

North American Discovery and Exploration Historiography, 1993-2001: From Old-Fashioned Anniversaries to the Tall Order of Global History?

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REVIEW ESSAYS/NOTES CRITIQUES

North American Discovery and Exploration Historiography, 1993-2001: From Old-Fashioned Anniversaries to the Tall Order of Global History?

DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION have recently become unfashionable, if not altogether disreputable, subjects of study among historians of early North America and of the North Atlantic world. Even the term “discovery” and its apparently more correct substitute, “encounter”, have fallen into disgrace because such terms allegedly give only a European point of view.¹ Certainly, as the illustrious British cartographer Helen Wallis has noted, everybody acknowledges that a selected number of historians have provided the international scholarly community with the records “of the feats of exploration and discovery”, that enable their peers “to assess the achievements, to allocate the credits and sometimes the blames”. The names of French Charles-André Julien (1891-1991), Americans Carl Ortwin Sauer (1889-1975) and Louis André Vignerat, British Charles Ralph Boxer (1904-2000), John Horace Parry (1914-82), David Beers Quinn, Raleigh Ashlin Skelton (1906-70) and James Alexander Williamson (1886-1964) immediately spring to mind. Without such records, as British Africanist historians Roy C. Bridges and Paul E.H. Hair (1926-2001) observe, “there can be no interpretations, valid or otherwise, indeed no serious history”. Yet a statement by Quinn, perhaps the most prominent contributor to the field of early North Atlantic discovery, that he “feel[s] that perhaps [he has] been better in documentation and descriptive writing rather than in analysis”, would today be considered naive if it came from any graduate student.²

“Contact” is the accepted buzz-word that replaced both “discovery” and “exploration”. Its proponents maintain that they are better able than anybody else to understand and then present the points of view of communities which meet in any part of the globe. In the words of one of the most distinguished representatives of discovery and exploration studies, Canadian literary critic Germaine Warkentin,

- 1 “Encounter” is an even worse term than “discovery”, which is explicit. The former subtly implies that the only real “encounter” was that between Europeans and American aboriginal peoples, as if other “encounters” between communities, ethnic groups, nations, peoples and cultures had not taken place prior to 1492 – a notion that is patently false. The author wishes to thank William Shuey, Freeman Tovell and Peter N. Moogk for their most useful commentaries.
- 2 Helen Wallis, “The Great Publication Societies”, in Germaine Warkentin, ed., *Critical Issues in Editing Exploration Text: Papers Given at the Twenty-eighth Annual Conference on Editorial Problems: University of Toronto 6-7 November 1992* (Toronto, 1995), p. 124; Roy C. Bridges and Paul Edward Hedley Hair, “The Hakluyt Society and World History”, in Bridges and Hair, eds., *Compassing the Vaste [sic] Globe of the Earth: Studies in the History of the Hakluyt Society 1846-1996 With a Complete List of the Society's Publications* (London, 1996), p. 239; [David Beers Quinn], “English Discoveries and Explorations to 1607: Luca Codignola Interviews David Beers Quinn”, *Storia nordamericana*, IV, 1-2 (1987), pp. 189-204, citation on p. 201.

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“cultural analysis” has taken the place of “the genres of national epic and/or scientific reportage” that had been, until the early 1960s, the hallmark of discovery and exploration studies.³ Should we then limit the idea of discovery and exploration to places where no human being had ever set foot prior to the arrival of the discoverers and the explorers? This narrow definition would leave us with Antarctica, much of the Arctic region, previously inaccessible mountain and desert areas and outer space.

The origins of this shift from discovery and exploration to contact studies can be traced back to the late 1960s, and this process came to a climax on the occasion of the Columbus Quincentenary in 1992 when, as Warkentin notes, “almost all the assumptions behind the European expansion . . . were fiercely interrogated and in many cases repudiated”.⁴ Hair explains how this new attitude towards European expansion has spread even among the editors of the Halkuyt Society. Established in London in 1846, it is undoubtedly the most illustrious of learned societies devoted to the “records of voyages, travels and other geographical material of the past”. The published records themselves, Hair maintains, are now used principally “to claim and illustrate alleged human and environmental disasters caused by European out-thrust and cultural encounter. What was too loudly trumpeted as praiseworthy is now not uncommonly seen as contemptible; what was considered positive and a global gain is widely – if equally facilely – interpreted as negative and a loss for humankind”.⁵

Major history journals have also been affected by this hostile perspective. Articles on the deeds of men such as John Cabot (Giovanni Caboto), Gaspar Corte Real, Miguel Corte Real, Martin Frobisher, Alejandro (Alessandro) Malaspina and George Vancouver, so common during the first half of the 19th century, have virtually disappeared from their pages. Articles about these men are now usually relegated to specialized periodicals, such as *Mariner's Mirror* or *Terrae Incognitae*, the official journals of the Society for Nautical Research and the Society for the History of Discoveries, respectively, or to similar journals that cater to “special interest” communities. The discomfort of the major journals over discovery and exploration studies is evident in their bibliographical listings. For example, in its “Recent Scholarship” section, the *Journal of American History* lists categories of all kinds, but none for discovery and exploration publications; these are most likely to be found scattered in the “Colonial and Revolutionary Period” or “Indians” categories. North of the border, the “Recent Publications Relating to Canada” section of the *Canadian Historical Review* does have a “Discovery and Exploration” category, but close examination reveals that this category is a catch-all where books and articles are dumped simply because they do not fit elsewhere. As for the *Revue d'histoire de*

3 Warkentin, ed., *Critical Issues*, p. ix. “Cultural analysis” is the more anthropological rendering of the idea of contact studies.

4 Warkentin, ed., *Critical Issues*, p. ix. Among the scores of commentaries on the significance of the Columbus Quincentenary, the most perceptive contributions are James Michael Muldoon, “Should Christians Celebrate the Columbus Quincentennial?”, *America* (27 October 1990), pp. 300-3; James S. Pritchard, “Goodbye Columbus”, *Queen's Quarterly*, 99, 3 (Fall 1992), pp. 601-8; Barry M. Gough, “Goodbye Columbus? Canada's Chains of History”, *History Today*, 43 (March 1993), pp. 8-12; James L. Axtell, “The Moral Dimensions of 1492”, *The Historian*, 64, 1 (Autumn 1993), pp. 17-28.

5 From the 1980 Rules of the Hakluyt Society, as cited in Hair, “The Hakluyt Society”, p. 109; *ibid.*, p. 19.

l'Amérique française, which has recently reorganized its “Bibliographie” along chronological rather than topical lines, early discovery and exploration works usually fall in the “Avant 1600” category. Again, closer examination shows that these publications are selected at random and inconsistently placed in the several chronological categories.

In 1995, American historian James Axtell, one of the pioneers of ethnohistory (perhaps a more accurate way to define what I have referred to so far as “contact studies”) made the bold statement:

“If [the Columbus Quincentenary] has taught anything, it has demonstrated that . . . we should no longer restrict our attention to the Admiral of the Ocean Sea . . . but should try to understand the cultural and intellectual world from which he came and in which he continued to operate. We should attend particularly to the short- and long-range consequences of the unification of the globe and of the human, biological, and cultural encounters he inaugurated.”⁶

No historian would disagree with Axtell. But then, Axtell presents what is indeed a recipe for global history; it is an ideal pursued by all historians, but so far attained only by a select few. In reviewing the scholarly literature on what he calls “Columbian Encounters”, Axtell felt obliged to arrange the enormous array of recent publications in no less than 11 categories, including “the exploration and gradual definition of the world after Columbus”. Axtell’s choice is indicative of the general trend among historians to make European discovery and exploration a minor province of a much larger global context.⁷

In selecting publications for this review essay, I faced the quandary of choosing between traditional, old-fashioned discovery and exploration studies or works reflecting Axtell’s call for a global history of the encounter. This was a difficult choice. It is admittedly rather awkward to write of English discoverers and navigators without mentioning Irish historian Nicholas P. Canny’s articles in the *Oxford History of the British Empire*, American ethnohistorian Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians and English* and Warkentin, *Canadian Exploration Literature*; or to deal with the cultural encounter between early Europeans and aboriginal people without examining Axtell, *Natives and Newcomers*, American historian Stuart B. Schwartz, *Implicit Understandings* and *Transferts culturels et métissages*, edited by Canadians Laurier Turgeon, Denys Delâge and Réal Ouellet; or, finally, to show the effects of the diseases that the Europeans brought with them, and which had such a devastating

6 James Axtell, “Columbian Encounters: 1992-1995”, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, LIII, 4 (October 1995), pp. 650-1. This article must be read alongside its previous instalment, Axtell, “Columbian Encounters: Beyond 1992”, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, XLIX, 2 (April 1992), pp. 335-60.

