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Michael A. Verney. *A Great and Rising Nation: Naval Exploration and Global Empire in the Early US Republic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022. ISBN: 9780226819921

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Introduction by Dane A. Morrison, Salem State University

Releasing the Kraken

“What made them do it? I wish I knew. One quality all these mariners had in common...was restlessness,” observed “sailor-historian” Samuel Eliot Morison in introducing *The Southern Voyages*, the second volume of his magisterial study, *The European Discovery of America*.¹ A man of his times, a scholar who knew a thing or two about both maritime exploration and the US Navy, the self-styled “sea-going historiographer” framed exploration as the cumulative endeavor of a few men of vision, courage, and will. This was heroic, virtually hagiographic history, embedded in the grand narrative crafted by privileged Brahmins like George Bancroft, Francis Parkman, and William Hickling Prescott, a well-trodden path that still finds its place in the popular imagination.² Its concerns focus on course headings, latitude and longitude, and charts and maps, rather than issues of empire, colonialism, or ethnic encounter.

More recent interpretations provide a contrasting picture, however. Felipe Fernández-Armesto, for one, prefers a more expansive and inclusive interpretation, in which “two big stories” are at play. In one narrative, “human cultures diverged...in ignorance or contempt of one another.” In another, a tale of convergence, “human groups got back in touch” through discovery and encounter. Explorers’ names are less-well known or lost, the routes unclear, the results clouded. For Fernández-Armesto, explorers were global “pathfinders” who were also “the engineers of history’s infrastructures, the builders of the causeways of cultures, forgers of links, spinners of webs.” Moreover, as in his portrait of Ferdinand Magellan, he directly challenges the heroic ideal of explorer, and concludes, “the tally of his failures is almost as long as the list of his honorific homonyms.”³

Situated between Morison’s traditional, episodic deference to “great men” and Fernández-Armesto’s sweeping, comprehensive compendia, we find Michael Verney’s excellent *A Great and Rising Nation*, a study of eleven US naval expeditions during the Jacksonian era. Where other scholars have examined “voyages of commerce and discovery” carried out by private interests such as merchant vessels, sealers, and whalers, Verney deftly expands the cast of promoters and boosters, narrates the course of each expedition, and reveals the imperial implications of a truly national project.⁴ He parses the constellation of motives that underlay exploration in distant seas, making a compelling case that this was a national project, melding an assortment of private and public interests. These strange bedfellows included “explorationists” such as Jeremiah Reynolds and Edmund Fanning, who “believed that knowledge, not commerce, would garner the greatest laurels,” politicians like John Quincy Adams, who “viewed naval exploration as a potent tool for advancing US honor in European eyes [and] were deeply committed to bolstering the US commercial empire in the South Pacific,” naval commanders, whaling masters, Indies merchants, and more (11). They were, Verney

¹ Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America, II, The Southern Voyages, A.D. 1492-1616* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), viii.

² George Bancroft, *History of the United States of America, from the Discovery of the Continent*, 8 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1834-1860); Francis Parkman, *France and England in North America*, 7 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1865-1892); William Hickling Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, 3 vols. (New York: Harper, 1843).

³ Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration* (New York: W.W Norton, 2006), 1-2; and *Straits: Beyond the Myth of Magellan* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2022), xi.

⁴ Dane A. Morrison, *True Yankees: The South Seas and the Discovery of American Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014) and *Eastward of Good Hope: Early America in a Dangerous World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021); Brian Rouleau, *With Sails Whitening Every Sea: Mariners and the Making of an American Maritime Empire* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014); James Fairhead, *The Captain and “the Cannibal”: An Epic Story of Exploration, Kidnapping, and the Broadway Stage* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); Jane Hooper, *Yankees in the Indian Ocean World: American Commerce and Whaling, 1786–1860* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2022).

explains, “fired by visions of grandeur, [and] had assembled a formidable coalition of elites to aid them...[that] included state actors and private citizens like scientists and sea captains...[u]nited by mutual interests” (11-12).

A Great and Rising Nation complements the burgeoning historiography of “the new federal state,” notably Dael Norwood’s *Trading Freedom* and Gautham Rao’s *National Duties*, that reconsiders the new nation in terms of its administrative apparatus such as customs collections, overseas commerce, exploration, and the like.⁵ In summarizing the book, reviewers Matthew Goetz, Anthony E. Guidone, and Katrina Ponti praise Verney for bringing an important and often-neglected domestic component to exploration and what he calls the “process of imperialization” (5). Goetz argues that “*A Great and Rising Nation* [is] an ambitious, trailblazing study, much like the expeditions it chronicles. It explores some previously ignored topics, reexamines old themes in a new light, and leaves room for future explorations of research.” Anthony E. Guidone praises the book for making a “striking case that the United States’ government conducted itself as an imperial power in the world far before the twentieth century.” Katrina Ponti credits the book for providing “a new perspective on the history of American empire through the lens of exploration and scientific pursuit.”

The particular strengths of *A Great and Rising Nation* are many. Employing the intriguing metaphor of the kraken, the enormous sea monster (which the reviewers describe in detail), Verney chronicles the development of the early republic’s imperial designs and describes how these tentacles “reached abroad to leave an imprint of the nation on new parts of the world.” (Ponti). Moreover, he grounds this global project within a set of domestic impellents, which were verbalized in the lobbying efforts of the “explorationists,” or the set of various groups who were invested in advancing American knowledge, influence, and power. Verney goes further in crafting a global study, addressing the vital role that indigenous peoples played in collecting the pepper, sandalwood, turtles, pearls, and other resources that supplied the American ships that sailed to the East Indies and Oceana. He relates that “the often violent, destabilizing relations between US sailors and oceans were a major area of concern” for Jacksonian administrations (49). This is also an eloquently narrated text. The author tells us that he had hoped to produce an engagingly written book that would “capture the drama of a rising imperial power through a riveting cast of characters,” and he has achieved this goal.

Goetz and Guidone do have some modest reservations. Goetz observes that “the book’s expansive narrative prohibits Verney from delving deeply into every topic and theme it touches upon, leaving some areas underdeveloped. One such area is the interaction between American and European exploratory expeditions.” Guidone further notes that “additional discussion in the book of the presence, or lack thereof, of Black and Indigenous sailors aboard these naval voyages and their role in furthering American empire would be welcome.” As to the origins of the US naval exploration project, he adds, “perhaps the roots stretch earlier, to American’s global visions of their future amidst the American Revolution. The chronology of the book could perhaps have opened at an earlier time in order to present a more complicated origins story of the expansionists’ visions for the United States.” Readers can decide for themselves whether these topics could have been dealt with in this volume or warrant especial treatment in subsequent volumes.

