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# H-Diplo

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Introduction by Eliga H. Gould

**Paul W. Mapp. *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713-1763*.** Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press and the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-8078-3395-7 (cloth, 2011, \$49.95); 978-1-4696-0086-4 (paper, 2013, \$29.95).

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Introduction by Eliga H. Gould, University of New Hampshire

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“It is time for a change.” With these words, delivered in Toronto as he assumed the presidency of the American Historical Association in 1932, Herbert Eugene Bolton sounded a call that still resonates. “In my own country,” Bolton explained for the benefit of Canadian listeners in the audience, “the study of thirteen English colonies and the United States in isolation has obscured many of the larger factors in their development.” Such tendencies, Bolton thought, had “helped to raise a nation of chauvinists.” For Bolton, the solution was obvious. Expand the boundaries of American history — from a “nationalistic” story centered on the British colonies that became the United States to one that included the Americas as a whole — and historians would discover that the “broad phases of American history” were not unique to any one country, including the United States, but were in fact “phases common to . . . the entire Western Hemisphere.” The result, Bolton predicted, would be a far more compelling narrative with much greater explanatory power.<sup>1</sup>

For the relevance of Bolton’s words today, one need look no farther than *The Elusive West*, the splendid new book by Paul Mapp that is the subject of this roundtable. Like Bolton, Mapp takes a thoroughly hemispheric view of American history. Focusing on the period before, during, and immediately after the Seven Years’ War, Mapp insists that the climactic struggle often referred to as the Great War for Empire was about much more than whether Britain or France would control the Ohio valley. On a fundamental level, the war was also a contest over what Mapp suggestively calls “the elusive West.” By this he means not just Western North America but a considerable share of the Pacific Ocean as well. Although Spain exercised a nominal lordship over most of this space — real power, of course, was still in indigenous hands — North America west of the Mississippi was an area where the geographic ignorance of Europe’s colonial powers was matched only by the boundlessness of their ambition. Not surprisingly, the combination proved explosive, as France, Spain, Britain, and eventually Russia vied for supremacy over a region that they neither controlled nor understood. As Mapp shows, their ignorance and ambition eventually plunged Europe itself into the chaos of world war, and the crisis helped set the stage for the cycle of imperial collapse and revolution that was to follow.

Unlike “The Epic of Greater America,” as the published version of Bolton’s address was called, *The Elusive West* is not overly concerned with “nationalistic” tendencies in American historical scholarship, nor should it be. Instead, Mapp’s main objective is to supplement — ‘reject’ would probably be too strong a word — the Atlantic perspective currently favored by most historians of Europe’s mid-century wars for empire with one whose center is several thousand miles to the west. The panelists on this roundtable are in general agreement that in so doing he has taken a familiar story and reconfigured it, in Elizabeth Mancke’s words, “in surprisingly original ways.” According to Juliana Barr, “Mapp makes the most persuasive case yet for framing the history of early America in continental and

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert E. Bolton, “The Epic of Greater America,” *American Historical Review*, 38, no. 3 (1933): 448-449.

hemispheric terms,” while Christopher Hodson calls his book “one of the smartest pieces of scholarship on the eighteenth century published in the last decade.” The central place of Spain and Spanish America in Mapp’s analysis is another strength — a “welcome” change, as Matt Schumann writes in his contribution to the forum. The panelists also note with approval the handling of what Daniel Baugh calls the “extraordinary geographical fact” that Europeans knew almost nothing about the area for which they were contending. In a profession that has for the most part internalized Bolton’s demand for broader approaches, this is high praise indeed.

Naturally, in a book of this scope, readers are bound to find areas that they might have treated differently, and the panelists on this roundtable are no exception. Still, there can be no question that Paul Mapp has made a major contribution to scholarship on the history of Europe’s early modern expansion. Although readers will have to decide for themselves how far, and in what direction, they want to carry the changes that *The Elusive West* recommends, they will surely agree that Mapp has made the case for change very well. The issues that the panelists discuss here are likely to be with us for a long time to come.

### Participants:

**Paul Mapp** is an associate professor in the department of history at the College of William and Mary. He received his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 2001, and is the author of *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713-1763* (2011). He is currently working on an international history of the American Revolution.

**Eliga H. Gould** teaches history at the University of New Hampshire. His new book, *Among the Powers of the Earth: The American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire* (Harvard University Press, 2012), will be released in March.

Juliana Barr is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Florida. She is the author of *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). More recently she published a couple of articles related to the subject of this roundtable: “Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders in the ‘Borderlands’ of the Early Southwest,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 68 (January 2011), 5-46 and “Beyond the ‘Atlantic World’: Early American History as Viewed from the West,” *OAH Magazine of History*, 25 (January 2011), 13-18. She is currently at work on a new book about religion and violence in the sixteenth and seventeenth century Indian-Spanish Southwest.

**Daniel A. Baugh**, Professor Emeritus of Modern British History, Cornell University, was born in Philadelphia, received his BA from the University of Pennsylvania and his Ph.D. from Cambridge University. He is author of *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole* (Princeton, 1965), and editor of *Aristocratic Government and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, 1975) and *Naval Administration, 1715-1750* (London: Navy Records Society, 1977). After publishing articles on English poor relief, 1690-1832, he returned to the study of naval and maritime history in 1983. Two articles of note are “Great Britain’s ‘Blue-Water’ Policy, 1689-1815,” *The International History Review*, X, 1 (Feb. 1988), pp. 33-58, and “Maritime Strength and Atlantic Commerce: The Uses of ‘A Grand

Marine Empire” in *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815*, ed. Lawrence Stone (London, 1994), pp. 185-223. In July 2011 his book, *The Global Seven Years War, 1754-1763: Britain and France in a Great Power Contest* was published by Pearson Longman.

**Christopher Hodson** earned his Ph.D. from Northwestern University and is currently Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Brigham Young University. He is the author of *The Acadian Diaspora: An Eighteenth-Century History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) and is at work, with Brett Rushforth of the College of William and Mary, on *Discovering Empire: France and the Atlantic World from the Age of Columbus to the Rise of Napoleon*, which will be published by Basic Books.

**Elizabeth Mancke** (Ph.D., Johns Hopkins University) is Professor of History at the University of Akron. Her publications includes *The Fault Lines of Empire: Political Differentiation in Massachusetts and Nova Scotia, c. 1760-1830* (2004), and *Britain's Oceanic Empire: Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds, 1500-1850* (forthcoming), co-edited with H.V. Bowen and John G. Reid. She is currently working on a book project entitled *Imperium Unbound: European Expansion and the Making of Modern Geopolitics*.

**Matt J. Schumann** teaches at Eastern Michigan University and Washtenaw Community College, having received his Ph.D. in History from the University of Exeter in 2005. A student of Jeremy Black, he specializes in mid-eighteenth century Atlantic international relations. He has written articles on diplomatic and military history ranging in scope from the Baltic Sea to the Pennsylvania backcountry, and co-authored his first book, *The Seven Years War: A Transatlantic History* (Routledge, 2008) with Karl W. Schweizer.

When is a continent not a continent? When “America” is reduced to only the East Coast and its Atlantic environs in the writing of early American history. In the beautifully written and keenly perceived *Elusive West*, Paul Mapp makes the most persuasive case yet for framing the history of early America in continental and hemispheric terms. Rather than a simple comparative or synthetic approach, he takes a quintessentially Atlantic World and East Coast subject – the Seven Years’ War – and demonstrates how critical the entire continent and the Pacific were to fully understanding the dynamics of that imperial conflict. Mapp argues that the rival European government officials and diplomats who determined the war’s origins and outcomes looked conceptually at the entire continent, and thus so must historians if we are to realize their global outlook. In doing so, he brings into great clarity the hemispheric dimensions of what Eliga Gould has called the “first true world war.”<sup>1</sup> Intellectual pleasures aplenty await the reader as Mapp proves the sweeping breadth of his research and his vision.

Indigenous people of the trans-Mississippi West and Far West sit at the heart of this tale of international contest and conflict. As Mapp has argued elsewhere, “when sources from, or encounters involving the Spanish, French, British and Russian Empires are combined, many Indian communities go from being marginal to one European empire to being central to all of them.”<sup>2</sup> And it is at the center of the Seven Years’ War that he finds Indian nations of the North American West. The global rivalries of Britain, France, and England that culminated in the “Great War for Empire” fixated upon the navigable river systems of the West that would provide a fabled passage to the Pacific and access to the profits of Asian trade markets. Along the way, those nations also hoped to find mineral resources and wealthy civilizations there for the taking. Yet against all expectation and ability (as demonstrated by their successes elsewhere in the world), the three European empires were brought up short. Indeed, “Well into the nineteenth century, North American regions familiar for millennia to western Indians remained unexplored by and unknown to Europeans and Euro-Americans.” (4-5)

While exploring the geopolitical issues that made the West and its native populations so central to European imperial rivalries, Mapp concentrates on the continent as it was constructed by the whimsy, fantasy, and aspirations of conquistadors, diplomats, government officials, scouts, traders, explorers and missionaries. We spend time on the ground with some of the producers of geographical information so valued by officialdom in Europe, but the true focus is how “empires were thinking and acting on the grandest scale.” (21) The view from up there has breathtaking and revelatory scope, but Mapp has kindly

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<sup>1</sup> Eliga H. Gould, “Entangled Atlantic Histories: A Response from the Anglo-American Periphery,” *American Historical Review* 112, 5 (December 2007), 1421.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Mapp, “Interpretive Implications of a Continental Approach,” William and Mary Quarterly-Early Modern Studies Institute Workshop, “Territorial Crossings: Histories and Historiographies of the Early Americas,” Huntington Library, 10.

left room for future scholars following in his footsteps. The focus on rarified levels of diplomatic knowledge and debate leaves the perceptions of colonial officials and colonists and the role of geographic knowledge in the everyday lives of early Americans open to further exploration. As it turns out, those whose perspectives call for greater study are especially those who dealt firsthand with the European invaders seeking knowledge of the continent's western reaches – American Indians. For Mapp's purposes, it makes sense that he ask only what limitations Indians created for the Europeans seeking access to and routes across the continent. Pausing his account there, however, risks leaving Indians inscrutable and somewhat passive objects stemming the path of history-making Europeans.

Mapp argues convincingly that geographic ignorance and uncertainty about the western regions of the continent regularly hampered European officialdom as competition for access to the Pacific intensified, and the cause for this ignorance must be attributed to the West's indigenous inhabitants. But, and this is the challenging "but," it is a lack of indigenous empire and "imposing civilizations" in the West that led to geographic ignorance on the part of Europeans. (43, 98) Put simply, Europeans only worked well with other empires. (193) Although "Empires, even those from radically different cultures, could, in the language of political scientist and anthropologist James C. Scott, make spaces and people 'legible' not just to themselves but also to each other," he asserts, indigenous people of the eighteenth-century West simply did not have sophisticated political institutions with which Europeans could work whether through conquest or collaboration. (257)

Thus does Mapp join a debate arising from several significant recent works trying to answer the question of how to make clear the critical impact of American Indians to the course of American colonial, national, and imperial history without using a yardstick of western Europe to measure their polities and their political power. The issue here is often what terminology to use when addressing questions of Indian-European diplomacy and political relations. While recognizing that Indian polities had unique and diverse forms, we have generally renounced loaded categories such as band, tribe, chiefdom, etc. for their association with outdated notions of stages or levels of "civilization" and their suggestion of primitivism over political complexity. More recently, debates have centered on the applicability of using terms associated primarily with the history of Eurasia – nation, state, federation, or empire – to Indian political structures. Here I am reminded of the vying 2008 texts of Brian DeLay's *War of a Thousand Deserts* and Pekka Hämäläinen's *The Comanche Empire*. In DeLay's work, Indians figure as stateless foils for state building by Mexico and the United States (with no simultaneous political development or evolution themselves) while Hämäläinen explores the question of indigenous imperialism and, more specifically, argues that Comanches were the builders of not merely a state but an empire.

We have perhaps arrived at a final phase of affirming for Indians those features of human society previously denied them in the scholarly realm: legal codes, social coherence, and geopolitical organization, but we still cannot figure out the proper language with which to describe them. For the moment, we seem caught on the question of "empire," especially when we consider Mapp's arguments alongside those of Hämäläinen. Hämäläinen has

inspired thoughtful and heated debate with his attempt to give Comanche power a political construction, and here Mapp appears to underestimate native political intent or strategy in the absence of such imperial construction. Another work, Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper's *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*, may or may not help us out here. They find that "tribes, peoples, and nations have made empires" and "empires cannot be confined to a particular place or era but emerged and reemerged over thousands of years and on all continents." A whole range of advantages – "larger family size, better access to irrigation or trade routes, good luck, ambitious and skillful rulers" – could give one group the power to dominate another.<sup>3</sup> I am not wedded to the label "empire" when it comes to recognizing Indian power and political structure, but I do take as instructive Burbank and Cooper's willingness to use the same political category in a number of different settings – and with a fluid set of defining characteristics. Might we do the same with "nation" or "state" as well in order to translate native power systems? The problem if we do not, as the *Elusive West* indicates, is that if your story is one of political exchange at an imperial level and Indians are not empires, then what politics they do have do not measure up to or enter into the exchange.

Thus there are costs to the argument against indigenous empire, and it is here where Mapp's exceptional study may become less persuasive for some readers. In the absence of an indigenous empire, Europeans were stymied in their search for geographic knowledge that would aid their own imperial projects in the West – that is clear. Yet even as the *Elusive West* tells a "multicultural, multinational, and multi-imperial" story – in the spirit of Eliga Gould's "entangled histories" – it does not place western Indians among the polities, be they nations or empires, struggling for geopolitical mastery during the age of the Great War for Empire. (19) They do not, like their European counterparts "exploit geographic understanding" for political ends to aid their own diplomacy with other Indians or Europeans; the "ambiguity of their geographic information" merely thwarts and befuddles vying European imperialism. (25, 69) It seems a strange suggestion, however, that while the international struggles of European empires were brought up short by the "human geography" of the West, that imposing "human geography" was itself devoid of politics. (40, 170, 233) With no imperial structure, Indian polities seemingly cannot figure as equal political and diplomatic players in an imperial battle, even as the evidence indicates that that's exactly what they were when they denied Europeans passage or deliberately confused them with misinformation and obfuscation as to the terrain, riverways, thoroughfares, and potential northwest passages.

