He is trapped, turning away, eyes clamped, recalling the grief of gunpowder and the pox, or his men who were eaten in New Zealand by cannibals, whom he forgave, shutting himself from the man lying on the pale green ground, face-up and tied to the pole aligning his corpse for sacrifice.

Captain James Cook has doffed his tricorn. But does not acknowledge the native gesturing him to the service and the forty-nine skulls on the back platform that the man will join. Smoke dances up like a materializing ghost beside four squatted singers and a drummer.

Tahiti. Tuesday, 2 September 1777.