7 We owe, I believe, this definition to one of the most original and influential scholarly essays since the Second World War: Alfred Worcester Crosby, Jr., *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*, (Westport, Conn., 1972). The other categories are: Columbus himself; 15th-century Spain; Spanish conquests and the consolidation of its empire; Christian missions; European colonization and encounters with aboriginal peoples; disease, ecology and aboriginal demography; the colonial discourse; the Columbus Quincentenary debate; museum exhibitions and catalogues and conference and symposia publications. See Axtell, “Columbian Encounters: 1992-1995”, p. 650.

effect in deciding who the dominating side would be in the future, without recalling American geneticist Luigi Luca Cavalli Sforza's studies and American historians Alfred W. Crosby, *Germs, Seeds, and Animals*, Noble D. Cook, *Born to Die* and John K. Thornton, *Africa and Africans*.⁸ All these works are crucial to the understanding of the process of discovery and exploration that has emerged in the past decade. But a line must be drawn somewhere, and in the end I have opted for a middle way. While keeping in mind Axtell's tall order and the demands of contact studies, I concentrate on more traditional discovery and exploration studies. Furthermore, during the past decade there have been more publications dealing with discovery than with exploration and this review reflects this imbalance.

Recent bad press has not made discovery and exploration studies an endangered species; such examinations are stimulated not only by individual scholarly curiosity, but also by the regular and inevitable ticking of a time-clock that announces neatly spaced anniversaries. These, in turn, allow celebrations that are welcomed by politicians and media moguls and that make funding agencies prone to support academic inquiries. In spite of the deceiving scholarly results produced by the Columbus Quincentenary of 1992, anniversaries can be beneficial to research. One of the most productive has certainly been in relation to the three voyages of the English navigator Martin Frobisher. Although the anniversary of his voyages of 1576, 1577 and 1588 belonged to the scholars of a quarter of a century ago, some of the best scholarly work has been published in the last decade.

In 1974, Walter Andrew Kenyon (1917-86), an archaeologist with the Royal Ontario Museum, organized a visit to Kodlunarn Island.⁹ This was the first archaeological mission to the Frobisher sites since one led in 1861-62 by Charles Francis Hall (1821-71), an American non-professional archaeologist, journalist and explorer. Hall had correctly identified Kodlunarn Island as the site of Frobisher's settlement on the basis of his archaeological findings and local Inuit oral tradition.¹⁰

8 Nicholas P. Canny, assisted by Elaine M. Low, eds., *The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 1998); Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2000); Germaine Warkentin, ed., *Canadian Exploration Literature: An Anthology* (Toronto, 1993); James Axtell, *Natives and Newcomers: The Cultural Origins of North America* (New York, 2001); Stuart B. Schwartz, ed., *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounter Between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge, 1994); Laurier Turgeon, Denis Delâge et Réal Ouellet, dirs., *Transferts culturels et métissages Amérique/Europe XVI^e - XX^e siècle/Cultural Transfer, America and Europe: 500 Years of Interculturation* (Sainte-Foy and Paris, 1996); Luigi Luca Cavalli Sforza, Paolo Menozzi and Alberto Piazza, *The History and Geography of Human Genes* (New Haven, 1994); Alfred W. Crosby, *Germs, Seeds, and Animals: Studies in Ecological History* (Armonk, N.Y. and London, 1994); Noble David Cook, *Born to Die: Disease and New World Conquest, 1492-1650* (Cambridge, 1998); John Kelly Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680* (Cambridge, 1992).

9 Kodlunarn Island is now known as Qallunaat. Kodlunarn ("White Man's Island", from "kodlunat", white people) was so named by the Inuit in memory of their meeting with Frobisher on that part of greater Baffin Island. See Walter Andrew Kenyon, *Tokens of Possession: The Northern Voyages of Martin Frobisher* (Toronto, 1975).

10 On Charles Francis Hall, see the touching narrative by Bruce B. Henderson, *Fatal North: Adventure and Survival Aboard USS Polaris, the First US Expedition to the North Pole* (New York, 2001) which complements the explorer's biography: Chauncey C. Loomis, *Weird and Tragic Shores: The Story of Charles Francis Hall, Explorer* (New York, 1971).

Kenyon confirmed Hall's discovery and called for further analysis, but his visit was short. At the same time as Kenyon's work, the Smithsonian Institution began a serious examination of an artifact that Hall had donated to the museum in 1863. This was a "bloom" – a piece of partially-processed iron – of uncertain origin that had allegedly been used by Frobisher. Under the guidance of Arctic archaeologist William W. Fitzhugh, the Smithsonian Institution took the lead in the 1970s and 1980s in the study of the Frobisher sites. The first Smithsonian mission to Kodlunarn took place in 1981. This was predominantly an American enterprise; only one Canadian archaeologist, Carolyn Phillips from Parks Canada, was part of the team. In 1990 and 1991 the Smithsonian Institution organized two more missions. Most of the field researchers were Americans, but Canadian archaeologists Réginald Auger (Université Laval), Lynda Gullason (McGill University) and Donald D. Hogarth (University of Ottawa) were also part of the two-year programme. Hogarth, a mineralogist, had begun to work on Frobisher on his own in the 1960s and 1970s.

The story of the Smithsonian Institution's Frobisher Bay project appears in William W. Fitzhugh and Jacqueline S. Olin, eds., *Archaeology of the Frobisher Voyages* (Washington, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993). The book, dedicated to the pioneer discoverers, Hall and Kenyon, and to the memory of Inuit historians, is subdivided into three sections: History, Field Studies and Analysis. Fitzhugh is a major contributor to the collection and the author of most of the historical and ethnographical articles. American ethnohistorian Wilcomb E. Washburn (1925-97) explores the story of the Smithsonian's involvement with Frobisher since Hall's donation of 1863. British ethnologist Susan Rowley considers the interaction between Hall and the Inuit and Réginald Auger provides an illuminating examination of 16th-century ceramics found on Kodlunarn in 1990.¹¹ The other contributions to the volume are highly technical and demonstrate the kind of geological and chemical sophistication needed by historical archaeology.¹²

In November 1989 the Smithsonian Institution project took a major step towards more structured international cooperation. As Fitzhugh indicates in the introduction, the team decided to expand "into a new and more formal phase of field studies as a joint Canadian, American, and British program . . . part of a Quincentennial effort featuring North Atlantic exploration and European-Inuit contacts in arctic North America". This led to the creation of "a formal structure known as the Meta Incognita Committee whose role, under Canadian ministerial oversight, was to control and coordinate the many interests involved in the growing Frobisher/Inuit-European contact research program" (p. 7). Other Canadian participants in the Meta Incognita Project included representatives from Canadian Museum of Civilization, the government of the Northwest Territories through the Prince of Wales Heritage Centre,

11 See also Réginald Auger, "Le premier établissement anglais au Nouveau Monde : les expéditions de Martin Frobisher (1576-1578) chez les Inuit de la Terre de Baffin", in Michel Fortin, dir., *L'archéologie et la rencontre de deux mondes : Présence européenne sur des sites amérindiens* (Hull, 1992), pp. 133-72.

12 Fitzhugh, Dosia Laeyendecker, Donald D. Hogarth, Rowley, Washburn and Olin contributed to the "History" section; Fitzhugh, Hogarth and Auger to "Field Studies"; Laeyendecker, Garmon Harbottle, Richard G. Cresswell, Raymond W. Stoenner, Henry Unglik, Michael L. Wayman and Robert M. Ehrenreich to "Analysis".

Parks Canada and the town of Iqaluit. In 1990 Fitzhugh and the Smithsonian team returned to the Frobisher sites. At the same time another independent team, consisting of Canadian archaeologists Charles D. Arnold (Prince of Wales Heritage Centre), Robert McGhee (Canadian Museum of Civilization) and James A. Tuck (Memorial University of Newfoundland) visited Kodlunarn under the sponsorship of the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

The available literature is unclear regarding what happened next. Fitzhugh states that Arnold, McGhee and Tuck were “present for part of the season” (p. 135). He also maintains that the Meta Incognita Project was a Smithsonian initiative. The second major collection of essays relating to the Frobisher sites, Thomas H. Symons, Stephen Alsford and Chris Kitzen, eds., *Meta Incognita* (Ottawa, Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1999) suggests otherwise. In the words of Symons, Vanier Professor at Trent University, it was the assessment provided by Arnold, McGhee and Tuck which “galvanized the Canadian Museum of Civilization into action and led to the creation of the Meta Incognita Project Committee” (p. ix). For his part, Ian Gourlay, the chairman of the Archives Research Task Force, the British branch of the Meta Incognita Project, states that the first meeting of the Steering Committee was held in Toronto on 26 November 1990 (p. 1).¹³ There is very little in the Symons, Alsford and Kitzen publication that connects the new team to the old one. The Smithsonian Institution seems to have left the field to the Canadian Museum of Civilization, although the former’s contribution, as well as Fitzhugh’s, is recognized as “on-going” and “an important component of this effort”, together with the work of Hogarth and Auger and the latter’s “associates centred at Université Laval” (pp. xi, 4). Furthermore, a British connection seems to have taken the place of the former American one. As acknowledged by Symons, the “most substantial addition” to the research team came “through the formation of the Archival Research Task Force (ARTAF) in the United Kingdom”, which was, supposedly, to complement the previous archaeological research. Together with Trent University, the task force provided the impetus necessary for several meetings, at least one scholarly colloquium and the publication of the new collection. Although Frobisher’s 400th anniversary was then rather distant in time, a felicitous coincidence provided the spark for this most grandiose publication. This was the official birth on 1 April 1999 of a new Territory, “which embraces the sites and seas once called Meta Incognita”: Nunavut. *Meta Incognita* is dedicated “to the People of Nunavut, past, present, and to be”. The birth of Nunavut was also celebrated by a major exhibition, “Inuit and Englishmen: The Nunavut Voyages of Martin Frobisher”, which opened at the

13 For lists of the participants, see Fitzhugh and Olin, eds., *Archaeology of the Frobisher Voyages*, pp. 104, 134-5. Symons is better known for his *To Know Ourselves: The Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies* (Ottawa, 1975), which signalled the beginning of Canadian Studies in Canada and internationally. See also Robert McGhee and James A. Tuck, “An Elizabethan Settlement in Arctic Canada”, *Rotunda*, 25, 4 (Spring 1993), pp. 32-40. Incidentally, Symons renders “Meta Incognita”, the name that Elizabeth I gave to Frobisher’s lands, as “the Unknown Shore”. The Latin “meta” is more properly translated into English as “destination” or “final aim”, not “shore”. For early reports on the findings of the Meta Incognita Project, see Stephen Alsford, ed., *The Meta Incognita Project: Contributions to Field Studies* (Hull, 1993), p. 228; D.D. Hogarth, P.W. Boreham and J.G. Mitchell, *Mines, Minerals, Metallurgy: Martin Frobisher’s Northwest Venture, 1576-1581* (Hull, 1994).