The notion that European difficulties in the North American West can be blamed on a lack of "indigenous imperial expertise and infrastructures" rests primarily on comparisons with European experiences in Latin America, China and Russia where they enjoyed more successful dealings with empires of "other" cultures. Yet, the key here is the political context. In China and Russia, European explorers and cartographers were there at the behest or permission of rulers. In Latin America, rulers of the Aztec and Inca empires had

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<sup>3</sup> Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper's *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 9.

been conquered and thus shared geographical knowledge with Spaniards as willing or coerced collaborators in newly emerging governing structures under the Spanish crown. The Latin American comparison is particularly important here, as it takes seriously indigenous ability to create sophisticated geopolitical power complexes. Added to that, we know now that the “conquests” effected by the Spanish empire were protracted and incomplete struggles that took centuries not years to finalize. So, what are we to make of the fact that it was not the two “indigenous empires” recognized by western scholars that withstood Spanish conquest but rather a myriad of other seemingly non-imperial groups like Apaches, Comanches, and Mapuches? Returning to Mapp’s North American West, one wonders if it is really a difference between state and non-state (or imperial vs. decentralized) Indian political economies (e.g. Aztec vs. Sioux) that determined the European failure to acquire geographical knowledge or if our labels are simply failing us. (96)

The absence of empire does not preclude Indian polities (or imperial diplomacy), and the *Elusive West* struggles against the potential implications of this argument. At root, Mapp demonstrates that in the “boundless” lands of the West, Indians did indeed defend their lands and borders against outsiders, because they stopped Europeans from breaching them. (150, 155-60, 240, 243) Without recognition for sovereign Indian nations, however, the power dynamics of the events taking place can be murky. European invaders and trespassers were not benign explorers merely seeking to chart the landscape and find a throughway to the Pacific. The *Elusive West* abounds with evidence of violence and coercion that reasonably would shape the determination of Indian nations to prevent European incursions into their lands. Motivations behind Indian actions that hindered Europeans are laid out clearly “whether to exclude outsiders from key positions in exchange networks, to keep disruptive and ultimately deadly Spaniards at a distance, or to prevent Spaniards from trading and perhaps allying with enemy nations beyond.” (51) More importantly, multiple accounts in the book closely detail the violence wrought by Europeans – captive-taking, slave raiding, pillaging of villages, killing of community members, “interrogations” of any who crossed their path or were “dragooned into service.” Indians had good reason not to collaborate with Europeans – they had heard of or experienced first-hand the harm Europeans brought; and why do we assume Indians should want to collaborate in the first place? In the absence of political structure or strategy, however, western Indians sometimes appear reduced to acting on “propensities” to be “hostile,” “deceptive,” “misleading,” “puzzling,” “perplexing,” “confused,” “ignorant,” “intractable,” “warlike,” “violent,” and “bellicose.” (43, 49, 84-5, 171, 233, 237) Native political intent on the other hand explains why Comanches issued warnings that they would deprive Spaniards of their lives if they transgressed their borders, why Crees did not let others “pass through their territory,” and why others said simply “go back to your own land.” (49-51, 269) It was Sioux border patrol rather than a Sioux “war party” which stopped French intruders, and trespassers rather than “journeymen” who were ambushed by Apaches. (48, 167) Language still entangles us, and these moments should press us to decide upon coherent terminology to recognize native imperial policy and native policy makers, without turning them into proto-Europeans. We must do so in order to deal with the political reality of power relations on the ground.



Returning to the question of Indian political configurations, it seems striking that the two regions that set up the most roadblocks to Spanish and French exploration were those of the Comanches and Sioux, those who, in addition to Iroquois, have been credited with coming closest to wielding imperial power in American history. Many, including Mapp, have argued that even though these two Plains nations exerted power regionally, they failed to demonstrate the internal dynamics that could earn the label of a national, much less imperial, polity. (342-43) Yet the *Elusive West* makes clear that Spaniards never followed Francisco Vázquez de Coronado's sixteenth-century tracks back to the Southern Plains after Comanche expansion took that region and much of Texas for the Comanche nation's own while exacting tolls for every French trader who wished passage across its lands. Meanwhile Frenchmen with more peaceable, profit-oriented goals of trade and exchange never could figure out a way to get past the Sioux's sacred Black Hills. One Apache leader even declared: "I am the emperor of all the Padoucas." (167,171, 235, 200) We might choose to say Indians could act imperially even if they did not define themselves in such terms, and here is an Indian ruler saying it as best a French translation allowed!

Whether or not they represented empires, Mapp's evidence illuminates how Indian polities exerted the sovereign power of nations in action if not in form. Spanish and French officials "had not seen in the trans-Mississippi West an indigenous power they deemed worthy of a seat at the metropolitan negotiating table" because no Comanche or Sioux had yet seen a Spaniard or Frenchman worthy of a place at a council fire – thus European ignorance of what lay on the other side of Comanche and Sioux borders. (411) The structure of their polities might not resemble those of Europe, China, or Aztecs and Incas, but it did not preclude their power to stop European imperialism at the border – why else did the West remain a region of vast European misunderstanding and ignorance. Using the terms most customary to our historiography may indeed be the only way we can take seriously the American Indian capacity for sovereign political power and to include native peoples on equal terms in global history. *The Elusive West* and the native power it illuminates make clear that even if western Indians remained "insulated from the great mid-eighteenth-century European imperial struggle," Europeans who ventured West found themselves caught in shifting and expanding webs of indigenous imperialism of one kind or another. This carefully reasoned and finely crafted study offers scholars a vital challenge – it will make us think, and think hard, about the concepts and frameworks with which we seek to tell the story of early America.

It is an extraordinary geographical fact that almost nothing was known about western North America until the later eighteenth century. Here was a vast land area bordering colonial settlements and temperate in climate which had essentially been left unexplored. In the pre-1763 maps which are beautifully reproduced in this book, the Rocky Mountains are missing and the trace of the Colorado River ends about where the Grand Canyon begins (but no indication is given of the canyon's presence). Moreover, there is no hint of the westward arc of the Missouri River in its northern extremity which – because French territorial claims were based on the watershed principle – would in due course give the Louisiana Purchase its vast balloon-like configuration. As Paul Mapp points out, Siberia was better mapped than the American West.

He offers three explanations of why the West remained unexplored: formidable geographical obstacles; Indian hostilities and geographical ignorance, along with white men's difficulty understanding what they were saying about more distant lands; and the Spanish Empire's obdurate refusal to allow other nations, especially the French in adjacent Louisiana, to penetrate westward. Regarding the first, one readily understands why the Spaniards would choose not to undertake an exploratory expedition up through the Grand Canyon, even though the course of the Colorado, one of only two great rivers flowing to the Pacific Ocean, was a matter of great curiosity and interest. The failure to venture up the Missouri River is not so easy to explain. It was extensively navigable, and the French were in a position (and felt authorized by their Louisiana claim) to probe its upper reaches. Yet they did not seriously attempt this. One reason was that the project might require military protection from Indian marauding. French authorities believed, rightly, that such a well organized expedition would arouse the ire of Spain's rulers.

Nevertheless, the absence of a serious French exploratory effort is curious. As Mapp shows, France led the world at this time in cartographical expertise. Jesuit mathematicians assisted the mapping of not only Siberia but also China. Yet it appears that no Jesuits, though there were numerous missionaries to the Indians in the northwest interior behind Canada, ventured further west. The traders and minor officials who did push up the Missouri River could not even determine latitude – which is easy to ascertain by taking the altitude of the sun at its noon zenith. As for longitude, which was very hard to determine before about 1770, no one seemed to have even a rough idea of the distance from the Mississippi to the California coast. One wishes that Mapp had addressed this issue because a reasonably credible estimate of the size of the land claimed by Spain could have brought some much-needed reality to the dreams and anxieties which form the chief subject matter of his book.

Of course, the Spaniards might have decided to explore the region themselves. Yet, although “Spanish explorers had reconnoitered ... much of the Southwest in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, ... the empire conducted little North American exploration between 1713 and 1763” (22). The arguments against Spanish exploratory expeditions do not appear compelling in comparison with arguments influencing the French or British. Why,

then, was so little done? This book does not supply a convincing answer. An answer may be drawn, however, from the Spanish Empire's policy regarding the Pacific Ocean. After Luis Vaz de Torres's discoveries in 1610—the last of many remarkable navigational achievements—there developed “an almost paranoid attitude” about new knowledge of this vast ocean. Spain became defensive; the monarchy faced overwhelming European challenges and became painfully conscious of declining resources. In the far-flung Pacific Spain's “policy was to discourage anyone, even Spaniards, from finding out anything that might entice other Europeans ... [to enter it]. Accordingly, the achievement of Torres was virtually suppressed.”<sup>1</sup> Mapp's interesting findings in Spanish archives regarding Madrid's successful effort to prevent the British from sailing to the South Atlantic in 1749 (322-6) provide additional evidence of Spain's concern to inhibit foreign maritime venturing in the Pacific. I believe that the reluctance to make further maritime discoveries was carried over into a reluctance to make new discoveries in western North America. Spanish imperial authorities were all too aware that, if feasible access routes or valuable resources were found, they lacked the means to police or protect them. In the end Mapp notes that “the Spanish government tried to conceal its geographic expertise from outsiders” (432), but the expertise was very limited (see 34) and almost nothing was done to widen its scope.

How serious were threats of incursion into the North American West by Britain and France? Much the book's detailed research is concerned with these supposed threats. There is no question that the Spanish were deeply apprehensive, but were the British really intent on finding a way to the Pacific by crossing the American continent? To be sure, they occasionally tried to discover a “northwest passage,” but such efforts, emanating chiefly from Hudson Bay, took place well to the northward. The French tried to persuade the Spanish that British territorial ambitions in North America threatened the West. Such warnings reached a crescendo in late 1754 and early 1755 during Anglo-French negotiations over the Ohio valley when the French, seeing war as imminent, were earnestly seeking a Spanish alliance, but they were essentially based on fantasy. Although the westward spread of British settlement was undoubtedly a disturbing trend, its threat to the far west lay in the distant future. The peace treaty of 1763 which awarded Britain an enormous expanse of North American territory may seem to indicate strong British territorial ambitions but, as will be seen in a moment, there was another reason for these acquisitions.

Mapp reports on his extensive reading of the memoranda concerning interior North America which he has found in the French foreign office archives. Many of the documents express hopes and anxieties about the unknown West, and he usefully points out how their emphasis broadly shifted from exploitative possibilities to defensive concerns in response to growing apprehensions about British power. He is aware that some of the memoranda were influenced by a concern to solidify a Bourbon alliance. There is interesting material here, but Mapp's tendency to imply that these memoranda guided French policy may be

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<sup>1</sup> The quoted words are from my essay, “Seapower and Science: The Motives for Pacific Exploration” in Derek Howse, ed., *Background to Discovery: Pacific Exploration from Dampier to Cook* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1990), pp. 7-9.

criticized.

For in the end there are salient hard facts to be recognized. With regard to pushing westward, the French never even settled Illinois, this despite the fact that Canada's growing season was dangerously short and food shortages were a problem; in fact, they proved to be a very serious problem during the Seven Years War. When compelled by wartime losses to make concessions in 1762, France's leading minister, the duc de Choiseul, chose to recover the French eastern Antilles (the entirety of which the British had captured) and to offer the British Louisiana east of the Mississippi. (At first, Choiseul did not realize that New Orleans was on the east bank, but retracted his mistake and duped the British minister, the earl of Bute, into believing that the minuscule Iberville River was navigable through Lake Pontchartrain to the Gulf.) He then persuaded the king of Spain, as the price for restoring Havana, to give up Florida to the British; at the same time, under pressure from London to make Madrid sign the peace preliminaries, he donated Louisiana west of the Mississippi to Spain as a recompense. Finally, after the war, Choiseul opted to establish a large settlement in America – in French Guiana. His purpose was to establish a colony which could quickly dispatch soldiers to rescue French sugar islands that the British with superior naval power might capture. (This colonizing venture was a disaster; practically all the settlers died.) France's eighteenth-century priorities are therefore clear. As for the British, their acquisition of a huge expanse of North American territory occurred mainly because Lord Bute was anxious to end the war in a hurry and the interior wilderness was what the French were prepared to offer.

All in all, the book presents us with a fascinating panorama of eighteenth-century geopolitical speculation (and provides an excellent index to help the reader trace the ingredients). Granted, the author too readily allows geopolitics to overwhelm politics – as if the replacement of Ferdinand VI of Spain by Charles III, or of George II and William Pitt by George III and Lord Bute, did not matter much. He also tends to assume that Spanish neutrality in the 1750s, as opposed to an active alliance with France against Britain, was a mistake; his view does not take into account Madrid's long experience of oppressive French intervention and Spain's utter incapacity for war (which Charles III discovered to his dismay). If Mapp is too easily disposed to detect immediacy in great-power concerns about western North America, he nevertheless makes us feel quite vividly the imagined presence of this vast unknown and unexplored territory.

Review by Christopher Hodson, Brigham Young University

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“[T]here are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we don’t know we don’t know.”

- Donald Rumsfeld, 2002

Admit it: the man can turn a phrase. Although derided by many critics as a declaration of war on plain English, the first quote, crafted by former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld during a press conference on Iraq’s alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction, is both grammatically correct and politically astute. With admirable concision, it parses the problems of intelligence faced by statesmen who attempt to exercise power beyond their borders. Rumsfeld’s discussion of the varieties of knowledge (and non-knowledge) that shape moments of international crisis would have been awfully familiar to the central characters in Paul Mapp’s *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713-1763*. Indeed, Mapp’s research reveals how competing Spanish, French, and British visions of the trans-Mississippi west became fundamental to the global conflicts of the eighteenth century despite their basis in guesswork, hearsay, boosterism, and unjustified optimism. While building a case for new thinking about diplomacy and warfare in early America, Mapp also uncovers the deep genealogy of Rumsfeld’s known knowns, known unknowns, and unknown unknowns – a genealogy that, for this reader anyway, illuminated much about places far less exotic than Mapp’s mysterious west.

To the book itself. Put simply, *The Elusive West* is one of the smartest pieces of scholarship on the eighteenth century published in the last decade. Mapp seems to be hopelessly addicted to archival spadework, and the result of his labors in underutilized foreign relations papers in Paris, London, Seville, and Madrid is a stunning portrait of geographical uncertainty in the high-stakes world of imperial expansionism. The book spins an ironic argument. The scholarly literature on early North America up to the Seven Years’ War, Mapp suggests, has focused almost exclusively on events and processes in the Atlantic basin for two main reasons. First, the French, Spanish, and Native Americans who inhabited the west have tended to strike historians as “colorful but inconsequential” in comparison to the more numerous, nation-founding British settlers of the eastern seaboard. (16) Second, scholars have rightly recognized that eighteenth-century people possessed almost no accurate information about lands and peoples beyond the Mississippi. Although European explorers, traders, and cartographers had probed, trafficked, and mapped their way through the Amazon jungle, the Arctic tundra, and the Asian countryside, the “ambiguity of western Indian geographic information” thwarted them. (25) “Idaho,” Mapp declares archly, “remained elusive.” (41)

But it was precisely that elusiveness that made the North American west so influential. As Mapp’s diplomatic sources demonstrate, the rivalry among British, French, and Spanish imperialists magnified and warped the information Europeans did manage to gather about

the region, transforming the sparsely populated, arid west into a land of great indigenous cities, vast mineral wealth, and easy routes to the Pacific. This eighteenth-century confluence of misinformed speculation and diplomatic anxiety over contending claims, Mapp shows, led directly to the Seven Years' War, and in turn to the sweeping reorganization of North American territory triggered by the 1763 Treaty of Paris.

