In *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire*, Amy Greenberg aptly uses gender to explore and explain Manifest Destiny from 1840 through the rest of the nineteenth-century. By comparing two conflicting definitions of manhood prevalent after the U.S.-Mexico War, she argues that extended expansionism in Latin America—and to an extent Asia and the Pacific—was fueled by gender. Creative and well-sourced, Greenberg’s work is an excellent example of what historians can offer through Joan Scott’s proposed method of gender analysis.

To construct her argument, Greenberg lays out two competing definitions of manhood in the nineteenth-century. The first, restrained manhood, focused on a man’s familial and financial standing. To proponents of restrained manhood, social status, wealth, and business success were indicators of manliness. The opposing definition, martial manhood, was grounded in a man’s ability to dominate others physically, often through violence or conflict. Martial men gauged their manliness through aggression, strength and bravery. Greenberg argues the martial men initiated ongoing imperialism through support of filibustering, militant annexation of lands like Cuba, and “personal annexation” of Latinas and other native women. In an era when industrialization transformed the definition of manly success, martial men had to move beyond the United States to fulfill their manhood.

In addition to restrained and martial manhood, Greenberg provides an engaging look at how American women, religion, the Civil War, and sexuality influenced and were affected by expansionism. One of the more interesting aspects of Greenberg’s argument is her exploration of how American men viewed Latinas and Latinos in the lands they sought to obtain. Interpreting travel literature, personal diaries and booster accounts, she shows how Latino men were depicted as lazy, immoral and feminine, while their female counterparts were advertised as healthy, curious and sexually available. Greenberg also showcases how Latinas were presented as suitable wives and mothers through a model of Anglo-Saxon domination. While marriage rates were falling in the states, martial men could find success and love (even if it was only carnal) in Central or Southern America.Since the weak Latino men could be easily conquered, Latinas were just another possible annexation.

Also interesting is Greenberg’s detailed look at the role of white American women in expansion. She argues that male expansionists sought to keep white women out of their Manifest exploits to avoid undermining the “manliness” of their adventures. Travel to wild lands also gave white women an opportunity for further liberation through cross-dressing, riding side saddle, and expanded labor prospects—all which made men uncomfortable. While Greenberg argues the experience could have somewhat liberated women, she concludes that most white women did not approach extended expansionism as a way to revolutionize womanhood.

Overall, Greenberg produces an extremely informative and enjoyable work. Her research is nicely done, and I thoroughly commend her interpretation of language and illustrations in travel logs and booster accounts. Use of personal diaries and letters counters any bias that could be encountered by using the travel logs and booster accounts alone. While such an expansive study requires limitation, readers may wish that Greenberg had put more emphasis on American expansion in Asia and the Pacific. While she points out that Latin America was more important and accessible to filibusters and expansionists, the analysis of Hawai’i’s annexation and
Commodore Perry’s failed experience in Japan pales next to her elaborately sourced and extensive discussion of Latin America. Greenberg does not necessarily need to further analyze the Pacific and Latin America for her argument, but their presence would better satisfy a reader interested in gender’s role in nineteenth-century expansionism. At the end of her conclusion, Greenberg brings manifest manhood to the present, arguing that “martial manhood refuses to die” (282) despite the advancements America has made in understanding gender. While offering an intriguing look at gender’s role in nineteenth-century American expansionism and Manifest Destiny, Greenberg also contributes to the broader understanding of gender and manhood today.