

“wild by nature”—and therefore were, so to speak, un-ownable. Animals “acted as obstacles to colonization,” according to Smalley, “because their wildness was at odds with Anglo-American legal assertions of possession” (3). As colonists worked to metabolize the bodies of animals, both wild and domestic, into products and commodities, they fought, essentially, to tame that wildness by privatizing animals’ bodies at their moments of death. Smalley brilliantly demonstrates how American governments, across five centuries, struggled to resolve the legal paradoxes of managing wildness. And although the vast historical literature on colonialism is most commonly narrated as a declensionary tale of wildness lost, Smalley suggests that such a construction “elides wildness in the present,” and insists that “if we allow animals to be actors in our stories, quite different narratives emerge” (237–238).

Taking this provocation seriously, *Wild by Nature* offers a wonderful example of the retellings that are possible if historians attend to animal-human relationships as a significant category of investigation. It is an approachable and well-written book that will appeal to readers curious and eager to think in new ways about old stories.

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*The American Elsewhere: Adventure and Manliness in the Age of Expansion.* By Jimmy L. Bryan. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2017. Pp. 393. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index.)

Jimmy Bryan’s stimulating history tackles the role of nineteenth-century adventurers and the chronicles they published to help expand America’s territorial reach. In doing so, he provides an important reminder about the role of personal proclivity, emotion, and culture in the process of territorial expansion, which is more often analyzed in terms of material or geopolitical imperatives. As the author usefully reminds us, empires require persistent narrative reaffirmation. Stories, in other words, helped structure the expansionist impulse, and Bryan subjects those stories—an array of travel narratives, memoirs, and sensationalistic fiction—to a fascinating blend of literary and historical analysis. The results are intriguing and insightful.

Between the War of 1812 and the Civil War, the book posits, the United States experienced a cultural moment defined by a decidedly romantic spirit, one in which self-proclaimed adventurers sought emotional fulfillment and authentic experience in the “elsewhere,” which is to say, the edges of what they believed to be the known world. Distancing themselves from what they regarded as the stultifying effects of domesticity and anomie of an encroaching market, such men (and this was a decidedly male

ethic) acted as the vanguard for larger settler colonial processes. And herein lies the book's most important contribution to the fields of western and antebellum history. Bryan astutely recognizes that for territorial expansion to occur, Americans had to believe in the beneficence of the process. Adventurers, it turns out, were perhaps the key constituency in a steady swing in popular perception away from seeing the West as a source of apprehension and annihilation and toward a conceptualization of the frontier as a region of fulfillment, possibility, and optimism. The heavily romanticized (not to mention published and widely-circulated) adventure narratives composed by these trailblazers prefaced and legitimated what would become the spirit of Manifest Destiny. Individuals who intentionally sought the perils of the "elsewhere," who eschewed ennui and consciously craved the richer emotional experiences on offer inside that vast unknown, then became raconteurs who energized the desire for transcontinental conquest. Those same stories thereby delegitimized competing Indian and Hispanic claimants.

Individual chapters substantiate these arguments. Bryan examines the sources of what he calls a disquiet that drove some men to lives of adventurous rambling, as well as the characteristics of what became an archetype for national manhood at the time. He also details the dimensions and tropes of a newly established (and increasingly self-aware) genre: narratives detailing the roving lives of trappers, mountain men, fortune-seekers, and explorers in the West. Such accounts provided incidents and described danger in ways decidedly different from the more stolid, scientifically inclined, and detail-oriented travel literature of the Enlightenment. Readers, meanwhile, will be gratified to find that Bryan thoroughly appreciates the role of Texas in stimulating this larger national love affair with western adventuring. Indeed, several chapters feature in-depth analysis of chronicles set in the Lone Star Republic and featuring prominent figures in its history; the Mier Expedition comes in for particularly fascinating reevaluation. *The American Elsewhere* also spends much of its fifth chapter delineating the ranger-type (epitomized by the Texas Rangers) as a prominent subset of the broader archetype of adventurous masculinity.

This is a book, then, that ought to appeal across several different subfields. Culturally minded historians of the West and of Texas, American Studies scholars, and specialists in literature could all cull important insights from this broad-ranging (and beautifully illustrated) work. It is, ultimately, a powerful reminder of the primary importance of storytelling to our understanding of and relationship with the world that surrounds us.