As the reviewers note, *A Great and Rising Nation* does much more than relate a narrative of scientific pursuit. What I found especially intriguing are the ways in which Verney integrates a host of deep and complicated domestic and global developments within a compelling narrative. His study makes a superb contribution

⁵ Gautham Rao, *National Duties: Custom Houses and the Making of the American State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Dael A. Norwood, *Trading Freedom: How Trade with China Defined Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022).

toward the historiography of empire, exploration, and the Jacksonian era, introducing fresh concepts and challenging conventional ways of thinking about these important areas.⁶

Contributors:

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Matthew Goetz is a doctoral candidate in The George Washington University History Department. His dissertation examines the Barbary Wars' impact on American racial politics, including the debate over slavery, the Atlantic Slave Trade, and Indian Removal. He has published scholarship with *Commonplace: the Journal of Early American Life*, the *White House Historical Association*, and the *George Washington Digital Encyclopedia*.

Anthony E. Guidone is an Assistant Professor of History at Radford University. He received his PhD from George Mason University and is preparing a book manuscript on the social and cultural impacts of global trade on the town of Salem, Massachusetts, in the early American republic. His research interests include digital history and early American social, cultural, and maritime history.

Katrina Ponti is a May Postdoctoral Fellow at the Belfer Center, Harvard Kennedy School. Her first book project, *Virtuous Emulations of Liberty*, focuses on the role of American citizens in the expansion of US diplomacy during and after the American Revolution.

⁶ In addition to the titles mentioned above, see, for example, William H. Goetzmann, *New Lands, New Men: America and the Second Great Age of Discovery* (New York: Viking, 1986); Lincoln Paine, *The Sea and Civilization: A Maritime History of the World* (New York: Vintage, 2013); and Jason W. Smith, *To Master the Boundless Sea: The U.S. Navy, the Marine Environment, and the Cartography of Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

Review by Matthew Goetz, The George Washington University

Maritime studies are a booming subfield of early American history, and have been for the past few decades. Collectively, these works demonstrate that the maritime world was key to the development of the early United States, with most scholarship in this field focusing on some aspect of the civilian merchant marine, including America's whaling fleet or trade with China. However, most academic scholars have ignored the topic of state-sponsored naval exploration in the Early Republic, with those few who examine it tending to focus exclusively on the United States Exploring Expedition, or "Ex Ex," a government-chartered naval voyage through the waters of the Pacific and Antarctic from 1838 to 1842. Enter Michael Verney's *A Great and Rising Nation*, which examines not only the Ex Ex, but a handful of other explorations undertaken by the American Navy during the antebellum era. In a well-written and skillfully organized narrative, Verney successfully demonstrates that American naval exploration was not only more common in this period than the lack of previous historical interest on the topic would lead one to believe (the Navy launched seventeen exploring voyages across the globe from 1838 to 1860), but also vital to the development of an American empire.¹

Verney focuses on seven exploration voyages, which he chose specifically to highlight his main argument: naval exploration increased in popularity in the United States throughout the Antebellum era as supporters of naval voyages of discovery gradually "converted" various interest groups to their cause (6). The narrative begins in the 1820s, when a small group of American intellectuals and naval officers began lobbying the federal government to fund naval explorations to the vast Pacific Ocean. These "explorers"—a term coined by Verney (3)—believed that such expeditions would prove to Europe that the United States had come of age as an imperial power and could contribute to the field of science and exploration as well as any European nation. Most Americans at this time, however, considered the proposals for European-style, state-sponsored naval exploration to be aristocratic, wasteful, and out of step with America's republican identity. As a result, the federal government initially rejected the proposals. In chapter two, Verney argues that explorers found more success in the 1830s by learning to speak the language of Jacksonian America, marketing their proposed naval expedition primarily as a commercial venture, rather than as a high-minded scientific endeavor. Explorers also learned to pitch their plans to common white Americans, President Andrew Jackson's central constituency, who bought into the idea that global exploration would demonstrate American manhood and boost capitalistic opportunities for white men. In 1838, the government launched the Ex Ex, setting off a period of roughly two decades during which explorer mania gripped the Navy Department and the American public.

In chapter three, Verney explains how supporters of the Ex Ex persuaded the emerging American middle class to support naval exploration by launching a mass marketing campaign upon the conclusion of the expedition. Participants of the Ex Ex and their political backers published several narratives of the voyage and opened a museum display at the National Gallery in Washington, DC (the precursor to the Smithsonian)

¹ For examples of scholarship that highlight the rise and growth of the field of maritime early America, see: Jesse Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 25:3 (1968): 371-407; Paul Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront: American Maritime Culture in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Brian Rouleau, *With Sails Whitening Every Sea: Mariners and the Making of an American Maritime Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014); Nancy Shoemaker, *Native American Whalers and the World: Indigenous Encounters and the Contingency of Race* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); and Dael A. Norwood, *Trading Freedom: How Trade with China Defined Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022). For those works of scholarship focusing exclusively on the Ex Ex, see: William Stanton, *The Great United States Exploring Expedition of 1838-1842* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); and Herman J. Viola and Carolyn Margolis, eds., *Magnificent Voyagers: The U.S. Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985).

that showcased some of the objects gathered by the expedition, including the macabre artifact of a human skull from a Fijian ruler killed by American sailors. The published narratives and associated museum exhibit were immensely popular with middle-class Americans. Verney posits that their popularity was due primarily to Americans' anxieties stemming from the Market Revolution and the resultant rapid economic, social, and political change. Tales of heroic white sailors overcoming nature, and the "savages" who inhabited it, confirmed white Americans' "values and social status in an increasingly diverse, complex, and shifting world" (78).

This chapter is perhaps the book's finest, but Verney misses the chance to make a connection with captivity narratives, which were one of the most popular forms of American literature in Colonial and Revolutionary America. These stories of white captives abducted by Indian warriors and Barbary pirates served a similar purpose to the exploration narratives and museum displays described by Verney: entertaining readers with tales of travel and violence, while simultaneously reaffirming white Americans' belief in their superiority over the "savage heathens" of the world. The popularity of these colonial and Revolutionary-era captivity narratives makes me wonder whether the public's fascination with stories of the Ex Ex was a response to the particular anxieties of the antebellum era, as Verney posits, or the result of white Americans' long-standing compulsion to reassure themselves of their superiority to the world's "barbarous" peoples.