The argument packs a punch. It forces historians to consider multinational visions of the trans-Mississippi west alongside old-style European power relations and political shifts among eastern Native Americans as determining factors in the imperial conflict that gave North America its shape. Happily, though, Mapp does not overstate his case. Indeed, one of the most appealing traits of *The Elusive West* is the author's determination to integrate his own original insights and those of scholars like Lawrence Henry Gipson, Fred Anderson, and Glyndwr Williams.<sup>1</sup> Rather than scoring historiographical points for himself, Mapp scores one for the progress of his field.

There is plenty to like about this book, beginning with its expansiveness. Nominally concerned with western North America, Mapp ranges from Asia to the South Atlantic to the Caribbean, tracing his multinational subjects as they laid the groundwork for notions of western geography that influenced policy in Madrid, Paris, and London. Moreover, for those of us who have, perhaps unconsciously, imbibed Fernand Braudel's old caricature of diplomatic history ("indifferent to the discoveries of geography, little concerned...with economic and social problems; slightly disdainful towards the achievements of civilization, religion, and also of literature and the arts"), Mapp's work proves a powerful corrective. (23) Not only diplomatic historians, but historians in general should pay close attention to Mapp's melding of ethnography, cartography, cultural history, and the evolution of imperial policies articulated by European statesmen. Finally, *The Elusive West* may well be the most transparent book I have ever read. That is, Mapp is utterly forthcoming about the logic that inspired his argument and organization. Although he writes a great deal about rivers, Mapp's book certainly doesn't flow like one – instead, it is built, stone by stone, like a borderland fortress. To make another comparison, *The Elusive West* can be a tough slog, but as a Utahn like myself can attest, tough slogs in the west yield the best vistas.

Like any book so wide-ranging, *The Elusive West* is bound to draw criticism from specialists. My best guess is that while a few of us might be able to push some of the book's individual building blocks off-kilter, the overall structure of Mapp's argument isn't budging. As someone primarily interested in the French side of things, let me give just one example. An important pillar of Mapp's thesis is that the nature of Native American geographical knowledge in the American west, coupled with the linguistic and representational difficulty of communicating that knowledge to Europeans, stymied French cartographers (the best in

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<sup>1</sup> See Lawrence Henry Gipson, *The British Empire before the American Revolution*. vol. 1-3 (Caldwell, Id.: Caxton Printers, 1936); vol. 4-15 (New York: Knopf, 1961-1970); Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Vintage, 2001); Glyndwr Williams, *The Great South Sea: English Voyages and Encounters, 1570-1750* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

the business, by most accounts) in their efforts to create accurate maps of the region during the eighteenth century. He argues that the failure of France's American mapmakers was most likely rooted in western particularities because during those same years, many of those same French cartographers managed to draw precise maps of tricky places like Russia, China, and France itself. (166-193)

I am not convinced, however, that the obstacles to accurate mapping in the Central Plains were so very different than those in the Massif Central. In the 1740s, members of an expedition organized by Jacques Cassini tried to find the headwaters of the Loire. To do so, they trekked deep into the Mézenc, a remote, roadless region to the southeast of Le Puy-en-Vélay. After stumbling through a hellscape of dormant volcanoes, lava-rock hovels, leery natives, and unintelligible tongues, one unnamed geographer finally reached Mont Gerbier du Jonc, from whose flank sprang the great river. He was then hacked to death by local peasants who accused him of being a sorcerer.<sup>2</sup> Not all visitors to the unmapped bits of old regime France met with fates so violent, but most of them ended up with similar impressions of disorientation. "The country has a savage aspect," wrote the British traveler Arthur Young in 1788 upon reaching Combourg in Brittany, recoiling at its "wretchedness" and comparing its gibberish-spouting inhabitants unfavorably to "the Hurons." Young kept to the highways during his journey, for beyond their ruts stretched the unknown.<sup>3</sup> Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Delambre and Pierre-François-André Mechain, the two astronomers whose survey of France in the 1790s yielded the metric system, needed armed guards in places like Montalet, a southern village whose residents tore down the pair's signal towers no fewer than four times.<sup>4</sup> Well into the nineteenth century, places like the Mézenc remained, for all practical purposes, *terra incognita*. One geographer recommended surveying the area from a balloon "only if the aeronaut can remain out of the range of a rifle," while the author George Sand marveled in 1859 that "the locals [were] no more familiar with the area than strangers."<sup>5</sup>

To be sure, triangulated maps of France were published in the 1740s, while finer topographical and political maps appeared at the end of the century. But in many ways, one could argue that French geography became fully known – that is, explored and mapped in ways useful to the expansion-minded state – at roughly the same time as that of the Louisiana Purchase. The parallels extend further. In both cases, the barriers to geographical knowledge were linguistic plurality, the vagaries of cross-cultural communication, and rough terrain. Perhaps this is simply an issue of perspective, but

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<sup>2</sup> Graham Robb, *The Discovery of France: A Historical Geography from the Revolution to the First World War* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 3-5.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur Young, *Arthur Young's Travels in France during the Years 1787, 1788, 1789*, ed. Miss Betham-Edwards (London, 1892), 123.

<sup>4</sup> Ken Alder, *The Measure of All Things: The Seven-Year Odyssey and Hidden Error that Transformed the World* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 228-9.

<sup>5</sup> Robb, 5-6.

where Mapp looks at the cartographic history of France and that of the trans-Mississippi west and sees divergence, I see a shadowy sameness.

This sameness doesn't make Mapp's thesis wrong. In fact, I think it makes *The Elusive West* more broadly relevant. Thinking simultaneously about old regime France and the American west, we can see how geographical uncertainty and state-driven efforts to remedy it informed diplomatic processes in both places. Statesmen in Spain, France, and Great Britain worked to undermine their rivals' American empires while enveloped in the fog of what Mapp calls "western futurity" – an anticipatory hunch, fed by confusion over land, resources, and trading partners beyond the Mississippi, that the west held the key to global preeminence. (430) Albeit on a much smaller scale, parts of old regime France inspired the same sort of "futurity" craze in the halls of Versailles. Louis XIV's chief minister, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, succumbed to it during the 1660s. After receiving reports from his cousin, Charles-Jean Colbert de Terron, and the veteran military engineer Nicolas de Clerville, Colbert agreed to fund new port cities at Rochefort on the Atlantic and Sète on the Mediterranean. He had big plans for both sites. Colbert envisioned Rochefort as a vast industrial center for shipbuilding and a launching pad for expeditions against the English; Sète was to enrich France by funneling goods from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, possibly via a canal connecting it to the Garonne River, which in turn reached Bordeaux.

Maps and charts helped seal Colbert's approval, but most of them turned out to be wrong in crucial ways. The Charente River's mouth proved far too shallow, narrow, and silt-prone to support Colbert's ambitious plans for Rochefort, forcing the minister to create a second naval base at Brest. Sète's harbor silted up as well, leading the monarchy to select nearby Agde (for centuries the preferred port of local merchants and fishermen) as the Mediterranean terminus of the Canal du Midi. The roots of these costly misconceptions within France recall Mapp's misjudged American west. Colbert de Terron and Clerville failed to communicate effectively with savvy natives near the Charente and in Languedoc. Linguistic barriers may well have played a role, as did political suspicion – both Rochefort and Sète had witnessed rebellions against the Parisian monarchy within living memory. Neither place was particularly easy to reach, and both endured frequent outbreaks of malaria. The crown's agents also manipulated depictions of the ports they touted out of self-interest. Colbert de Terron had served as the royal *intendant* of the Charente, and so hoped to boost his own career (and the value of his own recently-purchased land near Rochefort) by planting Louis XIV's navy there. For his part, Clerville wanted to invest in hydraulic works to guard Sète's harbor, making himself both rich and essential to France's presence in the Mediterranean.<sup>6</sup>

The end result of these geographical blunders (and many more like them) was nothing so dramatic as the Seven Years' War, but they did have diplomatic consequences. For on the basis of "futurity," Colbert de Terron and Clerville had inspired Louis XIV to assert his sovereignty in faraway regions whose attachment to the crown was complicated by

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<sup>6</sup> Josef W. Konvitz, *Cities & the Sea: Port City Planning in Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 73-88.



powerful rivals – the Estates of Languedoc and the landed, Protestant nobles of the west, against whom his father, Louis XIII, had waged open war. In North America, decades of diplomacy shaped by wrongheaded maps ended with France’s sudden ejection from the continent. In old regime France, negotiations tied to wishful portrayals of the physical environment contributed to the slow, grinding process by which the Parisian metropolis extended its control over distant, foreign provinces. Viewed with an eye toward geographical errors, the destruction of the French Empire in North America and the consolidation of royal power in France look like cousins.

Mapp’s clever mingling of hazy geography and hard-nosed diplomacy, then, might just help us better understand state-building in early modern Europe. “Known unknowns” and “unknown unknowns,” after all, influenced official perceptions of the Isère as well as Idaho. But what is beyond all doubt – a “known known,” as Rumsfeld would have it – is that *The Elusive West* has reset the terms of debate for the history of empire in eighteenth-century North America. We would all do well to read it, emulate it, and, perhaps, take its organizing concepts out for a spin somewhere other than the American west.

In *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713-1763*, Paul Mapp lays out a new discursive terrain for the study of early modern imperialism, one that combines international relations, exploration, war, and the acquisition of geographic knowledge from indigenous peoples. The diverse narratives Mapp weaves together will be familiar in their details to many readers, but he configures them in surprisingly original ways, pairing, for example, his analysis of the French mapping of North America with the involvement of French cartographers in the mapping of Siberia and China. Readers will find themselves analyzing along with Mapp only to be caught off-guard by an analytic digression, challenged to think anew about well-established stories of European overseas expansion, a scholarly style that will surely garner Mapp a well-deserved reading audience, both academic and lay.

Mapp's thesis is surprisingly simple, arguing "that perceptions of western American geography influenced the course of imperial diplomacy, that ideas about the undiscovered West contributed to the origins, unfolding, and outcome of the mid-eighteenth century's Great War for Empire" (429). The brevity of his articulated argument is a bit unsettling, especially because Mapp can be creatively and comfortably speculative in his analysis of European obsessions with the "uncharted waters" and "imagined lands" of North America (102). One wonders if he is not a bit like those indigenous guides whose reports were bafflingly enigmatic, whether from cultural differences or from what was wittingly left unsaid. Was the salty water that an informant reported to be in a westerly direction the Pacific, the Great Salt Lake, or a river that becomes brackish at the end of a hot, dry summer? Can the import of Paul Mapp's eloquent evocations of the mysterious western half of North America and his detailed descriptions of diplomatic posturing and machinations really be encapsulated as briefly as he has done? Are the unarticulated implications and potentialities of Mapp's analysis an invitation for conversation? Or has Mapp enhanced the import of his work by implying that his assemblage of material is conventional when instead it is quite unconventional? Are the broader implications of the book made persuasive through the rhetoric of interpretive understatement?

We can begin with Mapp's near factual statement that "perceptions of western American geography influenced the course of imperial diplomacy," a position he meticulously demonstrates over the previous 400 pages. Yet that claim when considered against the last century of historical scholarship represents a dramatic interpretive shift in the way we understand the history of early modern European expansion. As recently as 1995, a multi-authored book of essays entitled *America in European Consciousness, 1493-1750* explored a range of social trends, cultural developments, scientific investigations, and religious ideas that originated in the Americas yet had an impact within Europe,<sup>1</sup> a pointed challenge to a long-standing European conceit that causal forces in the world emanated from within

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<sup>1</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *America in European consciousness* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

Europe and flowed unidirectionally into the extra-European world. Mapp, in contrast, writes as though it were widely accepted that over the last half millennium Europe has been influenced, if not fundamentally transformed, by developments originating in the extra-European world, and the task for scholars working on extra-European topics is a modest excavation and elucidation of the dialectal forces shaping large-scale change.

This interpretive shift is particularly significant for diplomatic history and international relations. Mapp repeatedly emphasizes that the balance of power Europeans attempted to maintain over the eighteenth century, with its first major articulation in the 1713 Peace of Utrecht, was not just within Europe but had a critical, perhaps determinative, extra-European dimension. In the Franco-Spanish treaty, for example, the French government agreed that after the activation of the peace of 1713 French subjects could no longer trade on the Pacific coast of Spanish America, as they had been doing in the late seventeenth century, and the Pacific Ocean would return to being a “Spanish Lake.” Over the next five decades, officials in Paris, Madrid, and London engaged in long and convoluted considerations of the merits of one or another overseas territory, trade network, or exploratory venture, scheming about how they might promote commercial or territorial expansion without disrupting the imperial equilibrium established at Utrecht. They pondered the impact any decision might have on diverse concerns ranging from the duties on colonial imports and exports that sustained the domestic economy, to the maintenance of markets for merchant interests, to the possibility that a foreign competitor had found another American silver mine or the long-sought passage through North America to the Pacific.

By the early eighteenth century, the balance of power within Europe depended on the balance of power overseas, and the negotiations over the terms of imperial expansion reverberated back within Europe. Thus when Mapp laconically states “that ideas about the undiscovered West contributed to the origins, unfolding, and outcome of the mid-eighteenth century’s Great War for Empire” (429), one implication is that we cannot understand diplomatic maneuverings within Europe without understanding the extra-European circumstances that were influencing the positions one or another imperial power took. As Mapp explains in the last section, “The Elusive West and the Outcome of the Seven Years’ War,” the French decision to relinquish Louisiana west of the Mississippi River to Spain was predicated on growing financial concerns in Europe, as well as anxieties about the possibility of Britain finding the passage to the Pacific from Hudson Bay. Indeed, the cession of Louisiana to the British and Spanish helped to destabilize the balance of power within Europe and within the Americas, contributing to the American Revolution.

The inextricable intertwining of international affairs in Europe and overseas is perhaps most graphically illustrated by the rapid transfer of Louisiana in the early nineteenth century from the Spanish, to the French, to the Americans. In 1800, Spain, under pressure from Napoleon, negotiated a treaty that receded Louisiana to France, without a French troop or official stepping foot in North America. Napoleon’s subsequent failure to suppress the rebellion in Saint-Domingue (Haiti) cost France both financially and demographically in the deaths of thousands of able-bodied men, thereby making Louisiana both a financial and territorial liability. When American diplomats arrived in Paris to negotiate new

international terms for both French and American navigation on the Mississippi River, Napoleon offered to sell Louisiana to the United States, purchased as much for the frontier security it provided as for its resources. Indeed, Americans had little better comprehension of Louisiana than did the French, calling most of it the Great American Desert, a territory to which Indian nations east of the Mississippi could be relegated and that white Americans crossed on the way to better lands further west. What is critical about these transfers is that they were done not so much for the territory itself but for what it represented about the global balance of power.

