CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project originated in the late 1990s as I worked on my master's thesis at the University of Texas at Arlington. My topic was the biography of a Texas military figure, Walter P. Lane, and my sage committee members, Sam Haynes, Gerald Saxon, and Richard Francaviglia, encouraged me to look beyond the empirical minutia I had collected about his life. The task was both simple and complex. In his written recollections, Lane plainly revealed what he thought about his experiences. He was an adventurer who harbored a high opinion of his own manly qualities. I decided to listen to the stories he told. Stephanie Cole introduced me to what was then the relatively new scholarship in masculine studies, and that significantly enriched my understanding of Lane's career and the world he inhabited. I soon discovered that he was part of a reckless generation who contributed to the development of brash and chauvinistic narratives of territorial expansion, ethnic superiority, and nationalist exceptionalism.

My faulty memories of my studies at the University of Texas at Arlington have not diminished the debt that I owe. I am grateful to so many, and over the course of two decades, I have forgotten more than I have remembered. Thank you, Sam, Gerald, Richard, and Stephanie, and thanks to Douglas Richmond and Robert Fairbanks, all scholars who introduced me to the professional world of history.

I took my interest in these romantic adventurers to Southern Methodist University, where I entered the new PhD program in southwestern history. There, I gladly incurred further debts. As cochairs of my committee, Sherry Smith and David Weber were gracious, encouraging, and demanding. Sam Haynes joined my committee along with Edward Countryman and Crista DeLuzio, and I benefited from their depth of knowledge and incisive critiques. I would like to make a special mention of my SMU classmates—Matt Babcock, Constance Bishop, Alicia Dewey, George Díaz, Jim Dudlo, Francis Galán, Bonnie Martin, Helen McLure, Kerry Oman, Amy Porter, José Ramirez, Jeff Schulze, and Clive Siegle—great scholars and great friends.

I am also fortunate to enjoy the support of friends and colleagues at Lamar University. I have profited from the feedback generated during our

brown bag seminars as well as the individual conversations and rants with Rebecca Boone, Jeff Forret, Mark Mengerink, Gwinyai Muzorewa, and Yasuko Sato. As chairs of our department, John Storey and Mary Scheer have provided valuable guidance. Our graduate assistants have performed numerous tasks, large and small, in support of my work, and I would like to especially mention the help of Robert Barton, Kevin Broussard, Casey Diaz, Valerie Domingue, Cassandre Durso, Adam Gorrell, Judith Nelams, Sabrina Odom, and Collin Rohrbaugh. I owe special debt, one that I could never fully repay, to Patty Renfro.

At the University Press of Kansas, my editors, Kim Hogeland and Kelly Chrisman Jacques, have exhibited patience and insightfulness, and I am grateful for their advocacy of this book. I want to thank Daniel Justin Herman and the anonymous readers of my manuscript for their willingness to trudge through earlier drafts and share their expertise.

I have also benefited from generous financial and institutional support. The William P. Clements Center for Southwestern Studies at Southern Methodist University provided the means for research in numerous archives across the country. A fellowship at the Filson Historical Library in Louisville permitted me the luxury of spending time in the rich collections there. Through a faculty development leave, Lamar University granted the time and funds for writing as well as research, and a residency as visiting scholar at the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies at Brigham Young University provided the time and facility for new research, manuscript revisions, and enlightening conversations. I am grateful to Brian Cannon, Brenden Rensink, and Amy Carlin for their kindness and collegiality. To all the librarians and archivists at UTA, SMU, Lamar, the Filson, and BYU, and for those at Western Washington University, the University of Nevada Reno, and the University of Texas at Dallas, and for those at the many institutions that I have visited for this project—thank you for making my work as a historian possible.

I am blessed by the support of my friends and family, and I dedicate this book to my mother Candance A. Bryan. I especially want to express my gratitude to my wife, Liza Castillo Bryan, who first encouraged me to go to college and become a historian.

