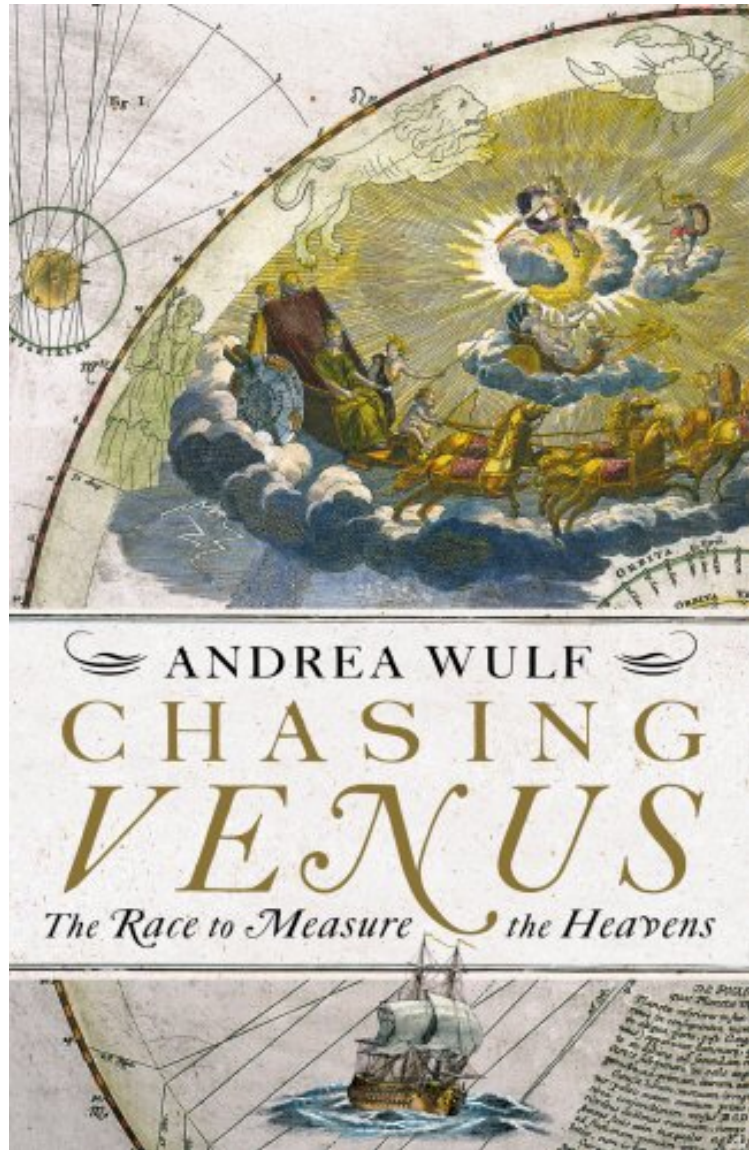


Chasing Venus: The Race to Measure the Heavens

Andrea Wulf

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Andrea Wulf : Chasing Venus: The Race to Measure the Heavens before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Chasing Venus: The Race to Measure the Heavens:

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Brief Narrative By H. Potter Prospective buyers should know how slight this book is. The hardcover edition is 336 pages, but in the Kindle edition, about half of it is notes. Most of the text is narrative of the principal astronomical expeditions of 1761 and 1769, concentrating on the difficulty of traveling by ship, carriage, and sledge. The math and science involved are almost totally absent. Nor is there much discussion of

the instruments and techniques used by the observers. You could get more science from the Wikipedia article about the transit of Venus and related articles about the astronomers and their instruments. So, although the book is well written, I can't really recommend it. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Inaccurate and non-compelling. By Aanel Victorial I got bored with this and stopped reading. I found Mark Anderson's *The Day the World Discovered the Sun: An Extraordinary Story of Scientific Adventure and the Race to Track the Transit of Venus* much more compelling and much more accurate. Anderson is an astrophysicist and a born storyteller. Wulf is definitely not the former and I'm not sure she's the latter either. I'm saddened by the inaccuracies and glaring omissions, especially when I note that Wulf's latest book (as of this review), about Humboldt, just won the Royal Society science award. The poor quality and inaccuracy of this Venus book makes me worry about the accuracy and quality of the Humboldt book. It's one thing to be a celebrated author; it's another to trade on that celebrity to have one's books -- accurate or not -- become bestsellers and award-winners. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting Stuff. More About the Process Than the Actual Science, Which is Nice. By E. King With the excitement of the solar eclipse and the transit of Venus which happened earlier in 2012, I wanted to read about what it was like before light, and telephones and cameras to rally scientists around the world for a once in a lifetime event. Captain Cook ventured to the South Seas in support of this event. It's an interesting read without getting bogged down in the science of the event. More about how do you cope with wars and weather and building telescopes and sailing (no planes!) for months to some remote island and hoping that the sky is clear enough to capture the event. Really pretty amazing stuff.

