

Dane A. Morrison. *True Yankees: The South Seas and The Discovery of American Identity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. 280 pp. ISBN: 9781421415492. \$27.95.

Dane Morrison considers early United States narratives of the Indian and Pacific Ocean worlds in a series of case studies. Through the lens of five individual maritime sojourners from the northeast, the book examines well-trodden topics such as the China Trade. The merchants are Samuel Shaw, Amasa Delano, Edmund Fanning, Robert Bennett Forbes, and Harriett Low (who travelled to Asia and the South Sea with her merchant uncle). It is a top-down approach centred around a quest for early national “identity”. Morrison weaves his selected Yankee accounts around interlude sections that provide each chapter with context and relate them to his theme of an evolving national character in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As Americans encountered and wrote about others abroad, they shaped ideas about themselves. For Morrison, the South Seas were a stage upon which travellers legitimized republican virtues and expressed shared values. Over time, their published and private writings were informed by exceptionalism that was increasingly intolerant of the worlds beyond United States shores.

Caught up in international conflicts that often disrupted their efforts, early American traders in the East sought national legitimacy in addition to economic competency. Inspired by contacts with European expatriates and Asian and African communities, they extolled civic pride and overseas adventurism in travel narratives that were widely popular at home. In Chapter 1, Morrison examines Shaw, supercargo of the *Empress of China*, the first United States vessel to trade in China. Shaw’s journals from the voyage celebrated the warm receptions that he experienced from British officials in Calcutta in 1788, so soon after the Treaty of Paris. He muted his critiques of European colonialism and described exotic Indian religious practices for his audience. Chapter 2 considers the memoir of Pacific mariner and seal hunter Delano, who at one point during a venture enlisted at Canton for service on the British ship *Panther* for an East Indies scientific expedition. Composed years later, his colourful descriptions of new worlds and local lifestyles legitimized the Yankee as an overseas explorer and travelogue producer in the tradition of Cook. At the same time, Delano’s account of Spain’s Pacific empire in Chile and Peru and smuggler prisons there contrasted American liberty and republicanism with Old World tyranny. Fanning was from the same early national generation as Shaw and Delano; Chapter 3 examines his “Voyages Round the World” (published in 1833). Fanning details his narrative of commerce and discovery during his sealing expedition to the Falkland and Juan Fernandez archipelagos in the late 1790s. Killing South Sea mammals and fighting pirates near Sumatra were both cited by him as evidence of Yankee ingenuity and discipline.

According to Morrison, the second generation of American expatriates revealed little of the earlier era’s cosmopolitanism and civic vigour. By the mid-1800s, Jacksonian ethnocentrism and an increasingly hostile United States naval force in the Pacific helped to shape a less tolerant and more self-assured traveller. Low, who resided in the East longer than Morrison’s other sample Americans, exemplifies this later era, and he spends a good deal of time in Chapter 4 documenting the less savoury aspects of her private journal. She lamented seeing the flags of British or Spanish ships during her journey to China, writing of one vessel, “[W]e all wished it had been a Yankee” (157). She decried Catholic ritual and Sabbath observance during a brief stay at Manilla in 1829: “It is true they all go to Mass in the morning and confess, but they spend the rest of the day in frolicking” (159). Low’s journal during her stay at Macao for four years is similarly peppered with complaints about Portuguese Catholics and Chinese

imperial corruption, although for Morrison, Yankee attacks on China's uncivilized state "did not yet take the form of the full-blooded racism that they applied to Native and African Americans" (165). Her attitude toward British expatriates in Asia was less caustic but marked by an ironic annoyance at cultural chauvinism and patriotism. Morrison's final chapter on Forbes, a trading company leader in Canton, offers a chronology of events surrounding the First Opium War from his perspective. The American agent shared British animosity toward Chinese government policy and justified a military action based on the barbarism of Chinese civilization. To that end, Forbes represented a new national character that emerged in the antebellum United States, a more confident and proud American on the global stage.

Related to the concern of representation (can five Yankee travellers speak for all Americans, or even all American visitors to the South Seas?) is a problem of repetition. With a handful of samples from which to draw, Morrison returns too often to the same point, both in his contextual interludes and in the chapters themselves. Moreover, the chapter-interlude-chapter organization can also be frustrating at times, especially for the section on Low, since most of the necessary context on Jacksonian America *follows* the chapter describing her break with the earlier conceptualized generation. The book ends somewhat abruptly with a brief postscript, and it is here where one may wish to see Morrison return to questions that he poses in his introduction regarding the relevancy of a transformed national identity for contemporary dialogues about American imperialism. These issues notwithstanding, *True Yankees* is overall a crisp and elegant book. If Morrison makes too much from the limited experiences of northeastern merchants abroad, he makes up for it with engaging, clearly-written unpacking of source material. He has produced a finely researched and richly told supply-side history that will prompt further discussion about the international and global relevancies of early American maritime narratives.