Chapters four and five chronicle additional (and little-known) expeditions undertaken by the United States Navy: one to the Red Sea in 1848, and two to the Amazon Basin in the 1850s. Both chapters illustrate how new constituencies of Americans embraced naval exploration to advance their own agendas. Evangelicals saw naval exploration in the Middle East as a way to strengthen Protestantism in "a moment of Christian spiritual crisis" in America (180). Southern slaveholders, meanwhile, hoped that exploration of the Amazon would jumpstart the colonization of South America and facilitate the expansion of a slave empire. In the sixth and final chapter, Verney recounts several voyages to the Arctic in the 1850s to find the lost Franklin expedition, a British naval venture launched in 1845 to the Northwest Passage whose participants disappeared. Although the Americans did not find the Franklin expedition, British public officials nonetheless praised the attempts as demonstrations of Anglo-Saxon chivalry and fortitude, thus finally granting the United States equal status among the civilized nations that earlier explorationists had so desperately craved. Throughout the entire book, Verney skillfully proves his argument about the importance of an ever-growing class of explorationists. Indeed, there is little to criticize and much to praise in this narrative and Verney's telling of it.

Despite the book's broad scope, the narrative remains tight and gripping. This is largely due to Verney's writing skill and his choice to keep the story focused on individuals who either participated in the expeditions or supported them at home, including such fascinating and complex figures as author and passionate booster of scientific exploration Jeremiah Reynolds, the religiously zealous explorer Lieutenant William Francis Lynch, and the indomitable widow Lady Jane Franklin. Verney also deserves praise for shedding light on the intricate symbiosis between the state and private enterprise in naval exploration during the Age of Sail. Though Verney focuses on state-sponsored, government-led expeditions, he demonstrates that they only came to fruition because of the support of private groups, including American whalers, merchants, evangelical Protestants, and slaveholders.

The implications of Verney's work extend far beyond the field of naval exploration. Above all, *A Great and Rising Nation* is a book about "the process of imperialization" in early America—a narrative of how the United States became an empire (5). Verney embraces a broad definition of the term empire, entailing not only raw physical power (military, political, and economic), but cultural and intellectual power as well. He is primarily concerned with revealing how Americans shed their postcolonial anxiety and developed confidence in their assumed cultural and racial superiority.

Not unlike *Captives* (2002), Linda Colley's masterful work on captivity in the Early Modern British Empire, Verney demonstrates that empire building was fundamentally a process driven by fear and anxiety. Whether it was intellectuals who were worried that Europeans looked down on Americans for their lack of scientific contributions, evangelicals who feared a growing Catholic population in the United States, or white southerners who were anxious to spread slavery to new regions lest the institution crumble in their own backyard, fear propelled white Americans to build their empire through exploration. As the skull of the Fijian ruler sitting in the National Gallery suggests, however, the results of the expeditions often created terror for the indigenous peoples the Americans encountered. Indeed, Verney deserves praise for maintaining a focus on the non-white figures in the narrative, be they participants in the expeditions, victims of American violence, or both. Whether it was Inuit hunters, Hawaiian mariners, or Arab guides, indigenous actors were essential to the success of every expedition Verney chronicles.²

A Great and Rising Nation also successfully illuminates how the European model of empire morphed in the unique democratic and capitalistic environment of the Antebellum United States. To gain support for their European-style naval voyages, explorationists translated their vision into the language of Jacksonian democracy and capitalism. Furthermore, the pluralistic nature of early America meant that various interest groups and classes used exploration to advance their own agendas. The American empire, in Verney's telling, was "multidimensional," like a "kraken" with many tentacles, or interest groups, that at times worked together and sometimes competed with one another (7). Verney's reference to empire as a kraken invites a comparison to Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker's characterization of empire in the Early Modern Atlantic World as a "many-headed hydra." In Linebaugh and Rediker's narrative, the common people rebelled against empire, but this is not the case in Verney's book. Instead, whether middle class consumers who devoured news of the expeditions, or Jack Tars who enthusiastically participated in the voyages, common Americans eagerly embraced exploration and imperialism. In Verney's narrative, the sailors on the voyages seemed at times even more violent, imperialistic, and racialized than the officers who led them. Indeed, the book's greatest success may be its analysis of how the formation of empire is "a domestic political process," with buy-in from common people necessary (6).³

Verney's book is certainly not the first to tackle the issue of empire building in early America, but it does offer a fresh perspective on the topic. Historians like to debate whether the ethnogenesis of the American empire formed on the western frontier or the maritime world. Verney, however, astutely notes that this debate is based on a false dichotomy. The American empire followed Americans wherever they went, whether across borderlands or oceans. Verney joins a growing number of historians who demonstrate that early Americans saw the western and maritime frontiers as linked. He bolsters this argument by quoting from naval officers and sailors who compared Native Americans to the other "savages" they encountered around the world, be they Arabs or Fijian natives.⁴

² Linda Colley, *Captives: The Story of Britain's Pursuit of Empire and How Its Soldiers and Civilians Were Held Captive by the Dream of Global Supremacy* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002).

³ Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden World of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).

⁴ Since Frederick Jackson Turner put forth his "frontier thesis" in 1893, many historians have posited that westward expansion was the key to the emergence of a unique American identity. Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1893* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1894): 197-227. For a modern iteration of this argument, see Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York: Macmillan, 2007). In recent decades, however, maritime historians have argued that the maritime frontier was just as influential as westward expansion, if not more so, in shaping the early United States. See Daniel Vickers, "Beyond Jack Tar," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 50:2 (1993): 418-424; and Matthew Raffety, "Recent Currents in Nineteenth-Century American Maritime History," *History Compass* 6:2 (2008): 607-

A Great and Rising Nation is an ambitious work with a broad scope. This is one of the book's greatest strengths, but also the source of one of its only foibles. The book's expansive narrative prohibits Verney from delving deeply into every topic and theme it touches upon, leaving some areas underdeveloped. One such area is the interaction between American and European exploratory expeditions. Verney contends that Americans desired exploration to seek the recognition for the US from European nations as a "great power," which raised the question of how Europeans responded to stories of American exploration in the Antebellum Era (4). Verney addresses this issue in chapter six, but only in the context of the voyages to find the missing Franklin expedition. This subject is mostly missing from the preceding chapters. Did earlier American expeditions ever come across European ones? Were there moments of competition, conflict, or cooperation and racial camaraderie between them? Elaborating on this topic would help illuminate Verney's contention that Americans viewed their empire through both a nationalistic and racial lens.

