Exchanging, Protecting, Collecting, Signifying: Clothes, Person, and Civilization in George Forster's *Voyage Round the World* (1777)*

Gabriele Jancke

> "In the evening, we returned on board; but as the surf ran considerably higher than at our landing, we were obliged to strip in order to wade to our boats, which our best swimmers had loaded with water-casks, and such refreshments as could be purchased on shore".[1]

With this rather ascetic non-description of his own person and clothes George Forster (1754–1794)[2], the 18th-century naturalist, ethnographer, writer, and translator, gives the kind of self-presentation that is highly characteristic of his travelogue. He simultaneously introduces his readers to a central topic of this famous Enlightenment text and to his own person though only indirectly in the "we" of his peer group. These are the officers and naturalists who had gone on shore to visit one of the Cape Verde Islands from their ship, the "Resolution", captained by James Cook on his second journey to the South Seas (1772–1775). Their clothes are not mentioned. The men stripped and must have carried their clothes high above their heads, obviously in order to save their fine attire from being spoiled by salt water. As Forster's long travelogue unravels, it becomes obvious that public nudity for these men of the European elite must have been disconcerting, and it would have potentially divested them of their social status. Very early on, the topic of attire thus is connected with a discourse on nakedness and social status.

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* Many thanks are due to those who discussed various aspects of this essay and gave their comments: First, to the participants of the workshop in Istanbul in 2009. Then, to readers of a first draft – Andreas Bähr, Sophie Häusner, Sebastian Kühn, Martin Leutzsch, Nina Mönich, Christine Vogel – more suggestions, in fact, than I was able to make use of in this version. Last not least, to the editors of this volume, Claudia Ulbrich and Richard Wittmann. My thanks also to Linda Schilcher who corrected and improved my English, to Julia Holzmann who found some typos, and to Nina Mönich and Sophie Häusner who did the editorial work.

1 George Forster, *A Voyage Round the World*, ed. Nicholas Thomas and Oliver Berghof, assisted by Jennifer Newell, 2 vols. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 1:36. In the German version made by George Forster together with his father Johann Reinhold and his friend Rudolf Erich Raspe, the word "naked" (*nackend*) is added, Georg Forster, "*Reise um die Welt"*, in: *Georg Forsters Werke. Sämtliche Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe, Reise um die* Welt, ed. Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften, bearbeitet von Gerhard Steiner, vol. 2 and 3 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1965/66).

2 Ludwig Uhlig, *Georg Forster. Lebensabenteuer eines gelehrten Weltbürgers (1754–1794)*, with 16 illustrations (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783956507052-45, am 08.07.2024, 21:07:25
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In contrast to the many detailed descriptions and discussions given of the attire on the bodies of other peoples encountered during this voyage, George Forster does not make more than a few remarks in passing about the European travellers' attire. He reports even less about the elite men on board, the captains, officers, and scholars, than he does about the sailors. There is a deafening silence in the text in this respect, foremost regarding his own clothes, which is especially striking once one approaches Forster's travelogue as a self-narrative. From the scraps of information scattered through the whole text, we can at least gather that even in the South Seas with its very warm climate the "gentlemen" on board went on-shore for their excursions fully dressed, complete with coats and neckwear.[3] There is a well-known portrait of the Forsters (father and son) painted by John Francis Rigaud in 1780, several years after their return, depicting the naturalists doing fieldwork in New Zealand. Even though this is certainly a reconstruction post-factum for the benefit of a cultivated European audience by an artist who was not on the voyage, it very likely reveals a good deal about their actual travelling attire.[4]

1. George Forster's Travelogue and Early Modern Self-Narratives

As Felix Platter's (1536–1614) journals and other contemporary texts show, attire was a central issue in early modern self-narratives from the 16th century on. Especially male authors devoted considerable and careful attention to clothing when writing about themselves. They might add drawings of their own, as Hieronymus Köler (1507-1573) did, or they might even be prepared to invest money, employing an artist who was to make woodcuts or miniature paintings, as did Sigmund von Herberstein (1486-1566) as well as Matthäus Schwarz (1497–1574) and his son Veit Konrad Schwarz (1541–1587/88). These men desired to visualize what they had to say by embellishing, emphasising or clarifying their written self–presentations. Attire was so important that it could even be chosen as the one and only subject of autobiographical self-presentation, as with Matthäus Schwarz and after him his son Veit Konrad Schwarz. Their costumed autobiographies were costly, consisting of coloured miniatures showing a wide range of their attire during various kinds of social encounters in the course of their entire lives. Each picture was accompanied

3 Forster, *Voyage*, 1:208, 413 (coat); 1:412 (cravat).

4 George Bertschinger, *The Portraits of John Reinhold Forster and George Forster. A Catalog Tracing the Origin of Each Portrait*. Improved website edition of the desktop publication of 1995 (Los Gatos 2004, http://www.rainstone.com/Portraits-Forster.2.htm#tish/ [accessed Dec 29, 2014]). Bertschinger's catalogue demonstrates that Rigaud's double portrait took some elements from an earlier Wedgwood medal, showing only Johann Reinhold Forster, and that the background elements are from New Zealand, not Tahiti, which is the usual ascription. Following Rigaud's oil painting, there were several drawings and engravings, e.g. the copper engraving by Daniel Beyel from 1799.

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by a few words of explanation. As both father and son were high-ranking employees in the Fugger firm of Augsburg during the 16th century, belonging also to the Augsburg patriciate, they were well aware of the fact that clothes were material objects with personal and social consequences.[5]

The 18th-century George Forster would definitely have shared this view. He himself liked to dress carefully. It was said that both he and his father dressed in an aristocratic (and accordingly expensive) way.[6] In his widely-read travelogue, he also had much to say about the clothes of European people encountered on the voyage and especially about European peoples' social practices and deep-seated ideas in general that were connected with attire. At the same time, he gave so much attention to other peoples' clothes, with descriptions of almost photographic precision, that attire turns out to be one of the most prominent topics of his narrative. Then why did he shape his self-description in this travelogue without ever mentioning explicitly his own clothes? Which use did he make of attire as a topic of autobiographical travel writing? How did he organize this topic into the narrative form of an autobiographical travelogue, at the same time shaping it as part of a discourse on culture and civilization? How did he connect person with place? What exactly was the message he wished to convey when writing about clothes?