A great strength of *The Elusive West* is Mapp's analysis of the geographic unknowns of the Americas in relation to the world more generally, and how those unknowns shaped imperial diplomacy. For many of us, it is difficult to comprehend how for three centuries after Columbus's landfall in the Americas that Europeans could still believe and act on medieval geographical ideas which were chimerical: a water passage through North America to the Pacific; a large inland sea, an American mediterranean sea, that would provide a marine egress to the Pacific; a large southern or austral continent, with "Australasia," being the terrestrial counterweight to Asia; and unknown wealthy cities with which Europeans could trade, if not conquer. If those cities were not to be found in western North America, then the passage to the Pacific would make Australasia and its cities more accessible. When the French transferred western Louisiana to the Spanish in 1761, none of these geographic beliefs had yet been proved chimerical, and thus it was not on those grounds that France relinquished its territorial claims in North America. Rather, Mapp argues, other parts of the world, particularly in Asia, were more accessible to Europeans, and the French were shifting their imperial gaze. The western half of North America, its elusive promises notwithstanding, was a money sump for rather than a treasure chest for European empires, and for the French a risky investment against the known returns of its tropical holdings, most particularly Saint-Domingue, but also those in the Indian Ocean world. After the Seven Years' War, France, which had long fashioned itself a land-based empire in the Americas, became a largely maritime empire. Britain relinquished the maritime conquests of Martinique, Guadeloupe, Havana, and Manila in exchange for continental territory in Canada, the Floridas, and the trans-Appalachian West. Spain, meanwhile, received Louisiana, an expensive territory of unproved promise that fronted on the expansive British Empire.

*The Elusive West* is truly a trans-imperial piece of scholarship, giving near equal weight to Spanish, French, and British perspectives on the American West, and the competition and diplomacy among them. Recognizing the novelty of Mapp's trans-imperial approach helps, in part, to explain the cautiousness of his argument. Almost all scholarship on European overseas expansion examines it through the lens of one or another empire, as though they were not in constant competition and negotiation with one another. We have some important comparative studies of empires, such as *Empires of the Atlantic World, Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830*,<sup>2</sup> but in that study, J. H. Elliott analyzes the internal developments of Spain and Britain's American lands more than their interaction. Or we

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<sup>2</sup> (New Haven : Yale University Press, 2006).

have essays, such as Eliga H. Gould's "Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery," which argues that we need to pay more attention to the dynamics of the intersections of British and Spanish interests in the Atlantic world.<sup>3</sup> But Mapp's study is one of the first that looks at the international relations over an extended period of time.

There has long been tradition in western scholarship on polity formation, most especially nation-states but also empires, to privilege internal developments over external relations and influences, as though every polity is its own social organism, separate and distinct from others. *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713-1763* draws that all into question, asking us to think critically and deeply about how international relations in the extra-European world defined the terms under which the modern world developed and the impact of diplomatic maneuverings on the quotidian details of daily life. It is an approach to early modern expansion that deserves greater exploration, and thus it is a little frustrating that there is no epilogue suggesting new avenues of investigation. But that is a slightly churlish criticism when the scholarly world makes available roundtables where these issues can be further discussed. In that spirit and with appreciation, I offer these comments on *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713-1763*.

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<sup>3</sup>*American Historical Review*, CXII (2007), 764-786; and the response by Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, "Entangled Histories: Borderland Historiographies in New Clothes," *ibid*, 787-799.

Review by Matt J. Schumann, Eastern Michigan University

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... the Seven Years War in the Americas arose, proceeded, and expired not only in response to events in Atlantic America's Ohio Valley backyard but also as a result of imperial perceptions of present happenings and future possibilities in far-off places like the western shores of Hudson Bay, the forbidding lands around New Mexico, the enticing reaches of trans-Mississippi Louisiana, and the Pacific littoral of North America. To most mid-eighteenth century Europeans, these areas were entirely unknown. This ignorance of western American geography influenced in unfamiliar and surprising ways the contest for America and empire, and it is to those recondite portions of eighteenth century North America far to the west of the Ohio Valley that we must now turn. (3)

With these words, building upon a Harvard Ph.D. thesis and ten years of additional research,<sup>1</sup> Paul Mapp introduces his readers to a possible revolution in Seven Years War historiography. Expanding upon the lofty tomes from Europe's golden age of empire,<sup>2</sup> historians in more recent times have glimpsed in the Seven Years War a conflict that reaches ever closer to a global scale, from Carolina-Shawnee trade disputes to British governance in the Philippines to Swedish public finance.<sup>3</sup> Despite some uneven scholarship, Mapp's addition of the trans-Mississippi West and a fair swathe of the Pacific Ocean adds a whole new world—almost literally—to this growing scholarly corpus.

One significant addition that Mapp makes, right from the start (chapters 1-4), is to introduce readers to the largest empire in the eighteenth century Americas: Spain. The change is welcome, not only for putting Britain and France on a smaller scale relative to the world map, but even more for Mapp's generous reference to Spanish sources. In so doing, he not only sets the stage for a wide-ranging discussion of French (chapters 5-8, 10) and British (chapters 9-11) imperial imaginaries, but also for understanding the role of the unknown both in and after the peace settlements of 1713 (chapters 7-8), 1748 (chapters 9-12) and 1763 (chapters 13-15).

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<sup>1</sup> Paul W. Mapp, "European Geographical Ignorance and North American Imperial Rivalry: The Role of the Uncharted American West in International Affairs, 1713-1763," (Ph.D. Thesis, Harvard University, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Sergei Soloviev, *History of Russia from the Earliest Times* (1851-79), vols.40-41 (republished, Gulf Breeze, FL, 1997, 2004); Richard Waddington, *Louis XV et le Renversement des Alliances* (Paris, 1896); *idem.*, *La Guerre de Sept Ans* (5 vols., Paris, 1896-1914); Julian S. Corbett, *England in the Seven Years War: A Study in Combined Strategy* (2 vols., London, 1907; republished London, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> Shirley Fish, *When Britain Ruled the Philippines, 1762-1764: the Story of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century British Invasion of the Philippines during the Seven Years War* (Bloomington, 2003); Ian K. Steele, "Shawnee Origins of Their Seven Years' War," *Ethnohistory*, vol.53, no.4 (Fall 2006), pp.57-87; Patrik Winton, *Frihetstidens politiska praktik: nätverk och offentlighet, 1746-1766* (Uppsala, 2006). See also Matt Schumann and Karl Schweizer, *The Seven Years War: A Transatlantic History* (London, 2008); Daniel Baugh, *The Global Seven Years War* (New York, 2011); Hamish M. Scott, "The Seven Years War and Europe's Ancien Régime," *War In History*, vol.18, no.4 (Nov.2011), pp.419-455.

One might say of Mapp's general scope that he seeks to cover the emergence, conflation and eventual disappearance of Spanish, French and British imperial imaginaries and accompanying ambitions on the trans-Mississippi and Pacific frontiers, based at least in part on their optimism-in-ignorance regarding the yet-to-be-known. This rich and complex thematic tapestry presents a daunting organizational challenge, yet despite this Mapp more-or-less successfully weaves them together through 433 pages of lucid prose, copious footnotes and well-suited maps.

As mentioned above, the first four chapters concern the Spanish Empire. Split between two sections, they discuss the expectations and difficulties that characterized the Spanish experience in northern Mexico (chapters 1-2) and on the Pacific maritime frontier (chapters 3-4). Their scope in general comes a bit before the 1713-63 timeframe outlined in the introduction, but Mapp's wide reading among Spanish sources is clearly evident and his detailed examples make these sections some of the best, most informative reading in the book. Setting a high scholarly bar, he writes at length not only on the vestiges of Aztec and Inca power—and sources of Spanish wealth such as Potosí—that defined much of Spain's colonial empire, but also on the mix of physical, cultural and linguistic geographies that inhibited Spanish exploration, defense, settlement and even trade much beyond those frontiers.

The next four chapters form the third section, on the French imperial experience. Here, Mapp takes us from the South Pacific (chapter 5) to France and the Far East (chapter 6) to the western Mississippi basin and beyond (chapters 7-8), all in an endeavor to show how rising commercial power and political projection by roughly 1700 brought a potentially menacing French presence to the most far-flung Spanish frontiers. Mapp generally succeeds in this venture and displays an impressive knowledge of French difficulties exploring the trans-Mississippi West, though there are two respects in which this section compares unfavorably with its predecessors. First, he neglects some costs and complexities of Amerindian relations closer to Louisiana's core—where Natchez and Chickasaws may have posed as many problems for Far West exploration as the more remote Mandans and Blackfeet.<sup>4</sup> Second and more importantly, he moves away from French sources for some of his illustrative examples, ranging from Spanish accounts of the Utes in 1694 (p.221) to British and American expeditions in the 1790s and beyond (pp.241-43).

Despite the relative weakness of Mapp's research on France vis-à-vis Spain, readers can expect to form in their minds a clear and fairly detailed picture of geographies known (and unknown) in both Paris and Madrid. One exciting feature of his work in these sections is the contention that European powers drew much from existing geographical knowledge

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<sup>4</sup> cf. Daniel H. Usner, Jr., *American Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley: Social and Economic Histories* (Lincoln, 1988); James R. Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People: The Chickasaw Indians to Removal* (Tuscaloosa, 2004); esp. James F. Barnett, Jr., *The Natchez Indians: A History to 1735* (Jackson, 2007). Concerns for Louisiana's core and periphery are brilliantly juxtaposed among the documents in Mississippi Department of Archives and History, *Mississippi Provincial Archives: French Dominion* (5 vols., Jackson, 1927-84).

and power structures: thus the Spanish worked relatively easily with the remnants of Aztec and Inca imperial authorities to survey their lands and the attendant political possibilities (chapter 2), and French cartographical expertise served not only France's own interests but also those of the Russian and Chinese courts (chapter 6). Mapp also leaves some tantalizing hints (e.g. p.156) that the French and Spanish courts—allies in close correspondence for much of the 1713-63 period—may have exchanged some geographical knowledge with one another; it would be interesting to see this sharing of notes explored much further in a revised edition or separate publication.

Finally, in chapter 9, Mapp turns his attention to the growing power of Great Britain, focusing especially on the ambitions of Arthur Dobbs, Governor of North Carolina. The chapter does a fair job of representing British imperial ambitions as a whole, and sets up in compelling fashion a major thematic shift from surveys of empire and exploration in general to imperial competition in the period 1748-63. Much of the book's fourth section (chapters 9-12) focuses on Dobbs' dream of renewed exploration for the Northwest Passage from Hudson Bay to the Pacific, and the alarm that both British and French ventures caused for Spanish leaders increasingly anxious for their monopoly of claims on the Rocky Mountain frontier and Pacific Ocean trade routes.

It is worth saying a bit more about this fourth section, as Mapp seems to build from a low point in chapter 9 to some convincing diplomatic history in chapter 12 and beyond. His treatment of Spanish ambitions and anxieties again leaves little room for complaint, following that crown's wish to maintain the Utrecht settlement in the Pacific (chapter 5) with justified fears of British and French encroachment (chapters 11-12). The French view in chapters 10 and 12 also looks good, though it might have profited from more archival work and ironically a more global context for French imperial concerns—the loyal-yet-rebellious antics of Joseph François Dupleix in India (1742-54), for example.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps due to their geographical remove from the trans-Mississippi West, however, Mapp's treatment of the British suffers much by comparison. Dobbs is isolated from his ambitious peers, for example, including Governors William Shirley of Massachusetts (leader of the Louisbourg campaign in 1745-46) and Robert Dinwiddie of Virginia (a founder of the Ohio Company).<sup>6</sup> Despite a good strategic summary of the War of Jenkins' Ear (pp.270-83), Mapp neglects the Vernon Medal as an icon for the popularity of British expansionism;<sup>7</sup> more importantly,

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<sup>5</sup> For some older scholarship on this topic, cf. Sidney James Owen, "François Joseph Dupleix," *English Historical Review*, vol.1, no.4 (October, 1886), pp.699-733; G.W. Forrest, "The Siege of Madras in 1746 and the Action of la Bourdonnais," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser. vol.2 (1908), pp.189-234. For the position of the British East India Company, see e.g. Petition to Robert D'Arcy, Fourth Earl of Holderness, 8 September 1754, British Library, Egerton MSS 3486, ff.125-127.

<sup>6</sup> On British imperial ambitions in general, see T.R. Clayton, "The Duke of Newcastle, the Earl of Halifax, and the American Origins of the Seven Years' War," *The Historical Journal*, vol.24, no.3 (Sept.1981), pp.571-603.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Kathleen Wilson, "Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon," *Past & Present*, no. 121 (Nov. 1988), pp.74-109. Several examples of the medal appear at <http://www.coins-of-panama.com/vernon.html>. For counterexamples peaking with the Knowles



he fails to connect the dots between that Anglo-Spanish war (1739-48) and Dobbs' interest in other routes to the Pacific (1741-47). Finally, while he notes correctly that Braddock's Campaign in 1755 sorely lacked geographical knowledge (p.267), he seems unaware of rivalries between Virginia and Pennsylvania that affected British relations with both colonies throughout the 1750s.<sup>8</sup> Most of Mapp's oversights are relatively small, given the enormous geographical scale of his scholarship, but together they illustrate a bit too well his aim of de-centering the more familiar pro-British perspective.

The book draws to a close in negotiations over western Louisiana (chapters 13-15), and as the range of European geographical ignorance shrinks, Mapp returns to his strongest suit. He sets aside the better-known vicissitudes of Anglo-French negotiations,<sup>9</sup> and concentrates on Franco-Spanish wrangling over the fate of the undiscovered West. He takes great care in retracing for his readers the seldom-studied steps of Louisiana's transition from continental empire to colonial buffer to virtual disappearance from maps of North America.<sup>10</sup> For their detail and attention to archival sources, these chapters place Mapp in good company among historians of eighteenth century diplomacy, and they nicely augment

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Impressment Riots of 1747, see Richard Pares, "The Manning of the Navy in the West Indies, 1702-63," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fourth Series, vol.20, (1937), pp.47-50, 54-69; John A. Schutz, "Imperialism in Massachusetts during the Governorship of William Shirley, 1741-1756," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol.23, no.3 (May, 1960), pp.217-36; Douglas Edward Leach, "Brothers in Arms? Anglo-American Friction at Louisbourg, 1745-1746," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Third Series, vol.89, (1977), pp.36-54.

<sup>8</sup> Amid his complaints about geographical ignorance, Braddock also noted Pennsylvania's determined neutrality. cf. Braddock to Napier, 8 Jun. 1755, in Stanley Pargellis, *Military Affairs in North America, 1748-1765: Selected Documents from the Cumberland Papers in Windsor Castle* (New York, 1936), esp. p.85. See also W. Neil Franklin, "Pennsylvania-Virginia Rivalry for the Indian Trade of the Ohio Valley," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol.20, no.4 (Mar. 1934), pp.463-480; Whitfield J. Bell, Jr. and Leonard W. Labaree, "Franklin and the 'Wagon Affair,' 1755," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol.101, no.6, Studies of Historical Documents in the Library of the American Philosophical Society (Dec. 19, 1957), pp.551-558; Labaree, "Benjamin Franklin and the Defense of Pennsylvania, 1754-1757," *Pennsylvania History*, vol.29, no.1 (Jan. 1962), pp.7-23; James P. Myers, Jr., "Pennsylvania's Awakening: The Kittanning Raid of 1756," *Pennsylvania History*, vol.66, no.3 (Summer, 1999), pp.399-420; James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York, 1999); Matthew C. Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry: The Seven Years War in Virginia and Pennsylvania, 1754-1765* (Pittsburgh, 2003). Of special interest for historians of geography, see Myers, "Mapping Pennsylvania's Western Frontier in 1756," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol.123, no.1/2 (Jan.- Apr., 1999), pp.3-29.