While I was occasionally left wishing that Verney had delved deeper into certain subjects, it is hard to fault a book for not doing more when it already does so much. *A Great and Rising Nation* is an ambitious, trailblazing study, much like the expeditions it chronicles. It explores some previously ignored topics, reexamines old themes in a new light, and leaves room for future explorations of research. And that is perhaps the ultimate value in Verney's work. Just as the Ex Ex kicked off an era of exploration frenzy in Antebellum America, I suspect *A Great and Rising Nation* will initiate increased historical interest in the topic of state-sponsored American voyages of discovery. The topic is ripe for further exploration.

626. For another work of scholarship connecting the maritime world with the western frontier, see Brian Rouleau, "Maritime Destiny as Manifest Destiny: American Commercial Expansionism and the Idea of the Indian," *Journal of the Early Republic* 30:3 (2010): 377-411.

Review by Anthony E. Guidone, Radford University

Michael A. Verney's insightful and contemplative book presents a striking case that the United States' government conducted itself as an imperial power in the world far before the twentieth century. Verney's exclusive focus on the American Navy presents a different perspective from studies which have primarily analyzed the nineteenth-century American presence in South America, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific through the frameworks of commerce or political economy.¹ Verney argues that a loose conglomerate of allies he labels "explorationists" (3) saw American naval explorative expeditions as the key to unlocking international scientific respect for the United States, defending Jacksonian capitalism, stabilizing white middle-class social and cultural values, buttressing American Christianity, spreading slavery and solving sectionalism, and patching up relations with Great Britain by aiding its Arctic rescue missions. Verney tracks what he calls the "process of imperialization" (5) as Americans transformed their 1810–1820s revulsion of state-sponsored explorative expeditions to an embrace of their utility by the 1850s.

Verney's chapters accomplish the difficult task of providing both chronological organization and thematic narrative as they each follow one set of proposed naval expeditions. He begins in chapter 1 with the failures of explorationist barnstormer Jeremiah Reynolds and his allies to successfully marshal support for an explorative expedition in the 1820s. Although supported by President John Quincy Adams, Reynolds's quest was ultimately torpedoed by political opposition from those who feared that the proposal would dangerously empower the federal government, raise taxes, and set the United States along the path of monarchical and aristocratic European nations. Verney points to this episode as a sign that notions of an "empire of knowledge" (12) and gaining honor and respect from Europe's scientific community were not enough to persuade scrupulous Americans to back Pacific exploration. Future campaigns would need "more compelling and practical" marketing beyond simply "European style-glory" (42), and found it by embracing Jacksonian capitalism.

Chapter 2 frames the United States Exploring Expedition of 1838–1842, or "Ex Ex," as "Jacksonian Capitalism." Verney argues that the Ex Ex, which traveled throughout the Pacific Ocean charting coasts and shoals, intimidating and killing Fijian islanders, collecting cultural and geological objects, and enforcing American law and order in the Pacific, was the "largest and most important manifestation" of the Jacksonian "commitment to US capitalism overseas." The new explorationists in the Jackson and Van Buren administrations garnered support for the Ex Ex by identifying it as the Pacific expression of the central themes of Jacksonian political economy. Verney argues that Jacksonian policies, particularly the displacement of Indigenous peoples and targeting banks, special interests, and monopolies, were designed to level the economic playing field for the common (white) man and create the "impression of a fair shot in the marketplace" (45). Death and shipwrecks caused by poor navigational knowledge, violence at the hands of Pacific Islanders, and misbehavior by both captains and crews across the Pacific were each "dangerous to white male capitalism" and thus required federal intervention to "secure a safe and profitable marketplace for white citizens overseas" (46).

Verney concludes that the Ex Ex was largely successful in achieving these imperial aims. Commerce was safer thanks to new navigational charts and violent reprisals against Indigenous islanders. The Ex Ex's surveys of the Pacific Northwest coastline helped American westward expansion and furthered the country's economic connection to the Pacific. Verney's conclusion, however, differs from that of many Americans in the 1840s.

¹ James R. Fichter, *So Great a Profit: How the East Indies Trade Transformed Anglo-American Capitalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Dael A. Norwood, *Trading Freedom: How Trade with China Defined Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022); Dane A. Morrison, *Eastward of Good Hope: Early America in a Dangerous World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021).

Reaction to the *Ex Ex* was initially muted and its commander, Captain Charles Wilkes, was reprimanded for his conduct overseas. Chapter 3 demonstrates how Wilkes attempted to resuscitate both his reputation and that of the *Ex Ex* by publishing narratives of the voyage and curating a display of the objects collected by the expedition at the National Gallery in Washington, DC. Verney argues that these popular mediums both “reaffirmed white middle-class values” through their display of “savage” (77) cultures and increased Americans’ appetites for “federally directed global imperialism” (105). This new appreciation for voyages of exploration sparked a number of overseas ventures in the late 1840s and 1850s.

In chapters 4, 5, and 6, Verney argues that naval exploration voyages were undertaken as solutions to solve domestic ills for various interest groups. On religion in chapter 4, Verney argues that the United States *Dead Sea Expedition* was designed to “prove the Bible” (109) and reinforce Protestant Christianity against intemperance, Catholic immigrants, and rising Biblical criticism. Chapter 5 surveys the ways in which Southern politicians and explorationists looked to South America as a potential region for slavery’s expansion in the face of growing political opposition to slavery’s extension to the American West. Verney argues that although they were ultimately unsuccessful, these federally funded missions to explore the suitability of Brazil and the Rio de la Plata region for plantation agriculture are a “previously unrecognized method of proslavery expansion” (167). Proslavery explorationists of the 1850s thus marked a significant change from their predecessors of the 1820s, who feared that naval expeditions would empower the federal government to potentially set its sights on abolishing slavery. Chapter 6 recounts the efforts by both England and the United States to recover the lost British Arctic explorer, Sir John Franklin. While Franklin and his party were not found alive, and several of Franklin’s would-be rescuers perished, Verney poignantly demonstrates that these missions by the United States brought the nation full circle in its approach toward explorative expeditions. Although a public-private partnership, the Arctic rescue missions were largely seen as a moment to prove American greatness, honor, and civilization, and a means to earn British respect. The voyages also served to highlight a shared racial unity in celebrating Anglo-Saxon strength. British expressions of gratitude over American rescue efforts, Verney argues, were the “closest” England would come to “recognizing the United States as an equal power in the era of the early US republic” (203).

