



THE INDIC ORIENT, NATION, AND TRANSNATIONALISM: EXPLORING  
THE IMPERIAL OUTPOSTS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY U.S. LITERARY  
CULTURE, 1840-1900

by

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction— “Rethinking Orientalism, Nation, and Transnationalism in the Age of Postnational Possibility”	1
Chapter One— “The Asiatic Orient and Transnational Imaginary: Texts and Contexts”	23
Chapter Two—“Popular Orientalism, Empire, and Nineteenth-Century U.S. Literary Culture”	74
Chapter Three—“The Asiatic Orient and the Aesthetics of Imperial Desire in Frank Norris’s <u>The Octopus</u> and <u>Moran of the Lady Letty</u> ”	117
Chapter Four—“‘A Connecticut Yankee’ in the Court of Empire: The Orient, Race, and Imperialistic Nostalgia in Mark Twain’s <u>Letters from Hawai’i</u> and <u>Following the Equator</u> ”	171
Bibliography	222

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Rethinking Orientalism, Nation, and Transnationalism**

#### **in the Age of Postnational Possibility**

On May 23, 1846, Thomas Hart Benton, a U.S. senator from Missouri, delivered a speech in the Senate on the question of Oregon. Arguing for the possession of the entire region of Oregon by the United States, he began by dramatically waving an issue of the London Times. Claiming to “smell a rat” in an article published in the Times, Benton alerted his colleagues to what he saw as the British conspiracy to outsmart the United States’ claim to Oregon. Highlighting the importance of Oregon as a strategic location to build a commercial Empire on the Pacific region, he argued that Oregon constituted a prelude to American Empire, and its Pacific coastline signified a “North American road to India” (“Speech” 318). For the contemporary readers, Benton’s rhetoric of Empire may sound like an instance of jingoism, a momentary aberration from serious national policy. Within the context of the protracted national debate in the 1840s over the question of Oregon and California, however, Benton’s rhetoric of the “North American road to India” demonstrates the pervasive presence of the oriental imaginary in U.S. national narratives that sought to establish the United States as a global power. In fact, the Orient frequently appeared in literary writings, periodical pieces, and national policy debates, establishing the importance of the Asia-Pacific in nineteenth-century U.S. cultural imagination.

As part of the long-deferred Columbian dream, the Orient signified a multivalent imagined space, readily available for the political, mercantilist, cultural, and aesthetic articulation of U.S. nationhood. An examination of the Orient in its polymorphous

manifestations across the genres of nineteenth-century U.S. cultural narratives challenges the traditional understanding of national identity as a socially constructed entity largely definable in terms of domestic formations, taking shape within the borders of a nation-state.

My dissertation, then, is an exploration of the interstices between the Asiatic Orient and nineteenth-century U.S. cultural narratives—novels, travelogues, periodical pieces, and political discourses that document the nation's *real* and *imaginary* encounters with the Orient. Although scholars, for decades, have productively critiqued the discourse of Orientalism in order to interrogate the asymmetrical power relations between the West and the East, my specific concern in this study is to examine the role that the Orient played in the nineteenth-century United States, particularly in the construction of national and imperial identity. Instead of taking Orientalism as the one-way imposition of western power on the East, I examine the oriental imaginary in nineteenth-century U.S. literature and culture from a transnational perspective. In doing so, I contextualize the representation of the Orient within the specific cultural context of the transnational flow of goods, ideas, and peoples. As the discourse on the Orient took shape in a global context made possible by international trades, European colonization, and Western imperial interventions in the distant locales, a transnational perspective on the study of Western representation of the Orient makes a significant contribution to current scholarship on globalization. In particular, I take on the task of interrogating two dominant tendencies among scholars who write and theorize about the phenomenon called globalization: first, the idea that globalization is comparatively a recent phenomenon; and second, the recognition that globalization has, among other things,



brought about a significant change in our thinking about nation and nationalism to the point of making *the national* obsolete.

In the field of cultural analysis, the 1990s saw a remarkable growth in scholarship that uses “global or transnational perspective” to examine race, ethnicity, gender, and nation (Singh and Schmidt 3). One of the important outcomes of this mode of inquiry is that the notions of race, ethnicity, gender, and nation are no longer confined within the borders of a nation-state. Instead, the cultural narratives of ethnic, gender, and national identities often cross national borders, and one way to comprehend the ideological implications of such identity formations is to employ a transnational perspective.

Globalization, however, has often produced discourses that posit the *transnational* as the nation’s dialectical other, thus leaving the *nation* out of the scope of a historical and cultural analysis the *transnational*.<sup>1</sup> Robert A. Cross interrogates the tendency among Americanists to posit the so-called transnational turn as postnational development. He argues that scholars often view the recent “transnational turn,” particularly in American studies, as a “post-national” development, in which “the nationalist project is obsolete” (384). Against this tendency of erasing the *national* from globalist and transnationalist discourses, Cross emphasizes the need to scrutinize national discourses from an “international angle [that] recasts the very formation of race and ethnicity” (383).

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<sup>1</sup> Although scholars of globalization differ in their views on the modalities and structures of transnational “flows,” they seem to agree on the point that the concept “transnational” captures the flow of goods, ideas, and peoples across the borders of the nation-states. According to Shelley Fisher Fishkin, the concept “transnational” refers to “multidirectional flows of people, ideas, and goods and the social, political, linguistic, cultural, and economic crossroads generated in the process” (22). See Shelly Fisher Fishkin, “Crossroads of Cultures: Transnational Turn in American Studies,” *American Quarterly* 57.1 (2005): 17-57. Linda Basch argues, “The term ‘transnational’ is used to signal the fluidity with which ideas, objects, capital, and people now move across borders and boundaries.” See Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Christina Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (London: Routledge, 1993) 27.

He argues for the transnational perspective, especially in American studies, as an important critical method in the interrogation of U.S. cultural narratives. A transnational perspective, according to Cross, “challenges the preoccupation with social identity” that recasts the formation of national identity as a “domestic affair, emerging out of everyday experience in local settings (383). Part of the problem in globalist discourse, to some extent, lies in its uncritical eliding of the global with the transnational.

As a useful corrective to this uncritical conflation of the transnational and the global, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak differentiates a globalist approach from what she terms the “planetary” method of analysis. While the globe is a metaphor of compression, “a mode of the abstract,” the planet is “a differentiated political space . . .[,] the species of alterity, belonging to another system” (72). By showing the predicament of a globalist approach, especially in the field of comparative literary studies, Spivak argues that by “imposing the same system of exchange everywhere” (72), globalization recasts the grand narratives of totalization, in which scholars often elide differences and alterities in the interest of an all-encompassing system of exchange. Spivak’s “planetary [model],” as Emily Apter argues, “implies a transnational literacy that assumes an engagement with world politics and an ethical vigilance against environmental catastrophes in an age of remote possibility” (204). Although Spivak writes within the specific context of the globalization of comparative literary studies, her distinction between the globalist and the planetary approaches helps us understand the dynamics between the global and the local and between the transnational and the national.

The tension between the global and the local, according to Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake, emerges when we view globalization as “a new world-space,”

constructed “around the dynamics of capital logic moving across borders” and the local as a political space, fragmented into “contestatory enclaves of difference, coalition, and resistance” (1). Consequently, the global/local model often recasts the one-way system of exchange, in which the transnational capital flows from the center to periphery, thus leaving the ethno-spaces of Western metropolises unproblematically intact.<sup>2</sup> Against this monolithic model of global/local, Rob Wilson calls for a “dialectical optic” as a lens to examine the “new forms of contact culture emerging inside America” (3). His model allows us to locate the “fragmented” ethno-spaces within metropolises, not necessarily lying in the remote corners of the world, where global capitalism has left its recent impressions.

Thus, in order to explore the dual articulation of U.S. national identity as an anti-colonial empire, my dissertation makes significant connections between U.S. national formations, the transpacific imagination, and the representation of the Orient in U.S. cultural narratives across the genres. It is my contention that, while the rapidity of the global exchange of ideas, goods, and people problematizes nationalist projects in the traditional sense of the term, the tendency of viewing globalization as the gradual

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<sup>2</sup> Although my use of the term *ethno-space* is informed by Arjun Appadurai’s notion of *ethnoscapes* by which he means people who move between nations such as tourists, immigrants, exiles, guest workers, and refugees, I am also interested in such exilic subjects’ relationship with space as their movement and settlement also creates fragmented and disjunctive spaces within a nation state. Theorizing about multiple spaces created in metropolises and peripheries by diasporic and exilic subjects under “new global economy,” Appadurai contends that multivalent cultural flows under globalization challenge the homogenizing tendency of globalization. Appadurai proposes an elementary framework to explore such disjunctures as the relationships between five dimensions of global cultural flow: *ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes*, and *ideoscapes*. Although these multivalent spaces overlap and sustain each other, by *ethnoscapes*, he primarily means “the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world” constituted by “tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, and other moving groups” who “appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations” See Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy” in *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*, eds. Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003) 32.

For the productive use of the concept “ethnospace” in the context of U.S. relationship with the Asia-Pacific, see Rob Wilson, “Introduction: Asia/ Pacific as Space of Cultural Production,” *Boundary 2* 21.1 (spring 1994): 1-14.

weakening of the sovereignty of nation-states overlooks the transnational dimension that dominant U.S. cultural narratives have always assumed. For example, we can examine nineteenth-century cultural narratives, those produced long before the current version of “globalization” set in, to establish that U.S. national identity has, to a significant extent, emerged transnationally. By examining the representation of the Orient in a range of texts across genres, I argue that the formation of a nation as an “imagined community” occurred when U.S. cultural narratives positioned the “nation-thing” in relation to and as different from its global others. In this process of dialectical imagining, the Orient functioned as the nation’s outlying geographical and cultural space, a conceptual and material frontier that sets the limits and possibilities of American global power. This refractory national imaginary, however, also produced a rhetorical double bind.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, it promoted a vigorous form of postcolonial nationalism and envisioned the role of the United States as a protector of fledgling democracies in the Western Hemisphere; on the other hand, the transnational imaginary produced the nation’s foreign outposts, especially in the Asia-Pacific and the Caribbean, as readily available spaces for missionary, mercantilist, and militaristic interventions, thus sustaining a cleavage in the anti-imperialistic discourse itself.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> I am using the term “national imaginary” both in Benedict Anderson’s sense of nation as the “imagined communities” and Lacanian sense of “imaginary” as a psychic experience of identification with the spectral self. See Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (New York: Verso, 1991) 6-7.; Jacques Lacan, “The Mirror as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience,” Literary Theory: An Anthology, eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2001) 175-78.

<sup>4</sup> My use of “cleavage” follows Elleke Boehmer’s concept of “the double process of *cleaving*,” in which an anti-colonial imperialism uses the strategy of “*cleaving* from, moving away from colonial definitions” and “*cleaving* to: borrowing, taking over, and appropriating the ideological, linguistic, and textual forms of the colonial power” (105-6). See Elleke Boehmer, Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors (Oxford UP, 1995). While using Boehmer’s postcolonial use of the term “cleavage,” I also retain the contradictory logic of “cleavage” developed by Derrida in his various writings. For Derrida, “cleavage” is a site of alterity, a gap between the signifier and the signified, a promise of profit of an

Drawing on the critical insights developed by scholars, including Lawrence Buell, Frederick Buell, and Arif Dirlik, I propose a critical method of dialectical analysis in which we examine the cultural exchange between Western metropolises and the Orient not only as an “inside-out” flow of power, but also in term of the cultural work the Orient has performed within the Western metropolises in the formation of dominant national identity. In doing so, my study extends the scope of this transnational inquiry on two fundamental grounds. First, my study argues for the constitutive role that the Orient played in the formation of U.S. national identity as a hegemonic global power. Second, I demonstrate how oriental imagination in nineteenth-century U.S. culture helped articulate a national imaginary, which simultaneously embodies postcolonial nationalism and neocolonial imperialism. Thus, this study is not another critique of U.S. Orientalism but an examination of how U.S. narratives of nation employ an orientalist paradigm in (re)configuring the nation’s increasing role in global politics. In a significant sense, the project is the study of the cultural *consumption* of the orientalist textual archive rather than the *critique* of the orientalist project of knowledge-production.

### **Theoretical Perspective, Method, and Analysis**

I am indebted to Edward W. Said’s groundbreaking study of Orientalism. The publication of Orientalism in 1978 not only paved the way for the development of postcolonial studies, the field of study that I call my own, but it also showed generations of scholars how texts belong to the *real* world and how discourses of representation are

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investment and the impossibility of profit without a loss. For Derrida, the notion of *différance* instigates “a strange cleavage:” “a *différance* that can make a profit on its investment and a *différance* that misses its profit.” By retaining Derrida’s notion of “cleavage” as the site of alterity marked by race, gender, and sexuality and the contradictory logic of the economic, I conflate Boehmer’s concept of colonial discourse both as abrogation and appropriation in which differences are created for the economic logic of profitability. See Jacques Derrida, Margin of Philosophy. Trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1991) 19.

consequential in shaping national and international policies, politics, and even our thinking of ourselves and our sense of cultural belongings. In an age of postnational possibilities, a call for rethinking Orientalism to examine national narratives amounts to summoning the “specter” from the past, the specters of Orientalism and nationalism that we have come to believe to have exorcized long time ago. From the outset, then, the question, “why summon the specter?” becomes a legitimate concern about the perspective, method, and the relevance of a cultural analysis of this nature.

For Said, Orientalism is a Western way of “coming to terms with the Orient”; more specifically, Orientalism denoted a “corporate institution” based in Europe with the purpose of dealing with the Orient by “making statements about it, by teaching it, settling it, and ruling over it.” In short, Orientalism is a “Western style for dominating, re-structuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Orientalism 1-3). In his refusal to accord the Western discourses on the Orient the status of a benign hermeneutic exegesis, Said underlines the radical implication of his critique of Orientalism. He shows how statements of definition, classification, and analysis of the Orient are politically and ideologically motivated and how they function as structures of asymmetrical power relations between the West and the East. Conceptually, then, the term “Orientalism,” to a great extent, articulates an *a priori* critical attitude and a theoretical bias with serious implications for the possibility of cross-cultural understanding.

It is no wonder, then, that in “Research and Reflection,” Wilhelm Halbfass, Said’s contemporary and a prominent Indologist, alludes to Orientalism as “the specter” that haunts cross-cultural understanding (“Research” 1). It haunts the study of Western representation of the Orient and the forms of knowledge produced about the Orient; for

Halbfass, the term “Orientalism” itself embodies the specter. Referring to the publication of Said’s Orientalism in 1978, two years earlier than the publication of his own Inden und Europa, Halbfass, in retrospect, writes that he “was completely unaware of the phenomenon [Orientalism] and its name” (“Research” 1). Rather, he took Said’s “new, rhetorically powerful and polemically charged” use of the term lightly, as the term Orientalism, according to Halbfass, was “on the verge of becoming obsolete” (“Research” 1). Thus, for Halbfass and those who followed his lead, “Orientalism” presented a methodological as well as an epistemological problem, particularly for those scholars whose studies of non-Western cultures are directed toward cross-cultural understanding.

Consequently, following the genealogy Said traced of “Orientalism” as parallel to the history of Western colonization and imperial domination (3), critics of Orientalism and postcolonial theorists initially developed a theoretical matrix to analyze the Western encounter with the Orient/East in terms of neatly drawn fault-lines such as center/periphery, colonized/colonizer, and the West and its global other. In the field of postcolonial studies, such reductionist structures proposed in the interest of developing an overarching theoretical coherence ignore specific differences, regional variations, historical discontinuities, and varied forms of local manifestations.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ever since the development of Postcolonial Studies, critics have questioned the tendency among postcolonial theorists to posit a homogeneous postcolonial world as opposed to an equally monolithic West. For instance, Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge warn of the danger of the idea of “the” postcolonial, as if there were but one kind of dynamic shared by all. See Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, “What is post (-) colonialism?” Textual Practice 5.3 (1991), 400. Anne McClintock also questions the unproblematic temporal progression that the term “postcolonial” implies, arguing that the term “postcolonial” carries the same sense of teleological history that it sets out to dismantle. See Anne McClintock, “Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term ‘Postcolonialism,’” Social Text 10.31 (1992), 84-98. For pedagogical implications of postcolonial studies in the Western academies, especially when the so-called Third World literatures are reduced to an easily packaged category of “postcolonial literatures” irrespective of geographical, cultural, and ethnic differences, see Vilashini Cooppan, “W(h)ither Postcolonial Studies? Towards the Transnational

Although Said devoted his study to French and British approaches to Islam, other scholars such as Roman Inden have productively used the Saidian insight to “deconstruct” the “Orientalist construction” of India. According to Inden, such a deconstructive reading aims at producing “a knowledge of India that helps restore that power,” a power that would inscribe “human agency” in Indological knowledge (403). Inden directs the critique of Indological discourse toward what he calls the Western tendency of essentializing. “Indological discourse,” he argues, “holds (or simply assumes) that the essence of Indian civilization is just the opposite of the West’s,” in which “human agency” has been “displaced . . . not onto a reified State or Market but onto a substantialized Caste” (402-3). Interestingly, he attributes the distorted understanding of Indic tradition in the West to human psychology rather than to a “will to power.” According to him, the faulty perception of India in Western discourses can be diagnosed in terms of the Freudian concept of condensation and displacement, in which “parts appear as wholes” and “associated elements appear as entities” (413). If we follow Freud and structuralist linguists, such as Roman Jakobson, whose ideas inform Inden’s interpretive strategies, Inden’s critique of Indological discourse risks becoming yet another instance of de-politicization. After all, the concepts of condensation and displacement (psychic mechanism) and synecdoche and metaphor (linguistic principles) are constituents of human mind, not ideologically motivated social acts. Fred Dallamyr argues that the Saidian “deconstruction of Orientalism is marked by somewhat an indiscriminate fusion of concrete historical observations with fundamental epistemological and metaphysical claims, regarding the status of knowledge” (118). The

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Study of Race and Nation,” Post Colonial Theory and Criticism, edited by Laura Chrisman and Binita Parry (Cambridge, London: Brewer, 2000) 1-35.



rhetorical strength of Dallamyr's and Halbfass's contention comes from their conscious use of the argument of dissociation, in which a concept is split into two interpretive trajectories. As it emerges from Dallamyr's and Halbfass's contentions to Said's critique of Orientalism, one needs to distinguish the historical knowledge from the philosophical understanding in order to go beyond Orientalism. When stripped of a historical context, a philosophical understanding takes the form of a hermeneutical exegesis. Drawing on Hans-Georg Gadamer's notion of an intra-subjective understanding, both Halbfass and Dallamyr call for "a dialogical engagement between reader and text, interpreter and interpretendum" as an alternative to the Saidian critique of Orientalism (Dallamyr 120), leaving the hermeneutic subject unquestioned. Dallamyr's corrective in fact invites a more serious question: can there be a hermeneutic exegesis without assuming the power of a hermeneutic subject?

Halbfass himself asks, "Is there a truly common ground for a comparison of different traditions of thought and a neutral universal medium through which they can communicate?" (Being12). He readily answers, "Such a common basis is provided by the logical and linguistic analysis and exemplified by the method of modern analytical philosophy of the Anglo-Saxon type" (14). The seemingly depoliticized study of the Orient, then, inscribes the racial and hermeneutic supremacy of a European subject, as he associates the philosophical method of understanding with the subject's racial allegiance and cultural location.

Thus, it is evident that the logic of "specter" can be extended to the post-Orientalist project itself. If an embedded critical bias haunts the Saidian critique of Orientalism, in which all forms of Western discourse on the Orient are taken as an

instance of Western “will to power,” the post-Orientalist project, in its attempt to go beyond Orientalism, perpetuates the spectral presence of the universal European subject whose privileged racial and epistemological location guarantees its ultimate hermeneutic power.

Between the Saidian indictment of Western Orientalism that constructs an equally homogenous “global other” contra-poised against an essentializing West and the post-Orientalist project of depoliticized hermeneutic understanding, the representation of the Orient in Western discourse needs to be examined across systems of discourses, locations, and institutional sites. In the beginning of Orientalism, Said cautions, “It would be wrong to conclude that the Orient was essentially an idea, or a creation with no corresponding reality,” though the Orient as an idea “has history and tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West” (4). But the “history and tradition of thought” that informs the textualization of the Orient in the West manifests itself in greater variety and disjuncture than a systemic coherence.

In fact, the “Orient” has a long and tangled relationship with eighteenth and nineteenth-century imperialism. European colonial and imperial powers used the concept “Orient” either to define indigenous peoples as degenerate “others” in need of colonial rule or to alternatively valorize the “Orient,” as in the case of the “Indic Orient,” as the originator of civilization and culture. As the rediscovery and consolidation of “Aryanism” in the early phase of British presence in India shows, imperialists often appropriated such concepts as “Orient” and “Aryanism” in order to establish their own racial supremacy.

In Orientalism and Race, Tony Ballantyne demonstrates that European imperial powers deployed the concept of “Orient” more flexibly and strategically. He rejects the “vision of Orientalism or colonial knowledge as the hegemonic imposition of metropolitan ideologies upon colonial societies” and, instead, argues that the Orientalist knowledge production consists of “imperial systems of circulation, recovering the transmission of ideas, information and identities across the empire” (16). Central to Ballantyne’s analysis is the concept of “Aryanism,” which the European imperial powers first appropriated to establish the racial superiority of the Eurasians and then strategically deployed to manage the empire locally and situationally.

In this proliferation of ideas and information, the Indic Orient, however, functioned as the point of origin and the structure of reference to a wide range of Orientalist discourses on the near East, the mid-East, and the far-East. One important aspect of Indic Orientalism, as Ballantyne compellingly argues, was the rediscovery of the so-called Aryanism. Early Orientalists—William Jones (Britain); Friedrich Max Muller, Johann Gottfried Herder, and Johann Wolfgang Goethe (Germany); James Bradstreet Greenough, Charles Rockwell Lanman, and Henry Clarke Warren (United States)—used “Aryanism” to establish the linguistic, ethnological, and racial affinities between European civilizations and the ancient early Vedic civilization of the Indies. As a result, the Indic Orient also became a prized entity for those who were resisting the dominant representation of the indigenous people as the racialized “other.” Towards the end of eighteenth-century in Ireland, for instance, Charles Vallancy laced Orientalism with the study of Irish language, culture, and history. In the Vindication of the Ancient History of Ireland (1786), Vallancy argued that Irish culture “exhibited profound

affinities with a range of Eastern traditions” (qtd. in Ballantyne 36). Vallancy’s appropriation of the Orient reveals another facet of Orientalism, mainly the construction of the Orient as a site of resistance against European colonization.

With multiple memberships in the Oriental Societies across Europe and the United States, Orientalists traveled across the globe, shared research and presented ideas, thus creating a network of ideas and concepts. As a Euro-American project of knowledge production, Orientalism thus generated a discursive network through which ideas and systems of knowledge circulated transnationally. In the context of nineteenth-century U.S. culture, the textualization of the Orient, to a great extent, contributed to the formation of transnational imaginary as one of the constitutive elements of U.S. national and imperial identity.

#### **“Transnational Turn” in American Studies and the Question of *the National***

The proliferation of American Studies programs across the globe has led to a discussion about the discipline’s object of study: what happens when a discipline that originated with an objective of studying a national culture becomes transnational? In her presidential address to the Annual Conference of American Studies Association in 2004, Shelley Fisher Fishkin poses a question: “What would the field of American Studies look like if *transnational* rather than *national* were at its center?” (emphasis original, 21). For Fishkin, employing a transnational perspective in American studies amounts to de-centering “the national” in order to accommodate the voices of the figures who “have been marginalized” in the discourse of national identity (Fishkin 30). Within the historical context of American studies as a discipline, the idea of de-centering the “national” opens up the possibilities for staging alternative histories. But such a counter-

historical analysis only becomes relevant and effective when we bring the multivalent histories to interrogate the supposedly unified *national* history. The “transnational turn” in American Studies has given rise of the discourse of postnationalism, understood as the necessary process of decentering the hegemonic presence of the national in the study of a national culture. Like the “specter” of Orientalism in cross-cultural studies, the *national* has turned into a spectral presence. Interestingly, both positions—post-Orientalist and post-nationalist—invoke globalization as the condition that has made it possible to move beyond Orientalism and nationalism and usher in an era of postnational formations.

There are fundamental intellectual and institutional factors contributing to this line of thought. First, for scholars who use postcolonial perspectives in American studies, a transnational perspective in the context of “globalization” signifies “the declining sovereignty of nation-states and their increasing inability to regulate economic and cultural exchange” (Hardt and Negri xii); and second, “the transnational turn” also refers to the globalization of American studies itself. Highlighting the productive engagement such international programs of American Studies are likely to facilitate, Fishkin calls for studies that focus on “the cultural work that American literature does in a range of social and political contexts around the world” (32). Such a productive collaboration, she believes, de-centers “the national,” thus opening up the field for international perspectives.

According to Cross, to “globalize American studies is to displace American perspectives” as it is an act of “looking through a reverse lens of a telescope” (384). Although the work done in the field of American Studies outside the United States interrogates the self-authenticating power of the work produced in U.S. academies, it

does not necessarily displace “the national” from the interpretive matrix. Rather, an international perspective on U.S. history and culture raises a methodological question: how is a nation’s literature studied transnationally?

Critics such as John Carlos Rowe, José Saldivár, and Carolyn Porter highlight the need of a comparative perspective that allows us to transcend the narrow nationalistic frame of reference in American studies.<sup>6</sup> In particular, Rowe has proposed a pan-American or hemispheric model of American studies. In “Postnationalism, Globalism, and the New American Studies,” Rowe calls for comparative courses as alternatives to courses based on the “nationalist paradigm” which “has often led to the neglect of other nations in the Western hemisphere” (13). Such an approach, he contends, will utilize the borders both as “divisions” and “contact” and pay “attention to . . . hybridities” (12). In the interest of displacing the hegemonic national culture as an object of study, Rowe overlooks the possibility of examining national narratives from a comparative perspective. As Heinz Ickstadt convincingly argues, “[T]he study of American culture can have a national focus and a transnational perspective, since cultural identities are the result of complex cultural exchanges embedded in histories that extend beyond national borderlines” (556). Although scholars working in the fields of ethnic studies, women’s studies, and gender studies have questioned the idea of a homogeneous American national identity based on a common cultural experience, such interrogations have mostly been carried out within the borders of the nation.

In a postethnic, postnational, and global context of American studies, Janice Radway insists on the importance of understanding the relational and differential nature

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<sup>6</sup> Also see José Saldivár, *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997); Carolyn Porter, “What We Know that We don’t Know: Remapping American Literary Studies,” *American Literary History* (Fall 1994): 467-526.

of American identity. She argues that American national identity is “constructed through relations of difference” (54). According to her, the quintessential U.S. national identity as white, male, and heterosexual is constantly posited and constituted in relationship with and yet different from the ethnic minorities, women, and persons of different sexual orientations. One way to redress this unique formation of American identity, she suggests, is to acknowledge the constitutive roles of the peoples who remain on the margin of national discourse. For her, the margins of national discourse are located within national borders, stratified across ethnic, gender, and racial fault-lines. A transnational perspective complicates Radway’s dialectical model by mapping out the multi-directional trajectories of national narratives not only within domestic spaces but also across national borders.

A transnational perspective into a national culture also allows us to interrogate the very process of national formation. In his Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and Transatlantic Imaginary, Paul Giles argues that national histories “cannot be written simply from inside” (6). In order to explore the transnational roots of a national culture, he proposes what he terms the “critical process of virtualization,” in which one has to look at national narratives from a “comparative angle of vision” (1). Giles’s spectorial metaphor conjures up reflected or refracted mirror images that “deprive the objects reflected of their traditional comforts of depth and perspective” (2). When seen as virtual images, national narratives “hollow out” each other, thus revealing themselves as fictive constructions. In his study of British and U.S. national narratives, Giles focuses on the point of negotiation, rather than establishing an antithetical relationship between two national literary cultures. He further argues that the “conceptions of national identity on

both sides of the Atlantic emerged through engagement with—and, often, deliberate exclusion of—transatlantic imaginary” (1). In a significant way, his method of “critical virtualization” recalls Lawrence Buell’s argument that the classic U.S. literatures of the mid-nineteenth-century exhibit postcolonial anxiety by constantly evoking the British literary tradition as a point of reference.<sup>7</sup>

Following Julia Kreteva’s insight of “transnational or international position itself as a point of intersection,” he reveals the “coercive aspects of imagined community,” whose ultimate presuppositions can only be known through “a reversed or mirrored” perspective (17). In this process of virtualization, there is no inherent contradiction in proposing a contiguous relationship between the national and the transnational: “what is inside the framework defined as ‘America’” must play off “what is outside it” (11). Contesting the neat equation between transnational and postnational in the current globalization discourse, Frederick Buell contends that the “demise of the nation has been greatly exaggerated,” and in fact, the “recent insurgent postnationalism” expresses “a new breed of cultural nationalism” (550). While Giles’s and Buell’s approaches counter the idea of U.S. exceptionalism by showing how the transatlantic imaginary worked in the formation of U.S. national identity, they are less attentive to the slippage centrally located in U.S. national narratives: a perpetual sliding from nationalism to imperialism, from postcolonial anxiety to imperial confidence. In this context, one needs to address not only “transatlantic imaginary” but also the often-understudied “transpacific

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<sup>7</sup> Drawing on Harold Bloom’s “antinomian” theory of anxiety of influence, Buell argues that U.S. ante-bellum literature shows “marks of post-colonial anxiety” most prominently visible in 1) “the semi-Americanization of English language,” 2) “cultural hybridization,” 3) “the expectation [expressed in the contemporary reviews and criticism] that artists be responsible agents for achieving national liberation,” 4) a fascination for “post-European pastoral,” and 6) a pervasive sense of “belatedness.” See Lawrence Buell, “Postcolonial Anxiety in Classic U.S. Literature,” in Singh and Schmidt 196-216.



imaginary” and its role in shaping nineteenth-century U.S. imperial identity. Thus, in the present study, I analyze the construction and representation of the Asiatic Orient in general and the Indic Orient in particular as the significant corollaries of transnational imaginary.

### **Chapter Organization: An Overview**

The first chapter, “The Indic Orient and Transnational Imagination: Texts and Contexts,” demonstrates how U.S. trade relations with the Orient, in the early nineteenth-century context of Boston’s commercial relations with the East (1790-1840), generated varied forms of cultural practices, including trade exhibits, annual parades, and oriental pageantries. Such visual displays of “things oriental,” as I maintain, metonymically represented the entire culture of the origin, rendering distant cultures and locations into a pleasurable spectacle for the popular gaze. Alternatively, thus displayed in the Western metropolises, the Orient elicited romantic nostalgia for the “oriental simplicity of mind” and its “blissful passivity” and “barbaric gorgeousness.” Such popular imagination about the Orient also informed the political discourses on U.S. national policies; especially during the Congressional debates over the question of Oregon and California in the 1840s, politicians utilized oriental imageries to justify U.S. continental expansion.

In the second part of the same chapter, I focus on the arguments of prominent politicians, including Thomas Hart Benton and Henry William Seward, who employed the rhetoric of “Asiatic markets” and the prospect of a racial union with the “yellow races” of Asia to justify the annexation of California. I maintain that the construction of Pacific coastal states as strategic locations for U.S. global reach provided the necessary rationale for the continental expansion. The expansionists, however, envisioned U.S.

presence in the Orient as an anti-imperial strategy, especially in re-channeling the Oriental trade, the presumed source of imperial power, from European empires to the Western hemisphere. As they argued for a hegemonic U.S. presence in the Asia-Pacific sector as the necessary condition for the hemispheric balance of power, the rhetorical construction of Pacific coastal states as a “North American road to India” produced an ideological slippage in U.S. national discourses, as such discourses shifted their focus from an anti-colonial nationalism to benevolent imperialism.

Popular narratives that imagine U.S. encounter with the Orient also reflect the political call for the increasing role of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region. The second chapter, “Popular Orientalism, Empire, and Nineteenth-Century U.S. Literary Culture” focuses on Edgar Allen Poe’s “A Tale of the Ragged Mountains” (1844), L. Clarke Davis’s Stranded Ship: A Story of Sea and Shore (1869), and Jane Goodwin Austin’s “The Loot of Lucknow” (1868). All these narratives employ the distinct historical context of colonial conflicts in India to examine the cultural and political formations at home. In “A Tale of the Ragged Mountains,” Poe develops the theme of “colonial doubling” and uses Warren Hastings’s wars in India as a way to comment on U.S. continental expansion of the 1840s. Davis, father of Richard Harding Davis, creates a protagonist, Luke Connor, a Harvard graduate and an acquitted murderer on a dubious court testimony, who sets out to Australia after a failed mining venture in California. While in Australia, however, he enlists himself in the Queen’s army bound to India to suppress the “Sepoy Rebellion” of 1857. After the heroic battle under General Neil [Ritchie] in Kanpur with the “Mohammedans” and “yellow Sepoys,” he not only mitigates personal guilt but also receives the Victoria Cross, claiming a place for himself

among “the great heroes of India.” Written against the background of the “Indian Mutiny” of 1857, Austin’s “The Loot of Lucknow,” a story about the adventure of a cursed jewel, presents the incidental encounter with the Orient as exotic and romantic, yet dangerous enough to de-stabilize the “enclosed” domestic space of an American home. By imagining an active U.S. participation in colonial conflicts abroad, these stories blur the boundaries between the domestic and the foreign.

The third chapter, “The Orient, Asiatic Racial Forms, and the Aesthetics of Imperial Desire in Frank Norris’s Moran of the Lady Letty and The Octopus,” takes on the representation of Asiatic racial forms in the turn-of-the-century U.S. literary culture. While Moran expresses a nativist racial paranoia toward the Asiatics and views the Asiatic presence within the nation as a threat to normative national identity predicated on Anglo-Saxon racial purity, The Octopus projects a vision of Asiatic markets for American wheat as a panacea to the economic crisis at home. Norris’s ambivalent representation of the Asiatics, I contend, is part of his aesthetic politics of promoting an exclusionary nationhood at home and an equally expansive globalism abroad. The actual U.S. adventures overseas at the turn of the century also gave rise to counter discursive formations as prominent writers and activists, such as Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, Andrew Carnegie, and Bishop Henry Porter, opposed U.S. imperial interventions overseas, especially in the Philippines. As an active member of Anti-Imperialistic League, Mark Twain championed the anti-imperialistic cause through essays and pamphlets such as “To the Person Sitting in the Darkness” and “King Leopold’s Soliloquy” and lambasted William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt for their imperialistic ambitions.

The final chapter, “‘A Connecticut Yankee’ in the Court of Empire: The Orient, Race, and Imperialistic Nostalgia in Mark Twain’s Letters from Hawaii and Following the Equator,” examines Mark Twain’s travel narratives, Letters from Hawaii and Following the Equator, an account of a year-long lecture tour of the world— Australia, New Zealand, Ceylon, India, and South Africa—he undertook in 1895. By counterposing Twain’s position on empire and imperialism with his views on the Orient and race, I argue that Twain’s critique of imperialism demonstrates the centrality of what Renato Rosaldo terms the “imperial nostalgia,” which uses “putatively static savage societies” as points of reference to map out the progressive changes taking place under the ideologically constructed mission of “white man’s burden.” As his travel writings demonstrate, Twain’s disillusionment at the workings of imperialism emanates from a profound sense of “mission gone wrong.” As a result, Twain directs his anti-imperialism more toward recuperating American republican values than critiquing imperialism as a form of ideology.

My project thus interrogates and challenges popular approaches in current scholarship in nineteenth-century U.S. literary studies. It goes beyond the critique of Orientalism in showing how the discourse of Orientalism, in the specific context of the nineteenth-century United States, complicated internally stratified racial, gender, and ethnic differences at home. By locating the Asiatic Orient within U.S. national discourses, it also challenges the traditional interpretation of U.S. continental expansion as domestic or hemispheric formations. Moreover, it establishes the roots of a transnational imaginary within the nationalist project of nineteenth-century U.S. culture

and demonstrates how the so-called transnational turn in American studies may not necessarily be a post-ethnic or post-national development.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **The Asiatic Orient and Transnational Imaginary: Texts and Contexts**

*I am refreshed and expanded when the freight-train rattles past me, and I smell the stores which go dispensing their odors all the way from Long Wharf to Lake Champlain, reminding me of foreign ports, of coral reefs, and Indian oceans, and tropical climes, and the extent of the globe I feel more like a citizen of the world at the sight of the palm-leaf which will cover so many flaxen New England heads next summer, the Manila hemp and cocoa-nuts husks, the old junk, gunny-bags, scrap iron, and rusty rails.*

*Henry David Thoreau, "The Iron Horse"*

In the midst of his meditation over nature and its vanishing glory in the surrounding landscape, Henry David Thoreau, the self-professed hermit of Concord, ironically states that he feels "refreshed" and "expanded" by the rattling sound of a freight train. In an ironic overstatement, he mentions that the spectacle of the most material of all objects—"the Manila hemp, cocoa-nut husks, gunny bags, scrap iron, and rusty rails"—carried by the rattling freight-train reminds him of distant locales and cultures and makes him "feel more like a citizen of the world" ("Iron Horse" 66). While watching the freight train pass along Fitchburg Railroad, which touched the pond about "a hundred rods" south of Thoreau's log-cabin, he feels intimidated by the encroaching presence of "commerce" and "civilization" symbolized by the "iron horse." It is also ironic that the transnational flow of goods not only challenges the limit of his own provincialism, it also makes possible for him to indulge in an armchair cosmopolitanism. By expressing an anxiety over the inflow of goods from the Indian Subcontinent, the source of his intellectual inspiration, Thoreau reveals a familiar mode of representing the East or the Orient in western discourses. To enter into the discourse of representation,

one must strip the Orient of its material context. The Orient must signify the dematerialized habit of mind. Elsewhere, he wrote, “Behold the difference between the Oriental and the Occidental. The former has nothing to do in this world; the latter is full of activity” (A Week 114). Despite Thoreau’s use of the imagery of “Manila hemp and cocoa-nuts husks, the old junk, gunny-bags” to demonstrate the corrupting influence of materialism on nature and man, his two conflicting surmises about the Orient—one as a distant source of commerce and trade and another as a dialectical other of what the West signifies—activity and progress—underscore the kind of ambivalence that marks the representation of the Orient. In nineteenth-century U.S. cultural narratives, the Asiatic Orient, as a default imaginary, hangs suspended as an object of desire, fantasy, and repulsion, shaping popular imagination, influencing national policies, and setting the course of expeditions and explorations.

