

Introduction: A Cultural Aesthetics of U.S. Literary Orientalisms

There is, perhaps, no better indicator of the political significance of the Orient in the USAmerican cultural imaginary than the fact that even poems of the revolutionary period linked nationhood with command over the Orient.¹ For instance, in “America, or a Poem on the Settlement of the British Colonies, Addressed to the Friends of Freedom and Their Country,” published in 1780, Timothy Dwight assumed the mantle of poet of the nation, narrating its evolution and prophesying its future glory. The poem starts by tracing the beginnings of civilization in Asia and the subsequent barbarities and depravities there and moves on to commemorate Columbus’s voyages, which signal a new era as “America’s bright realms [arise] to view” and as a haven for the persecuted is created in the New England colonies. Then, in a dream vision, the goddess of freedom, in “robes of pure white,” prophesies the glory of the nation as it imperialistically extends its dominion:

Hail Land of light and joy! thy power shall grow
Far as the seas, which round thy regions flow;
Through earth’s wide realms thy glory shall extend,
And savage nations at thy scepter bend.
Around the frozen shores thy sons shall sail,
Or stretch their canvas to the ASIAN gale,
Or, like COLUMBUS, steer their course unknown,
Beyond the regions of the flaming zone. . . .
For thee, proud INDIA’S spicy isles shall blow

Bright silks be wrought, and sparkling diamonds glow;
 Earth's richest realms their treasures shall unfold
 And op'ning mountains yield the flaming gold.²

America marches triumphantly over savage nations, emerging as leader and bearer of civilization. In recognition of America's glory and power, India pays obeisance to it. What is prefigured in the poem took concrete shape twenty years later, when Dwight became one of the founding members of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1811. A major agenda of this organization was the conversion of heathens in the Orient.

A century after the publication of Dwight's poem, an equally patriotic John Fiske, an eminent philosopher and historian, delivered a series of lectures titled "American Political Ideas, Viewed from the Standpoint of Evolution." The most popular lecture in the series was called "Manifest Destiny." In this lecture, Fiske reviewed the future of Europe during the Protestant and Catholic struggles in the sixteenth century in light of Columbus's discoveries and argued that Europe could either progress or "fall forever into the barren and monotonous way of living and thinking which [had] always distinguished the half-civilized populations of Asia."³ The discovery of the Americas, however, ensured that Europe would not be consigned to Asian lethargy. Here opened up an enormous region, and it was clear to Fiske that "the race which here should gain the victory was clearly destined hereafter to take the lead in the world."⁴ Fiske proclaimed that "In the United States of America a century hence we shall . . . have a political aggregation immeasurably surpassing in power and dimensions any empire that has as yet existed."⁵ In time, continues Fiske, "it will be possible to speak of the UNITED STATES as stretching from pole to pole."⁶

Dwight's postrevolutionary poem and Fiske's lecture, the latter written just before a period of rapid overseas expansion, demonstrate the remarkable persistence with which ideas of empire and the Orient were linked in the cultural imaginary for over a century.⁷ In Dwight's poem, the Orient (specifically Asia) is a naturalized trope for the imperial imaginary because it is simply a part of historical progression, a final realization of Columbus's thwarted attempts. In Fiske's lecture, control over the Orient is a supreme signifier of imperial power. And for both Dwight and Fiske, the idea of civilization and empire moving west, culminating in the New World, is a powerful raced one that thrives on distinctions between EuroAmerican uprightness and Oriental degradation.

Incarnated as the goddess of freedom in white robes, America, it is suggested, has a natural right over Asia. Yet the Asia that Dwight was writing about had at that time entered the imperial consciousness of Europe as Britain began to exercise control over India, a fact that Dwight, as a future missionary organizer, would have known well. In envisioning for the United States a cultural, material, and political dominion over India, Dwight was asserting the imperial right of the new nation over the Orient, a right that had hitherto been assumed by Europe but that “naturally” belonged to USAmerica from the time of Columbus. In Fiske’s evolutionary scheme, Asia is associated both with barbarism and inertia; it is a pernicious contagion to be avoided or, as Fiske suggests later in his lecture, a passive entity improving through British rule.

Dwight’s and Fiske’s conception of Asia as part of the imperial imaginary was repeatedly invoked in literary works. For at least a century, from the 1790s to the 1890s, poets, dramatists, essayists, novelists, and short-story writers routinely wrote about different Orients and produced a series of literary works in which the nation was variously embodied as vigorous, active, masculinized, and morally upright Columbia-as-empire, against versions of a decaying, passive, demasculinized, deviant, or spiritual Orient. Yet this imperial body was, to use Judith Butler’s terminology, very much a “figure in crisis,” dependent on the Oriental qualities it sought to (control and) dissociate itself from.⁸ Thus, a naturalized discourse of empire, predicated on oppositions, was interrupted by a violent destabilization of these oppositions, usually revealed in moments when questions of national incoherence surfaced. The Orient served the dual purpose of containing national schisms and constructing an imperial nationhood. The problematic configuration of the imperial body and the mapping of raced and gendered oppositions in USAmerican Oriental works as varied as Royall Tyler’s *The Algerine Captive*, John DeForest’s *Irene the Missionary*, Emerson’s “Fate,” and Whitman’s “Passage to India” is the focus of this book. These texts testify both to the importance of Orientalism as a needed, compensatory, raced rhetoric in the cultural imaginary and to the interest of the reading public in matters relating to the Orient, and they defy the insularity traditionally ascribed to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century U.S. literature and culture.