Canadian Museum of Civilization on 15 April 1999, under the curatorship of McGhee, another protagonist of the Frobisher sites missions (pp. xi-xii).

Meta Incognita is a handsome production, almost coffee-table size, and well illustrated. In spite of its official nature (the book opens with a series of letters reproduced in their original form, letterhead and handwritten signatures included), it is also a sound scholarly book. Articles providing historical context published by eminent specialists are printed alongside more technical contributions on medical skills and resources, ship design, navigational techniques and metallurgical technology.¹⁴ Perhaps the most original articles are by English Renaissance specialist William H. Sherman on the obscure role of John Dee¹⁵ and Bernard Allaire, "Methods of Assaying Ore and Their Application in the Frobisher Ventures" and "French Reactions to the Northwest Voyages and the Assays by Geoffroy Le Brumen of the Frobisher One (1576-1584)". Allaire is the author of a 1995 dissertation at Université Laval which was subsequently published as an acclaimed book on early French fur trade.¹⁶ His pieces of detective work, stemming from new research in the French archives, are the most original in the whole collection and show the extent of French and Spanish interest in the voyages.

James McDermott is a major contributor to *Meta Incognita* writing almost a quarter of the articles of the 1999 collection. He was the author of a 1984 doctoral dissertation on the London merchant Michael Lok, a major figure in 16th-century English voyages. The dissertation provided the first examination of the financial records of the Frobisher voyages. McDermott is best known for a 1998 address on Frobisher read before the Hakluyt Society, for editing documents relating to Frobisher's 1578 voyage and for his major monograph, *Martin Frobisher: Elizabethan Privateer* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001). This book is "popular" only in its appeal to the general public, being scholarly as well as comprehensive and well written.¹⁷ McDermott acknowledges Quinn's inspiration (p. xi) and closes on a somewhat politically correct reference to Nunavut: "the Inuit who have recently taken possession of their ancestral lands once more" (p. 434). McDermott draws on his own research and on that of the Smithsonian Institution and the *Meta Incognita* projects for a biography that supersedes all that was previously published on the English navigator.¹⁸

14 Eminent specialists are Quinn, Ann Savours Shirley, Richard I. Ruggles and Kirsten A. Seaver. James Watt deals with medical skills and resources, Ian Friel with ship design, David Waters with navigational techniques and Robert Baldwin with metallurgical technology.

15 On Dee's role, see also Ken MacMillan, "Discourse on History, Geography, and Law: John Dee and the Limits of the British Empire", *Canadian Journal of History*, 36, 1 (April 2001), pp. 1-25, especially pp. 12-13.

16 Bernard Allaire, *L'avènement de la traite des fourrures en Amérique du Nord-Est, 1500-1600*, thèse de doctorat, Université Laval, 1995; Allaire, *Pelletteries, manchons et chapeaux de castor : Les fourrures nord-américaines à Paris 1500-1632*, (Sillery, Québec and Paris, 1999).

17 James McDermott, "The Account Books of Michael Lok, Relating to the Northwest Voyages of Martin Frobisher, 1576-1578: Text and Analysis", Ph.D. thesis, University of Hull, 1984; McDermott, *The Navigation of the Frobisher Voyages* (London, 1998); McDermott, ed., *The Third Voyage of Martin Frobisher to Baffin Island 1578* (London, 2001).

18 The outpouring of new work based on the recent examination of the Frobisher voyages is not over; two additional books on the Frobisher voyages have been published when this review had already been completed. The first is a narrative of the parallel stories of Frobisher and Hall, as told by American journalist Robert S. Ruby, meant for a general audience. The second is McGhee's examination of Frobisher's Arctic voyages and their aftermath. If anything, the sheer number of monographs on the Frobisher voyages is evidence of the importance of serious, in-depth and long-

Another anniversary that produced illuminating scholarly results is that of the 1789-94 voyage that took Malaspina to South America, Pacific North America, Oceania and Southeast Asia. Between 1774 and 1794, Spanish naval officers carried out some 15 expeditions in the Pacific Northwest, from San Francisco Bay to the Aleutian Islands – more than the English, French, Russians and Americans combined. The North American portion of Malaspina's voyage took place between 1 May and 11 September 1791. He spent nine days in Port Mulgrave (or Yakutat Bay), in Alaska, and another 16 days at Nootka Sound, on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Malaspina was born in Mulazzo in the Duchy of Parma and Piacenza, and died not far away in Pontremoli. In spite of his life-long connection with the Italian peninsula, Malaspina was in the service of the Spanish navy from 1774 to 1795 and did not return home until 1803, following an almost seven-year internment in a Spanish jail. The Spanish establishment had accused him of sedition, and the legacy of that accusation was long-lasting. As British former Royal Navy commander and historian Andrew David noted in a 1999 lecture he delivered before the Hakluyt Society, this is why Malaspina's voyage is "perhaps the least known" among those of the great navigators of the late 18th century, such as James Cook and Jean-François de Galaup de La Pérouse. David also observed that in recent years "Enthusiasm for Malaspina's voyage has now been rekindled in Spain".¹⁹

Thanks to a number of well-established Spanish historians, backed by several governmental institutions and agencies, and Italian historian Dario Manfredi, Malaspina studies have finally taken off. (Manfredi works very much in solitude where Malaspina began and ended his life). The official journal of the voyage has been published in a handsome, two-volume, annotated *folio* edition. In the early 1990s, Malaspina conferences were held in Italy, Spain, Canada and the United States and their proceedings published.²⁰ More recently, the Malaspina expedition was examined as a result of an important 1998 exhibition at the Museu Etnològic of

term research. This only guarantees the advancement of human knowledge and allows its results to reach a more general audience. See Ruby, *Unknown Shore: The Lost History of England's Arctic Colony* (New York, 2001); McGhee, *The Arctic Voyages of Martin Frobisher: An Elizabethan Venture* (Montreal and Kingston, 2001).

19 Andrew David, *The Voyage of Alejandro Malaspina to the Pacific, 1789-1794* (London, 2000), pp. 3, 22.

20 Ricardo Cerezo Martínez and Carmen Sans Álvarez, eds., *Diario general del viaje* (Madrid, 1990), 2 tomes. This is volume II of a series called "La Expedición Malaspina, 1789-1794" of which eight volumes have so far been published between 1987 and 1996. The fully annotated translation into English of Malaspina's journal will soon be edited by David, Felipe Fernández Armesto, Carlos Novi and Glyndwr Williams. See also John C. Kendrick and Robin Inglis, *Enlightened Voyages: Malaspina and Galiano on the Northwest Coast, 1791-1792 / Voyages des lumières : Malaspina et Galiano sur la côte Nord Ouest, 1791-1792* (Vancouver, 1990-91); Donald C. Cutter, *Malaspina and Galiano: Voyages to the Northwest Coast, 1791 and 1792* (Toronto and Seattle, 1991) (a "companion book" to the "Enlightened Voyages" exhibition); Inglis, ed., *Spain and the North Pacific Coast: Essay in Recognition of the Bicentennial of the Malaspina Expedition 1791-1792* (Vancouver, 1992); Mercedes Palau Baquero and Antonio Orozco Acuaviva, eds., *Malaspina '92. I jornadas internacionales. Madrid-Cádiz-La Coruña. 17-25 de Septiembre de 1992* (Cádiz, 1994); Blanca Sáiz Martínez, ed., *Malaspina '93. Alessandro Malaspina e la sua spedizione scientifica 1789-1794. Atti del Congresso Internazionale nel Bicentenario della massima impresa di Alessandro Malaspina. Mulazzo, Castiglione del Terziere, Lerici, 24-26 settembre 1993* (Mulazzo and Cádiz, 1995); Orozco Acuaviva, Palau Baquero and J.M. Castanedo, eds., *Malaspina y Bustamante '94. II Jornadas Internacionales conmemorativas del regreso de la Expedición a Cádiz 1794-1994* (Cádiz and Santander, 1996).