Central to this Asiatic imaginary, however, is the construction of Asia-Pacific as a land of “barbaric wealth” whose possession guaranteed the U.S. national prosperity and international prestige. As the thoroughfare of colonial and imperial contacts, the Orient appealed to the Western imagination for exploration, travel, and commercial control. For instance, John Ladyard, the self-styled American navigator who accompanied Captain Cook’s expedition to the Pacific, justified his journal writing by stating that his journal would be “useful to America in general but particularly to Northern States by opening a most valuable trade across the North Pacific Ocean to China and the East Indies” (qtd. in Perry 19). The ambition of opening the trade routes to Asia for the newly independent nation, as John Curtis Perry notes, may seem “more myth than reality” (21). Nevertheless, it shows how persistently U.S. cultural imagination employed oriental

imaginary to prefigure the nation's destiny. Some twenty years later, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark's celebrated expedition followed Ladyard's steps for the opening of the trade route to the Pacific. In United States and East Asia, R. W. Van Alstyne argues that Jefferson's interest in the Lewis and Clark expedition, among other things, lay in his insistence on finding a "North American road to India" (21). One magazine termed the expedition as "the important event" undertaken with the objective of bringing the flow of "East India trade into the channel of Columbia and Missouri Rivers" ("Trade to India" 127). The writer also lauds Jefferson for his "evident design" of rerouting the trade whose course "has never changed . . . without affecting the destiny of nations" ("Trade to India" 127). The tendency of associating the India trade with the destiny of nations, especially with the presumed rise and fall of empires, has been a recurrent rhetorical trope in popular writings as well as in serious national debates.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The fabulous wealth of the Indies informs the post-Revolutionary celebration of the new Republic in Timothy Dwight's famous poem "America." Charting the future course of the new nation, Dwight writes, "Beyond the regions of the flaming zone/ For thee, proud INDIA'S spicy isles shall blow/Bright silk be wrought, and sparkling diamonds glow/ Earth's richest realms their treasures shall unfold/ And op'ning mountains yield the flaming gold." See Timothy Dwight, "America: Or a Poem on the Settlement of British Colonies" in The Major Poems of Timothy Dwight, 1752-1917 (Gainesville, FL.: Scholars Facsimiles and Reprints, 1969) 11-12.

Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Fate" and Walt Whitman's "Passage to India" are some of the notable examples of nineteenth-century poetic imagination that constructed India as a mother of civilization and a home of mysticism. The idea of East India trade and commerce was so pervasive that even a realist fiction writer like William Dean Howells employed "East India trade" as the backdrop to portray Boston's declining economic prosperity in his lesser known novel, A Woman's Reason (1882).

Besides narratives that deal with the theme of the Asiatic Orient in a greater length, there are texts that make an oblique and yet meaningful mythological, geographical, and thematic reference to Asiatic contexts. For instance, Melville uses the Hindu myth of Lord Vishnu's incarnation as a fish to discuss the metaphysical dimension of the white whale, which jealously guarded "his harem" like an oriental male. In House of the Seven Gables, Hester Prynne's motivations for life comes from her deep conviction that an uncle "who has sailed for India, fifty years ago" would one day "return and adapt her to be the comfort of his very extreme and decrepit age, and adorn her with pearls, diamonds, and oriental shawls and turbans, and make her ultimate heiress of his unreckonable riches." See Nathaniel Hawthorne, House of the Seven Gables (New York: Penguin, 1986) 64. In Dora Deane (1856), Mary Jane Holmes, a prolific writer of popular fiction, uses the trope of "East India uncle" whose unchecked money gotten in India and refined sentiment saves the future of his orphan niece, Dora, at home. The popularity of "India" was such that writers even used "India" and the "Orient" for the sake of publicity in the literary market. For instance, E. D. E. N. Southworth titled one of her novels as "India: the Pearl of Pearl River" only to exoticize the beauty of her heroine named "India" and place her in the comfort of a plantation home named "Cashmere."



Such commercial agendas of national prosperity, however, frequently appropriated the popular narratives of the Orient to foreground the rhetoric of enterprising American character. As John Kuo Wei Tchen argues, “merchant and national wealth, therefore, was contingent on either taking over of established trade routes to the richest Asiatic lands and empires from European rivals or the finding of new routes” (21). As a fluid signifier, whose signification depended on varied forms of mercantilist, political, and cultural contexts, the Indic Orient remained one of the constituent elements of U.S. national imagination. In the sections that follow, I examine the location of the Asiatic Orient in U.S. national imagination, mainly popular culture, political and academic discourses, and missionary writings. In doing so, I also demonstrate how the representation of the Asiatic Orient in a variety of socio-cultural sites contributed to the formation of U.S. national identity.

### **Oriental Displays: The “Imagined *Ecumene*” of Popular Imagination**

*Divitis Indiae usqua ad altimum sinum.*<sup>2</sup>  
Salem Town Seal

As the inscription of Salem’s town seal suggests, the Indic Orient, during the heyday of Boston’s economic prosperity, signified the untapped source of wealth. The India trade fostered and sustained Salem’s reputation as a global trade post until New York and other emerging Pacific coastal cities, including San Francisco, superseded Boston’s economic prominence. The trade relations with the Orient, as such, generated a wide range of cultural practices, including trade exhibits, annual parades, and Oriental pageantries. When goods and artifacts cross national borders stripped of their specific

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<sup>2</sup> The quote is inscribed in Salem’s town seal, which is translated as: “To the farthest gulf of the wealth of India.”

social and cultural contexts, they become objects of representation, often featured in advertisements, newspapers columns, and museum catalogues. Immersed in this symbolic system of exchange and circulation, they represent the entire culture of origin, making distant cultures and locations identifiable and readily available for the popular gaze.

The visual forms of oriental displays created alternative sites of difference, making it possible to imagine the nation in relation to and as different from racially marked transnational others. Carol A. Breckenridge terms these ethno-cultural sites as “imagined ecumemes,” very much like Benedict Anderson’s notion of “imagined communities” (196).<sup>3</sup> But, unlike Anderson’s notion of imagined communities, “the imagined ecumeme,” a product of mercantilist realism, formed “a discursive space that was global” (196). The visual display of remote cultures and peoples offered transnational “literacy” and helped create the national imaginary of cultural belonging. These imagined ecumemes, in the form of pageanttries, museum exhibits, traveling shows, and parades, also constructed a racialized and ethnitized transnational “other” within the nation, thereby rendering the supposed common culture and language, based on the affiliative national belongingness, more visible. Thus displayed in the imagined ecumemes, the Orient occasioned the discourse of representation permeated with hierarchical binaries, between Western activity and Eastern passivity, progress and stagnation, religion and paganism. Alternatively, the Orient elicited nostalgia for

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<sup>3</sup> Benedict Anderson defines *nation* as “an *imagined* political *community*—and imagined as both inherently *limited* and *sovereign*.” According to him, “[t]he nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations.” See Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (New York: Verso, 1991) 6-7.

primitivistic romanticism, exemplified by the “blissful passivity” of the Orient and its “barbaric gorgeousness.”

The presence of oriental goods and artifacts in Western metropolises coincided with colonial encounters. Often collected as the evidence of conquest and exotic relics of distant cultures, such oriental objects became a part of the cultural capital. For instance, as early as in 1799, Boston’s prominent businessmen established the East India Marine Society in Salem with the main objective of “promoting a knowledge [sic] of navigation and trade to East Indies” (“Intelligence” 284).<sup>4</sup> The most remarkable function of the Society, as promulgated in its Constitution, was to collect information about India and gather useful information regarding navigation routes. The Society required its members “to receive a blank journal,” in which the navigator recorded the “occurrences of his voyage” (“Intelligence” 282). Later on, with the establishment of East India Marine Hall in 1825, the East India Marine Society put a large collection of oriental goods on display. By the late twenties, the East India Marine Hall, along with the Athenaeum, had already become one of Salem’s important cultural attractions.

Besides providing entertainment to the viewers, the spectacle of oriental goods and artifacts displayed in trade exhibits and museums crystallized binaries between activity and passivity, display and use, and between stagnation and progress. In its issue of 12 March 1830, the Christian Watchman, a prominent Baptist magazine, reported of the magnificent view of the East India Marine Hall, which possessed “gems collected from every quarter of the world,” mostly “curiosities . . . chiefly imported from the East

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<sup>4</sup> The society was “composed of persons who navigated the seas beyond Cape of Good Hope or Cape Horn as masters or supercargoes of vessels that belong to Salem.” See “Salem East India Society,” The North American Review and Miscellaneous Journal 7.17 (Jan 1818): 283. Among others, the most noticeable founding members of the Society were Nathaniel Bowditch, Jacob Crowninshield, Benjamin Hodges, Benjamin Carpenter, and Jonathan Lambert.

Indies.” Those goods reminded the reporter of “many of the wonders of those regions of idolatry” (“East India Marine Hall” 42). The reporter expressed his bewilderment as he saw the “specimen of handwriting, which show[ed] the beginning of the civilization in the barbarian [sic].” But he drew consolation by contrasting the “bald eagle . . . ready to soar to the sun” against “the sloth, whose name signifies his [the East] whole character” (emphasis original, “East India Marine Hall” 42). Quite remarkably, the viewer contrasts the soaring eagle, an emblematic expression of the new nation’s upward moving energy with Eastern sloth and lethargy, thus not only setting a fault-line between “us” and “them” but also reaffirming his own sense of national allegiance.

Moreover, oriental displays were part of the public spectacle and viewers could experience the Orient through publicly organized parades, in which people would impersonate Orientals to demonstrate the life and character of the East. The East India Marine Society organized such annual parades, in which local and national dignitaries participated to witness the “magnificent spectacle of the East.” As avenues of performative racialism, such displays reenacted the class and caste hierarchies prevalent in the Oriental world. In Salem and the Indies: The Story of the Great Commercial Era of the City, James Duncan Phillips mentions an 1804 parade, in which “a person dressed as a Chinaman . . . and four husky Negroes dressed as East Indians and bearing the famous palanquin” marched along the streets “each carrying some East Indian curiosities” (qtd. in Prasad 14). Often such parades were highly publicized events. For instance, in a parade organized by the East India Marine Society of Salem on 14 October 1825 to mark the establishment of the East India Marine Hall, President John Quincy Adams; Josiah Quincy, the Mayor of Boston; and Rev. Kirkland, the President of Harvard, participated

in the festivity and the procession. One magazine reported that a procession passed through the principal streets “with military and music,” and to suit for the special occasion, “the officers dressed in Oriental costume” (“Flotsam” 243).<sup>5</sup> The spectacle of the Orient problematized the racial marking. Race, as a technology of the othering process, became more of a performance than an essence. However, this othering process was significant, as it readily transferred domestic racial categories to international contexts.

In the mid-century, circuses, freak shows, and pageants also featured the Orient. The most notable was the widely publicized “Barnum’s Great Asiatic Caravan” that began in 1849. Joel Benton, one of Barnum’s early biographers, mentions the lavish and elaborate preparation that Barnum undertook for the great traveling show, featuring a museum, a menagerie, and a circus ([A Unique Story](#)). Benton also mentions a report that stated that Barnum spent almost one hundred thousand dollars for the preparation of the show, which included charting a ship named *Regatta* to Ceylon to procure “a number of elephants or other wild animals” either by “purchase or capture” ([A Unique Story](#)). When Barnum’s cargo arrived in New York in 1849, “ten elephants harnessed in pairs to a gigantic chariot . . . paraded up the Broadway past Irving House” ([A Unique Story](#)). Barnum’s extraordinary feat of capturing elephants and other exotic wild animals in the distant jungles of Ceylon not only caught the imagination of the viewing public but also offered a cogent topic with which the media could construct an ethnic other.

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<sup>5</sup> The information is based on an undated letter written by H. B. Sigsbee to the President of the East India Marine Society, calling for the preservation of Salem’s historical heritage. The letter was originally published in [Salem Gazette](#) and republished by [Historical Magazine and Notes and Queries Concerning the Antiquities, History, and Biography of America](#) in its October 1, 1869 issue under the title “Flotsam: East India Marine Society of Salem.” The citations refer to the [Historical Magazine](#).

Through elaborate sketches that accompanied the news item about the capture of elephants and other wild animals in Ceylon, periodicals created a spectacle for visual masculinity, as a host of dark-skinned natives surrounded a few American males with their “whiteness” foregrounded. In the issue of 7 June 1851, the North American Miscellany: A Weekly Magazine of Choice Selection published an article, “Elephant Hunting in Ceylon.” In the article, the writer details the Ceylonese landscapes and people who “lived in the tropical jungles” (“Elephant Hunting” 283). Commenting on a Sinhalese, who accompanied the caravan to the United States to take part in Barnum’s show, the article expresses benevolent paternalism: “Instead of crashing through the jungles of Ceylon, he will quietly devour the gingerbread contributions of admiring thousands under the shadow of Barnum’s colossal tent” (“Elephant Hunting” 284). The description offers the image of a Sinhalese devouring gingerbread while caged among the circus animals in Barnum’s menagerie. The contrast between the jungle and the bread evokes the binary between the “civilized” and the “barbarian.” A week later, Gleason’s Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion republished the article transforming it into an elaborate illustration of how Barnum’s elephants were captured in Ceylon. The illustration shows a kraal [pen] set amidst the tropical jungle of Ceylon with one side open for elephants to enter the trap (“Capturing Elephant”). The sketch is remarkable in presenting a tableau of native Shehalese in direct contrast to American hunters. Surrounded by a swarm of half-naked natives with dark complexion and long fuzzy hair, two American white males appear to be leading the wild chase. While the sketch shows the Americans carrying rifles and riding horses, it uses a primitivist imagery of the natives romping across the jungle with logs, spears, and arrows (“Capturing Elephant”). The

hunting scene foregrounds the civilized bodies of the Western white males against the savage-like appearance of the natives.

The nineteenth-century traveling shows such as Barnum's "Asiatic Caravan" and hugely successful pageants based on oriental tales, such as Thomas Moore's Lalla Rookh: An Oriental Romance, either romanticized the oriental grandeur or flaunted the abject depravity of the oriental mind.<sup>6</sup> Like the officers dressed in oriental attire in the parades organized by the East India Marine Society, oriental people and goods in such pageants became unstable, ambivalent racial signifiers. The characteristic function of such a signification process, according to Bhabha, depends on the stereotypical representation of the "racial other" enmeshed into a "static system of synchronic essentialism." On the one hand, the stereotype becomes a source of knowledge, "a topic of learning, discovery, and practice"; and on the other hand, "it is the site of dreams, images, fantasies, myths, obsessions, and requirements" (102). For something to enter into the category of a legitimate Oriental, it has to fit into already textualized forms of representation. Yet, under the gaze of the multitudes in a public space, the spectacle also becomes the source of knowledge.

In a period of rising print culture and capitalism, the popular forms of mass entertainment—pageants, exhibits, and circuses—offered an avenue for national imagination. According to Ellen Strain, the oriental exhibits, such as Barnum's show, while reproducing recognizable images, bring "the Western subject face to face with the spectacle of difference, the exotic landscape dotted with wondrously alien human and

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<sup>6</sup> Published in the United States in 1817, Lalla Rookh is a sentimental verse romance, in which Lalla Rookh, the daughter of the Mogul emperor, Aurangzeb, departs from her parents' home to meet her royal bridegroom in Cashmere. On the way, she falls in love with a poet, but in the end, she discovers that the poet is no other than her own betrothed husband.

animal faces” (71). The exhibits of alien peoples and exotic goods, the products of the cross-cultural exchange mediated by transnational trades and travels, however, developed shared world-views among Euro-Americans by turning the objectified alien spaces and bodies into simultaneously available spectacles.

These spectacles often re-staged the Orient already textualized in popular oriental tales and travel narratives. The adaptation of Irish poet Thomas Moore’s popular book, Lalla Rookh: An Oriental Romance, into a pantomime and a pageant, for instance, ran for decades across the United States in the second half of nineteenth-century. Adam Forepaugh’s show titled “Lalla Rookh and the Departure from Delhi” that began in 1881 was the most famous of all the different adaptations of Lalla Rookh. One reporter who watched the show in Bristol, Pennsylvania, recounted the experience of seeing “twenty-five elephants, one thousand wild animals, and the pageant of Cleopatra and Lalla Rookh” (“Forepaugh Show” 3).

Contemporary newspapers enthusiastically reported the show in which Lalla Rookh’s beauty received glowing praise:

In the gorgeous glittering, Oriental pageant, Lalla Rookh is seen reclining in her sumptuous howdah, borne aloft upon the back of a ponderous and kingly elephant . . . embroidered velvet trappings touching the ground . . . . A fair young slave sits fanning the princess through the rose colored veils . . . and the lovely troupe of Tartarian and Cashmerean maids of honor ride upon each side of the princess . . . Rajahs and Mogul lords follow accompanied by cavaliers in costly armor . . . . [The] spectacle is followed



by Great Nazir or Chamberlain of the Harem, the retinue of the Court of Delhi . . . decorated in Oriental trappings. (“Forepaugh Show” 3)

Unlike Barnum’s menagerie, Forepaugh’s Lalla Rookh carried the theme of romantic Orientalism promoted by the lavish royal entourage and the fetishized oriental beauty of Lalla Rookh. Historically, the tradition of pageantry, as Stephen Arata argues, began with the rise of nationalism. As historical performances, pageants played an important role in promoting national identity (Arata 103). Through the display of historical memory of national events, pageantries enact a homogenous past that consists of important national events. In addition to the function of memory devices, such memory-displays teleologically stage the future course of the nation.

In the specific context of nineteenth-century U.S. culture, however, the “alien” and the “exotic” do not always appear as sites of the unfamiliar. In particular, they help define, categorize, and objectify the foreign others. Viewed within the long tradition of objectifying the racially and ethnically marked bodies in U.S. cultural history, the oriental displays resemble a wide range of spectacles such as blackface minstrels, Confederate pageants, and Buffalo Bill’s wild-west shows. While most of these shows used a set of strategies—performance, display, and categorization—to represent the essentialized “other,” they also served distinct ideological purposes.

Unlike the Oriental exhibits, post-bellum performances—Confederate pageants, Garden Clubs, and “ladies in hoopskirts”—about the plantation life, especially during the Jim Crow era, were counter-cultural practices. Steven Hoelscher aptly calls them “memory display” because they functioned as “passive containers but active vehicles in producing, shaping, and giving meaning to cultural memory and heritage” (661). Such

shows, with their underlying nostalgia, were sites of cultural politics; they brought space, culture, and race together by paradoxically relegating the contemporary racial and ethnic differences to a historical past. The Oriental exhibits, however, were sites of ambivalence. The ambivalent figuration of the foreign, as Bhabha contends, is an essential rhetorical strategy of colonial discourse. As Vijay Prasad notes, “[t]he popular Orientalism paraded out both ghastly and beautiful mysteries of India” that “validated the U.S. way of life in opposition to that deemed to be general in the East” (30). But the “beautiful mysteries” were often enchanting. The exhibits and pageants, while producing ethnic and racial differences, popularized oriental goods as commodity fetish.

As oriental goods began circulating across public and private spaces and gained cultural currency, they entered into a new discursive network of advertising, interior design, and fashion. Throughout the latter half of nineteenth-century, prominent magazines such as Harper’s Bazaar, Outing, and Godey’s Magazine constantly featured exotic oriental goods in their advertisements and fashion advice. For instance, referring to the collection of Oriental goods at A. A. Vantine’s, popularly dubbed as the “Mecca of America,” Godey’s Magazine urged the reader to take a stroll along the Broadway and “revel in a perfect dream of Oriental color and beauty” (“Fashion Novelties” 224). With the store’s recreation of the miniature oriental world with five lavishly decorated rooms, each representing a oriental nation, including Japan, China, India, Morocco, Persia, and Turkey, Vantine’s offered its clientele the most significant spectacle of oriental goods (“A Glimpse of the Orient” xliii). Their specialty in “fitting up Moorish and Turkish dens and smoking rooms” allowed the American bourgeoisie to recreate an Oriental world of their own.

Most importantly, the popularity of oriental goods transformed the interior of American bourgeois homes, allowing the dwellers to vicariously live in the supposed oriental luxury. The increasing popularity of “orientalia” at the latter half of nineteenth-century indicates the presence of a reverse form of colonial mimicry in that the metropolitan culture strives to approximate the life-style of cultures that remain in the periphery. Alternatively, such recreated cultural spaces challenged the notion of “separate spheres” by creating differences within the supposedly enclosed space of American domesticity. The radical implication of the popularity of oriental goods is evident as mostly women’s magazines promoted the idea of recreating oriental spaces in American homes. The October 1895 issue of Godey’s Magazine, for instance, detailed the fashionable “Moorish rooms,” where “the steaming beverage is served in the true Oriental manner” (“A Moorish Coffee Room” 443). For a Moorish coffee room to have the effect of Oriental luxury, the floor must be covered with “soft velvety piled rugs of Cashmere” strewn with “prayer rugs from Mecca, with a text from the Koran cunningly wrought in cabalistic characters” (443). The room must be lighted with “ruby and amber shaded mosque lamps” against “the dark background of the wall, upon which is hung a few pictures depicting harem life in the distant Orient” (444). Godey’s offered advice to women as to how they could transform the “weary of tea rooms with [their] conventional appointments” into “Moorish coffee rooms” (443). Godey’s laconic description of oriental luxury indicates the formation of intercultural hybrid spaces within the sanctified domesticity of nineteenth-century American homes. As sites of differences, these hybrid spaces embodied conflicting desire: on the one hand, they reminded viewers

of the perpetual stagnation of the Orient; on the other hand, they provided a virtual reality of oriental luxury and sensuality.

Ironically though, the popularity of oriental artifacts also reinforced the notions of Eastern passivity and stagnation. “Why are Oriental made goods so much more beautiful and artistic than the products of the Western World?” asks a caption in an advertisement of orientalia at Vantine’s, published in the December 1895 issue of Outing, a men’s magazine. The advertisement insists that the answer can be found in the “peculiarities of Oriental workmen,” for whom “time is nothing” and who “are incapable of understanding the value” their “bustling competitor of the Western World” attaches to time (“Advertisement 1” xviii). Surprisingly, in order to convince the buyers of the quality of Oriental goods, Vantine’s used the stereotypical representation of the Orient as stagnant compared to the energy and dynamism of the Western men. By the mid-century, the Orient entered into serious political discourses from a more diluted terrain of popular entertainment and throughout nineteenth century, remained pervasive in U.S. cultural imagination. This shift in focus became more pronounced during the 1840s when the issues of slavery and the westward expansion deeply divided the nation, political parties, and public opinion.

### **“Behold the Youthful Queen of the Pacific”: California and the Orient**

Amidst the internal schisms and political squabbles during the Senatorial and Congressional debates over the question of Oregon and California in the 1840s, expansionists made the rhetoric of “North American road to India” a rallying cry. Influential politicians, including Thomas Hart Benton and William Henry Seward, justified the possession of the entire region of Oregon and the annexation of California by

arguing that these new territories offered the United States an opportunity to build a commercial empire in the Pacific with the prospect of controlling the Oriental trade. For the expansionists, controlling the Orient meant a double strategy: cutting off the lifeline of Old World imperialism and tapping the same resources for the realization of U.S. imperial ambition. Those who opposed the annexation of California, including George Perkins Marsh, a Congressional representative from Vermont, interestingly, deployed the same Oriental imagery; they contended that the annexation of territories located in the furthest reach of the nation and in close proximity of the Oriental world would jeopardize the national homogeneity and degenerate Anglo-Saxon racial purity. What is fascinating about the debate, however, is that no matter whether one vigorously championed or vehemently criticized the expansionist cause employed Orientalist discourses to establish their respective positions.

In his speech of 23 May 1846, delivered in the U.S. Senate, Thomas Hart Benton, an influential U.S. senator from Missouri, categorically outlined the benefits of possessing the entire region of Oregon. A lifelong champion of the Westward expansion and a Jacksonian Democrat, he underlined the importance of Oregon “as a country to be inhabited and as a position to be held and defended” (“Speech” 314). Oregon, he argued, could be an ideal location for defending U.S. interests in the Pacific. Referring to Commodore David Porter’s retreat from the North-Pacific during the War of 1812 due to the lack of sufficient naval enforcement, Benton argued that a permanent military built-up in the Pacific would consolidate U.S. maritime power: “What happened to Commodore Porter,” he prophesized, would “happen again” if the United States turns its back “upon this commanding position [Oregon]” (314). Thus, Benton destabilized the borders

between the domestic and the foreign as he proposed to domesticate the territory through internal settlement and use it as a fortress to build an empire in the Pacific. The domestic interests in Oregon as a means of promoting national safety in the Pacific region that Benton articulated, however, had its “foreign” corollary, that is, an easy access to the Orient. Stressing the strategic importance of Oregon as a commercial route, he insisted, “[T]hrough the valley of Columbia lies the North American road to India” (315). Why should India matter so much for U.S. interests in the Pacific?

In Benton’s logic, India had always fed and contributed to empires throughout history. In view of India’s important role, he believed that no country could aspire to be an empire without monopolizing the Oriental trade. Quite interestingly, Benton reveals the imperial agenda while defending U.S. claims to Oregon. As he puts it,

[t]he trade of the East has always been the richest jewel in the diadem of commerce. All nations, in all ages, have sought it; and those, which obtained it, or even a share of it, attained the highest degree of opulence, refinement, and power. The routes through which it followed fertilized deserts and built up cities and kingdoms amidst the desolation of rocks and sands. Phenicia [sic], Egypt, Persia, were among the ancient thoroughfares of this commerce; Constantinople and Alexandria among the modern channels . . . (315)

Benton draws a historical sketch in which the rise and fall of Old World empires depended on their relative success in monopolizing the India trade. Implicit in his argument is what I have termed the rhetoric of postcolonial imperialism. In the final logic, possessing Oregon and California implied a dual strategy: a race for empire as well

as a race against Old World imperialism. The premise of his argument is based on the prospect of diverting the source of imperial power from European empires, namely Britain, to the Western Hemisphere and creating a counter empire in the Pacific for the propagation of U.S. interests globally.

Benton's argument is no longer a new proposition but a continuation of the historical consciousness embedded in the very formation of United States. U.S. presence in and control of the East meant the fulfillment of the long-deferred Columbian dream. The history of the New World, he contends, began with the dream of going east, and it was "the dazzling attraction of this commerce [with India]" that led to Columbus's "discovery of the New World" (315). For him, the mid-century push across the Pacific toward India meant the continuity of a teleological history of discovery, settlement, and control that runs from Columbus to La Salle to Lewis and Clark.<sup>7</sup> He commends Jefferson as a man of "rare endowment and common sense" who "following the grand idea of Columbus and taking up the unfinished enterprise of La Salle" set up the "brilliant" project of Lewis and Clark for the discovery of an inland route to the Pacific (17-19).

In emphasizing the urgency for the push to the Asia-Pacific, expansionists also appropriated the racialized discourse of the Asiatic Orient. "A major component of U.S. American culture in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" as Malini Johar Schueller observes, "was a race to the Orient" (23). By "race," she implies the racialized representation of the Orient in U.S. culture as well as the "competition between various business and scholastic interests," often played out as "a race with prominent European

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<sup>7</sup> Sieur de la Salle (b. 1643-1687) was a French explorer who discovered the mouth of Mississippi River and subsequently named the landmass "Louisiana" after King Louis XIV, thus establishing the French claim to territories in North America.

powers” (23). In this imperial contest among Euro-American powers over the control of the Asiatic trade, expansionists such as Benton envisioned a historical opportunity for the United States to fulfill the “providential design.” Going to the East was a commercially viable project. Ideologically, the project also allowed the “Anglo-Saxon race on the West coast of America” to reach its final destination, following “the divine command to subdue and replenish the earth” (Benton, “Speech” 318). Benton thus imbibes nineteenth-century racial theories to foreground the importance of maintaining U.S. control in the East. In a racial hierarchy, he places “the Oriental yellow race” above the ethnic minorities at home—African Americans and American Indians—although the yellow race occupies a place “far below the white” (318). Quite interestingly, he avoids racial essentialism while characterizing the Asiatics. It is the condition of mind that defines the Orient. Hence, he stresses the need and possibility of regenerating the Asiatics who remained “torpid and stationary for thousands of years” (318). Contrary to the “yellow race” of Asia, he deems African Americans and Native Americans incapable of regeneration.

More importantly, Benton embodies the notion of imperial benevolence in his vision of racial regeneration, as he shifts the focus from a seemingly benign commercial interest to the mission of “civilizing” the Asia-Pacific region. He further prophesizes, “In a few years, a great population will grow up there [Asia] luminous with the accumulated lights of European and American civilization” (318). As the yellow race was predisposed to improvement, he argued, the white race and the yellow race could “marry together, eat together, and trade together” (318), and he hoped that the racial differences between the



Anglo-Saxons and the Oriental races would finally even out in a higher form of racial hybridity.

Benton's racial schema demonstrates how nineteenth-century U.S. discourses of nationhood inscribed racial differences ambivalently. When it came to racial formations within the nation, the ethnic minorities either faced imminent extinction, most prominently expressed in the trope of "vanishing Indians," or as in the case of African Americans, they posed the danger of racial degeneration through miscegenation. The Asiatic racial forms, on the contrary, offered the prospect of "racial marriage," through which U.S. imperial desire could be realized. Central to this ambivalent representation of racial differences in national discourses is the construction of the Asia-Pacific as an imperial outpost, an exceptional space where overarching mercantilist and militaristic national interests nullify the existent racial and ethnic differences.

The Asia-Pacific became the center of reference when the question of whether slavery should be expanded to newly acquired territories became the main issue of contention between the South and the North. By emphasizing the urgency of capturing oriental trade as a common national interest, expansionists either sought to secure national consensus or to bypass the multi-faceted racial and regional problems facing the nation. President James K. Polk's position on the question of slavery, though, had been clear from the beginning; he also felt tremendous pressure from Southern politicians to admit California as a slave state. In the diary entry of 23 January 1847, Polk noted, "[T]hough [himself] a Southern man and from [a] slave-holding state," he did not desire to acquire more Southern territories that would "endanger the Union itself" (189-190). When John C. Calhoun asked for Polk's signature in a national address Calhoun intended

to deliver on slavery, Polk rejected Calhoun's request and termed the latter's intention "unpatriotic, mischievous, and wicked" (210).

Similarly, Polk felt uneasy about Benton's idea of "addressing a letter to the people of Oregon informing them that the bill to establish a territorial government over them has been rejected . . . on account of the attempt by Mr. Calhoun to leave the question of slavery open" (210). Nevertheless, Benton went on with his idea and in May published a letter addressed to the people of Oregon. As someone who had been fighting for the cause of Oregon for the past thirty years, he believed that the delay in passing of the bill of territorial government of Oregon concurrently imposing a "sanction," which "will forever prohibit the existence of slavery in Oregon," was a "tale of abandonment" by the mother country ("Letter" 148). However, he hoped to see "an emporium of Asiatic commerce" and "a stream of Asiatic trade pouring in the valley of the Mississippi through the channel of Oregon" ("Letter" 148). As his letter shows, internal political rivalries, either over slavery or conflicting regional interests, became less significant when it came to securing U.S. global interests.

Faced with the question of slavery and race that jeopardized the national integrity, expansionists argued for the annexation of Oregon and California as the national imperative to settle internal differences between the North and the South. The importance of Oregon and California's role in preserving the Union, however, lay in their proximity to the Oriental world. As strategic links to the Orient, the coastal states promised the fulfillment of an imperialistic agenda of spreading "civilization" in the Oriental world. As Benton puts it:

It is in this point of view, and as acting upon the social, political, and religious condition of Asia, and giving a new point of departure to her ancient civilization, that I look upon the settlement of the Columbia river by the van of the Caucasian race as the most momentous human event in the history of man since his dispersion over the face of the earth.

(“Speech” 319)

Although Benton maintained neutrality on the issue of slavery and, later on, criticized John C. Calhoun’s position on the Compromise Bill, his insistence upon interpreting the westward expansion as a historical necessity, generated by foreign imperatives, allowed him to court support from both the radicals and the moderates. Thus, the westward expansion found a logical conclusion: a move towards building an empire in the Pacific.

To some politicians such as George Perkins Marsh, a U.S. Congressional representative from Vermont, the prospect of “racial marriage” with the Orient was less appealing; for him, the Asiatic presence posed a threat to national homogeneity. In his speech “Slavery in the Territories of New Mexico, California, and Oregon,” Marsh expressed fear that the newly acquired territories, precisely due to their proximity to the Oriental world, would “lose themselves in the East” (12), thus further dismembering the already fragile body-nation. In the House of Representatives, he rhetorically asked, “What common interest has Boston with the bay of San Francisco, or New York with Monterey, or Charleston and Savannah and New Orleans with Puget’s sound and mouth of Columbia?” (12). Citing “impassable barriers of waste and mountains” as impediments to national homogeneity, he argued that the people of these new territories would be bound “indissolubly to the Oriental world,” as the Pacific States “united to the coast of

Asia by the freely navigable basin of the Pacific” (12). While echoing the myth of “city upon the hill” in his speech in the House of Representative, he warned his colleagues against breaching the divine covenant, “[W]hat God hath joined together, let no man put asunder” (12). At a different level, Marsh’s opposition to the annexation of California questions the discourse of Manifest Destiny. In his view, the orientalizing of coastal states would produce counter-spaces within the nation, thus undermining the very logic of a contiguously expanding nation.

In a way, Marsh’s argument raises serious doubt about the confident discourse of Manifest Destiny. As an ideology that sought to weld fractured spaces into a contiguous body-nation, the Manifest Destiny failed to achieve what Stephanie LeMenager terms the “terminal normalcy of manners” (4). In Manifest and Other Destinies, LeMenager examines the role of spatial imagination in the formation of national narratives. The representation of “counter-sites” such as deserts, prairies, and rivers in nineteenth-century literatures, as she argues, challenged “the hegemonic spatial representation” of a unified nation (4). As disruptive spaces located within the nation, these “counter-sites” undermined the cohesive spatial logic of national formation. The importance of spatial imagination in understanding national formations, as suggested by LeMenager, allows us to understand the anxiety that informs Marsh’s anti-expansionist position. Marsh believed that California’s admission to the Union would create an unmanageable foreign space within the nation, undermining the need of maintaining national uniformity. Unlike the “counter-sites” that LeMenager theorizes in her study, we cannot adequately understand the representation of the Pacific coastal states in the political discourse of the 1840s in purely spatial terms. In Marsh’s postulation, far from being a case of

geographical anomaly, California also posed a menace to racial normalcy of the nation due to its geographic and cultural allegiances to the Oriental world.

The problem of representing orientalized spaces also resurfaced during the debate over the Compromise Bill of 1850. Initially proposed by Henry Clay as a middle ground for the conciliation between the North and the South, the Compromise Bill received strong opposition from Southern politicians, especially due to the provision in the Bill that called for admitting California in the Union as a Free State.<sup>8</sup> In his speech on the Compromise Bill, delivered on 4 March 1850, John C. Calhoun, while rejecting the measures of compromise proposed by Clay, viewed the idea of admitting California as a Free State as an example of Northern “aggression” and accused the North of “making the most strenuous efforts to appropriate the whole [of the new territories] to herself by excluding the South from every foot of it [Oregon, New Mexico, and California]” (602). He challenged the constitutionality of its admission as “a Free State,” arguing that it was “the United States who conquered California and finally acquired [it] by treaty” (609). As the radicals on the both sides of the political spectrum, including William Henry Seward, Gerrit Smith, John C. Calhoun, and Robert Barnwell Rhett, questioned the future of the compromise, Daniel Webster sought moderation between two radical positions by making an emotional appeal to patriotism. Interestingly, Webster invoked the “Asiatic scenery” as a bulwark against the extension of slavery in New Mexico and California. With the purpose of striking a balance between the “Northern aggression” and the

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<sup>8</sup> In the Compromise Bill, Henry Clay proposed to admit California as a free State [exclusion of slavery]; leave New Mexico and Utah to settle the question of slavery by themselves; stop slave trade in the District of Columbia; compensate Texas for a vast portion of northwestern Texas ceded to other States; and enact a tough Fugitive Slave Law. See Eric H. Walter, Prologue, *The Shattering of the Union: America in the 1850s* (Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 2004) xvii-xxv. For Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, see Bruce Frohnen, ed, *The American Republic: Primary Sources* (Indianapolis: Library Fund, 2002) 633-36.

