



## **Domesticity and Expansionism**

The San Felipe de Austin *Telegraph and Texas Register*, like many newspapers of its day, saved important news for the second or third pages. The front page contained advertisements, jokes, recipes for the ladies, and the occasional blurb of inspirational poetry. The January 27, 1837, edition was no different. On its face the *Telegraph* proudly displayed a poem entitled “The Mother of the West.” A paean to western femininity, the work lauded the efforts of those brave women who moved into the wilderness to raise strong, dutiful families. Their sacrifices were enough to bring a tear to the roughest settler’s eye as he considered his own good mother and all she had done for him. Although these women lived and died in relative anonymity, the poem concluded,

*their graves shall yet be found,  
And their monuments dot here and there  
“The Dark and Bloody Ground.”*

Whether this statement would prove true or not remained to be seen. Nevertheless, while these ardent pioneers might have no monument of stone to their name, they could be certain that the thankless labors they

endured would bear living fruit in the lives of their grateful progeny.

Usually newspapers ran poetry and anecdotes with little comment. In the case of “The Mother of the West,” in contrast, the editors thought it necessary to wax poetic on the subject. (Apparently they also had mothers of whom they were fond.) They added their praise of “a spirit so resolute, yet so adventurous—so unambitious, yet so exalted—a spirit so highly calculated to awake a love of the pure and noble, yet so uncommon.” Never before, they wrote, had any woman had such a glorious effect on her environment. For the men at the *Telegraph*, women could achieve no greater end in life than that of mother, and that noble role only grew in honor in a rude country such as Texas. The *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* agreed. In an article discussing a new volume of poetry, the editors added to the discussion of the importance of such women. “The Mothers of the West,” they said, “performed so important a part in the history of emigration, that they are entitled to a more especial commemoration, than as simply incidental to the accounts given of their hardy husbands and sons.”<sup>1</sup>

The poem proved particularly appropriate for the *Telegraph’s* readers given its date of publication. Texas had won its independence from Mexico less than a year before. For almost twenty years, Texians worked to establish a home on that nation’s northern frontier, founding it on their own sweat and blood. Those who lived there were not just settlers. They were warriors for the cause, men and women alike. Everyone’s contribution, regardless of its size or nature, would prove invaluable. Although women did not fight in battle, they waged war elsewhere, protecting the symbols of civilization: home and family. Such battles may not have merited statues and celebrations, but they were no less important than those more obvious, according to the editors of the *Telegraph* and the *Democratic Review*.

But how much of this poetry was rhetoric and how much was based in reality? As is usually the case, both myth and truth played a role. The early nineteenth century birthed a flurry of sentimental poetry, essays, and other literature placing women on a prominent but narrow pedestal. Within certain prescribed boundaries, women did, in fact, rule the world—or at least the hearts of those surrounding them. Woman was, as one person wrote, “the comforter of man, and main supporter of his life.” Such thoughts saturated the collective American subconscious.<sup>2</sup>

This idealistic view of women did not always consider the hard truth

of life in this era, frontier life in particular. However, the poem noted it, acknowledging the challenge of the taxing move west that so many Americans were taking. The “Dark and Bloody Ground” bore the remains of those who broke themselves upon the wheel of progress. Yet evidence remains that, despite the challenge of living in Texas, women did apply the ideal, at least insofar as they could. Women applied the image to their own lives, transforming both themselves and their society according to its precepts.

Given the predicament emigrant women frequently found themselves in, such adaptability worked to their benefit. The United States felt a call to pursue the horizon, capturing it for personal gain and then, eventually, for the nation as a whole. After all, it appeared to be a land unoccupied by any recognizable or capable government. It only made sense that God (or Providence) had predestined it for Anglo American use. Orators, observing this westward trend, declared this national goal one of destiny made manifest—more familiarly, manifest destiny.