The South Pacific was Forster's primary focus. He and many of his contemporaries envisioned the region, and especially Tahiti and the Society Islands, as a place of undisturbed felicity, almost like paradise, and especially a sexual paradise (at least from a male perspective). This view was to be shared by many others, including European painters, most prominently Paul Gauguin. Emerging during the European Enlightenment, it was fuelled by colonial expeditions of discovery in the 1760s and 1770s like those of Louis Antoine de Bougainville

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5 Felix Platter, *Tagebuch (Lebensbeschreibung) 1536–1567*, ed. Valentin Lötscher, Basler Chroniken 10 (Basel; Stuttgart: Schwabe, 1976); Hieronymus Köler in Hannah S. M. Amburger, "Die Familiengeschichte der Koeler. Ein Beitrag zur Autobiographie des 16. Jahrhunderts," *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg* 30 (1931): 153–288, text 205–272; Sigmund von Herberstein, *Sigmund Freyherr zu(e) Herberstain / Neyperg / vnd Guetenhag / Obrister Erb-Camrer / vnd Obrister Truchsa(e)ß inn Ca(e)rndten / Denen Gegenwu(e)rtigen vnd Nachkommenden Freyherrn zu(o) Herberstain. Seines Thuens / Diensten / vnd Raysens / mit trewer vermanung / Sich zu(o) Tugenden vnnd guetem wesen zeschicken* (Wien: Michael Zimmermann, 1561); Matthäus Schwarz in August Fink [ed.], *Die Schwarzschen Trachtenbücher* (Berlin: Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft, 1963), 95–179; Veit Konrad Schwarz in ibid., 181–259; for further information on these persons and their texts see Gabriele Jancke, *Selbstzeugnisse im deutschsprachigen Raum. Autobiographien, Tagebücher und andere autobiographische Schriften, 1400–1620. Eine Quellenkunde*, unter Mitarbeit von Marc Jarzebowski, Klaus Krönert, and Yvonne Aßmann, http://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/jancke-quellenkunde/ (accessed Dec 29, 2014), entries on Felix Platter, Hieronymus Köler, Sigmund von Herberstein, Matthäus Schwarz, Veit Konrad Schwarz; on Matthäus Schwarz cf. Valentin Groebner, "Die Kleider des Körpers des Kaufmanns. Zum 'Trachtenbuch' eines Augsburger Bürgers im 16. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 25 (1998): 323–358.

6 Uhlig, *Georg Forster*, 38; Michael E. Hoare, *The Tactless Philosopher: Johann Reinhold Forster (1729–1798)* (Melbourne: The Hawthorn Press, 1976), 158, 172, 267.

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and James Cook, and at the same time by an optimistic, scholarly enterprise discovering nature's wealth and variety.[7] Human beings outside the "Old World" were among those "varieties" to be described and assigned a place by categorization. The standard for this enterprise was set by the "Old World" with their "ancient cultures". How exactly the "Old World" came into play in Forster's travelogue is another of the questions raised in this essay.

Forster thus concerned himself with areas that had as yet not much connection to the Old World, where he himself felt to belong. Acting as a scholar and scholarly author, he undertook to weave the topic of dress and clothes as highly material and social objects into a large spatial matrix that included more and more areas of the world – a world that was experienced by Europeans as "new" and as one to be discovered, to be described in its material and measurable aspects, to be compared with the "old" world with which they felt to be acquainted already, to be used for collecting objects and knowledge as well as for finding markets and founding colonies and empires, and to be included by scholars into the ongoing debates on the standards of culture, civilization, and history.[8] Against this background, George Forster's fascinating text of mixed elements certainly was a highly specialized type of self-narratives. For this kind of text, travel provided the narrative tool to connect person, societies, and spatial organization in a complex way.

The following essay is concerned with Forster's travelogue. It does not attempt to establish "facts" about attire in the social and material cultures under study, trying to look through the text at clothes as material objects and at the actual practices of various peoples with dress and clothes. These facts are part of a rich field of research in its own right, as well as the many drawings and pictures that were made during and after 18th-century voyages to the Pacific Ocean by various artists. In fact, none of those pictures was part of Forster's printed book. For this kind of material and social reconstruction, all types of sources are needed as well

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7 Out of the vast literature s. Klaus H. Börner, *Auf der Suche nach dem irdischen Paradies. Zur Ikonographie der geographischen Utopie* (Frankfurt am Main: Wörner, 1984); David W. Forbes, *Encounters with Paradise: Views of Hawaii and Its People, 1778–1941* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1992); Harry Liebersohn, *The Travelers' World: Europe to the Pacific* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2006); David P. Miller and Peter Hanns Reill (eds.), *Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany, and Representations of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Anne Salmond, *Aphrodite's Island: The European Discovery of Tahiti* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2009); Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific, 1768–1850: A Study in the History of Arts and Ideas* (London; Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1960); idem, *Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1992); Lee Wallace, *Sexual Encounters: Pacific Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2003); Larry Wolff and Marco Cipolloni (eds.), *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007).

8 Thomas Nutz, *"Varietäten des Menschengeschlechts". Die Wissenschaften vom Menschen in der Zeit der Aufklärung* (Cologne; Weimar; Vienna: Böhlau, 2009); Liebersohn, *The Travelers' World*; Wolff/Cipolloni (eds.), *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment*.

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as expertise in these highly specialized fields, whereas one single self-narrative would not be sufficient for leading to clear results.

This essay focuses on George Forster's book *Voyage Round the World* as an object of study in itself, reversing the perspective to consider what attire might actually have meant to George Forster and his 18th-century peers and audiences. In order to do this, it is necessary to examine the role of speaking and writing about clothes. At issue are the social, cultural, and epistemological concepts of the 18th century when dealing with the topic of clothing. Hence, this essay considers the theoretical foundations that are relevant for studying self-narratives, travelogues, and other narrative writings as historical sources. In particular, I am trying to draw attention to a special aspect of writing about dress and clothes: namely, that of theories of culture and civilization that are not only behind the descriptions but are also made explicit, in this case, from the very beginning. In consequence, this essay deals primarily with some European notions and discourses about clothes, which are seen in context of the dress practices and concepts of 18th-century South Sea peoples.

2. The Voyage Round the World – *a Piece of Naturalist Writing*

Forster's travelogue was published in English as *Voyage Round the World* in London in 1777. Shortly afterwards a German translation was published in 1778 with the title *Reise um die Welt*. The translation was made by Forster himself, together with his father Johann Reinhold Forster and his friend Rudolf Erich Raspe.[9]

But first, some background information on George Forster, his life and travels. Forster was born in 1754 in a village near Danzig in the eastern part of what was then called Prussia. His father Johann Reinhold Forster (1729–1798) was a pastor and naturalist, or, as it was called in the 18th century, a scholar of natural history. Johann Reinhold Forster began to take his eldest son, George, on trips when the boy was only ten years old, first to Russia, and a year later to England, where George helped his father as a teacher and translator. In 1772, when George was not yet twenty, both joined Captain James Cook (1728–1779) for his second circumnavigation of the globe, which concentrated on the South Seas and from which they returned in 1775. James Cook had orders to establish the location of the large southern continent, which was still assumed to exist, and to improve the nautical charts of these areas. The two Forsters were the ship's naturalists. Their assignment was to look for new and rare plants and animals, to make drawings and descriptions, and to bring home as many specimens as possible. So, where Cook's task kept him at sea, the Forsters and other scholars on board and also the painter, William Hodges (1744–1797), wanted to explore the islands and spend as much time

9 Uhlig, *Georg Forster*, 96. The following biographical information is from ibid. and Hoare, *The Tactless Philosopher*.

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as possible on shore. In fact, their first stay on Tahiti was only just a little more than two weeks long.