THE AMERICAN ELSEWHERE

INTRODUCTION

In February 1847, news arrived at Bent's Fort on the Arkansas River that the inhabitants of Taos, New Mexico, had revolted against their US occupiers. They killed the older brother of William Bent, one of the owners of the trading post, and he called on the available men to cross the nearly two hundred miles to the village and assist in defeating the resistance. A collection of twenty-three men responded— traders and trappers, veterans and amateurs, Anglo- and Franco-American as well as métis. Eighteen were employees of Bent, St. Vrain and Company, and the remaining five were independent men such as Lucien Maxwell, who had explored with John C. Frémont in 1842, and Lewis H. Garrard, an eighteen-year-old who had crossed over the Santa Fe Trail for the amusement.

Fired with a vengeful sentiment and alarmed by visions of the Mexican army marching through the passes of the Sangre de Cristo, the company traversed the winter landscape along the Purgatoire River. They stopped at an established campsite called Hole in the Rock. As darkness descended and the men settled about the campfire, the dogs suddenly barked and rushed about excitedly. The men scrambled, grabbed up their rifles, and "cached" themselves behind rocks and trees, waiting to receive the enemy that lurked in the dark. Garrard followed the cue of the veterans, admiring "the stealthy crawl of the older Indian fighters." The enemy never came, and the men eventually returned to their

routines, but for Garrard, the episode bore special significance. The enemy was not real, but his emotions were. He explained, "The anxious state of suspense, the strain of the eyes in the endeavor to penetrate the Cimmerian darkness . . . combined to work up to a greater tensity [*sic*] our already high-strung feelings." Garrard imagined the peril as well as his ability to meet it, and the quickening that events such as this promised had lured him into regions distant from home. The moment did not disappoint.[1]

Garrard was an adventurer, a member of a reckless generation that traveled to the preimagined frontiers of North America in search of emotional experiences and personal transformation. In February 1846, at the age of seventeen, he had abandoned his schoolwork and left his Cincinnati home to tour Texas and Louisiana. After a few months, he returned only to pick up a copy of Frémont's *Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains* (1845). He recalled that "the glowing pages . . . were so alluring to my fancy, that my parents were persuaded to let me go westward" (v). By September he reached Westport, Missouri, where he secured permission to accompany Ceran St. Vrain's caravan to Bent's Fort. There he sojourned for several weeks among the traders, teamsters, and Cheyennes. After receiving word of violence in New Mexico, he crossed over to Taos, and during his return journey he volunteered to help defend the makeshift Mann's Fort and participated in a gunfight with Comanches.

As the affair at Hole in the Rock illustrated, Garrard expressed little embarrassment that he imagined things. He admitted to a romantic ardor that celebrated the visionary, reveled in the emotional, yearned for the elsewhere, and wallowed in the egocentric. He enjoyed escaping into "a dreamy state" that permitted him to "build castles in the air." Such reverie brought him satisfaction, because it enabled him "to think of things not in our power to possess; for, during the brief moments we indulge in this train, we are as much gratified and happy as if in actual possession; and why deprive one of this *poor* luxury?" (40).

But the young traveler from Cincinnati represented a romantic of a specific sort. When he decided to join the too-few defenders at Mann's Fort, he did so "for excitement sake." He claimed to have astonished the officer in charge when he explained that his "trip to the country was one of pleasure" and that he had volunteered to experience "such dangerous

service" (298–299). By embracing this adventurous persona, Garrard rendered himself exceptional, and when he ventured into the interior of the continent, he realized his dreams. As the episode at the Hole in the Rock attested, his imagination would not permit otherwise. "This is the acme of life," he wrote of that anxious journey between Bent's Fort and Taos, underscoring how they "traveled and camped, always on the alert and ready for any emergency . . .; for a mountain man," one of the paragons of adventure "is supposed to always have his ear open to impending danger" (159).

Furthermore, Garrard was not alone. Not only had he read about previous adventurers, he personally met numerous others who exhibited similar proclivities to ramble and seek emotional stimuli. Company man Jared W. Folger had traveled with the writer when he first joined the caravan at Westport. According to Garrard, he "was a gentleman, so wedded to a roving prairie life . . . in pure love of adventure" (8). When Garrard mentioned a Mr. Chadwick who joined the same train, he not only observed that he came from "St. Louis, on his first trip, like several of us, for pleasure" (17), but also alluded to others whom he did not identify. On their way to Bent's Fort, they met with Hiram H. Buchanan, who delivered news that Indians had intercepted a government supply train. He had previously volunteered to serve in the US-Mexican War, but the army command disbanded his regiment. Garrard reported that Buchanan was determined to visit "Nueva Mejico," so he left the military and joined a supply train. They would meet again when Buchanan, "so pleased with my representations of savage attractions" (99), remained with Garrard at Bent's Fort. While there and at a Cheyenne encampment, at Taos and Mann's Fort, and on expeditions to and from, Garrard encountered fellow adventurers.[2]

