

both civil-military relations in the early republic and the importance of honour in early American culture.

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Meredith F. Small. *Here Begins the Dark Sea: Venice, a Medieval Monk, and the Creation of the Most Accurate Map of the World*. New York, NY: Pegasus Books, www.pegasusbooks.com, 2023. 320 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography. US \$29.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-63936-419-0.

Dark Sea is not Meredith Small's first work centering on Venice's critical role in "inventing the world," as we in the West look back on the hunt for new sailing routes and possibly overland trading routes that moved spices, fabrics, and more from east to west after the Ottomans captured Constantinople in 1453. This book is Small's tour de force suggesting how, most likely, Venetian cleric Fra Mauro, drew on knowledge from global sources to produce a "mappamundi," map of the world, that more accurately depicted the earth than the efforts of philosophers, artists, mathematicians, and seamen before him and many long after. As Small, an anthropologist by academic training, wrote in explaining why Mauro's work still matters: "According to NASA Landsat Science: 'The comparison is stunning when you consider that Fra Mauro compiled his data from the travel tales of myriad fifteenth century sailors.' Fra Mauro, who never saw anything beyond his native city, and certainly had no idea what the world looked like from above, got so much right." (233)

The map itself is seven feet in diameter, a "towering circle of blue and white covered with busy writing." What surprises her, and me, was that this large work was "hanging in a secluded space of wall outside the grand reading room of the Museo Corner in Venice." Small describes it as "the Rosetta Stone of world maps;" and having spent decades with maps and charts, this reviewer heartily agrees. So what does a visitor to the Museo see, if he or she stops? We absorb Mauro's geography in the map but also inscriptions in Venetian dialect that are often his reasons why certain decisions were made or serve as source notes. (xi)

Nothing proves NASA's point more than Mauro's decision to show that Africa could be rounded by sea. "The possibility of rounding Africa and finding open water on the other side is of prime importance because that was the Holy Grail for international trade" (147). The European shipbuilders' new designs for vessels capable of carrying greater cargo tonnage on longer routes made possible by better navigational charts was being translated into business when Mauro undertook the work.

Changes in shipbuilding and sharpened accuracy in charting allowed capitalism to blossom, and those historically active traders in Venice were ready to take every advantage to prosper – even more than they had when Constantinople was in Orthodox hands. The lay priest Mauro and the other Camaldolese religious (a monastic order of hermits) at the San Michele monastery on an island off Venice who worked for years on the map were cartographers for hire. Mappamundi weren't for the masses; they were commissioned. Mauro's original was for Venice and there were two copies. One of those went to the King of Portugal, eager to grow his trading options in Atlantic Africa.

“The Indian Ocean and its islands and coastlines as drawn by Fra Mauro were important because this is the area of the spice trade from which Venetian merchants had made their wealth.” Outside of Marco Polo and Nicolo de Conte, to whom Small gives great credit, that ocean was “virtually unknown.” (132-33) The map also places Japan off Asia for the first time.

Small's achievement in *Dark Sea* is remarkable since she was working from “vague and little documented” evidence on how the map was built and Mauro's life. With those two challenges as given, her narrative correctly carries a shroud of mystery through the work. Crucial to the telling of this story is Small's recognition from cover to cover of text is the human desire to define a sense of place in their lives. (92)

Dark Sea is directed to the cartographer in us all—academic, layman, sailor, landsman.

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Myron J. Smith, Jr. *After Vicksburg: The Civil War on Western Waters, 1863-1865.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland, www.mcfarlandpub.com, 2021. viii+319 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. US \$49.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-4766-7220-5. (E-book available.)

American Civil War histories tell similar stories regarding well-known battles, such as Antietam, Gettysburg, and Vicksburg. Myron J. Smith, Jr.'s book, *After Vicksburg: The Civil War on Western Waters, 1863-1865*, mentions Gettysburg and Vicksburg, but challenges the known narrative by focusing on the battles of the Mississippi River and its tributaries, conflicts that have not regularly been researched and reported.

The author, an expert on naval battles, ships, and commanders of the Civil War, has written nearly one hundred books over his career. *After Vicksburg* is a worthy addition to his bibliography, building upon his books dating back to