When the expedition returned to England in 1775, Cook decided that he would write the official report himself. His experiences with the report of his first voyage had led him to want to make decisions about the written version himself. This meant trouble for Johann Reinhold Forster who had understood that his contract included the right to write and publish the official report – both a scholarly honor and an important financial opportunity, as the work was likely to be a best-seller. Not least, this implied the exclusive rights to publish a text in narrative form and with illustrations. Several months were spent negotiating the conditions for publication, and in the end Johann Reinhold Forster lost his case. In this troubled situation, the Forsters opted for a two-pronged strategy: Johann Reinhold Forster reworked his travel journal into a book called *Observations made during a Voyage round the World* which contained his discoveries and observations organized into chapters arranged according to subject matter. This was published in London in 1778. The younger Forster, however, was under no obligation to obey his father's contract with the Admiralty because he had been too young at the time. He was, therefore, free to write his account in narrative form, using his father's journal, and publishing a book in his own right. It is consequently unclear, how father and son collaborated, not only during the journey but also in writing their respective books. George Forster worked for nine months, and published his *Voyage Round the World* in 1777, just six weeks before Cook's official version was printed. As Cook's version was the official one and also had all the illustrations, it sold very well. As a result of the elder Forster's falling-out with not only Cook and the Admiralty but also with his former patron Joseph Banks and with the "Resolution"'s astronomer William Wallis, who published a highly influential polemic criticising George Forster's travelogue, both the Forsters' English-language books never sold well. Only in our time were both books reprinted in new editions, including ethno-historical notes.[10]

Though I am concentrating here on George Forster's travelogue it is clear that this text should be read together with at least Johann Reinhold Forster's book and James Cook's official account, if not with all the descriptions from other

[10] These and the following details about the context and the strategies of writing that were relevant for George Forster's travelogue, are taken from Nicholas Thomas and Oliver Berghof, "Introduction," in George Forster, *A Voyage Round the World*, ed. Nicholas Thomas and Oliver Berghof, xix–xliii; see also Nicholas Thomas, "Johann Reinhold Forster and His *Observations*," in Johann Reinhold Forster, *Observations Made during a Voyage round the World*, ed. Nicholas Thomas, Harriet Guest, and Michael Dettelbach, with a linguistics appendix by Karl H. Rensch (Honolulu: Hawai'i University Press, 1996), xv–xxii, and idem, "'On the Varieties of the Human Species': Forster's Comparative Ethnology," in ibid., xxiii–xl. William Wales' *Remarks on Mr. Forster's Account of Captain Cook's last Voyage Round the World, in the years 1772, 1773, 1774, and 1775* (1778) is reprinted in Appendix B of Forster, *Voyage* (699–753), together with George Forster's published *Reply*, 1778 (ibid., Appendix C, 755–783). Wales criticized George Forster's *Voyage* but assumed that it had been written by his father, so his polemics was meant for Johann Reinhold Forster.

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participants on this voyage.[11] Furthermore, there are the accounts of Cook's first voyage and all the reports of former journeys into this region of the world, among them the report written by Bougainville.[12] We know that all this printed material had been read by the Forsters and others before setting sail, and that everything available in book form was part of the baggage the captains, officers, and accompanying scholars took on board. These books were consulted over and over during the journey. The captains, officers, and scholars took along all the knowledge that was available for them in order to discern what new observations they themselves were able to add. By the 1770s, it was quite a considerable library of travel reports, let alone other kinds of works on natural history, that had to be taken into account. All personal experience had to be checked against this body of existing knowledge. Accordingly, personal experience inserted into this kind of natural history travelogues was not intended as subjective commentary, valuable in itself, but as a necessary part of gaining knowledge according to scientific methods of autopsy and authentification.[13]

The same can be said about the narrative form of the published report. That the narrative form of writing was one of the issues of debate between Cook and Johann Reinhold Forster shows that it was not only a question of more enjoyable reading but also one of scientific authenticity. Thus, writing down the scholarly results of an expedition required the narrative form of a travel report in order to give credibility to everything that was presented as facts to readers. The traveller-writer had to guarantee that his facts were derived directly from physical reality in an act of personal investigation. Or else, he had to disclose on whose information he had based his notes, and if he got this information orally or in writing. Personal autopsy, i. e. investigations made in direct contact with the investigated objects, then had to be converted into some paper form: a description of plants, drawings and sketches, a journal, all of these later to be reworked into a more coherent form of narrative travel report. After processing information through several more stages of various paper forms, including excerpts or collections, the highest achievable end-product was considered to be the comprehensive "philosophical" essay. Typically, the philosophers writing about natural history had done all their research in contact with books and libraries, staying at home in their study, a fact which was lamented by Bougainville in his own travelogue. Bougainville knew as well as others that it was philosophical knowledge that was the most influential yet most derivative form of knowledge, and that the phi-

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11 Listed in Salmond, *Aphrodite's Island*, 506 note 7.

12 Listed ibid. 483–485 note 36 (Wallis), 489–490 note 11 (Bougainville), 494 note 3 (Cook's first voyage), 504 notes 1–3 (Boenechea).

13 Cf. Nutz, *"Varietäten des Menschengeschlechts"*, 143 and ch. IV: "Texte," 195–225, esp. 198, on autopsy and authentification. Nutz also refers to a tradition for this kind of travel reports (ibid., 196), originating in the humanists' apodemic literature with rich theory and practice from the late 16th century onwards.

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losophers would do what they wanted with his and other travellers' reports, reprocessing and de-contextualizing specific information into generalizations.[14]

George Forster's travelogue has a long history as a literary text, and rightly so as far as its aesthetic qualities are concerned. However, it was written as a piece of scholarship in natural history, a field that comprised specialized knowledge about plants and animals as well as about human beings. A special branch of this field was concerned with the differences and "varieties" of human beings. This was an early form of physical anthropology combined with what we would today call ethnology (or cultural anthropology), where the categories used for classification were a "people" or "nation", and the methods used for classification included the interpretation of different types of culture or civilization as historicized stages which would eventually be arranged into one single scheme of human historical development.[15] Human beings and human ways of life were subjected to classification, artefacts were collected and inserted into cabinets of rarities and curiosities, and scholars and scientists of various fields contributed to the debates.[16] Among them were famous 18th-century scholars such as the philosophers Denis Diderot and Immanuel Kant, to name just two.

George Forster, who was eventually to earn his living as a professional naturalist, aimed to combine in his travelogue all the different paper forms of processing natural history knowledge, ranging from describing single facts on the one side to philosophy on the other side.

> "I have always endeavoured in this narrative to connect the ideas arising from different occurrences, in order, if possible, to throw more light upon the nature of the human mind, and to lift the soul into that exalted station, from whence the extensive view must 'justify the ways of God to man'."[17]

In the German version he explicitly calls his text a "philosophical travelogue". This went along with his father's original task as it first had been set down by the authorities:

> "From him they expected a philosophical history of the voyage, free from prejudice and vulgar error, where human nature should be represented without any adherence to falla-

14 All this information about processing knowledge, transforming observation into paper forms (only part of which were meant for publication), the role of autopsy, authorization and authenticification and various forms of scholarly authority connected with a hierarchy of the various paper forms are taken from Nutz, *"Varietäten des Menschengeschlechts"*, ch. IV; in this important work, Nutz situates travel reports among other forms of scientific writing. Cf. also Thomas, "Johann Reinhold Forster and His *Observations*," esp. xv–xvi, xviii; Thomas/Berghof, "Introduction," esp. xxvii–xviii.