At Mann's Fort, however, Garrard met the less adventurous Colonel William H. Russell of Kentucky, who led a US supply train en route to Missouri. The officer recognized the young man as the son of a friend and asked him why he had placed himself in such a predicament. Garrard responded that "this is a trip for fun and health, though I must say it's rather rough fun" (326). The remark may have revealed motivations whimsical and inconsequential, and Garrard wanted to astonish the paternalistic Russell, but the young adventurer also expected the colonel, as well as his readers, to appreciate its meaningfulness. By 1846 when he made it, the

comment was a familiar one. He returned home and published an account of his wanderings, *Wah-to-yah and the Taos Trail* (1850), joining a corpus of works that had enjoyed popularity for almost forty years.

The adventurism that Garrard and his kind exhibited energized the mythologies of the American West and structured the justifications for its conquest. It heightened the romance and exceptionalism that informed generations of unquestioning historians who extolled the Anglo-American triumph over untamed landscapes and unworthy people.[3] In the estimation of more discerning scholars, however, adventurers have not fared well. Bernard DeVoto never questioned the superiority of the mountain men, but in *Across the Wide Missouri* (1947), he presents them primarily as calculating and rational businessmen, and he was less interested in the "exciting adventures which are outside our concern." In his classic *Virgin Land* (1950), Henry Nash Smith examines the cherished myths of the "Wild West," the spaces beyond the agricultural frontier, and finds that the men drawn to "an exhilarating region of adventure and comradeship" represented "anarchs" who could not find a lasting place in the domestic vision of empire expressed in the "garden of the world" metaphor. They espoused a "primitivism," according to Smith, that "could hardly strike very deep in a society committed to an expansive manifest destiny. A romantic love of the vanishing Wild West could be no more than a self-indulgent affection," perceptively locating the antithesis between adventure and domesticity and the capriciousness of the reckless generation.[4]

William H. Goetzmann and Richard Slotkin follow Smith, portraying adventurers as erratic and pernicious. Goetzmann rarely mentions them, but when he does, he uses them as foils whose contrasts demonstrate the seriousness of North American exploration. Although these government agents and military officers often appreciated the romantic qualities of vast and unfamiliar landforms, they nevertheless performed the sober business of gathering empirical geographies and extending the political and economic authority of the United States. Exploration functioned as "something more than adventure," Goetzmann observes. The private expeditions of the fur trade, a vocation rife with the lore of adventure, operated as profit-oriented enterprises, and the mountain man was an "expectant capitalist," not an adventurer who was "a mere curiosity seeker."

Through a process of demythologizing, Slotkin shows that Smith's primitivists, and by implication adventurers, were not searchers of a simple and pure form of humanity at one with nature; instead, they were destroyers and perpetrators of brutality. They wrapped themselves in an image that celebrated their violent potency and privileged their whiteness and their Americanness at the expense of interethnic understanding and social justice.[5]

By the late 1980s, historians of the New West viewed adventurism as an unfortunate myth that begged for correction. Adventurers represented an intrinsic part of western legends that reflected Anglo-American chauvinisms. As a group that succumbed to irrationality and egocentric desires, they did not easily fit within the rational world of sociological and economic imperatives that informed their scholarship. Patricia Nelson Limerick performs the crucial work of stepping away from the mythology of the frontier, including adventure, and observes that traditional histories perpetuated "stereotypes of noble savages and noble pioneers struggling quaintly in the wilderness. These adventurers seemed to have no bearing on the complex realities of twentieth-century America." She sees the West as a region defined by the subjugation of nonwhite groups and the exploitation of natural resources. In his work Richard White acknowledges the appeal of adventure in the early nineteenth-century West, but like DeVoto and Goetzmann, he persistently reminds his readers that it overshadowed the role of well-organized profit seeking in the region. Referring to the Santa Fe Trail, he notes, "It is easy to forget that this was not just an adventure, but also a serious business," and the fur trade "illustrates the peculiar blend of adventure and business . . . , but romance, death, and adventure should not obscure the extent to which the fur trade remained primarily a business." Even when Robert M. Utley evoked in the mountain man the imagery of "a life wild and perilous," he relegated it as secondary, if not insignificant, to their real work as entrepreneurs and explorers.[6]