I begin this book with an examination of the literature of the “Barbary” Orient generated by the U.S.–North African conflict of the late eighteenth century, including the works of writers Royall Tyler, Susanna Rowson, and Washington Irving. I then move on to the Near Eastern Ori-

entalist literature of the nineteenth century in light of Egyptology and the growth of missionary fervor, including the works of novelists John DeForest and Maria Susanna Cummins, poet Herman Melville, and short-story writers Edgar Allan Poe and Harriet Prescott Spofford. Finally, I consider the Indic Orientalism of the nineteenth century in the context of Indology, British colonialism, and the push for Asian trade in the United States, focusing particularly on Emerson and Whitman.

As the plural term *Orientalisms* in the title of this book suggests, these literary texts created multiple and diverse varieties of imaginary Orient. In different ways, writers maintained a dialogue with or strove to create an indigenous Orientalism premised on the idea of civilization and empire moving west, from Asia, through Europe, to culmination in the New World. The New World thus displaced Britain as empire. The Orient was seen as the new frontier against which the United States—variously represented as Columbia, Libertad, or Atlas, but always powerful and whole—could define itself in terms of virtue and world mission.

This task of imperial self-definition, however, was anxiety-ridden. The rhetoric of empire that permeates these works relies on various raced and gendered distinctions between Oriental despotism, sensuality, idleness, moral flaccidity, effeminacy, and sexual aberrance, on the one hand, and USAmerican democracy, rigorous Anglo-American morality, industry, healthy heteronormativity, and masculinity, on the other. But these oppositions are deployed to repress or allay fears about the wholeness and stability of the nation in the face of diverse ethnic immigration and African American and Native American presences. Similarly, the gendered polemic within these works resists the discourse on empire by questioning both the masculine and the heteronormative gender constructions of the New World.

As noted in the preface, I use the term *Orient* in this study strategically both to invoke Edward Said's polemical definition and to critique it. In his book *Orientalism*, Said describes the Orient as a European invention, "a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences," and also Europe's "deepest and most recurring images of the Other."⁹ Thus, Western representations of the Orient, no matter where and when this Orient might be located, include features that are disturbingly similar. Said uses Foucault's notion of discourse as outlined in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish* to describe Orientalism. Orientalism has functioned as a disciplinary practice "for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by

teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."¹⁰ Said demonstrates how from the eighteenth century onward, Oriental representation has always been linked to Western colonialism and imperialism. More importantly, Said shows the relation between the Westerner and the Orient/Oriental to be sexual and gendered. The Orient, uniformly associated with sexual promise, sensuality, and unlimited desire, is an "exclusively male province; . . . women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing."¹¹ The prototype of such images is Flaubert's Kuchuk Hanem. In the Westerner's view, the Orient always invites penetration and insemination.¹²

The impact of Said's *Orientalism* on disciplines as diverse as history, literature, linguistics, and political science cannot be exaggerated. In literary studies, *Orientalism* generated enormous critical activity in the decoding of texts heretofore seen as simply symbolic and existential and revealed them to be texts of high imperialism, complicit with empire. Like many postcolonialists, I too remain indebted to Said's pioneering work. I depart from Said's theoretical formulations, however, in two crucial respects: in pursuing issues of gender from a feminist and non-heterosexual imperative, and in emphasizing the discrete, rather than simply the unchanging, nature of Orientalist discourses within the United States.¹³

In critiquing the persistence of Western characterizations of the Orient as passive, supine, available woman/body, Said obviously draws attention to the power relations inherent in constructions of the Orient. This configuration, however, problematically assumes desire to be a male prerogative alone and situates masculinity as always powerful and separate from that (Woman) which it seeks to control; it also assumes a heterosexist model for gender relations. My study of U.S. Orientalisms challenges all these presumptions. First, the very contribution of women writers such as Susanna Rowson, Maria Susanna Cummins, and Harriet Prescott Spofford—belies the idea of Orientalism as a male domain. These women continually critique the patriarchal impulses of imperialism and explore the consequences of racial blurring, even as their transgressive positionings are partially reclaimed by the dominant imperial impetus of the discourses of Orientalism. Many U.S. Orientalist works also break down the traditional gendered dichotomies of mind and body that Said invokes. In the writings of Indic Orientalists, for instance, the muscular, athletic, imperial

body of the nation depends on an evocation of India as a dematerialized and disembodied spirit or soul; the investment in materiality and body is USAmerican, while the association with spirit is Oriental. Second, as my analyses demonstrate, the autonomy and wholeness of the imperial body is highly fragile, dependent on the raced/gendered Other that it presumes to control. Here, I am guided by Judith Butler's attempts to resituate femininity out of the paradigm of dominated/othered and by Homi K. Bhabha's theorizations on the stereotype as an "ambivalent, contradictory mode of representation," based as much on anxiety as on assertion, the enunciation of a split subject.¹⁴ Third, many U.S. Orientalist texts challenge heterosexist presumptions because the Oriental encounter opens up possibilities of homoerotic gendering that cannot be freely articulated at home.¹⁵

My second major departure from Said is from the idea of Orientalism as an unchanging discourse. Most obviously, the construction of the Orient changes according to different contexts, and Said himself acknowledges that his focus is largely on the Muslim Near and Middle East. As my study demonstrates, the parodic U.S. Orientalism of the Near East, as exemplified in the works of such writers as DeForest and Cummins in the mid-nineteenth century, is very different from Emerson's reverent Indological Orientalism during the same period. Similarly, the nationalistic fervor generated by the capture and enslavement of U.S. sailors in Algiers enters the representation of the Orient in the drama and novels set in Algiers in a different manner than does Egyptomania and missionary activity in the Near Eastern Orientalist literature a generation later.