“Southern slave power,” Webster insisted on allowing the people of New Mexico and California to decide the question of slavery, and as a redress to Southern grievance, he called for a tougher Fugitive Slave Law. He argued that slavery would not make inroads into New Mexico and California. Slavery, he insisted, would be “excluded from those territories by a law even superior to that which admits and sanctions it in Texas” (624). Citing “the law of nature” as an ultimate barrier against slavery, he contended that the “Asiatic formation and scenery” in these territories made the introduction of African slavery a “natural impossibility” (624). Whether it was the “foreign space” that resisted the homogenizing power of the nation in Marsh’s formulation or the “Asiatic scenery” that challenged Southern interest of extending slavery in the newly acquired territories as in Webster’s patriotic appeal, the Orient played an important role in U.S. national imagination.

The Oriental imagery not only appealed the moderates, it also fascinated radical reformists such as William Henry Seward. Arguing for the unconditional admission of California to the Union, Seward answered a series of objections voiced in the Senate, particularly Calhoun’s argument that by establishing a “self government,” California “usurped the sovereignty of State and the authority of Congress” (Calhoun 609). Seward contended that, by establishing the “self-government,” California in fact defied military colonialism and thus deserved a hearty welcome (Seward 4). While highlighting California’s short-lived independence as a Republic, Seward called for viewing its annexation beyond the immediate usefulness in “the Oriental commerce” (3). For him, California signified as a geo-cultural space, where “the West dies away into the rising East” (3). In Seward’s rhetoric, the expansive geographical imagery not only collapses

the West onto the East, it also re-inscribes the notion of Westerly march of the empire in which the East figures as the final destination. He viewed California as an exceptional space—“at once the Empire and the Continent”—(3). While California’s geographical vastness must have qualified it as a “continent,” it was the prospect for the propagation of U.S. national character that made it an exceptional space. In a significant way, Seward’s vision of a unified nation appropriates the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny, which is at once “nationalistic” and “imperialistic.”

Offering the reason why California must be admitted as a free state, politicians outlined the future role of the Pacific states in fulfilling the imperialistic destiny of the United States. As Seward puts it:

The population of the United States consists of native Caucasian origin and exotics of the same derivation. The native mass rapidly assimilates to itself and absorbs the exotic, and these therefore constitute one homogenous people. The African race, bond or free, and the aborigines, savage and civilized, being incapable of such assimilation and absorption, remain distinct, and owing to their peculiar conditions, constitute inferior masses, and [which] may be regarded as accidental, if not disturbing political forces. The ruling homogeneous family was planted on the Atlantic shore and following an obvious law, is seen continually and rapidly spreading itself westward year by year, subduing the wilderness and the prairie, and thus extending this great political community, which as fast as it advances, breaks into distinct States for municipal purposes

only, while the whole constitutes one entire contiguous and compact a  
[sic] nation. (6)

As the above excerpt shows, it is “the ruling homogeneous family” of Caucasian origin that holds Seward’s seamlessly “contiguous and compact” nation together. In this theory of unified national identity, racial and ethnic others are either absorbed into Anglo-Saxon purity or remain as non-threatening aberrations that prove the destiny of the ruling race. The benevolent assimilation imagined within the already subdued “wilderness and prairie” can be extended to newly acquired territories of the Pacific coast; moreover, it can also be used as a template to deal with the Orient as the nation transforms itself into an imperial power. Just as the U.S. national formation took place in “subduing the wilderness,” the Pacific states, as Seward argues, “must perform the same sublime and beneficent function in Asia” (Seward 6). The idea of the dying West, in fact, becomes the promise for rebirth; it is the Pacific where the revitalized West will “meet and mingle with the declining civilization of the East” under the “sway of our democratic institutions” (7). The projected union of the West and East can only happen, so the logic goes, if “American people . . . remain one individual nation” (Seward 6). Seward’s imagined nation is a deterritorialized one as its boundaries are either set across the racial divides or alternatively drawn along the trajectories of transnational commerce and capital.

The construction of the Asia-Pacific as a zone of American interest, especially during the period of U.S. continental expansion, demonstrates the significant shift taking place in the formation of U.S. national identity. It is not the Jeffersonian plowman rooted at home but the mercantilist pursuer of commerce and empire that represented the “true”



American character. Critics have pointed out the fact that the shifting notions of national identity, to a large extent, correlates to the way cultural narratives imagine the space. LeMenager offers a useful insight into the role of spatial imagination in the formation of national identity. In Manifest and Other Destinies, she writes:

Nineteenth-century theories of commercial empire that took the oceans rather [than] agriculture homestead as the originary site of national character de-familiarize the continental West by situating it within the emergent system of international capitalism; these commercial versions of Manifest Destiny foretell contemporary transnational or global articulation of the nation-form. (2-3)

In arguing for the centrality of “space” in national imagination, LeMenager makes several observations about the complex formation of national identity. She counters the historical understanding of the Manifest Destiny as an ideological expression of U.S. continental expansion over contiguous territories. Instead, she argues that the oceanic imagery played a dominant role in pushing U.S. national imagination beyond the national borders. The sustained focus on transnational trades as the condition of emergent U.S. national character, as LeMenager contends, situates U.S. national imaginary within the emergent system of international capitalism. Thus her insight into the alternative forms of national formation also opens up the possibility of examining how the “commercial version of Manifest Destiny” underlined U.S. imperial ambition.

One of the specific characteristics of U.S. national discourses, in fact, is that it simultaneously articulates both postcolonial anxiety and imperial ambition. In their introduction to Postcolonial Theory and the United States, Amritjit Singh and Peter

Schmidt maintain that U.S. national identity is simultaneously “postcolonial and neocolonial” (5). By “neocolonial,” Singh and Schmidt imply the domestic colonization of ethnic minorities such as American Indians. As a term often used to describe the continued hegemony of colonial powers over the former colonies in the form of economic and militaristic domination, “neocolonialism” often demystifies the emergence of the United States as a hegemonic global power on two important grounds. First, the critical position that takes U.S. westward expansion and the subsequent dispossession of Native Americans and other ethnic minorities as “neocolonial” hegemony presupposes a prior postcolonial condition, especially in relationship with American Indians and other ethnic minorities. Second, neocolonialism as a term, when applied to explain the relationship between the United States and its ethnic minorities within the borders, discredits the imperial dimension of U.S. national discourses that sought to extend the nation’s militaristic, cultural, and commercial domination overseas. Rather, the simultaneous presence of postcolonial nationalism and imperial ambition can be termed as “postcolonial imperialism.” Whereas “neocolonial” suggests the continued hegemony of a colonial power over former colonies, “postcolonial imperialism” indicates the emergence of a former colony as an imperialistic power.

Critics have recently shown the complex relationship between imperialism and anti-colonial nationalism; especially, notions of self-government, independence, and national sovereignty, which helped the colonized secure national solidarity against colonialism, is part of the colonial legacy of bureaucratic structures, systems of education, and forms of cultural practices that imperialism brought in the colonies. In Colonial and Postcolonial Literature, Elleke Boehmer terms this ideological indebtedness

of nationalist movements to imperialism as “cleavings of colonial nationalism” (100). In the struggle against colonialism, she argues that the “anti-imperial cultural nationalism” performed “a double process of cleaving” in that the anti-colonial nationalism effectively used the strategy of “cleaving from, moving away from colonial definitions,” and “cleaving to: borrowing, taking over, and appropriating the ideological, linguistic, and textual forms of the colonial power” (emphasis original, 101). Although she takes the official acknowledgement of the rights of dependent nations at Versailles in 1919 as the beginning of this “cleaving process,” Boehmer also mentions of the American War of Independence as the originary moment of nationalist movement (101). There is, however, a significant difference in the way the “colonial cleaving” functioned in the U.S. context. As the analysis of nineteenth-century expansionist discourse shows, the “double process of cleaving” consisted of appropriating the colonial legacy of self-governance, common culture, language, and history. In the case of U.S. nationalism, it also meant appropriating the imperial role of extending mercantilist, militaristic, and cultural hegemony over distant locales in the Asia-Pacific.

During the continental expansion and the push to the Pacific, U.S. national discourses, while distancing the United States from European colonial/imperial powers, strategically appropriated the same colonial discourse of alterity to construct imperial outposts beyond U.S. national borders. Well before the actual U.S. imperial adventure in the Pacific began at the turn of the twentieth century, the champions of westward expansion of the 1840s argued for a hegemonic U.S. presence in the Asia-Pacific, an indiscriminate space called the “Oriental World,” thus problematizing the perception of U.S. continental expansion as the extension of U.S. borders over contiguous territories.

The so-called Westward expansion, as Norman A. Graebner argues, was “in essence not westward” but “a northward and southward movement along the coastline” (xiii).

According to him, a desire to “control the great harbors of San Francisco, San Diego, and Juan de Fuca Strait” ultimately shaped the national goal of acquiring Oregon and California (xiv). Moreover, periodicals, travel narratives, and reports of explorations and expeditions in the Pacific developed a cultural and political climate in such way that “the determining factor that charted the course of the American nation across the continent to the Pacific” indeed became “the pursuit for a commercial empire” (Graebner 3). In this process of constructing the Asia-Pacific as the nation’s outlying post, the cultural discourse on the Orient—from scholarly works to popular romances—provided the necessary rationale for the expansion. The so-called Manifest Destiny, to borrow LeMenager’s telling phrase, included “other destinies,” such as the capture of trade with the East, the regeneration of the Orient by spreading American civilization, and the consolidation national self-image as an anti-imperialistic democratic nation.

### **Cast in the Print: The Orient and the Empire in the Pacific**

In this period of diplomatic maneuvering, secret missions, and expeditions aimed at possessing Oregon and annexing California, periodicals found a common cause to link their literary aspirations with the national cause. It is also worth noting that a heightened sense of cultural nationalism marks the development of literary periodicals in the United States. Particularly, after the War of 1812, U.S. literary periodicals jealously promoted cultural nationalism, emphasizing the unique and exceptional character of U.S. literature and culture. In its editorial piece of 29 May 1851, the National Era, for instance, warned writers against producing a “jackdaw literature” that “flaunts [itself] in plumage plucked

from Continental and British birds;” instead, the editorial insisted that U.S. national literature must be carved of “American history, laws, customs, climate, scenery, territorial extent, social, civil, and religious institutions” (“Obligation” 88). The editorial demonstrates what one might term the postcolonial sensibility as it calls for abrogating colonial legacy and developing indigenous cultural nationalism.

The proponents of self-determination and native cultural production often couched their rhetoric of unified language, culture, and national character, very much part of postcolonial affirmation of national independence, on the need of protecting the hemispheric balance. As a result, the presumed British influence and its threat to the “balance of power” played an important role in shaping public opinions. As early as on 5 March 1840, the Army and Navy Chronicle published an anonymously-written letter in which the author informed the people of the United States, “particularly those who were slaveholders,” about the British design to possess California as part of Mexico’s effort at paying “enormous debt” (“Letter” 151).<sup>9</sup> Warning against such an “acquisition [of California] by John Bull,” the writer paints a grim picture of nation’s future if British intensions were realized. In the wake of British colonization of California, the writer argues, “with the black battalions in California” mostly comprised of freed blacks from the West Indies and “yellow skinned sepoy from the East [Indies],” the English would have “an absolute control of all [sic] Mexico” (151). When that happens, the writer

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<sup>9</sup> Mexico’s national debt in the nineteenth-century is a crucial chapter in colonialism. According to Brian Hamnett, the imperial government inherited a large amount of debt. To add to the problem, between 1823-25, “two loans secured from the London Merchant Banking Houses Goldschmidt & co and Barclay, Herring Richardson & Co. Out of the projected 32 million peso, Mexico received only 17.5 million of it, due to commissions and administrative cost” (148). As the bondholders’ committee pressured the government for help in recovering the debt, in 1837, the entire debt had been consolidated at 5 percent interest. See Brian Hamnett, A Concise History of Mexico (London: Cambridge UP, 1999); Michael P. Costeloe, Bonds and Bondholders: British Investors and Mexico’s Foreign Debt, 1824-1888, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).

contends, “the fanatics of England would find argument for their abolition doctrine” (151). The writer finally urges the government in Washington to force Mexico to reject the British proposal. As the letter demonstrates, the question of California and Oregon not only promoted nationalist sentiment in outmaneuvering rival European powers for territorial possessions, but it also expressed a racial paranoia over the presumed settlement of freed slaves in California. The suggestion that the United States should assume a direct control over Mexico as a way of thwarting British colonial ambition, however, indicates a shift of emphasis in the public perception of U.S. foreign policy; periodicals demanded that the United States extend its role of protecting the hemispheric balance of power to an ultimate control of foreign territories.

The importance of the sentiment expressed in this anonymously written letter became more apparent, as the question whether Britain intended to colonize California continued to generate lively discussions among prominent political figures. On 8 November 1845, the Niles’ National Register, a non-partisan periodical, reprinted Caleb Cushing’s letter originally published in the New York Courier.<sup>10</sup> Amidst the wide-ranging speculation of possible British acquisition of California, the Register offered background information for Cushing’s letter to clarify the “English position” in California. The periodical presented the case of California as a three-way struggle between the United States, Great Britain, and France. Referring to a recent article in the London Times, in which the possession of California by the British “is held to be indispensable,” particularly, “to check the progress in wealth and power of the United

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<sup>10</sup> On May 8, 1843, President Zachary Taylor appointed Caleb Cushing, a U.S. Representative from Massachusetts, as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to China. In 1844, Cushing negotiated the Treaty of Wang Hiya, the first U.S. trade treaty with China.

States” (Cushing 147), the Register inferred that the British claim on California was part of the English design of shutting out the United States from “a most advantageous access to the trade of Asia” (147). The periodical suggested that the United States should offer guarantees to British bondholders to make sure whether Britain’s intention of possessing California was indeed based on the policy of debt recovery.

Cushing’s letter explained the “interest of British bondholders in California,” detailing that the Mexican government “in addition to general hypothecation of ten million acres” might set aside twenty-five millions acres of land “best suited for colonization from abroad” (Cushing 147). The public apprehension of the possible British acquisition of California was based on three important factors: the perceived British intention of colonizing California by the freed blacks from the West Indies, detrimental to Southern interest; the British intention of preventing U.S. trade with Asia, unfavorable for the mercantilist interest of the North; and the likely growth of British influence in North America, viewed as a serious threat to the hemispheric “balance of power.”

The textualization of California in contemporary print media contributed to the expansionist national imaginary. Periodicals hailed the Asiatic trade and the control of the Orient as an indispensable certainty of the nation’s future. In the wake of Gold Rush, The American Literary Magazine, a prominent New York-based periodical, declared that “California is the theme of the day,” a theme not so much about “new territories, their mines of platinum, gold, and quick silver” but about the “unexampled wave of emigration to California” that set “a new movement of Anglo-Saxon energy” on motion (“California” 337-339). The writer insists on looking at the issue of Anglo-Saxon

immigration to California from a philosophical perspective. If examined with “a philosophical intuition,” the writer argues, one will discover a “Providential design” manifest in the Anglo-Saxon settlement in California. Had the annexation of California occurred earlier, the writer explained, “it would have been idle in our hands” (339-40). So, the annexation of California was not a material possession but a moral victory, which would ultimately “prevent [California from] a lapse into barbarism” (340). The justification of Anglo-Saxon immigration to California as part of the providential design evokes the notion of “American frontier” that Frederick Jackson Turner would famously theorize at the turn of the century. Turner’s “frontier thesis” was as much of a definition of American national character as it was the lens through which he proposed to assess the historical formation of American society and its institutions.

In this sense, a “frontier” is not only a border-zone, but it is also a moral divide between “civilization” and “barbarism.” In The United States and the Pacific: History of a Frontier (2002), Jean Heffer productively uses the concept “frontier” to examine the relationship between the United States and the Pacific. He argues that Turner’s notion of “frontier” signifies “a zone of varied width separating “civilization” from “savagery” (1). Heffer’s reinterpretation of Turner’s “frontier thesis,” in the context of U.S. relationship with the Asia-Pacific, explains the process by which U.S. cultural narratives constructed the Asia-Pacific as a barbaric zone of wilderness in need of “cultivation” and “civilization.” Thus, the American Literary Magazine’s views on the annexation of California as a testimony of American national character anticipate the idea of a frontier as a zone of difference between “civilization” and “barbarism.” It is worth noting that the celebratory rhetoric of “Anglo-Saxon energy” also informs Turner’s writings. In “The



Problem of the West,” Turner uses “energy” as the major feature of American character (290). According to him, the Anglo-Saxon energy emanates from the Protestant work ethic and capitalistic desire for wealth. In order to establish the “restless energy” of the American character, he quotes Professor Boutmy who defined America “not so much [as] a democracy as a huge commercial company for the discovery, cultivation, and civilization of its enormous territories” (qtd. in Turner 292).

The notions of “cultivation” and “civilization” that provided necessary rationale for the removal and dispossession of Native Americans during U.S. westward expansion found new currency in discourses that represented California as the nation’s new frontier. The editorial of the Literary Magazine sounded the note of confidence, stating that California was bound to develop “great facilities for commerce with the Pagan countries of Asia” (“California” 344). Implicit in the editorial is a sustained belief that the admission of California in the Union was part of the providential design so that the United States could fulfill its moral imperatives in propagating “religion” and “civilization” in the Asia-Pacific. The “moral energy” manifested by the immigrant Anglo-Saxons in California, the editorial insists, must be utilized to revitalize “the benighted and enervated nations of Asia and inspire them with the energy of a true religion, free government, and intelligent industry” (“California” 344). Although the representation of Asia in terms of neat binaries—religion and paganism, energy and enervation, industry and passivity—sounds stereotypical, the promise of imperial benevolence—religion, democracy, and industry—makes U.S. presence in the Asia-Pacific a moral imperative.

Despite the pervasive use of familiar stereotypes, periodicals present the Orient as a site of contradictory desire. In fact, as Homi K. Bhabha maintains, “stereotype” is a condition for an ambivalent representation of others. In Location of Culture, Bhabha argues that the “colonial discourse is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference” (153). According to him, the discursive economy of the “stereotype” makes such ambivalence possible. Conceptually, a stereotype is a fixed category of representation, and yet it guarantees the knowledge of the other through perpetual repetitions without variation and difference. In U.S. Orientalist discourses, however, the ambivalent signification of the Orient emerges from the disjuncture inherent in the simultaneous representation of the Orient as the origin and the end. In particular, the Orient, presented both as a mother and a mistress, invites the dual process of signification, contradictorily predicated to the feminized Oriental body. As an origin, the Orient is viewed as the “mother” of civilization and a source of wealth; as a telos, however, the Orient figures as the final destination of Anglo-Saxon imperial march. Alternatively, the dual process of signification operates in the economy of desire: as a mother, the Orient promises a primordial reunion, and yet as a mistress, she offers the possibility of marriage and consummation.

Quite interestingly, the Orient not only occasioned the discourse of conquest and domination but also elicited U.S. sympathy for anti-imperialistic solidarity. The United States Magazine and Democratic Review, a nationalistic periodical, which, under the editorship of John L. O’Sullivan, promoted the idea of Manifest Destiny, considered the American “concentration on the Pacific” as a preparation for the “return into the bosom

of Asia” (“California—its Position” 427). In the long historical westward march of the Anglo-Saxons, the writer contends that the Roman Empire collapsed before “the hordes issuing in countless numbers from Asia” (427). The resurgent Anglo-Saxons, who had marched beyond the Rocky Mountains, were the same “Asiatic stock improved into American race” because they were armed not with “necked scimitar” of the old days, but with “civilization, Christianity, and political science” (427). Therefore, it was inevitable that the old mother Asia should welcome back her “civilized” sons who had left her fold in a state of “barbarism” centuries ago and who have now brought a new “dawn of civilization” (427). However, as a site of ambivalent desire, the Orient also instigated a crisis in Euro-American theories of race. The discovery of Sanskrit and ancient civilizations of the early Vedic period challenged the confident discourse of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority. The Democratic Review explained away this seeming “anomaly” in Euro-American race theories by appropriating “Aryanism” associated with the ancient Indic civilization as part of the Anglo-Saxon past.

While the “civilization mission” remains the fundamental principle in forging a broad cultural consent, the commercial “destiny” informs the imperialistic agenda behind U.S. continental expansion. In the May 1849 issue of the Bankers’ Magazine and State Financial Register, a Boston-based leading financial magazine, J. Morrison Harris published “A Paper upon California,” in which he read the history and geography of California futuristically.<sup>11</sup> Highlighting the importance of the Asiatic trade, Harris extends Benton’s logic that the Asiatic trade had shaped the course of the history of European empires. For him, the importance of California for the United States rested not

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<sup>11</sup> James Morrison Harris, a Representative from Maryland, was elected as a candidate from the American Party to the Thirty-fourth, Thirty-fifth, and Thirty-sixth Congress (1855-1861).

so much on its fabled wealth, but on the possibility of tapping the “ancient channels” from which “wealth and domination” followed in the Old World empires (Harris 672). He further argued that the prospect of building the “first Anglo-Saxon Empire upon the border of the Pacific,” comparable to the ancient empires built in the Mediterranean, would make the annexation of California “the greatest of the events . . . in the estimation of the future historian” (673).

In this period of national expansion and imperial ambition, a large number of periodicals viewed the issue surrounding U.S. continental expansion from transnational and global perspectives. After the Compromise of 1850 that formally settled the question of California, periodicals began to envision the United States as a global power. While interpreting the Monroe Doctrine flexibly, periodicals outlined the course of U.S. foreign policy to further the nation’s imperial ambition in the Pacific. In his 1823 message to Congress, President Monroe outlined the principle that the “American continents, by free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are hence forth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European power” (qtd. in Murphy 4). As Gretchen Murphy argues, Monroe’s message in fact became “a meaningful cultural and geopolitical frame for U.S. nationalism” (4). However, U.S. nationalist discourses throughout the nineteenth century made a strategic use of Monroe doctrine to suit the changing geo-political condition of the United States.

In a review article published in January 1850, the Southern Messenger, a pro-slavery magazine, exemplified the extent of flexibility that the contemporary media employed in the interpretation of Monroe doctrine. The Southern Messenger stressed on the importance of interpreting the Monroe doctrine strategically: “the Monroe declaration

had to be repeated and even extended in the letter though not in spirit” (“Our Foreign Policy” 1). Due to the changed condition of the balance of power, as the author clarified, it was necessary to make a distinction between the “letters” and “spirit” of the Monroe doctrine. The annexation of California gave the United States an additional responsibility of defending national interests in the Asia-Pacific region, especially in securing the “monopoly of Asiatic trade” (1). The writer hoped that U.S. control over the oriental trade would establish the nation as global empire. As the editorial puts it:

The Sultan of Borneo might be our vassal, the rival claimants of a Chinese throne be suppliants at the door of our Senate for the decision of their pretensions, and a military government be erected by [an] act of [our] Congress in Japan, as effectively as it was over Vera Cruz by an order of General Scott—we see in Constitution nothing to forbid the exercise such power by our federal government. (2)

Although the Messenger sounds hyperbolic, its message is consistent with the projected U.S. role of an ultimate arbiter in global politics and international conflicts. Moreover, the editorial signifies a slippage in U.S. nationalist discourse as the policy of “hemispheric balance of power” turns into a desire for the ultimate “control” over foreign territories.

In the diary entry of 24 October 1845, President James K. Polk repeatedly invokes the Monroe doctrine to justify the U.S. claim to Oregon and the ambition to annex California as an endeavor to prevent them from being a “new colony planted by Great Britain or any foreign monarchy” (19). Referring to his meeting with Thomas Hart Benton, Polk mentions that he told Benton how “he [Polk] was strongly inclined to

reaffirm Mr. Monroe's doctrine against permitting foreign colonization, at least as far as this continent was concerned" (18). Thus, President Polk's position on the issue shows how U.S. national discourses justified the continental expansion as anti-imperialistic solidarity. In fact, periodicals utilized the Pacific imaginary to defend and promote U.S. national interests against European imperialism. However, in doing so, they often reinscribed the Orient stereotypically as an imagined commercial outpost. Moreover, the Asia-Pacific became a discursive terrain, where multivalent articulations of race, gender, and nation came into play.

Even a purportedly scholarly disquisition on the Orient became a ground for the articulation of dual discourse of postcolonial imperialism. The Knickerbocker: or New York Monthly Magazine, in its issue of June 1853, for instance, published a lengthy article entitled "Orientalism," in which the author purposed to study "the scenery, the history, the mind, and the religion of the Orient" in the context of newly effected annexation of California ("Orientalism" 6). The article sets to counter stereotypical representation of the Orient, which the writer terms as "imaginary Orientalism," a product of the Western mind. The writer argues that the imaginary Orient conjures up the picture of a "languid, alluring atmosphere" with "luxurious ease" of "the coffee-rooms and flower gardens of Seraglio at Constantinople" (2). Contrary to the popular image, which he terms "unrealistic," he proposes to reveal the Orient of the present. According to the writer, unlike the magnificent picture that the West imagines, the Orient maintains "the spirit of silence, brooding over the turbaned tombstones of the cemetery" (2). What remained of the imaginary Orient were the marks of tyranny and despotism personified by the "powerful Sultans" and repressive "creed of Mohemet [sic]," under whose

despotic sway, languished the “reverend turbans cross-legged on Persian carpets in baths and harems” (2). In spite of the purpose of debunking the myth of luxurious wealth and unbridled sensuality associated with the Orient, the writer, ironically, project the Orient, which is as stereotypical as the one he set out to dismantle.

This self-deconstructive moment in the article occurs when the writer appropriates the contemporary U.S. nationalist discourse to argue for an increased U.S. role in the Oriental world. Written as a reply to British periodicals, which apparently criticized the “ungodly lust for annexation and domination” of the United States in the Pacific, the author justifies the annexation as God’s will: California was “reserved by Providence for the meeting place of the Anglo-Saxon on his Eastern and Western path of empire” (18). The crisis that the writer locates in the representation of the Orient, in fact, lies not in the Western perception of the East but in the mind of the Orient itself. The past is in fact the “real”; the present is a degeneration caused by the essential inferiority of the oriental mind that produced “no democracy” but servility to despotism (5). The presumed decadence of the Orient is the result of its submission to a false religion and misguided spirituality. As the writer takes the Middle East and Turkey as examples of oriental degeneration, the oriental past in fact was the golden age of Christianity when “Paul and Chrysostom preached” and before the Orient gave its religion away to “sensual superstition” (6). When one looked beyond the mythic aura of the glorious past, the Orient, as it remained, was anything but full of corruption and degeneration. Therefore, it begged the question: what could be done with the Orient? The best way to deal with the Orient, as the writer contented, was to exercise the power, as “the Orient never recognizes power unless displayed” (7). While criticizing British exploitation of India,

the Knickerbocker, ironically, justified the European conquest of the Orient. In a series of such conquests, the author argues, “England caring less for the glory [of Indian civilization] and more for gold, has carved and is yet carving her share of the Orient” (“Orientalism” 15). So the “the empire must fall,” not because India needs to be liberated from the colonial rule but because no one “can prevent the democratic element of America from making its impress upon the Orient” (“Orientalism” 13, 18). As it evident in the Knickerbocker article, the implicit rhetoric of anti-imperialistic solidarity calls for a direct U.S. intervention in the Oriental World. Thus, between imperial Britain and democratic America, the Orient remains a passive entity.

As the Knickerbocker article demonstrates, U.S. Orientalism not only relates to imperial desire, but it also informs postcolonial imperialism by revealing the dual discursive strategy of “cleaving to” and “cleaving away from” European imperialism. As a way of positing American democracy against British imperialism, the Knickerbocker article critiques British rule in India at the same calling for U.S. intervention for the propagation of American values in the Asia-Pacific. This rhetorical double bind most prominently appears as U.S. media present the case of colonial India to promote U.S. nationalism against Old World imperialism. Criticizing British concern over U.S. westward expansion, the Knickerbocker article states:

Whence comes the ungodly lust for annexation and domination, which English papers charge upon the United States? . . . We are not those who would arraign England for grasping India and opening Asia. . . . But for our grave old mother to turn her back upon us for our hankering for Cuba, while she is ready to swallow the one-third of human race at one huge



gulp, is sublimely farcical . . . . Retribution will demand why her one million of acres in India blush every year with poppy; whether its conversion into opium by the East India company; its sale, in defiance of Chinese laws, in Chinese ports, to four millions of Chinese smokers of whom four hundred thousand die yearly of its fatal effects . . . (17)

As the above passage shows, the writer denounces British exploitation of India for the promotion of opium trade as morally repugnant. Although the Orient needs power, the imposition of such power must follow the divine light of justice. The British rule in India must be replaced with a “civilized power” in order to “rescue [the Orient] from eternal anarchy, stagnation, and despotism” (“Orientalism” 16). For these noble causes, as the writer maintains, “America may unfurl the stripes and stars in the harbor of Jeddo and open Japan to the world” (16). While distancing the United States from British colonialism as a “civilized power,” the writer articulates the global version of the Manifest Destiny. Just as European powers justified colonialism as the harbinger of “civilization,” the writer envisions U.S. role in Asia and the Orient as an agent of civilization, justice, and order. In promoting postcolonial nationalism in opposition to European imperialism, U.S. national discourses thus appropriated the same imperial strategy of spreading “civilization.” In this ideological slippage from postcolonial nationalism to imperial domination, the notion of the hemispheric balance of power, profoundly articulated in the Monroe Doctrine, provided a language of convenience in formulating U.S. foreign policy. As Gretchen Murphy argues, “the Monroe Doctrine’s flexibility has always provided its power” in conceptualizing the dual identity of the

United States (viii): the postcolonial anti-imperial America and the America destined to control and police the world globally as an “empire of liberty.”

### **Academic Orientalism and the “Anxiety of Belatedness”**

Ever since the publication of Said’s influential Orientalism in 1978, the critics of Orientalism have maintained a degree of reluctance to engage with U.S. Orientalism. This lack of meaningful scrutiny of U.S. Orientalism is partly because of the prevalent sense of “U.S. exceptionalism” within the postcolonial critique of Western discourse on the Orient. Said considers World War II as a turning point after which U.S. involvement in the project of Oriental knowledge production became apparent, especially with the rise of area studies programs in U.S. academies. Prior to that moment, as Said suggests, there “was no deeply invested tradition of Orientalism” in the United States (290). Further, Said cites Orientalism’s indebtedness to philology, which was more vibrant in the nineteenth-century Europe, as one of the reasons for the absence of “deeply invested tradition of Orientalism” in the United States. He also adds that the “imaginative investment was never made either, perhaps because the American frontier, the one that counted, was the westward one” (290). Although one has to conceptually agree with Said that there was a lack of “deep” investment in academic Orientalism, this sense of lack also produced nationalist anxiety of belatedness. When an increased scholarly interest in the Orient as a site of knowledge production led to the establishment of the American Oriental Society in 1842, the founding members expressed an eagerness to emulate the scholarly work done by similar Societies across Europe. The annual proceedings and publications of the American Oriental Society in its early stage of development demonstrate that, by entering into the project of Oriental knowledge production, U.S.

scholars were vying for the kind of hermeneutic power their European counterparts enjoyed for so long. In his “Address” to the first meeting of the American Oriental Society, John Pickering, the first president of the Society, identifies the opening up of the East, increased communication facilities, and missionary work as the immediate contexts for the scholarly interest in the Orient (1). The rationale behind the scholarly exploration of the Orient, according to Pickering, lay in two important developments. First, the existing state of “peace” among all nations interested in “the investigation of history, literature, and science of the East” opened up the possibility of “cooperation” and scholarly exchanges. Second, the East, which has been “estranged in feeling, habits, and manners from their [European] brethren” for centuries, demonstrated a willingness to allow “free intercourse,” facilitating the study of Eastern languages and cultures (1). Pickering takes the Orient as an intellectual crossroad disseminating ideas across Western metropolises. With multiple memberships in various Societies, Orientalists, through professional seminars and extensive lecture tours, maintained a productive solidarity in the study of oriental cultures and languages, thus exchanging ideas across the globe.

The American Oriental Society in its initial phase could boast of a cosmopolitan membership that included prominent European Orientalists such as Eugene Burnouf (Paris), Franz Bopp (Berlin), Sir Henry W. Torrens (Calcutta), J. C. Prichard (Bristol), and Alexander von Humboldt (Germany). A productive sharing of knowledge about the Orient through intellectual exchange, as Pickering suggests, would compensate the belated arrival of the United States in the area of Oriental knowledge production. However, Pickering justifies the belated presence of the U.S. in Oriental study by making a distinction between the “young nations,” where every young man “is called upon to

have some agency in the management of public affairs” and the “older nations,” where “under the arbitrary government,” individuals are “exonerated from the burdens of public affairs” (3-5). Pickering draws upon the discourse of U.S. national identity as essentially democratic nation as opposed to “arbitrary” forms of governments in Europe to explain the United States’ lack of “deep” investment in Oriental Studies. But, the United States also enjoyed an advantage over other nation in the race for Oriental knowledge, as “intelligent and energetic American missionaries and scholars . . . spread over some of the most interesting regions” could contribute to the knowledge of the Orient (Pickering 1, 2).

Unlike European academic Orientalism that enjoyed material support from the empire, especially in providing the logistics and an easy access to remote cultures, the founding members of the American Oriental Society looked up to missionaries for a similar kind of productive collaboration. As Schueller argues, the American Oriental Society “was indisputably linked to raced missionary activity” (43). In his sixty page-long “Address,” Pickering frequently underlines the importance of missionary contribution to oriental knowledge production. Highlighting the role of missionary activities, he writes:

Thus in the wisdom of Providence has it happened, that, while the propagation of Christianity, on the one hand, is opening to us new sources of information in different languages—which are the essential instruments of knowledge—on the other hand, the progressive acquisition of their languages is constantly placing in our hands new means of disseminating religious instruction. (2)

Pickering's call for a collaborative nexus between academic Orientalism and missionary work elides a scholarly interest with an evangelical motive. As a result, the scholarly interest of acquiring knowledge of Oriental languages also serves the purpose of "disseminating religious instruction." In U.S. Orientalist discourse, religion and nation supplement each other. As Schueller observes, "the missionary activity not only signified national power but also raced itself as distinctively Western" (40). Since American missionaries found themselves "belated" in the mission of evangelizing India and other Oriental cultures, they also produced a discourse of "colonial cleaving" as they tried to distance themselves from British and European missions. However, they utilized the same Orientalist stereotypes in representing the natives as essentially "barbaric" and "uncivilized."

When it came to evangelizing India, American missionaries jealously flaunted national pride in the face of British competitors. The 1811 report of the Board of Commissioners, while appealing for donations from U.S. citizens, rhetorically asked: "Shall the four American missionaries be cast upon the London fund? . . . Would it not be a reproach to our character as a Christian nation?" (qtd. in Schueller 40). While political discourses pitted new democratic nation against European imperialism to promote postcolonial imperialism, missionary writings emphasized "Christian values" as the defining principle of national character and constructed the Asia-Pacific as an outlying constituency where the nation's moral and religious vision could be realized.

The fact that between 1843 and 1847 the American Oriental Society extended its membership to missionaries working in the Asia-Pacific region demonstrates the extent of influence missionaries have had on Oriental Study. Missionaries collected

manuscripts, wrote memoirs, travelogues and conversion narratives, contributing to the growth of knowledge about the Orient. The missionary contribution to the American Oriental Society is evident by the fact that the Society offered honorary membership to missionaries working in India and Ceylon. Miron Winslow, a prominent missionary working in Madras in the 1840s, became an honorary member of the American Oriental Society in 1846. Besides publishing a dictionary of Tamil language, Winslow frequently wrote about India. In his Sketches of Missions, he offered a picture of Indian people, particularly Hindus to the Western audience. The people Winslow saw were “partially civilized, at least, they are not savages” (253). Yet, he proposed a single word “imbecility” to describe their innate character (253). Winslow’s Hindus, however, were indefinable. They possessed “strange tissues of opposite qualities” (253). Winslow portrays the natives as possessing a combination of extreme human qualities. According to him, Indians, especially Hindus combined “sympathy with the cruel; the austere with the licentious; the sanguinary with the voluptuous . . . . At one time, they wallow in sensuality, indulging the most unbounded gratification; at another, they cheerfully undergo the most cruel self-torture” (254). Winslow appropriates the stereotype of Asiatic duplicity in an attempt to understand the “true character” of the Hindus. To fit the Orient into an already known category of knowledge, the object must pass through a systematic process of negation: since the Oriental cannot be sympathetic, he must be cruel.

There is, however, another form of collaborative nexus. Writings such as Miron’s Sketches reinforce the already available binaries between the Orient and the Occident by lending the power of authority. As someone who has “witnessed” and dealt with the

Orient, missionaries such as Winslow, perpetuated oriental stereotypes of the essential sloth, stagnation, passivity, and deprivation of oriental character. Periodical literature, missionary writings, and travelogues, offered the necessary rationale for U.S. control over the Asia-Pacific through military intervention, trade relations, and propagation of democratic values.

