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Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire

The U.S.-Mexico War (1846–8) brought two centuries of dramatic territorial expansionism to a close, seemingly fulfilling America's Manifest Destiny. Or did it? As politicians schemed to annex new lands in Latin America and the Pacific, some Americans took expansionism into their own hands. Between 1848 and 1860, there was an epidemic of unsanctioned attacks by private American mercenaries (known as filibusters) throughout the Western Hemisphere. This book documents the potency of Manifest Destiny in the antebellum era and situates imperial lust in the context of social and economic transformations that were changing the meaning of manhood and womanhood in the United States. Easy victory over Mexico in 1848 led many American men to embrace both an aggressive vision of expansionism and an equally martial vision of manhood. Debates about the propriety of aggression abroad polarized the public at home, shaping antebellum presidential elections, foreign policies, gender relations, and, ultimately, the failure of sectional compromise before the Civil War.

Amy S. Greenberg is Associate Professor of History and Women's Studies at the Pennsylvania State University. She is also the author of *Cause for Alarm: The Volunteer Fire Department in the Nineteenth-Century City* (1998).

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For Rich and Jackson

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The reputations of the nineteenth century will one day be quoted, to prove its barbarism.

– Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1850

Time will decide whether they were pirates and cutthroats, or heroes and patriots.

– Cora Montgomery, 1851

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Abbreviations Used in the Notes

AH	Hawaii State Archives
AHR	<i>American Historical Review</i>
BL	Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA
DBR	<i>De Bow's Review</i>
HL	Manuscripts Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA
HNMM	<i>Harper's New Monthly Magazine</i>
JAH	<i>Journal of American History</i>
LOC	Library of Congress, Washington, DC
NEYR	<i>New Englander and Yale Review</i>
NYH	<i>New York Herald</i>
NYT	<i>New York Tribune</i>
PMM	<i>Putnam's Monthly Magazine</i>
SLM	<i>Southern Literary Messenger</i>
SQR	<i>Southern Quarterly Review</i>
USDR	<i>United States Magazine and Democratic Review</i>
WWP	Callender I. Fayssoux Collection of William Walker Papers, Latin American Collection, Howard Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA

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