15 Nutz, *"Varietäten des Menschengeschlechts"*, ch. III: "Ordnungen der Differenz: Kultur/Zivilisation," 143–185.

16 Ibid. ch. V: "Objekte," 227–295; cf. also Thomas/Berghof, "Introduction," xli–xlii.

17 Forster, *Voyage*, "Preface," 9. German version: Forster, *Reise*, 1:9 ("philosophische Reisebeschreibung").

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> cious systems, and upon the principles of general philanthropy; in short, an account written upon a plan which the learned world had not hitherto seen executed."[18]

As regards the personal or self-narrative aspect of his story, Forster remarks:

> "I have sometimes obeyed the powerful dictates of my heart, and given voice to my feelings; for, as I do not pretend to be free from the weaknesses common to my fellow creatures, it was necessary for every reader to know the colour of the glass through which I looked."[19]

This is also the way he makes himself present in his text: His "I" is explicit in his Preface, framing the account as an organizing, reflecting, and responsible author-persona. During the main account, however, he mostly appears as part of a "we" that comprises at least his father and himself – and, we note, the "we" may well have meant "under the authority of my father" – but in most cases also the officers and the captain of the ship as well as the other specialists and scholars who usually all participated in the excursions on land. Thus, his textual "I" stands for those aspects of his person which were most distanced from the "facts" narrated, those aspects where he fashions himself as an individual *author* after the journey and where he especially aims to present himself as a *scholar* of natural history collecting facts and as a natural *philosopher* giving his general conclusions based on the facts. At the same time, however, he disappears almost entirely from his text as *son* of an authoritarian father whose mere helper he had been during the journey. Also, most physical and social aspects of his travel experiences are not present in his text as explicit topics.

To be sure, Forster certainly does not make himself the main subject of his travelogue. His text is focussed on the world seen and encountered during the voyage – the sea, seaports, islands, and everywhere the plants, the animals, the inhabitants. At the same time, he seems concerned to make his own body, attire, sociability and anything that was personal in these respects, disappear from his text and vanish behind his perspective as a scientific onlooker, processing data about the material and social world in an immaterial and socially disengaged way. The person of the writer is just some part of the narrative supporting the concept that there was first an *observer* who focussed on all the objects observed, and later on there was a *writer* who did the writing and thinking in order to fit his text into the existing discourses on natural history.

In this discourse on natural history, clothes were *objects* to be collected as artefacts,[20] and at the same time they were *signs* indicating the type and stage of the culture of which they were an element.[21] As objects in use, they were worn on

[18] Forster, *Voyage*, 5–6.
[19] Ibid., 9.
[20] On clothes as objects collected and kept in cabinets of curiosities and museums, s. Nutz, *"Varietäten des Menschengeschlechts"*, ch. V: "Objekte," 227–285, and 286, 291, 292, 312; on clothes in the collections of Johann Reinhold and Georg Forster, ibid. 267–271.
[21] Cf. also the contribution of Kornelia Kaschke-Kısaarslan in this volume.

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the body, giving protection against the elements and requiring the care of washing and mending. In contacts with the peoples encountered during the voyage, they were given and received as gifts, exchanged in commercial transactions of buying and selling, stolen and retrieved, or reworked into better sellable objects. They might also function as parts of gestures exchanged between people, in this respect subject to particular cultural usages and meanings embedded in those interactions. Against this background I am here raising the questions: How are clothes made visible in Forster's text? What is the role they play in fashioning the self in these transcultural settings?

3. Rituals of Status and Exchange – Clothes Narrated, Described, and Analyzed

When George Forster mentions the occasion on which he and the other gentlemen of the ship's elite had to undress in order to wade to the boat,[22] he sets the terms of engagement with the topic of attire for the rest of his travelogue. Most of the remarks he makes about himself are clad in the inclusive "we" used throughout the narrative, thereby indicating that he and his father belonged to the group of elite men on board in many respects. So his readers are meant to infer information about his person from what he has to say about the whole group, the captains, officers, and naturalist scholars. The topic of dress is used by him to make himself visible as a person in a social and cultural sense of belonging and relating to a group, but not in an individual or bodily sense.

As we have seen in the remark quoted at the beginning of this essay, being undressed is the condition that is noteworthy and has to be explained, and dress is strongly connected to status. Thus, nakedness becomes a subtopic in Forster's travelogue that is related to dress and status. In this way, Forster not only describes the facts of various peoples' repertoires of dealing with being dressed and undressed. His descriptions are also connected to 18th-century debates on culture and civilization in which clothes, among other artefacts like tools and weapons, were evaluated and collected as characteristics of particular cultures and as indicative of being civilized in a general way. Nakedness was seen in these discourses as a central feature of savagery, whereas clothes were seen as marking the difference between humans and animals.[23]

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22 Forster, *Voyage*, 36.

23 For the discussion of clothes in 18th-century debates on culture and civilization, s. Nutz, *"Varietäten des Menschengeschlechts"*, 79 (Meiner), 89 (Ehrmann), 127–128 (Linné), 148, 150, 162, 184, 298, 301, 304, 307; discussion of nakedness: ibid., 157, 182, 282; on the relevance of clothes for collections of objects and artefacts, s.a. note 20. – Cf. also Naoko Yuge, "Das 'wilde' und das 'zivilisierte' Geschlechterverhältnis? Die neue Blickrichtung in der anthropologischen Diskussion um 1800," *L'Homme. Z.F.G.* 13,2 (2002): 205–223.

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In Forster's travelogue the ordinary sailors who cared for the boat and did all the swimming in rough seas were either doing this undressed – like the elite men wading to the boat –, or Forster found it unimportant to mention that their clothes got completely soaked. So there is a social difference in dress or in nakedness characterizing even his own culture: Whereas it is an important fact to mention the gentlemen's nakedness and, probably, their caring to save their clothes from being spoiled by sea water, it is different with respect to the sailors. This short scene shows in a very few words that it was usual for men of this elite to be dressed, and to be dressed completely and carefully, and that for them public nakedness was something to be avoided by all means, stripping them of the very means of becoming visible as elite persons. This would have been acceptable only in very special situations. On the other hand, if the ordinary sailors were naked or not, if their clothes were soaked or not, is not important to know. What is important to know about their clothes, however, is that the captain ordered sailors' clothes regularly to be laundered with fresh water for reasons of health and cleanliness, and also that the captain distributed warm woollen clothes to them in colder climes.[24] Both serve as an example that the ordinary sailors, from the elite mens' perspective, had to be kept under strict discipline, and that their superiors took good care of the crew. Forster draws here on the conception of a society ordered hierarchically, where the lower ranks needed to be disciplined and cared for and the higher ranks did the disciplining and caring for them.

In all his carefully noted details about clothes, Forster had one rule of thumb to decipher other people's dress codes: the more cloth or the more elaborate the dress, the higher the social rank of the wearer. Few clothes, on the other hand, or even no clothes at all were indicators of the lowest social and civilizational level. Through all his careful reasoning Forster never lets go of this basic idea.[25] Trying a summary about the South Sea cultures he encountered, he writes of the Tannanians, the inhabitants of one of the western Polynesian islands:

> "Dress, another distinguishing character of civilization, is as yet entirely unknown to them; and in the place of cleanliness, which every where renders mankind agreeable to each other, we observed divers sorts of paint and grease. They seem however to be in great forwardness towards receiving a greater polish."[26]

"[G]reater polish", then, appeared in recognizable form for the travellers when people exercised greater care in dressing up for an encounter with their foreign visitors. Forster writes about New Zealand in April 1773:

> "However, at our approach, instead of being welcomed by the natives on the shore, we saw none of them, and received no answer when we shouted to them. We landed there-

24 Regular washing of clothes: Forster, *Reise*, 1:23 (from the "Introduction" that was added to the German version); distribution of warm clothes in Antarctic zones: Forster, *Voyage*, 62–63.