Verney uncovers several unexpected ironies and intriguing impacts of the expeditions he analyzes. One involves Verney’s observation in chapter 1 of Jeremiah Reynolds privately scoffing at republican government while waiting for Congress to fund an exploration voyage, while publicly championing his project as an expedition in service of the American people. Additionally, Verney notes the thought-provoking contradictions between Jacksonian support for the *Ex Ex* in order to supposedly protect American sailors, a group which would have included many Black mariners, while also supporting slavery in the United States. Furthermore, Verney argues that the *Ex Ex* aided American westward expansion and the conquest of Indigenous peoples thanks to its surveys and geographic knowledge of the Pacific Northwest. This surveying activity was also used to reinforce America’s claims over the entire Oregon territory against Great Britain’s competing claim on the same area. The American Navy was thus a crucial force in furthering America’s imperial interests on both the continental United States and throughout the Pacific Ocean.

Although challenging and thought-provoking in their current expression, these ironies could have been pushed further. Additional discussion in the book of the presence, or lack thereof, of Black and Indigenous sailors aboard these naval voyages and their role in furthering American empire would be welcome. Did Jacksonian-inspired captains who, in Verney’s telling, sailed to the Pacific to defend the white “common man” attempt to fill their ships with fewer sailors of color? Black sailors, as Nathan Perl-Rosenthal has argued, represented with particular clarity the contradictions between America’s racial beliefs in the United States and the use of maritime vessels as agents of American overseas interests. Black sailors were

simultaneously agents of American expansion abroad and non-citizens at home. Verney's argument about the racial nature of American empire in the nineteenth century could likely be deepened.²

Also, while the book is not explicitly framed as such, Verney has written an excellent account of the American state. By focusing exclusively on naval, and thus federally funded, expeditions, he argues that the American government undertook the more formal imperial activities of its twentieth-century counterpart. In arguing the early federal government was strong and active rather than weak and limited, the book thus aligns with the work of scholars such as Gautham Rao and Max Edling.³

Verney's argument that the federal government took an active role in promoting and expanding American interests overseas is well supported and excellently argued. One wonders, however, if by exclusively focusing upon state-sponsored missions and eliding America's pre-1815 efforts at establishing an "empire of commerce" (44), there is a missed opportunity to further enrich the book's coverage of the origins of America's Pacific imperial vision. Verney notes that "most of the seventeen [US Navy exploring] missions were commercial" in nature (6); does this suggest that naval exploring missions were a heritage of America's 1780s and 1790s efforts to establish trade with Asia and South Asia? Perhaps the roots stretch earlier, to American's global visions of their future amidst the American Revolution. The chronology of the book could perhaps have opened at an earlier time in order to present a more complicated origins story of the expansionists' visions for the United States.

Verney's book serves as an excellent and well-written analysis of American naval activity in the antebellum era. He persuasively argues that the Navy served as an arm of the American global imperial state in the decades before the Civil War, and offers perceptive insights from both published and unpublished primary sources to convey the experiences of a wide cast of characters. *A Great and Rising Nation* should prompt debate and discussion amongst historians and will prove useful to both academics and the interested public alike.

² Nancy Shoemaker, *Native American Whalers and the World: Indigenous Encounters and the Contingency of Race* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Nathan Perl-Rosenthal, *Citizen Sailors: Becoming American in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 14, 187-190.

³ Max M. Edling, *A Revolution in Favor of Government: Origins of the U.S. Constitution and the Making of the American State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Gautham Rao, *National Duties: Custom Houses and the Making of the American State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Rao, "The New Historiography of the Early Federal Government: Institutions, Contexts, and the Imperial State," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 77:1 (January 2020): 97-128.

 Review by Katrina Ponti, Belfer Center, Harvard Kennedy School

The American kraken of empire was a peculiar creature. After the War of 1812, the federal government, the head of this kraken, expanded in power (7). The continental nation spread west, and federal institutions like the Post Office and the Army became ubiquitous presences in daily life. It was the maritime tentacles of this organism, however, that proved the most active and oddly shaped. Of various lengths and strengths, they reached abroad to leave an imprint of the nation on new parts of the world. The kraken, once the mythological symbol fear for every mariner, now came to represent the intellectual claims of the United States on a permanent and prominent presence in the community of white western nations.¹

A Great and Rising Nation relates a new perspective on the history of American empire through the lens of exploration and scientific pursuit. These pursuits, which were funded by a union of government and private groups, were expeditions of discovery to new regions of the world. Upon the return of these expeditions, the leaders of the voyages published their findings for the American and international public. It is from these published writings and the real-time journals of the officers that Verney discerns a typology of Americans who advocated for a scientific approach to international engagement.² These “Explorationists,” as they are called by the author, sought to categorize the natural world, including people, into intellectual frameworks, and then to use their mastery of those scientific frameworks to evidence their claim to a permanent place among the “great powers” of Europe (2-3). This intellectual process of empire-building, however, ultimately required the white American middle-class at home to imagine itself as participant in this cultural sphere by reading the Explorationists’ published accounts. In seeking to acquire international reputation through scientific discovery, Explorationists and their government supporters developed a new democratically inflected language of imperialism that began and ended at home.

As Verney argues, this type of cultural and imperial expansion was neither exceptional nor unexceptional, but rather a multi-dimensional (multi-tentacled) combination of European-inspired and utilitarian republican approaches to national identity building abroad (6-7). This assertion encapsulates the complicated and varied nature of the United States’ imagined relationship with the world. Explorationists, whose aims were not always aligned, portrayed this cultural and intellectual expansion as a “glorious and useful” state enterprise, to simultaneously participate in world affairs while remaining aloof from the intrigues of Europe (3).

Temporally and thematically organized, this book recounts the experiences of seven of the seventeen government-sponsored expeditions that were staffed and supported by US naval personnel and civilians between 1815 and 1850. In six chapters, each dedicated to a different expeditionary tentacle that reached into the world, Verney weaves a wide-ranging story of how white men eliminated maritime frontiers and extended the imagined American community “wherever its citizens and their imaginations spread” (8).

