentation.¹²

However, this artist seems to have been particularly sensitive to the experimental character of his activity of drawing on site, among cultures that were generally unfamiliar with pictorial representation. An episode highlighted by Bernard Smith reveals the astonishing novelty of the visualization techniques for the Polynesians. The incident in Tahiti involved John Webber, the local chief Otoo, and the two captains of the expedition, and was not included in the publication of Cook's third voyage. It points to the medium of depiction itself, and we only know of it through a later account by Webber to the editor of the *Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay* in 1789. At the end of his stay on the island Cook asked Otoo "to sit to Mr Webber, in order to furnish such memorial of his features, as might serve for the subject of a complete whole length picture." Webber's account is reported in the third person:

When the portrait was finished, and O'too was informed that no more sittings would be necessary, he anxiously enquired of Captain Cook, and Captain Clerke, what might be the particular meaning and purpose of this painting. He was informed, that it would be kept by Captain Cook, as a perpetual memorial of his person, his friendship, and the many favours received from him. He seemed pleased with the idea, and instantly replied, that, for the very same reasons, a picture of Captain Cook would be highly acceptable to him. This answer, so unexpected, and expressed with strong tokens of real attachment, made both Captain Clerke and Mr. Webber his advocates; and Captain Cook, charmed with the natural sincerity of

¹² Joppien and Smith, 3:2. See also Quilley, *The Captain's Artist*: "Without wishing to polarize the artists too much, it is clear that Webber observed his remit as artist voyager in significantly more precise and deferential terms than Hodges" (14).

his manner, complied with his request much more readily than on any other occasion he would have granted such a favour.¹³

A portrait of Cook was delivered in a box with a lock and key, a similar apparatus to those protecting the precious longitude clocks. Here the exchange of pictures takes the place of the “exchange of names” that characterized the Polynesian friendship ritual. Otoo promised that he would preserve Cook’s portrait “with the utmost care” and show it to the commanders of the ships that might come to the Society Islands. We know the important role that the portrait played for a long time in the legitimization of power in Tahiti, before disappearing, destroyed by the harsh climate. As for the portrait of Otoo (which still exists, see Figure 4b), not only is it more lifelike than the one known through Hodges’s engraving from the second Voyage (see Figure 4a) but it also seems to capture an expression of frightened interrogation in the gaze of the Tahitian chief—the portrait was made before Otoo was assured that both pictures, his and Cook’s, would be exchanged. The visualization technique, the medium of representation itself, has become the object of the exchange ritual.¹⁴ Its becoming so has invested the portrait strongly with a function of power. Yet, the trace of such participation and visual interaction is quite exceptional in the accounts of the voyages led by Cook.

Hearne’s Walk to the Arctic Ocean under the Lead of Matonabee

In comparing the voyage Hearne made in the years 1769–72 through the plains of Canada to the circumnavigation program completed by Cook, the differences of scale, of means, and even of goals must be acknowledged. The Hudson Bay Company commissioned the Canadian expedition with a mainly economic goal: to prove the existence of copper mines and of a navigable passage for the fur trade in the northwest area of the country.¹⁵

¹³ *Voyage of Governor Phillipp to Botany Bay* (London: n.p., 1789), 293–94; and Bernard Smith, *Imaging the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1992), 107–8.

¹⁴ For further discussion of Indigenous appropriation of European techniques, see Nicolas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 83–124.

¹⁵ See Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (1930; reprint, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999),

The trek that led from the Hudson Bay to Coppermine River on the shores of the Arctic was made on foot with the help of native snowshoes and canoes. Although the expedition reached—on its third attempt—its geographical objective, the explorers failed to find copper or navigable water around Coppermine. Moreover, the expedition had previously experienced two fiascos: Hearne, the young officer nominated by the Hudson's Bay Company for this mission, was abandoned by his native guides in November–December 1769, and the second attempt was undermined by the poor abilities of its guides and had to be interrupted due to the breaking of the Hadley Quadrant by strong winds (February–November 1770). These setbacks remind us of the *sine qua non* condition of all successful expeditions: the capacity to orient oneself accurately and to survive in an unknown and often hostile environment. The third attempt—from December 1770 to June 1772—owed its success to the full collaboration of a Chipewyan chief, Matonabee, who was not only familiar with the terrain but was also known for his diplomatic skills (Hearne, 352, 356). Matonabee led the expedition *de facto*, and the European explorer found himself completely dependent on Matonabee's knowledge as well as on his modes of communication and local survival: the more than 4,000 kilometres from Prince Wales Fort to Coppermine (today Kugluktuk, Coronation Gulf) and back took eighteen months. Hearne was the first European to reach the Arctic Ocean (see Figure 5).

