



Manifesting America: The Imperial Construction of U.S. National Space

Mark Rifkin

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The expansion of the U.S. in the antebellum period relied on the claim that the nation's boundaries were both self-evident and dependent on the consent of those enclosed within them. While the removal of American Indians and racism toward former Mexicans has been well-documented, little attention has been paid to the legal rhetorics through which the incorporation of these peoples and their territories was justified, portraying them as actively agreeing to come under the authority of the U.S. Yet even as the creation and extension of U.S. jurisdiction functioned as an imperial system, it did not go unchallenged by dominated populations. In *Manifesting America*, Mark Rifkin explores how writings by Native Americans and former Mexicans protested the legal narratives that would normalize their absorption into U.S. national space.

Focusing on Indian removal in the southeast and western Great Lakes regions as well as the annexation of Texas and California, the monograph tracks the confrontation between U.S. law and the self-representations of once-alien peoples newly subjected to it. Institutions in the U.S. legitimized conquest by creating forms of official recognition for dominated groups that reinforced the logic and justice of U.S. mappings. But the imposed mappings continued to be haunted by the persistence of earlier political geographies. Examining a variety of nonfictional writings (including memorials, autobiographies, and histories) produced by imperially displaced populations, Rifkin illustrates how these texts contest the terms and dynamics of U.S. policy by highlighting specific forms of collectivity and placemaking disavowed in official accounts. Persuasively argued and anchored with judicious research, *Manifesting America* provides an overdue chapter in the history of resistance to U.S. imperialism.

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