Thus, the representation of Asiatic Orient in Senatorial and Congressional debates, popular culture, and missionary writings demonstrates how the Asiatic Orient provided an ideological coherence to often conflicting and contradictory discourses on the nation: a vigorous form of post-colonial nationalism and an equally rhetorically-charged form of imperialism. Contrary to the dominant tendency among Americanists of positing the “transnational” perspective as a “post-national” development, a critical attention to the discourse of the Asiatic Orient in nineteenth-century U.S. culture reveals a discursive terrain where nationalism and imperialism sustain each other.

Despite the rhetoric of “North American road to India,” particularly in the expansionist rhetoric of the 1840s, the importance of Asiatic trade in U.S. economy in nineteenth-century, in terms of real trade flows, was quite insignificant. Rather, the rhetorical construction of the Asia-Pacific in U.S. national narratives as the nation’s foreign outpost was based on the imagined “barbaric wealth” of the Oriental world. Nevertheless, the Asiatic imaginary also fed the growing sense of national self-confidence, primarily based on two overarching assumptions: the limitless trade opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region and the prospect of “marriage” between the Anglo-Saxons and the Asiatic races. The mid-century discourse of benevolent assimilation of Asiatic races so pervasive during the Senatorial and Congressional

debates over the question of Oregon and California, however, underwent a substantial revision during the late nineteenth century. With the arrival of transnational labor force from Asian countries, particularly China, the Asiatic presence in the United States also destabilized the discourse of national homogeneity, producing anxiety and ambivalences. On the one hand, the U.S. imperial adventures overseas, viewed as the outward flow of Anglo-Saxon energy, still produced optimism about the global expansion of U.S. influence; on the other hand, the Asiatic presence within the metropolises, like San Francisco, in the form of cheap labor force, gave rise to the discourse of “yellow peril.” Viewed as an impending overtaking of the United States by the Asiatics, the “yellow peril” discourse, ironically, questioned the Orientalist construction of Asia as a site of lethargy and stagnation.

Moreover, the “imaginative Orientalism,” as manifested in popular cultural and literary writings, challenged the “frontier” hypothesis. With the emergence of the nativist discourse of Anglo-Saxon supremacy in the late nineteenth-century, the notion of “American frontier” underwent a radical revision. By tracing Anglo-Saxon history back to Germanic period, the turn-of-the-century nativist discourses envisioned the East and the Orient as the final destination of westward march. In the next two chapters, I examine the implications of this ambivalent representation of Asiatic Orient in literary texts.



## CHAPTER TWO

### **Popular Orientalism, Empire, and Nineteenth-Century U.S. Literary Culture**

The development of literary periodicals in the United States, as I maintain in the previous chapter, coincided with the rise of anti-colonial nationalism. In particular, an emphasis on the need of developing national literature led to a call for the repudiation of European imperialism and its cultural legacy. When it came to the literary marketplace and popular writings, however, nineteenth-century U.S. literary culture demonstrated openness to a wide range of transnational ideas and literary currents. The discursive construction of the Orient as the West's racial and civilizational other became one of the areas where periodical literature and novel writing collaborated in disseminating ideas across the Atlantic. Just as the debate over the annexation of California in the 1840s occasioned the orientalist construction of the Asia-Pacific as the nation's new frontier, colonial conflicts taking place in the distant colonial world, such as the "Indian Mutiny" of 1857 that ushered in the direct British rule in India,<sup>1</sup> led to the resurgence of oriental imagination in U.S. literary culture, often with conflicting implications. While the Indian Insurgency challenged the stereotypical view of the Orient as a stagnant and passive entity, it also gave rise to a new set of stereotypes. The altered perception of the Indians as "lawless," "vengeful," and "barbaric" peoples promoted imperial solidarity, as U.S. cultural narratives justified the British presence in India as a desirable necessity for the

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<sup>1</sup> While I am aware of the controversies related to the naming of the historical events of 1857, for the sake of clarity, my use of "Indian Mutiny" follows its popular name. Depending on the perspective one has, it is also referred as "Sepoy Rebellion," "Sepoy Mutiny" or "The First War of Indian Independence." While "sepoy" is a pejorative term referring to the native soldier, the term "mutiny" retains its historical reference as the movement originated with the "rebellion" of regiments of discontented native soldiers in the service of the East India Company. As it soon took the form of a popular revolt, in which other sections of the Indian society, including local princes, monarchs, and general public also participated, scholars have challenged the use of terms such as "sepoy" and "mutiny" and instead prefer to term it as "The First War of Independence." See Astrid Erl, 164.

natives, deemed incapable of self-governance. Moreover, the sudden change of attitude toward the Orient also created anxiety over Asiatic racial forms at home.

Nowhere does the ambivalent attitude toward the Orient appear as pervasively as in the stories and novels that employ the historical context of the colonial conflict in India to negotiate the literary marketplace already familiar with the journalistic accounts of the “Indian Mutiny.” Popular writers such as Edgar Allen Poe, Jane Goodwin Austin, Francis Marion Crawford, and L. Clarke Davis published oriental tales in prominent literary periodicals, including Putman’s Magazine, Harper’s New Monthly, The Dollar Monthly Magazine, and Frank Leslie’s Popular Monthly. These writers, while remaining within the paradigm of colonial representation of the natives, offer an American perspective on the imperial formation abroad, thus complicating the very idea of American isolationism. Often an imaginative rendering of the Orient—only Francis Marion Crawford had a considerable experience of living in India—oriental stories, especially those that belong to Mutiny genre, typically situate an American character in the midst of a colonial conflict in India or alternatively place oriental characters within the national borders as an uncanny foreign presence. In doing so, these stories display a remarkable consistency in narrating the real and fantasized colonial encounters. L. Clarke Davis’s protagonist, George Lawrence, in the Stranded Ship, for instance, recuperates his doomed masculinity while fighting alongside the British during the “Indian Mutiny.” In “A Tale of the Ragged Mountain,” Augustus Bedloe, Poe’s hypochondriac character, while strolling in Charlottesville, Virginia, hallucinates about Hastings’s war in India. Bedloe’s phantasmagoric conjuration of Banaras in the vicinity of the early nineteenth-century Charlottesville draws a parallel between North American and British forms of

colonialism. In Jane Goodwin Austin's "The Loot of Lucknow," Edward Holmes, an expatriate American living in Calcutta, fights alongside the British, recovers a mysterious Indian casket, and sends it home as a gift to his beloved only to have a "treacherous native" follow all the way to his home in Boston. By imagining an active participation of an American male in colonial conflicts abroad, these stories not only promote imperialist masculinity, but they also complicate the boundaries between the domestic and the foreign. In particular, such narratives of imagined intervention question the emergent anti-imperialistic national identity at home by arguing for the increasing U.S. solidarity with the empire and its agents.

In this chapter, by analyzing Poe's "A Tale of the Ragged Mountain" (1844), Davis's Stranded Ship (1869), and Jane Goodwin Austin's "The Loot of Lucknow" (1868), I argue that the oriental imagination in these stories is an expression of "political unconscious" that renders the imperial imaginary embedded in the discourse of Manifest Destiny visible. As such, the narratives of transnational encounters demystify the very rhetoric of "imperial denial." Such encounters with the colonized demonstrate how U.S. national identity draws upon imperial formations abroad. In particular, "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains" presents the case in point on the convergence between the national formation at home and the ascendancy of British colonialism in India and as such, offers a parodic commentary on the westward movement of the United States.

### **Looking West, Imagining the East: "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains"**

In his lesser-known story, "A Tale of Ragged Mountain," published in Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book in 1844, Poe demonstrates how the mid-nineteenth-century U.S. westward expansion mirrored British colonial venture in India. Through a conscious

parody of the British imperial march in India during the late eighteenth-century, Poe depicts the westward movement of the nation as a continuation of the Anglo-Saxon imperial march. With the parodic subversion of a typical western narrative of colonial adventure, however, Poe expresses anxiety over colonial ventures, undermining the very discourse of Manifest Destiny. The story begins with a typical frame narrative. The narrator recounts a curious case of Augustus Bedloe, a hypochondriac who, while strolling across “the Ragged Mountains” of Charlottesville, Virginia, experiences an enigmatic, psychic delusion of participating in Warren Hastings’s war in India. The events of the story take place in the year 1827, a period of Indian removal and U.S. westward expansion. A patient of the seventy-five-year-old doctor Templeton, Bedloe undertakes a walk across the eponymous Ragged Mountains on a “dim, misty day” of Indian summer and does not return until late in the evening. When he reappears, he relates a fantastic story of how he found himself in an “Eastern-looking city, such as we read in the Arabian Tales” (178). In the strange place, later identified as Banaras, the holy city of the Hindus, Bedloe finds himself surrounded by “a million of yellow and black men, turbaned and robed, and of flowing beard” (179). When he comes upon a “small party of men, clad in garments half Indian [and] half European, and officered by gentlemen in a uniform partly British,” he picks “the weapon of a fallen officer” and fights with “nervous ferocity” without “exactly understanding what it [the war] was” for (179). However, a group of natives chase him away, and he retreats along with the British in a dark ally. At one point, he even experiences “death,” receiving a blow from a native Bengali (179). Enigmatic as Bedloe’s story remains, he keeps insisting upon the veracity of his phantasmagoric experience of a transubstantiation of soul. Like Poe’s other stories

of the fantastic, “A Tale of the Ragged Mountains” ends with an “enigma”: how to explain Bedloe’s experience rationally? Dr. Templeton, a follower of the “doctrine of Mesmer,”<sup>2</sup> offers plausible explanation by showing a photograph of one of Templeton’s British friends, Mr. Oldeb, taken in Calcutta in the year 1780 during the “administration of Warren Hastings” (180). Pointing out the exact likeness of Bedloe and Oldeb, Templeton proposes the theory of the transubstantiation of soul and suggests that Augustus Bedloe in fact was an incarnation of Oldeb, the British officer, who was killed by “the poisoned arrow of a Bengali” (180).

Thus, in explaining away an enigma, the story poses another one. Dr. Templeton explains the mystery of Bedloe’s experience, leaving the reader to make sense of Templeton’s explanation as to what exactly Bedloe’s purported connection to Oldeb signifies. And by extension, what does Bedloe’s fantasized “re-experience” of Oldeb’s predicament of colonial adventure in India offer regarding the displacement of “Indians” within the United States? By drawing a parallel between Bedloe’s errand to the “Ragged Mountains” of Virginia and Hastings’s war in India, the story demonstrates that the Westward expansion and its ideological postulations in the discourse of Manifest Destiny indeed mirror British colonialism in India. The story, in fact, indicates the continuity of an imperialistic race identity, most pronouncedly manifest in the British colonialism in India. At the center of this convergence of identities is the theme of colonial doubling. The mirror image—Bedloe/ Oldeb—suggests that American Bedloe embodies British Oldeb. Bedloe’s racial allegiance with the British also reinforces a similar doubling between North American and Far Eastern Indians as they are bound by a common

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<sup>2</sup> The term Mesmer refers to Franz Mesmer (1734-1815), a Swiss-German physician who founded the doctrine of “animal magnetism,” popularly known as mesmerism.

weapon of resistance, the “poisoned arrow.” The story’s blurring of racial and national identities across the national borders challenges the critical tendency of interpreting the representation of ethnic minorities—African Americans and American Indians—in Poe’s writings within the context of domestically available racial differences in the ante-bellum America.

Despite being one of Poe’s favorite stories, “A Tale of the Ragged Mountains” has received less critical attention than his other stories of this era, such as “Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Gold-Bug,” “The Black Cat,” “The Premature Burial,” and “The Purloined Letter.” One of the reasons for this relative lack of critical scrutiny, as Doris V. Falk maintains, is that the story is “deliberately obscure, full of multifarious Romantic-Gothic elements which never quite cohere” (540). Given the predominance of New Critical approaches in the fifties and early sixties, it is quite reasonable that critics often found the polymorphic structure of the story baffling. As a result, critics have established the story as part of Poe’s aesthetic oeuvre that consistently deals with the bizarre and the morbid with its recurrent themes of mesmerism, animal magnetism, and ratiocination. For instance, Falk argues that the main concern of the story lies in the theme of “animal magnetism,” a popular nineteenth-century notion about the “electromagnetic force” believed to make “time and space unreal and relative” (540). While Falk rightly points out the temporal and spatial dislocation as one of the main interests in the story, she leaves the significance of such dislocation unexplained. Citing Poe’s familiarity with the historic landscape of Charlottesville, Daniel J. Philippon insists on the importance of interpreting the story in relation to Poe’s environmental awareness. According to him, “Poe not only grounded his tale in the Virginia landscape but also used the realities of

that landscape to both justify and spoof the Romantic visions Bedloe claims to experience” (4). Whether one argues for the spatial dislocation as Falk does or takes the story as being grounded in the landscape, the transposition of the story’s domestic setting to the fantasized oriental landscape of India warrants further scrutiny.

Recently, critics of U.S. imperialism have begun to reexamine the implications of transnational imagining, especially the use of oriental tropes, in Poe’s writings. In Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism, John Carlos Rowe insists, “Poe’s rhetorical use of non-European peoples should also be interpreted in relation to the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century imperialism (53). By focusing on Poe’s use of “imaginary voyages,” especially in the “Journal of Julius Rodman” and “A Tale of Ragged Mountains,” Rowe contends that these writings bring North American and European colonialisms within a single context of imperial formations (56). He highlights the significance of the U.S.-Mexican War and the internal displacement of Native Americans in Poe’s fictionalized travel narratives and argues that, through “strange doubling of Great Britain and the United States,” Poe proposes a “model for imperial power in North America,” largely based on British colonialism in India (55). Although Rowe’s postcolonial interpretation of the story calls for a new direction in the Poe scholarship, it also raises an important question about Poe’s attitude toward imperial formations in North America. Within the context of internal colonization and westward expansion, what does Poe’s “imperial fantasy” of colonial doubling imply? According to Rowe,

What Poe imagines in these two fantastic travel narratives is achievable only in and through his own poetic authority; it is a fantasy of imperial power and authority vested in the literary author and by no means

realizable in what Poe considers the increasingly decadent politics of democracy. Fantastic as such poetic authority may thus remain, it is by no means harmless or trivial; it remains very much part of neocolonial practices . . . (55)

Though embedded in the “poetic authority” of the writer, the imperial fantasy, as Rowe maintains, is no longer “harmless or trivial.” However, it remains to be explained how seriously Poe deemed the model of “imperial power” displayed in India applicable or even desirable in the North American context. Taking Rowe’s insight about colonial doubling as the point of departure, I maintain that Poe expresses deep anxiety over U.S. westward expansion, as the story focuses on the morbid and grotesque aspect of Bedloe’s imagined colonial warfare.

In fact, the unwillingness to sanction an imperial triumphalism in the story originates not so much from his apprehension of “decadent politics” as from the perceived emasculation of Anglo-Saxon race through colonial and imperial encounters. It is significant that Bedloe does not feature as a quintessential agent of empire; nor does he assume the authority and power of a colonial soldier while participating in the suppression of Indian resistance in Banaras. He is a sickly individual of dubious origin, someone “impossible to comprehend” (177). Further, the narrator is unable to recognize “his *mental*, his *moral*, or his *physical* relations” (emphasis original, 177). His physiognomy reveals a degree of animalism and degeneration about him. The narrator persistently focuses on Bedloe’s physical and mental abnormality. He possesses “*exceedingly* long and emaciated” limbs, an “absolutely bloodless” complexion, and “abnormally large and round [eyes] like those of a cat” (177). Since Bedloe also



experienced “death” during his reveries about Banaras, his morbid appearance adds gothic elements to the narrative. The ghostly, spirit-like dimension of Bedloe’s physicality, however, supports Temple’s theory of the transubstantiation of soul, that is, Bedloe as the reincarnation of Oldeb, the British soldier who was killed by a “poisonous arrow of a Bengali” during Hastings’s war. Besides his apparent physical oddities, Bedloe suffers from “profound melancholy” and is under experimental treatment from an equally eccentric doctor, a follower of Mesmer (177). Bedloe’s “peculiarities,” his diseased body, and his unknown origin suggest that he is unlikely to assume the authority of an imperial power. Rather, Bedloe’s imagined participation in the colonial conflict and his self-deprecating story of defeat and humiliation interrogate the very rationale behind colonial adventures.

Through Bedloe’s vision of India, Poe parodies the typical Western narrative of exploration and colonization. The fact that Bedloe imagines himself fighting in India while strolling in the vicinity of the nineteenth-century Charlottesville establishes the fact that he consciously internalizes the discourse of Westward expansion. He mentions how the “scenery” and its “solitude seemed absolutely virgin” and how he “could not help believing that the green sods and gray rocks” he trod upon “had been trodden never before by the foot of a human being” (178). He expresses the jubilation of a colonial explorer: “So entirely secluded and in fact inaccessible, except through a series of accidents, is the entrance of the ravine, that it is by no means impossible that I was indeed the first adventurer—the very first and the sole adventurer who had ever penetrated its weird recesses” (178). Bedloe’s description of the journey conveys the aura of an “errand to the wilderness.” By claiming to be the first adventurer of the “Ragged Mountains,”

Bedloe claims the position of a western explorer and colonizer. As if he were realizing the Columbian dream, he discovers a mysterious passage to India through the ravine, which he accessed by means of “a series of accidents” (177). Poe employs the conventions of Western narratives of exploration to make connections between the Anglo-Saxon presence in the American west and the British presence in India. There is, however, an element of mimicry in Bedloe’s tale of transnational adventure; he presents the trivial pursuit of a leisurely walk taken under intoxication with the grand narrative of discovery and settlement. As a result, the “doubling of Great Britain and the United States” entails parodic subversion of the very rhetoric of the Westerly march.

Moreover, Bedloe’s nonchalant attitude, his morbid physicality, and his inability to impose an order of power in Banaras reveal his racial anxiety, the feeling of being a captive of “a million of black and yellow” natives. Through Bedloe’s fantasized (mis) adventure, Poe develops a narrative of what Linda Colley terms the “colonial captivity,” a story about the predicament of a lonely Western colonizer who succumbs to the native hostility and aggression, suffers captivity, and even death (Colley 5). As Bedloe undertakes the stroll, he recalls the “strange stories told about these Ragged Hills and of the uncouth and fierce races of men” (Poe 178). The memory of the Anglo-Indian encounters instigates “fear” in Bedloe’s mind. The metaphoric displacement of North American Indians onto East Indians is part of the psychic defense mechanism that allows the subject to cope with the sudden onslaught of fear. While in Banaras, Bedloe experiences the loss of self-identity. Outnumbered and overwhelmed by the natives, he loses the power of an absolute sovereignty that he has assumed as the first adventurer of the Ragged Mountains. Rather, he finds himself “[a]midst the crowd, and the clamor, and

the general intricacies of confusion” (179). Implicit in Bedloe’s vision of India is the anxiety and fear of being outnumbered: he joins a small group of Europeans facing “great odds” against the “swarming rabble of the alleys” (179). It is Bedloe’s experience of the transubstantiation of soul—his psychic re-experiencing of Oldeb’s death—that makes the errand into the “Ragged Mountains” a meaningful event. In the mirror of the British struggle in India, Bedloe sees the impending danger of a colonial adventure. His effort to reassert “power” in India leads to a loss of authority. He picks “the weapon of a fallen officer” to fight against “millions of black and yellow men” (179). Yet, the native resistance repulses the army of Europeans with whom Bedloe forges an alliance. His assumed colonial authority falls apart: “The rabble pressed impetuously upon us, harassing us with their spears, and overwhelming us with flights of arrows” (179). Bedloe’s candid report of the British retreat in Banaras expresses disillusionment over the supposed invincibility of a colonial power. His psychic death in India indicates not so much as the triumphal assertion of colonial power as the vulnerability of the very power structure that brings Europeans in conflict with the natives.

Bedloe’s racial allegiance with the British parallels a similar racial blurring between East Indians and American Indians. Just before Bedloe hallucinates about Banaras, he sees a vision of a “dusky-visaged half-naked man” pass him, and Bedloe feels “his hot breath upon my face” (178). Later, when Templeton explains that the “vision itself presented to you [Bedloe] amid the hills” was the “Indian city of Banaras” and the “man escaping by the strings of turbans was Cheyte [sic] Singh himself,”<sup>3</sup> the

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<sup>3</sup> Warren Hasting’s treatment to Chet Singh, the Raja of Banaras, was one of the reasons that led to a long legal prosecution against Hastings. Ernest Binfield Havell notes, “During the tumult, Chet Singh escaped to Ramnagar by lowering himself from one of the wondows of the palace.” See Havell, Benares, the Sacred City: Sketches of Hindu Life and Religion (London: Blackie and Sons, 1905): 213.

story not only blurs the spatial boundaries between Virginia and Banaras, but it also collapses the racial differences between “dusky half-naked” American Indians and “yellow” East Indians. Like Oldeb, the colonial “double,” Bedloe dies when a “black and tall man” strikes him with “a poisoned barb” (179). Devoid of any trace of colonial arrogance of power, he sums up the entire episode in a Caesaresque hendiatriis—“I struggled, I gasped, I died” (179). Yet, the intended bathos in the tricolon undermines the imperial arrogance of a Caesar. He hallucinates of being killed by a “poisoned barb,” a veiled metonymy for racial miscegenation as it draws at and poisons the blood of the victim.

In “A Tale of the Ragged Mountains,” Poe draws a parallel between the internal colonization in the United States and the British colonialism in India. He also makes a compelling case of how transnational encounters mediated by Euro-American imperialism produce racial anxiety. More importantly, the story represents a shared tendency in populist oriental tales of using oriental themes either to articulate an imperialistic triumphalism or to subvert the very logic of the Western domination over non-European peoples and cultures. While Poe’s tale uses Warren Hastings’s war in India as a transnational context to reflect over the emergent national formation at home, Davis’s Stranded Ship and Jane Goodwin Austin’s “The Loot of Lucknow” express an ambivalent attitude toward the Orient. In these narratives, the Orient appears as something romantically seductive but dangerously disruptive to American domesticity.

The Indian Uprising of 1857 captivated U.S. cultural imagination and elicited contradictory responses from writers such as Davis and Austin. Like Poe, Davis situates an American male character amidst Indian insurgency. Unlike Augustus Bedloe, whose

imagined participation in the counter-insurgency ends up in retreat and death-fantasy, George Lawrence of Stranded Ship, while fighting the Indians, attains moral regeneration. Since both Davis and Austin, to a large extent, appropriate the discursive strategies employed in the colonial representation of the Insurgency, it is pertinent to examine how contemporary periodicals furnished these writers with readily available orientalist stereotypes that populate their narratives. In particular, the populist codification of the natives as “vengeful savages” and “murderers of innocent women and children” in periodical literature inform Davis’s and Austin’s representation of the Orient. As a result, both Stranded Ship and “The Loot of Lucknow” reproduce the discourse of imperial legitimacy.

### **American Periodicals and the “Indian Mutiny”**

A cursory survey of American periodicals published between the late 1850s and the 1860s reveals a productive collaboration among periodicals on both sides of the Atlantic in disseminating Mutiny literatures. U.S. periodicals often reprinted articles and news published in the British press and occasionally carried out reports of the “Mutiny” sent home by American journalists and missionaries residing in India. In doing so, periodicals carried over the colonial construction of the natives as “vengeful murderers of innocent women and children.” Periodicals associated with Christianity and foreign missions such as Christian Inquirer and Missionary Magazine, while denouncing the “heathen outrage,” took the “Mutiny” as a Divine call for the “furtherance of the gospel” (“Result” 82). Frustrated with the East India Company’s policy of non-interference with the native faith, American missionaries took the Insurgency and the subsequent advent of the direct British rule in India as a historical opportunity that would open up the limitless

avenues for the religious proselytizing. In its issue of March 1859, Missionary Magazine, for instance, blamed the East India Company for “professing to rule on the principle of not interfering with the religion of the native” and for depriving [missionaries] of “the means to lead the heathen soldier to the truth” (“Result” 82). In the wake of the British ascendancy, the Missionary concluded that the “prospects of the missionary enterprise in this land were never so bright and encouraging as at the present” (82). Despite the self-serving rhetoric of religious conversion, Christian publications viewed the “Mutiny” from a moral perspective. An obvious outcome of such a perspective was that it called for a radical change of attitude toward the Orient and India. The popular perception of the Orient as passive, stagnant, and ahistorical gave away to a new image of the Orient as lawless, murderous, and vengeful. Moreover, in Mutiny literature, the projection of the Insurgency as a battle between good and evil, religion and heathenism, and between civilization and barbarism led to a depoliticized understanding of the conflict.

As the details of native atrocities meted out to innocent women and children dominated the media representation of the Indian Insurgency, a rhetorical appeal to humane sentiment promoted the discourse of racial solidarity with the British. Periodical pieces portrayed the conflict as an unspeakable experience of horror. The Ballou’s Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion, a widely circulated illustrated magazine, for instance, went as far as to supplement the news report with a graphic illustration of a “slaughter” scene. In its issue of 27 March 1858, almost a year after the rebellion, Ballou’s Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion published a broadsheet, illustrating “the slaughter of English residents” in Cawnpore as a “souvenir of the dark days of the Indian

Mutiny” (“English Residents” 208).<sup>4</sup> The sketch shows a large number of white women and children huddled in a vault-like room. Engulfed by the blazing fire and surrounded by the “native perpetrators,” the victims display an angelic calmness that contrasts with the devilish intent of the native soldiers bearing spears and swords covered with blood. The accompanying article alerts the reader to the putative verisimilitude of the “slaughter” scene: “The assembly room in Cawnpore was crowded with women and children, *as shown in our graving*, when the ferocious sepoy made their appearance at the windows and deliberately poured in a destructive fire, murdering the hapless and unoffending inmates” (emphasis mine 208). Through the narrative cue—“as shown in our graving”—the periodical assumes the perspective of a “witness” and rhetorically calls upon the reader to take the sketch as the stand-in reality. Moreover, the narrative authority endowed on the visual spectacle authenticates the narrative representation that follows the illustration.

The writers often bemoan the inability of language to represent the “barbaric atrocities” and express the sense of a “linguistic trauma.” In “Life in India: The Sepoy Mutiny,” published in Oliver Optic’s Magazine,<sup>5</sup> Harriette B. Cotes appeals to the reader to share her humane sentiment while questioning the very ability of language to “portray the scenes and incidents” (720). From the position of a witness, she writes,

The heart sickens as it dwells on that horrid carnage; that treachery so unparalleled in the annals of history; that disregard of all the claims of

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<sup>4</sup> The primary referent of the “massacre of women and children” is the reported killing of two hundred British civilians by Nana Sahib, a Hindu leader, in Cawnpore [Kanpur] on 15 July 1857. Historical accounts tell that while retreating from the approaching British Army, Nana Sahib ordered that the hostages were put to death. See Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993) 64-67.

<sup>5</sup> *Oliver Optic’s Magazine: Our Boys and Girls* (1867-1876), with moderate circulation, primarily catered to juvenile audience and regularly published poems, music, and fiction for young people.

humanity; that pitiless massacre of helpless women and children . . . . No  
tongue can tell the anxiety and suspense of the foreign residents! Terror  
blanched every cheek, and an agony of uncertainty filled every heart!  
(720)

Coates contrasts the “civilized outrage” experienced by the expatriate community against the natives’ complete “disregard” of humanity. It is not the event itself—the “pitiless massacre of helpless women and children”—but the traumatic experience of having to reflect over and narrate the incident that challenges the writer’s sensibility. By admitting the inability of language to “tell the anxiety and suspense,” the speaker forces the reader to “imagine” the “unspeakable horror,” a euphemistic reference to “rape” and violence on women’s bodies.

The linguistic trauma so pervasive in Mutiny literatures also indicates the crisis in the representation of the Orient in Western discourses. In particular, the “Indian Mutiny” challenged the stereotypical perception of the oriental as being a passive, stagnant, and servile race. In its issue of 4 September 1858, the Christian Inquirer, for instance, took the Mutiny as a “lesson” about the Oriental race and wondered: “How is it that a tribe of people, generally noted for their apathy and indolence, are suddenly rioting in excitement and rebellion?” (2). In answering the question, the Inquirer suggested that the “Oriental mind slow to awaken from its lethargy, rushes over to the extreme of passion and vehemence as soon as some event takes place stirring enough to disturb repose of their *sluggish disposition*” (emphasis original 2). The Inquirer attributes the causes of Insurgency to race-specific qualities of the oriental mind and cites extreme “passion” and “vehemence” as the ultimate reason for the rebellion. In doing so, the Inquirer occludes



the native desire for independence from any form of rational consideration and denies the natives any form of political agency. And yet, the question indicates the writer's sense of disillusionment over the failure to understand the oriental mind, as it challenges the prior conceptions about the East as being "slow" and "lethargic."

Due to the predominance of missionary perspectives, a highly foregrounded moral overtone marks the representation of the "Indian Mutiny" in U.S. periodical literature. Especially, the writers identify religious and civilizational differences as the prime causes of the "Mutiny." Such an understanding of the "Indian Mutiny" displays a degree of indigenization process at work. However, by foregrounding the "women and children" as victims of native atrocities, American periodicals re-inscribed the very discursive strategies that the British employed in representing the "Mutiny." Moreover, Euro-American fiction writers also exploited the popular appeal of the Insurgency, as it appeared in a wide range of genres—novel, memoir, and historical sketch—leading to a hybrid narrative of generic cross-over. As early as in 1897, in the review article, "Indian Mutiny in Fiction," Hilda Greg sums up the literary appeal of Indian Insurgency:

Of all great events of this century, as they are reflected in fiction, the Indian Mutiny has taken the firmest hold on the popular imagination . . . [T]he events of the time seemed to provide every element of romance that could be desired in a story. Valor and heroism, cruelty and treachery, sharp agony and long endurance, satiated vengeance and blood-thirsty hatred were all present." (218)

Although the sudden influx of the mutiny-related novels published in Britain must have influenced Greg's assessment of the influence of Indian Insurgency in contemporary

fiction, the fact that novels were often published simultaneously in Britain and the United States cannot be ignored.<sup>6</sup> As a result, it is important to assess Austin's and Davis's writings within the shared conventions of the literary marketplace. Greg rightly enumerates a host of themes such as heroism, cruelty, valor, and vengeance that fascinated fiction writers. What is important in Greg's observation, however, is that by constantly focusing on these popular themes, the Mutiny narratives further crystallized the racially forged hierarchies. In particular, such narratives often foregrounded British valor, heroism, and restraint against the backdrop of native cruelty, treachery, and vengefulness. Consequently, mutiny literatures, as Gautam Chakravarty argues, gave rise to a hybrid literary genre, in which "historical novel and colonial adventure novel, romantic Orientalism, historiography and pictorial cultivation of oriental picturesque intersect" (92). Besides contributing to the formation of a new genre, mutiny literature also developed a shared literary marketplace. Writers capitalized upon the immediate historical context made accessible by the proliferation of mutiny literature in contemporary periodicals.

Sensational in plot construction and populist in appeal, Davis's and Austin's narratives employ the mutiny trope as a convenient literary device to negotiate the literary marketplace already familiar with the events of the Indian Insurgency. While Davis's novella takes the form of a colonial adventure fiction in which an American male salvages his guilt-ridden conscience and suspect masculinity by rescuing the besieged

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<sup>6</sup> By the time Davis's novel was published in 1869, a number of noted Mutiny novels were already published. Edward Money's *The Wife and the Ward; or a Life of Error* (1859), H. P. Malet's *The Lost Link of Mutiny* (1867), and James Grant's three-Decker *First Love and Last Love* (1868) are some of the notables that preceded Davis's novella and were published concurrently in New York and London by Routledge.

empire in India, Austin's story recasts the oriental "treachery" and "deception" in a sentimental narrative of American domesticity.

### **Colonial Masculinity, Orientalism, and the Fantasy of Imperial Solidarity**

Originally serialized in Putnam's Magazine, L. Clarke Davis's Stranded Ship: A Story of Sea and Shore underwent a period of relative obscurity after its publication in a book-form by Putnam and Sons in 1869.<sup>7</sup> Given the pervasive coverage of the "Indian Mutiny" in contemporary U.S. periodicals in the late fifties, the novel's inability to appeal the broader audience at first seems puzzling. Contemporary reviewers have pointed out the lack of aesthetic qualities as one of the demerits of the novella. It is also important to note that by the time the novel came out, the sensational appeal of the "Indian Mutiny" had already subsided. When a second edition came out in 1880, however, it received considerable notice from the contemporary readers. Episodic in structure, the novel is suffused with sentimental moralism and melodramatic co-incidences. The Literary World considered it a "clever performance," an "adroit trick by which the identity of two people has been confused and a really pleasant surprise [was] prepared" ("Current Fiction" 1). Harper's Monthly, however, dubbed it a "queer story" in which "there is a seduction, and a murder, and a curious confounding of identity, and a shipwreck" ("Editor's Book Table" 452). While the contemporary readers took issue with "sensationalism," they praised Davis's "remarkably well-written" novella.

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<sup>7</sup> Father of Richard Harding Davis and husband of Rebecca Harding Davis, L. Clarke Davis was born in 1835 in the city of Sandusky, Ohio. He began his journalistic career as an editor of the Legal Intelligencer, which he joined immediately after his graduation in 1855. He became the managing editor of Philadelphia Inquirer in 1870, and served as the Editor-in-Chief of The Public Ledger until his death in 1904. Known for his long journalistic career, Davis frequently published articles in the leading nineteenth-century periodicals and magazines on topics ranging from the game of "Croquet" and its value for women's beauty to pieces on dramatic criticism. Although he frequently published short stories in periodicals, including The Atlantic Monthly, Lippincott's Magazine, Galaxy, and Scribner's Monthly, the Stranded Ship is his only known experiment with novel writing.

The first part of the novella takes place in the mid nineteenth-century Boston. It begins with the principal character, Luke Connor, a young Harvard graduate, delivering the valedictorian speech. The narrative, however, unfolds with a pervasive sense of discord. Despite the historic occasion, Connor begins his speech with a visible discomfort. As he stands among “grave professors, trustees, and friends like Saul among his brethren, taller and fairer than they,” a foreboding sense of doom seems to linger in the air (Davis 6). Later on, he learns that his beloved sister has become the victim of seduction by none other than a fellow student, George Lawrence. Luke Connor pursues revenge; he confronts George Lawrence, stabs him, and throws the body in the water, as the latter was preparing to leave New England in a California-bound ship. Penitent and remorseful, Connor turns himself to the authority. As the body of the victim was never recovered, the court acquits Connor even though he confesses to the murder. Thus a social outcast and a murderer in the eyes of the community, he decides to “go out into the world and to make his hands earn the bread” (40). The second episode begins with a mining scene in California, and the narrator introduces to the reader a young unfortunate miner, by the name of Abdel Dunlethe. As the narrator focuses on the struggling prospector’s sense of self-pity with a tremendous sense of guilt, the reader assumes that Abdel Dunlethe must be Luke Connor. Frustrated with bad luck and repeated failures at “striking” gold, Abdel Dunlethe moves to Melbourne, Australia, as a grazer. The drifter then enlists himself in the Queen’s army raised to quash the “Sepoy rebellion” in India.

While in India, Abdel Dunlethe fights to die honorably so that he could dissipate the guilt. Ironically, he fights valiantly against the “yellow devils,” achieves heroism, and

absolves the stigma from his “manhood.” When the narrative comes to a close, he is seen preparing himself to return to the United States on a ship. The final episode opens in Squan [Manasquan] Beach, New Jersey, the climactic event of “stranded ship” unfolds. Quite interestingly, Luck Connor, the social outcast, reappears in the beach. He risks his own life and saves hundred of lives, thus finally winning the love and admiration of fellow citizens. At this moment, the reader again assumes that it is Luke Connor who fought in the Indian Mutiny. However, the novella ends with a twist: one of the rescued passengers of the stranded ship turns out to be George Lawrence, the ensign of the East India Army. As the story rushes through these melodramatic twists and turns, the narrative centers not so much on its aesthetic properties as on its moral outcome, the consequences of possessing good and bad passion.

Throughout the narrative, Davis’s interest lies not in the character or plot but in an idea that needs to be perfected and executed. Moreover, the plot and the character appear as part of a superimposed structure, and the narrative lacks enough local detail to be aesthetically satisfying. The Atlantic Monthly rightly pointed out that Davis’s novella operates with “an abstract conception . . . in the mind of the author,” and, during the course of the narrative, the author sets out in “constructing figures and lives which shall converge toward and radiate from this situation” (“Recent American Fiction” 419). Although contemporary readers criticized the novel for its lack of realism and its heavy reliance on ideation, Davis, in his authorial note, implicitly argues for realism. He notes that the novel was inspired by two historical events: that the final rescue scene was based on the wreck of an immigrant German ship, *Minerva*, and that the actions of Captain Abdel Dunlethe during the “Indian Mutiny” were based on the “similar incident in the

career, in Mexico, of the late Confederate General Henry E. Reed.”<sup>8</sup> Unlike his prototype, a U.S.-Mexican War hero, Davis’s soldier of fortune, Abdel Dunlethe, possesses questionable moral character—being a seducer and a betrayer of friendship—until he attains moral redemption by suppressing the “Indian Mutiny” in Lucknow. Although Davis’s adherence to realism or lack of it remained the primary focus of the critical contention among nineteenth-century reviewers, the novel’s sheer geographic stretch—actions take place in Cambridge, California, Australia, India, and New Jersey—offers an insight in the role of transnational imagination in the nineteenth-century literary culture. Particularly interesting is the way Davis utilizes the contemporary cultural construction of the “Indian Mutiny” to superimpose an overarching plot structure that brings two dominant themes—romantic reconciliation and moral regeneration—together to a sustained narrative coherence. Moreover, the centrality of transnational imagination in the novella raises an important question about the significance of using the “Indian Mutiny” as a redemptive circumstance for a renegade American drifter in a sensational story of seduction, betrayal, and an apparent murder that takes place in the heart of Boston.