Texas provides an excellent study for manifest destiny. Mexico had recently opened its northern province to settlement by Stephen F. Austin and other entrepreneurs to supplement the thin Tejano population already there. As more people arrived, news spread regarding the wonders of this new territory, encouraging even more willing pioneers. At the least, the region sparked a push for territorial aggrandizement that ended in the absorption of much of northern Mexico into the United States. But Texas also typifies the expansionist experience in other ways. From its beginnings as a target for enthusiastic emigrants, the American desire to obtain Texas grew alongside the push for continental conquest. The republic, when it became a state, reached the pinnacle of expansionist fervor as it contributed to the war between the United States and Mexico. Finally, as expansionism became less a national and more a sectional, Southern issue, Texas revealed its Southern heart and continued to endorse expansion until the Civil War and its aftermath brought all such dreams to an end.<sup>3</sup>

Although Texas history paralleled that of the United States, it also served as a microcosm of the nation’s populace. Emigrants arrived from all regions of the country, carrying with them regional mindsets that would play out in miniature what Americans did at large across the continent. Add to that the arrival of trans-Atlantic immigrants, let alone the presence of Native Americans and Hispanics who had lived there for

generations, and the discourse grew increasingly convoluted. What place did expansion have in America's future? Texans discussed the question as eagerly as did anyone else; however, because Texas was in a sense the heir of past expansionist endeavors, the argument tended to be skewed. Nevertheless, Texas opinion was by no means unified. When sectionalism crept into the discussion, slavery tucked firmly under its wing, Texans debated the political and social ramifications of both. Then as emigrants arrived each year from other places, they refreshed the conversation with new ideas and new energy.<sup>4</sup>

The fever for manifest destiny spread quickly across the country and eventually across the continent. Countless Americans looked to Texas for new opportunities and land and gathered up family to travel there. Typically men made this decision as the heads of households, but their choices affected all those around them. As a result, wives, mothers, and daughters also journeyed past the United States into barely charted territory, often leaving behind friends, family, and everything with which they were familiar.<sup>5</sup>

Or did they? While women could not transplant houses, gardens, relatives, or sometimes even their own belongings, that did not mean they traveled without cultural baggage. In particular, they carried the framework that historian Barbara Welter calls the "cult of true womanhood," or the "cult of domesticity." This concept emerged from the United States' rapidly changing social structure in the early nineteenth century. Prior to this period, gender roles were as they had largely been for centuries, part of a preindustrial, agricultural culture. However, a shift in work patterns occurred with the rise of the new republic. By the 1830s, the United States already had a basic social hierarchy within which citizens worked, played, and lived, and this framework remained largely uncontested or unmolested. Each person had a particular niche in which he or she moved. It was in this period that the middle class began to emerge as a powerful influence in the young nation. This influence covered not only economic issues, but also matters of gender; the middle class was the chief architect of true womanhood.<sup>6</sup>

According to this concept, men and women operated in separate "spheres" of movement. As American society shifted from a preindustrial to a commercial structure, business and home became separate both physically and figuratively. Men worked in business, politics, and other public arenas. Meanwhile, women remained at home to exercise influ-

ence more subtly. Each gender had its role to make life function smoothly. Men cared for public matters; women, private ones. Because home life was now exclusively feminine territory, proponents of separate spheres emphasized the inestimable value of a woman's touch upon her family. To tend to the needs of her children and spouse was a woman's responsibility above all else. "The Mother of the West" captures the trope of true womanhood clearly. In fact, in a sense the poem plays to it. No higher place was available to westering women than the throne of domestic life, raising moral children in a rugged new world.<sup>7</sup>

Welter considers true womanhood to be an inferior position for women, cutting them off from the political and economic machinations of their husbands and brothers and forcing them to care for home and family. However, other scholars disagree with such a limiting perspective. Even some women of the period argued that domesticity offered women a position beyond what they might otherwise have. Catharine Beecher, for instance, argued that the home could be in a sense the base of operations from which women could extend their influence in their community, their nation, and ultimately the world. For Beecher, domesticity was more than staying home with the children. It was a position of power.<sup>8</sup>