Barcelona, mainly devoted to late 18th-century Spanish exploration in the region north of present-day Seattle, entitled “Nootka: Regreso a una historia olvidada” (“Return to a forgotten history”). Mercedes Palau Baquero, Marisa Calés and Araceli Sánchez, eds., *Nootka: regreso a una historia olvidada* (Madrid, Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, 1998) is a lavishly-produced catalogue from the exhibition containing several scholarly articles in Spanish, fully translated into English. Maria Dolores Higuera, “Aportación de la expedición de Malaspina y Bustamante al conocimiento de la costa noroeste de América Septentrional, 1791-1892 / Contribution of the Malaspina and Bustamante Expedition to Knowledge of the Northwest Coast of North America, 1791-1792”, deals specifically with the Malaspina expedition. What is especially noteworthy is the central part of the catalogue, in which all the interesting and most beautiful items that were shown at the exhibition are handsomely reproduced.²¹

These collections of articles show a renewed interest in the voyage, but suffer, as is often the case with proceedings, from the uneven quality of the contributions. Eventually, monographs began to appear. Three were published in 1999, in three different languages and three different countries.²² Canadian historian John C. Kendrick, a long-time student of 18th-century discovery and exploration along British Columbia’s coast, was himself involved in the Spanish Malaspina revival,²³ and has written one of these, *Alejandro Malaspina: Portrait of a Visionary* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999). This will probably be, for some years to come, the standard biography of the navigator. The book is slim and highly readable. Kendrick is mainly interested in the Malaspina voyages, his *forte*, but this focus narrows the scope of the book. *Alejandro Malaspina* is not the major monograph that scholars might want for future reference, something like McDermott’s *Martin Frobisher* or John Beaglehole’s *Life of Cook*.²⁴ Few questions are asked and answered, and a global context is wanting.

Yet another of the new publications on Malaspina is by Dario Manfredi. To date, Manfredi’s contributions have been published primarily in Italian and in obscure antiquarian journals and hard-to-find conference proceedings. He has now edited *Alessandro Malaspina e Fabio Ala Ponzone: Lettere dal Vecchio e Nuovo Mondo (1788-1803)* (Bologna, Società editrice il Mulino, 1999). A rather long introduction precedes the full text of 119 letters written between September 1788, when the expedition was prepared, and 28 December 1803, the year of Malaspina’s return to the Italian peninsula. The letters, which were carefully collected and edited by Manfredi,

21 The exhibition and the catalogue profited greatly from the sponsorship of a number of Spanish and Canadian institutional sponsors, in addition to the Spanish Association for Canadian Studies. The 1998 exhibition was the ideal continuation of another one that took place at the same museum in 1988. Its catalogue was published as Palau Baquero, ed., *El ojo del totem: Arte i cultura de los Indios del Noroeste de America* (Madrid, 1988).

22 Two are reviewed below. The third is Emilio Soler Pascual, *La aventura de Malaspina. La gran expedición científica del siglo XVIII por las costas de América, las Filipinas y las islas del Pacífico* (Barcelona, 1999).

23 Kendrick, *The Men with Wooden Feet: The Spanish Exploration of the Pacific Northwest* (Toronto, 1985); Kendrick, ed., *The Voyage of Sutil and Mexicana, 1792: The Last Spanish Exploration of the Northwest Coast of America* (Spokane, 1991).

24 John Cawte Beaglehole, *The Life of Captain James Cook* (Stanford, 1974).

come from several archival repositories and were hitherto mostly unpublished and unknown. From now on, this collection will constitute the basis of any new publication on the Malaspina expedition.

Manfredi's introduction, despite its cohesiveness and thoroughness, is not the full-scale, definitive biography that we have been awaiting from the Italian historian. Whereas Kendrick's interest lies in the voyages, Manfredi is more taken by Malaspina's political views. Was he in favour of Latin American independence? Did he represent colonialism? Manfredi answers both questions in the negative, but one wonders whether these are questions worth asking (pp. 120-2). Manfredi's examination of his main character is coloured by an attitude that prevails among Mediterranean historians. People of the past are often judged not against the standards of their contemporaries, but against those established by later historical developments. Were they on the right or on the wrong side of history – that is, did they share the views of those who eventually took the lead? Thus, Manfredi needs to show that Malaspina was indeed a man of the Enlightenment, whereas his Spanish opponents, contemporaries as well as later historians, were not.²⁵

In spite of these shortcomings, thanks to the recent renewed interest in his persona, Malaspina is not doing too badly when we compare his fate to that of two other protagonists of North American discovery and exploration. One is his contemporary rival, George Vancouver, a major figure in Pacific and North American maritime exploration. The other is Cabot, Columbus's northern alter ego, who sailed for the English and was a former resident of Venice – though his place of birth remains unknown.

The commemoration of Vancouver's 1792-94 visit to the Northwest coast of North America seems to have produced embarrassment, rather than celebration, among the residents of the present-day city named after him. In 1992 their elected representatives obscured Vancouver's own role in the exploration of the Northwest coast and chose to celebrate an encounter of peoples instead. This was, perhaps, meant to avoid any repetition of the Columbus backlash which was taking place in the rest of the Western world. To be sure, this attitude was well in line with Canada's official stand towards the Columbus Quincentenary, Canada being, according to Barry Gough, a Canadian historian of the British Navy, "perhaps . . . the most politically correct of all the American states".²⁶ New scholarship has suffered accordingly.

Luckily, Vancouver's 200th anniversary was preceded by the long-awaited, fully annotated edition of the navigator's narrative. This was made possible by editor William Kaye Lamb (1904-99), a former Canadian National Librarian and Dominion Archivist, and, once more, by the Hakluyt Society.²⁷ Two books worth noting came out in conjunction with the 1992-94 anniversary of Vancouver's voyages and both are conference proceedings. Robin A. Fisher and Hugh J.M. Johnston, eds., *From Maps*

25 Manfredi's somewhat old-fashioned attitude is also evident in his use of capital initials when dealing with Malaspina (*il Carcerato, l'Esule, il Navigatore, il Prigioniero, la Spedizione*), very much in line with the style of another major Italian non-professional historian, Christopher Columbus's biographer, Paolo Emilio Taviani (1912-2001), who used to refer to his books as "la mia opera" ("my opus"). On Malaspina's politics, see also Soler Pascual, *Antagonismo político en la España de Godoy. La conspiración Malaspina (1795-1796)* (Alicante, Spain, 1990).

26 Gough, "Goodbye Columbus?", p. 9.

27 See George Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Round the World 1791-1795*, William Kaye Lamb, ed. (London, 1984), 4 volumes.

to *Metaphors: The Pacific World of George Vancouver* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1993) includes 13 of 21 papers read at the “Vancouver Conference on Exploration and Discovery” held at Simon Fraser University on 23-26 April 1992. Fisher and Johnston are distinguished scholars of British Columbia and both are, in different ways, very knowledgeable in the fields of aboriginal and ethnic history.²⁸ Their book, however, suffers from a lack of clear direction. The contributions themselves are, for the most part, rather traditional in approach. There are articles on the geopolitics and the image of the Pacific Ocean, on Vancouver’s technology and documentation and on international relations. There are also three articles on European-aboriginal relations, besides a short yet fascinating introductory essay by Squamish elder Louis Miranda (1892-1990), which recounts his people’s oral recollections of Vancouver in 1792.²⁹ Is *From Maps to Metaphors* a book about Vancouver or about the aboriginal peoples he met? That is, do we place it in the discovery and exploration or in the contact category? The two, of course, need not be mutually exclusive. The answer is that the editors tried to have it both ways, but in the end they did not meet the expectations of either camp. For example, in subsequent reviews of *From Maps to Metaphor*, a traditional historian of cartography lashes out at its “political correctness” and at the exclusion of several sound pieces that had been presented at the conference. For his part, a militant supporter of aboriginal rights finds nothing good in it except some sparse attempts – all by women from New Zealand and Australia, he emphasizes – to depict “the First Nations’ perspectives”.³⁰

Fisher and Johnston’s introduction is one of the best features in the collection. It manages to balance a short but clear synthesis of Vancouver’s own role and of the mixed recognition he suffered from his contemporaries, with the need to take into account the presence and viewpoint of the local aboriginal peoples. But Fisher and Johnston also make it very clear that while Vancouver did not particularly appreciate the aboriginal nations he met (although he liked the Hawai’ians), this attitude does not justify making Vancouver and all other European navigators and explorers of his time responsible for “the ideas and enterprises spawned by their voyages”. Fisher and Johnston are keen to distance themselves from those well-intentioned writers who, in order to “to present a politically palatable version of the past”, rewrite the history of the North American aboriginal peoples “as a straight and unrelieved downhill run from 1492 to the present day”, conveniently forgetting the “periods and places of

28 See Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver, 1977); Fisher and Kenneth Coates, eds., *Out of the Background: Readings on Canadian Native History* (Toronto, 1988); Johnston and Tara Singh Bains, *The Voice of a Sikh: Giani Tara Singh Bains, an Indo-Canadian* (Montreal and Kingston, 1995); Johnston and J.S. Grewal, eds., *The Canada-India Relationship: Exploring the Political Economic and Cultural Dimensions* (New Delhi and London, 1994). See also their preceding “companion volume”, Fisher and Johnston, eds., *Captain James Cook and His Times* (Vancouver, 1979).

