

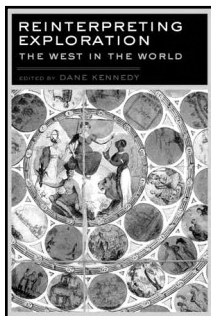
White Sands was not the “black space” that we imagine it was. Its boundaries were porous, certainly for the wildlife and occasional guided safaris, but also for some of the scientific studies. For example, White Sands rockets captured the first images of the planet’s curvature, and these images were made available to public audiences on the pages of *National Geographic* in 1950. The porosity of boundaries was sometimes unintentional, as when the occasional errant missile brought White Sands military experiments into public conversation in the United States and neighboring Mexico. Given Edgington’s desire to explore public engagement with White Sands, I did wonder—where are the aliens? Surely a book discussing the competing identities of a particular place, as missile range, as habitat, or as ranchland, might have explored

the connection between White Sands and the UFO mecca in nearby Roswell. It is a minor quibble, but it would have served Edgington’s point that “secured from public access, [White Sands] could yet be observed and reimagined” to suit a variety of needs and desires [117]. Edgington does make that point very well in other ways, however, from atomic tourism to so-called authentic safaris. *Range Wars* takes an enormous step in reconnecting this militarized landscape to scholarship in environmental history and the Cold War era generally.

Jacob Darwin Hamblin  
Oregon State University  
Corvallis, Oregon

## BOOK REVIEW

### REINTERPRETING EXPLORATION: THE WEST IN THE WORLD



Edited by Dane Kennedy

Oxford University Press, 2014

ISBN: 978-0-199755-34-9

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Price: \$99, hardcover

Dane Kennedy has assembled a fine collection of historiographical essays on various aspects of western discovery, exploration, and exploitation of other parts of the world. Focusing on the history of the history of these themes *Reinterpreting Exploration* offers a state of the art in understandings. This is not a book for the casual reader, the buff, or the aficionado. It is fundamentally constructed for historians seeking basic understanding of a major field.

Kennedy emphasizes in his introduction the central role of Western civilization’s encounters with other peoples and lands as a means of understanding the nature of these peoples. Much of the historical study of this subject has celebrated both individual heroism and national glory; accordingly, this volume focuses on each essayist addressing exploration’s role in shaping a Western sense of exceptionalism, the place of this exceptionalism in the imperial ambitions of European and American powers, and the nature of the cultural engagement with other peoples that resulted.

The individual essays have application across broad arenas despite their relatively narrow subjects. For instance, there are essays on the shifting interpretations of interactions, exploration and enlightenment, exploration and its reporting

in books and articles, and the legends of individual explorers and expeditions. There are also regional studies of exploration, relating to Imperial Russia, the Pacific Islands, East Africa, Central Asia, and Antarctica.

For readers of *Quest* the most interesting essay will probably be the one by Michael F. Robinson who concentrates on the relationship of exploration and scientific advancement. Robinson invokes Stephen Pyne’s characterization of the “third great age of discovery” as a twentieth century development in which humans began to explore beyond regions where they could not survive without artificial life support; at the poles, under the sea, and in space. While Robinson takes issue with this characterization of recent exploration he allows that it is a useful entrée point for seeking to place the themes of discovery, exploration, conquest, and exploitation present in these regions into broader intellectual construct that includes both science and empire.

The most interesting part of this book is that the theme of exploration, whether something that is largely a Western phenomenon or something that is universal to all humankind (and there is a debate raging on that issue), has been inextricably tied up on the process of mediation between knowledge seeking and empire-building. Exploration has also been constantly the linkage between representation and reality; themes from these relationships require incorporation into historical studies of space exploration in the making of the modern world.

Roger D. Launius  
National Air and Space Museum  
Smithsonian Institution  
Washington, DC