In comparison to the gigantic encyclopaedic enterprises of Cook's accounts, Hearne's later publication in 1795 appears to have quite limited pretensions. True, it offers a first glimpse of the Canadian North, but its maps lack precision, as Hearne had at his disposal for his final expedition only "an old Eltons's Quadrant" (v, 64)—cumbersome and not very dependable. His report of having attained latitudes over 71°N would provoke the scepticism of influential geographer Alexander Dalrymple.¹⁶ Nevertheless, based on Hearne's information, the Admiralty advised Captain Cook to avoid any serious search for a northwest passage from

149–65; Strother Roberts, "The Life and Death of Matonabee: Fur Trade and Leadership among the Chipewyan, 1736–1782," *Manitoba History* 55 (June 2007): 7–17; and Glyn Williams, *Arctic Labyrinth: The Quest for the Northwest Passage* (London: Penguin, 2009), 122–131.

¹⁶ Hearne reports 71°54' north latitude for Coppermine, the correct position being about 68°N.

the Pacific side below 65°N latitude on his third voyage of exploration. The extremely accurate log of the ships taking part in the Cook expedition revealed that he could not navigate beyond 67° north latitude.¹⁷

In contrast to the abundant engravings in Cook's account, Hearne's travelogue remains extremely modest, containing only six maps, two plates with views, and two illustrations depicting native tools drawn by the explorer himself. Hearne's drawings are strikingly plain and devoid of artfulness, bearing all the signs of an amateur draftsman of limited skills. With regard to formal features, Hearne's work can barely measure up to that of Webber, a professionally trained and accomplished artist: the contrast is obvious when comparing *Winter View in the Athapuscow Lake* (Hearne, plate 4) to *View of Snug Corner Cove in Prince William's Sound* (Cook 1784, plate 45). One needs, however, to go beyond these formal and visual disparities. Refusing to engage in comparisons on the grounds of obvious differences in artistic training would not only be unproductive, it would cause us to neglect a number of issues, obscured by traditional categorizations. In the present case, for instance, it is worth focusing on the striking difference in the treatment of the landscape and in the relationship to space as between the discovery by sea, which allows a panoramic perspective (see Figure 6a), and the exploration by foot, which provides a view from below, taken from ground level (see Figure 6b). The peculiarities of the terrain also account for the distinctive registers in which both draftsmen worked: Webber's view of the coast lent itself to the sublime, whereas Hearne's tangible experience of inland travelling resulted in a scene of tranquil, yet anguishing desolation.

If we turn to Hearne's description of the Chipewyan culture, it is possible to grasp just how his own "ethnographic" adaptation to the means of survival and transportation, combined with his confidence in native knowledge, formed the indispensable circumstances of his success. These crucial interactions influence the way in which he presents material objects. Webber also focused in the Northern Pacific on local method of transportation and depicted canoes and sledges.¹⁸ But in contrast with Webber's often decontextualized and somehow aestheticized drawings,

¹⁷ See Cook (1784), plate 53.

¹⁸ See also Quilley, *The Captain's Artist*, 16.

made as if the artist had been taking his cue from a cabinet of curiosities (see Figure 7a), the extremely precise delineation of the canoe, the visualization of its construction and of the portage technique (see Figure 7b) display Hearne's practical and utilitarian interest in the object. Furthermore, while an aesthetic sense almost dominates Webber's compositions (see Figure 8a), a practical sense dominates in the representations by Hearne (see Figure 8b), which remains as sober in style as the instruments themselves. The exactness of the dimensions and of the detail with which the latter draws the "snow shoes"—the use of which he describes in detail in his account—again shows the importance of this instrument of native locomotion as a condition of his achievements (see Figure 9b). In comparison, the sled proposed by Webber (see Figure 9a) is still a beautiful exotic object. This disparity between the images suggests a great difference between the two forms of travel in the scale and nature of their interaction with the human and natural worlds. The point of view of maritime expedition—which masters space through its instruments—and specifically of its artist is a purely visual one, detached vis-à-vis nature and humans. That of the walker Hearne remains within the travelled space. His relationship to nature, to people, and to their objects always depends on a successful appropriation of local knowledge. The kind of ethnographic knowledge produced by Hearne through the mediation of Matonabee comes closer to a "thick description" than that of the Cook expeditions which are essentially oriented by the classifications of natural history. The narrative of the Hudson Bay Company representative is of a practical order; it belongs to an ethnography that is still "savage" and not yet disciplined. However, it implicitly contains a principle of shared anthropology.

Hearne's "deadly" Sketch

This shared anthropology can be illustrated by Hearne's account of a shamanistic cure that he witnessed in November 1771, on his return from Coppermine. His extremely precise and analytical description recalls a later episode in his relations with Matonabee, allowing us to better understand the role played by the techniques of writing and drawing in their friendship. The subsequent incident is inserted by Hearne as an appendix to the account of healing practices of the Chipewyan group who

accompanied him in his expedition by foot; on a winter's day in 1778, nearly a decade after the trek that they had made together to Coppermine, Matonabee, who happened to become one of the great mediators of the fur trade with the Hudson's Bay Company, came back as usual to the Prince of Wales Fort. He had a strange request for the man who had since become the Fort's governor:

