

recommended to any naval historian. Furthermore, with the book shedding light on the challenges of a neutral nation during a major international conflict, the book can also be recommended to scholars working in the field of international relations and conflicts, and of course, any scholar studying Argentine history in an international setting. Especially interesting in this context is the discussion on how individual Argentine merchant vessels affected by the war despite of their neutrality became the reason for discussions on giving up Argentina's strict neutrality.

With this review being based on the PDF version of the book, the reviewer can neither comment on the technicalities of the printed hardcover version nor the functionalities of the EPUB version. While the book definitely has the quality to be used as a textbook in a wide variety of classes reaching from naval history to Latin American history or international studies, the reviewer hesitates to recommend the book for this purpose due to the price unless it is available via institutional access for students at the respective university. The suggested retail price for both versions put the book in a price range mainly suitable for institutional purchases only.

Ingo Heidbrink  
Norfolk, Virginia

**Hancock, James F. *From John Cabot to Henry Hudson, Early European Arrivals in Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic North America*  
McFarland, 2025**

215 pp., illustrations, glossary, notes, bibliography, index  
ISBN: 9781476695778 (softcover) US\$39.95

In his publication James Hancock offers a short overview aimed at a broad audience. Accordingly, he focuses on a retelling of well-established facts, drawing partly on recent scholarship and partly on research over a century old, combining both with a fresh look at the primary sources.

The book adopts a geographical and chronological approach in chapters dedicated to certain regions. These chapters focus whenever possible on famous explorers, their voyages, and encounters with Native American populations. In doing so, Hancock sheds light on six different geographical regions: Newfoundland, Baffin Island and Labrador, the Gulf of Maine, Cape Cod Bay, the St. Lawrence Valley and Chesapeake Bay.

For the most part, Hancock uses the well-known writings of famous explorers like Samuel de Champlain, John Smith, Jacques Cartier and others. If no such prominent discoverer visited a particular region, he describes other,

less commonly known but still well-researched expeditions in chronological order. Given this, Hancock's claim that he tells a mostly forgotten story seems rather peculiar. This might be true regarding school curricula but seems odd considering hundreds of books and thousands of research papers in different academic disciplines that analyze this topic.

At the end of most chapters, Hancock devotes a few pages to Native American societies encountered by the explorers. These are concise summaries that not only present well-known First Nations, but also rather unknown ones. While this is a commendable idea, its execution presents a problem: by placing this information after the historical narrative, readers lack the contextual knowledge about Indigenous political organization and way of life that could help them understand why the events unfolded as they did.

By structuring the book regionally Hancock offers his readers valuable insight into the history of discoveries and encounters that unfolded in certain areas. However, research has shown that these voyages and intercultural encounters were not as isolated as this perspective suggests. The same Europeans often visited different regions, and monarchs, writers, as well as financiers, at least sometimes saw engagement in the Americas from an interconnected perspective. Likewise, Indigenous peoples were connected across regions and nations, trading and sharing information that could influence their interactions with Europeans.

Considering how Hancock handles the sources for his work, it becomes evident that he places little emphasis on context. He rarely explains for whom and under what circumstances reports were written. Did the authors want to inspire others to follow them, to appear as the hero, to defend themselves against critics? Were the reports secret manuscripts or published? These questions are seldom addressed and for the most part, Hancock seems to consider anyone who was present at the time a credible source.

To give some examples: Hancock claims Jacques Cartier published reports on all three of his voyages, which he did not. Hancock also treats the writings of John Smith as authentic eye-witness reports despite them being propaganda to promote new projects of colonization under Smith's leadership. These texts were part of a self-heroizing strategy in a specific context that merits mention when using them as sources. The same applies to Champlain, whose writings should always be analyzed in light of the opposition he faced in France. In short, this use of sources is problematic, and even more so because Hancock incorporates long quotations directly into his narrative.

These are not the only extensive quotations, however. Hancock also cites extensively from research literature and handbooks, sometimes more than half

a page. These passages are surely very well written, but compiling chapters like this can break the narrative of a book.

Regarding the works cited, Hancock relies heavily on older works or classics, some more than 100 years old. He combines these with more recent materials, albeit mostly online articles and encyclopedic entries. For example, the most frequently cited work on Indigenous Peoples is a classic from 1941.

Generally, Hancock focuses on works that describe events in the Americas and those that analyze Native American cultures. This is a well-established approach, but the lack of critical engagement with sources is reflected in his omission of works that examine how Europeans perceived and represented the New World to Old World audiences. It is always a missed opportunity, when the author does not consider the intellectual and religious background of his key actors – the zeitgeist, if you will. But how events were translated into text, how they were presented or why certain things would be left unsaid are important questions when working with primary sources.

The same methodological issue arises with the images reproduced in the book. They are mostly used for illustrative purposes and not analyzed. This becomes problematic when the images were created by German geographers who never saw the people or places depicted, or when they originate long after the events described.

Overall, the author successfully retells a story whose outline is already well established. In doing so, he presents engaging quotations from primary sources and highlights exemplary scholarly work that enriches what might otherwise be a dry narrative. The book is well researched regarding historical events and can be praised for its brevity and clarity. Of course, this comes at a price: many events and the connections between them are either shortened or omitted. Furthermore, Hancock grants too much credibility to his historical figures and fails to contextualize their reports as products of their time. Still, as a first introduction to the topic, it is an engaging read for a non-academic audience.

Jan Simon Karstens  
Paris, France