From the outset, Dunlethe’s quest for an “honorable death” sounds a less convincing explanation for his participation in the “Indian Mutiny.” Precisely because of this obvious lack of narrative exigency, however, Davis’s exploitation of the colonial conflict in India as a historical background of the novella becomes more interesting. On the one hand, the Oriental imaginary allows the author to negotiate the literary

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<sup>8</sup> *The American Annual Cyclopedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1868* mentions General Henry E. Reed who was a politician and lawyer from Louisville, Kentucky. According to the *Register*, Reed fought in the U.S.-Mexican war as a member of the Kentucky Regiment and “distinguished himself at Buena Vista, Chapultepec” and later on, he raised an army of volunteers for the Confederate Army and “was elected a member of the Confederate Congress of Kentucky” (587).

marketplace, and on the other hand, the story's leitmotif—the rescue of the besieged empire in India—enables him to develop a character that embodies what Brady Harrison terms the “American imperial self.” In Agent of Empire: William Walker and the Imperial Self in American Literature, Harrison defines “American imperial self” as a consciousness that “plunges wildly into Napoleonic fantasies” and “imagines a rush across a frontier, a pirate raid on another country” (18). In Harrison's formulation, the American imperial self thus signifies the desire for the national expansion through political and militaristic control over a foreign territory or a nation. This desire for more territories, according to Harrison, is best expressed in the exploits of nineteenth-century filibusters such as William Walker, Aaron Burr, and James Wilkinson. Davis's hero lacks an ulterior agenda for the territorial control and does not entertain any militaristic ambition. But, the moral regeneration and the subsequent integration into American society back home that he achieves by suppressing the natives in India demonstrates the importance of his allegiance to the empire for the reinvention of his American masculine self. Modeled after the adventure of Henry E. Reed, a U.S.-Mexican war hero, Dunlethe's actions perpetuate the expansive national consciousness through fantasized military exploits in colonial India.

The dominant moral theme—crime, curse and redemption—provides a structural coherence to an otherwise episodic narrative, endowing the character of Dunlethe with an agenda of racial and masculine regeneration. Both central characters, Luke Connor and George Lawrence, succumb to the excess of passion. Although both are promising scholars at Harvard, they enact the narrator terms “the curse of Cain” (20). Luke Connor apparently murders George Lawrence, a fellow student and a close friend who has

committed the sin of seducing the former's sister. The entire narrative deals with the consequences of the "original curse," its dissipation, and the final restoration of manhood through two entirely unrelated circumstances. George Lawrence, the supposed victim of the murder, happens to be alive after all and frees himself from the "shadow of the curse," fighting "yellow devils" in India. Luke Connor, the mythical Cain, a murderer and a social outcast, miraculously reappears at Squan Beach, New Jersey, in time to save the lives of hundred of innocent people from a ship wreck. The domestic and foreign adventures thus bring two estranged friends together with the ultimate realization that it is only through the heroism displayed in protecting "innocent women and children" that one could fully realize the ideals of American masculinity.

With the use of the biblical story of "Cain's curse," Davis also introduces the theme of "pre-determinism." The notion of predetermination helps explain the sudden fall of the characters; it also establishes Abdel Dunlethe's adventure in India as part of his "destiny," a condition that he must overcome to assert his masculinity. The very prospect of fighting in India rouses the "man hidden somewhere in the heart or brain of Abdel Dunlethe" and prepares him for the "sublime determination" of dying an honorable death (72). An over-determined trope of fate accompli shapes the underlying moral theme of the story. The Biblical perspective that the narrator uses to chart the course of the characters' actions not only underscores the theme of moral regeneration, but it also justifies the characters' transnational adventures as the wandering vagabonds. The pervasive use of gothic images foreshadows the impending disaster, which can only be averted through moral restitution. Luke Connor's moral transgression occurs under the "shadows of curse" (6). Unaware of the fate of his sister back home, he walks out of the



commencement hall and feels as if “some devil of disaster” was following him on the way (9). The frequent references to “curse,” “shadow,” and “devil” in the opening scene foreground the moral dimension of the story, endowing it with a mythic significance. While Connor awaits the news about his sister’s victimization—she “died confessing an awful wrong and shame”—a plethora of ominous signs invade his serenity (11). He envisions the “carved griffins’ heads [in the room] throwing shadows on the floor” and feels as if he is being “pursued by a shadow,” as “curious bronzes and grotesque old carving” look “somber with smoke and ashes of centuries” (9). The gothic images add the supernatural dimension to the narrative as if the individuals are part of a larger moral design. They also suggest that Luke Connor’s fall from the Saul-like grace and his subsequent act of vengeance merit absolution through moral acts.

In this section of the novella, Davis’s homespun theme of moral retribution—a combination of the biblical myth, gothic imagery, and a fatalistic worldview—works at the structural level as well. The biblical curse binds Luke Connor and George Lawrence together as “bothers-in-sin.” While materializing his murderous intent, Luke Connor “never once thought of the old scriptural curse,” that is, “a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth” (41). As a result of the shared fate, each character undertakes a disparate course of actions—one at home and another abroad—as the outcast vagabonds. Yet, with rediscovered masculinity through heroism, like the biblical Prodigal son, both return home for a sentimental reconciliation. From the outset, the narrative’s insistence on the biblical symbolism appears to be clogged with moralistic sentimentalism. George Lawrence’s triumphant homecoming from India as a reformed moral being, however, is consistent to the media representation of the Indian Insurgency as a conflict between

good and evil. Davis's aesthetic interest in creating a narrative suspense through confounded identities undermines the biblical typology.<sup>9</sup> As a result, Davis begins the second part of the story with George Lawrence, disguised as Abdel Dunlethe, thus reversing the implication of the biblical curse. It is George Lawrence's fruitless labor and meaningless adventures around the world that the narrative focuses on, thereby establishing a motif for Lawrence's adventure in India as the soldier of empire.

Thus bearing the misplaced biblical curse, Lawrence begins the long process of dissipation of the curse in San Francisco, a frontier city. The vision of San Francisco evokes the notion of a "sin-city" with gambling, profanity, greed, and crime hidden behind its beautiful visage. As the narrator remarks, "The beautiful night, closing down on the golden City by the sea, hid under its shadows a thousand wrongs and crimes" (42). The portrayal of San Francisco as a city of crime and sin perpetuates the moral tone of the story. In this frontier zone, Abdel Dunlethe's initiation into the life of sin takes place. During his futile stint as a prospector in California, he undergoes a physical, moral, and psychological degeneration. He cultivates vices, including gambling, drinking, and an insatiable desire for gold. And yet, the narrator's sympathetic attitude toward Abdel Dunlethe keeps the possibility of his redemption open. Like the biblical Cain, he has to wander across the wilderness of the California mining pits as his "heart was filled with a single feeling—an awful hunger and thirst to find gold" (58). The temptation, however, does not end there; he succumbs to "the devil [that] tempted the lonely, deserted

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<sup>9</sup> When George Lawrence signs in as "Abdel Dunlethe" in a lodge upon his arrival in San Francisco, the clerk at the desk wonders if his folks made a mistake in christening him. "They called you for the wrong brother. It should have been Cain—the other one," he says (48). This reversal of identity also suggests that Davis considers the sin of carnal desire—seduction and betrayal—to be as consequential as the sin of fratricide.

vagabond with liquor, and made him drunk” (70). As he passes through the sin of flesh, greed, and drunkenness, he loses all hope in life.

Davis’s is a tale of overdone sentimentalism, yet it takes a meaningful turn when the transgressor absolves the guilt and sin by fighting the natives in India. In the battle with the “yellow devils,” he gradually rediscovers meaning in life and finally reclaims his American masculinity. What is important, though, is the way the author’s political consciousness overrides the narrative exigency. In the authorial note, Davis vindicates Abdel Dunlethe’s actions in India as being prototypical of General Henry E. Reed’s similar adventure during the U.S.-Mexican War. As a result of this implied continuation of the Westward movement, Dunlethe’s experience in India constitutes a fitting education on patriotism. In helping to rescue the besieged empire, he claims the “American imperial self.” Like General Reed who planted the American flag on “the heights of Chapultepec,” Dunlethe hoists the British flag on the colonial Residency at Lucknow, thus reclaiming the empire from the “yellow devils”:

He raised it [the flag] high above his head [so] that those in the rear might see [that] it was still safe, shook out its tattered folds, and then leaped into the ditch already heaped high with dead and wounded comrades. Followed by the scanty remnant of his regiment, he clambered up the slippery sides of the redoubt, and amid a yell of triumph, taken up by the regiment after regiment, and echoed again by an army, Abdel Dunlethe planted the flag he bore upon the enemy’s ramparts. (84)

Although the “tattered folds” of the flag suggest the British predicament in India, there is no sense of implied irony here as in the famous scene of flag hoisting in Stephen Crane’s

Red Badge of Courage. The narrator's racial marking of the native insurgents as "yellow devils" and "murderous sepoys" distances the reader from the natives (77), thus making Dunlethe's spectacular rise as triumphant and final. The image of Dunlethe "climbing up the slippery sides" of the ditches full of dead bodies refers to the widely circulated news about the insurgents mercilessly throwing women and children in the ditches. It is also worth noting that Dunlethe assumes the complete control over the Regiment, temporarily exercising the colonial power. The final act of heroism leads to the transformation of his identity. The name "Abdel Dunlethe," a constant reminder of the primal curse, is replaced with a new name "the Ensign Dunlethe," a bearer and protector of the flag. He becomes part of the imperial solidarity, as the British induct him into the order of empire. The narrative closes with Dunlethe "waiting proudly to be decorated with the Victoria Cross" (85).

Drawn with broad narrative strokes and populated with orientalist stereotypes, Davis's story lacks local details. Not a single native features as a character nor does the story present any interesting detail about the locale. It does not, however, diminish the political significance of the story. The narrative operates at the level of abstraction and presents the events through a preconceived moral design that recasts the Indian Insurgency as a battle between good and evil. While living the life of "a miserable, desperate wretch" in Australia, Abdel Dunlethe learns of the news of "bloody horrors" and "foul deeds being done in India" by "the sepoys [who] had risen on their masters" (70). Catch phrases such as "bloody horrors" and "foul deeds" not only indicate Davis's indebtedness to the media representation of the Insurgency, but they also mirror the pervasive sense of moral outrage that marks the colonial construction of the "Indian

Mutiny.” Although his hero does not initially imbibe the moral imperative of saving “the children of England” and “her imperial possessions” (70), he seizes the opportunity of suppressing the insurgency as a way of mitigating the guilt and reclaiming his “manhood.”

The lack of an ulterior motive or cause thus makes Abdel’s adventure in India a tale of moral regeneration and the recuperation of the doomed masculinity. The Indian episode ends with coda: “[A]s the victorious ranks pressed onto the Residency, he felt that at least he had done a *man’s work*, and that thereafter the shame and crime of his life would be less heavy to bear” (emphasis mine, 84-85). Just as Dunlethe plunges in the life of hopelessness gradually, he ascends the life of meaning and hope through a progressive affirmation of masculinity. In this process of regeneration, he passes through one battle after another, witnessing how the British “had been betrayed and butchered with horrible atrocities” and how “the murderous sepoys . . . threatened . . . women and children” (77). It is the abject spectacle of suffering “women and children” pitted against ungrateful “murderous sepoys” manifest in Lucknow and Cawnpore that forces him to understand the purpose of his own life. While passing along the streets of Allahabad facing the “fierce scowls of the Hindus and the Mohommendans [sic]” and their “hatred,” he experiences the epiphany that he must do “some great, heroic deeds for the starving women and children” (77). By rescuing the beleaguered empire and its endangered children and women, he not only attains manhood but also experiences a religious awakening. Describing his battle royal in Lucknow, Davis writes,

On the twelfth [day], the attack began, and Abdel Dunlethe, with a whispered prayer breaking upon his white lips, went down into battle, with

the old determination strong in him . . . . He fought like a man drunk with wounds, drunk unto madness with carnage and tumult; he saw his Captain far in advance, surrounded by a horde of yellow devils, trying to strike him down; he hewed a path through the dusky Maharattas [sic] to his officer's side; together they cut their way to the mouth of the enemies' guns; later he was again alone among their cannonries, blackened with smoke and powder, seeking death at a hundred hands fighting it nowhere.

(79)

The vague and hazy description of the battleground has very little to offer aesthetically; the narrative is clogged with overdetermined stereotypes. And yet the evocatively drawn moral and racial fault-lines between the colonial army and the native rebels endow the battle scene with the regenerative power. Dunlethe's "blackened" body, a result of his heroic resistance to the firing "cannonries," also evokes the image of the pandemonium. Being surrounded by "a horde of yellow devils," he experiences the near loss of racial identity. The "whispered prayer" coming out of "white lips" is the only visible marker of "whiteness." The image of his saving the life of the British officer at the moment of latter's certain death signifies colonial solidarity, an act very much symptomatic of salvaging the empire.

In a colonial context, the notion of the resurgent masculinity informs both the discourses of imperial legitimacy and anti-colonial resistance. In her study of colonial masculinity, Mrinalini Sinha takes the Ilbert Bill controversy of 1883 as the defining moment for the shifting racial and gender ideologies in the colonial India.<sup>10</sup> According to

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<sup>10</sup> Introduced by C. P. Ilbert, the Law Member of the Government of India on 9 February 1883 in the Legislature Council to amend the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Indian Penal Code, the Ilbert Bill

Sinha, “The stereotypes of the ‘manly Englishman’ and the ‘effeminate Bengali *babu*’ that structured the Ilbert Bill controversy emerged out of, and helped shape, important shifts in racial and gender ideologies that accompanied the political and economic transformation of the imperial social formation” (33). In her study, Sinha shows how the notion of gender was interlinked with legal, administrative, and racial issues. Unlike the formation of racially motivated gender ideology that pitted colonial masculinity against the native “effeminacy” in the late nineteenth century, however, Mutiny narratives codified colonial masculinity differently. As Davis’s and Austin’s narratives show, the native masculinity posed a threat to European women and children. In fact, these narratives underscore the imperative of reclaiming colonial masculinity by protecting women and children. In particular, Davis includes Christian values as part of the emergent masculinity. Davis’s narrator lauds Dunlethe’s heroism for not only protecting innocent women and children but also being part of the “grand Old [order of] Christian soldiers” and doing “brave and humane deeds” (83). By presenting the “Indian Mutiny” through the lens of Christian moralism, Davis appropriates the colonial narrative space. Unlike the American War of Independence, as Gautam Chakravarty argues, “the rebellion and its much debated causes underscored a model of radical conflict between cultures, civilizations, and races” so that the “conflict at once justified conquest and dominion and proved the impossibility of assimilating and acculturating subject peoples” (4). In view of the historical ramifications of the “Mutiny”—establishment of the direct

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proposed to give native officials the criminal jurisdiction over European subjects. The Bill sparked controversy and invited resistance from the British, popularly known as the “White Mutiny.” The Bill was finally passed on 25 January 1884 with a compromise that allowed British subjects to demand trial by a jury of whom at least half were British subjects or Americans. See Sinha, Colonial Masculinity: The ‘Manly Englishman and the ‘Effeminate Bengali’ in the Late Nineteenth Century (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995) 33.

British rule and the consolidation of empire through legal and social reforms—

Chakravarty's argument also points to a broader issue: the legitimization of imperial warfare at home. Without positioning the "Indian Mutiny" within the broader context of colonial conflicts across the world, as Chakravarty contends, it would be "impossible for a nation to engage in warfare for a century without a public culture . . . that viewed expansion as expression of an inevitable national and racial urge with very real material dividends" (1). The cultural production of the "Mutiny" as a conflict between races and civilization thus also functioned as a means of building public consensus and achieve the legitimacy for empire.

This need for an ideological justification of imperial dominion also explains why there is so much emphasis on protecting "women and children" in the literary production of the "Indian Mutiny." More importantly, the counter-insurgency, portrayed as a mission of rescuing children and women, as Nancy Paxton argues, established India as "a domestic space under threat, which readily justified the British rule as a thing to be rescued and secured" (85). The pervasive leitmotif of violated bodies of women and children can also be taken as a form of ideological interpellation. In Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text, Jenny Sharpe calls for a more nuanced analysis of the figure of the white woman as a site of multivalenced articulation of race, gender, and nation. Drawing upon Louis Althusser's notion of "ideological interpellation," the process by which the subject identifies with a form of ideology, Sharpe insists that the "representation of English women as the innocent victim of anti-colonial rebellion was instrumental both in reestablishing preexisting structures of colonial authority and in preparing grounds for new ones" (65). With an analysis of proliferated accounts of the



violation of women in Mutiny literature, Sharpe draws attention to the use of women's bodies as sites of moral purity, thus legitimizing the counter-insurgency as the restoration of the moral order. Within this broad spectrum of imperial formations, one finds the logical conclusion of Davis's masculinist agenda. As a prototype of a U.S.-Mexican War hero, Dunlethe does enact a part of American history in India, but by rescuing the women and children of empire, he attains manhood and returns home with his moral conscience intact.

The literary treatment of the "Indian Mutiny" in U.S. literature, however, defies a monolithic codification of the masculine imperial self. A number of stories published in popular literary magazines, especially by women writers, invite an alternative perspective on American domesticity. While tales of the "Indian Mutiny," such as Davis's, re-inscribe an imperialistic consciousness by claiming a meaningful American role in maintaining the colonial order, women writers such as Jane Goodwin Austin foreground the "domestic space" as a way of inscribing the Orient ambivalently.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Orient, Gender Anxiety, and "Cosmopolitan Domesticity"**

In "The Loot of Lucknow," Austin employs the context of the "Indian Mutiny" and in doing so, complicates the notion of American domesticity. Predominantly a story that deals with the themes of romantic love and female virtue, "The Loot of Lucknow" incorporates the historical events of the "seize of Lucknow" in its sentimental plot.

Unlike Davis, Austin includes local details, mostly derived from popular oriental tales

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<sup>11</sup> Jane Goodwin Austin (1831-1894), a Boston-based prolific writer of popular fiction, published dozens of novels. The most notable of her novels—*Standish of Standish* (1889), *Betty Alden* (1891), *A Nameless Nobleman* (1881)—deal with Puritan history. She frequently published short stories in prominent literary magazines, including *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's Magazine*, *Putnam's Magazine*, *Emerson's Magazine*, and the *Galaxy*. She also enjoyed close friendships with Emerson, Louisa May Alcott, and Hawthorne. "Lora Lee" (1865), "The Loot of Lucknow" (1868), and "A Little Begum" (1888) are some of her notable stories that deal with the Orient.

such as the Arabian Nights. Like Abdel Dunlethe in Davis's novella, Edward Holmes, the male character in Austin's story, while participating in the suppression of the Insurgency, witnesses the pillage of Kaiserbagh, the palace of the Nawab of Lucknow.<sup>12</sup> Although his involvement in the conflict is incidental, his actions abroad invite dangerous consequences home, thus destabilizing the boundaries between the domestic and the foreign.

Published in Harper's Monthly Magazine, "The Loot of Lucknow" revolves around a mysterious Indian casket that travels from India to the United States. Reminiscent of Willkie Collins's The Moonstone, published in the same year, the story employs the trope of the adventure of a "cursed jewel." In Austin's story, Edward Holmes, an expatriate American, participates in the suppression of the Indian Insurgency. While witnessing the plunder of Kaiserbagh, Holmes incidentally recovers an Indian casket from an Irish soldier and sends it home as a gift to his fiancée, Edith Withrington. As the casket comes from "the mysterious East where her lover had disappeared," Edith develops an attachment to "her beloved box" (64) until a "half-bred Hindoo" [sic] arrives at her "quiet New England home" to reclaim the casket (66). She struggles with the Indian to keep the casket, and as the struggle becomes perilous, the long-disappeared lover arrives in time to rescue her from the cloud of poisonous perfume emanating from the casket. While the Indian dies of poisoning, the jewels hidden in the casket become Edith's proud possession, a gift from the "imperial treasure-chamber" (69). A complex

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<sup>12</sup> Built in 1848 for Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, Kaiserbagh was ransacked and destroyed during the "Mutiny." When the British asserted full control of the Insurgency, there were reports of widespread plundering of Mogul palaces. In the diary entry of September 25, 1857, William Edward Russell, the correspondent of the Times, noted, "From the broken portals issue soldiers laden with loot or plunders: shawls, rich tapestry, gold and silver brocades, caskets of jewels, arms and splendid dresses. The men are wild with fury and lust of gold—literally drunk with plunder." See William Edward Russell, My Indian Mutiny Diary (London: Routledge, 1859) 234.

metonymy for the “mysterious East” itself, the casket of jewels in the story entails contradictory significations. On the one hand, as an exotic object of desire, it hypnotically appeals to Edith’s feminine sensibility, and on the other hand, it exposes her to the danger of rape and the violation of her body.

More importantly, in charting the course of the casket, Austin appropriates the discourse of the colonial construction of the Indian Insurgency in which rebellious natives pose a threat to women and the sanctity of the colonial domestic order. While the sentimental plot of the story re-inscribes nineteenth-century notions of domesticity as an “enclosed space” protected by a white male, the narrative’s focus on “things oriental” as objects of desire reveals the seductive force of what Kristen Hoganson terms the “cosmopolitan domesticity.” By analyzing manuals of home décor and the interior space of the nineteenth-century bourgeois American home,<sup>13</sup> Hoganson demonstrates how the nineteenth-century notion of domesticity, in fact, was cosmopolitan, resulting from the increasing exchange of commodities across the national borders (pars 5-7). It is worth noting that the turn-of-century popularity of “oriental goods” in American homes also coincided with the increasing nativist paranoia over Asiatic racial forms. In fact, the marked difference one finds in the cultural attitude toward oriental goods and Asiatic peoples, as in Austin’s story, demonstrates that globalization conceptualized in terms of the movement of goods and services across national borders can at times be an inadequate way of understanding how a particular national culture inscribes its global others. The simultaneous presence of fascination and repulsion toward “things oriental”

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<sup>13</sup> Hoganson refers to Bertha Honoré’s Chicago mansion that boasted of “a Spanish music room, English dinning room, Moorish ballroom, Flemish library, and French and Chinese drawing room” as examples of “bourgeois American home.” See Kristin Hoganson, “Cosmopolitan Domesticity: Importing the American Dream, 1865-1920, *American Historical Review* 107.1 (2002): 54 pars.

in Austin's story is consistent with the way nineteenth-century narratives of cross-cultural exchanges represent the Asiatics ambivalently.

The description of Kaiserbagh reveals the contradictory attitude of the narrator toward the Orient. Inviting the reader in the interior of the palace, the narrator comments,

Through the saloons and halls glittering with all the barbaric splendor of Oriental decoration, through the chambers of the Zenana glowing yet with the memories of the voluptuous beauty they had held, the furious revels, or, as one might say, orgies they had witnessed, through throne-room and audience-chamber and the secret closet of royalty, wandered a rude and lawless soldiery, destroying, profaning, insulting whatever was too cumbrous to be stolen or too refined to suit their material taste. (64)

From the outset, the narrator employs the Orientalist stereotypes of Eastern sensuality that undercuts the critique of the wanton destruction wrought by the "rude and lawless" soldiers. Similarly, the narrator's voyeuristic focus on royal chambers and Zenanas as palimpsests of "voluptuous beauty," "furious revels," and "orgies" supersedes the sympathetic attitude. Although presented through the perspective of an American male, the narrative's predominant concern with material goods and the interior space of oriental palaces offers a distinctive feminine touch to the story. The narrator rushes through the catalogue of "precious" oriental goods—"shawls of Cashmere, muslins of Dacca, sandal wood, ivory, ebony, precious vases, and bowls of jade, porphyry, porcelain" (64). And the resultant nostalgia over their destruction shows how these goods, while maintaining their exotic nature, held a singular cultural importance in contemporary American homes. Austin's fascination with oriental ornaments and objects of interior décor can be

attributed to the popularity of Orientalia at the turn-of-the-century American culture. Hoganson asserts that Oriental ornaments were more common than the North American ones, especially “during the Orientalist craze that swept the nation from the 1870s to the turn of the century (par 13). In her 1877 book on interior décor, Harriet Prescott Spofford places high importance to Oriental goods. She suggests that oriental goods were suited for “the very young and gay, and for those cosmopolitan people who are able to feel at home everywhere” (qtd. in Hoganson, par 14). While Spofford cites cosmopolitan appeal as the important value of oriental goods, there is another dimension of this popularity as well. Circulation of such goods offered transnational literacy to the American middle class, thus broadening its imaginative horizons.

Yet, the “cosmopolitan domesticity,” as Austin’s story demonstrates, paradoxically kept the racial and national boundaries intact. The climatic scene, in which Edward Holmes recovers the “mysterious casket,” shows how the narrator’s sympathetic attitude toward the destruction of native goods gives away to a systematic racial profiling. Amidst the chaos created by the counter-insurgents in Lucknow, Edward Holmes maintains a position of neutrality; he “wander[s] observantly, but without [any] attempt at interfering” (64). When he comes across an Irish soldier, who was fighting with a Bengali of the Native Infantry over the “loot,” Holmes acts as the arbiter by taking over the ownership of the casket. Before the presence of the American, the “wretched Hindoo [sic]” and the servile Irish recede in the backdrop (65). The racially marked portrayal of the native Bengali and the Irish as the looters reveals that the domestically available racial stereotypes still functioned in a transnational context. The narrator utilizes the stereotypes of greediness, volubility, and servility to represent the Irish soldier who

surrenders his prized possessions to Holmes. When confronted by Edward Holmes, the Irish soldier, who was valiantly “kicking” the “white-livered nigger [the Bengali]” a moment earlier, suddenly cowers to the “young republican,” offering him the casket (65). The fact that Edward Holmes mediates the conflict between a colonial soldier and a jealous native over the possession of “imperial spoils” has a paradoxical implication. Holmes’s assumed racial superiority allows him to negotiate from the position of an unquestioned authority, and yet his benign gesture of transmitting the casket, the symbolic object of colonial desire, to the United States, leaves the enclosed domesticity vulnerable to a foreign encroachment.

Like the mysterious Orient, the casket remains an enigma, an undecipherable sign. Upon the examination, Holmes discovers “no meaning whatever in its tortuous lines” (65). In its multivalent possibilities, however, the casket abounds with “mysterious symbols,” “half-formed characters of an unknown tongue,” and “rude hieroglyphs hidden amidst fantastic lines” (65). The description of the casket sounds Poesque in its gothic sensibility. Baffled by the unknown, Holmes experiences an “intense craving” to “discover the secret” and yet, in a sudden revelation, he declares, “She [Edith] must have it, at all events” (65). By appropriating the mysterious casket as a gift of love, Holmes turns it into an uncanny object of desire. In his 1919 essay on “The Uncanny,” Freud rejects the notion that “uncanny” is the opposite of “canny.” Tracing the etymology of the word, he argues, “*Heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*. *Unheimlich* is in some way or other a sub-species of *heimlich*” (157). In German, *heimlich* signifies something familiar, something that belongs to home whereas *unheimlich* means

something strange, foreign, and repulsive. In the Freudian sense, the “uncanny” simultaneously signifies home and abroad, familiar and foreign, love and repulsion.

The Freudian notion of “uncanny” thus allows us to understand not only Edith’s ambivalent relationship with the mysterious casket, but it also helps unpack the contradictory representation of the Orient in U.S. cultural narratives. Edith Wirthington unexpectedly receives the gift along with the news of Edward’s sudden disappearance in India. Edith develops a complex relationship with the casket. Within Edith’s emotional economy, the casket provides “the last link between him and herself” and becomes “the best loved of her possessions” (66). During the “listless hours” and “anguish of her mourning,” Edith takes solace in contemplating the casket (66). “With the casket upon her knee,” she turns a “wishful and yearning gaze” upon it (66). Through this veiled sensuality implicit in Edith’s relationship with the casket, the narrative foreshows the final confrontation with the Indian. The native’s claim to the casket violates Edith’s emotional being, and the struggle that ensues occasions a racially charged reenactment of the “Mutiny” as the violence upon white women’s bodies.

Although the claimant of the casket is a Eurasian Indian, the narrator portrays him as a trickster figure. His “sleepy black eyes express the combined ability and cunning of both the father and mother race [sic]” (66). The “smooth tone of his voice” and visage of a Christian give the façade of respectability. His sudden arrival in her idyllic New England home is analogous to the satanic presence in the Garden of Eden. The Eurasian’s outward appearance of refinement initially deceives Edith; the narrator, however, constantly reminds the reader of his devilish features: the “supple yellow hands,” the “disagreeable greenish tinge” visible on his “olive face,” and the “nearly closed eyelids”

betraying “a lurid light” (67). Reminiscent of the original sin of temptation, he proffers her a “set of turquoise mounted in the filigree-work” and assures her that the jewels “will become Madam’s blonde complexion” (67). A distinct sexual overtone marks the exchange between Edith and the Indian. He keeps surveying her physique with his “sinister gaze” that wanders “admiringly over the young girl’s charming face” (67). Since the casket has become a substitute object for her “lost love” (66), the foreigner’s claim on the casket and his “sinister gaze” upon her body amount to a threat to her chastity.

The climatic scene, in which the native forcibly destroys the casket, suggests a subliminal act of rape. As the native progresses toward Edith to snatch the casket, the smooth-talking Eurasian suddenly changes into a “savage” brute. Regarding his transformation, the narrator observes,

He was close beside her now, his long yellow hands quivering slightly, outstretched for the casket. Edith half extended it, then drew it back, while a slight blush mounted to her pale face . . . The Eurasian glared at her for a moment with the fierce yet wavering gaze, the savage yet tremulous motion of a panther about to spring, and then writhing his lithe body aside, he slid behind her extended arm, seized the box, dashed it vehemently upon the floor, and struck his heel sharply upon the cover once, twice, thrice. The exquisite carvings flew, riven bird from beast, flower from fruit [sic]. . . . From the crystal vials . . . [.] arose such vile and inebriating clouds of perfume that the air reeled and vibrated with their sudden power. (68)



By comparing the Indian's advance toward Edith to "a panther about to spring," the narrator prefigures the destruction of the casket as a sexual aggression against Edith. The emphasis on "now" in the first sentence and the paratactical sentence that follows it convey the sense of urgency and helplessness that Edith experiences. It is his "wavering gaze" and outstretched "yellow hands" that elicit "a blush" in her face. The animal imageries—"tremulous motion of a panther" and the "writhing lithe body"—codify the violent image of "rape" while emphasizing the brute force and savagery of the Indian. Given Edith's relationship with the casket as the substitute object of love, the native's brutality against it implies an invasion into her emotional being.

In Mutiny literatures, the figure of the "rape" of white women rarely appears as a transparent signifier; instead, popular accounts of the "Mutiny" embody the figure of rape euphemistically as "unspeakable horror." By displacing the native's violence from Edith to the casket itself, Austin not only negotiates the Victorian sensibility, but she also appropriates the colonial trope of representing "rape" as "unspeakable" violence against women and children. The figure of "rape" of European women by the natives, as Nancy L. Paxton suggests, was a literary construction, popularized by Mutiny novels that depict "innocent English women" as "threatened with rape and torture by violent, lawless Indian men" (7). Paxton also contends that the Indian Insurgency of 1857 historically marks the predominance of the narrative of colonial rape. Such narratives, she argues, performed "double duty" in that they "naturalized the British colonizer's dominance by asserting the lawlessness of Indian men" and at the same time, they "shored up traditional gender roles by assigning British women the role of a victim, countering British feminist demands for women's greater political and social equality" (6). Paxton's analysis of how the

narratives of violence on women functioned in the interest of empire also explains why the imagery of rape, unlike in official accounts, is frequently present in the fictional representation of the “Mutiny.” Contrary to the fictional representation, the official historical accounts of the “Mutiny” deny any occurrence of “dishonor” perpetrated to English women by the insurgents. For instance, in his report of the official investigation submitted to Lord Canning, Sir William Muir, then chief of the Intelligence Department of the Government of the North-West Provinces, concluded that “the stories of dishonor done to European females are generally false” (368). Citing a numerous eyewitness accounts, Muir argues that “crimes of the nature” could not have been occurred, as the “color of European women is repugnant to the Oriental taste” (368). He also alludes to the political nature of the Insurgency as evidence of why incidents of rape did not occur. He further contends that the Insurgency was “not so much to disgrace our name as to wipe out all traces of Europeans, and of everything connected with foreign rule (369). As a result, he concludes, the stories of rape were fictitious creations.

Both the literary representation of rape and its denial in official records, ironically, promoted traditional gender roles. Paxton suggests that the denial of rape in historical accounts, including George Trevelyan’s contention that English women “died without apprehension of dishonor” (qtd. in Paxton 8), in fact, perpetuates the Victorian technology of gender policing. By resurrecting the figure of rape, mutiny literature performed the cultural act of legitimizing the British rule as the protection of colonial domesticity. The fact that Edward Holmes suddenly appears at the moment of peril to rescue Edith from the “vile and inebriating clouds of perfume” and the threatening Indian demonstrates that Austin’s story not only appropriates the narrative of “colonial rape” but

also shows the vulnerability of American domesticity. Yet, the Eurasian's death at the end allows her to keep the prized contents of the casket as a "dowry," thereby establishing the importance of possessing the "imperial treasure."

The narratives of encounters between Americans and non-Europeans in a colonial context, as these popular oriental tales demonstrate, extend the domestically available racial categories to the distant people and cultures. In doing so, they problematize the discourse of American "exceptionalism," as they situate the domestic formation of the nation within the broader context of European imperialism. By imagining an encroachment of the Asiatics within the national borders, both Poe and Austin stage the counter-discursive moment, especially in showing the uncanny presence of the "foreign" as potentially dangerous. In particular, the changed attitude toward the Orient after the Indian Uprising of 1857 in U.S. cultural narratives anticipates the discourse of "yellow peril" that would dominate the representation of Asiatics at the turn of the century. By focusing on Frank Norris's novels, Moran of the Lady Letty and The Octopus, the next chapter examines the aesthetic and political implications of Asiatic presence in the turn-of-the-century U.S. literary culture.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **The Orient, Asiatic Racial Forms, and the Aesthetics of Imperial Desire**

#### **in Frank Norris's The Octopus and Moran of the Lady Letty**

*We have to carry our wheat into Asia yet. The Anglo-Saxon started from there at the beginning of everything, and it is manifest destiny that he must circle the globe and fetch up where he began his march.*

*Frank Norris, The Octopus*

*The menace to the Western World lies, not in the little brown man [the Japanese], but in the four hundred millions of yellow men [the Chinese] should the little brown man undertake their management. The Chinese is not dead to new ideas; he is an efficient worker; makes a good soldier, and is wealthy in essential material of a machine age. Under a capable management, he will go far. The Japanese is prepared and fit to undertake this management. Not only has he proved himself an apt imitator of Western material progress, a sturdy worker, and a capable organizer, but he is far more fit to manage the Chinese than are we.*

*Jack London, "Yellow Peril"*

At the turn of the twentieth century, a number of writers, including Frank Norris and Jack London, responded to the social, cultural, and economic implications of transnational contacts with Asiatic peoples. The two epigraphs with which I begin this chapter exemplify the ambivalent representation of the Asiatic Orient at the turn of the twentieth century. In "Yellow Peril," written during his stay in Manchuria as a journalist covering the Russo-Japanese War, London cautions the readers at home of the impending danger of the rising power of the East, which, he argues, will ultimately jeopardize Western interest in Asia. Interestingly, in his projection of Asia as a "menace to the Western World," London extends two fundamental racial qualities—chivalry and industry—traditionally associated to the Anglo-Saxons onto the Asiatic races.

It is also noteworthy that London presents the Asiatic threat as the product of western modernity itself. The Japanese efficiency in subjugating and managing the millions of Chinese, according to him, depended on the former's ability to imitate the technology of Western material progress. Upon arriving at the village of Kuel-ian-Ching from Korean Peninsula, London notices the Chinese industry, people engaged in business amidst the devastation wrought by the ongoing Russo-Japanese War; the spectacle of Chinese industry makes him realize the fact that the Chinese "has grasped far more clearly the Western code of business" (London 277). This led him to conclude that the Chinese, the efficient imitators of Western modernity, especially under the Japanese tutelage, posed a greater threat to Western supremacy in terms of industrial growth and efficient production; with the "vast land of immense natural resources" and the technology of a "mechanical age" at their disposal, a working alliance between the Chinese and the Japanese, as he argues, would bring "the much heralded Yellow Peril" (278). London also critiques the Western views of the Asiatics as "permanence," the idea that the East was essential stagnant. Moreover, in London's taxidermic classification of the Asiatic Orient into a docile hard-working "yellow race" and a modern technology-savvy chivalric "brown" race also suggests a crisis in the representation of the Orient. While the depiction of the Chinese as a servile race in need of external tutelage and domination still carries on the stereotypical representation of the Orient as a lethargic and stagnant entity, the portrayal of the Japanese as a virile and tactful race questions Western complacency over the East. Thus, in the pervasive climate of an anti-Chinese immigrant sentiment of the late nineteenth-century America, by projecting Asia as the "menace to

the Western World,” London validates the rhetoric of “yellow peril” at home from an international perspective, available to him as a witness of the rising power of the East.