¹ For the expansion of the US maritime empire, see: Eliga Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth: The American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); Ernest May, *Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961); Kariann Akemi Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation* (Oxford University Press, 2010); and Max Edling, *A Hercules in the Cradle: War, Money, and the American State, 1783-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

² See for example: the writings of William Reynolds, *The Private Journal of William Reynolds: The United States Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842*, ed. Nathaniel and Thomas Philbrick (New York: Penguin Books, 2004); Charles Wilkes, *Synopsis of the U.S. Exploring Expedition, During the Years 1838-42* (Washington, D.C.: Peter Force Press, 1842); William Francis Lynch, *Narrative of the Expedition to the River Jordan and the Dead Sea* (London: James Blackwood Press, 1855); and Elisha Kent Kane, *The U.S. Grinnell Expedition in Search of Sir John Franklin: A Personal Narrative* (New York: Childs and Peterson Press, 1853).

The first three chapters work together to exemplify the process by which an expedition of discovery was conceived, executed, and finally received by the American public. Aspiring naturalist Jeremiah Reynolds, an early champion of exploration, wished for the United States to tap into the European “Empire of Knowledge” as a way to earn national respect (11). His vision to unite federal and civilian agents in a single expedition of discovery, however, came too early for legislators, who feared that such a voyage would unduly expand government and military powers to maritime routes that were at that time used only for private American commerce (12). It was not until the administration of Andrew Jackson that domestic political culture shifted to a more militant drive to protect this American commercial shipping and to increase the presence of the Navy far beyond local waters.³ In using the language of this new political environment to support their own aims, Explorationists gained more traction for a dual-purpose military and scientific expedition (45).

The 1838 United States Exploring Expedition (“Ex Ex”) became a “tentacle of state power thrust into the Pacific World.” (46). Six US Navy vessels and over 200 men comprised the first government-sponsored voyage of discovery, with a mandate to show the strength of American maritime power and make the oceanic space safer and more favorable for American shipping. During its four-year deployment in the Pacific, the Ex Ex: charted the landscape and its curiosities; violently forced indigenous communities into commercial treaties; and policed wayward American sailors. The leader of the expedition, Admiral Charles Wilkes, proved ornery and unpopular among his crew members as well as among American politicians at home. Upon the return of the expedition, the political establishment in Washington, DC largely ignored Wilkes and the scientific accomplishments of the voyage (76-77).

Rather than retreat from the public eye, Wilkes appealed to the American public for recognition by publishing the *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*.⁴ The growing white American middle class adored the genre of travel and adventure, imagining themselves as participants in these great expeditions and were reassured that the nation held a prominent role in the world.⁵ In addition to travel narratives like Wilkes’s, the artifacts of expeditions also found their way into the US National Gallery, where the public could see the products of scientific discovery (104-105). These fed the public hunger for more such expeditions, and the government supplied.

The following three chapters describe expeditions of discovery that illuminate the variety of political agendas that provided the impetus for these voyages. Expeditions were often intended to reassure white Americans that their political agendas were in the best interest of the country. While Explorationists cited science as the main reason for further expeditions around the world, the justification for these journeys was, in fact, the reinforcement of preexisting desires for white Protestant supremacy, expanded enslavement, and national civility and honor. These became the actual reasons for separate cliques of Explorationists to send voyages to the Dead Sea, South America, and the Arctic, respectively. These prevailing reasons also exposed American anxieties about the future of the nation, which largely went unresolved and resulted in the Civil War.⁶

³ On Jacksonian maritime economic protections, see John Belohlavek, “*Let the Eagle Soar!*”: *The Foreign Policy of Andrew Jackson* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1945).

⁴ Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition* (Washington, DC, 1845).

⁵ These family-friendly narratives were published in periodicals like *Campbell’s Foreign Semi-Monthly Magazine* (Philadelphia, 1842) and the *Ladies National Magazine* (Philadelphia, 1840).

⁶ Carl Lawrence Paulus, *The Slaveholding Crisis: Fear of Insurrection and the Coming of the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017), and Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

Verney's book, like many recent histories of America in the antebellum world, describes an "empire state of mind," elaborating on new efforts to understand how the United States government sought to place itself as a nation among nations.⁷ The Explorationist imperial framework proposed by Verney reveals nuance in how some Americans thought about their presence in the world. Although its main actors are predominantly white and male, this monograph's approach to them complicates the Manifest Destiny narrative. Certainly, American maritime shipping girdled the globe, and opened new markets for American goods. But mercantile wealth in this dangerous trade was not certain. Private investors often went bankrupt, and often common trade routes could not function without the aggressive protection of the US Navy.⁸

Shifting from a model of exceptionalism to Verney's kraken model of multi-pronged and probing outreach allows for a significant shift in how we understand national identity in this era. Through the lens of natural philosophy, we see the process by which Americans created knowledge of foreign cultures as filtered through their own biases. And because this occurred "scientifically"—in a ritualized and European-approved process of recordkeeping—it gained a veneer of intellectual legitimacy for the American public. When combined with other recent monographs on the topic of American national identity as constructed abroad, *A Great and Rising Nation* introduces a new facet in the complicated narrative of American foreign affairs.⁹

Finally, woven among the grand expeditionary plans of elite white Americans were the efforts and participation of maritime workers who helped sail the ships, and the enslaved populations of Americans who, if some Explorationists had their way, would have been subject to forced migration to South America. Although Verney digs into the racism that drove many Southern Explorationists to seek new slave states in the Southern Hemisphere only in chapter five, racial division and tension are evident throughout the book. Verney makes clear that the main actors in this story are overwhelmingly white male elites and middle class. The American identity perpetuated by the Explorationists represented a very specific swathe of national society that did not necessarily reflect the fullness of American identity in reality. The expeditions were championed by elite white men, and the products of their travels were consumed by literate and white middle-class Americans. Fully uncovering the reception of these expeditions by other American communities is possibly a project for another book.