On a summer's day in June 1761, astronomers all over the world cast their eyes to the sky to witness a rare astronomical event: the transit of Venus across the face of the sun. It was one of the most important collaborations of scientific history, as by racing to different points around the world and comparing results, these men hoped to unlock the key to one of the most pressing questions of the Enlightenment: the distance between the earth and the sun, which would allow them to calculate the dimensions of our solar system. For the first time, scientists from across the globe came together - despite politics, wars, trade disputes, terrible weather and bitter rivalry - to measure the universe. Transits of Venus come in pairs, eight years apart - the next one will be June 2012, and won't occur again until December 2117. We will therefore be the last people for more than a century to see a phenomenon that inspired scientists from all over the world to work together for the first time in the history of mankind. A thrilling adventure story, an inspiring tale of Enlightenment science, and a hugely informative slice of intellectual history with Britain at its centre, "Chasing Venus" is going to be this decade's Longitude.

"Andrea Wulf's story of the chase is an enthralling, nail-biting thriller and will undoubtedly prove one of the non-fiction books of the year. Even if you fail to see the Transit, don't miss this wonderful book," -- John Harding Daily Mail "A fine example of scientific storytelling about astronomers of the Enlightenment observing the transit of Venus. Publishers got hot for science writing when Longitude by Dava Sobel took off unexpectedly as a long-term bestseller...Andrea Wulf's story of how astronomers of the Enlightenment hoped to measure the distance from the Earth to the Sun by observing the transit of Venus internationally on June 6, 1761, and again on June 3, 1769, is another fine example of such scientific storytelling...From the original inspiration of Edmund Halley that led to the active co-operation of Captain Cook, Benjamin Franklin and even Catherine the Great, the enterprise is narrated with elegant expertise." -- Iain Finlayson The Times "Historian Andrea Wulf's Chasing Venus is beautifully paced, alternating between expeditions, with lush descriptions of the often arduous journeys involved." Nature "Chasing Venus: The Race to Measure the Heavens takes us first to the year 1761 and the phenomena that is a transit of Venus. It charts the story of a truly international effort; to not only observe the transit of 6 June 1761 and indeed its partner of 3 June 1769, but to present the real quest that was to finally determine the distance between the Earth and the Sun. The author weaves parallel stories involving the French and British expeditions, but makes sure that other delegations from Sweden, Germany, Italy and Russia are given a fair airing. Through this platform we meet the real characters. As political leaders try to prevent bloodshed on battlefields and carnage in capitals, the global scientific community, more appropriately philosophers and astronomers, contemplate their task in the dawn of enlightenment... [an] outstanding book! It's the book of the year so far - do not miss it!" Astronomy Now "[a] truly excellent book...Andrea Wulf tell[s] the rip-roaring tales of numerous expeditions that set off around the globe to observe the Venusian transit of 1761...[She] communicate[s] the verve and energy - not to mention the perilous nature - of the expeditions." -- Marcus Chown New Scientist About the Author Andrea Wulf was born in India and moved to Germany as a child. She trained as a design historian at the Royal College of Art and is the author of *The Brother Gardeners* (longlisted for the Samuel Johnson Prize 2008 and winner of the American Horticultural Society 2010 Book Award), *The Founding Gardeners* and the co-author (with Emma Gieben-Gamal) of *This Other Eden: Seven Great Gardens and 300 Years of English History*. She has written for *The New York Times*, *the Guardian*, *the Wall Street Journal*, *the Los Angeles Times* and many others. She lives in London.