Scholars have recently established a constitutive link between the discourse of “yellow peril” and the literary representation of Asiatic racial forms. Colleen Lye argues that the discourse of “yellow peril” was the result of a racial paranoia that recast the Anglo-Saxon race discourse as a “minority discourse suspicious of a coming modernity” (76). According to her, the turn-of-the-century racial paranoia often appears in literary texts, especially naturalist fiction, in the trope of “bodily besiegement” (72), in which Anglo-Saxon type is recast as a vanishing race. Similarly, the presence of Asiatic racial forms, as Norris’s Moran of the Lady Letty (hereafter, cited as MLL) shows, also offered an avenue for American male to resurrect Anglo-Saxon masculinity supposedly jeopardized by the increasing feminization of American culture.

Thus the representation of Asia at the turn of the twentieth century is permeated with conflicting formulations: a dangerous presence at home and an equally desirous space for an imperial adventure abroad. In this chapter, I propose to examine the aesthetic representation of the Asiatics; particularly, I am interested in exploring how fiction produced at the turn of the twentieth century responded to ambivalences in U.S. national imaginary produced by the contradictory representation of Asiatic racial forms. I take Norris’s novels, especially The Octopus and Moran of the Lady Letty, as examples of aesthetic production of national imaginary. In the context of the growing anti-immigration sentiment at home and the increasing influence of the United States abroad, Norris’s conflicting portrayal of Asia and Asiatic peoples, as I demonstrate, is symptomatic of a larger ideological ambivalence in U.S. national narratives. And as

such, a sustained desire for imperial domination abroad and an equally vociferous disavowal of the changes that such transnational contacts are likely to bring home informs the contradictory representation of Asiatic racial forms. In a significant way, Norris's call for naturalism as a mode of representing greater realism can be understood as part of his aesthetic project that reconciles his dystopic views of reality at home with the utopian vision of U.S. hegemony abroad. As a result, in Norris's writings, while the Asiatics signify a contagious presence at home, the Asia-Pacific region represents a new frontier for the realization of the commercial version of the nation's "Manifest Destiny."

### **Touched by the Oriental Vices: Asiatic Others and "Manifest Domesticity"**

In his early writings, especially short stories and journalistic pieces he contributed to regional magazines—Argonaut, The Wave, and the Overland Monthly—, Norris demonstrates a fascination toward representing ethnic minorities and immigrant laborers, especially the Chinese. After he accepted the position of a staff writer with The Wave, a California-based magazine, in 1896, he regularly contributed stories, sketches, and journalistic pieces to the magazine. Often permeated with Asiatic racial forms, these early writings share the contemporary nativist outlook towards minorities and immigrant laborers. Moreover, presented as the destabilizing presence, the codification of the Asiatics in Norris's writing, complicate the boundaries between the domestic and the foreign. As the short story "Third Circle," published in the August 1897 issue of The Wave, shows, Norris's pathological portrayal of the Asiatics, while representing the Chinese as inassimilable others, in fact, challenges the discourse of what Amy Kaplan terms the "Manifest Domesticity."

Contrary to the traditional notion of domesticity as a stabilizing force, Kaplan argues that “domesticity is more mobile and less stabilizing; it travels in contradictory circuits both to expand and contract the boundaries of home and nation and to produce shifting conception of the foreign” (“Manifest” 583). Particularly significant is her insight that women's extension of sympathy across the nation's racial and ethnic divides ruptures traditionally conceived borders between masculine and feminine spheres. The concept of domesticity as the “process of domestication, which entails conquering and taming the wild, the natural, and the alien” (582), according to Kaplan, turns into a discourse that aims at normalizing and regulating the “foreign” within the nation. In this sense, domesticity becomes a unified imperial project, in which “men and women become national allies against the alien” (582). Kaplan's deconstruction of the myth of separate spheres demonstrates that the figuration of the “foreign” is an indispensable part of a national imaginary in that the nation is imagined as “home” against the “foreign” Other. Norris's tales about Chinese immigrants in the late nineteenth-century, however, challenge the discourse of domesticity as a unified imperial project. Rather, he projects the Anglo-Saxon male as engendered species, the victim of a simultaneous extension of “female sympathy” within and an encroachment of the foreign without. As the narrator of The Octopus puts it, the female sympathy is nothing but an “irrepressible sham” (TO 314). In fact, Norris mocks at the figure of an activist progressive woman as being sentimental. The activist woman often appears in his writings as an indulgent romantic, seeking to retreat from the brutal reality of life. Laura Jadwin in The Pit, for instance, vicariously lives the lives of Shakespearean and other fictional heroines; Mrs. Cedarquist in The Octopus indulges in entertaining bohemian artists and nondescript social outcasts



as part of her ostentatious charitable work. Moreover, Norris's women characters pose a constant threat to masculine enterprises.

In his fictional writings, Norris questions the progressive agenda that informs women's extension of sympathy over ethnic minorities. In his story, "The Third Circle," for example, Norris challenges the white woman's cause of bringing her "suffering oriental sisters" within the embrace of American domesticity. In the story, he reverses the familiar trope of "Chinese slave girls," mostly utilized in the writing of white activist women and instead, presents the case of a white woman of "unmixed American stock" who undergoes the degrading experience "slavery" in the Chinese quarters ("Third Circle" 77).

Evocatively titled the "Third Circle," suggestive of Dante's inferno, the story is set in San Francisco's Chinatown. The story begins when an unsuspecting couple from the East coast, Tom Hillegas and Miss Ten Eyck, stop at the restaurant of the Seventy Moons. While in the restaurant, a Kanaka man tattoos a butterfly on Miss Ten Eyck's little finger, foreshowing the degeneration and corruption she would have to suffer for twenty years under the Chinese captivity. Meanwhile a Chinese merchant invites Tom Hillegas to another room to show him the recently imported Indian. When he returns to the restaurant, Ten Eyck has already disappeared in Chinatown. Some twenty years later, the narrator rediscovers her, languishing in "a slave-girl joint" (81); ironically, she refuses to come back to "civilization" as she "like[s] um China boys better" (82). Thus the story charts the irreversible devolution of Miss Ten Eyck. As the story unfolds, a white woman who possessed the "freshness [and] vigorous, healthful prettiness seen in certain types of unmixed American stock" (77), finally succumbs to "oriental vices" and

turns into a “dreadful looking beast of a woman, wrinkled like a shriveled apple” (82).

Unlike the representation of “Chinese slave girls” in the contemporary discourse of social reform that called for an extension of women’s sympathy over the suffering Oriental sisters, Norris’s story expresses a nativist paranoia against the “contagious presence” of Asiatic racial forms.

Contemporary periodicals are full of stories about the flourishing slave trade in Chinatown. National and regional media carried stories about how Chinese girls were forced into sexual servitude. These stories recount horrid tales of brutality and degradation that Chinese women and children, who were bought in the United States from the Mainland China and sold into servitude, suffered under Chinese patriarchy. The sympathetic representation of suffering women also helped in promoting the discourse of Chinese presence as a dangerous threat to the nation’s moral foundation. Such stories helped crystallize the notion of “Oriental vices” as the epitome of the Orient, which not only signified the inassimilable Chinese immigrants but also portrayed the Oriental presence as a site of disease.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike Norris, by portraying Chinese women as victims of Oriental vices, women appropriate the discourse of “Chinese slavery” to claim their own positions in national narratives. In an article published in California Illustrated Magazine of February 1892, M. G. C. Edholm expresses her moral outrage at the presence of “slavery so vile and

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<sup>1</sup> Between March 1894 and February 1895, Frank Norris published a series of stories in the Overland Monthly under the title “Outward and Visible Signs.” According to Colleen Lye, the title referred to contemporary criminologist, Cesare Lombroso’s formulation that criminals wore the “outward and visible signs of a mysterious process of degeneration” (qtd. in Lye, America’s Asia 47). For Lombroso’s influence on Norris, see John S. Hill, “The Influence Cesare Lombroso in Frank Norris’s early Fiction,” American Literature 42.1 (1970): 89-91.

debasing” that it overshadowed “the horrors of negro American slavery” (159).<sup>2</sup>

Compared to the condition of Chinese slave girls, the writer argues, “The negro of ante-bellum days was a prince in fortune,” and as such, the slavery flourishing in Chinese quarters was “a stain in the American flag” and “a blot upon the national honor” (Edholm 159). The prevalence of exploitation of women in the Chinese community, as Edholm suggests, posed a menace to the progressive promise of the post-reconstruction nation. It reminded the nation of its recent memory of slavery and the resultant danger of national disintegration; moreover, the “moral degeneration” prevalent in the Chinese quarters produced a counter-space, “a blot in the national honor,” that needed to be wiped out. Hence the extension of female sympathy over suffering Oriental sisters created an opportunity for white women to come out from the “separate sphere” and claim on U.S. national identity.

The deconstruction of separate spheres has another facet to it, though. Women’s emergence in the public sphere through activism, as Kaplan argues, “leaves another structural opposition intact: the domestic in intimate opposition to the foreign” (“Manifest” 581). To wipe out the “stain” from national honor also meant protecting the victims from the “damning deeds . . . of barbaric ages and heathen countries” (Edholm 159). Ironically, while creating a binary between the protective western male and his counterpart, the “barbaric” oriental male, activist women’s writing, especially on Chinese slave girls, re-inscribed the same gender hierarchy they were set to dismantle by setting a

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<sup>2</sup> M. G. C. Edholm regularly contributed to magazines such as *Herald of Gospel Liberty* (1808-1930), *California Illustrated Magazine* (1891-1894), and *Leslie’s Monthly Magazine* (1904-1905). Mostly her journalistic pieces deal with women’s activism. The *California Illustrated Magazine*, during its four years run, published materials on California landscape and news and opinion pieces related to women’s reform movements such as the Occidental Board Mission House and the Women’s Missionary Board.

binary between the white woman who enjoyed male protection and the Oriental woman who suffered degradation under Oriental patriarchy.

By keeping the traditionally constructed Orientalist binaries between “barbarism” and “civilization” intact, the activist women could participate in the assimilationist national project. Flora Best Harris, a noted missionary, who spent significant part of her life in Japanese missions, for instance, hailed the work done by the Woman’s Missionary Board. According to her, in rescuing and sheltering the destitute Chinese slave-girls, the missionary women were setting as an example of the “manifest value” of American home-life by removing the “stigma from the honor of this great city [San Francisco],” already “burdened with the problems of international vice” (226). Nevertheless, the extension of “manifest values” of American domesticity over the “prisoners of darkness” entailed a perpetuation of racial and ethnic fault-lines between the domestic and the foreign.

Contrary to the hope manifest in the desire of bringing the destitute within the embrace of American domesticity, Norris’s story shows the contagious nature of the “Oriental vice.” He reverses the trope of the “slave-girls” by portraying a white woman as the victim of the degenerative presence of the Asiatics. Her inability to see through the Oriental deception leads to her final disappearance. She takes “the grotesque gimcrackery [sic] of the Orient” to be an exotic spectacle: “a little bit of China dug out and transplanted here” (“TTC” 77). The “huge hanging lanterns, the gilded carven scenes, [and] . . . the incense jars of brass high as a man’s head” give her a false sense of touristic pleasure (77). The exotic appeal of the oriental display, in fact, lures her into iniquity. To the narrator, the Oriental space, however, represents “a noisome swamp”

that needs to be drained out to reveal the corruption and disease underneath (76). Against this pathological projection of the Orientalized space as a site of morbidity and corruption, the narrator foregrounds the inherent vulnerability of the feminine sentiment.

The story also shows the transference of spatial corruption (“noisome swamp”) onto the human body, instigating a process of degenerative and irreversible corruption. As Miss Ten Eyck allows a Kanaka Chinaman to tattoo “a grotesque little insect” in her arm, Tom Hillegas warns her that the image “will never come out” (79). His casual comment, ironically, foreshadows the transformation that Miss Ten Eyck undergoes during her captivity, turning her into a “dreadful-looking beast.” The act of tattooing is also symptomatic of sexual initiation, as the Kanaka man imprints her “freshness” with a grotesque image. Twenty years later when the narrator rediscovers her, she has lost all the traces of her former identity; she refuses to return back to “civilization.” In the case of Norris’s female protagonist, redemption and restoration of honor become impossible. While the extension of female sympathy over the Oriental women shows the possibility of domesticating the “foreign,” Norris’s portrayal of “white slave girls” languishing in Chinatown indicates that the Asiatic presence was a threat to a racial and gender normalcy.

In his later writings, Norris continues to explore the implication of transnational contacts with the Asiatics. In Moran of the Lady Letty, he develops the theme of “Asiatic duplicity” through a series of failed economic alliances between Chinese immigrants and the quintessential Anglo-Anglo-Saxon characters. And yet, in The Octopus, he projects a utopian vision of Asiatic markets as the panacea of domestic economic crisis. Often viewed as classic examples of American naturalism, both novels incorporate a globalist

perspective and as such, respond to the cultural changes set in by the transnational flow of goods, peoples, and capital. In the section below, I demonstrate that the figuration of the “foreign” in Norris’s fiction is part of the aesthetic project of restoring the lost vitality of the Anglo-Saxon male. And as such, the Asia-Pacific imaginary in Norris’s writing serves the dual ideological purpose: the promotion of an exclusionist national identity at home and the advocacy for an expansive U.S. presence abroad.

### **“Shanghaied” Masculinity and the Asiatic Racial Forms**

Immediately after Norris completed the composition of McTeague, he began working on Moran of the Lady Letty in the fall of 1896. Originally serialized in The Wave, Moran was published in a book form in 1898. Although Norris continues the naturalistic theme of primitive brutality, one of the central preoccupations in McTeague, the focus in Moran is less on showing the pathological degeneration of characters through series of narrative entropies but more on demonstrating the atavistic resurgence of the Anglo-Saxon race instinct. Ross Wilbur, the protagonist and the central of consciousness in Moran, while fighting off Chinese pirates on the Pacific, off the coast of California, rediscovers the primordial brutality, not so much as the cause of degeneration but as a missing link to his Anglo-Saxon ancestry. It is the presence of the Asiatic “coolies” on the Pacific that awakens in Wilbur the dormant race instinct. A chance encounter with Moran Sternersen, the daughter of a Nordic sea rover, presents to Wilbur a utopian possibility of race regeneration, as she demonstrates the pristine form of the Anglo-Saxon vitality, unfettered by the modern “civilization.”

Weaved around series of melodramatic incidents, the narrative begins when Ross Wilbur, a San Francisco dandy, presents himself at the Herricks to attend a tea party,

organized to celebrate Josie Herrick's social debut. In a society where life is punctuated with balls, cotillions, and pleasure excursions, Wilbur finds himself a solitary male in the house filled with women, and to escape the oppressive female presence, he takes a stroll along the wharves, where an "undersized fellow in dirty brown sweater and clothes of Barbary Coast" unsuspectingly drugs him and hands him over to a Chinese fishing boat (MLL 181). Thus "shanghaied," his adventure on the coast off California begins. During the course, he experiences the ordeal of forced servitude in a fishing schooner, the *Bertha Millner*, captained by Alvinza Kitchell, a ruthless beachcomber.<sup>3</sup> Owned by a Frisco-based Chinese Company, the ship was exclusively manned by a Chinese crew.<sup>4</sup> On board the *Bertha Millner*, Wilbur works as one of the Chinese "coolies" until Captain Kitchell is incidentally killed while plundering the *Lady Letty*, a floating wreck. Moran's father also dies in the shipwreck, leaving Moran adrift on the Pacific. Thus left on their own for survival, Moran and Wilbur assume the command of the *Bertha Millner* and its Chinese crew. While helping a Chinese junk trice a dead whale, a fight breaks between the crew of the *Bertha Millner* and the Chinese beachcombers at the Magdalena bay, Baja, Mexico, as the makeshift economic alliance with the Chinese falls apart upon the accidental discovery of one hundred thousand dollars worth of ambergris in the dead whale. With the help of "pampered and effete" crew of the *Bertha Millner*, Moran and Wilbur defeat the "ferocious" Chinese pirates, seize the ambergris, and take the pirate

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<sup>3</sup> A beachcomber is usually a white man living as a drifter on the South Pacific, who is looking for salvage materials and refuse to sell. Due to the anti-Chinese sentiment of the period, ships owned by Chinese companies often employed a dummy white captain to avoid legal complications. Kitchell explains Wilbur that he became the captain of the *Bertha Millner*, as "it is a Custom House regulation that no coolie can take a boat out of Frisco" (MLL 197).

<sup>4</sup> The term "shanghaied" is an American neologism, which commonly refers to "various methods of forcing a sailor to sea," including kidnapping and drugging (OLD Online); it also retains its roots as a nominal verb from "Shanghai" and refers to Chinese piratical ships in the South Pacific.

leader, Hoang, in to captivity (MLL 248). Wilbur and Moran plan to sail the ship back to San Francisco, and with the money off the ambergris, contemplate a filibustering career in Cuba. Upon their arrival in San Francisco, however, Hoang murders Moran, steals the ambergris, and vanishes in Chinatown.

In its bare plot essentials, the novel presents a situation in which an “effeminate” dandy rediscovers his Anglo-Saxon masculinity by fighting off the Chinese pirates. Ironically though, Wilbur's transformation into a hardened swashbuckling filibusterer becomes possible through the counter-agency of the Asiatic “coolies.” By appropriating the agency of a “coolie,” a state from which he initially hoped to escape to the “civilized” society, Wilbur assumes the agency of power and commands the “loyal” troop of the makeshift troop of a “loyal” Chinese crew in the battle against the pirates. When he finally reenters the society “dressed in a Chinaman’s blouse and jeans,” he insists on retaining the new identity to the extent of scandalizing the urbane sensibility of his peers back home. He tells the shocked members of San Francisco’s social circle that he has finally realized the vanity of “german favors and cotillions” (308). To Wilbur who has “fought with naked dirk” in a primitive battle against the Chinese, the “civilized” way of life amounts to a degrading compromise of his masculinity (308). Initially mocked by the schooner’s captain as an “effeminate” weakling unfit to survive in the Darwinian world of the Pacific, Wilbur triumphantly emerges not only as a quintessential Anglo-Saxon male but also as an agent of empire. The dual portrayal of the Asiatics—as the servile partner of American free enterprise as well as a dangerous impediment to U.S.



imperialistic ambition—represents the ambivalent inscription of the Asia-Pacific in U.S. cultural imagination.<sup>5</sup>

Wilbur prefers a crude form of “primitivism” over “civilization” as a way of mastering gender anxiety at home. Before his adventure on the Pacific began, Wilbur finds himself in an oppressively “feminine” milieu at the debutante ball. His momentary escape from the “terrifying array of millinery and a disquieting staccato chatter of feminine voices,” ironically, lands him in the world of primitive brutality (177). Even before leaving the San Francisco social circle behind, however, he experiences the emasculating effects of the “feminine culture.” While in the party, he feels assaulted by the “mingled odors of many delicate perfumes” (177); an overwhelming female presence “unmans” him, as he spots only one other male in the room, identified by his “high hat,” barely visible in the glittering display of “pink [and] lavender” (177).

In Moran, the Pacific functions as a border-zone, where gender, race, and ethnicity-based identities undergo radical revision. When Wilbur wakes on deck of the *Bertha Millner* from the drug-induced sleep, he becomes conscious of the high hat, the dancing shoes, and the gray gloves he had worn the night before (184). On the way, the schooner passes the yachting party that he was to attend, only for him to catch a glimpse of “girls in smart gowns” and “young fellows in white ducks and yachting caps” reeling off a quicksteps” (187). Although melodramatic, the incidental crossing between the *Bertha Millner* and the yachting party is profoundly symbolic. The “civilized” society represented by the yachting party gradually recedes in the Pacific horizon, leaving Wilbur in the Pacific wilderness, where the chance encounter with Moran, an archetypal figure of

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<sup>5</sup> For an excellent treatment of “filibustering” and “empire,” see Brady Harrison, Agent of Empire: William Walker and the Imperial Self in American Literature (Athens: U of Georgia P, 2004).

Anglo-Saxon vitality and the concomitant conflict with the Asiatics reinitiate him into the rites of masculinity.

Once beyond the reach of “civilization” and culture, Wilbur’s racial and gender identities become questionable. His feeble protest against forced servitude—“I demand to be put ashore”—elicits a mocking response from Kitchell who riles at his “effeminacy” and the lack of masculinity:

‘Angel child,’ whimpered the big man. ‘Oh, you lilee of the vallee, you bright an’ mornin’ star. I am reely pained, y’know, that your vally can’t come along, but we’ll have your piano set up in the lazarette. It gives me genuine grief, it do, to see you bein’ obliged to put your lilee white feet on this here vulgar and dirtee deck. We’ll have the Wilton carpet down by to-morrer, so we will, my dear . . .’ His rage boiled over . . . The captain knocked him down with a blow of one enormous fist upon the mouth . . . .  
(185)

Through relentless physical brutality, Kitchell instigates a crisis in Wilbur’s self-perception; with his uncouth dialect, Kitchell turns the very markers of Wilbur’s race, class, and gender into undesirable attributes. He associates the color white—“lilee of the vally,” “bright an’ mornin’ star,” and “lilee white feet”—with “softness” and lack of strength. In the Pacific world, teeming with “coolies” and “Chinese junks,” Wilbur’s visible whiteness, far from being a source of power, becomes a liability, a sign of effeminacy. Kitchell’s mocking promise of a “piano” and “Wilton carpet” also challenges Wilbur’s class allegiance. From the perspective of the Pacific wilderness, the “cultured” world of San Francisco appears remote; the genteel society, reduced to an

insignificant cultural space, remains blissfully unaware of the Darwinian world of its periphery.

Thus thrust in the Pacific, “alive with coolies” (247), Wilbur’s association with Moran Sternersen further destabilizes the normative gender roles. It is Moran Sternersen who plays the masculinist gender roles. Amidst the chaos that ensues among the Chinese crew, who were “helpless—paralyzed with fear” when a squall hits the *Bertha Millner* (222), Moran takes over the command and restores order in the ship. Until the climactic battle against the pirates, Wilbur accepts Moran’s leadership in the beleaguered ship. For someone like Ross Wilbur who found himself reduced to a status of a “coolie” in an attempt to evade the oppression of feminine presence, the reversal of gender roles is anything but an ironic turn of events. Instead, Moran’s de-gendered presence, a figure that summons the image of the mythic Anglo-Saxon type, mirrors Wilbur’s own racial past. She is a woman “without sex—savage, unconquered, untamed, glorying in her own independence, her sullen isolation” (229). She is a mythic Nordic type; she not only represent the Anglo-Saxon purity but also makes him aware of his own racial vitality, “lost and unfamiliar in this turn of the century time” (260). With her immense physical strength and “flaming eyes,” she vents her “wrath at their [the Chinese crew’s] weakness and cowardice” and intimidates them for submission (222). Such a ferocious “manly” action from a woman is possible, as she has preserved her essential racial identity from the corrupting influence of feminine sentiment. As the narrator comments, she is “a thing untouched and unsullied by civilization” (260). While transcending normative gender roles, however, she also opens up the utopian possibility of race regeneration.

Through an overblown romantic imagery, especially the portrayal of Moran as a Nordic female warrior, Norris critiques the discourse of domesticity that promoted women's roles in propagating "culture" and "civilization." As the novel progresses, however, there is lack of a meaningful outcome of Moran's "manly" ferocity. In the climactic battle drawn out in an epic scale against the Chinese pirates, Wilbur resurrects the dormant Anglo-Saxon masculinity by internalizing the spectacle of "coolies" fighting against each other, while he leads "good Chinese" of the *Bertha Millner* against the "bad Chinese" of the pirate ship. It is not only the heroism achieved from the battle against the "coolies" but also the spectral pleasure of watching the "coolies" fight—"grapping and gripping and hitting one another . . . in a barbarous Oriental fashion with nails and teeth"—that awakens in Wilbur "the primitive man, the half brute of the stone age (286). The dehumanized portrayal of the Chinese crew as animals fighting with "nails and teeth" summons the image of a primordial scene of primitive brutality, a prelude to the resurrection of Anglo-Saxon race instinct.

Wilbur's reaffirmation of race instinct, however, does not constitute the "true" American masculinity; he also needs to free himself from the feminine domination exercised by Moran. Having worked under Moran's command for long, Wilbur finds a unique opportunity to reassert his masculine identity. In a most bizarre turn of events, Wilbur finds himself fighting with Moran. Although Moran, while fighting with the Chinese pirates, has "lapsed back to the Viking and sea rovers of the tenth century," her blind rage instills a "new-found strength" in Wilbur (287). The narrator indicates the presence of inevitability about Wilbur's transformation: "He fought with her as against some impersonal force that was incumbent upon him to conquer—that it was imperative

that he should conquer if he wished to live” (287). In subduing Moran’s primitive rage, Wilbur learns that in the Darwinian world of the Pacific, the only means of self-preservation is the race instinct not the normative control of the “civilized” self. Moran’s melodramatic submission to Wilbur’s will—“give me your hand. I am as weak as a kitten”—helps fully restore Wilbur’s masculine identity. For this, however, Wilbur has to reassert the Anglo-Saxon racial identity, by not only subduing the Asiatics but also passing through the “primitive phase” of life mirrored in the naked bodies of the “coolies.”

More importantly, through an account of Wilbur’s mis/adventure in the Pacific, Norris argues for the resurrection of Anglo-Saxon masculinity. The brutal life of a “coolie” that Wilbur endures, however, can be taken as the rite of the passage through which he has to pass to reclaim the “true” identity of an Anglo-Saxon male. Caught between the physical intimidation of Captain Kitchell and an indifferent crew, exclusively composed of Chinese immigrants, Wilbur survives by appropriating the agency of a “coolie.” Wilbur’s symbolic transformation into a “coolie” occurs suddenly and violently: “He went down forward at the toe of Kitchell’s boot—silk-hated, melton-overcoated, patent-booted, and gloved in suedès. Two minutes later, there emerged upon the deck a figure in oilskins and sou’wester” (186). By emphasizing the sartorial image as a marker of Wilbur’s identity transformation, the narrator parodies Kitchell’s critique of Wilbur’s vanity and social pretension. The trade off of the fashionable clothing with the sailor’s rough garments enables Wilbur to claim the agency of a laborer, but he lacks the allegiance with the laboring class, as he neither can identify himself, at least visibly, with the “coolies,” nor can he exchange the labor for wages, thus maintaining his dual

identity: “It was Wilbur, and yet not Wilbur” (186). In case of Wilbur, “coolie” becomes a visible marker that he can carry as a means of survival, and as such, it lacks the meaningful presence of a normative or ideational significance. And yet, in the hierarchical order of the *Bertha Millner*, because of his “brains” and superior navigation skills, he succeeds in exercising limited authority over the Chinese crew. Thus Wilbur’s new identity of a “coolie” challenges the semantic and cultural implication of the term “coolie,” endowing him with the power of agency that the Chinese crew, despite possessing a partial ownership of the ship, is unable to realize. This contradictory meaning of the term “coolie” suggests that its semantic significance depends not so much on the logic of economic exchange as on the existent difference within the racialized social economy.

In nineteenth-century cultural context, “coolie” signifies a racial, ethnic, and class-based identity. The term “coolie” also carries the vestiges of early forms of transnational relationships under colonialism. European-Americans used it to refer either to a native hired laborer in the colonies or to an immigrant laborer in Western metropolises. According to Oxford English Dictionary, “coolie” originally referred to “a numerous aboriginal tribes of Gujarat [India] formally noted as robbers” (“coolie”). As early as in 1554, Botelho, the Portuguese explorer, had used the term *coolie* to refer to people living “along the river of Bassein,” the Irrawaddy River of Myanmar. The economic meaning of the term as hired labor probably came from its Tamil roots from a similar word “Kuli,” which meant to “hire” (“coolie”). In the context of transnational border crossing, especially facilitated by colonial and imperial encounters, Europeans began to use the term to refer to laborers of South Asian origin in various dominions of

European empires, and it began to carry the semantic significance of “immigrant laborers.” In the United States, “coolie” often referred to an immigrant laborer, especially of Chinese origin. Although the term is used indiscriminately and at times without specific reference to “labor,” the 1879 Constitution of California linked the term “coolie” to the Asiatic people, thus adding a legal dimension to it.<sup>6</sup> Since these legal postulations associated the term “coolie” to people of specific ethnic origin, the term became an ethnic as well as racial marker.

In Moran, the term “coolie” functions as an ethnicity-based identity marker rather than an identity based on economic system of exchange. A Chinese company operates the schooner; Charlie, one of the crew, owns portion of the share in the venture. And yet, due to a legal prohibition, the *Bertha Millner* can operate only under a white captain. Captain Kitchell explains how his captaincy of the schooner fulfilled the “Custom House regulation that no coolie can take a boat out of Frisco” (MLL 197). After the enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which barred both skilled and unskilled Chinese workers from entering the United States, like Charlie of the *Bertha Millner*, Chinese immigrants, appropriated the status of “a coolie” as a strategy for economic survival even if they may not qualify themselves as “coolies” in the sense of a hired labor.

As part of the production machinery, “coolie” also demonstrates an extreme form of alienation of human condition under capitalism. In a capitalistic system, as Colleen

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<sup>6</sup> The section 4 of Article 29, of the Constitution of California has the following provision about “Asiatic coolieism”: “The presence of foreigner ineligible to become citizens of the united States is declared to be dangerous to the well-being of the State, and the Legislature shall discourage their immigration by all means within its power. Asiatic Coolieism is a form of human slavery, and is forever prohibited in this State, and all contracts for coolie labor shall be void. All companies and corporations, whether formed in this country or any foreign country, for the importation of such labor, shall be subject to penalties as the Legislature may prescribe” (“The Constitution of California, 1879”)

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, however, does not mention the term “coolie”; instead, it uses “Chinese labor” throughout the document.

Lye argues, the term *coolie* signifies “a different kind of monstrous presence, not the ambivalent pleasure of the body’s libidinal release but the efficient prospect of its mechanical abstraction” (76). Lye focuses on the dehumanized perception of “coolies” as “mechanical abstraction,” devoid of volition and desire, suggesting that the Asiatic presence was non-threatening to Anglo-Saxon racial purity. The representation of the crew of the *Bertha Millner* as “coolies” suggests that Chinese immigrant laborers were viewed as lacking sexuality and individual agency.

The “monstrous presence” of the Chinese crew on board the *Bertha Millner*, however, unsettles Wilbur’s racial complacency. He finds the “absolute indifference of these brown-suited Mongols, the blankness of their flat, fat faces, the dullness of their slating, fishlike eyes” as “uncanny, disquieting” (MLL 188-89). Wilbur’s experience of “uncanny” at the sight of the Asiatics can be explained as the feeling of anxiety over encountering the “foreign” and “strange” at “home.”<sup>7</sup> Sigmund Freud reminds us that the unsettling experience of the “uncanny,” as psychic defense, also “develops in the direction of ambivalence” (157). It means that the same uncanny object can be a source of dread as well as a refuge for security and comfort. In spite of their manifest repulsion to racialized bodies—“the blackness of their fat faces . . . [and] slanting, fish-like eyes”—, Wilbur and Moran feel secure among the “crew” of the *Bertha Millner* as a more violent group of Chinese pirates poses an immediate threat to their safety.

Although there has been a strong presence of Asiatic racial forms in the turn of the century literature, scholars until recently have paid scant attention to the

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<sup>7</sup> The word “uncanny” is a translation of the German word, “*unheimlich*.” Freud proposes that *unheimlich* is part of the subject’s emotional affect, and the very notion *unheimlich* is indeed implicated in the term *heimlich* itself: “What is *heimlich* thus comes to be *unheimlich*.” See Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny” in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, 154-167.



representation of the “foreign” in American naturalism, especially in novels that explore the emergent ethnic differences in U.S. global cities. Exploring the ideological implication of the representation of the Pacific in American literature, John R. Eperjesi demonstrates a strong correlation between U.S. imperialism and the codification of the Pacific region in U.S. literary culture. The imagined construction of the Asia-Pacific region in American culture, according to him, is permeated with “imperialistic imaginary,” in which “a particular representation or misrepresentation of geographical space supports the expansion of the nation’s political and economic borders” (2). Eperjesi’s notion of “imperialistic imaginary” as the cultural construction of distant geographical spaces as the outposts of imperialistic expansion follows the “inside-out” interpretive model. In this model, imperialistic and colonial relations are viewed in terms of one-way circulation of power that flows from the center to the periphery. As Norris’s Moran shows, the real and imagined encounters with the distant cultures also produced counter-spaces within metropolitan centers, instigating a crisis in the Western discourse of self-confidence, resulting in anxiety and racial paranoia.

As Wilbur’s adventure in the Pacific demonstrates, the resurrection of race instinct also requires the Western male to pass through the ordeal of bodily besiegement, death, and loss of innocence. The narratives of the Western construction of colonial spaces outside the frontier of civilization, as Aleida Assmann argues, often dramatize the “heroic ordeal of the colonizer [who] is to leave his native place and sail into yet blank and open spaces, extending the geography, wealth, and rule of the Western world” (59). Although the imperative of expanding the nation’s political and economic borders has been a powerful and consistent motif in colonial and imperialistic discourse, the cultural

changes brought in by such encounters within the seemingly localized spaces of Western metropolises often escape critical scrutiny. Wilbur and Moran's imperialistic mission of filibustering in Cuba flounders not because they fail to pass through the "heroic ordeal" but because Hoang, despite his pledged allegiance to Moran, upon the arrival at San Francisco, kills her, steals the ambergris, and vanishes in Chinatown without a trace. It is significant that the novel ends with the image of the *Bertha Millner* vanishing on the Pacific horizon. More sobering is the vision of Moran's dead body "lying on the deck with outstretched arms" as the crewless ship gradually vanishes in the horizon. The final scene conveys the idea that Moran and her type are unfit to survive in the "civilized" world of San Francisco. The scene also leaves a lingering sense that had Moran been able to preserve her Nordic self, without surrendering to "civilized" norms, she would have not only materialized the filibustering mission in Cuba but also survived the "Asiatic duplicity" represented by Hoang.

The tradition of filibustering, especially popular in the mid-nineteenth-century, fascinated Frank Norris who saw in organized initiatives of establishing colonies in the South Seas as part of the fulfillment of Anglo-Saxon destiny. In "South-Sea Expedition" he lauded the pioneering spirits of the young men who, on 19 February 1897, sailed to found a colony named Bougainville in the South Sea. Norris countered those who considered the adventure as "a lark indulged in by certain wild fellows to go down and seize the natives' land and the natives' women" ("South Sea" 252). Norris defended the expedition sponsored by the South Pacific Colonization Company, arguing that the expedition carried the spirit of Anglo-Saxon long march. According to him, the mission cannot fail because the "great majority of these men are the big-boned, blonde, long-

haired type—the true Anglo-Saxon type” and were “responding to that same mysterious impulse that ever drives their race towards the setting sun” (253). The problem he saw in the contemporary society was its inability to realize that race instinct.

In the fictional world of Moran of the Lady Letty, the Pacific appears as a dangerous space, a zone of captivity and besiegement. Yet, it paradoxically offers an avenue for Wilbur to reclaim his masculinity. Cultural narratives produced in Western metropolises, such as Norris’s Moran, demonstrate how the real and imagined colonial and imperialistic adventures in distant spaces and locations bring cultural changes at home in restructuring social and economic relations and producing diverse counter sites within the unified nation. As sites of cultural and ethnic differences, these counter-spaces simultaneously constitute the normative national identity as well as challenge the homogenizing tendency of national discourses.

At the turn of the twentieth-century, literary texts that sought to respond to the emerging ethnic and cultural diversity of the city-spaces demonstrate the importance of spatial imagining in the construction of national identity. As the immigration of Asiatic peoples in the Pacific coast increased, the mid-nineteenth-century rhetoric of “happy marriage” between the Anglo-Saxon and the Asiatic “yellow race,” most profoundly expressed in the debate surrounding the annexation of California, gave way to racial anxiety, most profoundly expressed in the discourse of “yellow peril.” In her America’s Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, Colleen Lye demonstrates a constitutive relationship between American naturalism and the representation of Asiatic racial forms, especially in fiction set in the Pacific region. She argues that the obsessive preoccupation with the theme of Anglo Saxon degeneration in American naturalism is “necessarily

contextualized by a contemporary history of U.S.-Asian relations” (73). In the context of the economic anxiety caused by the influx of cheap labor force and the resultant anti-Chinese immigrant sentiment, Lye offers an alternative perspective into some of the major contradictions apparent in naturalism’s response to the turn-of-the-century economic crisis. Instead of taking novels such as Norris’s The Octopus as an indictment of monopolistic capitalism, she explains why such novels fail to stage a meaningful allegiance to working class. According to her, novels, such as The Octopus, “illuminate some historically well-traveled circuits between the pleasures of eliminating coolies and the imperative of trust-busting” (77).

Ambivalent as it is, Norris’s vision of Asia, however, defies a unified interpretive model. In Moran of the Lady Letty, the Asiatic characters fall into two mutually exclusive categories—good Chinese who forge strategic alliance with the Anglo-Saxons and the bad Chinese who threaten the nation’s racial normalcy. And yet, in the Octopus, Norris presents the prospect of the Asiatic markets as an answer to economic crisis at home. Therefore, it is expedient to analyze the racial anxiety caused by the Asiatic presence at home, as presented in Moran of Moran, in the context of the expansive geo-estheticism he proposes in The Octopus. It is also important to question why, irrespective of the Asiatic paranoia at home, both of his novels would end up with a programmatic vision of distant locales, either as prospective markets for domestic products or as sites of filibustering adventures abroad.