These scholars were correct. Adventurers of the early nineteenth century were self-indulgent. They were destroyers and brutes who reveled in the violence that they enacted. They were "mere," "quaint," and unserious, but the stories they told beguiled a generation of Americans into believing in their own exceptionality and in their destiny to conquer

the continent. The study of adventurism further reveals how deliberately Americans shaped their world. Manliness and whiteness, landscape and frontier, nationhood and otherness represented malleable categories that readily yielded to their manipulations. As both products and creators of these constructs, adventurers demonstrated that individual preference, informed by caprice, sentimentality, and yearning, drove territorial expansion as meaningfully as social, economic, and political imperatives. As an important cultural moment of the early nineteenth-century United States, adventurism played a crucial role in defining alternative masculinities that countered the rational and industrious male and presaged the gendered and ethnic justifications of US manifest destiny.

Adventure nevertheless was a very old idea. When the earliest human communities gathered to tell stories about themselves, they often plotted their tales as travels fraught with perils and wonders in faraway places. As literary scholar Joseph Campbell observes, the hero's journey represented "the one, shape-shifting, yet marvelously constant story," and he designates this structure as the central "monomyth" of human storytelling. Paul Zweig similarly describes adventure as the "oldest, most persistent subject matter in the world." According to Campbell and Zweig, it marks an essential human experience. From Gilgamesh to Odysseus, from Moses to Rama, the protagonists of these stories endured journeys into exotic spaces of marvel and travail, and by means of their strength, talent, and resolve, they emerged as heroes. In these earliest epics, mortals more often embarked upon their adventures with reluctance, compelled to leave the familiar and secure to satisfy the whim of some supernatural being.[7]

In its modern sense, according to German literary scholar Michael Nerlich, the adventurer eagerly anticipated and intentionally sought the peril and hardships in other places in order to acquire the hero's mantle.[8] He suggests that this iteration originated in Europe during the twelfth century. Threatened by the emerging urban bourgeois and unable to remedy the problem of land scarcity created by the practice of primogeniture, the landless children of the minor nobility sought adventures in order to resolve their economic and prestige crises. In France they formed the *chevalerie* and provided their services in times of war such as the Crusades. Chrétien de Troyes's tales of King Arthur and the Germanic *Nibelungenlied*

celebrated the deeds of the past in order to legitimize class standing in Europe. In the fifteenth century, during the closing decades of the *reconquista* against Iberian Muslims, the *hidalgos* of Spain expressed similar ideas to defend the nobility against an inchoate merchant class.[9]

Whether or not Nerlich accurately identifies a shift to a modern type, warfare and wealth contributed significantly to this definition of adventure. The growing influence of commerce around the globe and the European incursions into the New World intensified the militaristic and economic aspects of the idea. Great Britain exemplified these newer ideas during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As literary scholar Martin Green observes, only the vast profits of overseas trade could justify its risks, and British storytellers such as Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift created fresh narratives of adventure that galvanized their nation with an "energizing myth of empire." While the merchant-adventurer might have originated in the British Isles, William C. Spengemann claims that the action of adventure and the refashioning of its ideas took place in the varied frontiers of North America. By the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Green and Spengemann argue, the literature of Great Britain began to criticize the darker elements of the risky pursuit of riches. Cast in the form of an adventure, these cautionary tales illustrated the detrimental effects to self, family, and community and promised that redemption lay in returning to the domestic realm.[10]

In this view, while the British sought refuge in the havens of domesticity, their contemporaries in North America embraced and advanced the idea of merchant and national adventurism. Anglo-Americans wove adventure into their cultural tapestries that developed in the eighteenth century, informing the American Revolution, the creation of the United States, and their movements across the continent. Theirs was a less corporate and more individualistic version. Over the next several decades, the idea evolved and expanded to become a distinctive, yet imagined, American type. The conceit of this label, however, does not confirm its exceptionality in either its firstness or its uniqueness. To reach this conclusion, Green, Spengemann, and other scholars rely on generalizations, perhaps untenable, but nevertheless informed by texts deliberately constructed to convey a sense of superiority.

