



Restless Men: Masculinity and Robinson Crusoe, 1788-1840

Karen Downing

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Around the turn of the nineteenth century Robinson Crusoe turns up remarkably often in material dealing with the emerging Australian colonies. The call to adventure and do-it-yourself guide to settlement in Daniel Defoe's novel resonated strongly with British explorers and settlers. But Crusoe did not make men restless: restlessness was the expression of unresolved tensions in men's lives between ideals, aspirations, traditions and material circumstances, the tension between what men felt they should do and what was actually possible. Crusoe seemingly reconciled these tensions, showing that a man could be both wild and domesticated. Karen Downing traces the links in a discursive chain by which a particular male subjectivity was forged. Through the rarely studied interrelationship between public representations of manliness and self-representations by men in more private writings, she reveals how restless men took their restlessness with them, so that the Australian colonies never were a solution to men's anxieties.

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