that such violence was a hallmark of the trade, and that both sides were at fault, and frequently.

This book is well-researched, has a useful although somewhat dated bibliography, and is well-referenced. It also has many illustrations, the provenance of which is unfortunately not provided. This reviewer could not find, for instance, the source or origin of the illustration of Captain James Hanna's vessel *Sea Otter* firing on the natives of Nootka Sound in 1785. Such omission apart, this is an excellent account of Metcalfe's proceedings. As such, it adds significantly to the historical literature of the maritime fur trade. (Barry Gough, Department of History, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3C5, Canada.)

**HERO IN DISGRACE: THE LIFE OF ARCTIC EXPLORER FREDERICK A. COOK.** Howard S. Abramson. 1991. New York: Paragon House. xix + 250 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 1-55778-322-5. US$21.95.

The story of the claims in 1909 by Frederick A. Cook and Robert E. Peary to have attained the North Pole, and of the subsequent controversy about which explorer — if either — reached 90° N, is well known. In the past 80 years, many books have been published about the two men's claims, supporting those of one (usually the backing of one man involves the condemnation of the other) or disputing both. In recent years, the consensus of academic historians of polar exploration has been that it is unlikely either Cook or Peary reached the North Pole or its immediate vicinity.

Enter Howard S. Abramson, the editor of *Traffic World* and the author of a previous book about the National Geographic Society, with an effort that claims to present 'new evidence which finally sets the record straight' and 'dispells [*sic*] those clouds and retrieves the true hero from disgrace.' *Hero in disgrace* certainly is entertaining reading, and one finishes it liking Cook as a man and wanting to believe that he did indeed accomplish all he said, including reaching the North Pole and making the first ascent of Mount McKinley. But there is precious little 'new evidence,' and the author does not present a great deal other than Cook's word to prove that Cook accomplished what he claimed. On the other hand, Abramson has selectively ignored facts that damage Cook's case. For example, he has blatantly neglected to mention the later expeditions to the Mount McKinley area, the discovery of Cook's 'fake peak,' and the exhaustive study of Bradford Washburn (1958) that completely supported the indications that Cook faked his ascent of the highest mountain in North America. In addition, he never adequately explains why Cook was willing to leave his all-important 'proofs' of his attainment of the Pole in Annoatok with a man he hardly knew rather than taking them with him.

Such a dearth of necessary information is compounded by Abramson's lack of any academic references throughout the book. In fact, nothing other than quotes are referenced, leaving the reader simply to guess whether statements that disagree with former assessments are made because of new data or because of opinion.

The seriousness of this lack of referencing is amplified by the factual errors throughout the book. Jo Peary was not 'the first white woman known to have visited the Arctic' (page 6); 'white women' have been living in Arctic settlements such as Tromsø and Hammerfest for hundreds of years. Nor was she even the first woman to accompany an exploring expedition to the Arctic; from 1735–1736, for example, Mariya Pronchishcheva accompanied the Lena–Taymyr branch of Bering's Great Northern Expedition that surveyed the Arctic coastline of Siberia. The voyage of *Miranda* in 1894 was not 'the world's first strictly pleasure cruise to the Arctic' (page 20); regular commercial tourist ships began going to Svalbard in 1881, and by the time of *Miranda*, half a dozen trips of this kind were being made to Svalbard each year and more to Alaska and other northern destinations. Robert E. Peary was not 'the only American who was launching expeditions to the North Pole at this time' (page 64); Walter Wellman attempted to reach the North Pole from Svalbard in 1894, and the Baldwin–Ziegler expedition (1901–1902) and its successor under Anthony Fiala (1903–1905) both attempted to reach the Pole from Zemlya Frantsa-Iosifa. It is not at all universally accepted that Pytheas crossed the Arctic Circle (page 135); the locations that have been most convincingly argued for his destination — the Shetlands, southern Iceland, and southern Norway — are all below the Arctic Circle (Whitaker 1982). And Sir John Franklin was not a retired admiral (page 136), nor was his expedition of 1845 almost 100 years before the Cook–Peary controversy began in 1909 (page 137).

Abramson's basic thesis is that Peary's triumph in the North Pole controversy was due to the unrelenting pressure of his supporters, such as the National Geographic Society, the Peary Arctic Club, and *The New York Times*, who 'quickly devised the plan they believed was most likely to succeed: Destroy Cook's claim by destroying his reputation as an explorer and a man' (page 150). But in building a case for the ubiquity and under-handedness of the Peary clique, Abramson engages in similar slanted reporting. All too often, Abramson dismisses people who questioned Cook's story by implication and insinuation, rather than by any comment on whether their information was accurate or not. Thus, he besmirches Professor Herschel Parker with the comment that he 'had actually resigned from the [Mount McKinley] expedition in fear of his life after stating that the summit was unreachable, not because it was time for him to return to his classes' (page 59); Abramson ignores the fact that in 1912 Parker and Belmore Browne led the first expedition to reach the height of 20,000 feet on McKinley (Browne 1913).