By the late eighteenth century, the romantic idea reached the United States and infused adventurism with an energy that heightened its emotional appeal. As much as it defined a canon of literary and artistic masters or delineated a historical period, romanticism functioned as a philosophy, vigorously discussed by leaders and followers of popular and learned cultures. It transformed the ways in which many Americans viewed themselves and their worlds.[11] Scholars have variously defined romanticism as an effort to restore emotion and the visionary to the human condition that the rationalism of the Enlightenment had dismissed, or as a tool in the fashioning of emergent nationalisms, or as both product and counter to intensifying market capitalism, or as a symptom of democratization.[12]

As a consequence, a precise explanation of romanticism has long eluded experts. Morse Peckham, a distinguished scholar of the field, confirmed the resilience of the puzzle when he asked, "Will we ever understand the Romantics? Will we ever understand Romanticism? . . . Probably not." He dedicated his thirty-year career to trying to formulate a hypothesis, but ultimately, he had to concede. "I do not know how many times I have arrived at what I believed to be a stable theory of Romanticism," he explained. "I have always turned out to be wrong." The project of tracing predictable patterns and processes within something as formless and irrational as romanticism may well prove futile, but any study of the idea requires a baseline from which to begin. The scholar "cannot plunge into . . . romanticism . . . without possessing a working definition," according to intellectual historian Rollin G. Osterweis. He advises that the "definition he must hack out for himself."[13]

A thorough hacking through the texts and images of early nineteenth-century adventurers of the United States reveals four basic elements of romantic thought: emotion, imagination, the elsewhere, and inwardness. Although reductive in approach, this parsing of broad, interrelated ideas provides helpful markers that identify and illuminate romantics and the mental worlds they constructed. Emotion energized. It generated deeply felt sensations that fired the enthusiasms and bestowed meaning to the otherwise meaningless. Imagination created the egresses through which visionaries located emotional inspiration, permitting escape from the prosaic and crossover into elsewheres—other realms of space and time where

sensation and vision made old ideas into new.[14] Romanticism also resituated the way humans located themselves in the universe, aggrandizing the self. Nineteenth-century German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel termed this emphasis on the subjective experience as "absolute inwardness," which impelled the transformations of human cultures from traditional community orientations into modern individualist modes of perception. As Peckham grandly claims, "No profounder change had occurred in human life since the development of urbanism." Scholars have charted the many ways in which romantics shaped the cultures of the early nineteenth-century United States. Their commitment to individual fulfillment powered American consumerism and fueled the engine of market dynamism. It instilled ardency into a nationalism that blossomed in this era.[15]

As part of their outward expression of emotion, adventurers also embodied the nineteenth-century man of feeling. Sentimentality originated in British and American discourses in the eighteenth century in both its masculine and feminine forms—if such a division ever existed. Up until the late 1990s, scholars had either dismissed sentimental literature as silly outliers to the canon of great writers or defined it as exclusively the realm of women. Adventurers often considered their tenderhearted feelings feminine or boyish, but they nevertheless embraced such sentimentality as a preservation of their adolescence, an escape from the impersonal marketplace, or a liniment against their own aggressiveness. Unembarrassed, adventurers openly confirmed the ubiquity of manly sentiment. Occasionally, they felt a nurturing impulse and wept manly tears. Often, they forged warm bonds of fraternal affection, but only within certain tolerances. Anglo-American adventurers openly extended their sympathies for each other, for pristine nature, and for beautiful men and women, but they often failed to extend them to groups with ethnicities or agendas that differed from theirs.[16]

The romantic turn represented one of a number of interrelated forces that converged in the United States following the conclusion of the War of 1812. That conflict prepared the cultural, geopolitical, and economic ground for the arrival of the romantic adventurer. In his classic study, Vernon Parrington noted how the war "hastened the development of nineteenth-century ideas." Andrew Jackson's victory at New Orleans had

come after the Ghent peace accord, but it transformed disenchantment over stalemate and the burning of the capital into a nationalist celebration that elevated the volunteer frontiersman as a heroic icon. The romantically charged optimism and confidence, as well as anxiety and uncertainty, led many Americans to direct their attention to the incorporation of the continent that would further accelerate market expansion.[17] In that postwar era, greater access to the spaces of adventure and enterprise as well as the growing pressures to achieve, or to escape from, material success inspired a reckless generation of American men to imperil their bodies, destroy those of others, and seek their fortunes within the ever-shifting frontiers of North America.