25 E.g. Forster, *Voyage*, 34–35 (inhabitants of Santiago), 53 (slaves in the Dutch Cape colony).

26 Ibid., 554.

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> fore, and having proceeded to their habitation, soon found the reason of this unusual behaviour. They were preparing to receive us in all their finery, some being already completely adorned, and others still busy in dressing. […] Thus fitted out, they shouted at our approach, and received us standing, with marks of friendship and great courtesy. The captain [!] wore the new cloak of baize on his own shoulders, and now took it off and presented the man with it; he, on his part, seemed so much pleased with it, that he immediately drew out of his girdle a pattoo-pattoo, or short flat club made of a great fish's bone, and gave it to the Captain in return for so valuable an acquisition."[27]

According to Forster's account, dressing up with clothes worn on the body on the part of the hosts was part of their rituals of hospitality, distinguishing a formal and ceremonious occasion from everyday encounters. At the same time, Captain Cook's valuable red-coloured cloak was used as a diplomatic present. In honour of this occasion, the cloak was now given by the guest as a gift, after the Maori chief before had tried in vain to acquire it in some simpler way of economic exchange.[28]

When the travellers arrived in Tahiti, Forster describes a reception ceremony given by the high chief Tu for the strangers. Presents were exchanged, ladies of the upper classes forged bonds of adoption with the gentlemen from Europe, and in exchange for their gifts these men were wrapped in huge amounts of cloth:

> "In a little time we met with an ample return for our presents, especially from the ladies, who immediately sent their attendants (Towtows) for large pieces of their best cloth, dyed of a scarlet, rose, or straw colour, and perfumed with their choicest fragrant oils. These they put over our cloathes, and loaded us so well that we found it difficult to move in them."[29]

When Tu approached the next day to return Captain Cook's visit, he came on board only after Cook had been wrapped in a similar way:

> "Captain Cook stood on the ship's side, entreating his majesty to come on board, but he did not stir from his seat, till an immense quantity of the best cloth of the country had been wrapped around the captain, encreasing his bulk to a prodigious dimension."[30]

Forster clearly recognizes this proceeding as a "ceremony"[31], but equally clearly he has no idea what exactly the performative qualities of this ritualized behaviour were for those who enacted it. For the Tahitians, it was "a mark of peace and friendship"[32], acknowledging and containing the *mana* or ancestral power of a person. In fact, on ceremonial occasions chiefly persons were wrapped regularly

27 Ibid., 88.
28 Ibid., 87–88.
29 Ibid., 181; for gifts of cloth as a regular part of welcoming and farewell ceremonies, cf. ibid. 195, 205 etc.
30 Ibid., 182.
31 Ibid., repeated on the "Adventure" when Tu also visited Captain Furneaux, ibid. 185.
32 Salmond, *Aphrodite's Island*, 275.

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in many layers of bark cloth or finely woven garments[33]. At this point, the Tahitians still thought the Europeans to be very high-ranking, nearly divine people whose power was best bound in bonds of friendship. Still, they had forged bonds of friendship with former English, French and Spanish visitors, and as they were aware that these were hostile to each other, they realized the difficulties of how to maintain their former political friendships and at the same time adjust to their new visitors.[34]

Being chiefly concerned with finding access to fresh water, vegetables, and meat, Cook, according to Forster's travelogue, was neither interested in the obligations implied in these ritualized ways of creating relationships nor even aware of anything having happened in this respect. Whereas Cook was thinking of exchange in simple economic terms, for Pacific peoples exchanges "were more than economic transactions of goods – barkcloth, food and the like –, but were being couched in religious terms."[35] When garments and cloth then appeared among the goods of exchange, there were different notions of what exactly the interactions of giving, taking, and making exchanges were meant to be part of. Cook's intentions were to have a "market" where he intended just to "buy" all the provisions he needed for continuing the voyage and maintaining the health and work of the crew. This was to be accomplished without further involvement in relationships and without giving much time to the question if what he had given as the "price" for an item would be seen as sufficient to close the interaction.[36] Because he was in short supply of goods to give in exchange such as nails, tools, beads, and garments, the prices had to be as cheap as possible. Gifts and presents were best dealt with in terms of short-term exchanges, without consideration of the contingent longer-term obligations.[37] The sailors wanted to collect objects in order to sell them at home for good money, supplementing their very meagre pay and compensating them for hard work at high risk. This, however, could result in the market for provisions breaking down, as the inhabitants of the islands found it more profitable to sell their weapons, cloth and other desired objects instead of fresh fish, etc.[38] It could even mean one group of islanders waging war and robbing another group of these desired items that had so suddenly become valuable items on this temporary

[33] Ibid., 166–167, cf. further on wrapping in barkcloth ibid., 74, 143, 150, 250; for the ritual meanings of wrapping persons and things cf. also Steven Hooper, *Pacific Encounters: Art & Divinity in Polynesia, 1760–1860* (Norwich: The British Museum Press, 2006), 38–44.

[34] Salmond, *Aphrodite's Island*, 273; cf. also Thomas/Berghof, "Introduction," xxxii, on the Europeans' "honorary 'insider' status", accorded to them by the hierarchically minded Raiateans and Tahitians.

[35] Hooper, *Pacific Encounters*, 44–47 (p. 44).

[36] At least, such doubts were expressed among his crew, cf. Salmond, *Aphrodite's Island*, 266.

[37] Ibid., 79–80, 257–280; cf. Liebersohn, *The Travelers' World*, 13, about the vulnerability of 18th-century travelers through their dependence on acquiring fresh provisions throughout their voyage.

[38] E.g. in Charlotte Sound, New Zealand, Nov. 1774: Forster, *Voyage*, 611.

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market.[39] In such an instance, Cook used his authority and even violence to restore the type of market he sought to sustain in order to fulfil his tasks as leader of the expedition.[40] Forster gives no hint about the role of the scholars and the officers in the context of these conflicts. The latter certainly had some interests of their own which were not so far from those of the sailors.

With respect to physical subsistence and the provision of one's own or the whole group's future well-being, clothes had significance varying with the agent and the agenda. Thus social spaces were created that shifted in time and space and could mean different things to different participants. The ritual establishment of bonds of friendship would mean mutual gift-giving and sharing of resources among friends, at least for Tahitian and other South Sea populations.[41] If their European partners were unaware of these relational implications that would apply to any dealings with goods and resources, then the same event might mean completely different things for different parties according to these different notions.

The interplay of resources, relationships, and normative constructions of social space that emerges is a large field of investigation in itself. Situating interactions of exchange in their wider social field of power relationships, ritualized relational obligations, and the expectations of different agents would be worthwhile but impossible to pursue in the framework of this essay. These questions would have to be investigated not only with respect to the Tahitian ritualized ways of "doing society," but also with respect to the apparently non-ritualized, "modern" forms of economic exchange through the market relationships that were becoming so prominent in European societies and discourses at this time.