Again, to discount the newspaper reports of Philip Gibbs, Abramson states, 'Soon after Freuchen and Gibbs met the returning explorer — if not before — they decided between themselves that Cook had not reached the North Pole, even though no one had yet heard his story of the expedition....Either Gibbs had attended a different homecoming ceremony than did all the other journalists in Copenhagen or he had already decided on a plan to make

himself famous at Cook's expense' (page 147). This totally omits that Gibbs — one of the most honoured journalists of this century, who was knighted for his outstanding correspondence from the front during World War I — was actually the first journalist to interview Cook, *before* the explorer even landed in Copenhagen. Gibbs went out to *Hans Egede*, while Cook was still aboard, interviewed the explorer, and asked to see his diaries, journal, or observations. Cook exploded at him, shouting, 'I bring the same proofs as every other explorer. I bring my story. Do you doubt that? When Shackleton and Peary came home you believed what they told you. Why, then, should you disbelieve me?' (*The Daily Chronicle* 7 September 1909). But as Gibbs commented later, 'I *had* believed him. But at that strange, excited protest and some uneasy, almost guilty look about the man, I thought, "Hullo! What's wrong? This man protests too much." From that moment I had grave doubts about him' (Gibbs 1923: 43).

Gibbs is just one piece in Abramson's indictment of the press as a tool of the Peary cabal. But his underlying assessment that the press of the United States, or even that of New York City, was 'clearly under Bridgman's influence, if not control' (page 157) is not only a naive oversimplification, it is certainly inaccurate. Herbert L. Bridgman of the *Brooklyn Standard–Union* was a minor figure with a remarkably unimportant newspaper in an era when the American press was dominated by personalities such as William Randolph Hearst, Joseph Pulitzer, and James Gordon Bennett, and by their respective newspapers. Moreover, this also overlooks that not all journalists, explorers, or scientists believed Cook, even before the pro-Peary/anti-Cook campaign got underway.

In summation, although I still would be willing to believe that Frederick A. Cook was the first man to reach the North Pole, I demand the proof to convince me that he was. It still has not been produced. (Beau Riffenburgh, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

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**ICE AGE EARTH: LATE QUATERNARY GEOLOGY & CLIMATE**. Alastair G. Dawson. 1992. London and New York: Routledge. 293 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-415-01567-7. US$25.00.

This book is designed as an undergraduate text concerning climate change during the Late Quaternary. The topic of climate change has received increasing attention during the past few years in response to fears concerning, for example, warming due to 'greenhouse' gases and the implications of this for sea-level change during the next 50–200 years. Recent evidence from both Greenland ice cores and the sedimentary record from the North Atlantic suggests that the onset of significant shifts in the climate system may also be extremely rapid. One result of the increasing number of scientific papers on aspects of global change is that, for the undergraduate, the advent of a new textbook summarizing much of this work presumably comes as something of a relief. Dawson's book is thus timely, although the publication of new papers on topics such as the massive discharge of icebergs into the North Atlantic on at least two occasions over the last 25,000 years means that certain parts of it are already superseded. This is testimony to the activity of researchers in the area of global climate change, rather than implying any criticism of the author.

The book is divided into 13 chapters, opening with three chapters that introduce Late Quaternary climate change, and emphasise the record from marine sediments and ice cores. For some time evidence from these two sources has been regarded as a benchmark against which other, often more fragmented, records are compared. The discussion of the results of global climate modelling in Chapter 3 makes up a useful introduction to the output side of computer modelling studies of climate change. The importance of specification of boundary conditions, and the basic physics that drives the models, are considered in less detail.

Chapters 2 to 5 are in many ways the core of the book. Here the isotopic records from cores in deep-ocean sediments and ice sheets are described, providing an outline of the major climate shifts since oxygen isotope stage 5e (the last interglacial). I would have welcomed a section setting the last glacial–interglacial cycle within the perspective of longer term isotopic records from the oceans, showing a series of cold–warm cycles during the last one to two million years. This would have demonstrated that the rest of the volume is dealing with evidence for only the latest of a series of oscillatory changes in the global climate system. The history of ice sheets over the last glacial cycle, and the nature of deglaciation, is discussed clearly in Chapters 4 and 5. The title of Chapter 5, 'The melting of the last great ice sheets,' is a little misleading in the sense that, particularly in the early stages of deglaciation, much mass loss from the Laurentide ice sheet in particular was probably in the form of rapid iceberg calving rather than direct melting.

A variety of Quaternary environments and processes are dealt with in Chapters 6 to 10, including permafrost conditions; the climate record in lakes, bogs, and mires; palaeohydrology; aeolian action; and volcanic activity. Late Quaternary climate change outside the areas affected directly by glacier ice, described in these chapters, is a useful treatment, but tends to concentrate on geomorphological evidence. I would have preferred to see more information from both the litho- and bio-stratigraphic records. However, the coverage of such a wide range of