As this position indicates, the argument of "true womanhood" as Welter defines it frequently overlooks less tangible tasks which early-nineteenth-century women were capable of doing, even within their "separate spheres." Many Americans who lauded domesticity as the greatest of all virtues ignored the public role it allowed female citizens to play. Separate spheres of influence for men and women did exist, but they did not hold anyone back with iron fetters. The boundaries set for each gender proved more fluid than some have assumed. Women were able to function publicly, although in a limited fashion in accordance with the dictates of true womanhood. The emergence of women's benevolent societies, which will be discussed in more detail later, is a case in point. Because voluntary associations remained low-profile, largely apart from center stage, they could engage society in ways that might otherwise be prohibited. In this way, they provided an added dimension to public behavior; men dealt with issues through politics while women worked through benevolent societies and other organizations—or, more simply, at home—to combat the same issues from a different vantage point. This demonstrates merely a gendered participation in events, not a total segregation of activity.<sup>9</sup>

Women's activism was in a sense the second side to the coin of domesticity. This aspect stemmed from the concept of republican motherhood. In the fledgling United States, women had the duty of preparing the next generation to be good citizens. From their homes, they could teach their children republican virtues and prepare them for roles as nation builders. Because of this, many women took their responsibility a step beyond into society at large. The home was no longer the only arena in which they moved; the community needed the feminine touch as much, if not more so, than just one household. If labor at home was important, many reasoned, how much greater was work done beyond it? In voluntary associations, then, women found a way to utilize their domestic roles for a greater number and make their contributions more meaningful.<sup>10</sup>

Domesticity became even more important in a region such as Texas. As families joined Austin's Colony and other settlements in their first hesitant steps, they faced difficult circumstances. Technically the area was still part of Mexico. This meant that not only was it an underpopulated wilderness (assuming that the colonists recognized that local tribes or Hispanic residents populated the area, which at the time proved rarely the case), but one under the control of a people whose level of civilization they considered questionable. The colonists needed everything possible to make themselves more comfortable and give the land the feeling of home. It is at this point that women's role—whether as bastions of virtue at home or an influential force elsewhere—became crucial and where the call to bring civilization to the wilderness grew louder.<sup>11</sup>

Although their roles were distinct, women still had vital responsibilities impacting more than their own households. The poem in the *Telegraph* sets women if not on a higher plane—and many contemporaries would have argued this—at least on an equal footing with men. Both genders had a duty to help construct civilization in the wilderness, each with a distinct set of responsibilities. Although men moving in political circles or writing for periodicals functioned as the chief promoters of American expansion, women also heard the call to move across a God-given continent and use their unique station to ready it for further settlement.<sup>12</sup>

And women answered that call. They were no less players in the drama of manifest destiny than were men. Certainly women approached expansionism differently than did men, despite some similarities due to its political and ideological framework. Manifest destiny affected western women in one of two ways: as its beneficiaries or its victims. Whites found

themselves in the former camp; Indians, Hispanics, and blacks, almost always in the latter. White women's roles in supporting and endorsing manifest destiny range from active participation in pro-expansionist activities to holding views indicative of an expansionist mindset, with the largest number somewhere in between. Since the arrival of filibusters in Texas in 1820, women helped to further American interests. Their own desires were often admittedly personal—the protection of themselves and their families—but their vision was broad enough that self-interest encompassed the interests of the colony, the republic, and eventually the state and nation. Although war remained the traditional business of men, women nevertheless volunteered their assistance within accepted boundaries. If a situation became more severe, women in turn offered more help. Such help came in several forms: money, clothes, ammunition, information, and in some circumstances even themselves. In fact, during the various filibustering endeavors of the 1850s, some women worked to promote aggressively expansionist endeavors. One woman even attempted political machinations at home and abroad to this end, although her actions tested the limits of domesticity beyond reasonable boundaries for many.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, such a stretch makes sense, given the flexibility of true womanhood in other areas. What proved equally important was the emergence of the expansionist movement in the same period. An entire continent lay to the west of the United States practically begging for absorption. A highly developed ideology emerged to support the claims of expansionists. This ideology provided the structure necessary to bolster and justify the movement's political ramifications. At its heart, expansionist philosophy closely paralleled domesticity so that adherents to the latter tended to accept the former. The true woman, then, would tend to agree with the rationale behind territorial aggrandizement and, within her separate sphere, work toward it.