29 Articles on the geopolitics and the image of the Pacific Ocean are by Ben Finney, K.R. Howe, David MacKay and Glyndwr Williams; on Vancouver’s technology and documentation by David, Alun C. Davies and Lamb; on international relations by Christon I. Archer, Alan Frost and James R. Gibson; on European-aboriginal relations by Yvonne Marshall, Anne Salmond and Victoria Wyatt. The introductory essay is signed by Louis Miranda and Philip Joe.

30 Norman J.W. Thrower, “Review”, *Pacific Historical Review*, 64, 1 (February 1995), pp. 122-3; David T. McNab, “Review”, *Canadian Historical Review*, LXXII, 3 (September 1996), pp. 433-6.

cooperation and accommodation" (pp. 6-18).³¹

Furthermore, although this is never explicitly stated, the editors also avoid the current fashion among "colonial discourse" historians and deconstructionist literary critics. They believe that no European could really apprehend the New World, because, even when, in the words of John Elliott, they "had the desire to look, and the eyes to see, there is no guarantee that the image which presented itself to them – whether of peoples or of places – necessarily accorded with the reality".³² Unfortunately, Fisher and Johnston's call for a new history that would add to our knowledge, while showing the points of view of the Europeans and the aboriginal peoples, is not fully met by the collection of articles they have assembled.

Stephen Haycox, James K. Barnett and Caedmon A. Liburd, eds., *Enlightenment and Exploration in the North Pacific 1741-1805* (Seattle and London, University of Washington Press for the Cook Inlet Historical Society in the Anchorage Museum of History and Art, 1997) is also a collection of conference proceedings. *Enlightenment and Exploration* was meant to celebrate Vancouver's arrival at Cook Inlet in 1792, and is devoted to what is today northern British Columbia and Alaska. In spite of its limited geographical scope, it may well be considered a second volume in an ideal "Vancouver and His Times" series. Here again we have a fusion of the geopolitics and the image of the northern Pacific coast, technology and documentation, international relations and European-aboriginal relations.³³ Although non-professional historians are more fully represented here than in *From Maps to Metaphors*, the overall result is strikingly similar. These are sound, traditional pieces, which go alongside an attempt to recognize the role of aboriginal peoples. There is also a similar attempt to downplay Vancouver's own role – his name does not appear either in the title of the conference or in that of its proceedings. Of particular interest, at least to this reader, are American librarian Carol Urness, "Russian Mapping of the North Pacific to 1792" and British historian Anthony Payne, "The Publication and Readership of Voyage Journals in the Age of Vancouver". Fisher, "George Vancouver and the Native Peoples of the Northwest Coast", which closes the collection, is as good as, and very similar to (at times often verbatim) his introduction to *From Maps to Metaphors*, although he now

31 Fisher and Johnston make explicit reference to Ronald Wright, *Stolen Continents: The Americas Through Indian Eyes Since 1492* (New York, 1992). Another example of this best-selling, but misleading, literature is Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy* (New York, 1990).

32 John Huxtable Elliott, *The Old World and the New 1492-1650* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 20. Elliott himself, of course, never went as far as some of his more radical followers. While showing that early English authors placed the North American aboriginal peoples in "familiar schemes of how human society is supposed to function", Kupperman is keen to emphasize that the latter, however, did just the same thing. See Kupperman, *Indians and English*, p. 1.

33 *Enlightenment and Exploration in the North Pacific* (1997) consists of 13 of the 16 papers presented at the "Exploration in the North Pacific, 1742-1805" conference organized by the Cook Inlet Historical Society at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art in October 1994. The editors have also included two lectures that were offered prior to the conference. Articles on the geopolitics and the image of the northern Pacific coast are by Jonathan C.H. King, Anthony Payne and Kesler E. Woodward; on technology and documentation by David, Davies, John M. Naish, Kendrick and Carol Urness; on international relations by Barnett, Iris H. Wilson Engstrand, Phyllis S. Herda, Inglis and Glyndwr Williams; on European-aboriginal relations by Fisher and Stephen J. Langdon.

examines in some depth Vancouver's encounter with the local aboriginal people.³⁴

Cabot fared much worse than Vancouver – except that Vancouver's name was almost obliterated, whereas no such shame was felt with regard to Cabot. The 1997 anniversary marking his first voyage across the North Atlantic was celebrated by whoever could claim some right over the navigator's memory – Italy (Gaeta and Venice), England and Newfoundland. The only exception was the city of Genoa, which had been so overtaken by the Columbus Quincentenary that it simply forgot that Cabot's Genoese connections are yet to be discarded. The Newfoundland celebrations were particularly enthusiastic. As soon as the Columbus uproar had abated, Cabot took off and publications bearing the Cabot imprint became numerous. Despite the enthusiasm, it is simply mind-boggling that so little has been achieved in terms of scholarship that adds to human knowledge.

We know very little about Cabot's life and deeds. Evidence may still be found hidden in some archival repository, although some additional material has been uncovered recently. The scarcity of original documentation is a common problem regarding early navigators, discoverers and explorers. Were it not for the 1497-98 letter of the London merchant John Day, published by Vigneras in 1956, Cabot specialists would hardly have moved a step further than the historians who celebrated Cabot's 400th anniversary in 1897.³⁵ They continue to battle over the five traditional landfall hypotheses: the Strait of Belle-Isle, Bonavista, Labrador, Cape Breton Island and the current border between Maine and Nova Scotia. Unfortunately, as Canadian historical geographer Bernard G. Hoffman pointed out in 1961 – and French historian Henry Harrisse (1829-1910) back in 1896 – the sources “are just sufficient to place his [Cabot's] landfall in the Newfoundland region, but all other statements are speculation”.³⁶

34 In addition to Malaspina and Vancouver, another protagonist in Spain's Northwestern expeditions has also recently received some recognition. Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra, born in Peru, was the commander in charge of the negotiations with Vancouver. A conference on “Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra (1744-1794): Sus viajes y su época” was held in Lima on 17-19 August 1994. His journal was published in *Nutka 1792* together with the charts and drawings of the expedition and Bodega y Quadra's Spanish-Nootka dictionary. The book, edited by Mercedes Palau Baquero, Freeman Tovell, Pamela Spratz and Robin Inglis, is prefaced by twelve background articles. See Palau Baquero, Tovell, Spratz and Inglis, eds., *Nutka 1792: Viaje a la Costa Noroeste de la América Septentrional pour Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra, Capitán de Navío* (Madrid, 1998). It contains articles by José Alcina Franch, Eric Beerman, Salvador Bernabeu Albert, Inglis, Kendrick, Antonio Menchaca Careaga, Palau Baquero, Soler Pascual, Tovell (who is also the journal's editor) and Wilson Engstrand. On Bodega y Quadra, see also Yvonne Marshall, “Dangerous Liaisons: Maquinna, Quadra, and Vancouver in Nootka Sound, 1790-5”, in Fisher and Johnston, eds., *From Maps to Metaphors*, pp. 160-75, 324-7.

35 On the reliability of early sources, see for example David P. Henige, “Primary Source by Primary Source? On The Role of Epidemics in New World Depopulation”, *Ethnohistory*, XXXIII, 3 (Summer 1986), pp. 292-312; Henige, *In Search of Columbus: The Sources for the First Voyage* (Tucson, 1991); Luca Codignola, “Another Look at Verrazzano's Voyage, 1524”, *Acadiensis*, XXIX, 1 (Autumn 1999), pp. 29-42.

36 Henry Harrisse, *John Cabot the Discoverer of North America and Sebastian Cabot His Son: A Chapter of the Maritime History of England Under the Tudors 1456-1557* (London, 1896); Bernard Gilbert Hoffman, *Cabot to Cartier: Sources for a Historical Ethnography of Northeastern North America 1497-1550* (Toronto, 1961), p. 16. Louis André Vigneras, “New Light on the 1497 Cabot Voyage to America”, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 34, 4 (November 1956), pp. 502-9; Vigneras, “The Cape Breton Landfall: 1494 or 1497. Notes on a Letter from John Day”, *Canadian Historical Review*, XXXVIII, 3 (September 1957), pp. 219-28.

To date, the best account of Cabot's voyage remains the synthesis published in 1962 by James Williamson, which contains practically all the relevant sources.³⁷ His *The Cabot Voyages* is the chronological and historiographical boundary of the new book by Spanish historian Manuel Ballesteros Gaibrois, *Juan Caboto*, (Valladolid, Spain, Casa Museo de Colón, Seminario Americanista de la Universidad de Valladolid, 1997) – a deceiving state-of-the-art synthesis, to say the least.³⁸ Not only are his historiographical questions rather limited in scope, but he is unable to answer any one of them. Where was Caboto born? Where and when did he die? What do we know of his family? To a Spanish-speaking audience the book is actually misleading, as Ballesteros Gaibrois upholds the idea that Cabot might have been originally from Gaeta and that he returned from his second voyage and died in London (pp. 66, 78, 115-27, 164-5). Last but not least, in a style that would not have been employed even by a 19th-century erudite such as Harisse, Ballesteros Gaibrois solemnly affirms that Cabot “*es el descubridor de las grandes pesquerías del Norte*” (p. 113).³⁹ So much for the last 30 years of maritime history of the North Atlantic world.⁴⁰ Still, the book might be worth consulting for the compact documentary appendix and for the summary of Cabot's activities in Spain, the result of Ballesteros Gaibrois's most original contribution (pp. 140-9, 187-283).