By linking American scientific culture to military engagement in the world, Verney builds a framework for understanding the patterns of thought that compelled both the American public and politicians to "stamp the world with a national character" and how the US government and American citizens participated in this definitional construction abroad (3). A welcome addition to the scholarly and graduate reading lists on US and the World, this monograph also lends itself to readers of the "new diplomatic history" and applied history.¹⁰ The US government, while expanding its diplomatic bureaucracy, still relied on scientists and naval

⁷ See, for example, Emily Conroy-Krutz, "Empire and the Early Republic: An H-Diplo State of the Field Essay," H-Diplo (September 2015): <https://networks.h-net.org/system/files/contributed-files/e133.pdf>; Eliga Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth: The American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

⁸ Nancy Shoemaker, *Pursuing Respect in the Cannibal Isles: Americans in Nineteenth-Century Fiji* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2019), and Daniel Feller, *The Jacksonian Promise: America, 1815-1840* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

⁹ Kariann Akemi Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Post Colonial Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Dane Morrison, *True Yankees: South Seas and the Discovery of American Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014); and Brian Rouleau, *With Sails Whitening Every Sea: Mariners and the Making of an American Maritime Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

¹⁰ These emerging historiographic approaches are beginning to appear in the of early American foreign policy. See Karine Walther, *Sacred Interests: The United States and the Islamic World, 1821-1921* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Patrick Cohrs, *The New Atlantic Order: The Transformation of International Politics, 1860-1933*

officers to serve as national surrogates abroad. Verney's social and cultural approaches to these foreign interactions introduces a new way to approach the history of US foreign policy and how a post-colonial nation engaged in the mental exercises necessary give itself the oxymoronic title of an imperial democracy.¹¹

Verney ably describes the expression of American empire and identity as a kraken (7). The tendrils of this creature were woven throughout the world and in American cultural consciousness. The nation was conquering nature by organizing it into a knowable space, and this space became inflected with Americans' belief that their nation had become part of an exceptional tier of the great powers in Europe.

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022); and Ernest May, *"Lessons" of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

¹¹ Akemi Yokota, *Unbecoming British*, and Morrison, *True Yankees*.

Response by Michael A. Verney, Drury University

I wrote what became *A Great and Rising Nation* with many goals in mind. My undergraduate advisor, Heather Cox Richardson, impressed me with the centrality of political ideology and partisan politics in US history.²⁵ Some of my favorite books in graduate school, meanwhile, were those by scholars of the British Empire, including Linda Colley, Maya Jasanoff, and my mentor, Eliga Gould.²⁶ I was captivated by their “entangled histories” (to use Gould’s phrase) of global imperial expansion, encounters, conflict, and international and transimperial influences.²⁷ Further, as a student of W. Jeffrey Bolster’s and a graduate of the Munson Institute for American Maritime Studies at Mystic Seaport, I possessed a longstanding fascination with mariners, vessels, voyages, and especially the nascent US Navy.²⁸

With *A Great and Rising Nation*, I hoped to fuse these fields together. I wanted to demonstrate what a globally informed study of the imperial politics of the sea in the early US Republic might look like. In doing so, I also aspired to make contributions to such vexing scholarly issues as the start of the US global empire, American exceptionalism, the nature and scope of Manifest Destiny, early US national identity, nineteenth-century state power, the Market Revolution, US-UK relations, and the coming of the Civil War. Finally, I wanted the book to be engaging. I hoped to capture the drama of a rising imperial power through a riveting cast of characters and to appeal not only to scholarly audiences, but also to undergraduate students and perhaps the general public.

It is not for me to say whether or not I achieved all those objectives. However, in reading the reviews for this roundtable, I am hopeful that I approached some of them. Katrina Ponti’s admiration for the “kraken model of multi-pronged and probing outreach” as a new conceptualization of early US imperial history was gratifying to read. Matthew Goetz’s review is elegant in summarizing the process and intricacies of domestic imperialization. Both Goetz and Anthony Guidone rightly observe that fear and anxiety often underlay the exploring expeditions of the antebellum US Navy. I especially valued Guidone’s acknowledgement of the book’s contributions to the literature on state power in the early US republic and its “unexpected ironies.” All the reviewers appear to have appreciated the inclusivity of the book and its recurrent themes of race, ethnicity, gender, and class. Collectively, their excellent summaries and insightful comments made me grateful to Thomas Maddux for recruiting them. I thank them all for their careful reading and reflections. Special thanks, too, to Dane Morrison for composing the introduction to this roundtable.

²⁵ Among Richardson’s many books are: *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004); *West from Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America after the Civil War* (New London: Yale University Press, 2007); and *To Make Men Free: A History of the Republican Party* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

²⁶ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), and *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002); Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750-1850* (New York: Vintage, 2007), and *Liberty’s Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011); Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), and *Among the Powers of the Earth: The American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012).

²⁷ Eliga H. Gould, “Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery,” in *The American Historical Review* 112:3 (June 2007): 764-786. For the “transimperial,” see Kristin L. Hoganson and Jay Sexton, eds., *Crossing Empires: Taking U.S. History into Transimperial Terrain* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2020).

²⁸ W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997) and *The Mortal Sea: Fishing the Atlantic in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012).

Each of the reviewers raises excellent questions about the scope of *A Great and Rising Nation*. Chronologically, the commercial impetuses of many of the Navy's exploring expeditions made Guidone wonder why I started the book in the 1810s and 1820s, and not during the American Revolution or its immediate aftermath. He is right that the Revolution was a movement of both national independence as well as of imperial expansion.²⁹ The Treaty of Paris set off a profound era of US commercial expansion and engagement with the larger world.³⁰ In *True Yankees*, Morrison recounts how early US merchant-mariners like Amasa Delano (active in the 1790s through the 1810s) and Edmund Fanning (circa 1790s–early 1830s) fashioned themselves the republican counterparts to Enlightenment European explorers.³¹ Furthermore, the very first calls for the US government to sponsor scientific exploration beyond North America date back to the early 1790s, when John Churchman asked for George Washington's support in sending "one or two vessels on a Voyage of experiment" to the northeastern Atlantic.³²

Nonetheless, I did not start the book at such an early time simply because there were no US naval voyages of discovery before the United States Exploring Expedition of 1838–1842 (or the "Ex Ex," as contemporaries called it). The naval character of these missions was critical in the ability of the US to attain cultural parity with the Great Powers of Europe. As French immigrant and Revolutionary veteran Peter S. Duponceau wrote in 1836, "We must have our Ansons, our Cooks, our La Perouses, our Rosses, our Parrys, and our Kruzensterns."³³ All of these figures were naval officers and explorers. Their public service allowed them to fully represent their respective nations. Thus, while the merchants of the first decades of the early republic might fancy themselves the Yankee equivalents of European naval explorers like James Cook or Louis Antoine de Bougainville, their private status meant that could not fully claim those mantles. Only a national expedition would allow the United States to, in the words of one congressman, "enter into this glorious career of discovery and human improvement."³⁴ Edmund Fanning knew this. As early as 1810, the sealing magnate began lobbying the federal government for "a national exploring, discovery, &c. expedition," which he hoped would result in "commendable dignity" before the "Nations of the World."³⁵

²⁹ Marc Egnal, *A Mighty Empire: The Origins of the American Revolution* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988); William Earl Weeks, *John Quincy Adams and the American Global Empire* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992); Weeks, *Building the Continental Empire: American Expansion from the Revolution to the Civil War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996); and Weeks, *The New Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations, Volume 1: Dimensions of the Early American Empire, 1754-1865* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Gould, *Among the Powers*.