[Matonabee] informed me, that a man whom I had never seen but once, had treated him in such manner that he was afraid of his life; in consequence of which he pressed me very much to kill him, though I was then several hundreds of miles distant. On which, to please this great man to whom I owed so much ... I drew a rough sketch of two human figures on a piece of paper, in this attitude of wrestling; in the hand of one of them, I drew a figure of a bayonet pointing to the breast of the other. This is me, said I to Matonabee, pointing to the figure which was holding the bayonet; and the other is your enemy. Opposite to those figures I drew a pine-tree, over which I placed a large human eye, and out of the tree projected a human hand. This paper I gave to Matonabee, with instructions to make it as publicly known as possible. (Hearne, 221n)

This is quite a curious account for a representative of the British Enlightenment such as Hearne of an act that he considers without any other consequence than to appease his native partner by showing this form of mimetic solidarity—"not expecting that any harm could possibly arise from it" (221n). Hearne's behaviour is certainly motivated by the commitment developed towards the man who had been his guide in the Canadian North. It is also probably motivated by the stake embodied by Matonabee as mediator in the fur trade west of Hudson Bay: without his trust, the furs would no longer flow towards the Fort and the Company of which he was a representative.

Hearne was also aware of the custom among the Chipewyan of the North of attributing certain deaths to evil spells uttered by the Cree Indians of the South, by the Inuit, or even by their own people. The previous passage is contained in a footnote as a subtext to the following account: Hearne was present during a long session in which a very ill Indian was cured by one of the Chipewyan "conjurers," which allowed Matonabee's group (and thus the entire expedition) to continue its trek. Being schooled in the observation of "matter of facts," the explorer concludes in his travelogue:

Though the ordinary trick of these conjurers may be easily detected, and justly exploded, being no more than the tricks of common jugglers, yet the apparent good effect of their labours on the sick and diseased is not so easily accounted for. Perhaps the implicit confidence placed in them by the sick may, at times, leave the mind so perfectly at rest, as to cause the disorder to take a favourable turn ... But how this consideration could operate in the case I have just mentioned I am at loss to say; such, however, was the fact, and I leave it to be accounted by others. (220–21)

Although the native shamans or “conjurers” are, when it comes to their methods, merely simple “jugglers” whose tricks Hearne had observed and even drawn (see Figure 10), they nevertheless often healed their sick.

This apparent healing of sick people is an unexplained “fact” that the explorer can, at best, attribute to their particular beliefs. Hearne also remarks that the therapeutic ability of these “sorcerers” can turn into a lethal power against any person designated in a secret act of revenge. His narration of the episode in which he symbolically drew his combat with his host’s enemy is meant to illustrate such a belief, which is assumed to be held even by a chief as prestigious as Matonabbee. But against Hearne’s expectation, the publication of his sketch did have a tangible effect:

Sure enough, the following year ... [Matonabbee] informed me that the man was dead, though at that time it was not less than three hundred miles from Prince Wales’s Fort. He assured me that the man was in perfect health when he heard of my design against him; but almost immediately afterwards became quite gloomy, and refusing all kind of sustenance, in a very few days died. (221n)

Hearne could have used this episode for a section of his description of the Chipewyan Indians or in his portrait of Matonabbee. Instead, he recalls it only in the footnote without insisting on the “killing power” of his own drawing. However, we can ask what might be the reason for the belief, visibly shared by the Chipewyan chief and by his enemy, in Hearne’s strong magical power. It might stem from the specific techniques used by the British officer and with which Matonabbee was virtually unfamiliar: the mastering of writing and drawing. In the warm and highly appreciative portrait he had made of his guide, Hearne described “the natives of those parts being utterly unacquainted with letters, or the use of hieroglyphics” (348).

On the one hand, Matonabee, who had guided Hearne during eighteen continuous months through the North-Canadian tundra, was perfectly aware of the state of dependence in which the stranger found himself vis-à-vis his own group. On the other hand, he witnessed Hearne's recurrent use of the quadrant in order to determine the latitude, his drawing of his map, his writing in his journal, and also his sending letters to the fort. The observations aiming to establish a geographical point with the quadrant, their annotation in Hearne's journal, and their transfer onto drawings gradually composing the map of his itinerary might be the techniques unknown to the natives that became invested by them with a power analogous to that of the local shamans.¹⁹ Matonabee could observe the European's complete trust in the power of his medium of inscription. If Hearne managed to control an unknown space through writing and drawing, why would this technique not affect men in the same way?

Just as with the exchange of portraits between Otoo and Cook during the latter's third voyage, this incident between Hearne and Manontabee shows how the differences in inscription techniques immediately become a question of interpretation, and of an appropriation in terms of knowledge as well as of power. It also documents the ritualistic precautions that often surround images, particularly when they represent humans.²⁰ The technique operating in this episode is a medium of representation: from nature through the cartographic drawing and writing; from man as a picture which, inscribed in a shamanistic context, could become a strong instrument of power.



The contrast between the type of ethnographic and visual knowledge produced in the eighteenth century by scientific

¹⁹ Two Indians, identified by Hearne as Matonabee and Idotliazee, came back from Coppermine in the summer 1767 with a sample of copper ore and a draft map drawn on deerskin. This might indicate attempts at appropriating the drawing technique, see Hearne, 356. For a discussion of this map and its authors, see June Helm, "Matonabee's Map," *Arctic Anthropology* 26, no. 2 (1982): 28–47; and Roberts, 12.