<sup>9</sup> For the most recent accounts, see Schumann and Schweizer, *Seven Years War*, chapter 6; Baugh, *Global Seven Years War*, chapters 14-16.

<sup>10</sup> For much older scholarship, see William R. Shepherd, "The Cession of Louisiana to Spain," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol.19, no.3 (Sept. 1904), pp. 439-58; Arthur S. Aiton, "The Diplomacy of the Louisiana Cession," *American Historical Review*, vol.36, no.4 (Jul. 1931), pp. 701-20; Richard R. Stenberg, "The Louisiana Cession and the Family Compact," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, vol.19 (Jan. 1936), pp. 204-09.

more conventional histories of the convoluted negotiations and huge transfers of territory sealed by the Treaty of Paris.<sup>11</sup>

In sum, Mapp offers a well-conceived but unevenly researched case for the role of undiscovered lands in the great power calculations of the mid-eighteenth century. While the French side could use some work and the British a bit more, his addition of Spain on the grandest scale represents a major scholarly contribution, and it may go even further than he intended to de-center traditional narratives of the global Seven Years War. Having added the Far West and the Eastern Pacific, his references to Spain's jealousy for the China trade (pp.112-15) offer a promising venue for future research. His accounts of French mapmakers in the Far East (pp.178-93) hint at an increasingly developed trans-Asian land route,<sup>12</sup> and although they lay beyond his scope, he hints briefly at the implications for Pacific history of the Russian presence at Petropavlovsk and Okhotsk (pp.21, 292).<sup>13</sup> And if French and Russians in eastern Asia were not enough to worry the Spanish by the mid-eighteenth century, there remain the Dutch at Malacca (from 1641) to consider, the British at Bengkulu, Sumatra (1685, fortified 1714),<sup>14</sup> and the growing European presence in general by the 1730s at the Chinese port of Guangzhou.<sup>15</sup> Long before William Draper's expedition to Manila in 1762, then, it would seem that Spain's hold on the Pacific had come under threat from the west as well as the east. Here, virtually another world away from the Ohio Valley, far beyond Hudson Bay and New Mexico, Mapp seems unwittingly to have opened yet another intriguing prospect—not just the West and Pacific, but also the Western Pacific—for further globalizing the scale of the Seven Years War.

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<sup>11</sup> Zainab Esmat Rashed, *The Peace of Paris, 1763* (Liverpool, 1951); Colin G. Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (Oxford, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> For a different but possibly related account of evolving land routes across Asia, see Scott Levi, "India, Russia and the Eighteenth-Century Transformation of the Central Asian Caravan Trade," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol.42, no.4 (1999), pp.519-48.

<sup>13</sup> Russian ambitions in eastern Asia and moving into the northwest Pacific appear from an early date in George Lensen, "Early Russo-Japanese Relations," *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, vol.10, no.1 (Nov., 1950), pp.2-37; A. E. Sokol, "Russian Expansion and Exploration in the Pacific," *American Slavic and East European Review*, vol.11, no.2 (Apr., 1952), pp.85-105.

<sup>14</sup> H. Morse Stephens, "The Administrative History of the British Dependencies in the Further East," *American Historical Review*, vol.4, no.2 (Jan. 1899), pp. 248-254. For Bencoolen's place in contemporary scientific literature, see Mr. Perry and William Stukeley, "An Account of the Earthquake Felt in the Island of Sumatra, in the East-Indies, in November and December 1756... dated at Fort Marlborough, in the Island of Sumatra, Feb. 20, 1757," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, vol.50, (1757-58), pp.491-92.

<sup>15</sup> British trade privileges were extended in 1711. Ships from Denmark, Sweden, the Dutch Republic and the Austrian Netherlands were welcome by the early 1730s. See also the map on p.192 of Mapp's book—evidence of the French presence in Guangdong Province by 1737. See Gerald B. Hertz, "England and the Ostend Company," *English Historical Review*, vol.22, no.86 (Apr. 1907), pp.255-79; E.H. Pritchard, "The Struggle for Control of the China Trade during the Eighteenth Century," *Pacific Historical Review*, vol.3, no.3 (Sept. 1934), pp.280-295.

*Introduction*

I would first like to thank Elizabeth Mancke, Christopher Hodson, Juliana Barr, Matt J. Schumann, and Daniel Baugh for taking the time to read and comment on *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713-1763*. I know how long such reviewing takes, and how little time is available for it during the academic year. Having gone, moreover, through the long process of writing *Elusive West*, I sympathize with those having to go through the long process of reading it. Christopher Hodson is quite right to say it can be a “slog,” and it is fair to ask whether what readers can see along the way justifies the effort of the trek. I hope that this forum will help them decide.

I will respond to the individual commentators in turn, beginning with Elizabeth Mancke’s review, which I will not go on too long in answering because she has, in many respects, articulated *Elusive West*’s arguments and made the case for the book’s importance better than I have. It is in my interest as an author to stay out of her way. I will, however, agree with and elaborate on two of her criticisms, since doing so will illuminate some of the murkier aspects of the book.

I share her opinion that *Elusive West*’s overall argument and some of its sub-points are understated. It would be fair to say also that the language of the book’s thesis is somewhat abstract, in the sense that a reader has to grind through four hundred pages of text before the meaning of the main argument is entirely clear. Some of the understatement and abstraction is a result of the reticent personality of the author; some is a consequence of his limitations as a writer and a historian. A bolder character with a sharper pen and more years of reflection to draw on might have arrived at a more direct argument.

A more interesting reason for the argument’s abstraction and understatement, however, is the book’s compound topic. *Elusive West* could have focused on one European empire, but came instead to consider the interactions and geographic horizons of France, Spain, and Britain. It could have taken European ignorance of western American geography as a given and then followed the implications of this nescience for imperial policy; instead, as the project developed, it took on also the question of why western North America was so difficult for Europeans to comprehend. The book might have confined itself to consideration of European geographic ideas and their influence on the policies of European states. As it explored the roots of those notions and the nature of those policies, however, *Elusive West* became increasingly interested in the nature and transmission of the Amerindian geographic conceptions that so often shaped European thinking. As the book’s argument came to encompass many things, its description of individual things became less concrete. I don’t mean this as an excuse, I’m just trying to describe why I found a complex subject challenging.

The difficulty of handling complexity was one reason for an understated thesis, the boldness, paradoxically, of the book's claims was another. Early in the project, I began to realize that I was seeing in my research a world very different from the eighteenth century that secondary reading had led me to expect. In the books and articles I had read, most everyone knew that the pre-1763 North American Far West and Pacific Ocean were areas of little historical importance. Everyone north of Latin America knew that eastern North America was the part of the eighteenth-century Western Hemisphere that really counted. No one took Northwest Passages seriously, and it was understood that tales of western North American peoples and lands were so fanciful that they must have arisen from the mendacity or mischievousness of those recounting them. And everyone knew that the way to understand developments within the nations, empires, and cultures that historians customarily make the units of their study was to study developments within these customary units of study.

Yet here I was finding sober officials in Paris, Madrid, and London pondering the importance of access to the South Sea, contemplating the potential value of the trans-Mississippi West, and seeing the Americas' center of gravity south and west of Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. And the more I looked at those weird Indian tales about the mysterious North American West, the more I thought their strangeness could be traced back as much to the difficulties of describing the distant and unseen to Europeans with different languages, expectations, and cultural categories as to deliberate dishonesty. Even the notoriously implausible Northwest Passage was turning out to look, in eighteenth-century eyes, like a possibility worth looking into. I began to despair one day in the foreign office archives in Paris, when, after reading a lengthy exchange between French officials about the gravity of 1740s British searches for a Northwest Passage, I concluded that no one was going to take me seriously. I seemed to have found myself in the territory of Bigfoot and alien abductions. Worse still, as Mancke remarks, was the belief I was coming to that understanding relations among empires and nations might be central to making sense of developments within empires and nations. This would suggest that the much neglected subject of early modern international relations deserved attention alongside studies of towns and discourse and, more seriously, that the disciplinary tendency to study units of the early modern world apart from their neighbors, rivals, and distant imaginings was hamstringing our understanding of the past. Who would want to hear this? I seemed to have found a recipe for a book no one would read past the fifth page.

How to induce readers to go farther? My solution was to offer intriguing historical questions in the introduction to capture an audience's attention, to lay out promising but somewhat elliptical responses to these queries, and then to let readers follow themselves the evidence and reasoning pointing to a very different understanding of early America, western exploration, and the Seven Years' War. Rather than frightening a prospective audience away with the novelty of the book's findings, I wanted those working through *Elusive West* to discover that it delivered more than it promised. We'll know, in a few years, if this strategy was such a good idea.

I agree also with Mancke's second (and not at all churlish) criticism that *Elusive West* does not explicitly point to directions for future research. *Elusive West* certainly benefited from

the research suggestions of scholars like David Weber and Glyndwr Williams, and Mancke is right that it could have done more to pass on the favor.<sup>1</sup> I confess that, as I was finishing the book, I was probably thinking too much about getting the manuscript in early enough to be eligible for tenure and therefore remain a scholar myself, and not enough about pointing out paths for other researchers.

An additional reason for the paucity of research recommendations in *Elusive West* was a result of the book's effort to fill a relatively narrow chronological gap in the history of geographic thought and western American exploration. The bulk of works treating these subjects cover the great wave of Iberian discoveries before about 1610, and Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment exploration after 1763. When I started working on *Elusive West*, there were good books covering my period of interest between 1713 and 1763, but fewer of them, and this relative inattention left opportunities for new research. A book that considers the years between two well-covered periods will often generate fewer research suggestions because its chronological prequels and sequels have already been written. Pre-1713 Spanish wanderers in the American Southwest like Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca (1528-1536) and Francisco Vázquez de Coronado (1540-1542), and post-1763 revealers of the Pacific Northwest like James Cook (1778) and Meriwether Lewis and William Clark (1804-1806), have already been much written about.

Nonetheless, as I was working on *Elusive West*, I did happen upon topics too elusive for my taste and wished I could pursue them further. I hope that others will do what I lacked the time or skills to accomplish. I'll mention three areas for investigation here; two others appear in the comments of Juliana Barr and Matt Schumann and in my responses to them. The first type of research I'd like to see would employ a deeper understanding of the history and culture of particular western Indian nations to refine, reinforce, or refute my general suggestions about the forms and horizons of native American geographic awareness. In working on the question of western Indian familiarity with the broad expanses of western North America, I mostly relied on the published records of sixteenth-to-eighteenth-century exploration. I could see that I would have benefited from immersion in the ethnographic studies, oral traditions, and nineteenth and twentieth-century records of the many individual Amerindian nations of the West, but I just didn't have the years to devote to this next level of research. Evaluating my claims about the extent of and constraints on western Indian movement, communication, and geographic conceptions in light of specialist knowledge should take other researchers farther into the historical West than I was able to go.

Connecting the geopolitical concerns of pre-1763 French and Spanish officials with the post-1763 course of Anglo-American expansion would be another fruitful goal of research.

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<sup>1</sup> Two especially rich texts for me were David Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); and Glyndwr Williams, *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Longmans, 1962). Weber's footnotes pointed to a host of neglected topics and unanswered historical questions. Williams' careful reconstruction of what might have seemed a rather marginal episode in exploration history opened up an under-appreciated but consequential area of eighteenth-century thought; his work made the eighteenth-century geographic imagination imaginable.

Bourbon diplomats and ministers were preoccupied with the danger multiplying Anglo-American settlers posed to the northern provinces and silver-producing regions of the Spanish-American empire, and they did a pretty good job in the 1750s and 1760s of predicting the westward expansion of the English-speaking peoples of the Atlantic seaboard. Most histories of this expansion begin after the American Revolution, and many see it through Anglo-American eyes. Treatments beginning earlier and profiting from longer *durée* Spanish, French, and Franco and Hispano-American points of view might end up telling a somewhat different story.

Finally, I came to suspect, as I was working through the eighteenth-century documents describing the peoples of the Pacific Northwest and the journeys of western and Pacific explorers, that there was probably a lot more going on in the pre-1763 North Pacific than most scholars are aware of. I don't like to speculate in print about what this involved, and I suspect that a working knowledge of Russian and Japanese, and an unusual degree of expertise in the histories and cultures of the native peoples of the northern Pacific Rim would be necessary before an investigation could even begin, but I do believe some real surprises may lie in the early modern waters between Japan and British Columbia.

I approached Christopher Hodson's review with some nervousness both because of my great respect for his knowledge of the French Empire and because of my fear of his wicked sense of humor. The combination is formidable. As predicted, one episode he discusses does suggest that the joke is on me.

Hodson's review mentions one unfortunate French surveyor who, while seeking the headwaters of the Loire in the Mézenc region southeast of Le Puy-en-Velay, was chopped up by suspicious locals. By coincidence, my father-in-law comes from just north of Le Puy-en-Velay, and family trips often take me to the area. During one of these trips, on a hike around Mont Mézenc with my wife and daughter in 2009, we became thoroughly lost. There was little danger of being hacked to death by the denizens of the region, none of whom were to be seen, but we were being progressively shredded by local flora overhanging what can only with great overstatement be referred to as a path. This incident points to a number of possible conclusions about the author of *Elusive West*. One is that he was uniquely suited to write a book about geographic ignorance, capable, as he is, of quite astonishing geographic ignorance himself, even in a country with perhaps the most highly developed tourist infrastructure in the world. The other possible conclusion is that someone who, detailed hiking map in hand, could get himself lost in twenty-first-century France is too dull-witted to write a book about anything. I'll let the reader decide.

My French misadventures have some bearing on Hodson's critique of *Elusive West*, inasmuch as they show that even extensive geographic information may not be sufficient geographic information. I agree with Hodson that too much can be made of the differences between regions like the North American West and early modern France, and consequently of the distinct challenges such areas posed for geographers. He is correct that many areas and peoples of France remained unintelligible to outsiders well into the nineteenth century, and I like his idea of asking about other parts of the world some of the types of questions I posed for eighteenth-century western America. Nonetheless, I think it useful to

draw a distinction between the kinds of geographic uncertainty confronting eighteenth-century French investigators of regions like France and western North America.