What, then, of the publications meant to celebrate 1997? Today, any student of history would select Peter E. Pope, *The Many Landfalls of John Cabot* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1997) as his or her starting point. Pope is a specialist in early 17th-century maritime history, with a special interest in the historical anthropology of the Newfoundland trade. His doctoral dissertation, together with the path-breaking work of the James Tuck's Memorial University Archaeological Unit, finally unveiled the obscure history of 17th-century colonization in the Avalon Peninsula.⁴¹ This “memoir of John Cabot”, as Pope defines it, is meant “to contrast what we know about Cabot with what we think we know”. But this is not a book about Cabot. Our current knowledge of Cabot's voyages is rapidly reviewed in one chapter,

37 James Alexander Williamson, *The Cabot Voyages and Bristol Discovery under Henry VII* (Cambridge, 1962).

38 The book is the Spanish version of a manuscript that should have been published, in Italian, in the series known as “Nuova Raccolta Colombiana” meant to celebrate the Columbus Quincentenary. In a puzzling remark, Ballesteros Gaibrois attributes delays in publishing his manuscript and the whole series being put on hold to “las condiciones políticas italianas de los últimos aos” (p. 7). One wonders what he is referring to. That the “Nuova Raccolta Colombiana” is (or was) an extremely expensive governmental enterprise which has produced almost nothing of scholarly relevance seems to be a more plausible reason for its suspension.

39 Translated as “the discoverer of the large northern fisheries”.

40 See Michel Mollat du Jourdin, dir., *L'aventure maritime, du golfe de Gascogne à Terre-Neuve* (Paris, 1995); Peter Edward Pope, “The 16th-Century Fishing Voyage”, in James E. Candow and Carol Corbin, eds., *How Deep is the Ocean? Historical Essays on Canada's Atlantic Fishery* (Sydney, 1997), pp. 15-30; Turgeon, “French Fishers, Fur Traders, and Amerindians during the Sixteenth Century: History and Archaeology”, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, LX, 4 (October 1998), pp. 584-610; Olaf Uwe Janzen, “The European Presence in Newfoundland, 1500-1604”, in Iona Bulgin, ed., *Cabot and his World Symposium June 1997: Papers and Presentations* (St. John's, 1999), pp. 129-38.

41 Pope, “The South Avalon Planters, 1630 to 1700: Residence, Labour, Demand and Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Newfoundland”, Ph.D. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1992.

which mainly relies on Hoffman, Quinn and Williamson. Thanks to its compact review of the existing evidence, students and “educated lay reader[s]” willing to get acquainted with the state of our current ignorance about what Cabot really did will start from here (pp. xi, 7, 166).

The real interest of Pope’s book does not reside with discovery and exploration, but rather with public history. Its author makes plain that it was not scholarly curiosity, but sheer nationalism that shaped the debate about Cabot’s itinerary a century ago. The Cabot tradition, to adapt British historian Eric Hobsbawm’s terms, was invented by 19th-century Canadians as “an anti-American posture” to counter the parallel American invention of the Columbus tradition. Similarly, the debate over the several hypotheses of Cabot’s landfall derived from “anglophone/francophone cultural tensions within Canada” and from the “competition between Canada and Newfoundland” (p. 8). Certainly, American and Canadian historians had already linked the creation of the Cabot tradition to the Canadian community of Italian origin.⁴² Still, Pope’s treatment of this theme is the most innovative part of his book, a welcome addition to the public history of late 19th-century Canada and Newfoundland within the more general context of the British empire.

Three more books bearing Cabot’s name in their titles must also be noted. Iona Bulgin, ed., *Cabot and His World Symposium, June 1997: Papers and Presentations* (St. John’s, The Newfoundland Historical Society, 1999) includes 22 articles ranging from consideration of the local aboriginal peoples and the European context of the Cabot voyages, to the debate on Cabot’s landfall, the European presence in Newfoundland in the 16th century, and the public use of Cabot’s voyages themselves. Although well packaged, the collection does not contain anything that is especially new or original.⁴³

The other two books were published in Italy. Marcella Arca Petrucci and Simonetta Conti, eds., *Giovanni Caboto e le vie dell’Atlantico settentrionale, Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi. Roma, 29 settembre-1 ottobre 1997* (Genoa, Brigati, 1999), contains the full conference proceedings and includes some good articles. It also suffers, though, from the worst tradition of the Italian academic world: there is no peer evaluation or vetting of the articles submitted, no editorial uniformity and no thematic focus. Only six of the 39 articles deal specifically with Cabot. One, by Italian historical geographer Ilaria Luzzana Caraci, “Giovanni Caboto cinquecento anni dopo” is a short survey of Cabot studies over five centuries, from Spanish priest and historian Francisco López de Gómara to United States Navy Rear Admiral and

42 See, for example, Robert F. Harney, “Caboto and Other Parentela: The Uses of the Italian-Canadian Past”, in Roberto Perin and Franc Sturino, eds., *Arrangiarsi: The Italian Immigration Experience in Canada* (Montreal, 1989), pp. 37-61; Roberto Perin, “La découverte canadienne de Jean Cabot ou les emplois de l’histoire”, in Rosella Mamoli Zorzi and Ugo Tucci, eds., *Venezia e i Caboto: Le relazioni italo canadesi. Atti del Convegno Internazionale. Università di Venezia, 21-23 maggio 1990* (Venice, 1992), pp. 103-18.

43 The articles on the local aboriginal peoples and their relationship with the Europeans are by Daniel Ashini, Ingeborg Marshall, Shayne McDonald and Gerald Penney. David Artiss, Todd Gray, Evan Jones, Colin Mudie, Birgitta Wallace and Alan F. Williams write on the European context; Brian C. Cuthbertson, James K. Hiller, Lara Maynard, Fabian O’Dea, and Alan F. Williams again, on Cabot’s landfall; Darlene Abreu-Ferreira and Janzen on the European presence; and Shane O’Dea, Perin and Pope on Cabot’s public history.

historian Samuel Eliot Morison (1887-1976). Two more, by Renaissance specialists Luisa D'Arienzo and Vera Liguori Mignano, should never have been printed in a scholarly book. Without footnotes or documentary evidence (the latter in barely three pages), they discuss the matter of Cabot's origin simply on the known existence of some "Caboto" family names in certain areas – and reach opposite conclusions. Articles by Annalisa D'Ascenzo, Maria Cristina Fanelli and Patricia Licini are on the later Cabot image and traditional cartographical problems.

The second Italian book is Rosella Mamoli Zorzi, ed., *Attraversare gli Oceani: Da Giovanni Caboto al Canada multiculturale* (Venice, Marsilio, 1999). Mamoli Zorzi, an Italian literary critic, edited this collection of articles originating from a conference held in Toronto on 16-18 October 1997.⁴⁴ Historians of discovery and exploration consulting the book for scholarship on Cabot will find a number of articles of great value. These include Roberto Perin, "Cabot as a Contested Ethnic Icon", Gabriele Pietro Scardellato, "John Cabot, Jean Cabot or Giovanni Caboto: What's in a Name?" and Angelo Principe, "Chronicles from 'Cabotia': 1925-1935". While these authors elucidate the political use of the Cabot myth, Italian archivist Edoardo Giuffrida has produced something new, and rather interesting, on the navigator, for the first time since the 1950s. He could have made our lives easier had he written one article instead of two. The two pieces, "Ricerche cabotiane, nuove prospettive storiografiche" and "New Documents on Giovanni Caboto", tell variations of the same story, but are not identical and need to be read one alongside the other; still, the contents are important.

Not only has Giuffrida found the only known autograph signatures by Cabot, but he was able to document additional aspects of Cabot's life. Cabot lived in Venice from at least 1461 to shortly before 1488. He was a full citizen (1476) and a recognized member of Venetian society, engaged in various activities and officially a trader in animal skins and pelts. He was in contact with a group of people variously engaged in international activities and he himself travelled at least once to the Middle East in 1483. His interest in oceanic navigations preceded Columbus's voyages. He left Venice in 1488 in order to avoid imprisonment for debts and, in his subsequent wanderings, he followed up his fur and wool trade connections visiting Valencia in 1490-93, Seville in 1494 and finally Bristol in 1495 (pp. 47-59, 61-71). While, some of these elements were already known, Giuffrida provides the Venetian social and economic context allowing historians to make sense of what, so far, had been mainly scattered pieces of evidence. He also enables us to distance ourselves from the debate over Cabot's origins, annoying and distracting as this discussion is. In short, were it not for these two short articles by Giuffrida based upon individual, painstaking and imaginative archival research, one might have concluded that the millions of dollars that were spent in the Cabot celebrations perhaps fostered tourism and promoted national identities or community awareness, but did not add a single line to our knowledge of the Venetian-English navigator.⁴⁵

44 The conference was entitled "Attraversare gli oceani / Crossing the Ocean / Traverser l'océan". Articles by Gino Benzoni, Piero Falchetta, Alberto Tenenti and Tucci are background pieces, all of them published either without footnotes or with sparse footnotes. The book also contains several articles by literary critics. See the similar collection, Mamoli Zorzi and Tucci, eds., *Venezia e i Caboto*.