Of course, not all Americans who embraced expansionism did so out of ideological impulse. Many simply saw available land and moved west to claim it. In doing so they maintained a pattern that had existed since the first Europeans set foot on the continent. Nevertheless, by the 1820s and 1830s such ideas had become part of the nation's structure, and pioneer farmers often agreed tacitly with them, regardless of whether or not they articulated them. This is not to say that some did not try. One traveler in Texas endlessly praised the land's fecundity, inviting his readers to enjoy the available territory. *DeBow's Review*, a Southern journal devoted to commerce,

agriculture, and the mechanical arts, lauded Texas as “the true springs of national greatness and individual prosperity.” Such a place promised wealth and a fresh start for those wishing to do well for themselves.<sup>14</sup>

However, Americans tended to take land hunger and redefine it with loftier descriptions. *DeBow's* had already done so by alluding to possible “national greatness.” The greatest example emerged as the desire to recreate Eden, the “Garden of the World,” on American soil. As God had given man the opportunity to bring the earth under submission, so farmers had a calling to complete this work with the plow. Cultivation was an integral part of civilization. Only savages allowed the earth to lie fallow as they grubbed about for roots or berries; modern people used their intelligence to delve into agriculture and do more with the land for the sake of the nation. After all, was this not Jefferson's agrarian republic, destined for population by the hero of the land, the yeoman farmer? As such, it became the near-patriotic duty of Americans to plant crops or domesticate animals. Communities developed, broke the soil and transformed their surroundings into something beautiful: mile after mile of fields.<sup>15</sup>

Such attitudes adapted easily to Texas due to its natural “beauty and loveliness.” Some observers hoped it would take less work to reshape the landscape as a result. In their *New Guide to Texas*, published in 1845, Richard S. Hunt and Jesse Randel exalted in the “sunny plains of the southwestern garden,” where they hoped other Americans would make their home. Of course, the land still required work. Texas may have been the land of milk and honey, said *DeBow's*, but “*first milk the cows and gather the honey.*” “The earth belongs to the race that will till it,” the journal added sagely. Without the shaping of human hands, what could be a garden would merely be a beautiful wilderness, and such a waste of potential was a violation of the basic tenets of the nation.<sup>16</sup>

As an active part of the agricultural household economy, women moving to Texas could easily endorse the appropriation of available farmland. This mentality was less a facet of domesticity than of mere survival. Emigrants came to Texas for the land above all. However, once they arrived, women found the need for established communities—for civilization—just as great as that for fertile soil. Here the civilizing aspects of domesticity came to bear. Similarly, as part of the household economy, women remained tied to the home and all it had come to symbolize. Their husbands would tame the land with the plow; they would tame it with the spinning wheel.<sup>17</sup>

Americans' ties to the earth ran deep for men and women alike. Land was not just land; it was a physical manifestation of pride in country. The freedom to till the soil paralleled other freedoms nineteenth-century Americans held dear. As far as the *Democratic Review* was concerned, the United States bestowed three blessings on its citizens: liberty, equality, and free land. The three worked together to create a perfect union. No other country had accomplished what the United States had: the creation of a new nation based on a radical concept of government. More shocking, the experiment had so far worked. The republic held together and persevered without reliance upon soldiers on every street corner or a political system gone corrupt. Citizens were free to live as they pleased without fear of reprisal or harassment by government officials.<sup>18</sup>