One difference has to do with the extent of geographic nescience. Pockets of eighteenth-century France frustrated the cartographic designs of French scholars and officials. Areas larger than France itself refused their understanding in western North America. Consequently, the range of possible geographic misunderstandings and discoveries was much greater in the New World than in what Donald Rumsfeld has described as Old Europe. No one was going to discover a new Mediterranean west of eighteenth-century Burgundy, but the existence of a vast inland sea in the American West was an open question for early eighteenth-century French geographers. Bretons, Basques, and the truculent peasants of Haute Loire might evade the control of Paris, but the existence of unknown civilizations or the outposts of distant ones was not something Parisian scholars had to contemplate for the relatively familiar hexagon as they did for the mysterious regions stretching west of Hudson Bay and the Mississippi.

The other grounds for distinguishing *La France profonde* from Western America were the different state resources available for explorers and emissaries from the metropole. Surveyors might run into trouble in Haute Loire, but if that trouble proved too durable or defiant, they had French ministries, French laws, and even French troops they could call upon. Whether officials or officers would come and what they could do is another question. The beast of the Gévaudan, whatever it was, mocked the best efforts of French administrators, troops, and hunters for a good part of the mid-1760s as it ate its way through a significant chunk of the women and children of the Massif Central. An ineffectual but proximate state is, nonetheless, categorically different from one remote to the point of abstraction. The representatives of Paris who made their way to the provinces might be limited in their capacities or disappointing in their performance, but their presence signified that the French state was not going to go away unless something epochal—a revolution or a German invasion, for example, occurred. It had to be reckoned with. In contrast, if French western explorers, like Pierre Gaultier de Varennes et de La Vérendrye and his sons in the upper Missouri country in the late 1730s and early 1740s, ran into trouble with Mandans, Shoshones, or Sioux, they could not be sure that representatives of the French state would ever arrive. The smallest mischance, a stolen gift bag, a rumor of a hostile raiding party, a translator more interested in chasing a woman than speaking for a Frenchmen, could thwart French exploration and expansion for what turned out to be forever. The power of the French state was remarkably resilient in France itself, ultimately brittle in western America, and this limited what French explorers and cartographers could accomplish as they looked toward mountains far more imposing than Mont Mézenc.

The French government knew a great deal about France, and much less about western North America, and not enough in either case. Where parts of eighteenth-century France resisted French understanding, however, vast stretches of western North America defied it.

I don't think that Juliana Barr and I have such different images of the eighteenth-century North American West and its peoples in our heads. Within the review and the book, we

often come around to a similar view, and even when Barr criticizes *Elusive West* for not advancing a particular claim, she'll sometimes, a few paragraphs later, refer to the book doing just that. Where we differ, I think, is about how best to understand and talk about questions of power, scale, and empire.

But agreements first. Barr is correct in saying that *Elusive West* is not a ground-up study of either Amerindian or Euro-American communities in the West, and that my claims about the content and circulation of geographic ideas in and among these communities need to be tested against the results of more focused and earthy studies. This is one of the areas for future research that Elizabeth Mancke has asked for in her review. Barr, herself, is already doing this kind of research, and her recent article on "Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders in the Borderlands of the Early Southwest" in the *William and Mary Quarterly* shows just how fruitful it can be.<sup>2</sup>

I agree also with Barr that there is a problem of incommensurability in *Elusive West*. It is not so hard to find the right words to describe the European empires, states, and governments interested in the North American Far West, but difficulties quickly arise when using either the same or different terms to speak about the Indian nations, peoples, and communities in the region. These Indian communities differed in many respects from each other and from their European allies and antagonists, even as eighteenth-century people often found that shared humanity--not to mention trade, sex, and mutual enemies--made it possible to bridge cultural divides. From the beginning of the project, I was worried about the challenge of bringing European empires and western Indian nations together in a single interpretive framework without the Indians looking like lesser parts of the whole. Avowing difference without allowing disparagement isn't easy. The compositional problems are real, the study has its limitations, and criticisms along these lines are neither unexpected nor unwelcome. This is not to say that I second all of Barr's criticisms, however perceptive and well-informed they may be. In some cases, I think the review's interpretations of *Elusive West* are unwarranted.

I don't think it just to say, for example, that the book risks "leaving Indians inscrutable and somewhat passive objects." A study that repeatedly states that Indian communities consciously and vigorously frustrated the exploratory efforts of European empires cannot fairly be said to leave an impression of passivity. The Pawnees, Utes, Moquis, Blackfeet, Comanches, Apaches, Mandans, and Sioux, who, in keeping with their own designs, opened or closed routes and furnished or withheld geographic information were unmistakably active in the book.<sup>3</sup>

Nor do I think "inscrutable" the right word. Understanding and interpreting the ideas and intentions of eighteenth-century western Indians is inherently difficult because, as non-

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<sup>2</sup> Juliana Barr, "Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders in the Borderlands of the Early Southwest," *William and Mary Quarterly* 68 (2011): 5-46.

<sup>3</sup> Mapp, *Elusive West*, 46-51, 199-201, 235-237, 339-343.



literate peoples, they left little written evidence of their own. Being, moreover, peoples distant from Europe and many of its colonies, they are the subjects of a limited number of French, Spanish, and British documents. This paucity of written evidence is a problem that antedated the publication of *Elusive West*, and no one book, or even set of books, can easily or completely surmount it. In an effort to discern the geographic ideas and horizons of western Indian peoples, *Elusive West* scrutinized as much of the fragmentary evidence the early modern era has left to us as its author could manage. It set up elaborate comparisons with better documented areas in an attempt to use distant light to elucidate an obscure region. If western peoples remain inscrutable after the book, it's not for want of searching.

It is, moreover, stretching to say that *Elusive West* suggests that the human geography of the West was somehow “devoid of politics.” I don't recall ever hinting at that idea, and I see nothing in the pages to which Barr refers that suggests my memory is faulty. I never denied that western Indian communities pondered the best responses to the challenges of eighteenth-century circumstances, or that factions within these communities strove to guide them in different directions. Still more to the point, *Elusive West* explicitly and repeatedly argues that western Indian nations tried to impose their power on other peoples, both Indian and European. The book never gainsayed and often showed the kinds of Indian activities that I think most people would refer to as politics.

I think Barr is conflating an absence of politics with the lack of certain kinds of political organization. I see western Indians engaged in contests for power and territory, but not for empire. Thus, when Barr says that I do not “place western Indians among the polities, be they nations or empires, struggling for geopolitical mastery during the age of the Great War for Empire,” she is only half right. I do say, often, that western Indians were vying for control over particular parts, resources, and communities of the North American West. My explanation for the limits of European exploration rests in part on this claim. I do not, however, place western Indian nations in the same analytical category as the empires of France, Spain, or Britain--or China, Russia, Peru, or Mexico, for that matter--and this is where the rub comes. I think western Indian nations were actors, and they were certainly acting upon westering Europeans, but they were not actors of the same type as the great European, Chinese, or pre-Columbian empires *Elusive West* considers. Barr and I agree that western Indian nations struggled with one another and with Europeans, and that they dominated particular territories and neighbors. I don't think, and I'm not quite sure how far Barr is willing to argue, that such struggles made empires of nations and imperialism of domination. I think it is fair to say that she is at least more open to the use of such terms for western native peoples than I am.

Our differing degrees of openness are a result, I believe, of disparate ideas about scale and about the many divisions of power. Barr is right that western Indians “denied Europeans passage or deliberately confused them with misinformation and obfuscation as to the terrain, riverways, thoroughfares, and potential northwest passages.” *Elusive West* makes these same claims about the local supremacy of western Indian peoples. But the many instances of local supremacy do not mean that pre-1763 western Indians figured “as equal political and diplomatic players in an imperial battle.” This is, in part, because local power is not the same as overall power. Pawnees, or Comanches, or Sioux war parties might

repulse French and Spanish advances onto the Plains, but these local demonstrations of might did not give the Pawnees, Comanches, or Sioux the capacity to launch fleets, manufacture firearms, or rule directly and indirectly over millions of people, as the French government did in Europe and North America, and the Spanish government did in Europe, North America, South America, and the Philippines. General equality requires more than local advantage.

The sites, moreover, of these instances of western Indian mastery point to another type of eighteenth-century European prowess that distinguished France, Spain, and Britain from the native peoples of the West: the ability to project power. For these Indian victories were taking place in the American West, often in or near the core territories of the Indian peoples involved. They were occurring, in contrast, thousands of miles and an ocean away from Madrid, Paris, and London, and they therefore demonstrate the extraordinary ability of these European empires to transport their representatives across the world. Like the payload on an early Space Age rocket, the power actually deployed was limited and often inadequate, but the energy beneath it was explosive. No Sioux war party ever threatened Paris, no Comanche band Madrid. Even European failures in the West hinted at the technological, organizational, and financial apparatus that set France, Spain, and Britain apart from their Amerindian counterparts.

More generally, as this issue of power projection suggests, eighteenth-century European ambitions and actions were on a different scale than those of their Amerindian counterparts. Another way to think of the “geopolitical mastery” mentioned earlier is with an emphasis on “geo” as earth. Spain, France, and Britain were not just trying to control a river valley here or a mountain crossing there. Their aspirations, and the implications of their aspirations, encompassed the continent of North America and the relation of it to Europe, Africa, South America, Asia, and whatever lay in the endless waters of the great South Sea. *Elusive West* discusses early modern Spanish voyages from the Alaska coast to sunny Florida, French appearances from the North Pacific to the St. Lawrence and southern Hudson Bay, and British expeditions from the Bering Strait to northwestern Hudson Bay. And these same empires, and sometimes the same ships, rounded Cape Horn, crossed the Pacific and circumnavigated the globe. The nineteenth century and European domination of the planet was still far away, but European contemplation of the globe and the ability to act across it was not. Western Indian nations could not operate on such a scale, and there’s no reason to think they could yet imagine doing so. This statement is in no way disparaging to western Indians: imperial ambition is no measure of human worth. But nothing *Elusive West* or any other book can say can elide the disparities of power and polity in western America and the eighteenth-century world. Our arguments about the proper descriptive terms cannot escape irreducible differences of scale, organization, and force.

Possession of useful geographic information is another kind of power, and, with regard to the question of how western Indians used this advantage, I disagree again with Barr’s criticism. Barr is not correct to claim that I don’t think western Indians exploited geographic understanding for their own ends. What else could we call the famous tale of Coronado’s Indian guide leading the gullible conquistador and his men on to the Plains to

die?<sup>4</sup> To my mind, the more interesting question is one that Barr does not address, but is nonetheless pertinent to her review and central to *Elusive West*. Much of the discussion of empire in the book was concerned with the ways empires communicate geographic information to one another: Inca and Aztec to Spanish Empire; Russian and Chinese to French Empire. The subtler issue is how far, before at least the nineteenth century, geographic horizons could extend without an imperial political structure to protect and promote movement and gather and digest information. It's a venerable issue. Polybius, in the second century B.C., was already saying that thanks to the imperial expansion of Rome and Macedon, someone could look out from the Mediterranean and see farther into the lands beyond than ever before. The question is, while western Indians were so busy struggling with one another, and while they were speaking different languages and conceptualizing the world in such culturally varied ways, and while no single polity could extend its rule over most of the West, how much geographic understanding did western Indian peoples have to exploit? How far did their geographic cognizance extend? I don't think the evidence yet allows a clear answer to the question, but the question itself hints at the issue not so much of what we should call different polities, but of what different kinds of polities could do.<sup>5</sup>

This matter of efficacy takes the discussion to what I take to be the root of our disagreement. I think that the sociopolitical organization of the western European empires enabled them to act on a grander scale than the Indian peoples of the West, and that this difference in capacity justifies the use of different terms to describe the polities of these two continental Wests. This does not mean that I "underestimate native political intent or strategy in the absence of" an "imperial construction" (such as the one Pekka Hämäläinen has posited for the Comanches.) I may understate such intentions or strategies for lack of documentary evidence of them, but I can't imagine western Indians or any other group of human beings being without them, and the placement of different communities in different analytical categories should not be taken as evidence of such a belief. Distinctions need not be invidious. To withhold from western Indians an imperial designation is not to deny them human volition. We should have sufficient confidence in the intrinsic equality of human beings to talk distinctly about the different historical conditions in which we find them, and in which they found themselves.

I would have liked Matt Schumann's review to be longer. This is, in part, because the learning on display in it, in terms of both geographical breadth and temporal depth, is so impressive. I don't know that many scholars who read the journals from the 1880s and 1890s anymore, nor both the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* and the

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<sup>4</sup> Mapp, *Elusive West*, 50, and see also 46-51, 199-201, 235-237, 339-343.

<sup>5</sup> I don't want to interrupt the reasoning of my response, but I should offer here an answer to Barr's question about what to make of the vulnerability of Amerindian empires to Spanish rule, in contrast with the ability of peoples like the Apaches, Comanches, and Mapuches to resist subjugation indefinitely. The centralization of power in great empires often makes them surprisingly susceptible to conquest. Capture or kill the emperor and the whole imperial structure can totter. Alexander could conquer the mighty Persian Empire more easily than he could the many lesser polities around it and Macedon. See *Elusive West*, 432.

Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, nor anything in Swedish. I learned from Schumann's comment and I would have liked to learn more. I would also have liked more to respond to: the brevity of Schumann's criticisms makes them difficult to address.

Schumann's main complaint is that the research in *Elusive West* is uneven. I agree with him. The research is uneven because it was selective. The topical breadth of *Elusive West* made such selectivity necessary and desirable. The book discusses, at one point or another, the global designs and western American visions of the French, Spanish, and British Empires; the geographic horizons of the Inca and Aztec Empires and of the many Indian peoples from California and Texas to Alaska and the Yukon; Russian expansion to the Pacific; French Jesuit contributions to Chinese Cartography and Spanish monetary contributions to the Chinese economy; the Northwest Passage and the unknown continent of the South Sea; French trade with Chile and British attacks on Philippines. It is pretty clear from this list that if I thought a subject was relevant, even a subject rather distant from the North American West, I was ready to include it. A book that ranges so widely tends to run on, however, and is in constant danger of losing argumentative coherence. It was crucial therefore, for the sake of reader, author, and Aristotle's principles of plot construction, to omit anything that was less than essential. Schumann often faults *Elusive West* for what it left out, but nothing in his review convinces me that adding the material would have made for a better book.