45 In reviewing a number of publications issued between 1996 and 1997 in conjunction with the Cabot anniversary (although none of the titles are included in this review), Janzen, a Canadian maritime

If any celebration has been planned to commemorate the anniversary of the voyages of the two Azorean Corte Real brothers, the alleged Portuguese pioneers in the cod fishing industry who sailed towards Greenland and Newfoundland in 1501-02, its echo had not reached this writer. The only exception might be a short note, independent of any celebratory occasion, by the Canadian geographer, W. Stan W. Nowak, who calls for an examination of the hypothesis that the two brothers were of Channel Island origin.⁴⁶ At any rate, Portuguese historians of discovery and exploration have little to celebrate. According to Canadian historian Darlene Abreu-Ferreira, although “fantastic statements about the importance of Portugal’s involvement in the region abound”,⁴⁷ the activity of its fishermen in the region was at best “intermittent”. Furthermore, “the highest number of Portuguese ships known to have gone to Newfoundland in any one year is eleven”, as opposed to the hundreds or so traditionally claimed by Portuguese historians more interested in extolling Portugal’s pre-eminence in North Atlantic discoveries than in sound archival research. Unfortunately, as Abreu-Ferreira notes, illustrious non-Portuguese historians, such as Morison, Harold Adams Innis (1894-1952), Keith Matthews (1938-84), and even David Beers Quinn, have followed suit and have accepted this myth at face value. In doing so, they also promulgated the notion of Portugal’s early involvement in the Newfoundland voyages.⁴⁸

Not directly linked to any of the anniversaries examined so far, but certainly stimulated by the climate these generated, are two Canadian historians’ single-handed attempts to address the overall theme of North Atlantic and North American exploration. James J. Sharp, *Discovery of the North Atlantic* (Halifax, Nimbus, 1991)⁴⁹ and Raymonde Litalien, *Les explorateurs de l’Amérique du Nord 1492-1795* (Sillery, Septentrion, 1993) are exceptional in that their efforts require not only the mastery of a vast secondary literature, but also, most importantly, a confidence verging on boldness. The latter we usually associate with past generations of historians such as Innis, Morison or Parry. Although their general framework is rather traditional, these two books are praiseworthy.

Discovery of the North Atlantic is an old-fashioned, highly readable, short account of the discovery of the Atlantic from the 6th to the 17th century. Although entirely

historian, concluded that “the legacy of the Cabot quincentenary is not an impressive one”. See Janzen, “1497 and all that . . .”, *Newfoundland Quarterly*, 92, 1 (Summer 1998), pp. 46-8. See also Brian C. Cuthbertson, “Voyages to North America before John Cabot: Separating Fact from Fiction”, *Collections of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society*, 44 (1995), pp. 121-44; David Beers Quinn, “John Cabot and the 1497 Voyage to Newfoundland”, *Newfoundland Studies*, 15, 1 (Spring 1999), pp. 104-10.

46 W. Stan W. Nowak, “Were the Corte-Reals of Channel Island Origin?”, *Newfoundland Quarterly*, 88, 1 (Spring 1993), pp. 14-15.

47 Abreu-Ferreira, “The Portuguese in Newfoundland: Documentary Evidence Examined”, *Portuguese Studies Review*, 9, 2 (Fall-Winter 1995-6), pp. 11-33, citation at p. 11.

48 Abreu-Ferreira, “Terra Nova through the Iberian Looking Glass: The Portuguese-Newfoundland Cod Fishery in the Sixteenth Century”, *Canadian Historical Review*, 79, 1 (March 1998), pp. 100-15, citations at pp. 108, 106; Abreu-Ferreira, “Portuguese in Newfoundland”, p. 11. A detailed survey of historical literature appears in Abreu-Ferreira, “Portugal’s Cod-Fishery in the 16th Century: Myths and Misconceptions”, in Candow and Corbin, eds., *How Deep is the Ocean?*, pp. 31-44.

49 Sharp’s book was actually published before 1993, this article’s starting date. It is noted here because it is one of a kind and in many ways coincides with Litalien’s scholarship.

based on secondary sources, Sharp at times manages to be challenging. For example, he shows how little historians know about the Irish ventures in the North Atlantic. Individual accounts of these voyages have rightly been “treated with considerable skepticism”, yet, “taken together, the strength and credibility of the whole is . . . much greater than that of the individual parts” (p. 21). One might recall that historians and archaeologists had the same feeling with reference to the Norse before the early 1960s findings of Norwegian archaeologist Anne Stine Ingstad (1918-97) and her husband, author Helge Ingstad (1899-2001).⁵⁰ Sharp also succeeds, for the first time in a synthesis of this sort, in integrating into his narrative the latest documentary and archaeological discoveries relating to the Basque whalers in Labrador.

Litalien’s study, *Les explorateurs de l’Amérique du Nord*, is very much in the same vein as Sharp’s, taking the story up to the end of the 18th century – although the post-1760 portion is rather short. Two eminently qualified students of European expansion into the North Atlantic area, Pope and Canadian historian Marcel Trudel, are at odds in judging this book, and both provide details that show either Litalien’s mastery of her sources or just the opposite.⁵¹ Litalien’s ambitious plan to discuss the exploits of the French alongside those of the English, the Spanish, the Portuguese and even the Russians must be commended. This international framework avoids not only the traditional chauvinism so common in most pre-1960s syntheses, but also the generalizations of their “progressive” counterparts, so fashionable among post-1960s French historians.⁵² Like Sharp’s study, this book is based on secondary sources. Having for many years actively participated in and then coordinated the effort of the archivists of the National Archives of Canada working in the French and Spanish archives, Litalien’s own intimate knowledge of the sources is clear. Concurrently, her more limited acquaintance with the English, Portuguese and Russian material is also evident. This book is best when it sticks to the explorers and their deeds. When it ventures into the larger framework of European expansion, it tends to repeat traditional, common sense cause-and-effect links. Parkmanesque questions such as those concerning why England defeated France (naval power according to Litalien), should not be asked anymore. Answers are never satisfactory and, when applied to any specific issue, they never hold.

In recent years, syntheses, when they exist, tend to be the product of collective efforts, each specialist mining his or her own field, rather than a one-author enterprise. This is the case with John B. Hattendorf, ed., *Maritime History: Volume One: The Age*

50 On Irish voyages and the possibility of those of others, see Robert McGhee, “Northern Approaches Before Columbus: Early European Visitors to the New World”, *The Beaver*, 72, 3 (May 1992), pp. 6-23; Alan F. Williams, “Sailor Saints, Northmen and Princes: European Lights on the Sea of Darkness”, in Bulgin, ed., *Cabot and his World*, pp. 49-62. A rather influential, albeit controversial, book not examined here is Kristen A. Seaver, *The Frozen Echo: Greenland and the Exploration of North America, ca. A.D. 1000-1500* (Stanford, 1996). Its examination requires a knowledge of Norse history that this writer does not possess.

51 Marcel Trudel’s positive review is in *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française*, XLVII, 4 (printemps 1994), pp. 568-9; Pope’s negative review is in *Canadian Historical Review*, LXII, 3 (September 1996), pp. 441-2.

52 See, for example, Pierre Pluchon and Denise Bouche, *Histoire de la colonisation française* (Paris, 1991), 2 vols.; Carmen Bernand and Serge Gruzinski, *Histoire du Nouveau Monde : De la découverte à la conquête, une expérience européenne, 1492-1550* (Paris, 1991).

of *Discovery* (Malabar, Fla., Krieger Publishing Company, 1996) and *Maritime History: Volume Two: The 18th Century* (Malabar, Fla., Krieger Publishing Company, 1997). These volumes contain lectures delivered at the John Carter Brown Library of Providence, Rhode Island during two Summer Institutes in Early Modern Maritime History held in 1992 and 1993.⁵³ They are in essence textbooks; footnotes are often replaced by suggestions for further reading, and documentary evidence is seldom mentioned. What makes the works special is the quality of their contributors, all top specialists in their own field, who manage to write state-of-the-art articles along clear-cut editorial lines.⁵⁴ Noticeably lacking however is the inclusion of the scholarship of a distinguished specialist in French maritime history, such as Turgeon for the 16th century, or Alain Cabantous and James S. Pritchard for the 17th and the 18th centuries. The only article devoted to the French is Anthony N. Ryan, "France and the Atlantic in the Sixteenth Century", and the bibliography shows its author's ignorance of French language historiography. Of the two volumes, *The 18th Century* is less interesting in terms of discovery and exploration studies, except for articles on Pacific exploration and on the science and practice of navigation.⁵⁵

Another good example of a collective effort is Emerson W. Baker and Kristine L. Jones, eds., *American Beginnings: Exploration, Culture, and Cartography in the Land of Norumbega* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1994). As is often the case, an exhibition and a subsequent conference provided the departure point for this handsomely-produced selection of the conference papers edited by an American historian and an American ethnohistorian. Both the exhibition and the conference were entitled "The Land of Norumbega". The exhibition opened at the Portland Museum of Art on 15 November 1988, and the conference was held in December. Where *Maritime History* spans a lengthy period of time, *American Beginnings* is geographically and chronologically focussed on the land of Norumbega. This a toponymy that in the early maps roughly identified the region around and to the north of Penobscot Bay, Maine.⁵⁶

American Beginnings is a good example of interdisciplinary study of a well-defined area at the time of contact. It is telling that the best scholarship examined so far, including *American Beginnings*, comes from scholars who have managed to blend the traditional canons of discovery and exploration studies with contact studies, historical archaeology, and even old-fashioned social and economic history.