²⁰ See Jack Goody, *Representations and Contradictions: Ambivalence towards Images, Theatre, Fiction, Relics, and Sexuality* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1997).

maritime expedition and by individual (or small team) exploration on land is important to recognize. I have highlighted the decisive role played by the different uses and appropriations of inscription techniques in the relationship established with the natives. With the exchanging of Otoo's and Cook's portraits in Tahiti, Webber's witnessing the scene became an act of mediation and participation. Moreover, the "drawing lesson" given by Matonabee to Hearne precedes by nearly two centuries the famous *leçon d'écriture*, the writing lesson that Claude Lévi-Strauss "took" from the Amazonian Indians.²¹ It does not occur in the context of a purely scientific expedition, nor does it insert itself into an anthropological discipline that was yet to be born. It nonetheless teaches us the difference in the relation of power and knowledge between, on the one hand, what an individual traveller could establish by moving on the same technical level as the natives, integrating himself for a while in their way of life and, on the other hand, the powerful sea expeditions characteristic of the same period. It also teaches us something about our own writing, drawing, and reproduction techniques. The symmetry between the "lethal sketch" made by Hearne and the power of the local sorcerers is highly significant. It may be a paradigm of the impossibility of writing a history of cultural encounters without considering at the same time the interactions provoked by our techniques of representation—namely by the mediation of our own presence.



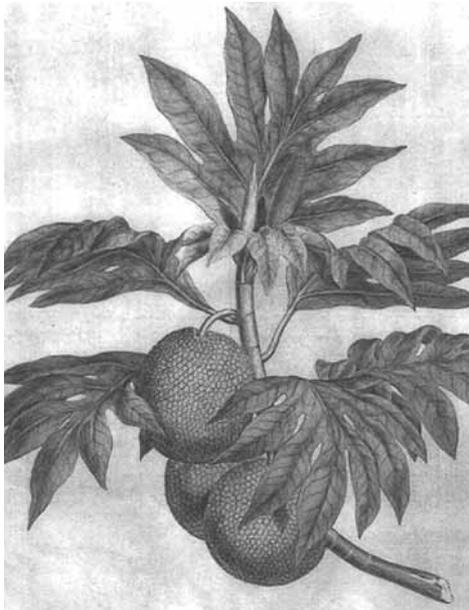
Philippe Despoix is a professor in the Department of Comparative Literature and a member of the Centre Canadien d'études allemandes et européennes at Université de Montréal. His published works include *Le Monde mesuré: Dispositifs de l'exploration à l'âge des Lumières* (2005).

²¹ See Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Leçon d'écriture," *Tristes Tropiques* (Paris: Plon, 1955), 347–60.



Figure 1a (top). *A View of Matavai Bay* (anonymous), Hawkesworth 1773, plate 2. Bibliothèque des Livres rares et collections spéciales, Université de Montréal

Figure 1b (bottom). *A Branch of the Bread-Fruit with the Fruit*, Hawkesworth 1773, plate 11. Bibliothèque des Livres rares et collections spéciales, Université de Montréal



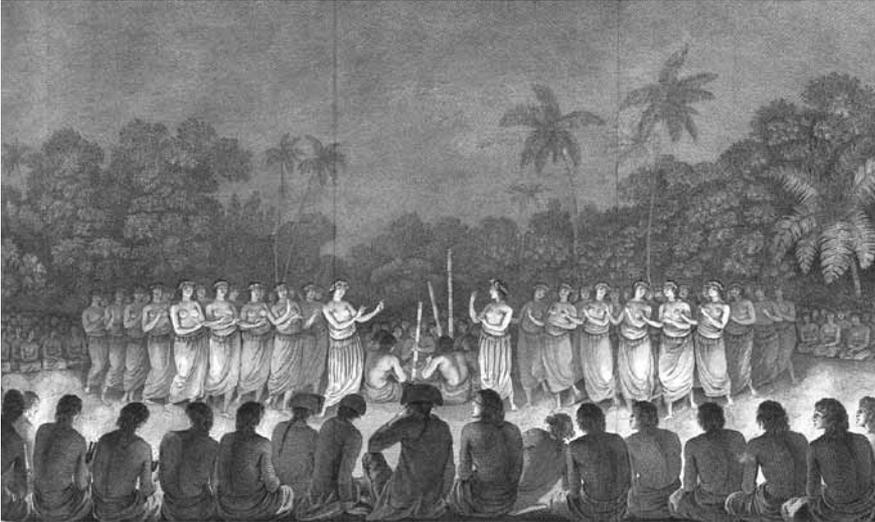
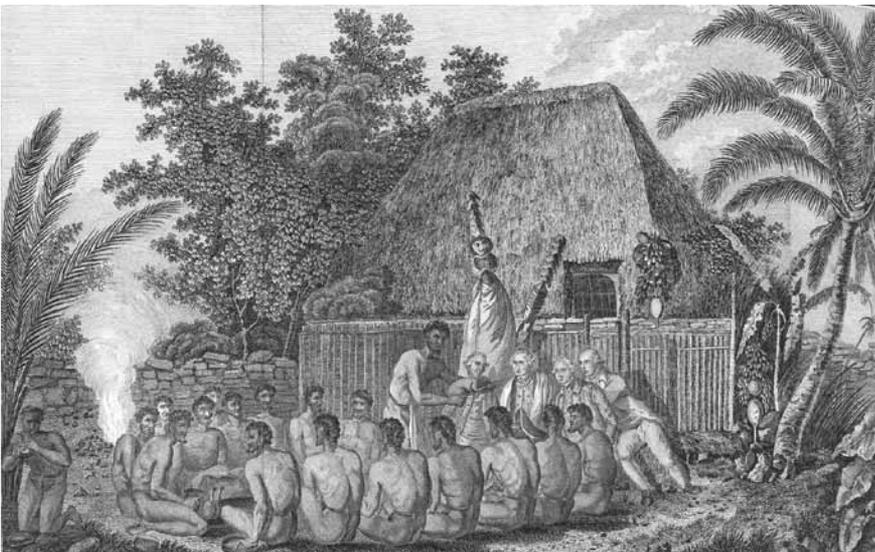


