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A Voyage Around the World in His Majesty's Frigate Pandora

This facsimile reproduces the 1793 edition of the journal George Hamilton, Pandora's surgeon, kept during a voyage to the South Pacific in 1790-1791 to capture Bounty's mutineers. The original is now an extremely rare and valuable work that has never been reproduced in facsimile until this, the fourth volume in the Australian Maritime series. For anyone seriously interested in Pacific voyages of exploration, this is a welcome arrival and makes one late-eighteenth-century account more widely available than in the past.

Peter Gesner, curator of maritime archaeology at the Queensland Museum and director of the archaeological excavations of the Pandora wreck site, introduces Hamilton's journal with a twenty-four-page essay that provides a useful short history of the voyage of Pandora and a brief biography of the surgeon. Not unreasonably, the second half of the essay focuses on what Hamilton's text can tell us about the archaeological assemblage being excavated from the wreck site. It is disappointing that Gesner's essay includes only five illustrations, two of which relate to William Bligh and Bounty, and omits much of the available illustrative material directly related to Pandora, including that held by the Australian National Maritime Museum.

Hamilton's original publication was relatively short, containing only five chapters and a total of 165 pages. His account opens by suggesting that the British government's principal purpose for the voyage was "to bring punishment to the mutineers of His Majesty's late ship Bounty". Hamilton then devotes just twenty-four pages to what he saw as the "preliminaries" leading up to Pandora's arrival at Tahiti. The social (and sexual) interactions between the crew and the peoples of the South Pacific occupy most of the next eighty pages or so. Hamilton's comments suggest virtually everyone on board Pandora from the lowest seamen to the officers engaged in sexual encounters with the local women and girls, and Hamilton clearly was no exception.

He next briefly describes the loss, at the northern end of the Great Barrier Reef, of Pandora, thirty-five crew, and four prisoners. After the wreck, 102 crew set sail in a convoy of four small boats to make the 1,100-mile voyage through the Endeavour Straits and the Arafura Sea to Coupang in Dutch Timor. The overcrowded boats, limited food, a water supply of just two small wine glasses per person per day, and the blazing tropical sun made this sixteen day voyage a truly remarkable feat.

It is unfortunate that the mutiny aboard Bounty—through the huge literature it has generated, not forgetting four Hollywood movies about the subject—has largely overwhelmed and obscured the importance of Pandora's voyage and loss. Certainly, Hamilton rarely mentions Bounty or even Pandora's ostensible task - the search for the mutineers. Instead, he chooses to concentrate on subjects of far more interest to the late-eighteenth-century reading public: descriptions of exotic places, strange wild-life, and, particularly, "other" peoples and cultures.

Hamilton's journal is fascinating reading, which brings into sharp focus the world view, and resulting behaviour, of late-eighteenth-century Englishmen when faced with the realities and temptations of the South Pacific. Hamilton himself comes across as an

individual with strong opinions who was very much a man of his times in terms of his attitudes to virtually everyone who was not white, male, and English speaking. This beautifully crafted and hand-bound limited edition is clearly a collector's item that, despite its high cost, can only increase in value over time.