53 The John Carter Brown Library, directed since 1983 by American historian Norman S. Fiering, is the international temple of discovery and exploration studies in the Americas. The purpose of these Institutes was to train college and university teachers in the United States in maritime history.

54 Contributors are Richard W. Unger (early voyages), Charles Verlinden and George D. Winius (Portugal), Fernández Armesto, William D. Phillips, Jr. and Carla Rahn Phillips (Spain) and Anthony N. Ryan (England).

55 Glyndwr Williams deals with Pacific exploration; Karel Davids and Willem F.J. Mörzner discuss the science and practice of navigation; Daniel A. Baugh, Benjamin W. Labaree and Nicholas A.M. Rodger address international history; Roger J.N. Knight and Thomas Philbrick focus on maritime history.

56 Laurier Turgeon has demonstrated that Norman and Basque fishermen – the most numerous visitors to the area – preferred to use Terre-Neuve or Côte de la Floride. See Turgeon, "French Fishers, Fur Traders, and Amerindians during the Sixteenth Century; History and Archaeology", *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, LV, 4 (October 1998), pp. 584-610, especially pp. 596-7.

However, the decade or so that intervened between the planning of the conference and the publication of its proceedings indicates the widening “gap” between scholarship in the mid 1980s and the mid 1990s. The questions asked by scholars and the secondary literature available to them had changed somewhat. This whole enterprise seems to have started off almost as a “discovery and exploration” project. However, along the way, the volume seems to have lost some of its traditional approach and increasingly become a “contact studies” initiative. There is a substantial difference between Part One: “European Discovery, Exploration, and Cartography” and Part Two: “Native Americans and the European Encounter”, the latter being the most original and innovative part of the collection.⁵⁷

Although this review essay has focussed on discovery rather than exploration, it is important to, at least briefly, examine the *magnum opus* on the field of exploration studies per se of the past decade: John Logan Allen, ed., *North American Exploration* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska, 1997). It is subdivided into three volumes – I: *A New World Disclosed*; II: *A Continent Defined*; III: *A Continent Comprehended* – which stretch from the Norse beginnings well into the 19th century. Several important specialists of exploration or of European expansion in general were enlisted to thoroughly examine their own field of expertise.⁵⁸ The quality of individual articles appears to be sound; they are state-of-the-art essays which blend factual accounts with critical historiographical analysis. The reader may consult these volumes for information about individual aspects of exploration, or to become acquainted with the main questions which are in need of answers. They should be aware, though, that the collection was at least a decade in the making. Indeed, 1992, rather than 1997, seems to have been the closing date for most of the articles. As is the case with the Hattendorf collection, the absence of a true specialist in 16th-century French exploration is regrettable. Although Karen Kupperman includes an 11-page summary of French exploration in her essay, “A Continent Revealed: Assimilation of the Shape and Possibilities of North America’s East Coast, 1524-1610”, her overview is based entirely on English-language literature.

What then about Axtell’s recipe for global history? Is Allen, a geographer and the general editor of this comprehensive survey, in agreement with Axtell, the ethnohistorian? In principle, yes. One wonders in effect how anybody who has lived through the late 1960s and the Columbus Quincentenary could possibly disagree with Allen’s statement in the preface: “No exploration . . . takes place in a vacuum. Rather, all explorers are conditioned by the time and place and circumstance of their exploration” (pp. 2, 5). Furthermore, in reminding us of the legacy of his American mentors – John Kirtland Wright (1891-1969), a geographer; Bernard DeVoto (1897-

57 Part One includes articles by John L. Allen, Richard D’Abate and Quinn. Part Two includes contributions by Axtell, Bruce J. Bourque, Kenneth M. Morrison, Harald E.L. Prins and Ruth H. Whitehead. Parts Three and Four include contributions on European images of and presence in Norumbega by Baker, Edwin A. Churchill, D’Abate, Alaric Faulkner, Gretchen F. Faulkner, John Brian Harley, Faith Harrington and John G. Reid. The articles by Harrington and Reid are especially original and useful.

58 Contributors to Volumes I and II are Alan V. Briceland, William John Eccles, Robert H. Fuson, Gibson, Conrad E. Heidenreich, Oakah K. Jones, Kupperman, Malcolm G. Lewis, Alan G. Macpherson, W. Michael Mathes, Quinn, Dennis Reinhartz, Ruggles and Robert S. Weddle. The citation is from Allen’s preface.

1955), an essayist; and William H. Goetzmann, a historian – Allen explains that three elements served as guidelines for *North American Discovery*: “[A] belief in the importance of geographical knowledge . . . a belief in the significance of the relationship among the natural environment, indigenous peoples, and European and Euro-American explorers and a belief in the subjective influence of the exploratory process on later historical events” (pp. 2, 5).⁵⁹ Allen’s blueprint, just like Axtell’s, is demanding especially for individual authors who want to examine long stretches of time, entire nations or overall European expansion. Thus Allen’s ideal book remains to be written. His contributors, perhaps on account of the available documentation, look at events mostly from an European viewpoint. The aboriginal contribution, so often invoked, remains on the side. The geographical and chronological framework is entirely European or Euro-American. Allen’s *North American Exploration* certainly represents the new departure point in North American exploration studies. Yet there is little that is really new.

Now that all are in agreement on the necessity of writing a more comprehensive and less Eurocentric history of discovery and exploration – historians, archaeologists, geographers, literary critics and ethnologists – should not scholars cease preaching to the converted and go back to the sources and start looking anew? Anniversaries might provide a good stimulus for this. Although such volumes tend to generate little scholarly interest, without these anniversaries and celebrations, discovery and explorations studies would not have much to cheer about.

Here is a good opportunity to do just that. Are France, Canada and the United States ready for the next festivities celebrating the Breton navigator and administrator, Samuel de Champlain? A number of dates are available for forthcoming 400th anniversaries: 1603 for Tadoussac, 1604-05 for Maine and Nova Scotia, and 1608 for the city of Québec. We know that municipal authorities and provincial and national governments on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean are in the final stage of planning. But what about publishers, universities, research centres and individual scholars? Although both English-speaking and French-speaking Canada recognize Champlain as the father of New France, Champlain is in serious need of re-examination.⁶⁰ The only novelty to date regarding the Breton navigator is a negative one. The beautiful John Carter Brown Library manuscript in which Champlain allegedly narrated his 1599-1601 voyage to the West Indies was not authored by him – though we do not know who did.⁶¹ If the 1994 spirited exchange on Cartier’s *Relations* between

59 The reference to William H. Goetzmann is in Allen, “Where we Are and How we Got There: Surveying the Record of Exploration Studies”, in Edward C. Carter II, ed., *Surveying the Record. North American Scientific Exploration to 1930* (Philadelphia, 1999), pp. 3-18, especially pp. 15-17. The latter must be read for Allen’s definition of “geographical exploration”.

60 In the past decade there has only been a new edition of Champlain’s *Des Sauvages* of 1604, edited by Réal Ouellet and Canadian ethnohistorian Alain Beaulieu, and a collection of Champlain writings dating from 1604 to 1629, edited by French medievalist Jean Glénisson, the latter lavishly produced but devoid of new evidence or interpretation. See Samuel de Champlain, *Des Sauvages*, Beaulieu et Ouellet, dirs. (Montréal, 1993); Glénisson, dir., *La France d’Amérique : Voyages des Samuel de Champlain 1604-1629* (Paris, 1994). See also Champlain, *Récits de voyages (1603 à 1635) : Textes choisis*, Émile Ducharlet, dir. (La Rochelle, 1999).

61 See Luca Codignola, “Le prétendu voyage de Samuel de Champlain aux Indes Occidentales, 1599-1601”, in Madeleine Frédéric and Serge Jaumain, dirs., *La relation de voyage : un document historique et littéraire. Actes du Séminaire de Bruxelles* (Bruxelles, 1999), pp. 61-80.

Canadian historians William J. Eccles (1917-98) and Ramsay Cook which appeared in the *Literary Review of Canada* is of any indication, Champlain's sources also need to be seriously re-examined.⁶² The forthcoming anniversaries might provide some encouragement in that direction. Ten years from now we may be rejoicing about the new impulse towards a better understanding of the Champlain years that originated in the Champlain Quadricentennial, or we might be regretting another wasted opportunity.

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62 W.J. Eccles, "Saint-Malo Sailor", *The Literary Review of Canada*, 3, 2 (February 1994), pp. 20-3; Ramsay Cook and Eccles, "Interpreting Jacques Cartier: An Exchange", *ibid.*, 3, 4 (April 1994), p. 19.