In departing from Said in these two crucial areas, however, I do not simply embrace ambivalence and hybridity apolitically and ahistorically, as universally applicable.¹⁶ The major contribution of Said's *Orientalism* was to make it impossible to think about Western constructions of the Orient in purely spiritual, philosophical, or symbolic terms and, by analogy, to make it problematic to deal with any construction of an Other without thinking about relations of power. To simply ignore such relations and questions of hegemony is, as Ella Shohat has suggested, to "sanctify the *fait accompli* of colonial violence."¹⁷ I thus use the term *Orientalism* throughout this study to call attention to the historicity of U.S. literary writings about various Orients and their participation in raced discourses of empire in the nineteenth century, not to suggest an unchanging, seamless, repetitive tradition. The three different Oriental sites explored in this study—Algerian, Egyptological,

and Indic—generate a wide variety of concerns within the omnivorous framework of imperial ideology; examining them together, however, points to the sheer magnitude of U.S. literary Orientalisms for a century prior to the 1890s.

My use of Said's and Foucault's terms in the plural forms *Orientalisms* and *discourses* also indicates my need to open up these terms to the possibility both of different kinds of literary Orientalisms and of different kinds of discourses on the Orient. For example, although Poe and DeForest both critique the idea of mastering the Orient through Egyptology, Poe's stories demonstrate the destructive consequences of this mastery tragically, while DeForest's novel does so comically. Similarly, although many appeals for increasing trade with Asia were made on the grounds of national power, missionary appeals made on similar grounds were far more concerned with representing the wretchedness of Asia than were political diatribes.

Because the idea of discourse has so often been linked with disciplinary practice and repression alone, it is important to clarify Foucault's use of the term *discourse*, its relationship to this book, and the departure of this book from some of Foucault's formulations. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault explains the idea of discursive formation. Any type of statements, irrespective of the conventional fields they belong to or the time period when they were written, form a field of discourse if they refer to the same object.¹⁸ Unlike conventional history, however, which unfolds as an oeuvre of collective statements or philosophy where statements are reconstituted as chains of inference, a discursive formation is linked together by systems of dispersion.¹⁹ My pluralization of *discourse* emphasizes the differences that Foucault himself recognizes within a field of discourse. Throughout his career, Foucault remained aware of the ubiquity of the technologies of power through which laws, cultural values, and sexual practices were generated. His effort in *Discipline and Punish* was to present a "genealogy of the present scientifico-legal complex from which the power to punish derives its bases."²⁰ In an interview in 1982, Foucault described his role as one of showing people "that they are much freer than they feel, that people accept as truth, as evidence, some themes which have been built up at a certain moment during history, and that this so-called evidence can be criticized and destroyed."²¹ Resistance, in other words, can come from the act of strategically historicizing discursive formations, a strategy I use in examining literary discourses on the Orient.

Despite Foucault's own massive studies of the juridical system and

of the discourses on sexuality, however, his notoriously complex and often contradictory statements on power, knowledge, and resistance have led to a Foucauldian practice, particularly within U.S. literary studies, that all but denies any significance to specifics of power. In the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*, for instance, Foucault writes, "Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet . . . this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. Should it be said that one is always 'inside' power, there is no 'escaping' it . . . ? This would be to misunderstand the strictly relational character of power relationships. Their existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance."²² Foucault comes so close to collapsing notions of power and resistance here that it is no wonder that many Foucault-inspired new historicists, Foucault's denial of the inclusiveness of power notwithstanding, minimize the significance of power relations.²³ Many people, taking the idea of circulation and localization of power to mean a scrutiny of the local power alone, have ended up denying the relevance of such issues as colonialism and imperialism. The result, as Jonathan Arac and Harriet Ritvo have suggested, is that much of this work, "however fine its local analysis, comes to little conclusion except that any significant cultural practice is complicit in the power it might think to be opposing."²⁴

My own analyses benefit from Foucault's notion of discursive formations in that I see U.S. literary Orientalist texts as inextricably related to discourses on the Orient. I pay particular attention, however, to the deformative power of both particular writers and contexts. Throughout this study, I note the numerous ways in which writers enunciate resistances to the mechanisms of power that seem inevitable in discourses on the Orient. But I do not suggest that these enunciations were simply complicit with furthering an imperial will or a stereotypical Orient. Instead, I focus on the specific nature of the challenges against the systemic discourses on the Orient.

