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Peter Whitfield, *Sir Francis Drake*. New York: New York University Press, 2004. 160 pages, illustrations, chronology, index.

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The British Library and New York University Press have partnered to produce the Historic Leadership series with the aim of providing short, comprehensive accounts of the subjects, illustrated with documents and other materials held by the former. (The series' publicity notes that some of the visual material has never appeared in print.) Following these guidelines Whitfield has produced a concise biography of Sir Francis Drake.

The author adopts a strictly chronological approach to the subject. He examines the sailor's possible family origins, and rightly dismisses some stories (such as, a Protestant father chaplain serving in the Roman Catholic Queen Mary's navy). The story moves to firmer ground once Drake began serving on John Hawkins' ventures. His inexplicable desertion of his commander off Mexico in 1568 following an unexpected Spanish attack provides both the first mystery about Drake's character and seemingly explains his enmity to Spain. Subsequently, the book charts Drake's successful cruises in the Caribbean and his circumnavigation of the world. The successes of his expeditions by 1575 gave him a fortune and fame at home and abroad. Whitfield shows how circumnavigation arose accidentally – indeed, it was contrary to his orders. While his Spanish captives found Drake impressive as a leader and man of honor, his countrymen often found reason to regret his imperious nature. Thomas Doughty, one of the commanders in the round the world voyage, was tried and executed for disagreeing with

Drake. (The Doughty episode established a pattern in dealing with high-ranking colleagues for the rest of Drake's career.) The captain's success continued during the prelude to the Spanish Armada, especially his attack on Cadiz in 1587. His capture of a Spanish pay ship, when he should have been guiding the English fleet at night against the Armada, illustrates both his desire for gain and his willingness to disobey orders. Drake's deviation from orders in the 1589 expedition against Portugal and the remnants of the Armada helped ensure the campaign's failure. Consequently, he was retired from active naval duty and served as the governor of Plymouth until he rejoined Hawkins in 1595 for a campaign in Caribbean aimed at Panama. By 27 January 1596, when Drake died, the campaign had disintegrated into a costly fiasco largely due to Drake's errors of judgment. An inspiration to generations of Britons, a skilled seaman, a solid (albeit demanding and prickly) leader, a loner, a firm Protestant, a patriotic Englishman (who would act severely but treated individual enemies well), and a man greedy for fortune and fame emerges from the book. Indeed as the Spanish observed, Drake was a Protestant version of their Age of Discovery heroes.

The biography delivers what the series promises. The author eschews both the laudatory interpretation of Drake (John Corbett) and the myth-busting one (H. Kelsey). However, as Whitfield observes throughout the book the lack of personal writing from Drake limits the opportunity to the view man other his eulogistic collaborator (Philip Nichols) depicted his thoughts and actions. As the author states concerning Drake's comments (p. 149), on his last expedition, his subject seems incapable of introspection or deep analysis.

The book has many sound attributes. It reads easily and compellingly. The illustrations are germane, extensive and well reproduced. Although written by a subject matter expert there are no notes. The bibliography contains printed primary and secondary works (with annotations on a third of the latter). The book is thus a derivative and not groundbreaking work. There is a useful index. A chronology rounds out the book's ancillary material. The layout of the book does possess an idiosyncrasy: the top fourth of each page is blank a quarter of the time. On other occasions the press used it for

images, their captions or quotations from the text, but it seems that the editors artificially reduced the amount of space available for narrative. Otherwise the book has an attractive appearance.

Who should read Whitfield's Drake? It is an excellent introduction to one of, if not the, the most famous Elizabethan sailor. Books like this (and hopefully the companion volume on Nelson) will serve freshman university students well by instructing them about Drake's life and the issues attached to it. The book would also prove a good introduction for readers ignorant of naval history. Whitfield has produced a scholarly and visually appealing biography of Drake.



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