Such freedom had two effects on westward movement. First, Americans could move west to pursue their futures in a new location with little, if any, official supervision. (Although soldiers were present, they were stationed in the West for the protection, rather than hindrance, of potential settlers.) Second, the ability to spread out created a bond between emigrants and their seventeenth-century forebears. Upon arrival in the New World, Puritan John Winthrop compared his people's mission to being a "city upon a hill," emitting a shining example to all those who followed. Their journey carried a greater purpose than simple survival. The Puritans intended to reshape the world by their lifestyle, and their example carried down through the centuries.<sup>19</sup>

Expansionists intended to do the same, one way or another. Americans not only wanted to use freedom for themselves but also to transmit it to others. The republic's freedoms and the culture it had developed as a result served as examples for the entire world. As the *American Quarterly Review* put it, the United States was "the beacon, the example, the patriarch of the struggling nations of the world." For the editors of the *American Quarterly*, their nation would only be the first in a long series of republics worldwide; as other countries saw the glories of democracy that the United States offered, they would follow suit.<sup>20</sup>

Nineteenth-century women inherited the responsibility to instill in their children the knowledge and proper understanding of that freedom. The republican mother of the late eighteenth century provided their example. Mothers were in a prime position to elevate national consciousness and perpetuate patriotic feeling. *Blackwood's Magazine* recognized the hidden yet necessary duties women had to perform. A woman's dig-

nified task was “[n]ot to make laws, not to lead armies, not to govern empires, but to form those by whom the laws are made, and armies led, and empires governed.” If not for the “frail and yet spotless creature whose moral, no less than physical being, must be derived from her,” women would for many have little higher purpose. As with “The Mother of the West,” the women glorified in *Blackwood’s* could measure their worth through the good deeds and virtue of their offspring. The fate of the future American empire lay in their gentle hands.<sup>21</sup>

Such responsibility followed women even to the rough terrain of Texas. Their work took on an added urgency there. Good citizens would help to erect virtuous institutions in their new communities. Following the pattern of American virtue would make all this possible. If, however, women failed in their role as moral instructors, the foundation of all their sons’ efforts would be nothing more than sand, and, when the storms of adversity assailed it, its destruction would be great. Clearly such work was not for the weak or half-hearted, and its repercussions extended beyond the borders of the United States or Texas to where the rest of the world stood by, watching and waiting to observe its ultimate success or failure.

Many Americans believed it better to take such benefits abroad themselves. Destiny called for absorption into the one great republic of the world, and nothing else would do. “New territories *will* be planted, declare their independence, and be annexed!” exulted *DeBow’s*. “We have New Mexico and California! We *will* have Old Mexico and Cuba! The isthmus cannot arrest—nor even the Saint Lawrence!! Time has all of this in her womb. *A hundred States* will grow up where now exists but thirty.” For this journal, manifest destiny called not only across what would become the contiguous forty-eight states, but Mexico, the Caribbean, and even Canada, all to the glory of liberty. Some took this concept even further, as did expansionist Anna Ella Carroll. “We, then, my countrymen,” insisted Carroll, “have a mission to perform, out of our country; we have to throw our weight, in behalf of equality and justice, over the countries of the world, and to guard with a vigilant eye the principles of Protestantism and Americanism, that our own strength shall increase, our own resources expand, and an additional impetus be given to our moral, commercial, and political greatness.” This statement revealed expansionist philosophy in its truest form. For those such as Carroll, it was not enough to spread the light of freedom abroad. The cause of the United States was also the cause of righteousness.<sup>22</sup>