I use *nation* and *empire* as related terms in this study because of the frequency with which the nation was constructed as an empire in Orientalist works. The close connection between ideas of nation and those of empire has also been noted by theorists of nationalism. Timothy Brennan has pointed out how European nationalism was motivated by European colonial activity: "The 'national idea,' in other words, flourished in the soil of foreign conquest."²⁵ Both Benedict Anderson and George L. Mosse also situate the beginnings of modern European nationalism in the late eighteenth century, a period coex-

tensive with the beginnings of colonialism.²⁶ It would be a mistake, however, to think of nationalism and imperialism as identical. Even though the founding fathers often thought of the United States as an empire, the very nature of the connection between nation and empire necessarily changed with different historical and social contexts. *Nation* and *empire* are relational and related terms, one dependent on the other.

Here we come to a crucial difference between U.S. and European Orientalisms. Colonialism, with its ensuing violent contact with non-European others, ensured that for European countries, particularly England and France, the narrative of empire as unquestioned was inherently unstable and needed to be supported by ideas of firm national character. In the United States, however, imperialism, particularly with respect to the Orient, could be constructed much more benevolently, as teleology. Since the "discovery" of the Americas by Columbus was popularly transmitted as the outcome of a vision to reach the Orient, contemporary arguments about seizing Oriental trade or civilizing Orientals through missionary activity were accompanied by visionary statements about completing Columbus's original mission. Tropes of expansion and control over various specific Orients were thus mystified as "natural" through the complex genealogy of the country's intimate associations with the search for the Orient.

In addition, in contrast to the situation in Europe, the idea of nation in the United States, predicated as it was on the internal colonization of Native Americans and African Americans, was rife with instabilities. As Toni Morrison has suggested, values that are touted as prototypically "American" and that often form the focus of white U.S. literature are shaped in response to an Africanist presence that had to be either repressed morally and politically or constructed as an absolute Other (primitive, savage), against which a quintessential (white) national identity could be articulated.²⁷ Morrison's argument compellingly places slavery (as "blackness") and racial alterity at the center of the construction of national identity.²⁸ Unlike the idea of nation, however, the idea of a U.S. empire, seen as much more benign than the idea of empire in European Orientalist works, was used to both mystify national instabilities and bolster the idea of a strong, expanding nation. It was thus no accident that the most popular figure for the nation in U.S. Orientalist works was Columbia, the feminization of Columbus. Yet, because of this attempted mystification, U.S. literary Orientalism became the site of a triadic encounter in which the Africanist and Native

American presences returned to haunt and question the cultural and political hegemony of the New World.

Of course, the Orient here is not simply a displaced site of national racial issues. The encounter with the Orient works powerfully to articulate and shape national identity in terms of a youthful nation revitalizing the world with messages of liberty and virtue or in terms of a radical historical shift through which the United States becomes the newest seat of empire to which the Orient needs to turn. Of all the discourses on the Orient—political, economic, scientific—literary Orientalism most significantly challenges, even as it evokes, imperialist constructions of national identity and of the Orient, as well as the racial hierarchies at home. In fields like phrenology and archaeology, Egyptomania and interest in the Near Eastern Orient produced massive phrenological studies supporting Caucasian superiority (such as Morton's *Crania Ægyptica*). Yet Poe, during the same time, engaged in compelling critiques of Western imperial will in such stories as "Ligeia" and "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains." Similarly, such novelists as John DeForest and Maria Susanna Cummins both ridiculed and deployed the pretentious figure of the archaeologist venturing east.

It should also not surprise us that these literary Orientalist works were heavily preoccupied with issues of gender and sexuality. Ideas of empire and nation in the nineteenth century, as in the present, were raced, and racial distinctions often depended on gendered distinctions. For theorists of nationalism, nation and gender are often intimately related. Benedict Anderson's connection between nation and gender is perhaps unwitting. Anderson states, "in the modern world everyone can, should, and will 'have' a nationality, as he or she 'has' a gender."²⁹ Although Anderson assumes that gender is an unproblematic category, something that everyone has, rather than a category that is constructed, his formulation also points to the hegemonic ways in which nation is gendered. George L. Mosse focuses on this latter aspect in the concept of nation. The beginnings of modern nationalism in the late eighteenth century coincided with the Protestant revivals in Germany and Britain, leading to an alliance between nationalism and respectability, "an alliance that regarded control over sexuality as vital to the concept of respectability."³⁰ Deviance, aberrance, and excess were unnational, while respectability, normativity, and control were national.³¹ Nationalism was increasingly associated with an ideal of asensual heterosexual manliness, and even though female national symbols were invoked, these were essentially static rather than dynamic.³²

Mosse's analyses are particularly relevant in considering formulations of nation in the United States. The curbing of overt sensuality and of promiscuous behaviors that would encourage it was particularly strong in New England, where immigrant purity was routinely contrasted with European libertine excess. But although Mosse's arguments compellingly demonstrate the alliances between nationalism and sexual codes and between nationalism and heteronormativity, they are based on the assumption of literal, oppositional gender constructions (albeit highly politicized ones), the hierarchies of which are dramatic indications of hegemonic, nationalistic power structures. When national icons, as bearers of national ideology, are invoked in the context of empire, however, gender often does not work literally.

