Toby Musgrave, The Multifarious Mr Banks: From Botany Bay to Kew, the Natural Historian Who Shaped the World

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The publication of Toby Musgrave's biography, *The Multifarious Mr Banks*, marks the two-hundredth anniversary of British naturalist Joseph Banks's death. Although Banks has been the subject of numerous biographies, Musgrave approaches Banks from a relatively fresh point of view in this accessible, highly readable biography.

The two best-known biographies of Banks are Patrick O'Brian's *Joseph Banks: A Life* (1987) and Harold B. Carter's *Sir Joseph Banks (1743–1820)* (1988). O'Brian was a writer of historical novels – including books such as *Master and Commander* (1969) from the Aubrey–Maturin series – and an amateur naturalist and historian. Carter was an Australian veterinary scientist who carried out research on merino wool before turning to the history of science.

Both books were written in the late 1980s, and although they are by no means outdated, Musgrave's new biography benefits from incorporating some of the insights provided by more recent scholarly work on Banks and the long eighteenth century. Musgrave also provides a different perspective on Banks, approaching his subject as a historian trained in horticulture and garden history, and this passion shines through especially clearly in the sections on the botanical research that Banks carried out on the *Endeavour* voyage and his contribution to the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew.

Banks's voyage on the HMS *Endeavour* was only the beginning of his career, yet, as Musgrave shows, he already excelled in two specific areas: plant collecting and shaping institutional priorities. The *Endeavour* voyage was an early joint effort with the Royal Navy, combining colonial and scientific ambitions, and this model – involving sending a team of naturalists to collect specimens and make observations – was copied by later voyages of discovery. Banks was not only an organizer, however, as he also clearly relished exploring new environments and hunting for specimens himself.

Banks was instrumental in establishing the Royal botanical collection at Kew through a wide network of fellow botanists and through specially commissioned specimen collectors who were sent as far afield as southern Africa, India, North America, China and Australia. Musgrave points out that the influence of plant hunters, from Banks's time and later, can still be seen today in the selection of ornamental plants available to buy at European garden centres.

True to the popular-history remit of a biography clearly aimed at a wide audience, Musgrave devotes almost one-third of the book to the voyage on the HMS *Endeavour* that made Banks's name. After the account of this expedition, Musgrave innovatively eschews a strictly chronological account, making it much easier to draw connections between the various different scientific, institutional and social activities in which Banks was involved throughout the later part of his life.

Musgrave uses this approach fruitfully, showing that Banks was a pivotal figure in both the growth of science in Britain and its increasingly important role in Britain's imperial

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ambitions. Although these themes have been discussed at length in the scholarly literature – most notably by John Gascoigne in *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment: Useful Knowledge and Polite Culture* (1994) and *Science in the Service of Empire: Joseph Banks, the British State and the Uses of Science in the Age of Revolution* (1998) – Musgrave brings this view of Banks's legacy to the lay reader, showing how Banks's extensive institutional work at the Royal Society, and involvement in the founding of the Ordnance Survey and the Royal Institution of Great Britain, as well as participation in many other clubs, associations and societies, put Banks at the centre of British scientific and intellectual life at the end of the eighteenth century.

Although a minor quibble, it could be argued that Musgrave missed an opportunity to give greater depth to Banks's scientific, institutional and social identities by more clearly linking them to the dissensions based on religious, political and intellectual orientation that animated the Royal Society in the early 1780s.

The book explicitly positions Banks as 'a pivotal figure in the development and expansion of British domestic and imperial ambitions' (xvi), with particular attention paid to the way in which Banks combined scientific and colonial activities during his voyages of discovery, and the effort he made later in his career to promote the interests of empire in his institutional roles. This can be seen, for example, in Banks's attempt to provide useful trees and plants, and eventually merino sheep, to establish a self-supporting penal colony in Botany Bay in Australia, or his famous project for importing cheap breadfruit plants from the Pacific Islands to slave plantations in the West Indies.

By emphasizing these issues and contextualizing them with an honest account of Banks's character, Musgrave's biography will hopefully contribute to discussion about Banks's role in colonialism and slavery, and the way in which his legacy is celebrated in 2021 and beyond.

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C. Bruce Tarter, The American Lab: An Insider's History of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018. Pp. 453. ISBN 978-1-4214-2531-3. $79.95 (hardback).

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Established in 1952, the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) is a US federal research organization sponsored by the US Department of Energy and administered as a government-owned, contractor-operated facility. It was assigned national laboratory status in 1979. In writing this history, the author aims to capture LLNL's contribution to 'the astonishing evolution of the scientific–military landscape' (p. vii) during the second half of the twentieth century, stemming from its primary focus during the Cold War on developing nuclear weapons systems. He also sets out to present the laboratory's adjustment to the end of Cold War hostilities by becoming a world leader in fields such as supercomputing, laser science and the stewardship of stockpiled nuclear weapons.