This is because Schumann does not show how the material consigned to the less frequented portions of my desk bears on *Elusive West*'s arguments. With regard to the French Empire, I left out discussion of Amerindian relations near the heart of Louisiana because I did not think them pertinent to my argument that changing French ideas about the unknown western reaches of that colony and its continent were a precondition for the cession of trans-Mississippi Louisiana in 1762. Nor did I want to repeat the work or restate the results of scholars of colonial Louisiana like Dan Usner.<sup>6</sup> I found Dupleix's machinations in India fascinating, but too distant physically and distinct logically to connect to French policy regarding western North America. So far as the British Empire is concerned, I don't see how discussing Arthur Dobbs alongside fellow Governors like William Shirley or Robert Dinwiddie furthers our understanding of Dobbs' Northwest Passage projects, nor how rivalries between Virginia and Pennsylvania pertain to my consideration of Britain's ideas about and access to the North American Far West, nor why the Vernon medal merits attention in a discussion of high-level British schemes to despoil Spain. I'm familiar with the literature about these topics that Schumann cites in his footnotes, but I didn't think while writing *Elusive West*, nor do I now that summarizing this existing scholarship would show readers anything new nor do more than interrupt my lines of reasoning. The burden for a commentator criticizing the omission of material is to demonstrate that such exclusion detracts from a book's arguments, or at least that inclusion of additional material would enhance them. I don't feel that Schumann has done

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel H. Usner, Jr., *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press and the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1992).

this, and, in the absence of such a demonstration, I can't really respond in a more pointed fashion. I'm not saying that I can't be persuaded that additional material should have been included in *Elusive West*--and if anyone could persuade me, it would be Schumann--but I'm not persuaded yet.

I don't quite understand Schumann's opinion that *Elusive West* failed to "connect the dots between the Anglo-Spanish war (1739-48) and Dobbs' interest in other routes to the Pacific (1741-1747)." It is first important to note that Dobbs' seminal 1731 memoir making the case for a Northwest Passage from Hudson Bay preceded the War of Jenkins' Ear by eight years. So far as dots go, in Chapter 3, I connected interest in a Northwest Passage with the presence of Spanish silver in the Pacific. I began Chapter 9, the section most concerned with the War of Jenkins' Ear, with discussion of Dobbs' fascination with a Northwest Passage. In Chapters 10, 11, and 14, I showed how French and Spanish officials connected Dobbs-inspired Hudson Bay exploration to Britain's designs on the Spanish Empire. My own feeling is that the passages between the dots in these chapters are short and straight.

I second Schumann's recommendation for further research on the question of pre-Seven Years War threats to Spain's Pacific possessions from the direction of Asia, and I find the range of his knowledge here particularly striking. As my references to the 1746 dispatch of two Dutch ships from Batavia to California, the European presence at Canton, southward moving Russian exploration of the North Pacific, and the French use of Chinese sources and Russian expeditions to gain information about the "Spanish Lake" attest, I share Schumann's interest in the possibility of the Spanish Pacific being vulnerable to advances and investigations from areas less remote than Hudson Bay and Louisiana.<sup>7</sup> I barely scratched the surface of this topic, however, and scholars with a greater command of Dutch, Russian, Japanese, and Chinese will need to pursue the issue.

I find fascinating the topics Schumann has referred to, and I have the greatest respect for the wide-ranging mastery of eighteenth-century history evinced in his comments. I am not convinced, however, that *Elusive West* was the place to discuss the topics to which Schumann alludes. We often understand less by talking about more. I stretched the *West* enough.

It is more difficult to respond to Daniel Baugh's review, because it does not address *Elusive West* in quite the same way the previous four pieces have. With the 2011 publication of his superb *Global Seven Years' War, 1754-1763: Britain and France in a Great Power Contest*, Baugh has distinguished himself as one of the leading experts on the "Great War for the Empire" and as an exceptionally astute reader of secondary writings about the Seven Years' War.<sup>8</sup> While researching *Elusive West*, I looked at Baugh's earlier works on Anglo-French

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<sup>7</sup> Mapp, *Elusive West: for the Dutch*, 397 and 397n. 15; Canton, 112; Russian exploration, 182-183, 401-404; French use of Chinese sources and Russian expeditions, 164-165, 183-187, 192-193.

<sup>8</sup> See my forthcoming review in the *International Journal of Maritime History*.

imperial rivalry, appreciated the knowledge and insights informing them, and looked forward to his opinions about my own efforts to make sense of the great imperial struggles of the early and mid-eighteenth century.

The book Baugh's review describes, however, differs in many respects from *Elusive West*. The book I published often contains what the review says it leaves out, omits what the review says it includes, and argues something quite different from what the review claims that it said. More subtly, the review often misses the relation between the individual topics *Elusive West* discusses and the larger themes of the book.

I will group Baugh's questions and criticisms under six headings and answer them in roughly the order they appear. I will respond at some length because, while I disagree with Baugh's criticisms, I do think they raise important and intriguing issues.

Baugh's first question is an interesting one, but his review doesn't delve far enough into *Elusive West's* and eighteenth-century France's effort to answer it. He asks about the French "failure to venture up the Missouri River" and, indeed, about "the absence of a serious French exploratory effort" in this direction. It's not quite right to dismiss French venturing up the Missouri. Both Étienne Véronard de Bourgmont and Pierre Gaultier de Varennes et de La Vérendrye and his sons made serious attempts to ascend the Missouri and to move west in the Missouri River region. Illness prevented a similar try by Jesuit Father Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix, and death at the hands of a Sioux war party forestalled an effort by Jesuit Father Jean-Pierre Aulneau to proceed west with the Vérendryes. That death hints at a fundamental problem: western Indian nations like the Sioux, Plains Apaches, Comanches, and "Gens du Serpent" could and often did stop French western exploration. A too serious French effort could become a suicidal attempt, as even Lewis and Clark's expedition very nearly was when a Teton Sioux party threatened to block passage up the Missouri in 1804. In contrast, moreover, with the situation in China and Siberia that Baugh mentions in his commentary and I mention in *Elusive West*, where French Jesuits or cartographers received the help of powerful imperial governments acting on their home continents, Bourgmont and the La Vérendryes were an ocean away from Paris. The seventeenth and eighteenth-century Russian and Chinese governments subdued powerful eastern and western indigenous peoples blocking imperial expansion across Asia; the French government found it neither easy nor expedient to dispatch help on the same scale to the Missouri Valley. The provision of help from Paris was likely inhibited, as Baugh acknowledges, by fear of antagonizing Spain, and, going somewhat beyond the issues treated by *Elusive West*, by hopes that explorers like Bourgmont and the La Vérendryes could succeed without drawing funds away from the royal entertainment budget, and by suspicions in the Ministry of Marine that the La Vérendryes were more interested in trade than exploration.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Mapp, *Elusive West*, 194-202, 233-238. For a concise discussion of missionary efforts, financial issues, and French governmental skepticism about the motives of French explorers, see W. J. Eccles, "French Exploration in North America, 1700-1800," in John Logan Allen, ed., *A Continent Defined* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 175-182.

Baugh's second criticism arises from a misreading of my claims about Spanish knowledge of the area between the Mississippi River and the coast of upper California. Baugh wishes I had addressed the question of why "before about 1770, no one seemed to have even a rough idea of the distance from the Mississippi to the California coast." I did not address this precise question because it rests on a false premise. As a glance at many of the maps in *Elusive West* makes clear, quite a few people had a fair notion of how far apart the Mississippi and the Pacific coast south of Cape Blanco were. What was rarer, perhaps even non-existent among pre-1763 Europeans, was a clear sense of the contents of much of the area between the Mississippi and the California coast, and of the contours of the coastline north of Cape Blanco. That uncertainty about the northern coast was critical, because it left open the possibility that a branch of the Pacific extended, Mediterranean-like, east into the unexplored regions of the North American interior. If something like the Great Salt Lake was the end of a Pacific Gulf rather than an enclosed body of water, Santa Fe and New Orleans were not so far from the western ocean. If, on the other hand, little but forbidding mountain ranges and hostile plains lay between the Mississippi and the Pacific, traversing the intervening space might take a very long time. Distance as crows fly was one question, practicality of human movement another.

With regard to the more general question of why Spanish knowledge of western North America geography was so sketchy, *Elusive West* discusses at considerable length the limited reach of Spanish exploration and the challenges of acquiring geographic information from the West's native inhabitants. Pre-1763 Spanish explorers neither made it far enough north nor covered enough of the ground between the Rio Grande and the California Coast to clarify southwestern geographic questions themselves. Restricted in their own movements, Spanish investigators often asked western Indians about what lay beyond the horizon, but found it hard to make sense of what they heard. In accounting for these Spanish interpretive difficulties, I emphasized the challenge of conveying geographic concepts across linguistic and cultural boundaries, the limited geographic horizons of the Indians with whom the Spanish were coming in contact, and the absence of indigenous empires like those the Spanish had encountered farther south and from which they had often gained a rough notion of large stretches of human and physical geography.<sup>10</sup>

In considering the question of why the Spanish Empire conducted so little exploration of western territories like those between New Mexico and the upper California coast, Baugh contends that *Elusive West* does not provide a persuasive response, but does not explain why the reasons the book offers are unconvincing. The reasons it gave were certainly prominent in the minds and evident in the behavior of the Spaniards from whose testimony and conduct they were derived. The costly disappointments of the great sixteenth and seventeenth-century entradas, Plains Indians' lethal repulse of the 1720 Villasur expedition east from New Mexico, threats from Apache Indians of the Southwest to settlers and scouts, and the need to retain scarce Spanish soldiers for frontier defense were all good reasons for Spaniards to have hesitated before venturing into the unknown. Simultaneously, the

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<sup>10</sup> Mapp, *Elusive West*, 29-98.

absence of a developed Southwestern fur trade comparable in scale to that drawing Frenchmen west from Canada and Louisiana deprived western Spaniards of one reason to take exploratory risks, and the presence of potentially lucrative but largely unexploited tropical areas in or around parts of the Spanish Empire farther south gave Spanish officials contemplating support for exploration good reason to look to someplace like Venezuela rather than the areas comprising modern American states like Utah and Nevada. It is not sufficient for the comment to deny the persuasiveness of these considerations without addressing them.

Moreover, even as the review fails to respond to the explanations Elusive West offers, it sometimes reiterates them. On one occasion, it suggests that a reason for the relatively tepid Spanish official support for western exploration was fear that other empires might exploit Spanish discoveries. It observes that the Spanish Empire discouraged exploration of the Pacific Ocean after 1610 for this very reason, and contends that this same attitude may have inhibited official encouragement of western North American exploration. Taken as one of the general considerations constraining Spanish western exploration in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, I agree with this argument. This is why, citing Spanish sources, Elusive West makes essentially the same point about Spanish fear of foreign geographical cherry-picking on page 54.<sup>11</sup>

Placing particular emphasis on fear of foreign exploitation of Spanish exploration for the decades from 1713 to 1763, however, is a trickier matter. It was in these decades, after the 1699 establishment of a French presence in Louisiana, and especially after the arrival of the French Mallet party in Santa Fe in 1739, Bering's Russian ships along the coast of Alaska in 1741, and Middleton's British expedition on the northwest shores of Hudson Bay in 1742, that the Spanish government could no longer rely on inertia to protect western North America and the North Pacific from the prying eyes of other empires. The idea that Spanish inactivity would keep geographic information away from rival powers only made sense when those powers were keeping away from the West. When Spain's rivals were moving into and around the region, Spanish inactivity might simply leave Madrid to be surprised by discoveries discussed in Paris, London, and St. Petersburg. Consequently, when, in 1751, a series of memoirs by Captain of the Sinaloa and Sonora cavalry Fernando Sánchez Salvador warned the Spanish government about the danger of French explorers bypassing New Mexico and finding a navigable river route to the Pacific, they received a favorable reception. When the smoke from the Seven Years' War cleared and imperial resources again became available for exploration, ships from Spain's navy and missionaries from its religious orders moved north to investigate western North America. Much of what Elusive West is about is Spanish officials' coming to terms with new waves of French, Russian, and British exploration that were rendering old Spanish policies obsolete. The review

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<sup>11</sup> Mapp, *Elusive West*, 54: "This failure to investigate a possible passage's depths was not universally regretted by Spanish officials. For shrewd Spanish statesmen, a Northwest Passage's potential utility might furnish good reason to avoid confirming its existence. For if such a passage was more more than chimerical, it might provide a route more useful to British, Dutch, and French interlopers than to Spanish mariners. . . . Revealing to them [English raiders] an easier northern route to the Pacific might be less than prudent." See also, *Elusive West*, 104, 105 n.4.



overlooks this changing context of Spanish responses to the challenges of western American and North Pacific geographic uncertainty.

As the review underestimates the importance of the changing circumstances Spanish officials confronted when contemplating western exploration, it also, in a third criticism, misunderstands Elusive West's arguments about Spanish reactions to British designs on the North American West. In addressing the seriousness of pre-1763 British western ambitions, Baugh argues, if I understand his comments correctly, that Spanish officials were concerned about British projects, but he feels that both Spanish officials and the author of *Elusive West* have exaggerated the import of British designs. Baugh sees the British threat to the Far West as a matter for the "distant future" and asks if the British were "really intent on finding a way to the Pacific by crossing the American continent?" *Elusive West* does not say that they were so intent, nor it does it see the British threat to the Far West as immediate. The book discusses the British ships, that, impelled by the enthusiasm of Arthur Dobbs and his supporters, probed the northwest shores of Hudson Bay for a Northwest Passage in 1742 and 1747; and it mentions Captain Cook's 1778 voyage along the Northwest Coast. But, in its chapters on British exploration, the book does not posit a grand pre-1763 British effort to strike west across the Mississippi. It highlights instead Britain's limited access and infrequent approaches to western lands south of Hudson Bay, and the Hudson Bay Company's reluctance to accede to Dobbs' hectoring and send expeditions west of the bay itself. The book avers that British interest in moving across North American lands to the West lagged far behind that of France, and that, indeed, Spanish American lands south of western North America, and not western North American territories themselves, were the fabulous and elusive West most pre-1763 Britons were after.<sup>12</sup>

If the pre-1763 British threat to the North American Far West was relatively distant and notional, why then, it may reasonably be asked, would Spanish officials respond so fearfully to it? Most basically, it was because fear of British expansionism generally and uncertainty about the character of the western North American territories this expansionism might come to involve led Spanish officials to exaggerate the immediate dangers the British Empire posed to the West and to act upon these overblown concerns. Spanish ministers and monarchs responded to their perceptions of British intentions, and the true character of those British intentions matters only to the extent that figures like Arthur Dobbs with real projects and the ability to realize some of them gave nervous Spanish officials something to get their imaginations going. The British threat to Spanish North America might have been more distant than Spanish officials thought, but these officials made decisions in accordance with a belief that the threat was not distant enough. The review fails to distinguish between the realities of western American geography and eighteenth-century exploration and the often distorted perceptions of geography and exploration that guided the conduct of Spanish statesmen.

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<sup>12</sup> Mapp, *Elusive West*, 261-270, 281-282, 413-416, 426-427.

More fundamentally, the review is allowing our hindsight to obscure Spanish foresight. One of the striking features of mid-eighteenth-century diplomatic records is that the Spanish (and French) officials producing them were often thinking not just about the decades in which they were writing, but about the likely course of North American events in the near and not-so-near future. Their temporal horizons extended further than those of Baugh's review. Though Britain's settlements on North America's Atlantic seaboard lay miles and mountain ranges away from Mexico in 1750, Spanish and French officials were already anticipating the westward movement of multiplying Anglo-Americans toward New Spain and its silver mines. Their understanding of the implications of mid-eighteenth-century Anglo-American demography was every bit as acute as Benjamin Franklin's. They were fretting not simply about immediate British intentions but, more crucially, about the long-term British and Anglo-American capabilities this demographic growth signified. They were right to do so, as the land grab of the Mexican War would later demonstrate.