A large part of George Forster's published work on attire attempts to give an impression of what could be seen and what was worn on people's bodies. Whenever he describes the attire of New Zealand Maoris, or those of the inhabitants of Tahiti and other Polynesian islands, he goes into great detail, observing materials and techniques of production, colours, as well as ornaments, tattoos and accessories. All this serves as part of characterizing a population collectively. Also, these descriptions are part of the ethnographical collection and processing of material in a second paper form, which was made after Johann Reinhold Forster's daily notes in his travel journal.[42]

Forster always starts with bodily appearance. Differences between men and women in dress are one of the key elements in his travelogue – not least because they were easily observable for European eyes, untrained as they were in other markers of social difference and their specific meanings. But at the same time, gender as a number of differences in terms of the body was also a notion that was highly privileged by naturalists' discourses under Linnaean influence, tend-

39 Ibid., 276.
40 Cf. ibid., 611.
41 Salmond, *Aphrodite's Island*, 79–80.
42 Cf. Nutz, *"Varietäten des Menschengeschlechts"*, 196.

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ing at times to overshadow other markers of social difference and distinction.[43] About Tahitian people, e.g., Forster makes the following remarks:

> "The people around us had mild features, and a pleasing countenance; they were about our size, of a pale mahogany brown, had fine black hair and eyes, and wore a piece of cloth round their middle of their own manufacture, and another wrapped around the head in various picturesque shapes like a turban."[44]

That this was expressed in general terms but meant, in fact, to refer only to the males, becomes obvious in the next sentence, setting women apart as a special group that is marked by gender.

> "Among them were several females, pretty enough to attract the attention of Europeans, who had not seen their own country-women for twelve long months past. These wore a piece of cloth with a whole in the middle, through which they had passed the head, so that one part of the garment hung down behind, and the other before, to the knees; a fine white cloth like a muslin, was passed over this in various elegant turns round the body, a little below the breast, forming a kind of tunic, of which one turn sometimes fell graciously across the shoulder. If this dress had not entirely that perfect form, so justly admired in the draperies of the ancient Greek statues, it was however infinitely superior to our expectations, and much more advantageous to the human figure, than any modern fashion we had hitherto seen."[45]

In this description, there is detail about fabric and colour of cloth, about the way of arranging the textiles, about the aesthetic values he associates with this, and, last but not least, about the culture of Greek antiquity which sets the standards against which to look, to appreciate, to understand and to evaluate. Throughout the text, there are also quotations from poets and other writers from Greek and Roman antiquity, and it is worth mentioning that this classical background was deemed completely appropriate in writing a scientific text of natural history.[46] Forster's remarks reveal the concepts which contemporary educated Europeans drew upon as myths to live by[47] – providing pre-conceived patterns for their observations, actions, and narratives. As Anne Salmond and others have shown, European myths such as that of Arcadia or paradise were particularly relevant for the Europeans in their encounters with the various South Sea peoples during their 18th-century voyages.[48] In the context of the 1770s, the language of Greek sculpture and aesthetic

43 Ibid., 130; Salmond, *Aphrodite's Island*, 127 and note 5 with further references.
44 Forster, *Voyage*, 144.
45 Ibid.
46 Nutz, *"Varietäten des Menschengeschlechts"*, 223–224.
47 Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (eds.), *The Myths We Live By* (London: Routledge, 1990); Mary Midgley, *The Myths We Live By* (London: Routledge, 2003).
48 Salmond, *Aphrodite's Island*, esp. "Introduction: Aphrodite's Island," 17–21, and "Conclusion: The Angel of History," 458–464, also 457, after quoting Captain William Bligh and George Hamilton: "As one can see from these rapturous accounts, after two decades of contact by ships of different European nations – British, French and Spanish – the myth of 'Aphrodite's Island' had triumphantly survived, unscathed by experience."; cf. further

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was certainly Eurocentric as well as class and gender specific, being available foremost to the educated male elites. But at the same time, as Bernard Smith has suggested, this was the language used to express respect according to the highest values of one's own culture, in visual and in textual media.[49] Later in his text George Forster criticized drawings made of Tongan people by the artist William Hodges because the latter had used the aesthetic language of ancient sculpture. It is interesting that Forster was seemingly oblivious to the fact that he himself had also explicitly made this comparison in his own description of Tahitian women.[50]

Again, Forster makes a remark in passing about "common men, who went almost naked"[51], that reveals his generalizing language as being in fact socially highly particular. He obviously had focused on the men and especially the women of the native elites when mentioning elaborate dress and the display of impressive amounts of cloth. Analogous to European societies, he noted that class and quantity of dress were interrelated. That was easy for him to comprehend. He also noticed that baring the shoulders as a sign of respect for higher-ranking persons was customary. But the fact that this was a situational as well as a relational practice was difficult to understand for him: They had first met Towhah, the leader of the Tahitian fleet, surrounded by his warriors and in his full military dress as was appropriate to his position. Later they encountered him together with his king.

> "He was now dressed like the rest of the people in this happy island, and naked to the waist, being in the king's presence. His appearance was so much altered from what it had been the day before, that I had some difficulty to recollect him."[52]

Even the father of the "king" had to bare his shoulders when his son was present.[53] Whereas there were some practices of ceremonial respect such as forms of address and greeting that the Europeans and especially Captain Cook in his contacts with leaders assumed from indigenous practices and practised themselves, Forster never

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Börner, *Auf der Suche nach dem irdischen Paradies*; Forbes, *Encounters with Paradise*; Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*; idem, *Imagining the Pacific*; Wallace, *Sexual Encounters*.

49 Smith, *Imagining the Pacific*, 84 ("It is important to realise that the so-called 'noble-savage' mode of presentation was not a visual stereotype applied indiscriminately, a misperception of eighteenth-century European vision. It was, more often than not, the result of a conscious aesthetic decision to elevate where the artist felt that elevation was appropriate. Parkinsons's *Journal* is admirable in the close relationship established between text and illustration; and the specific context of plate III reads, on the facing page, 'among the rest who visited us, there were some people of distinction in double canoes: their cloaths, carriage and behaviour evinced their superiority. I never beheld statlier [!] men. They behaved courteously.' So, appropriately, the Polynesian chieftain is presented in the engraving as if he were a Roman magistrate, his flowing toga about him, delivering a speech in the Senate."), cf. ibid. plate 85.

50 Forster, *Voyage*, 232; cf. Smith, *Imagining the Pacific*, 72–73.

51 Forster, *Voyage*, 144–145.

52 Ibid., 359.

53 Ibid., 182.

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mentions any member of the travellers' group baring his shoulders out of respect towards high-ranking natives. Understanding the ritual language of rank and status very well, they wanted to give the message that they as a group completely and collectively, from captain to sailor, even boys, and servants, were at least as high-ranking as the highest representatives of the peoples they encountered.

No concept, however, was available to him for those situations in which a person was not at all distinguished by dress but made apparent as a leader only by other people's respectful behaviour. Forster and the other European men were indeed so puzzled by such an incidence that only then they started to observe faces in order to identify persons individually: When returning to New Zealand in November 1773, Forster describes the first encounter with the Maoris,

> "[…] and among them was Teiratu, the chief who had made acquaintance with us on the fourth of June and had pronounced a long harrangue that day. He was now in his old clothes, or what the polite world would call deshabillé; quite destitute of the finery of chequered mats edged with dog-skin, and his hair carelessly tied in a bunch, instead of being combed smooth, and delectably greased with stinking oil. In short, from being the orator and leader of a troop of warriors, he seemed to be degraded to a simple fishmonger. It was with some difficulty that we recognized his features under this disguise […]"[54]

After this, Teiratu was again treated by the travellers as an individual of leadership status. But without appopriate attire this had seemed plainly impossible – not only rank but even the individual features of the person were first and foremost a consequence of the dress worn and shown in order to become relevant as social facts.