Figure 2 (top). *A Night Dance by Women in Hapai* (after a drawing by Webber, Cook 1785, plate 17) Bibliothèque des Livres rares et collections spéciales, Université de Montréal

Figure 3 (bottom). *An Offering before Capt. Cook in the Sandwich Islands* (after a drawing by Webber, Cook 1785, plate 60) Bibliothèque des Livres rares et collections spéciales, Université de Montréal



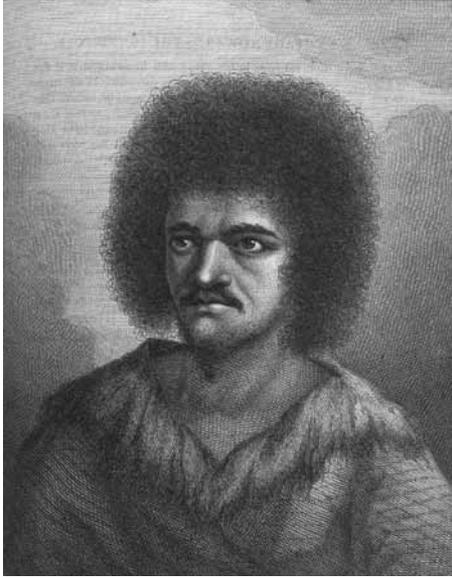


Figure 4a (top). *Otoo King of O-Tabeite* (after a drawing by Hodges, Cook 1777, plate 38) Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

Figure 4b (bottom). *Tu*, oil on canvas (Webber, Smith 1992, 108). Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington



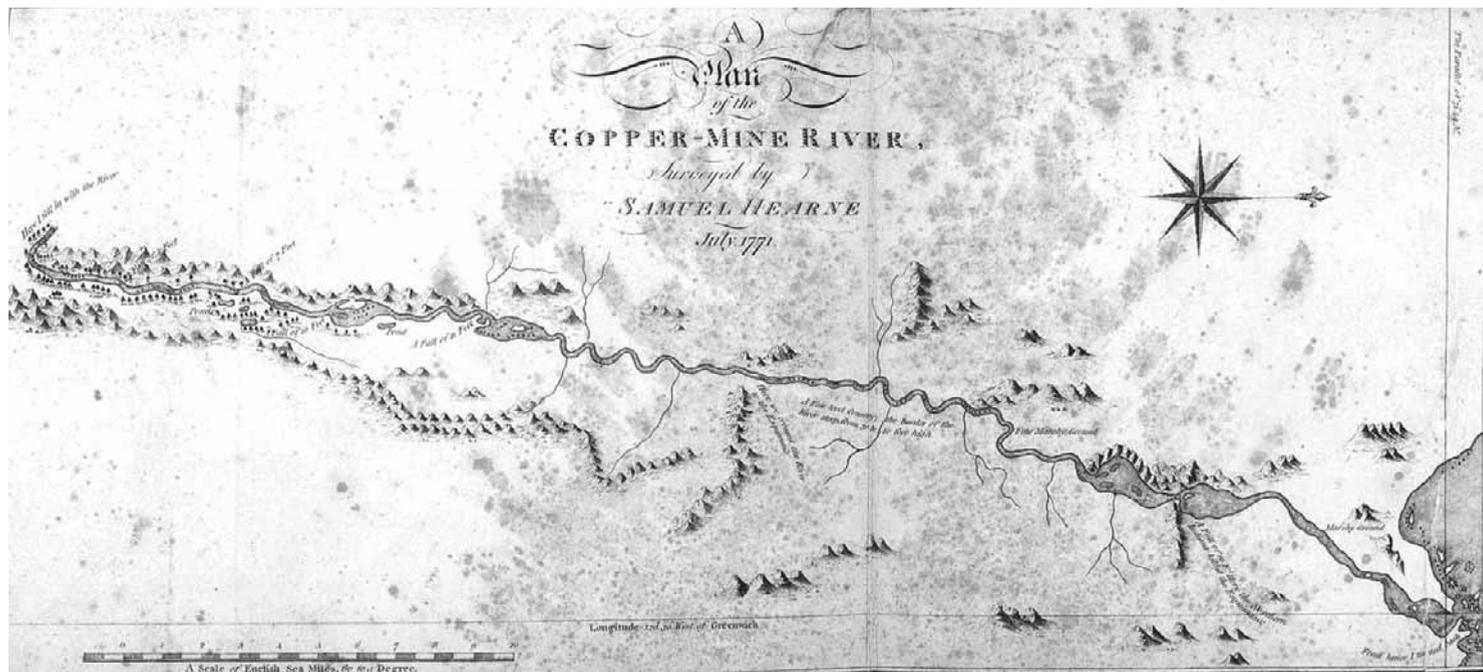


Figure 5. *Chart of the Copper Mine River*, Hearne, plate 3. Bibliothèque des Livres rares et collections spéciales, Université de Montréal

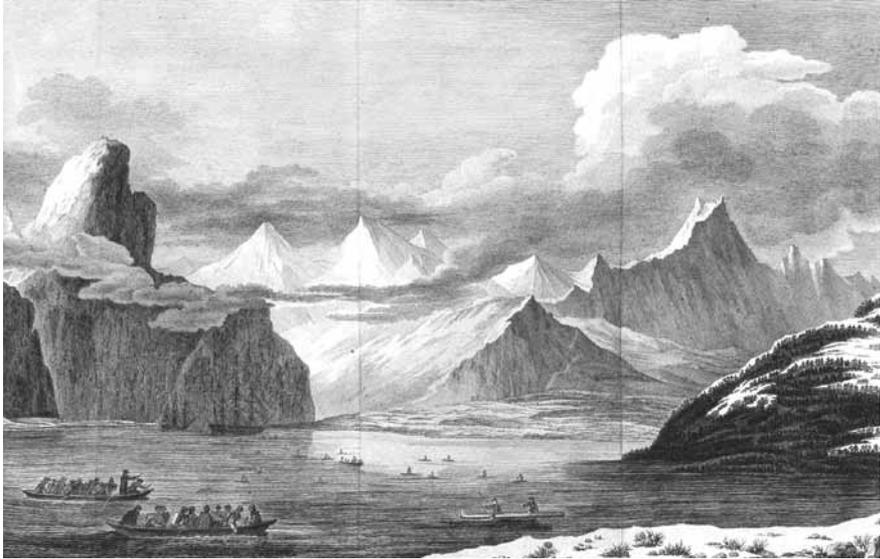
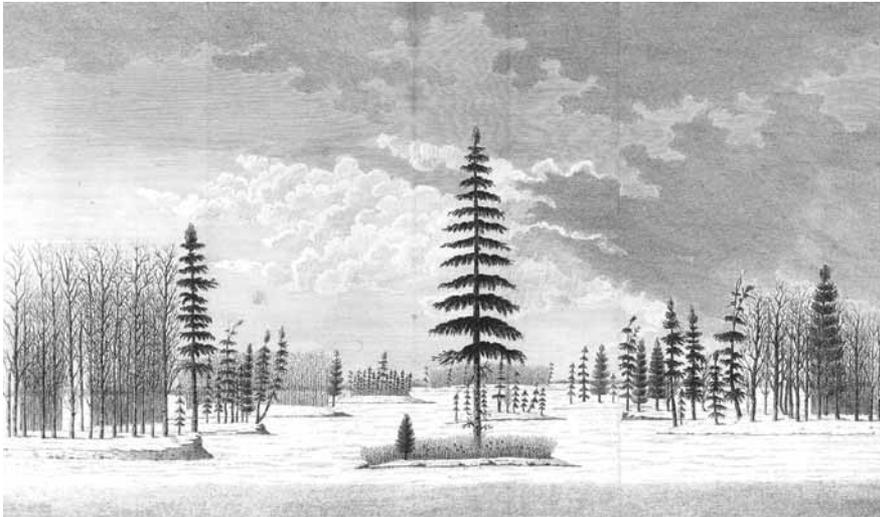


Figure 6a (top). *A View of Snug Corner Cove in Prince William's Sound* (after a drawing by Webber, Cook 1785, plate 45)

Figure 6b (bottom). *A Winter View in the Athapuscow Lake* (after a drawing by Hearne, plate 4)