Here, Rey Chow's analysis of the journalistic representations of the use of Lady Liberty in the Tiannanmen Square revolt of 1991 is particularly useful. Chow begins by demonstrating the problems inherent in seeing gender literally and as an unchanging category. A feminist friend asks Chow, "How should we read what is going on in China in terms of gender?" Chow responds: "The problem is not how we should read what is going on in China in terms of gender, but rather: what do the events in China tell us about gender as a category, especially as it relates to the so-called Third World?"³³ By reversing the question, Chow demonstrates the mutability of gender categories in a transnational context. Chow suggests that even though Lady Liberty is ostensibly "female," in the Tiannanmen Square context "woman is not the heterosexual opposite of man, but the symbol of what China is not/does not have."³⁴

Chow's arguments are especially relevant in thinking about U.S. nationalism in the context of Orientalism. Symbols of nationhood evolved and changed from early European conceptions of the Americas, to early settlements in the seventeenth century, and through the revolutionary period. Europeans pictured the Americas through the body of the Native American woman, resplendent with fruits, a symbol of fertility.³⁵ By the seventeenth century, the idea of associating the nation with tropes of exploration and conquest coalesced in the figure of Columbia, the feminization of Columbus. In *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Cotton Mather declared that the New World be called Columbia. It was in the revolutionary period, however, that Columbia as a symbol for the United States gained accepted currency. Philip Freneau referred to the United States as both Columbia and New Albion.³⁶ Undoubtedly, that the music of "Hail Columbia" was part of Washington's inaugural

march made the symbology more popular.³⁷ Simultaneously, the eagle, the symbol of the Roman Empire, was adopted as the seal of the United States in 1782. The spread eagle, bearing a shield on its breast, an olive branch in one talon, and thirteen arrows indicating readiness for war in the other, was often gendered as male.³⁸ Yet another revolutionary manifestation of nation was Liberty, deriving immediately from the liberty cap carried by Britannia on a spear and the Roman goddess of liberty.³⁹

For most Orientalist writers, the idea of nation as Columbia was appealing, no doubt because of the trope of exploration and empire inherent in the invocation of Columbus's ventures and his vision of reaching the Orient. Columbus's original dream was idealized and invoked to naturalize ideas of empire. Although strictly in terms of a sex-gender equation Columbia as an early iconic figure for the nation was female, the Columbia invoked as a justification for expansionism and control in the context of the Orient was gendered differently. Columbia as a figure for nation as empire was not associated with such qualities as fluidity, disorder, and emotion, which have, within theories of gender dichotomies, been traditionally associated with femininity; rather, this Columbia was associated with activity, power, athletic vigor, and (virtuous) desire for expansion and control, qualities traditionally coded as male.

In U.S. Orientalist texts, the nation as empire is often embodied as young, vigorous, powerful, and masculinized. But the portrayal of this figure is also interrupted by anxious moments in which its imperial gender construction is destabilized through its encounter with the Oriental other. For example, in *El Fureidis*, Maria Susanna Cummins's hero, Meredith, loses his sense of masculinity and wholeness when confronted with an image of two amorous women. Thus, these Orientalist texts do not simply perpetuate a repressive patriarchy.⁴⁰ Many women writers, in fact, used the Orient as a site for questioning and undermining the socially acceptable ideologies of womanhood in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In *Slaves in Algiers*, for instance, Susanna Rowson constructs the harem as a social space for the bonding of women, out of which emerges a critique of the ideal of woman as republican mother. Opened up at key moments in such texts as Cummins's *El Fureidis* and Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers* are possibilities of queer gendering that undermine the heteronormativity and patriarchy on which imperial discourse rests. As this study suggests, an unstable gendered discourse often works to contest the ideology of superior USAmerican virtue on which the rhetoric of empire within Orientalism depends.

Chapter 1 of this study describes the numerous discourses on the Orient beginning in the postrevolutionary period. Briefly examining the many commercial, political, and literary contacts with the Orient in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it emphasizes the raced and imperial nature of these contacts and puts under question the model of New England cultural insularity that has dominated most intellectual histories of the period. Oriental travel writing, in particular, enjoyed a success that belies such claims. The chapter then moves on to examine the complex interrelationship between the technologies of race and the discourses on the Orient, by examining two important types of orientalist discourses: phrenology and missionary statements.

Egyptology in the United States generated anxieties about racial hierarchies as much as it did an enthusiasm about decoding the mysteries of the Orient. One can see such anxiety and enthusiasm in Morton's *Crania Americana* (1839) and *Crania Aegyptica* (1844) and in the ethnographic writings of George S. Gliddon, U.S. consul at Cairo. Both writers study Egyptian writings to support polygenesis. Official reports on missionary activity also form an important part of Orientalist discourses. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was formed in 1811. The reports of that board offer a fascinating account of the political and racial concerns of the missionaries and of their need to be seen as agents of a major power. The reaction of missionaries to the Oriental churches of the Near East suggests a less than certain ethnocentrism. The alarm of U.S. missionaries at the laxity of Oriental churches and the daily proximity of Christians and Muslims in the Near East underscores an anxiety about cross-cultural and interracial contact that reflects fear of contamination both from people of color within the country and from imperial contacts abroad.