³⁰ See, for instance, Edward Gray, *The Making of John Ledyard: Empire and Ambition in the Life of an Early American Traveler* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); David Iglar, *The Great Ocean: Pacific Worlds from Captain Cook to the Gold Rush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Nathan Perl-Rosenthal, *Citizen Sailors: Becoming American in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015); Emily Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), and Nancy Shoemaker, "The United States' First Overseas Possession," *Diplomatic History* 46:5 (November 2022): 847-872.

³¹ Dane Anthony Morrison, *True Yankees: The South Seas and the Discovery of American Identity* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014), 91, 106-107, and 109.

³² John Churchman to George Washington, September 5, 1792, *Founders Online*, National Archives, updated October 2022, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-11-02-0038>. See, also, John P. Harrison, "Science and Politics: Origins and Objectives of Mid-Nineteenth Century Government Expeditions to Latin America," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 35:2 (May 1955), 176.

³³ Peter S. Duponceau to Jeremiah Reynolds, September 5, 1836, reprinted in Jeremiah Reynolds, *Pacific and Indian Oceans: Or, the South Sea Surveying and Exploring Expedition: Its Inception, Progress, and Objects* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1841; Google Books), 156.

³⁴ Lemuel Sawyer, Register of Debates, House, 19th Cong., 1st Sess., December 16, 1825, 813.

³⁵ Edmund Fanning to Martin Van Buren, March 13, 1837, Records of the U.S. Exploring Expedition Under the Command of Lt. Charles Wilkes, 1836-1842, RG 37, M 75, roll 2, National Archives and Records Administration Boston, Waltham, Massachusetts.

Like Guidone, Goetz also muses in his review about the span of the book. He suggests that incorporating Indigenous North American and Barbary captivity narratives in my chapter on the publications and scientific collections of the Ex Ex would have given it more context. I agree that these products all “served a similar purpose,” especially “entertaining readers...while simultaneously reaffirming white Americans’ belief in their superiority over the ‘savage heathens’ of the world.” He further argues that the popularity of the publications and museum displays of the Ex Ex may have had less to do with white anxieties over an era of profound change and more to do with a “longstanding compulsion” on the part of white US citizens to establish their supposed superiority over global peoples of color. I certainly concur with Lawrence Peskin and others that the encounter with Barbary was important for early US national identity, and I eagerly look forward to Goetz’s own exciting scholarship on this subject.³⁶ I would especially welcome future studies in the tradition of John Carlos Rowe and Amy Kaplan that encompass the fearful literature of captivity narratives and the more confident travelogues of the era of Manifest Destiny.³⁷ In 1852, for example, one particularly brash US traveler to the Holy Land ventured that “Palestine may in the course of time have its representatives in the Congress of the United States of America and Asia.”³⁸ Such a declaration would have been unthinkable to James Leander Cathcart, John Foss, or any other US prisoner of the Barbary States in the first few decades of the early republic. As Morrison has shown, such early US globetrotters believed that they lived in a dangerous world.³⁹

Even so, I chose not to go back so far in my literary context of the Ex Ex volumes because I wanted to privilege the specific *milieu* of the late antebellum era. While public interest in accounts of foreign travel has a long history in North America, there have been changes as well as continuities in the cultural dynamics of those fascinations. Drawing on the insights of many scholars, I argue that the cultural and racial chauvinism of antebellum travelogues assuaged anxious white, middle-class anxieties over the domestic destabilizations of the period.⁴⁰ The disorientation of the market revolution, the rise of middle-class culture (including both evangelical fervor and an emphasis on self-improvement through reading), rapid territorial expansion in North America, and the emergence of vigorous critiques of slavery, white supremacy, and patriarchy put immense strains on antebellum white psyches. That particular context was different from the more realistic, external fears of foreign captivity in North America and North Africa in the colonial and post-revolutionary eras.⁴¹

³⁶ Lawrence A. Peskin, *Captives and Countrymen: Barbary Slavery and the American Public, 1785-1816* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009). See, also, Robert J. Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) and Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005).

³⁷ John Carlos Rowe, *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) and Amy Kaplan, *Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002). See, too, Shelley Streeby, *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) and Andy Doolen, *Fugitive Empire: Locating Early American Imperialism* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

³⁸ Samuel Sullivan Cox, *A Buckeye Abroad; Or, Wanderings in Europe, and in the Orient* (New York: George P. Putnam, 1852; Google Books), 182.

³⁹ Dane A. Morrison, *Eastward of Good Hope: Early America in a Dangerous World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021).

⁴⁰ For starters on an immense literature, see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992; reprint, 2nd edition, New York: Routledge, 2008); Ronald Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), and David Chapin, *Exploring Other Worlds: Margaret Fox, Elisba Kent Kane, and the Antebellum Culture of Curiosity* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004).

⁴¹ An excellent compilation of accounts of Barbary confinement is Paul Baepler, ed., *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of Barbary Captivity Narratives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). See, also, Morrison,

In trying to offer both a comprehensive understanding of US naval exploration as a general phenomenon as well as conceptual frameworks for specific missions, I certainly did not pursue every possible angle of significance. To Goetz's question about Europeans' reception of expeditions to regions beyond the Arctic, there is indeed plenty of material to analyze. For issues of clarity and space, I cut out the Ex Ex's intriguing encounter with the French exploring squadron off Antarctica, its complex relations with British colonists in New South Wales in Australia, and, later on, the snubbing of the Dead Sea expedition by British leaders and cultural authorities. I also hope that future scholars will take Guidone's interests in the racial makeup of exploratory crews and the experiences and perceptions of Black and Indigenous sailors seriously. I agree with Ponti, too, that studying how diverse communities responded to these missions would be valuable. Newspaper sources would be particularly helpful in such an enterprise. Likewise, foreign archival research would doubtless recover other intriguing stories. Indeed, considering the number of voyages of discovery that the US Navy dispatched in the early republic, the diversity (or lack thereof) of their crews, their geographical range, their relations and interactions with European and global peoples, and their domestic and international visibility, the possibilities for future scholarship in this area seems nearly endless. If, as Goetz suspects, *A Great and Rising Nation* will inspire and guide future scholarship on the antebellum US Navy's global exploring expeditions, I will be satisfied.

Eastward of Good Hope; Colley, *Captives*, and Peter R. Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008).