Hirschfeld's sensitive portrait of the "Father of the Country" agonizing over his responsibilities to "his children"—the republic—while also looking to his own self interest gives Washington his due. It also shows that on the slavery issue, Washington retreated from leadership in favor of a policy of benign neutrality. Although he sometimes extrapolates too much from the impressions of Washington's contemporaries, lets "presentsim" color his inquiry, and misreads evidence (as, for example, when he describes a 1786 letter to Robert Morris as representing Washington's views as president), Hirschfeld offers the most substantial and sensible argument yet about Washington's entanglement with slavery. He also helps us understand that however much Washington and his generation deflected the slavery issue they could not escape it because they knew they had to face it. The burden of history demanded no less.

RANDALL M. MILLER
Saint Joseph's University


Scholars of early nineteenth-century American territorial growth have generally focused their attention westward, viewing the Mississippi River valley as a powerful magnet that drew thousands of settlers across the Appalachians. But as Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr., and Gene A. Smith remind us, the Gulf Coast region was no less coveted by the proponents of American expansionism. More than two decades before the term "manifest destiny" entered the expansionist lexicon, U.S. political leaders as well as private citizens dreamed of an American empire that would include a southern belt of land stretching from Florida to Texas. In _Filibusters and Expansionists_, Owsley and Smith provide a valuable synthesis of these official and unofficial efforts to establish American hegemony over the Gulf Coast South during the Jeffersonian period.

Jefferson, Madison and Monroe, the authors argue, "were fervent expansionists, willing to go to almost any lengths to secure additional territory in the South and Southwest" (p. 2). While the Virginia dynasty sought to achieve these ends without armed conflict, it was not above using force, or the threat of it, to pressure weaker neighbors into relinquishing their lands. In the Southeast, military intervention by the United States brought about the collapse of Spanish authority in Florida and the defeat of the Creek Indians in Alabama and Georgia, thus paving the way for Anglo-American settlement. In the case of Texas, Washington chose a more cautious, covert role, preferring to aid independent filibuster expeditions seeking to wrest the region from the weakening grasp of
Spain. In short, American leaders selected from a wide range of policy options to pursue their territorial agenda. It was an agenda, the authors point out, that was consistent with an agrarian outlook that many but by no means all Americans shared. The Northeast, faced with declining political influence as more trans-Appalachian states entered the Union, tried unsuccessfully to block the Jeffersonians’ expansionist objectives. Indeed, New England’s growing abhorrence of slavery, the authors suggest, may well have been "a very convenient excuse" that masked political motives for its "general opposition to any territorial expansion" (p. 180).

The authors weave a coherent and engaging narrative from these events, no easy task given the murky, byzantine world of plots and intrigue that characterized American expansion during this period. Inevitably, a lack of extant documentation and a penchant for secrecy among such shadowy figures as James Wilkinson and Augustus Magee leave many questions unanswered. Although Owsley and Smith can only speculate as to the motivations and objectives of many of the participants in the expansionist drama, their conclusions appear reasonable and sound. Some historians of American expansion may find less convincing their contention that this early phase of territorial growth differed little from the era of Manifest Destiny that followed. The fitful, often desultory attempts to gain land during the Jeffersonian period seems far removed both in scope and method from the urgent, bellicose, and racially charged atmosphere in which the nation pursued its quest for Lebensraum in the 1840s.

Perhaps the book’s most important contribution is its coupling of the extralegal activities of American filibusters with the official foreign policy objectives of U.S. leaders. Generally studied as wholly separate phenomena, these land grabs are viewed by the authors as twin elements of the same expansionist impulse. Such a framework raises interesting questions about the nature of American territorial growth that extend well beyond the Jeffersonian advance into the Gulf Coast South. Scholars interested in all phases of American expansion will profit from this readable and informative book.

Samantha W. Haynes
University of Texas
at Arlington


Jennifer Fleischner is a scholar of English literature, not history. Nevertheless, her efforts to explore what she calls the silences of black women’s accounts of slavery give historians fruitful points to ponder. Fleischner uses the tools of psychoanalysis (reinforced by a solid ground-