In Chapter 2, I examine a number of literary Orientalist texts of the late eighteenth century that were written in the wake of the U.S.–North African altercation. The capture and enslavement of U.S. sailors by the Algerians created an outrage that went unappeased until 1805, when William Eaton, U.S. consul at Tripoli, coordinated an attack on Derna and raised the U.S. flag on the city walls. The historical occasion thus provided ready materials for dramatizing oppositions between North African despotism and immorality, on the one hand, and U.S. freedom and virtue, on the other. Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captive* (1797), David Everett's *Slaves in Barbary* (1797), Susanna Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers* (1794), James Ellison's *The American Captive* (1812), Jonathan Smith's *The Siege of Algiers* (1823), and Peter Markoe's *The Algerine Spy in*

Pennsylvania (1787) all participate in the official narrative of the United States as a virtuous empire spreading the light of freedom in a dissipated Orient, the imperial body being constructed through an exclusion of both slavery and deviant Oriental sexuality. But the raced and gendered anxieties accompanying the construction of strong, imperial nationhood are also evident. Slavery surfaces at the center of national consciousness, splitting the coherence and identity of the nation. And all too often the gendering and respectability of the hero embodying the nation is undermined by a willing participation in sensual excess, as a discourse of sexuality contends with a discourse of empire. For instance, in *The Algerine Captive*, Tyler's narrator is made to literally participate in the purchase of human cargo. Later, inside a Muslim enclave, he delights in the "feminization" of his body through ritual scrubbing and oiling.

Chapter 3 focuses on the Near Eastern Orientalist literature of the nineteenth century in relation to the Orientalist discourses of Egyptology and missionary Protestantism. While Egyptology generated a rush of self-styled archaeologists chauvinistically ready to excavate all of the Near East, missionaries prompted concerns about the mixture of races and cultures there. In literary Orientalist works about the Near East, the border becomes a site of anxiety and transgression. Most works appropriate the hierarchical paradigm of white explorer and explored Oriental, but they do this so self-consciously and critically that what emerges is a parodic Orientalism in contestation with the dominant discourses on the Orient, the latter being recuperated only as points of closure. In John DeForest's *Irene the Missionary* (1879), for instance, the vigorous, USAmerican male archaeologist is constantly critiqued in his quest to excavate all of the Near East. These works also reveal the precariousness of the racial alterity on which the missionary-imperial body is constructed, by introducing moments when this body is transformed through interracial contact. In William Ware's *Zenobia* (1837), for instance, Lucius M. Piso fears for his manly body in the Oriental languor of Palmyra. Maria Susanna Cummins, however, uses racial intermixing to both contain and subvert imperial race and gender hierarchies. Exploiting the new possibilities available to women as a result of missionary work overseas, Cummins, in *El Fureidis* (1860), creates Havilah, a woman pure but not bound by domesticity, pious but overly learned, beautiful but more athletic than her male archaeologist suitor. Through this racially mixed character, Cummins challenges the patriarchy within imperialism while still maintaining the raced imperatives of the latter. Finally, chapter 3 explores the tension between the raced and gendered

formations of Near Eastern orientalism by examining the interventions of African American David S. Dorr. In *A Colored Man Round the World* (1858), Dorr negotiates his critique of white Egyptology and his willed identification with patriarchal imperial structures that create a space for his contingently “free” body, to reveal the omnivorous attraction of Orientalist narratives of empire.

Chapter 4 examines three of the most subversive Near Eastern orientalist writers: Edgar Allan Poe, Harriet Prescott Spofford, and Herman Melville. These writers critique imperial-hermeneutic power through a raced and gendered destabilization of the body of the archaeologist/traveler/hermeneute. The comic critique of Orientalist power gives way here to a demonstration of its tragic consequences. Poe critiques both the repressive discourses on the Orient and the suppression of the facts of Western colonialism in the U.S. imaginary. “Ligeia,” the most complex of Poe’s oriental tales, demonstrates the crisis of identity consequent on the inability of the narrator to support either an imperialist national identity or Southern nationalism. The character Ligeia, suggestive of an Oriental and Africanist presence, undermines through her power the narrator’s attempts at coherent raced and gendered self-fashioning. In “Desert Sands” (1863), Spofford critiques the objectification of the Other inherent in the aesthetics of Oriental authentication. By literally equating the artistic triumph of the hero (a triumph won by a mastery over the Oriental landscape) with the death of the woman, Spofford exposes the repressive patriarchal basis of Western imperialism. Writing contemporaneously with Spofford, Melville, in *Clarel*, problematizes the idea of USAmerican hermeneutic power by dramatizing the resistance of the Oriental subject to appropriation and control. Through *Clarel*, a young theology student journeying the Near East, Melville eroticizes the relationship between the New World and the Orient and demonstrates how the racial-cultural difference of the Orient cannot be contained by a creation of race hierarchies or through phallogocentric othering. Instead, *Clarel* questions the oppositions between the New World and the Near East through the circulation of homoerotic desire.

Chapter 5 focuses on popular Indian Orientalist writers, the complex cultural discourses on Indology, the push for Asian markets, theories about the westerly movement of empire from its inception in Asia, and the colonization of India. It then examines Indic Orientalist writings, including works by such poets as William Rounseville Alger and James Russell Lowell, which contrast a youthful USAmerica with a spent and dissipated Orient. The enormously successful Bayard Taylor,

often dismissed as sentimental and romantic, exhibits in his travel writings a keen historical awareness and a self-consciousness about constructing the Orient that opens possibilities for a transgressive Indic orientalism.