In so doing, adventurers contributed to a significant shift in the way many Americans viewed expansion. Before the 1820s, many US political and cultural leaders regarded the acquisition of new territory with trepidation because it brought chaotic elements into the national domain. The postrevolutionary rush across the Appalachian Mountains, according to this rationale, consisted of a squatter class with tenuous loyalties. The purchase of Louisiana in 1803 deepened these anxieties, incorporating an ethnically mixed population. A slave revolt near New Orleans and Aaron Burr's scheme to detach the western territories seemed to confirm these fears. Thomas Jefferson's explorers, furthermore, identified a Great American Desert in the center of the continent that would delineate the geographic limits of the agrarian empire.[18]

According to diplomatic historian Frederick Merk, US policy makers of this early period devised several rhetorical strategies that countered the visionary desire to possess unwieldy territories. For one, they advocated expansion by confederation, anticipating that the hemisphere would unite with the creation of independent yet like-minded republics. Literary scholar Andy Doolen reads similar processes. With the Louisiana Purchase, US leaders saw themselves as sharing the continent with European empires, and after the success of Mexican independence in 1821, they felt a kindred connection to the anticolonial movements in Latin America. Even when considering the potentially romantic enterprise of exploration, historian Peter J. Kastor finds that Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, Zebulon M. Pike, and others warned their fellow citizens against the dangers

present in the West and cautioned them about the travails of disorderly expansion.[19]

Richard Slotkin depicts the period of the 1820s and 1830s as an abeyance in the US drive for continental dominion. Cultural leaders such as James Fenimore Cooper had to consider the apparent likelihood that their nation had reached its natural boundaries and developed new myths that regarded these nonarable frontiers as resources for industry and pathways for commerce. He shows how Washington Irving presented these ideas in his histories of John Jacob Astor and Benjamin L. E. Bonneville, whose hired trappers would become tragic figures, victims of descent into savagery and miscegenation. Stephanie LeMenager builds on Slotkin, and borrowing from Irving, she describes this period as "the lawless interval" and the Great Plains as an arid, mercantile, and transnational space that resisted US expansion. Both Slotkin and LeMenager seem to agree with Henry Nash Smith that the figure of the Jeffersonian-Jacksonian yeoman farmer held hegemonic sway, and that Americans of the period could find no compelling alternatives that could accommodate unfamiliar lands. Along with scholars such as Richard Drinnon and Peter Antelyes, they deem the work of Cooper and Irving as failures of imagination and of narrative.[20]

Perhaps so, but in the immediate decades following the War of 1812, the United States entered into a phase that emphasized incorporation over acquisition. Bolstered by confidence in their military, economic, and cultural prowess, expansionists nevertheless cultivated ambitions in the Gulf South, Texas, Oregon, California, and the interiors between them. The Adams-Onís Treaty (1820) ostensibly demarcated a clear boundary between the United States and the Spanish domain, but for many pro-expansionists, it heightened the region's exoticism and enflamed their avarice for it. The federal government continued to sponsor explorers, yet more and more, their presentations to the public joined the discourses of adventure. Common citizens became increasingly aware of opportunities in faraway places. The Panic of 1819 moved William H. Ashley to innovation. He redefined the North American fur trade with the rendezvous system that gave rise to the culture of the mountain man. Mexican independence in 1821 opened the way for overland trade with New Mexico and coincided

with the Anglo-American colonization of Texas, and in 1830 the US Congress passed the Indian Removal Act that formalized the dispossession of native lands within the bounds of the nation.[21]

