

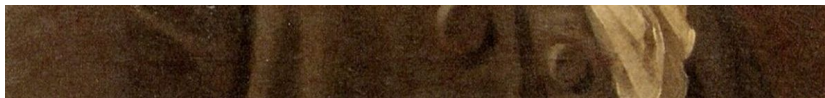
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The Traveller by Andrea Wulf: George Forster's quest for common humanity

At age 17, Forster was invited by the British admiralty to accompany Captain James Cook on his second expedition





George Forster

Richard Horan

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The Traveller: The Revolutionary Life of George Forster and his Search for Humanity

Author: Andrea Wulf	ISBN-13:	978-0241711217
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Before there was Darwin, Thoreau or Margaret Mead there was George Forster, traveller, writer, translator, naturalist, revolutionary, humanist.

At age 17, Forster, along with his temperamental father, was invited by the British admiralty to accompany Captain James Cook on his second expedition to observe and collect scientific information during the voyage.

Unlike the learned people around him, Forster saw the world and its people

differently: “Some 250 years ago, George Forster began his search for our common humanity, urging that we – as a species – share the right to equality and freedom”, writes author Andrea Wulf of her latest subject.

Wulf, who has an affinity for German notables of the Enlightenment (The Invention of Nature; Magnificent Rebels), delivers an awe-inspiring biography of one of the lesser-known but highly impactful figures of the late 18th century.

Forster came of age during the Enlightenment, “a time when philosophers, scientists and writers believed that reason illuminated the path towards human progress”. And there was no one more passionate about science than Forster's fractious, egotistical father Reinhold, whom few liked, and none could employ for long.

As Wulf explains: “Reinhold's volatility and quarrelsome personality affected his son. Observing how his father

fought, shouted and fell out with friends and strangers alike, George learned to be happy by making others happy.”

During his three years at sea, George endured extreme challenges, as the HMS Resolution, in search of Antarctica, sailed around the globe, making numerous stops among the Pacific islands, and more than once daring into the iceberg-infested waters below the Antarctic Circle. It was these maritime adventures, particularly among the Pacific island cultures, that led him to his singular understanding of the world that, “the pursuit of happiness alone was not enough: the real guide to how we should live is human dignity”.

All of these exotic places and encounters and philosophical discourses are masterfully recounted by Wulf, who weaves Forster's original journals together with her own graceful prose. Also included in the volume are more over 100 colour plates and black-and-white drawings of the exotic

landscapes, animals and people; some drawn by Forster and William Hodges, the artist employed on the HMS Resolution.

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