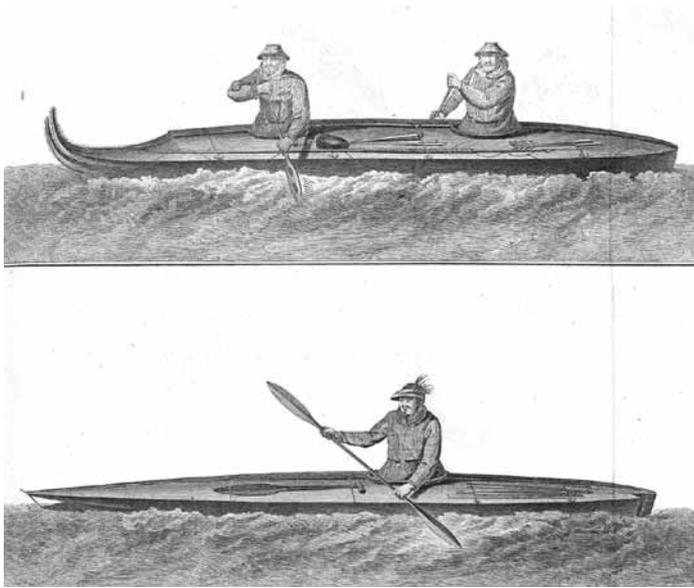
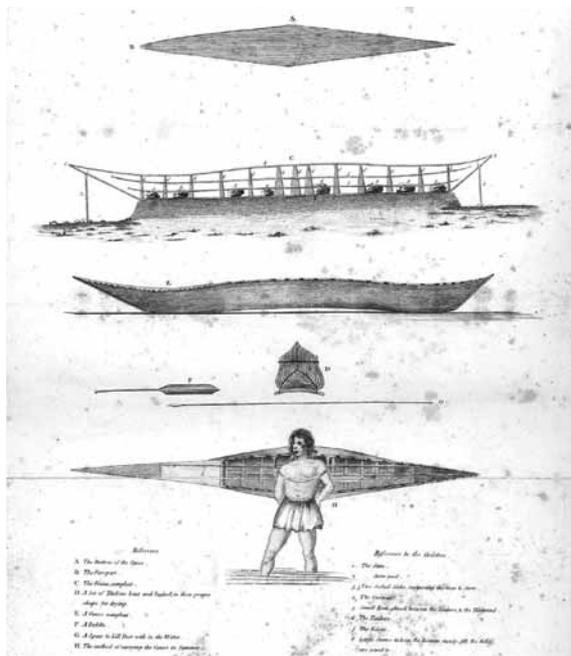


Figure 7a (top). *Canoes of Oonalashka* (after a drawing by Webber, Cook 1785, plate 50). Bibliothèque des Livres rares et collections spéciales, Université de Montréal

Figure 7b (bottom). *Indian Implements* (after a drawing by Hearne, plate 2). Bibliothèque des Livres rares et collections spéciales, Université de Montréal



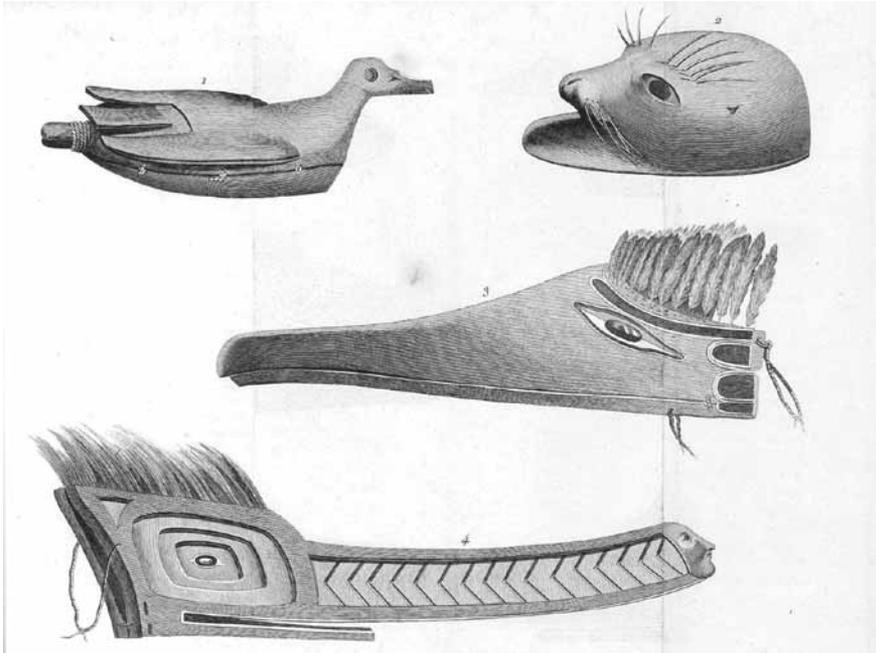
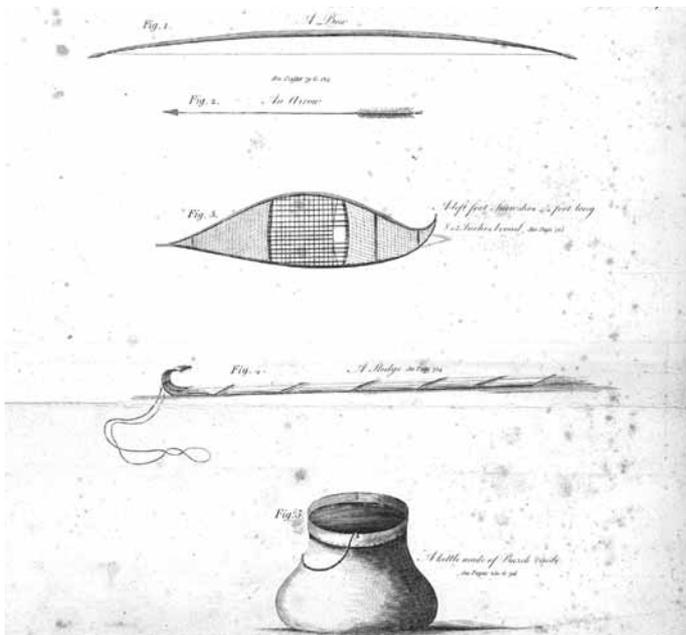