As such statements indicate, expansion did not have the endorsement of the Founding Fathers alone. It also contained the divine sanction of Providence, as the *Democratic Review's* "Annexation" claimed boldly in 1845. The first stirrings of manifest destiny came in an era when Protestantism had experienced a resurgence, thanks to the second Great Awakening. As more Americans converted to evangelicalism, they began to apply it to their own situations. Christianity became the foundation upon which the United States was built; like the Puritans, evangelicals saw their land as the new Israel. As dedicated children of God, their duty was to spread the gospel beyond its current boundaries, except by this point politics and religion intertwined so tightly in the thoughts of many that the resultant mass became a civil gospel. As one man wrote:

*Let thy noble motto be  
GOD,—the COUNTRY,—LIBERTY,—  
Planted on religion's rock,  
Thou shalt stand in every shock.*

To embrace Christ meant more than the rejection of sin; it meant accepting the God-approved, Western, civilized lifestyle. Ultimately, all this would result in the increased "moral greatness" of the United States.<sup>23</sup>

As a result, Americans went after new territories not only with patriotic fervor, but with missionary zeal. In fact, they supported the work of such itinerant preachers as if it went hand in hand with the civilization process; the two melded in a burst of Christian republican enthusiasm. For fur traders such as Gabriel Franchère, missionaries instilled their charges in the Pacific Northwest with not only "the faith of Christianity," but also with "a living germ of civilization" that would bring the natives into the American fold. Oregon settler Alexander Ross agreed that evangelism was important but stressed that Indians primarily needed "time to dispel that thick and heavy cloud of ignorance and barbarism" that kept them from understanding true religion. Missionaries had the resources to accomplish that feat easily, Ross believed. *DeBow's* agreed, noting that "Christianity will not spread where ignorance and superstition prevail." Because the journal believed that all commerce had been designed to civilize and Christianize, not to indulge selfish desires, religion and civilization were inseparable. By spreading out into new territory and rescuing pagan barbarians, Americans could serve both God and man while benefiting themselves.<sup>24</sup>

Missionary fervor translated easily to domesticity. Not only did women have the high patriotic calling of republican motherhood, they were also called to a life of piety. Americans perceived women as being more attuned to spiritual matters. This bond to holiness gave them the right to teach and encourage others to live godly, decent lives. Part of the reason women appeared morally superior was because of the sanctifying atmosphere of the home. The marketplace tainted the souls of men who gave themselves to its service, thinking solely of earthly matters; women had no such difficulties. Instead, they had the time to organize such events as a ladies' fair in Houston where proceeds would go to charity. Which charity would receive the profits made little difference to the journalist reporting the sale, whether feeding poverty-stricken orphans or rescuing savages halfway around the globe. In this way, women could help bring civilization not only to their own community, but to the world at large, aiding in the extension of republicanism to pagan lands.<sup>25</sup>

One reason Americans equated paganism with savagery was due to their firm belief in a global racial hierarchy. Ever since the English had developed a sense of superiority over the Spanish during the Reformation, colonists and, later, Americans championed the Anglo-Saxon as supreme. Two centuries of bloody encounters with the natives had cemented this idea in place, as had interaction between slaveholders and their African captives. Both to maintain nationalistic pride and to justify further subjugation of Indian and black alike, racialism became a necessity. Such chauvinism multiplied when combined with the belief that the United States had created a government far greater than any other in the world; this compounded the call of manifest destiny over citizens. Not only did the nation have a responsibility to share its republican ways with its neighbors, but, because Americans were superior, they had every right to do so.<sup>26</sup>

This view carpeted the United States in the nineteenth century. "Great is the destiny which leads on the vanguard of the master race of the human family," Thomas Hart Benton declared in a speech extolling the "American Empire." "Barbarians conquer to destroy; civilized men to improve and exalt," the Missouri senator continued; "the Anglo-Saxon will carry his civilization wherever he goes." Benton's speech emphasized two points. First, men could identify civilization by its improvement of its surroundings. The civilized man would make a garden of any new environment, ultimately making everything more beautiful rather than destroying all with his presence. The senator's second point was more