As volunteers, trappers, traders, or mere curiosity seekers, adventurers stepped into these worlds and transformed them from sources of apprehension into regions of romantic optimism. Their actions were less important, perhaps, than the stories they told. If their fellow citizens had expressed their misgivings, adventurers contributed to developing an appeal for expansion. As literary historian Edward W. Said argues, "The enterprise of empire depends upon the *idea* of *having an empire*," and storytelling is crucial to this cultural project. He concedes, "The main battle in imperialism is over land . . . but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, . . . these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative."[22] Adventurers constructed the stories that prefaced the manifest destiny articulated during the 1840s. They did so by reclaiming the Great American Desert as the American elsewhere—the space that re-formed men and their nation into something exceptional. They refined the frontier hero as a vital risk taker, enterpriser, and patriot warrior. They appropriated the privileged savagery of the Native American, providing masculine alternatives that liberated the individual from the constraints and drudgery of the industrious male and the yeoman farmer.

As expert storytellers, adventurers positioned themselves as the vanguard of US territorial expansion. Their ethnic and national chauvinisms shown brashly and arrogantly, but like most Americans, they preferred not to see themselves as invaders, and they engaged in myth making, not to resolve but to obscure the contradictions of their tales. Using what Henry Nash Smith terms "imaginative weapons," they constructed narratives that masked the unjustness of conquest, engaging in a process that ethnographer Renato Rosaldo describes as "imperialist nostalgia." By this means, these agents of expansion could absolve themselves of the conquest they enacted by mourning the people and landscapes they devastated.[23]

Through letters home, travel accounts, fiction, poetry, artwork, and material culture, adventurers transmitted their ideas to their friends, fam-

ily, and neighbors, and they created the figure of the remarkable American male that generated a wide appeal, offering instruction to audiences on how to personally invest in nationhood by situating that conceit within the expansionist mission. Their narrative agility enabled them to build entitlement on the land, confirming the fictive ideology of legitimacy and inevitability. Such deceptive practices did not originate exclusively from aloof literati or policy makers pursuing some nefarious intent. It emerged from a collaboration of both producers and consumers of culture. Americans and their adventurous avatars eagerly charmed themselves into believing in their own self-canonization and the vilification of others, preparing the grist for the aggressive and bellicose rhetoric that typified the pro-expansionist arguments of the 1840s.

As much as the reckless generation exhibited optimism and confidence in their territorial ambitions, the vicissitudes of the energetic market economy awakened deep anxieties. Powered by technological and industrial innovation as well as romanticism, the expansion of the marketplace in the early nineteenth century wrought fundamental changes in the American nation. The uncertainties created by booms and busts agitated a restlessness, especially within young men. When they could not find their place within these new regimes at home, many turned to the elsewheres of the continent.[24]

Adventurers internalized this restlessness and refashioned it as a privileged state that set them apart from those who could not understand their inward struggles. They assuaged their anxieties with the balm of their imaginations. They became enterprisers, schemers, and visionaries. They converted setbacks into opportunities. As both operatives and castoffs from the market revolution, adventurers entered into what they perceived as American hinterlands and found vibrantly multicultural worlds enmeshed within global economies.[25]

In order to resituate themselves within this era of dynamic change, culture makers refashioned their constructions of gender, nationhood, class, and other categories. American masculinities, in particular, underwent significant redefinition. During the colonial period, European Americans insisted that men were born with predetermined qualities that ordered them within castelike hierarchies. They understood their manliness

through the lens of subordination to communal and familial associations that strict patriarchal customs defended.[26] By the early nineteenth century, concessions to white male suffrage and the competition and uncertainties of the marketplace had torn down the old colonial walls of deference and innate manhood. For the first time, according to gender historian E. Anthony Rotundo, the American male had to prove his manliness. These changes also provided greater opportunities—so the idea goes. White men of any social class could achieve higher station if only they embraced the new measures of manhood: ambition, competitiveness, and individualism. Peers sanctioned this masculinity by assessing sobriety, rationality, and measured violence.[27]

Swept up by the currents of romanticism, territorial expansion, and market escalation, adventurers of the early nineteenth century took the old charts and remapped the topographies of American manliness. Many hoped that their endeavors would earn the approbation of their fathers, yet in the same moment, they sought escape from this paternal domesticity. Their fathers often encouraged adherence to the ideal of the industrious male—the sober, rational man of endeavor. Although adventurers shared a belief of their ethnic superiority and nationalist exceptionalism, as well as answered calls to patriotic duty and profitable enterprise, they nevertheless indulged their imaginations and sentimentality, seeking hazards within elsewheres that offered liberation of their passions and egress into their depravities. They fashioned narratives that conveyed their claims to a privileged righteousness, creating a remarkableness that, in their own minds, justified the brutalities that they would commit against themselves, other peoples, and the natural world.