Thus, at least in European eyes, clothes were the ritual place where social position as well as the recognisability of an individual were to be found. Again and again Forster describes events like this where various South Sea peoples did not rely on dress in their social practices as exclusively as their visitors from foreign shores.[55] This almost ritual fixation, on the part of the Europeans, on clothes as the place where a person came to be what she or he was also gives a clue to why Jeanne Baret (1740–1803), travelling in men's clothes in Bougainville's expedition (1766–1769), was recognised as a woman by the Tahitians, but not by her European fellow travellers.[56]

Forster drew the conclusion from his diverse observations that South Sea peoples did not need to dress as much as others. But as a cultural person with moral sentiments, as he himself would have expressed it, he could not make this simple statement in neutral terms. It was what he called "naked" that provoked him to more and more lengthy reflections about clothes and their uses when describing and noting the fact. It is worth mentioning here that Forster used the word "na-

54 Ibid., 270.
55 Cf. also ibid., 235, 254, 318.
56 Liebersohn, *The Travelers' World*, 21–23; Salmond, *Aphrodite's Island*, 92, 103, 113, 116, 233, 255, 256.

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ked" explicitly only for the bodies of children and adult males, whereas for females he took care to transmit similar facts only indirectly. With this he was certainly taking into account the heated debates around the sexual encounters between European men and South Sea women, with their sharp criticism focusing on the argument that this way Europeans brought venereal diseases to the peoples of these areas. Thus framing the debate in terms of ethnic collectivities, the suggestion was avoided that it was men who infected women with these diseases. In order to escape this battlefield, on his second and third voyages Cook sought to prevent any representation of female bodies that might be identified as "naked".[57] Indeed, Forster's analysis of attire and nakedness focuses on male bodies and on the effects that the visibility of male body parts had on European male travellers. There were, after all, no European women around for this to cause any immediate effect.

One of the most indicative of the small essays Forster inserted into his narrative deals with the inhabitants of the island Malakula of the New Hebrides/Vanuatu. It deserves to be quoted at length:

> "Dress, in such a climate, is to be considered as an article of luxury, and cannot properly be placed among the indispensible necessaries. At Mallicollo they have not yet attained that degree of opulence which could have suggested the invention of garments. In their tufted groves they neither feel the scorching beams of a vertical sun, nor ever know the uncomfortable sensation of cold. Briars and shrubberies oblige them to take some precaution, and the impulses of nature towards the encrease of the species, have suggested the most simple means of preserving the faculties[58] and guarding against the dangers of mutilation […] We are too apt to look at the principles which are early instilled into our mind by education as innate, and have frequently mistaken a moral sentiment for a physical instinct. From the contemplation of unpolished people, we find that modesty and chastity, which have long been supposed inherent in the human mind, are local ideas, unknown in the state of nature, and modified according to the various degrees of civilization. It is not likely that the Mallicollese have ever thought of banishing unseasonable ideas from their mind, by a contrivance [i.e., referring to the penis-wrapper, G.J.] which seems much more apt to provoke their desires. Nay, it is uncertain whether the scanty dress of their women owes its origin to a sense of shame, or to an artful endeavour to please. The ideas of beauty seem to be more obvious, though singular and different among divers nations. The Mallicollese are not satisfied with the charms of their own person, but think that a stone hung in the nose, a bracelet, a necklace of shells, and a shining black paint, set them off to greater advantage. Their women, as far as we could observe, have no trinkets, but paint themselves with the yellow colour of turmerick, which has a peculiar aromatic smell."[59]

In these reflections, Forster concludes that at Malakula the protecting functions of clothes against heat, cold and sun were mostly provided by the forest, while aesthetic effects were implemented by adornments, body paint, scent and – at

57 Smith, *Imagining the Pacific*, 180, 198.
58 Here the German version has the more explicit wording "Geschlechtstheile:" Forster, *Reise*, 2:181.
59 Forster, *Voyage*, 492.

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other places – tattoos. Moreover, he is aware that practices of embellishment were gendered according to rules differing from those he knew from European peoples, males making much more use of adornments than females. Moral sentiments like shame, decency, discipline, honesty, on the other side, prove to be culturally specific and far from given by nature. They are part of a highly particular European system of values and rules, shaping emotional orientations and reactions to a high degree. Under the circumstances mentioned by Forster, clothes would be a luxury that was not affordable for the inhabitants of Malakula due to material scarcity. So, according to his lucid analysis, dress was completely unnecessary in practical terms but absolutely indispensable in terms of cultural standards. In the last resort, clothes were a necessity of moral and civilizational relevance that was strongly connected to notions of sexuality and the need to cover sexual body parts in order to make them invisible. Especially offensive to Forster's eyes were the penis-wrappers worn by men of various South Sea islands, which he invariably comments on as indecent:

> "Round their middle they tie a string, and below that, they employ the leaves of a plant like ginger, for the same purpose, and in the same manner as the natives of Mallicollo. Boys, as soon as they attain the age of six years, are already provided with those leaves, which seems to confirm, what I have observed in regard to the Mallicollese, viz. that they do not employ this covering from motives of decency. Indeed it had so much the contrary appearance, that in the person of every native of Tanna or Mallicollo, we thought we beheld a living representation of that terrible divinity, who protected the orchards and gardens of the ancients."[60]

Forster refers here to the ancient Roman god Priapus, symbolized in form of a big penis, thus not only relating the topic of attire and nakedness to the sphere of religion and religious myth but also qualifying the practices encountered at Tanna, Malakula and elsewhere as idolatry. His notions, based again on one of the myths of antiquity available to the educated among the Europeans, were of course one-sided assumptions and far from what the peoples concerned themselves saw and felt about these body parts and practices, maybe also far from what the sailors, mariners and servants of the expedition thought. It is obvious that Forster and probably other European men as well felt these practices to be so confounding that they could not avoid looking again and again, and that they kept wondering what to make of this view. For their eyes, the sight of covered yet well demarcated penises was a sexual sight, at once requiring concealment and a sense of shame, even when they acknowledged that questions of decency were not involved for the inhabitants themselves. Probably the people of Tanna and Malakula did not even feel that everyday nakedness as such was a sexual matter. Like other South Sea peoples at that time, they had more explicit cultural repertoires at their disposal to evoke sexual notions – talk and jokes, gestures, dance,

60 Ibid., 515.

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and in some places public copulation.[61] In the German translation of this passage, it was added that a "decent veiling"[62] of the penis would be the proper way of dealing with this part of the male body.

But Forster also has a comparison of cultures to offer, and for this he draws on medieval and the earlier part of early modern European history:

> "The ideas of modesty are different in every country, and change in different periods of time. Where all men go naked, for instance on New Holland, custom familiarizes them to each other's eyes, as much as if they went wholly muffled up in garments. The fashionable dresses and suits of armour which were worn in the fifteenth and sixteenth century at every European court, would at present be looked upon as the most indecent that can possibly be contrived; and yet who will dare to assert that there was less modesty in the world at that age than in this, or defame the virtuous characters of the invincible knights of that time, so famous for chastity, honour, and gallantry, – because they wore breeches made after the fashions of the times?"[63]

Forster is talking here about the codpiece, and he again refers to the Roman god Priapus. European history provides for him the evidence that can be of help to realize that civilizational values like decency may be part of different cultural systems, systems that were changing over time and that were signified by completely different cultural symbols and gestures. Being dressed or undressed, hiding body parts or making them visible, were thus put into verbal language with the effect of showing them to be part of the ritual systems of doing culture (and cultural values) through gestures and objects. These in their turn were only decipherable and usable by agents who had the relevant knowledge about embedded cultural and social practices at their command.