Figure 8a (top). *Various Articles at Nootka Sound* (after a drawing by Webber, Cook 1785, plate 40) Bibliothèque des Livres rares et collections spéciales, Université de Montréal

Figure 8b (bottom). *Indian Implements* (after a drawing by Hearne, plate 5) Bibliothèque des Livres rares et collections spéciales, Université de Montréal



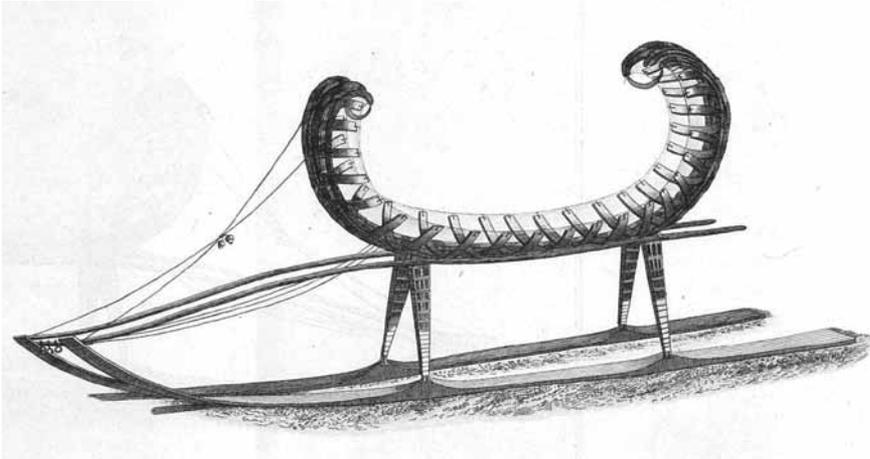
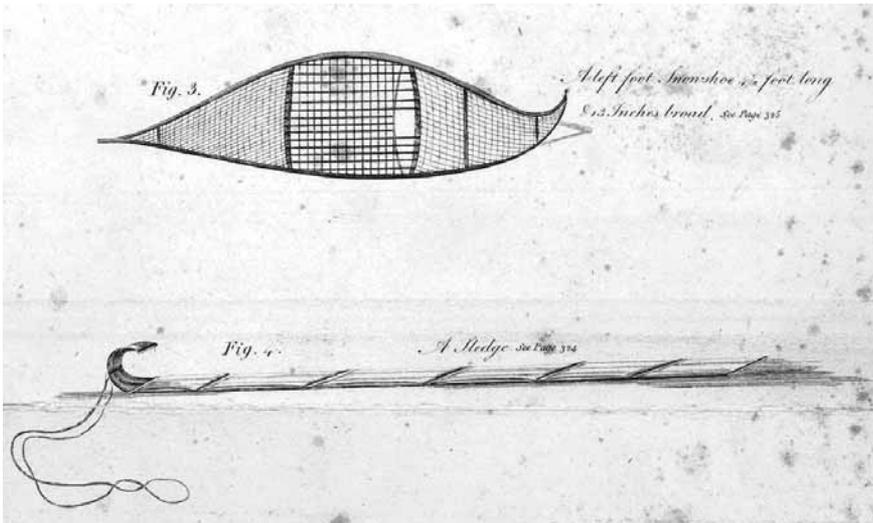


Figure 9a (top). *A Sledge of Kamtschatka* (after a drawing by Webber, Cook 1785, plate 71). Bibliothèque des Livres rares et collections spéciales, Université de Montréal

Figure 9b (bottom). *Indian Implements* (detail, Hearne, plate 5). Bibliothèque des Livres rares et collections spéciales, Université de Montréal



For these reasons it is necessary also to observe, that on the day preceding the performance of this piece of deception, in one of my hunting excursions, I accidentally came across the conjurer as he was sitting under a bush, several miles from the tents, where he was busily employed shaping a piece of wood exactly like that part which stuck out of his mouth after he had pretended to swallow the remainder of the piece. The shape of the piece which I saw him making was this, ; which exactly resembled the forked end of the main piece, the shape of which was this, . So that when his attendants had concealed the main piece, it was easy for him to stick the small point into his mouth, as it was reduced at the small end to a proper size for the purpose.

Figure 10. Detail of Hearne's account, 216. Bibliothèque des Livres rares et collections spéciales, Université de Montréal