In fact, Norris’s novels inscribe Asiatic racial forms ambivalently. In Moran, the Asiatic bodies become the lens through which Wilbur looks into the futurity of American male; and by subduing them in a primordial battle, he also rescues the besieged

masculinity from the excess “feminization of culture,” a claustrophobic cultural space of endless tea parties, cotillions, and sentimentalism. While doing so, he also utilizes the strategic alliance with the Asiatics, such as Charlie and his fellow crew, who, due to their acceptance of the servility, pose a lesser threat to U.S. nationhood. Through his fictional response to the Asiatic presence, Norris promotes U.S. national identity, predicated to Anglo-Saxon male under the threat of cultural decadence and gradual enervation of masculinity. In this reconstitution of American identity, the presence of the Asiatic racial forms in his fiction provides a double strategy: rescuing the domestically beleaguered masculinity and opening up the Asia-Pacific regions for imperialistic adventures.

It is no longer the imperial desire of spreading “civilization” in the East that informs the central interest of the novel; it is the primordial scene of barbaric conquest and domination that continues to be the primary focus of the novel. Critics have interpreted Ross Wilbur’s transformation as Norris’s response to the “yellow peril discourse of a coming modernity,” in which “the historical emergence of Asiatic racial form can be read as the appearance of the otherness of Western modernity itself” (Lye 76). An attention to the ambivalent representation of Asiatics, however, reveals that the gender and racial anxiety in Ross Wilbur were already implicated in the turn-of-the-century American culture. More importantly, the encounter with the Asiatics in the Pacific awakens in him the Anglo-Saxon masculinity, suppressed under the emasculating influence of what Norris perceives to be the increasing feminization of American culture at the turn of the century. Ironically though, the Asiatic encroachment contradictorily makes such a resurgent masculinity not only desirable but also a national imperative to protect U.S. interest in the Asia-Pacific. In dramatizing the impending danger of the

Asiatic presence in the United States, the novel also challenges the turn-of-the-century economic agenda of the Asiatic trade, as the makeshift economic partnership between the Anglo-Saxons and the Chinese “coolies” of the *Bertha Millner* fails to take a meaningful direction. Although, in its crude masculinist agenda, the novel lacks aesthetic maturity, nevertheless, it dramatizes Norris’s concern with the cultural and racial implications of transnational cultural encounters.

### **National Aesthetics and Imperial Desire**

Throughout his brief career as a novelist, critic, and journalist, Norris extensively wrote and published on the purpose and method of writing fiction. In his critical writings, he stressed the importance of developing an art form, which tends towards what Fredric Jameson, in relation to so-called Third World literature, termed as “national allegory.”<sup>8</sup> Explaining what constitutes a literary text as national allegory, Jameson identifies the tendency of “an obsessive return of the national situation” and a “collective attention to us” as the defining principles of a national allegory (65). From a comparative perspective, however, he takes the preoccupation with the “national” in Third World literatures as a reminder of “outmoded stages of our own first-world culture” exemplified in the writing of “Dreiser and Sherwood Anderson” (Jameson 65). Although Jameson relegates the “return of the national situation” found in the writers of American realism

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<sup>8</sup> Jameson’s essay “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism” has sparked off much controversy ever since its publication in 1986, especially due to its homogenizing tendency and neat binary it sets between the so-called Third-World and the First-World literatures, whereas Third World literature is viewed as recuperating the “outmoded stages” which the First-World literature has historically surpassed. Instead of going into the controversy caused by Jameson’s formulation, my intention is to retain the concept of “national allegory” as a way of relating literature and politics. For more information on this debate, see Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, and Literatures*, (London: Verso, 1992) 95-122.

Imre Szeman offers a revisionary reading of Jameson’s essay. He argues that instead of taking Jameson’s use of “national allegory” as a reductionist essentialism, one should explore the significance of the term in thinking about the “relationship between culture and politics in general” (806). See Imre Szeman, “Who’s Afraid of National Allegory? Jameson, Literary Criticism, and Globalization,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 100.3 (2002): 802-27.

and naturalism to a historic past that the postmodern American sensibility has positively outgrown, nevertheless, he offers a useful concept to establish the link between the late nineteenth-century aesthetic form and the political consciousness it embodies.

Norris's experimentation with naturalism can be understood as an attempt to achieve an ideal art form that is not only attentive to contemporary political consciousness but also a part of the socio-cultural praxis of the time. In "The Frontier Gone," Norris insists that a true epic must evolve from national history and that its action "must devolve upon some great national events" (Norris, Literary 121). In the absence of political consciousness and historical awareness, he argued, "American epic just as heroic, as ephemeral, just as important and as picturesque [as that of Homeric epic of war and conquest] will fade into history leaving behind no finer type, no nobler hero than Buffalo Bill" (Literary 120). From this broad perspective of historic awareness of national character, he critiqued the Howellsian realism for its obsession with petty domestic avocations and narrow provincialism. He dismissed realism for its preoccupation with minute details. Compared to the immense historical encompass of an epic romance, which Norris identified as naturalistic fiction, a realistic text offered no more than "the drama of a broken teacup, the tragedy of a walk down the block reception-rooms, the excitement of an afternoon call, [and] the adventure of an invitation to dinner" ("A Plea" 173). The mocking catalogue of middle class cultural etiquette also exhibits gender anxiety so central in his writing. The cramped details of everyday life in realist texts represented a claustrophobic feminine space that his male characters often strive to leave behind. As an antidote to cultural decadence, he called for a greater realism that could only be achieved through "a naturalistic tale," in which "terrible things

must happen to the characters” (Norris, “Zola” 168). He insisted that the characters of a naturalistic tale must be “flung into the throes of a vast and terrible drama that works itself out in unleashed passions, in blood, and in sudden death” (168). From his insistence on “terrible dramas” as realistic representation of life, it can be deduced that he is revising Zola’s crude scientism for his own aesthetic purpose.

Critics have pointed out inconsistencies in Norris’s use of naturalistic philosophy in his fiction, especially the tendency of shifting attention from the sordid reality of life to a romantic view of life. For example, his most ambitious novel, The Octopus, despite death, degeneration, and starvation faced by the principal characters at home, ends up with a sanguine hope that things will “inevitably, resistlessly work together for good” once the American wheat makes inroad to Asian markets (TO 652).

Going beyond the dominant tradition of interpreting naturalist novels in term of their adherence or lack of confirmation to philosophical and scientific definitions of literary naturalism, Eric Carl Link calls for a renewed attention to aesthetic aspect or aspects of American naturalism. Rather than looking for a “direct reference to either philosophical or scientific naturalisms” in naturalist texts (17), he insists that one should “be referring to those texts in the latter half of the nineteenth-century that incorporate at thematic (as opposed to generic, philosophical, or methodological) level scientific or philosophical concepts arising from the works of the loose affiliation of nineteenth-century philosophical and scientific naturalists” (18). While Link’s emphasis on examining naturalist texts in terms of their aesthetic properties provides a new critical direction, he is implicit in underscoring what constitutes the “aesthetic” dimension of American naturalism. While interpreting a naturalist text, as Link suggests, one should



make a distinction between “positive” and “negative” naturalism, depending on how a particular text incorporates concepts of philosophical or scientific naturalism. According to Link, such a taxonomy is warranted by the fact that the “roots of both positive and negative literary naturalism are contained within naturalist theory itself” (69). While negative naturalism is informed by the “natural selection paradigm of Charles Darwin,” the positive naturalism, he argues, is influenced by the “progressive and utopian evolutionary theory of Herbert Spencer and his American disciple John Fisk” (69). He cites Norris’s McTeague and Edward Bellamy’s Looking Backward as the primary examples of negative and positive naturalism, respectively. Interestingly, by calling for the interpretation of literary naturalism in terms of its the degree of affiliation to scientific and philosophical concepts of naturalism, he conjures up the same sets of criteria in examining the aesthetic properties of a naturalist literary text.

Critics have established a correlation between the rise of realism/naturalism and powerful social and cultural forces unfolding during the 1890s, especially immigration, class differences, and racialized social structure.<sup>9</sup> In this regard, the exclusive focus on aesthetic formalism, as Link proposes, offers a rather limiting view of naturalism. Yet, by recognizing the contradictory impulses—dystopian and utopian—often found in a naturalist text, Link opens up the possibility of reexamining a text like Norris’s The Octopus from an alternative perspective. However, I am less interested in attributing the contradictory tendencies in The Octopus to the writer’s conscious appropriation of scientific and philosophical naturalism but more invested in examining Norris’s

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<sup>9</sup> Bill Brown’s The Material Unconscious: American Amusement, Stephen Crane, and the Economy of Play (1996) and Amy Kaplan’s The Social Construction of American Realism (1988) provided important direction to the study of realism and naturalism. In particular, these studies demonstrated how realist and naturalist texts are related to broader social and cultural issues of the time.

conflicting aesthetic practices within the context of transnational exchange of labor and goods that produced the fluid dynamism between the local and global, the domestic and the foreign. I propose to explain the conflicting impulses inscribed in The Octopus by mapping out the narrative trajectory that gradually moves from a “limited view” of reality at home to a “larger view” of the limitless global expansion of U.S. economy. The recognition of the tension created by the dynamics of globalism, as I contend, is crucial to explain the simultaneous presence of dystopian and utopian impulses in The Octopus.

### **Narrative Perspective, Gendered Nation, and Exclusionary Localism**

In his novels, Norris shows a remarkable sense of geographic affect. The Octopus begins with a typical regionalist trope—an outsider’s perspective, very much like the unnamed narrator of Sarah Orne Jewett’s The Country of the Pointed Furs. Like Jewett’s narrator, Presley, the stand-in artist and the center of consciousness in The Octopus, voices his desire to give poetic expression to “things” happening at the local level. He asserts that the “epic life is here, here under our hands” (TO 41). In the spirit of a realist, he aspires to represent the locale. He resolves to extend his poetic sympathy to people living and toiling in the San Joaquin Valley. During his bicycle rides, for example, he visits Guadalajara, the Mexican quarter of the Valley in search of stories. Like an ethnographer, he frequents Solotari’s, a Mexican restaurant to listen to the stories of a centenarian. The recollection of the “relics of former generation” (20), however, remains immaterial to Presley. For him, “these Spanish-Mexicans, decayed, picturesque, vicious, and romantic” represent a passing civilization (20). Like a Homeric bard, he is in search for a “tremendous theme, heroic, terrible, to be unrolled in all the thundering progression of hexameters” (9). For the poetic inspiration, Presley needs a “frontier of Romance,

where a new race, a new people—hardy, brave, and passionate—were building an empire” (9). Presley’s poetic vision, thus, sets up a spatial hierarchy between the bustling town of Bonneville, the center of big agribusinesses and Guadalajara, the sleepy Mexican quarter of “passing civilization.”

In Presley’s theory of progressive art form, there is an inherent discord between his envisioned poetic form and the aesthetic possibility offered by the locale. He fails to realize the irony implicit in his aesthetic vocation when, contrary to his imagined “forerunners of empire,” he finds the wheat growers of the San Joaquin valley engaged in petty squabbles over “grain rates” and “freight tariffs” (13). The disjuncture between his poetic aspiration and the aesthetic possibility offered by the local space becomes more prominent as he surveys the landscape teeming with “uncouth brutes of farmhands and petty ranchers” (5). He is unable to feel “sympathy with them . . . with their lives, their ways, their marriages, deaths, bickering, and all the monotonous round of their sordid existence” (5). Presley’s imagined national epic in which racially marked “farmhands,” women, and ethnic others occupy a marginal space is thus homologous to the social structure of the farming community of the San Joaquin Valley. A more important question, then, is how far Presley’s views reflect Norris’s own notions of art and its social and cultural function.

Presley’s conception of art echoes Norris’s own theory of novel. Just as Norris considers novel, especially naturalistic novel, to be an epic form of art, a historical record of a race or a nation, Presley believes that his vocation as an artist is to represent the historical moment of national building, to write a “frontier Romance” about the “forerunners of empire.” Critics view that Norris’s emphasis on the epic dimension of

novel has much to do with the revival of classical art form at the turn of the century. Barbara Hochman, for example, demonstrates significant similarities between The Iliad and The Octopus. The prevalence of sudden deaths, elaborate banquets, and pervasive use of Homeric similes, she argues, exemplify Norris's conscious appropriation of epic conventions. She attributes the prevalence of such epic conventions in The Octopus to the "contemporary Homeric debates of the 1890s" (121). According to her, Norris identifies the turn-of-the-century fiction writer with Odysseus, and by doing so, he "lays claim to a position of cultural power and authority" (125). While Hochman associates the "cultural power and authority" with the writer's ability to negotiate the expectations of an elitist readership, in the light of Norris's critical writings, I contend that the use of epic conventions in his fiction is part of the project of aestheticizing the nation's westward expansion.

It is more than a coincidence that fiction writers at the turn of the century employed Homeric conventions to negotiate the readerly expectations. In a time of heightened national self-importance and repeated imperial adventures abroad, epic imagination, for writers like Norris, offered an avenue to participate in national and racial history, history understood as imperial conquest and subjugation. In his theoretical writings on the nature and purpose of the novel, Norris revealed how deeply he shared the imperial agenda of the Manifest Destiny of the Anglo-Saxon racial supremacy. He viewed the British colonial rule over India and the East as an important step in the historical march of the Anglo-Saxons. Tracing the history of westward movement back to the Germanic settlement of fifth century B.C., he writes,

Then [after the Germanic conquest] for centuries we halted and the van

closed up with the firing-line, and we filled all England and all Europe with our clamor because for a while we seemed to have gone as far Westward as it was possible; and the checked energy of the race reacted upon itself, rebounded as it were, and back we went to Eastward again—crusading, girding at the Mohammedan, conquering his cities, breaking into his fortress . . . . (“The Frontier Gone” 112)

Norris’s constant recourse to the discourse of the Anglo-Saxon “long march” appears clichéd to the point of losing its seriousness; yet, in the context of U.S. imperialistic adventures overseas in the 1890s, particularly the U.S. military intervention in the Philippines, his foray into the mythic history of the race echoes the construction of imperial nationhood in the contemporary political discourses.

In its “obsessive turn to national situation,” to quote Fredric Jameson’s famous phrase, Norris’s theory of fiction, like a “gong,” echoes the contemporary imperial ideology. Largely focusing on Norris’s critical writings, including “The Frontier Gone at Last” and “A Neglected Epic,” Donald Pizer argues that Norris’s intellectual development coincides with the resurgence of the “germ theory” at the turn-of-the-century. The so-called germ theory “interpreted English life largely in relation to its Germanic origin” and viewed American democracy “as racially transmitted through Anglo-Saxon immigration” (44). He further argues that it was Theodore Roosevelt who “expressed the germ theory” in a way that “appealed [to] the popular imagination” (45). By linking U.S. continental expansion to the historic march of the Anglo-Saxons, Roosevelt transformed the academic historical discourse of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority into “the romance of long march” (46). Roosevelt equated the energy of “the

restless and reckless hunters, the hard, dogged frontier farmers” with the Germanic tribes (qtd. in Pizer 46). By displacing “Indians, French, and Spaniards,” Roosevelt argued, the white settlers, who “thronged across the Alleghenies,” replicated what the Germanic tribes centuries ago did to “Cymric [sic] and Gaelic Celts” (qtd. in Pizer, 46). As part of the conceptualization of American national character in terms of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority, Norris viewed the late nineteenth-century American involvement overseas as historical continuity of the Anglo-Saxon long march. Celebrating U.S. intervention in the Philippines as an extension of the national frontier beyond the Pacific, he wrote, “But on the first of May, eighteen hundred ninety-eight, a gun was fired in the bay of Manila, still further westward, and in response, the skirmish-line crossed the Pacific” (“Frontier” 112). In this particular intellectual and political climate, Norris appears to be less interested in the actual trade relations with the East but more invested in the aesthetic representation of the Anglo-Saxon long march. Highlighting the importance of maintaining U.S. presence in the Orient, he argued that a “mere supremacy in trade in the East is not after all the great achievement of the race but patriotism” (“Frontier” 116).

In his desire to write an epic poem on the frontier activities of the “pioneers of empire,” Presley echoes Norris’s own aesthetic theory of romance as an expression of Euro-American imperialistic formation. Yet, Presley’s inability to discover a suitable subject matter in a San Joaquin Valley already fraught with racial differences and conflicting class allegiances exemplifies a classic case of capitalism’s cooption of the progressive intent of an art. That is, the very system of exchange that the artist sets out to expose absorbs the oppositional position taken by the cultural critic. If “cultural criticism rejects the progressive integration of all aspects of consciousness within the apparatus of

material production,” as Theodore Adorno argues (1035), the oppositional stand of a cultural critic under capitalism ends up with the final capitulation to capital. Although Adorno advocates a dialectical method of cultural criticism as a way of asserting artistic autonomy and thereby resisting the totalizing power of the régime, it is relevant to examine why Presley’s aesthetic revolution—the resistance to monopoly capitalism represented by the Railroad—failed in The Octopus.

Despite his repulsion toward racial others, Presley aspires to write a “song of the people” (TO 40). Yet, what he really means by “people” is uncertain. When he finally writes the poem, “Toilers,” celebrating the ranchers’ cause, the title of the poem sounds a misnomer. Far from being the “toilers,” in the Jeffersonian sense of the term, the ranchers of the San Joaquin valley of California exercise an equally monopolistic hold on the land through systematic eviction of petty farmers and sharecroppers. In his first encounter with a “true” farmer, a German immigrant sharecropper, Presley learns that the immigrant family is on the verge of being evicted from Los Muertos as Magnus Derrick plans to modernize the ranch with new machinery to produce “bonanza” crops enough to export to markets in China and India. Lauded as a “socialistic poem,” the “Toilers,” paradoxically, enters the bourgeois mode of circulation and becomes yet another commodity fetish. A San Francisco newspaper “printed it in Gothic type, with a scare-head title so decorative as to be almost illegible” (394). The only positive outcome of the poem is that it inspires Mrs. Cedarquist, wife of a prominent capitalist, to begin “a movement to send a shipload of wheat to the starving people in India” (605). The sense of urgency—“By the time our ship reaches India, the famine may be all over” as “they

are dying so fast”—implied in the ostentatious philanthropic cause indicates the irony of the apparent success of Presley’s “socialistic” poem (605).

Mainly due to the success of his poem, however, Presley gains unexpected access to the corporate world. It is Shelgrim, the president of the Railroad, whose criticism of the poem leaves Presley “confused” and “embarrassed” (574). He becomes a celebrity in Mrs. Cedarquist’s social circle comprised of decadent artists and misguided philanthropists (314). After the publication of the “Toilers,” the narrator crowns him with the title of the “greatest American poet since Bryant” (394). Caught between the conflicting interests of the ranchers and the Railroad, he undertakes, in a true bardic tradition, the mission of “telling all his countrymen of the drama that was working itself out in the fringe of the continent” (395). Presley maintains a false consciousness to promote the “cause” of the ranchers against the perceived monopoly of the Railroad. His “socialistic” vision fails to notice the reification process at work in the titanic battle between the ranchers and the Railroad. The ranchers’ interests in land acquisition are as monopolistic as the Railroad’s manipulation of freight rates and land values. In this drama of economic production, the human condition of labor is significantly absent, leaving the entire labor force, immigrant petty farmers, and women out of the putative national cause.

The novel’s exclusive focus on the rancher’s interest results in the systematic marginalization of immigrants, laborers, and women. In particular, the novelistic representation of the closely-knit circle of the ranchers, bonded in a common cause against the Railroad, makes the agency of labor virtually immaterial in the agrarian community of the San Joaquin Valley. It is the circulation of commodities that mediates



the multiple levels of human relations manifest in the community. The localized narrative perspective, ironically, naturalizes the commodity product, the wheat, by displacing the power of human agency onto the product itself. In the memorable plowing scene at Annixter's Queen Sabe Ranch, for instance, an instrumental mechanism takes over the agency of human labor. While witnessing the primal scene of seeding from an outsider's perspective, Presley's poetic vision solely focuses on the mechanical process of production:

The ploughs, thirty-five in number, each drawn by its team of ten, stretched in an interminable line . . . Each of these ploughs held five shears, so that when the entire company was in motion, one hundred and seventy-five furrows were made at the same instant. At a distance, the ploughs resembled a great column of field artillery. (127-28)

With the pervasive use of the passive voice, the narrator transfers the agency of labor to instrumental mechanism, as if the entire spectacle of labor follows a pre-orchestrated process of automation. In the scheme of things, it is the product of labor that matters, not the human agency of labor.

As the novel focuses on the central conflict between the ranchers and the Railroad, the novelistic discourse, while representing the community as a whole, marginalizes women, racializes ethnic minorities, and dehumanizes the immigrant labors. For instance, Chinese cooks populate the novel; they do not speak a single word, but their presence, though limited to the kitchen and the dining table, sustains a highly foregrounded gastronomic theme of the novel. During sumptuous feasts and lavish dinner parties, Chinese cooks prepare food and, like human automatons, flock around the guests.

Devoid of personal agency and class allegiance, they provide the ranchers with cathartic pleasure of sublimating their deep-seated racial and gender anxieties.

At the dinner party organized to galvanize all the ranchers in a unified project of “busting S. Behrman,” the local Railroad agent (111), the presence of the “slimy sloop” prepared by a Chinese cook jeopardizes the putative unity of the ranchers. The Chinese “sloop” horrifies Annixter, one of the prominent ranchers, who has a chronic bowel disorder and who is always seen eating prunes and reading David Copperfield. “It makes me sick. Such-such *sloop!*” he quips (102). In a comically-veiled sexual gesture, Osterman, a fellow rancher, puts the ill-fated sloop in Annixter’s bed and provokes him to frenzy:

Ah, yes, in my bed, sloop, aha! I know the man who put it there . . . and that man is a *pip*. Sloop! Slimy, disgusting stuff; you heard me say I didn’t like it when the Chink passed it to me at dinner—and just for that reason you put it in my bed, and I stick my feet into it when I turn in. Funny, isn’t it? (121).

The association of the *sloop*, particularly prepared by the “chink,” to its “yellow” visibility metaphorically displaces the negative agency onto the Asiatic racial forms. The contextual association of “slimy, disgusting stuff” with the bed, suggestive of homoerotic possibility, horrifies Annixter, a self-identified misogynist. One critic has pointed out that the “misplaced syrup’s provocation of racial slur in the text suggests further that the substance carries racial, as well as, sexual meaning” (Lye 85). The syrup, however, can also be linked to Annixter’s aversion toward the League’s “sticky” scheme of bribery against the Railroad. Given Norris’s negative representation of the Chinese business ethic

in *Moran*, it is very likely that the ranchers' unethical scheme of buying votes to elect their own dummy representative in the Board of the Trustees of the Railroad looked "yellow" to Annixter.

In the post-exclusion era, the proponents of the extension of the Chinese Exclusion Act used gastronomic logic to justify the impending threat of "yellow" peril." In 1901, Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor, published a pamphlet urging the government to extend the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The pamphlet is evocatively titled as Some Reasons for Chinese Exclusion; Meat vs. Rice; American Manhood against Asiatic Coolieism; which will Survive? Arguing for the extension to the Exclusion Act, Gompers draws on the prevalence of unethical business practices among the Chinese as one of the important reasons for the Chinese exclusion (6). Citing the Report of the Legislative Committee of 1876, the pamphlet shows how Chinese business firms create organized guilds that "nullify and supersede State and National authorities" (qtd. in Gompers 6). Similarly, Gompers implies that the ability of Chinese labors to survive on the meager diet of rice enables them to work on lower wages thus making American white labors vulnerable.

The contextual blurring of the sexual and the racial semantic import of the *sloop*, ironically, challenges the stereotypical representation of the Chinese as "effeminate coolies." In view of the cook's location within the most feminine space in an American home, the kitchen, the *sloop* also represents the cook's veiled gender identity as a disruptive counter-force to masculine solidarity of the ranchers. In the broader narrative economy, the feminine presence signifies a decadent culture, a direct impediment to masculine enterprise. The ranchers' meeting ends with Presley gazing on "the redwood

paneling of the room” that gave an impression of “a dark crimson as though stained with blood” (TO 123). As a prescient sign of forthcoming disaster, the image takes on a sinister propensity as Presley moves his gaze from the blood-like image to Annie Derrick’s cat with “her paws tucked under her breast, filling the deserted room with the subdued murmur of her contented purr” (124). Just as the syrup disrupts the homosocial bonding between the ranchers, provoking a quarrel between Annixter and Osterman, the ubiquitous presence of Annie’s cat, always seen “licking at the white fur of her breast” (58), embodies the displaced female gaze that threatens masculine autonomy.

Anne Derrick offers a counter possibility in the world permeated with hyper masculinity. She attempts to dissuade Magnus from the proposed plan to elect a Railroad commissioner through bribery. Her effort to bring moral order elicits in Annixter a reaction very much similar to that of the Chinese sloop. He considers her moral concern a typical “feminine” ploy to “get hold on him [Magnus Derrick], trying to involve him in a petticoat mess” (182). It is she who displays revulsion toward the wheat. The immensity of the wheat field reminds her of the “elemental force, this big energy, weltering here under the sun in all the unconscious nakedness of a sprawling, primordial Titan” (60). The image of naked “primordial Titan” expresses her anxiety over the masculine domination.

Caught up in the “terrible drama” of resurgent masculinity, Norris’s women characters, especially those who possess literary sensibility, retreat into their own unrealizable psychodrama of romantic longing. Unlike her husband, Annie Derrick entertains a romantic ambition of visiting places she knew from reading “her beau ideals of literature and art” and dreams of “Rome, Naples, and the world’s greatest art centers”

(59). In the stifling world of the masculine desire for material possession, however, she fails to restore a moral order, which the novel presents as the domain of women.

Similarly in The Pit, Laura attempts to cultivate aesthetic sensibility in Curtis Jadwin.

Enmeshed as he is in the ruthless world of the Chicago stock market, Curtis finds nothing worth reading beyond Howells's The Rise of Silas Lapham. He professes that he does not believe in an exclusionary social order, which leaves women to cultivate and "refine their own minds, and live in a sort of warmed-over, dilettante, stained-glass world of seclusion and exclusion" (Pit 112). Yet, ironically, Laura relapses to a schizophrenic existence as Curtis Jadwin gets caught up in the Chicago wheat pit. Split between her artistic and materialist selves, she relives her repressed desire by impersonating literary characters, especially Shakespearean heroines. With "her histrionic power at the fullest stretch" (258), she redirects the libidinal drive by vicariously living through series of romantic fantasies. In the process, she loses her individuality and becomes a "composite photograph of thousands of Laura Jadwins" (217).

Hilma Tree of The Octopus, however, offers meaningful, although momentary resistance to the intimidating power of the male gaze. Not only does she refuse to be Annixter's mistress, she also forces him to marry her. The narrator, however, projects her only as a symbolic figure. Like Moran Sternersen, Hilma signifies the "elemental existence"; being "close to the great, kindly earth," she is not "defiled and crushed out by sordid, strenuous life-struggle" (TO 85). Like Hilma, Annixter also belongs to nature; he walks with his "little persistent tuft on the crown, usually defiantly erect as an Apache's scalp lock" (328). The image of Annixter as a noble savage struggling in the world of monopoly capital and his subsequent union with Hilma suggest the tragic implication of

the closing of the frontier, as both Hilma and Annixter appropriate the romantic trope of “vanishing Indians.” The very physical presence of Hilma also indicates to the presence of a predetermined fatality. It is her “Medusa-like, thick and glossy” hair that fascinates Annixter (83). As someone exposed to the gaze of a Medusa, Annixter becomes the victim of the conflict between the ranchers and the Railroad.

The community of wheat producers is highly stratified; the novel represents ethnic minorities and immigrants as peripheral to the social order. The systematic racial profiling in The Octopus, as Daniel Schierenbeck points out, expresses Norris’s “implicit fear of degeneration” as well as the “celebration of the destiny of the Anglo-Saxon race in its conquering and civilizing of the West and its new project of turning eastward in an imperialistic project” (78). The narrator repeatedly marks Presley as an “interesting figure, suggestive of a mixed origin,” with his “dark face, delicate mouth and sensitive, loose lips” (TO 210). Hooven, the German immigrant, poses a particular problem of assimilation. Although he has replaced his German national allegiance, the memory of “*Hoch der Kaiser*,” and has adapted America as his “*Vaterland*” (174-75), he remains a perpetual outsider. Magnus Derrick threatens him with eviction and asks to leave the assembly when ranchers discuss strategies to fight against the Railroad. Interestingly, immigrants also possess negative agency. It is Hooven who first fires the shot and sparks off the shootout that leads to the slaughter of the ranchers.

As the Anglo-Saxon masculinity conflates with U.S. national identity, the racial others, ethnic minorities, and women become irrelevant in the project of restoring the national character. The farming community organizes elaborate seasonal feasts, in which the entire community participates. Such communal celebrations demonstrate racial and

ethnic fault-lines. In the jack-rabbit-drive party when the random killing of rabbits resumes, the Anglo-Saxons “drew back in disgust but the hot degenerated blood of Portuguese, Mexican, and mixed Spaniard boiled up in excitement at this wholesale slaughter” (502). By presenting the Portuguese, Mexican, and mixed Spaniard as “degenerate” who could enjoy the wanton massacre of innocent animals, the narrator reinforces the stereotype of ethnic minority as being uncultivated “savages.” In contrast, the whites indulge in “Homeric feast,” marked by an “epic simplicity and directness, an honest Anglo-Saxon mirth and innocence” (505). The abject representation of racial others, by contrast, enhances the national character of the Anglo-Saxons as “the backbone of the nation” (505). From Presley’s limited perspective, Norris presents a highly exclusionary social order, where “the vast and terrible drama” of the titanic battle between the ranchers of Tulare County, California, and the Railroad leaves a number of characters dead, homeless, and dispossessed. Yet, the novel ends with Presley’s affirmation that “good issued [forth] from this crisis, untouched, unassailable, undefiled” (TO 651). He also realizes that to experience *the good*, one has to adapt a “larger view” (TO 652), a perspective that transcends the immediacy of the localized vision of life. In the following section, I propose to explain Norris’s “larger view” and its implications for the novel’s engagement with the contemporary national imaginary.

### **The “Larger View,” Expansive Globalism, and Imperial Desire**

Through his aesthetic engagement with the events taking place in the valley of San Joaquin, Presley voices Norris’s desire to write an epic romance of imperial adventure about the westerly march of the Anglo-Saxons. Ironically, his aesthetic project of representing the “people” and their “cause” is a limited one. Consequently, as the

novel progresses, his perspective becomes less apparent. He loses the comfort of an outsider's perspective. While participating in the Homeric feast, he witnesses the bloody carnage at the ditch, which leaves the principal characters either dead or left adrift to face the unknown future. Yet, amidst the grim reality, Presley completes his aesthetic education about the importance of adapting a "larger view" (650), a view that calls for the shift in perspective from a localized human state to a universalized trans-human condition:

Men—motes in the sunshine perished, were shot down in the very noon of life, hearts were broken, little children started in life lamentably handicapped; young girls were brought to a life of shame; old women died in the heart of life for lack of food. In that little, isolated group of human insects, misery, death, and anguish spun like a wheel of fire.

*But the WHEAT remained.* Untouched, unassailable, undefiled, that mighty force, that nourisher of nations, wrapped in Nirvanic calm, indifferent to the human swarm, gigantic, resistless, moved onward in its appointed grooves. Through the welter of blood at the irrigation ditch, through the sham charity and swallow philanthropy of famine relief committees, the great harvest of Los Muertos rolled like a flood from the Sierras to the Himalayas to feed thousands of starving scarecrows of the barren plains of India. (emphasis original 651)

Presley's triumphant optimism that follows the loss of human agency emanates from the deterministic acceptance of colossal natural forces beyond the control of human desire and volition. What is remarkable about this shift of perspective, however, is the way



Norris re-inscribes the lost power of agency in the wheat itself. The wheat becomes, in Jameson's phase, a "national allegory." As a linguistic device of alternative signification, allegory articulates the principle of double-entendre. At the literal level, the wheat is a staple grain. But as a cosmic force, it embodies the nation itself. It is through the wheat's power of sustaining life that the renewal of the "strength of nations" becomes possible (369). An ability to possess, control, and distribute the wheat in the global system of exchange is to globalize the nation's political capital.

In Norris's formulation, the "nation" thus embodied in the wheat is masculine in nature. By raising the commodity status of wheat as a cosmic force of nature, Norris presents agrarian labor as the site of libidinal release; the vast farmland becomes a place, where "the elemental Male and Female [are seen] locked in a colossal embrace" (131). In its crudity, the primordial imagery of copulation supplements the feminine principle. Thus begotten of the "heroic embrace" of a "vigorous male" (130), the wheat crosses "the Pacific, bursting upon Asia, flooding the Orient in a golden torrent" (321), carrying the same level of sexual fantasy into the dark recesses of "harems" and "temple shrines" in India (648).

Yet, Norris's is not the allegory of a postcolonial nation but that of an emergent global power. While a postcolonial national allegory exhibits an impulse toward promoting the indigenesness of national culture, Norris's story of the wheat projects an expansive vision of the global. Although critics have recently pointed out how American naturalism tends to conceptualize the aesthetic production in terms of transnational and global context, such studies often incline toward an analysis of the formal properties of a text. In "Geo-Aesthetics: Fascism, Globalism, and Frank Norris," Russ Castronovo, for

instance, argues that the “conceptualization of the globe as a single geo-economic unit depends on a historically specific aesthetic formation exemplified by Norris’s fiction” (158). Expanding upon the traditionally explored terrain of literature’s relationship with imperialism, he shows how aesthetics, especially formalism, by producing the “aestheticized portrait of the global,” facilitated “the imagination and conceptualization of the global as a single, perfect form” (Castronovo 158-59). Castronovo’s argument, while explaining how imagining about the globe became possible through certain aesthetic properties of a text, due to his formalistic emphasis on aesthetic properties, leaves ideological dimension of “imagining the global” out of question. In the case of The Octopus, much of Norris’s “geo-aestheticism,” a tendency of representing the global through an art form, depends on the language of metaphoric abundance and allegorical representation rather than formalistic precision. The Octopus, with its formal and thematic inconsistency, hardly exhibits the formalistic notion of “symmetry, totality, and balance” (Schiller 1794). Norris uses the imagery of wheat as the mediating force between the local and the global. More importantly, in his allegorical representation of the nation, Norris charts a parallel course between the wheat and the nation, one destined for the markets in the Asia-Pacific and another, destined to circle the globe. As a cosmic metaphor of national regeneration, as well as a commodity of transnational economic exchange, the wheat embodies the emergent global nation.

The shift in the narrative perspective, from a particular region to an international situation, problematizes the critical understanding of fiction based on a particular region. It demonstrates how an aestheticized representation of the global produces counter-cultural formations at home by constructing a unified nationhood that leaves ethnic

minorities and racial others out of national imaginary. Thus, the aesthetic vision of the global nation in naturalist fiction raises an important critical and methodological question not only about the implication of envisioning global from the perspective of the local but also about the implicit ideological formations that make such a perspective possible. In “Literature and Regional Production,” Hsuan L. Hsu offers an “alternative model of geographical affect that posits an extension of care outward from a local hearth to global cosmos” (36). Exploring the connection between Norris’s regionalist interest and his professed “larger view” of life, Hsu argues that Norris “inserts regionalist aesthetics into an emotionally charged epic of globalization and dramatizes how imperialism and international commerce contribute to the ongoing transformation of a particular wheat growing region” (44). Unlike a typical regionalist perspective that surveys the scene of transformation from a nostalgic vantage point, Norris’s perspective on “imperialism and international commerce,” however, is celebratory and overtly utopian. Moreover, The Octopus stages the exclusionary nationhood predicated on Anglo-Saxon masculinity at home as a prelude to U.S. imperial interventions abroad.

As a transnational commodity of exchange, the wheat brings the globe within the grid of a unified system of production, distribution, and consumption. Harran Derrick’s ranch office, with its network of efficient communication, is multiply-linked to national and international business centers; being a center controlling its peripheries, the office of Los Muertos Ranch receives news of “fluctuations in the price of the world’s crop” and about the “fate of nations” ( 54). Linked to a system of exchange, local happenings become meaningful within the broader context of transnational trade and commerce:

The ranch became merely the part of the whole, a unit in the vast

agglomeration of wheat land the whole world round, feeling the effects of causes thousands of miles distant—a drought on the prairies of Dakota, a rain on the plains of India, a frost on the Russian steppes, a hot wind on the Ilanos of Argentine. (54)

The wheat represents a powerful force, destined to circumnavigate the globe. In this “vast and terrible” drama of production and supply, “tiny squabbles” and “small bustle of mankind” remain insignificant before the “indifferent, gigantic, resistless” movement of the wheat that follows the course of the empire (448). The apocalyptic vision of the wheat—bursting open in the Asia-Pacific—transfers the lost power of individual agency onto a benevolent global commodity, the “Nourisher of the Nations” (Pit 73).