In chapters 6 and 7, I specifically analyze the Indic Orientalist texts of Emerson and Whitman in the context of the political, economic, and philosophical discourses on India sketched in chapter 5. In chapter 6, through an examination of Emerson's "Indian Superstition," "Plato," *English Traits*, and "Fate," I show how Emerson's raced construction of India as a passive and spiritual Other against an active and material New World is an anxious attempt to recuperate the nation as vibrant and whole. As Emerson became more involved with issues of slavery and race, he increasingly sought to exclude the social-material Asia and its raced bodies (and create a transhistorical Asia, free of divisive racial politics) to facilitate the construction of the nation as a strong, whole, athletic body. Yet race powerfully surfaces in Emerson's essays through his engagement with theories of racial evolution and Anglo-Saxon destiny. And at significant moments in Emerson's construction of the Indic Orient, the normativity and wholeness of the nation is questioned as it becomes evident that the idea of a powerful (male) nationhood depends greatly on a homoerotic nationhood that needs to be suppressed.

Chapter 7 examines several of Whitman's Orientalist poems, including "Salut Au Monde," "Facing West from California's Shores," and "Passage to India," and traces their construction of India as a maternal trope and a raced Other lacking its own agency. I suggest that in these poems, particularly in "Passage to India," the fantasy of cross-continental unification does not simply exist in a spiritual imaginary where power relations are suspended. "Passage to India," for instance, historicizes India but does so strategically, excluding the realities of British colonialism. This excluded history contours the embodiment of the nation as youth/child innocently embracing the world.

My analysis of specific U.S. literary Orientalisms as related to political and commercial issues and to questions of nation, empire, and race stands in contrast to most studies in this area, which have reduced literary interests in various Orients to the allure of a syncretic, European-constructed Orient, conceived as simply philosophical, spiritual, or exotic, or have seen the deployment of certain tropes for the Orient as unrelated to the field of power relations. Arthur Christy's statement about Emerson, "He turned both inward and Eastward," typifies the

ahistorical nature of these studies.⁴¹ Christy's book, published in 1932, is admittedly dated, but even Beongcheon Yu's *The Great Circle: American Writers and the Orient* (1983) doggedly refuses to admit issues of power.⁴² This lack of a sociopolitical approach to U.S. literary Orientalism until very recently can be explained by two long-standing tenets of U.S. literary studies: the centrality of Puritan New England culture to the nation and the insularity of this culture; and the assumed lack of an imperialist tradition in the United States.

In *Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Romance of the Orient*, Luther S. Luedtke brilliantly shows how the New England of Hawthorne's time was, in fact, far from insular. Drawing on a wide variety of materials, including records of Hawthorne's readings, the logbooks of Hawthorne's father, Nathaniel S. Hathorne, and various maritime histories, Luedtke delineates the active commerce and interaction with the Orient in mid-nineteenth-century New England. Luedtke's findings allow him to examine Hawthorne's writings through a context far more cross-cultural than any available before.⁴³ Looking specifically at U.S. attitudes toward the Near Eastern Orient in the nineteenth century, Fuad Sha'ban sees USAmerican Orientalism as an expression of the New World belief in its chosen destiny, as the "symbolic kingdom of God," to spread the light in the Muslim world. In the nineteenth century, this missionary goal coalesced with expansionist impulses, leading to "a more physical aspiration to establish that Kingdom in the Holy Land."⁴⁴ Both Luedtke and Sha'ban demonstrate the significance of the historical-material Orient to the culture of nineteenth-century USAmerica. My study expands Luedtke's scope to include the relationship of literary texts to imperialist discourses, and it goes beyond Sha'ban's by emphasizing the secular as well as religious impulses of USAmerican Orientalisms.

Until recently, U.S. literary and intellectual history have simply not acknowledged the existence of imperialism as a significant ideology within the United States. Indeed, the most accepted model for literary and cultural studies of the United States was Perry Miller's model of Puritan origins (a model that Amy Kaplan has shown was formulated by the imperial conditions that brought Miller to the Congo on an oil tanker);⁴⁵ the second influential model derived from Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis that the vacant frontier was the enabling condition of U.S. democracy.⁴⁶ The major challenge to these approaches came from critics who placed intercultural contact and conflict at the center of

national culture. Richard Slotkin suggested that the colonists' brutal suppression of Indians made the idea of regeneration through violence the defining metaphor of national identity.⁴⁷ In the works of Ronald Takaki and Richard Drinnon, the idea of empire came to the forefront in U.S. cultural studies. In *Iron Cages*, Takaki proposed that the "iron cages" of Protestant repression and racial purity, bureaucratic capitalism, and expansionism were interlinked and together explained nineteenth-century U.S. culture.⁴⁸ In *Facing West*, Richard Drinnon suggested a direct link between internal colonization and external empire building, by showing how the characteristics attributed to Native Americans and used as a justification to "subdue" them were also used in wars with the Philippines and, later, Vietnam.⁴⁹

As historians have noted, theories of exceptionalism have all but prevented imperialism from being examined as a significant ideology in U.S. history and culture. Such theories maintain that the United States, unlike Europe, was not interested in overseas possessions and that therefore, except for an aberrant period from 1898–1912, imperialism is irrelevant to a consideration of its history. This view was challenged by two almost contemporaneous works, William Appleman Williams's *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1959) and R. W. Van Alstyne's *The Rising American Empire* (1960). Williams and Alstyne both demonstrated the long history of the United States as an empire much before the end of the nineteenth century. More importantly, Van Alstyne traced the history of the ideology of empire and showed how the United States was continually thought of as an empire by statesmen and policymakers from the time of the revolution. This view was supported by Williams in his later work *Empire as a Way of Life* (1980).⁵⁰