In a fourth criticism, Baugh feels that *Elusive West* overstates the westward orientation of the French Empire and, consequently, exaggerates both the danger France posed to Spanish America and the need for an explanation of France's 1762 cession of trans-Mississippi Louisiana. It is, perhaps, best to respond to this criticism is by making three distinctions.

A first distinction is between the priorities of France and the French government and the activities of French individuals. If I understand Baugh's comments correctly, one point he is making is that France did not pose much of a threat to the Spanish Empire in the North American West because westward expansion was a matter of modest importance for France. An immediate problem with this criticism is that it ignores the arrival in Mexico and New Mexico of Frenchmen from Louisiana and the Illinois country, the guns Frenchmen were putting into the hands of the Indian nations bordering on the Spanish Empire, the contraband goods French traders were trying to put into the hands of Spanish subjects, and the Spanish fear that westering French traders and products might be harbingers of merchants and soldiers to come. These French actions and items menaced the Spanish frontier. The more subtle problem with Baugh's criticism is that these kinds of ominous French actions were not always linked to particular French governmental policies. The Franco-American individuals encroaching on Spanish territory often had priorities distinct from those of France and the French imperial government, and these unofficial objectives could endanger Spanish frontier security.<sup>13</sup>

The second distinction is between documents as influences and documents as indications. In trying to understand French American policy and discern the place of trans-Mississippi Louisiana among French governmental priorities, *Elusive West* examined memoirs and correspondence from the French foreign ministry. Baugh feels that *Elusive West* makes too much of these papers, that the book "may be criticized" for implying that the "memoranda concerning interior North America . . . found in the French foreign office archives" actually "guided French policy." It is important to note here that, while some of

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<sup>13</sup> Mapp, *Elusive West*, 29-30, 330-356.

the documents I looked at were influential, and while I often tried to measure that influence, these papers were most important to me as evidence of the thoughts of the officials formulating and implementing French policy. I put more emphasis on documents expressing the ideas guiding policy, rather than on documents guiding policy themselves. I thus began with the often odd decisions of French statesmen, asked where such choices came from, and then scrutinized written records to try to discern the motivations behind them. The question, therefore, is not just whether foreign office functionaries heeded words on paper, but whether those words provide a fair indication of the thoughts of foreign office personnel.<sup>14</sup>

Baugh's review raises an important issue here. French foreign office archives, like those of every bureaucracy I'm aware of, are filled with pronouncements about all manner of topics by every category of author, and the question of whether those declarations express the ideas driving the actions of the ministry is a good one. It was a question that was very much on my mind when writing *Elusive West*, in part because I spent so many lunches discussing it with other researchers at the Quai d'Orsay. In general, when deciding if I could take the ideas expressed in foreign office correspondence and memoranda seriously, I considered three criteria. First, when French documents were produced entirely or in part for the representatives of other states, I checked for consistency between what French diplomats declared to foreigners and what they said to each other. Along these lines, Baugh observes my awareness that "some of the" French foreign ministry "memoranda" I cite "were influenced by a concern to solidify a Bourbon alliance," but does not mention my point that the documents French diplomats transmitted to their Spanish counterparts were stating the same opinions French diplomats had already come to themselves. Second, when viewing papers expressing particular ideas about the North American West and the Pacific Ocean to which it led, I looked for consistency between the ideas stated and the more general and longstanding concerns of French statesmen. Finally, and most importantly, I asked whether the sentiments articulated in official records were compatible with the policies the French foreign ministry put into practice. I checked words against words, words against ideas, and words against actions.<sup>15</sup>

The question of the position of trans-Mississippi Louisiana among the concerns of the French government offers a good example of the process. With regard to French imperial actions, I noted that the French government founded the Louisiana colony in 1699, recommitted to it around the end of the War of the Spanish Succession, and retained the colony at considerable expense until wartime disasters forced the 1762 cession of eastern

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<sup>14</sup> Mapp, *Elusive West*, 148-149, 162-163, 361, 384-385.

<sup>15</sup> Mapp, *Elusive West*, 162-163, 304-305n. 29, 369-382. I asked the same kinds of questions about Spanish documents transmitted to French diplomats. In one case, after comparing Spanish papers sent to French diplomats with those circulated among Spanish officials, I found that Spanish diplomats meant what they said in their external communications. Their French counterparts found this hard to believe, and this unfounded gallic skepticism led to a misunderstanding of Spanish concerns and a mishandling of Franco-Spanish relations. See Mapp, *Elusive West*, 332, 350-351. Indeed, a minor theme of *Elusive West* is that one can assume neither the sincerity nor the insincerity of diplomats' pronouncements. You have to check. I did.

Louisiana to Britain and wartime choices led to the 1762 cession of trans-Mississippi Louisiana to Spain. I asked why French statesmen decided to give up those western portions of a colony France had held for sixty-three years. In the first half-century of Louisiana's existence, when the colony was being established, developed, and preferred over territories such as the Spanish half of the island of St. Domingue for which it might have been exchanged, discussion of the unexplored western portions of the colony and of the mysterious lands and waters to which they led tended to emphasize the potential value of the unknown North American West. They spoke of water routes to the Pacific, of access to wealthy Spanish colonies, or silver deposits, rich farmland, and Indians with whom France might ally. In contrast, in the twelve-or-so years before the 1762 cession of trans-Mississippi Louisiana, I remarked a growing skepticism in foreign office records about the future value of the undiscovered West, and a related inclination to discount the worth of Louisiana as a colony. While words extolled the future value of the mysterious North American West included in and opened up by trans-Mississippi Louisiana, the French Empire was happy to keep western Louisiana. As skepticism about the potential value of the West grew, cession of western Louisiana became first conceivable and then, in 1762, actual. In this and other cases, I found a consistent relation among words in documents, and between words on paper and deeds of ministers.<sup>16</sup> Given that *Elusive West* repeatedly and explicitly demonstrates this kind of relation rather than simply asserting it, the burden for Baugh's review is to show that the documents the book cites are unrelated to French governmental policy despite such demonstrations. It is not a burden the review meets.

Had it endeavored to do so, the review would not have elided a third distinction and, as a result, underestimated French official interest in the North American West. That third distinction is between performance and potential. While I'm not entirely sure I'm grasping Baugh's argument, I think his comments suggest that *Elusive West*'s explanation of the 1762 French cession of trans-Mississippi Louisiana to Spain is unnecessary because France was never particularly attached to the lands beyond the Mississippi anyway. As indications of this want of French commitment to the North American West, the review notes the scantiness of French settlement in the Illinois country and the 1762 French cession of trans and cis-Mississippi Louisiana to Spain and Britain respectively. As an indication that French priorities lay elsewhere, the commentary mentions the disastrous French attempt to settle Guiana after the Seven Years' War and use the South American colony as a source of provisions for French Caribbean sugar islands. These are "salient hard facts" advanced as apparent challenges to the arguments of *Elusive West*.

None of these facts, however, all of which the book recognizes, in any way refute the argument that growing skepticism about the potential value of the unexplored American West served as a precondition for the French cession of western Louisiana. The cession of the colony in 1762 does not demonstrate a lack of interest in keeping the territory before 1762. Indeed, if French interest in western Louisiana had been so negligible in the sixty-three years before the cession, there would have been no French colony to cede. It is true, as Baugh states, that France tried to build up Guiana after 1762, but such an effort after the

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<sup>16</sup> Mapp, *Elusive West*, 147-163, 359-385.

sacrifice of western Louisiana in no way proves an absence of French interest in the American West before 1762, nor, for that matter any French interest in Guiana before the end of the Seven Years' War. The thin settlement of the Illinois country before the Seven Years' War that Baugh observes need not indicate that the region would continue to be thinly settled after the conflict, any more than the fact that French Guiana was underdeveloped before 1763 need mean France would not try to develop the South American colony in 1763. In general, the parlous state of a colony was no sure sign that French statesmen discounted its worth. They could and often did distinguish between the past disappointments of a territory and its future possibilities. Before about 1750, they tended to emphasize these future possibilities of places like the Illinois country and, more importantly for the argument of Elusive West, of western American territories beyond the ken of French administrators. It was the change in attitudes about unknown and underdeveloped territories after 1750, the growing doubt about what the unexplored West would ultimately offer, that made trans-Mississippi Louisiana expendable. Baugh's review talks of "eighteenth-century French priorities," but French priorities changed many times over the course of the century. The review ignores these changes in French perceptions and policies, and therefore misses the need for an explanation of them. It fails to distinguish performance from potential, and therefore overlooks what French officials often saw: that the future of colonies might be more important than their past. Salient hard facts are a good place to start, but it is the interpretation of them that makes an argument. In my opinion the review does not interpret enough.

Baugh's fifth criticism has to do with the relation between politics and geopolitics and, more profoundly, the extent to which statesmen shaped events or were constrained by circumstances. As he puts it, "granted," Elusive West "too readily" allows "geopolitics to overwhelm politics—as if the replacement of Ferdinand VI of Spain by Charles III, or George II and William Pitt by George III and Lord Bute, did not matter much." Baugh is correct in his general claim that I think that geopolitics often overwhelmed politics, that statesmen of different views and factions were impelled by the conditions in which they found themselves to act in comparable ways. The extent to which statesmen drive events or are driven by them is, of course, one of the classic questions in the history of international relations. There is much room to disagree here, and that is one reason I felt I had to support my views with fifteen chapters of evidence and reasoning. Rather than responding with evidence and reasoning of his own, Baugh simply places his "granted" in their place. I don't think you can grant what historians and statesmen have been arguing about for as long as historians and statesmen have been arguing. Rather than reprising 433 pages, I will mention one example of the kind of observation that suggested to me the weight of geopolitical pressures on mid-eighteenth-century statesmen; namely, what I call, in a very specific sense, the tragic character of the Seven Years' War. In many instances, the dominant figures of that war produced, with their efforts to avoid the many perils of international relations, the perils they sought to escape. Frederick the Great feared the annihilation of Prussia, and his pre-emptive invasion of Saxony nearly provoked it. Austria and Russia sought to crush Prussia, and succeeded in leaving it legendarily enduring. At the end of the war, the British Empire sought to secure its colonies on the Atlantic seaboard of North America by acquiring large swathes of territory around them, France tried to salvage its Atlantic empire by abandoning vast North American territories in favor of

compact islands and questionable South American and South Atlantic ventures, Spain endeavored to protect an overextended empire by extending it farther toward the Mississippi. All three of these empires, despite their contrasting policies and fates in the war, ended up losing in the decades after it much of what they had sought to maintain, often because of the policies they had chosen. The quandaries of geopolitics and empire seemed to me greater than men and their politics.<sup>17</sup>

That I advance the general theme of the primacy of geopolitics over politics, however, does not mean that I think politics and persons to be irrelevant. I would not have analyzed various imperial decisions in such minute detail and considered particular figures at such length if I thought choice and individuality an illusion. Baugh's review, even though it is correct with regard to my general emphasis on the primacy of geopolitics, cites examples demonstrating that I think politics and persons to be far from insignificant. I thought the replacement in Spain of Ferdinand VI by Charles III important, which is why I devoted 26 pages to introducing Charles III's background, laying out his belief in the desirability of a North American imperial balance of power, and explaining why he ultimately accepted a French cession of trans-Mississippi Louisiana that rendered such an equilibrium impossible.<sup>18</sup> An entire chapter of *Elusive West* is constructed around the belief that Charles III's particular ideas mattered. So far as Britain goes, I specifically placed William Pitt in opposition to Lord Bute, noting that Pitt and his supporters opposed the resolution to the Seven Years' War favored by Bute.<sup>19</sup> I also mentioned that one reason for the urgency of fall 1762 French efforts to persuade Spain to accept a peace settlement was fear that the more bellicose party in British politics would regain influence and promote further British conquests.<sup>20</sup> This does not amount to a suggestion that it didn't matter much which of these Spanish and British figures held the reins of government.

The sixth case where Baugh and I differ is with regard to his claim that I see Spain's 1750s neutrality, as opposed to an alliance with France, as a mistake. *Elusive West* isn't the sort of book to which this kind of criticism is applicable. I never saw it as my task to judge the rightness of imperial policies from two-and-a-half centuries ago. I simply wanted to understand why human beings acted as they did and what the consequences of their actions were. The whole notion of labeling Spanish policy a mistake would have been incompatible, moreover, with the larger, tragic theme of *Elusive West*. Spanish, French, and even victorious British statesmen found themselves in tragic circumstances, in the sense that all their possible American imperial policies were likely to produce consequences they were designed to avoid. In this context, the best-informed and considered choices could turn out to be mistakes; the least knowledgeable and thoughtful, mistakes also.

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<sup>17</sup> See Mapp, *Elusive West*, 430-433.

<sup>18</sup> Mapp, *Elusive West*, 387-412.

<sup>19</sup> Mapp, *Elusive West*, 417-418.

<sup>20</sup> Mapp, *Elusive West*, 383.

More directly, Baugh's criticism is inaccurate. He contends that, in considering Spain's reluctance to ally with France, I failed to "take into account" Spain's unreadiness for war, and its earlier and unpleasant experiences with its French rival and neighbor. I mentioned the precarious state of Spain's military forces on page 406. I discussed Spanish concerns about France's exploitation of a Spanish alliance to gain access to western South America markets on pages 127-132 and 139-142. I alluded to mid-eighteenth century Spanish statesmen's vivid recollection of such incidents on pages 323 and 337-338, and I spent 18 pages detailing mid-eighteenth-century Spanish fears of French expansion at the expense of Spanish imperial territories in the Americas (336-353).

Acknowledging as I do the expertise and acuity behind Baugh's review, how can I so frequently and vigorously question the judgments in it? From what do all these disagreements arise? Most basically, in considering the ideas and policies of eighteenth-century statesmen, *Elusive West* highlights change, anticipation, and perception, while the review emphasizes continuity, immediacy, and reality. All of these qualities can be found in the actions and deliberations of Enlightenment officials, and there's nothing surprising about scholars weighing them differently. I stand by the arguments in *Elusive West*, but I can certainly see why the review might demur.

Going a little further, my own feeling is that, with the benefit of erudition and retrospection, the review sees eighteenth-century events so clearly that it is a little impatient with a study of eighteenth-century figures who saw them only darkly. Knowing so well what happened between 1713 and 1763, and what would happen after the Seven Years' War, the review hesitates to enter into the minds of eighteenth-century people contemplating the bewildering world around and uncertain future before them. Of course, one of the paradoxes of historical inquiry is that, to understand the past as well as we can, we have simultaneously to understand it as badly as its participants did. It can certainly be argued that *Elusive West* and its author lost themselves in the wilderness of eighteenth-century thought. It can also be argued, in the spirit of Christopher Hodson, that we often have to muddle through the forest before we can get the view from above the tree line.

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