subtle. Not only did he declare Anglo-Saxons—meaning here Americans, not Englishmen—the eternal bearers of civilization, but he encouraged expansion of that civilization into areas bereft of such benefits. Similarly, the *Texas State Gazette* declared Anglo-Saxons “ahead of every civilized race of the world,” masters of superior law, religion, and government. The editors implied the need for Americans to take advantage of this position. In time, they would establish “an empire which is felt, respected and feared, in every quarter of the globe,” while inferior specimens would disappear. The *American Whig Review* believed this would not take long, as Anglo-Saxons possessed an “energy and vigor” in territorial conquest that other races apparently lacked.<sup>27</sup>

True womanhood also carried with it some racial overtones. It was, after all, the product of the white American middle class. Therefore the cult of domesticity naturally carried the implication that those who did not—or could not—heed its principles were inferior or immoral. Poorer women, particularly women of color, who had to work outside the home found themselves in the dubious position of appearing to be less than civilized and, in a sense, not true women. Another way to interpret the situation is to say that, as white Americans, many women who followed their husbands west held as many racist ideas as their men. Perhaps race trumps gender in this case. But regardless of the reasons, emigrant women’s writings often bear a tinge of racism, including an implication of a strict ethnic hierarchy.<sup>28</sup>

So manifest destiny played out not only political visions of a unified continent, but also dreams of a cultivated wilderness, tamed by good government and a good God, controlled by those at the apogee of humanity. The various aspects worked together to present a powerful and persuasive argument for expansion. Even better for expansionists, these criteria did not necessarily require a political voice in order to work. All they needed was someone who believed them and was willing to follow through by moving west, wordlessly carrying the banner of manifest destiny alongside their wagons. By their presence, emigrants demonstrated their faith in the American claim to the continent, and by their actions once they settled, they put manifest destiny to work and made it work.

American women implemented expansionism this way as did others. In some ways, they surpassed masculine endeavors in this regard. Although they had no public platform from which to declare their enthusiasm, they did so from their homes or elsewhere. They helped to cultivate a verdant

wilderness and bring it under the plow as they worked beside their families in the fields (unlike other professions, agriculture remained available to both genders, as it always had). As good, dedicated Christians and mothers, they passed on moral and patriotic values to their children and fulfilled them as best as they could in their own lives. They held to race as a rationalization for their endeavors, as extant writings will indicate in later chapters. Western women might never have used the phrase itself, but manifest destiny in all its forms nevertheless played an active role in their lives.<sup>29</sup>

The women whose stories form the basis of this study contributed in their own way to the flow of ideas. Early colonists had little except their accrued experience to sustain them and answer the questions placed before them. Those who endured the Texas Revolution emerged from the crucible refined, with the first distinctly Texan perspective in such matters. But women never stopped arriving with more fuel for the flames as their families tried to find a place to settle down: some place with a little more room, where national destiny and personal dreams merged into a glorious whole. Northerner, Southerner, or European, these women had something substantive to say about the issues at stake.

It is to everyone's benefit that the work of these women remains available. By examining these sources, scholars can see a new depth to manifest destiny. True, such information remains in the background for the most part, never as prevalent as the *Democratic Review* or other journals or the orations of a Lewis Cass or Thomas Hart Benton. This does not detract from their value. While some may focus solely on the melody the loudest expansionists played, a more subtle harmony arises from those who did not always have the opportunity to take the lead. Harmony exists not to make itself known, but to color the work behind the scenes. As a result, it brings out the best in the melody by playing in concert with it. The resultant work becomes both more complicated and more beautiful. Such is the case with these women's writings.

That such sources exist is a credit to the women who provided them. Their presence indicates that these women desired to be heard and ultimately understood. Diaries were often passed down to one's descendants to share firsthand knowledge of a rough new world and the writer's place in it. In the same way, modern readers have an opportunity to indulge not only their own natural curiosity but also the wishes of the writers. The women—and their stories—speak for themselves.