For our purposes, the importance of these studies lies in their demonstration of imperialism as not an aberrant but a central and enabling ideology of U.S. culture. The Revolutionary War severed the economic and military bondage of the colonies to Britain, but it did not break many of their ideological ties, particularly the idea of Anglo-Saxons creating empires and holding sway over people of color.⁵¹ The founding fathers had no difficulty thinking of the nation as an empire: America was quite naturally to be one. Thomas Paine, for instance, had no doubt that the war of independence involved more than the rights of the thirteen colonies. Paine wrote, "'Tis not the affair of a city, a county, a province, or a kingdom; but of a continent—of at least one eighth part of the habitable globe."⁵² As early as 1783, Washington used the term *ris-*

ing empire to describe the United States.⁵³ By the early nineteenth century, the idea that the United States represented liberty and freedom for which, paradoxically, it needed more territory and influence was acceptable to many statesmen. Jefferson, whose most frequently used word was *liberty*, described the United States as an “empire for liberty.”⁵⁴ “Trusted with the destinies of this solitary republic of the world, the only monument of human rights, and the sole depository of the sacred fire of freedom and self-government,” Jefferson wrote, “from hence it is to be lighted up in other regions of the earth, if other regions of the earth shall ever become susceptible of its benign influence.”⁵⁵ Jefferson’s formulation mutually implicates the sacred and the secular, the national and the imperial. Being trusted with guarding the “*sacred* fire of freedom” (emphasis mine) paradoxically means ensuring its expansion. Freedom and influence, liberty and empire—such was the paradoxical language of U.S. empire building. This rhetoric, couched in the familiar and acceptable language of USAmerican freedom, was different than the British rhetoric of empire, in which empire building was cast as a civilizing mission.

It was also clear to the early leaders that spreading freedom did not simply mean (although it could include) rallying to the cause of revolutions for freedom in other countries. John Quincy Adams wrote to his father in 1811, “The whole continent of North America appears to be destined by Divine Providence to be peopled by one nation, speaking one language, professing one general system of religious and political principles. . . . For the common happiness of them all, for their peace and prosperity, I believe it is indispensable that they should be associated in one federal Union.”⁵⁶ What Adams had speculated about as the imperial construction of the nation would be circulated in popular parlance as indisputable through the appellation *America*, a term signifying the imaginary welding together of two continents.

Only very recently, however, have literary critics recognized the importance of ideas of empire to U.S. literary studies.⁵⁷ David S. Shields has shown that until the mid-eighteenth century, the poetry of the United States featured a discourse of empire. After 1750, this myth was simply shorn of its British imperial frame and applied to the “republican glory of the rising glory of America.”⁵⁸ While Shields emphasizes the centrality of empire to eighteenth-century literature, Wai-Chee Dimock demonstrates its significance to the mid-nineteenth century. By placing Melville’s writings in the context of antebellum discourses of empire,

Wai-Chee Dimock analyzes Melville's imperial articulation of individualism.⁵⁹ The essays collected in *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (cited earlier in this introduction, in n. 45) attest to the growing acceptance of imperialism as an important ideology in the study of U.S. literature.

My study of U.S. literary Orientalisms similarly situates texts in relation to discourses on empire endemic in the country since the Revolutionary War. I suggest that U.S. literary Orientalism was not simply a mystical, ahistorical phenomenon or an imitation of British Orientalism but an indigenous discourse deriving its impetus both from immediate sociopolitical circumstances and from theories of the westerly movement of civilization, culminating in the New World—theories that naturalized the idea of a USAmerican empire. I also show how works of writers seen as central to the mid-nineteenth century, such as Poe, Emerson, and Whitman, need to be read through postcoloniality. The construction of the nation as a strong, though benevolent, empire, continuing in the Orient the original quest of Columbus, served both to distinguish this new empire from those of Europe and to mystify and contain internal racial schisms, conflicts, and violence.

My study of U.S. Orientalist literature in the century prior to the 1890s demonstrates the international interests of USAmerican writers in a period that has largely been seen as insular. These writers sought to appropriate the imperial imperatives of European Orientalist discourses within a Columbiad vision, changing, questioning, or accommodating these imperatives to the exigencies of the New World. An understanding of how literary Orientalism works in the early period of the nation's history is therefore crucial in comprehending both the global dimensions of definitions of nation and the dual nature of early U.S. culture as both postcolonial and colonizing.

This book excludes many texts in which issues of orientalism and imperialism might be significant, because I have focused on the literary Orientalisms arising out of only three specific contexts. The numerous works produced in fear of the yellow peril, for instance, need to be read in the context of the Chinese immigrant cultures of California more than in the context of imperialism, although, no doubt, the two are related. Even within these contexts, my purpose is not to engage in an exhaustive examination of Orientalists works, but to focus on their different discursive possibilities. Similarly, I have not dealt with works relating to the Pacific Islands, because of the very different Western constructions placed on oral versus print cultures; primitivism and Orientalism can-

not simply be collapsed as structures. Travel writing about the Orient likewise serves only as a point of departure, because of the different manner in which issues of representation and mimeticism need to be theorized there. Finally, I end this study just before the 1890s, because of the proliferation of new Oriental contexts and because the perceived activity of “real” empire making generates qualitatively different discourses of empire that affect discourses on the Orient.