4. Clothes, Person, and Culture

When talking about attire and nakedness, Forster suggests that basic questions of culture and civilization were involved and that dealing properly with those questions required an educated person with fully developed moral sentiments, capable of exercising these sensibilities towards all kinds of observations made and able to connect everything seen and encountered to a valid system of categories and concepts. Clothes worn or not worn by other people might, for example, be connected to questions of climate, or to material prosperity, social differences, beauty, sexuality, propriety, religion, or the education of the agents observed.

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61 Salmond, *Aphrodite's Island*, 64, 121, 452–453, 456 (Tahitian views of sex); 170 (graphic use of language); 70–71, 99, 100, 102, 120, 167–168, 353, 390, 452–453 (sex in public and as part of rituals or festivals), etc.

62 Forster, *Reise*, 2:215 ("so daß wir an jedem *Tanneser* oder *Mallicoleser*, statt einer ehrbaren Verschleyerung, vielmehr eine leibhafte Vorstellung jener furchtbaren Gottheit zu sehen glaubten, welcher bey den Alten die Gärten geweyhet waren.")

63 Forster, *Voyage*, 566–568.

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And on the part of the observer, they were related to powers of moral knowledge and judgment that he situated in a person like himself, i.e. European, male, qualified by a scholarly education and a naturalist's training. In his at times lucid reflections on cultural diversity, there is never the notion that such powers of judgment, operating within a valid system of categories and concepts, might also be expected among the peoples he observed, or even for that matter, among those who had the task of serving for the expedition and its leading group of elite men as servants and sailors.

At the same time, there is no explicit language to describe the possible desires or anxieties that may reside in the person of the observer and that may have activated or immobilised him, nor for the narration of thoughts and physical actions outside of, or contrary to, the plans and motivations of the persona of the scholarly observer. Whereas Forster has space to say something about the sailors' or South Sea people's sexual, social or economic options and actions, he has none for ascribing any to himself, or to any of the elite men on board. In narrating himself as a disciplined scholarly observer of male nakedness, he leaves open the question of any personal involvement. Did he even allow for such a space of involvement? So we can't know for sure about eventually existing personal aspects of his preoccupation with male nakedness from this text, whereas in other contexts he could be very explicit about his feelings towards male friends.[64]

In addition to his explicit discourse on clothing, there is a subdiscourse on a specific concept of person. This, in distinction to his ideas of culture and civilization, is never openly discussed. It is present as an implicit assumption, shaping his own perspective, focusing on cultural values and giving legitimacy to his narrative and judgments. According to his narrative, it is the observer from outside, the stranger without inside knowledge of the culture observed, who can be trusted with the process of collecting, ordering, classifying and evaluating evidence. This outside observer is also sure of himself as he compares and evaluates and makes connections to the wider field of discourses with other participants. Those observed, however, are never trusted to have the capacities for ordering, evaluation, and judgment. Their knowledge is narrated as no more than practical knowledge: They are not only "naked" because of the climate and their perceived poverty, but in the last resort, because they lack the appropriate sense of decency, morality, sexuality, and religion. And it is only the people observed, of course, who have no idea of what is lacking in their judgmental capacities. Thus, in light of this concept of person and its intra- and transcultural hierarchical implications it makes much sense for Forster to concentrate his discourse on nakedness on male agents. While including non-European people, he at the same time continued an early modern tradition of situating scholarly and judgmental

64 Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller, *Mann für Mann. Biographisches Lexikon* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2001), 234–236.

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capacities not just preferably in male bodies, but also in male-male social settings where male-male social practices and rituals determined the ways of establishing authority.

5. Conclusion

In sum, Forster obviously had a standard for measuring the level of civilization, and he uses this standard for all those whose dress he describes, including himself and his gentlemen peers, the English sailors, and all the people he encountered during the voyage. According to this standard, he himself belongs to the highest possible category of civilization, the men of the European elite. Within this elite it is especially the scholars with their special skills of disinterested observation and reasoning who inhabit the highest rank and set an example for all mankind as to which direction their future development should take. It is paradoxical that just as these superior qualities as scholar are demonstrated in writing, they tend to make the observer himself invisible, leaving just his objects of observation in the light of written history. That this is meant also as an indication of high social status can be seen by the same kind of invisibility removing the whole group of elite men from being an object of description. It is not *their* dress we are made to see, it is not *their* desires and *their* sexuality and *their* economic dealings we are told about, it is just always the ordinary sailors and other peoples who come into view as physical beings, in need of being disciplined and educated. Even while for persons of his social status and ambition in the material-physical and social world it seemed essential to wear appropriate clothes, thus "doing the person" in a performative way by using clothes as ritual signs, in his travelogue he appeared as a person mainly through invisibility – thus making a performance in writing that was certainly no less rich in making use of culturally significant practices.

Still, while he is concerned with describing, classifying and evaluating according to scientific standards of natural history of his time, Forster continues to inhabit a world in which clothes were people's "outer skin" and where dress was used as a complex language of belonging and hierarchy for making social selves, where still in the 18th century identities were made and changed through handling clothes[65] – a world where dress was among the material objects used for ritualized ways of life.

Scholars like George Forster were hard at work devising new discourses that aimed at separating the scholar as an observer and thinker from the world observed and analyzed. At the same time, in his travelogue the writer is still implic-

65 Cf. David Gary Shaw, *Necessary Conjunctions: The Social Self in Medieval England*, The New Middle Ages (New York; Basingstoke, Hampsh.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), ch. 7: "Self-Possession," 145–163: 145 ("outer skin"); and Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2004), 176–179.

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itly – and often in the “we”-form – present as a social individual. He recognises and discusses the embeddedness of clothes as objects in a social world of interaction, relationships and ritualized behaviours, and he demonstrates intimate knowledge of these. Ways of life and normative orientations still mattered for him, as they had done for early modern scholars and a longer tradition from antiquity, making entanglement in the social world an important aspect of scholarly writing.[66] Also, social hierarchy and a self-ascription of a high position of the educated and the scholars in this hierarchy remained a primary issue. But according to the terms of the new Enlightenment discourses, where scholars were fashioning a distanced observer who was standing outside the world observed and still able to understand and judge, not marked any longer by embeddedness in social practices, all these physical and social aspects of the scholar had to disappear from his scholarly texts. Ways of life and normative orientations were no longer of value as an example given for others nor even acceptable any more as an explicit part of the self-fashioning in scholarly discourse.

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66 For the tradition from antiquity cf. Pierre Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1981), for early modern scholars cf. Gabriele Jancke, “‘Individuality’, Relationships, Words About Oneself: Autobiographical Writing as a Resource ($15^{th}/16^{th}$ centuries) – Konrad Pellikan’s Autobiography,” in *May I Introduce Myself? The "I" between Self-reference and Hetero-reference. Individuality in the Modern and Premodern, ed.* Franz-Josef Arlinghaus (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, in prep.).

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