The romantic adventurer of the early nineteenth-century United States, then, was an individual who intentionally sought perilous encounters in the elsewhere in order to incite emotional stimuli. They eschewed the farm, the mechanic's workshop, the clerk's office, and the domestic realm in favor of an unfettered existence—even if only temporarily. At first, this pull began with powerful images that formed in their thoughts and dreams, and when they reached these adventurous spaces, they anticipated that their careers would transform them, a trial from which they achieved a vital manliness that eluded those who were not bold enough to

risk. Adventurers relied on their imagination to fashion the meanings and justifications of their experience, and their storyteller impulse led them to communicate their ideas and beliefs to their families and neighbors within the community of the United States. They became visionaries who energized continental expansion and contributed to the redefinition of American archetypes of manhood and nationhood.

In exploring the world of the romantic adventurer, *The American Elsewhere* attempts to understand a moment in time. It does not locate the origin of the American form of adventure. Such an exercise would likely prove fruitless and equally meaningless. Communities from different times and in different geographies expressed similar ideas. This study, however, focuses on the period within which adventurism reached its florescence in the United States—arguably from the end of the War of 1812 to the end of the US-Mexican War, marked by the emergence and popularity of the published adventurelogue. The architects did not invent something new. As historians and anthropologists have established, culture types operate within a persistent continuum of re-creation, and adventurers eagerly borrowed from older notions and shared with the new.[28]

By this means, *The American Elsewhere* offers cultural-historical perspectives to the study of US expansionism. The elsewheres of the continent represented shifting mental landscapes within which adventurers reconfigured symbologies and recast narratives that rendered remarkable their selves and their worlds. They demonstrated the ways in which the individual functioned as both product and producer of the ethos to which they claimed affinity. They further exemplified the dynamic and necessary interactions between learned and popular cultures of the era, illustrating the polyphony of voices, often discordant, that sought to make sense of the changes around them—the optimisms and anxieties as well as the friendships and animosities. Following the cue of anthropologist Clifford Geertz, this work seeks to listen to adventurers, to hear "the story they tell themselves about themselves."[29]

As master storytellers, adventurers developed narratives of exceptionalism that they presented as exemplars of Americanness. They dismantled familiar stories of backwoods vitality, warrior patriotism, and enterprising ingenuity and reconfigured them with peril-seeking, sentimental

liberation, and romantic savagery to create what they perceived as a new archetype. Although that seemingly fresh model fell along the old axes of whiteness and manliness, adventurers drew imprecise demarcations between such categories. They often excluded Mexicans and African Americans but occasionally allowed space for the métis, and although they consigned native men as others, they usurped elements of their masculinities.

To understand the nebulous and often contradictory worlds of the romantic adventurer during the era of US expansion, *The American Elsewhere* begins with broad discussions about definitions, parameters, and archetypes. This approach sketches a thematic baseline from which subsequent explorations will tighten the focus. An analysis of reading, storytelling, and print culture will show the mechanisms that disseminated the ideas of adventure and expansion that significantly contributed to the ever-shifting aesthetics of American manliness. The subject narrows with targeted studies of adventurous sentimentality, eroticism, and the social apparatus of the expedition. The book concludes with an examination of specific manifestations of the adventurer—the explorer, the patriot warrior, and the man of enterprise.

The stories that adventurers told illustrated an effective method of culture re-creation. With vibrant imaginations, they reordered their experiences to fit any imperative that they chose to influence. With metaphorical power and aesthetic utility, they mitigated the unjustness and violence of territorial acquisition, and they contributed to the rationales that made it palatable, if not destined, transforming alien worlds into American spaces. At the center of these tales, the peril seeker not only functioned as protagonist but also as recalibrated archetypes that resonated with a reckless generation, many of whom accepted these narrative leaps as justification for conquest as well as adopted the adventurer as a paragon of exceptional American manliness.