Interestingly though, the movement of wheat, “a vast flood from the West to East,” follows the course of the expanding nation itself (73). As the narrator piles on epic similes to represent the globalizing power of the wheat, the metaphoric signification takes over the realistic description. Devoid of any mediating agency of human labor, the story of wheat production takes the form of an autotelic text and its narrative trajectories encompass a vast global reach, from Los Muertos to the Himalayas.

As much as Presley values the “larger view” of life and adapts a global perspective on local events, he surrenders his aesthetic rebellion against the capital in the interest of benevolent utilitarianism, “the greatest good to the greatest numbers” (651). His aesthetic education, an idealistic blend of transcendental optimism and capitalistic imperialism, however, comes from two highly unlikely sources—Vanamee, the belated romanticist, and Cedarquist, the capitalist. In this conflict between the ranchers and the Railroad for the control of land, Vanamee, a Native American, represents the missing

link. He is also a seasonal laborer, belonging to a class surprisingly written off in a novel about California agribusiness. During the rise of large-scale farming in California, petty farmers lost their land holdings and turned into seasonal laborers. Vanamee's presence reminds of the systematic eraser of an important labor force in The Octopus, thus hollowing out the "socialistic" content of Presley's oppositional art. Further, Vanamee's transcendental optimism provides a greater philosophical perspective as he sublimates his obsessive personal grief in the cosmic metaphor of wheat. After years of relentless grieving over the death of his beloved Angéle, whose memory imposes upon him a periodic nomadic sojourn to the ranching community of the San Joaquin Valley, he finally experiences Angéle's heavenly presence in the wheat. As he contemplates the significance of this mystic experience, he realizes that—

There was the lesson. Angéle was not the symbol, but the *proof* of immortality. The seed dying, rotting and corrupting in the earth; rising again in life unconquerable, and in immaculate purity —Angéle dying as she gave birth to her little daughter, life springing from her death —pure unconquerable, coming forth from the defiled. (393)

Through Angéle's spiritual presence, he sees what the ranchers like Magnus Derrick fail to see: the amoral cosmic principle that the wheat embodies. The ranchers' attempt to possess and monopolize the wheat leads them to a collision course against an equally powerful social force, the Railroad.

In Cedarquist's materialist vision, the wheat assumes a global dimension. For him, re-channeling the flow of wheat from Europe to Asia also means setting the course of the empire in the proper perspective: "For years we have been sending our wheat from

East to West, from California to Europe. But time will come when we must send it from West to East. We must march with the course of empire, not against it” (306). Through Cedarquist’s project, Magnus Derrick experiences an epiphany of “the whole East opening, disintegrating before the Anglo-Saxons” (319). The imperialistic prophesy of “the East conquered” inscribes the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny. The vision of “empire rolling westward, [and] finally arriving at its starting point, the vague, mysterious Orient,” offers for the embattled ranchers a revolutionary cause as “important as the discovery of America” (319). The conflicting construction of the local as a space of exclusionary nationalism and the Asia-Pacific a site of expanding national frontiers reveals the ideological slippage—a shift from domestically forged normative nationhood to a transnationally imagined U.S. hegemony abroad—centrally located in nineteenth-century U.S. national narratives.

By appropriating the orientalist imagery of “mysterious East,” Norris constructs the Asia-Pacific as a site of imperialistic desire. In the projection of Asiatic markets, Magnus Derrick not only envisions “big chances” for “big business,” but he also imagines the East as a feminine and passive entity. From this ideological perspective, the wheat becomes not only a trade product, forging mutually beneficial relations but a means of extending U.S. hegemony in the Asia-Pacific. As Presley boards the ship, *Swanhilda*, bound to Calcutta, he carries Cedarquist’s message:

Tell him [the hungry Hindoo] ‘we’re coming, Father Abraham, a hundred thousand more.’ Tell the men of the East to look out for the men of the West. The irrepressible Yank is knocking at the doors of their temples and he will want to sell ’em carpet-sweepers for their harems and electric light

plants for their temple shrines. (648)

In a comic blend of sexual impulse with an overtly missionary, militaristic and mercantilist intent, Cedarquist echoes Magnus's vision of the conquest of the East. The imagery of an "irrepressible Yank," armed with the trade goods, "knocking at the doors of temples" foretells the coming of Western modernity, illuminating the darkness of harems and temple shrines with the "electric light," a symbol of western technology. The encounter of Western modernity with the dark and mysterious East, however, takes place not in the markets but in the secluded space of "harems," the familiar site of Western sexual fantasy.

The contradictory representation of the Orient, both as a site of romance as well as a location of hunger and deprivation, makes Norris's imperialistic project of geo-aestheticism possible. In the novel's libidinal economy, the Orient reappears as a feminine beauty. In his mystic dream, Vanamee longs for Angèle's orientalized body. He is enamored by "the reflection of the profound dark blue of her eyes, perplexing, heavy-lidded, almond-shaped, Oriental lips, with their almost Egyptian fullness" (133). Since Vanamee occupies a racial borderline—"his hair was very black" and "his face was brown like an Indian's" (32)—the story of his lost romance with an oriental beauty projects a primitivistic fantasy of putatively "uncivilized" and "barbaric" simplicity; Vanamee's love was "untouched by civilization, spontaneous as the growth of trees" (36). Similarly, Annixter and Hilma's idyllic reconciliation conjures up a scene from a "deserted Japanese pleasure house," where the couple is seen wiping "each other's eyes like two children" (405). In the masculinist world of The Octopus, such intimate romantic encounters substitute for the characters' sexual fantasies about oriental harems and

pleasure houses.

Alternatively though, the novel constructs an Orient that is on the verge of starvation. Norris frequently refers to the Indian famine of 1897 in The Octopus. From the perspective of the ranchers, the Railroad stood between “the fecund [valley of] San Joaquin, reeking with fruitfulness” and “the millions of Asia crowding toward the verge of starvation” (322). The villainous agency of the Railroad, symptomatically represented by S. Behrman’s “great stomach” (66), assumes the sinister propensity, obstructing the movement of food to “the famished bellies of the whole world of the Orient” (322). It is not the sympathetic extension of humanitarian values but the global drama of “supply and demand of wheat” that guarantees “centrifugal power” of the metropolises informs the imperative of feeding the hungry crowds of India:

Because of some sudden eddy spinning outward from the middle of its [pit’s] turmoil, a dozen bourses of continental Europe clamored with panic, a dozen Old-World banks, firm as the established hills, trembled and vibrated. . . . Or another channel filled, and the starved moujik of the steppes and the hunger-shrunken coolie of the Ganges’ watershed fed suddenly fat and made thank offering before ikon [sic] and idol. (Pit 72-73)

The wheat integrates the entire world into a unified network of commodity exchange with the United States at the center. The famine in India at the turn of the century was a byproduct of British colonial policies, especially the redistribution of land that eradicated the traditional system of support. The envisioned project of rescuing millions of “hungry Hindus” by capturing Asiatic markets, in fact, produces a double irony of imperialism



that literally and figuratively disempowers the Asiatics twice.

Thus, by projecting the Asia-Pacific as untapped market for American products in his most ambitious novel, The Octopus, Norris lays bare a doubly oriented national imaginary. In the midst of financial crisis at home, precipitated by the conflicting monopolistic interests of the ranchers and the Railroad, The Octopus outlines a futuristic course of the nation as a hegemonic a global power. In doing so, however, Norris constructs a unified, homogeneous nation, exclusively predicated on the resurgent Anglo-Saxon masculinity. Moreover, an aesthetic project of imperial desire reconciles the built-in narrative contradiction, the simultaneous representation of dystopian reality at home and the utopian projection of the Asia-Pacific as the nation's imperialistic outpost.

The U.S.-Spanish War and the direct involvement of the United States in the Philippines at the turn of the century also led to an open cultural debate over U.S. imperialism. The prominent writers and intellectuals, including William Dean Howells, Mark Twain, Bishop Henry Porter, and Andrew Carnegie, critiqued the U.S. government's imperialistic ambition. In particular, Mark Twain's writings during this period not only challenge U.S. imperialism in the Asia-Pacific, but they also convey a deep sense of disillusionment with the failed promise of Western interventions in Asia and Africa. Twain's writings, especially his Letters from Hawai'i and Following the Equator, embody the voice and the vision of a writer who, by the end of the century, emerged as a champion of anti-imperialistic cause, thus revising his own early, favorable views of empire as a benevolent institution.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **“A Connecticut Yankee” in the Court of Empire: The Orient, Race, and Empire in**

#### **Mark Twain’s Letters from Hawaii and Following the Equator**

In its issue of 22 December 1900, the New York Commercial Advertiser published a caricature entitled “Mark Twain and his Empire: A Laughing World.” As if it were a fitting tribute to the aging humorist’s embattled image of an anti-imperialistic crusader, the sketch projects Mark Twain standing on the globe, his silver hair streaked with dark shadows flowing in the air and his quizzical eyes looking far out onto the horizon. The globe drawn as a laughing human figure, while representing Twain’s international audience, stands out against Twain’s transcendent gaze, implying that his anti-imperialism at home was somehow out of place with the “empire of humor” he had created globally. The sharp distinction between the laughing world and Twain’s serious looking persona in the sketch represents much of the response Twain’s anti-imperialism received at the turn of the century. Like the Commercial, critics of Twain’s anti-imperialism frequently exploited his humorist persona to undermine the seriousness of his anti-imperialistic writing. When Twain made his anti-imperialistic stand unequivocally clear and upbraided U.S. government for its imperialistic involvement in the Philippines in essays such as “To a Person Sitting in Darkness” and “King Leopold’s Soliloquy,” he received a series of retorts from pro-imperialist publications. Such publications often dismissed his critique of U.S. policy in the Philippines as a humorist’s misguided gaffe, thus being unworthy of serious attention. The New York Sun, a staunch supporter of U.S. involvement in the Philippines, countered Twain’s views by portraying him as a “misguided humorist.” The Sun cautioned readers for taking Twain’s political

views seriously, stating that he was “in a state of mortifying intoxication from an over-draught of seriousness, something for which his head has not been hardened” (qtd. in Zwick xxxvii). Although the criticism of Twain’s anti-imperialism was shaped by the highly polarized political climate of the time when the media were divided into pro and anti-imperialistic camps, Twain’s position on empire merits critical scrutiny and as such forces us to rethink not only imperialism but also challenging the postcolonial critique of empire.

When studied along with his views on race, the Orient, and international politics, Twain’s position on imperial and colonial relations resists the binary that posits anti-imperialism as diametrically opposed to imperialism. In fact, critical attention to Twain’s writings on Euro-American imperialism, race relations, and transnational cultural contacts reveals conceptual inconsistencies, ruptures, and contradictions. While in Hawai’i as a young journalist, for instance, he approved of “the wonderful benefits conferred upon this people [Hawai’ians] by the missionaries” and marveled at the blessing of “civilization so prominent, so palpable, and so unquestionable” (Letters from Hawaii 54). Years later, he castigated Western missionaries in Ceylon [Sri Lanka] for westernizing the Orient. The very sight of native girls, dressed in western attires and educated in mission schools in Colombo, produced “grating dissonance” in the Oriental “fairylane and paradise” of his dream (FTE 2:8-9). He found the native’s adaption of western customs and mannerisms a poor mimicry that appeared “ugly, barbarous, [and] destitute of taste” (FTE 2:9). In South Africa, he lambasted Cecil Rhodes’s role in suppressing the Boers as imperial “schemes” to turn the whole of South Africa into “an imposing Commonwealth or empire under the shadow of . . . British flag” (FTE 2: 294);

and yet, he lauded British rule in India for its “distinguished administrative ability, reinforced by just and liberal laws” (FTE 2:172), especially at a time when Indian nationalism was taking momentum against British rule. Thus, Twain’s ambivalent attitude toward Euro-American imperialism and his often-contradictory critique of imperialism raise important questions: what are the conceptual or ideological bases of Twain’s critique of imperialism? How far did his views on race and the Orient inform his attitude toward Euro-American imperialism? More importantly, how do Twain’s writings on transnational and global formations of colonial and imperial relations challenge or complicate the postcolonial critique of empire?

By focusing on Twain’s Letters from Hawaii (1866) and Following the Equator (1897), the present chapter demonstrates that Twain’s anti-imperialism is directed toward the *means* of imperial subjugation rather than imperialism itself. As a humanist, Twain stood for human dignity and shunned the kind of violence he observed in the Philippines. Yet he rarely questioned the “benevolence” that imperialism promised to confer to the colonized. His critique of colonial violence gives away to an unwavering belief in imperialism’s mission of civilization and produces what Renato Rosaldo terms the “imperialistic nostalgia,” a form of imperialist apology that uses “putatively static savage societies” as points of reference to map out the progressive changes taking place under the ideologically constructed mission of “white man’s burden.” As such, Mark Twain’s disillusionment over imperialism emanates from a profound sense of “mission gone wrong,” and, in his critique of U.S. foreign policy in the Philippines, he shows more interest in recuperating American republican values than critiquing imperialism as a form of ideology. While denouncing Western high-handedness toward the colonized, he

advocates benevolent imperialism that calls for spreading the “blessings of civilization” and democracies in “savage” societies.

### **Imagined Paradise and Real Savages: The Hawai’ian Hangover**

Upon Twain’s arrival to the United States, the New York Herald, in its issue of 15 October 1900, published an interview entitled “Mark Twain Home: An Anti-Imperialist.” This was also the moment when Twain openly declared being an “anti-imperialist” and began interactions with the members of the Anti-Imperialistic League.<sup>1</sup> Yet, in the same interview, he recalls the moment of leaving the North-American shores for the two-year long lecturing tour of Asian, Eurasian, and African countries as *the time* when he was a “red hot imperialist” and wanted “the American eagle to go screaming into the Pacific,”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anti-Imperialist League (1898-1910) was initially formed by a group of prominent Boston citizens with a number of branches across the nation. Mark Twain’s official membership to the League is relatively late discovery. William M. Gobson’s 1947 article, the first extensive study of Twain’s anti-imperialism, does not mention his association with the League. It appears that Twain’s involvement in the League began sometime after his return from Europe in October 1900. In the introduction to Mark Twain’s Weapon of Satire, a collection of Twain’s anti-imperialistic writings, Jim Zwick mentions that one of Twain’s “first actions related to the League was a December 3, 1900, letter asking for Grover Cleveland’s advice on how to bring the Treaty of Paris before the Supreme Court” (xxi). He was formally invited to be a Vice President of the League of New York in January 3, 1901. For details of Twain’s association with the League, see Jim Zwick, “‘Prodigality Endowed with Sympathy for the Cause’: Mark Twain’s Involvement with the Anti-Imperialist League,” Mark Twain Journal 32.1 (1994): 3-26. Zwick’s title quotes Twain’s letter of January 3, 1901 to E. W. Ordway, in which he replied to the invitation saying “Yes, I will be glad to be a Vice President of the League, a useless because non-laboring one, but prodigality endowed with the sympathy for the cause” (qtd. in Zwick xxii). I will come to this point at end of the chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Published in 1897, Following the Equator records Twain’s impressions of Afro-Asian, Eurasian, and Caribbean countries—Australia, New Zealand, India, Ceylon, South Africa, Fiji, and Mauritius—countries, which were part of the imperial dominions. As part of a well-planned undertaking, primarily envisioned by Twain’s friend, Henry Huttleston Rogers, Vice President of Standard Oil, the much publicized World tour of the Clemenses began from Elmira, New York, after the Clemenses arrived there on 18 May 1895 from their brief sojourn to Europe. The North-American segment of the tour began in Cleveland and ended two months later in Victoria, British Columbia. All together, Twain gave some 23 lectures, which he preferred to call readings, to enthusiastic audience. The Clemenses’s two-year-long worldtour began on 23 August 1895, the day they left Victoria for Australia. The tour included scheduled lectures in different cities in Australia, New Zealand, India, Ceylon, and South Africa. On the way to Australia, the Clemenses stopped in the Island of Fiji, Mauritius, and Ceylon as well. Despite chronic health issues and cancelled schedules due to travel delays, Twain gave approximately one hundred six performances to international audiences in Australia, New Zealand, India, and South Africa. He completed the tour of the world on 15 July 1896 in South Africa and sailed on *Norhan Castle* for Southampton, where he finished Following the Equator the following year. Although Following the Equator consists of Twain’s most pronounced views on colonial and imperial relations from a transnational perspective, it has escaped

in hope of setting “a miniature of the American constitution afloat in the Pacific” (“Mark Twain Home” 5). Quite interestingly, Twain highlights the departure from and the arrival at the United States as two significant points in his career that separate his imperialistic position from that of an anti-imperialistic one. In doing so, he underscores the importance of travel writings, especially published at the turn of the century, in understanding his views on Euro-American imperialism. My primary focus on Following the Equator in part is to extend the metaphor of temporality, of departure and arrival, to examine the transitionality of Twain’s ideological transformation. In this neatly drawn temporality punctuated by departure and arrival, however, there is memory of prior journeys. It is momentous that on the eve of departure from the shores of North America, Twain also recalls his Hawai’ian days.

Twain’s memories of Hawai’ian days on the eve of his celebrated travel of the world epitomize the ambivalent mode of thinking. Imbued with nostalgia and disillusionment, the Hawai’ian imaginary continues to shape his views on imperial relations, racial differences, and his attitude toward Euro-American imperialism. While waiting on board the *Warrismoo*,<sup>3</sup> a mile away from Honolulu, he expresses frustration about not being able to visit the “paradise” he was “longing all those years to see again” (1: 24). Twain’s reminiscences of and longings for Hawai’i demonstrate the centrality of the Hawai’ian imaginary in his writings, especially those that explore the transnational experience of border-crossing and colonial/imperial relations. The Hawai’ian experience

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serious critical scrutiny despite a growing body of scholarship on Twain’s travel writing. For a complete itinerary of Twain’s travel and lecture schedules, see “Appendix: Samuel S. Clemens’s Itinerary, World Lecture Tour” in Robert Cooper, Around the World with Mark Twain (New York: Arcade, 2000) 320-25.

<sup>3</sup> On the way to Australia, he had planned to lecture in Honolulu. A rumor about cholera outbreak forced him to cancel the lecture as the Hawai’ian authorities had imposed quarantine, making it impossible for him to deliver the lecture. See Following the Equator, 1:20-24.

significantly influenced his literary career, be it fiction writing, lecture performances, or travel narratives.<sup>4</sup> In “Imperial Triangle: Mark Twain’s Foreign Affairs,” Amy Kaplan examines the constitutive role of Hawai’i in the making of an “American Mark Twain.” In particular, she demonstrates how Twain’s use of Hawai’i as a cultural and intellectual capital, especially in his triangulation of exotic space and imperial desire in lectures, established his reputation as an expert on Hawai’ian cultures and peoples (238-39). From the position of a “frontier white man,” as Kaplan suggests, Twain could position himself as an insider within the discourse of Euro-American imperial formations. Although Kaplan is more interested in examining the contribution of the Hawai’ian imaginary in the formation of Twain’s national identity, it is equally pertinent to examine the importance of Hawai’i in mapping out his international career as an American humorist. Literally, the lecturing career that began as an “expert” on Hawai’i in 1866 culminates with the lecturing tour of the world in 1896. Moreover, the kind of perspectives on racial and cultural differences that Twain developed during his Hawai’ian sojourn, as I demonstrate in the latter section of this chapter, continue to inform the representation of differences in Following the Equator, the final travel book he wrote about the world-tour.

Twain’s recollection of Hawai’i as a “paradise,” however, explains the positionality and function of the itinerant subject who is under constant pressure of supplementing the inadequate act of witnessing. In “Travel and Unsettlement: Freud in

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<sup>4</sup> Twain published twenty-five letters in the Sacramento Union, gave series of lectures on the Sandwich Islands between 1866 and 1873, and used his Hawai’ian experience in Roughing It (1872) to construct some fifteen chapters. In Following the Equator, he devoted one chapter on Hawai’i that consists of his reflection over the political and cultural history of Hawai’i. Throughout Following the Equator, Twain uses the figure of a “Kanaka man” as a central image to think about colonial relations and to question the binary between “civilization” and “savagery.” In a letter to William Dean Howells, dated 7 January 1884, Twain also mentions his intention of writing a book on Bill Ragsdale, the interpreter of Hawai’ian Parliament, who died in self-exile in the leper colony. See Mark Twain-Howells Letters: The Correspondences of Samuel L. Clemens and William Dean Howells, 1872-1910, eds. Henry Nash Smith and William M. Godson (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1960) 378.

Vacation,” Brian Musgrove offers an alternative model to a postcolonial approach to travel-writing that he hopes will counter the tendency in the postcolonial critique of Western travelogues to uncritically conflate empire with travel writing. By situating subjectivity at the center of the study of travel-writing, he argues, one can effectively go beyond a politically charged postcolonial perspective that reads travel narratives “either as a version of Freud’s ‘instinct of destruction’—an aggressive agency that destroys the ecology of the otherness—or an eroticization of the foreign, desire without normal limits, which terminates in rape and exploitation on personal and cultural scales” (31). In rejecting the postcolonial critique of travel-writing as an ideologically eschewed practice, Musgrove anticipates the inevitability of the “political” that he hopes to bypass when he contends that a “[t]ravel text always supplements the insufficient act of ‘witnessing’ with epistemological reflection” (32). It would be rather simplistic to assume that a traveler’s reflection on the cultural encounter to be a “purely” subjective one and that the “epistemological reflection” as a necessary supplement can always be without any form of cultural politics of its own. In fact, it is the subject’s reflective supplement in the forms of prior assumptions, beliefs, and discursive digressions that make an unmediated form of subjectivity a theoretical impossibility.

Twain’s travel writings are suffused with what Musgrove calls an “epistemological reflection.” Contrary to Musgrove’s notion of psychic unraveling, Twain’s supplemental reflections take the form of an epistemological validation mostly derived from texts produced by missionaries and colonial bureaucrats, thereby relegating the witnessed presence to a timeless past. For instance, Twain recalls Hawai’i as a “paradise,” and yet in the next line, he reveals that the paradise of his reminiscences is



not what he witnessed forty years ago in Hawai'i. Of all the experiences, he recalls how, as an American tourist, he "used to ride up to it [Nuuanu Valley] on horseback in those days [of paradise] . . . and branch off and gather bones in a sandy region where one of the first Kamehameha's battles was fought" (1: 25-26). Although seemingly an innocent pursuit of a typical tourist, for him, the "bones" reminded him of the old time "savage warfare," producing a discord between the imagined paradise and the spectral presence of a past. In a way, the "bones" resurrect the past to supplement the present act of "witnessing" so that the modernity's imprints can be measured against the putatively static cultures. As the relics of barbaric past, the "bones" also lead him to revisit the history of Hawai'i, to the time of Captain Cook's arrival in 1777. He humorously depicts Kamehameha, the first, as a "remarkable man for a savage," who "sold to his savages the foreign stuffs and tools and utensils which came back in ships, and started the march of civilization" (1:26). Twain's praise of Kamehameha's efforts at modernizing the Islands, however, is imbued with irony. Intended for a humorous effect, the qualification—"for a savage"—denies Kamehameha the historical agency of progress. The Hawai'ian King's idea of "enlarging his sphere of influence," in Twain's views, also represents the modern idea of imperial conquests, that is, "robbing your neighbor—for your neighbor's benefit" exemplified in the great theater of benevolences is Africa" (1:26). Twain's use of Kamehameha's early warfare with the neighboring kingdoms and subsequent expansion of his kingdom as an example of modern instance of imperialism manifested in South Africa obliterates the contemporary political situation in Hawai'i. Alternatively, it naturalizes modern imperial formations as part of the universal human impulse.

It is also noteworthy that while Twain was waiting on board the *Warrismoo*, Hawai'i's reigning monarch, Queen Liliuokalani, whom Twain met in 1866, was languishing in the prison. Surprisingly, Twain does not mention the contemporary events taking place in Hawai'i, thus creating a mythic "paradise" peopled by "savages" and blundering monarchs, who, in an attempt to mimic the rational order of modern "civilization," unwittingly paved the way for American missionaries, who "repaired the defect" (1:29). Thirty years after his travel to Hawai'i, Twain's reevaluation of the work of American missionaries in Hawai'i lacks the glowing admiration he had of American missionaries as the harbingers of modernity. Nevertheless, he endows them with the agency of progress and change that he denies to Hawai'ian native kings—Kamehameha and his successors, namely Liholiho.

The contrastive images of the paradisiacal retreat and the barbaric culture that inform Twain's recollection of Hawai'i reveal his ambivalence toward Hawai'i and its peoples. This ambivalence, as Stephen H. Sumida contends, embody "a complex pastoral view, masked, however, by the allure of the very clichés Twain first parodied, then pondered, yet failed to subvert in a fully consistent way" (587). In view of Twain's ambivalent representation of Hawai'i, Sumida's assessment is accurate. But, it is also pertinent to interrogate what Twain's reluctance to utilize the subversive potential of a parody tells us about his position on transnational cultural encounters. The important thing to note about his representation of Hawai'i is that his romanticized views of non-western cultures and societies do not take a primitivistic position,<sup>5</sup> a position that extols primitive cultures and societies as a way of critiquing the modernized industrial societies.

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<sup>5</sup> I am using the tem "primitivistic" in a broader sense to imply the Western mode of representation that portray and glorify the traditional societies for their irrationality, simplicity of mind, and supposed closeness to nature.

As a result, Twain's writings about cultural differences neither fully glorify the primitive societies nor offer an adequate critique of Western interventions in such societies.

Twain's representation of putatively primitive or oriental societies in his travel writings, in fact, is mediated by the narrative authority he appropriates from the orientalist paradigm composed of missionary accounts, oriental tales, and reportage of colonial bureaucracy. He employs prior discursive paradigms to couch his epistemological reflection on cultural encounters, thereby re-inscribing the very discourses of representation that he parodies. As a result, while he is critical of the colonial brutality and violence against the natives, as expressed in his critique of U.S. intervention in the Philippines, he also produces colonial complicity in the advocacy of Western interventions as forms of humanistic benevolence. For instance, the "heathens and savages" who populate his Letters from Hawai'i, are already textualized constructions of Hawai'ian people in missionary writings that promoted Hawai'ian imaginary in western culture. As a young journalist, Twain had personal acquaintances with prominent native Hawai'ians. He mentions witnessing the parliamentary proceeding and the dignified arrival of the king, Kamehameha IV, in the Hawai'ian parliament. To him, the king appeared to be a "man of good sense and excellent education," possessing an "extended knowledge of business" (107). The king's dignified presence, however, also reminds him of the king's father, necessitating a textual journey back to the past. In his comments on Kamehameha's father, Twain writes:

This man, naked as the day he was born, and war club and spear in his hand, has charged at the hordes of savages against other hordes of savages far back in the past, and reveled in slaughter and carnage; has worshipped

wooden images on his bended knees; has seen hundreds of his race offered up in heathen temples as sacrifices to hideous idols, at a time when no missionary's foot had ever pressed this soil, and he had never heard of the white man's god. (Letters from Hawai'i 108)<sup>6</sup>

Twain's recourse to the past, to the already available textualized constructions of Hawai'ians to understand what he witnesses as a traveler, exemplifies the crisis centrally located in the western discourse of representation. Faced with the changed and seemingly incomprehensible present, the traveling subject takes a textual journey back to the remote past and supplements the "lack" the subject experiences in the very act of witnessing by appropriating the prior forms of representation. In his influential Orientalism, Said argues that Western representation of distant cultures and peoples is permeated by what he terms the "textual attitude," a form of fallacious assumption that "the swarming, unpredictable, and problematic mess in which human beings live can be understood on the basis of what books—texts—say" (93). Such textual attitude, according to Said, helps transform the unpredictable and fluid reality of a human society into homogenous data or concepts that can be defined, controlled, and ruled. Said offers a valuable insight into a travelling subject's use of already available categories and forms of knowledge to process the "reality" it confronts. The role of such discursive complicity, however, cannot necessarily be limited to the Will to knowledge; the use of prior forms of discourses also helps recreate a past that denies the present the very agency of change. As exemplified in his

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<sup>6</sup> In the Letters and later on, in his lectures, Twain used various missionary writings about Hawai'i. Among them he used James Jackson Jarvis's History of the Hawai'ian or Sandwich Islands (1843) most thoroughly. In his letter to Samuel C. Damon, dated July 19, 1866, Twain mentions Jarvis's book, "I return herewith the book I borrowed, with many thanks for its use and for all your kindness. I 'cabbage' it by strong arm, for fear you might refuse to part with it if I asked you. This is a case of military necessity and is therefore admissible. The honesty of the transaction may be doubtful, but the policy of it is sound—sound as the foundation upon which the imperial greatness of America rests."

Letters from Hawai'i, the use of already existing forms of knowledge exceeds Western conventions of representing the others. Twain's conjuration of "hordes of savages," while witnessing the Hawai'ian parliamentary procedure, an epitome of western modernity, indicates that the itinerant subject not only makes use of prior textual formations to represent the witnessed present but also to recreate a mythic past. Far from being an act of romantic memorializing, the past functions as a stable point of reference against which the progressive changes brought in by the modernity are not only measured but also justified as benevolent forms of western interventions.

Twain arrived in Hawai'i as a reporter of the Sacramento Union with an objective of accessing the feasibility for investment in sugar plantations and shipping trades for the California-based capitalists. Therefore, the discourse of the commercial version of Manifest Destiny informs his representation of Hawai'i and its peoples. Consequently, his anthropological and cultural interest in Hawai'i reinscribes the emergent discourse of U.S. imperial ambition that feeds on the discursive strategies of orientaling the Asia-Pacific as the nation's new frontier. In the letter of 10 September 1866, Twain argues for the importance of Hawai'i in promoting U.S. mercantilist interests in the Asia-Pacific. Echoing Thomas Hart Benton's rhetoric of "North American road to India" that Benton employed to underscore the urgency of annexing California to the Union as a prelude to U.S. commercial empire in the Pacific, Twain writes:

To America it has been vouchsafed to materialize the vision, and realize the dream of centuries, of the enthusiasts of the Old World. We have found the true North-West passage—we have found the true and only direct route to the bursting coffers of 'Ormus and Ind'—to the enchanted

land whose mere drippings, in the ages that are gone, enriched and aggrandized ancient Venice, first, then Portugal, Holland, and in our own time, England—and each in succession they longed and sought for the fountainhead of this vast Oriental wealth, and sought in vain. The path was hidden to them, but we have found it over the waves of the Pacific, and American enterprise will penetrate to the heart and center of its horded treasures, its imperial affluence. . . . California has got the world where it must pay tribute to her. She is about to appointed to preside over almost the exclusive trade of 450 million people. . . . (Letters from Hawaii 274)

Although no longer an original argument by the 1860s, Twain's emphasis on the importance of Hawai'i as a gateway to Asiatic trade demonstrates the significance of the Pacific imaginary in the formation of U.S. national narratives. While California occasioned the orientalist construction of Asia-Pacific in the 1840s and provided the necessary rationale for Westerly expansion for the nation, precisely because of its geographic and cultural proximity to the Asia-Pacific, Hawai'i assumed a new currency in the U.S. imperial discourse. Just as the expansionists presented California as a contest between European empires and democratic America, Twain argues for U.S. presence in Hawai'i as an effective way of loosening "French and English grip closing around" the Island (12).

His conviction about the commercial significance of Hawai'i for U.S. control of the Asia-Pacific, however, is based on the pragmatic appraisal of the progress already made by American missionaries in the Islands in promoting American republican values. In his letters of 13 June and 1 July of 1866, he extensively covered a month-long

mourning of the death of Princess Victoria Kaahumanu with vignettes of anthropological details of royal funeral procession and Hawai’ian death rituals. Although he showed fascination toward elaborate royal ceremonies and rituals, he disapproved “heathen” and “lascivious” practices that undermined the republican values that the American missionaries had planted in the Islands (170). In particular, Twain criticizes Bishop Staley for reviving the old heathen way of ceremonial and ritualistic life in Hawai’i. Referring to the work of Bishop Staley at the Royal Hawai’ian Established Reformed Catholic Church, Twain accused him of “throwing down gauntlet of defiance before a high English civilization” and challenging a “band of stern, tenacious, unyielding, tireless, industrious, devoted old Puritan knights” (MLH 171). Noticeable is his recasting of the discourse of “Puritan errand” to describe the work of American missionaries in Hawai’i. It shows that he was concerned not only in protecting the “civilization” planted by American missionaries, but it also reveals a political unconsciousness that positions Hawai’i within the foundational narrative of U.S. nationhood. Moreover, Twain exhibits a nationalist fervor in situating Hawai’i at the center of the Euro-American power struggle. Twain’s apathy toward Bishop Staley is directed at his connection with the French establishment:

He [Bishop Staley] is fighting with good nerve, but his side is weak. The moneyed strength of these islands—their agriculture, their commerce, their mercantile affairs—is in the hands of Americans—republicans; the religious power of the country is wielded by Americans-republicans; the whole people [sic] are saturated with the spirit of democratic Puritanism, and they are republicans. (172-73)

The scathing critique of Bishop Staley's attempt to revive Catholicism in Hawai'i derives its logical force from the perceived danger of Staley's corroboration with the royal "pomp and ceremony," thus posing a menace to democratic values propagated by American missionaries. Twain's admiration of American missionaries in the Islands is based on their success in cultivating religious, social, and commercial culture largely informed by what he terms the "democratic Puritanism." But, especially because of French connection with the catholic missions in Hawai'i, he also utilizes the nationalist rhetoric that differentiates American democratic values from Old World imperialism.

Immediately after his arrival at Honolulu, Twain underscored the importance of greater U.S. presence in the Islands. He believed that the United States, despite its geographical proximity to Hawai'i, was still lagging behind the rival European powers in extending their sphere of influence over the Islands. In the letter of 19 March 1866, Twain urged the California-based shipping companies to send faster streamers in Hawai'i so that they would help "populate these islands with Americans, and loosen that French and English grip" over the Sandwich Islands (12). The plea, however, was not for momentary trade supremacy. In the same letter, he argued that the increasing U.S. presence in Hawai'i would "result in a contest before many years as to which of the two [the United States and Britain] shall seize and hold them" (12). In the light of the future political development in Hawai'i that would lead to the declaration of republic, Twain's jingoistic rhetoric, however, proved to be a prescient analysis of the contemporary political situation in Hawai'i. Twain's progressive position, however, raises an important question: why does Twain's representation of Hawai'i stop short of dismantling the pervasive dichotomy between "civilization" and "savagery" so central to the



representation of Hawai'i in Euro-American imagination? More importantly, what does Twain's contradictory representation of Hawai'i tell us about the politics of representing ethnic others in nineteenth-century travel narratives?

As Twain's travel account of Hawai'i suggests, the narrative necessitates a complex process of discursive mediation to negotiate expectations of the contemporary readers, familiar with the dominant form of Euro-American imagination about Hawai'i. That is, the authorial voice in a process of establishing the narrative authority as a cultural expert takes recourse to prior forms of textual representations. Such textual paradigms are often ideologically motivated acts of supplementarity and set up a dialectical tension between empirical observation and the already conceptualized forms of knowledge. During his four-month sojourn to Hawai'i, for instance, Twain observed the progressive transformation of the Sandwich Islands from an imagined "tropical paradise" into a commercial hub with its booming shipping business and a flourishing sugar industry; it already boasted of a parliamentary political system and more importantly, Christianity.<sup>7</sup> And yet, the cultural image of Hawai'i that he presents to the reader is that of the time of Kamehameha, the great, of "savage" warfare, heathenism, and of "lascivious hula-hula," which, in his own observation, was virtually non-existent. Upon his arrival at Honolulu, the first thing that fascinated Twain was the "music of six different church-bells, which sent out mellow tones far and wide, over the valleys" (26). The music, however, also reminds him of how those valleys and hills were "peopled by naked savages, thundering barbarians" and "pagan temples where human sacrifices were daily offered up to hideous

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<sup>7</sup> In the letter of 10 September 1866, Twain presents a detailed data on Hawai'i's sugar industry under the heading "Progress of the Island's Production" showing comparative advantage of Hawai'i's sugar production over Louisiana in term of productivity and labor cost. See Mark Twain's Letters from Hawaii, ed. A Grove Day (New York: Appleton Century, 1966) 257-75.

idols” (26). This gap between the conjured mythic past and the witnessed present not only justifies the Western intervention in distant cultures, but it also constructs Hawai’i as part of the U.S. national imaginary.

While constructing Hawai’i as a next commercial frontier of California, Twain participates in the mid-century discourse of the Manifest Destiny and gives continuity to the expansionist argument of the 1840s, especially the notion that the newly acquired Pacific states has a unique responsibility of spreading American “civilization” in the Asia-Pacific. However, Twain shows a more pragmatic understanding of the issue than reiterating the seemingly utopian vision of the limitless possibility of “Asiatic trade.” In a letter directly addressed to California-based capitalists, he presents a commercial scheme for the success of capital investment in Hawai’i. He proposed that U.S. businesses in Hawai’i should employ transnational labor, the “Asiatic coolies,” for the efficient production of sugar in Hawai’i. He reminds the prospective investors in California of how the “coolie labor” has made its “superior claims in your great mining, manufacturing, and public improvement corporations” and how it can be replicated in Hawai’ian plantations (271). He believed that the employment of “Chinese coolies” would reduce the cost of production, as the employers would have to “pay five dollars instead of paying eighty to hundred dollars a month” (271). In his appraisal of the cost benefit of employing immigrant laborers, Twain also anticipates its likely effects on white laborers, an issue that would become the most contentious one in decades to come, leading to the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act. From the position of an authority, he argues, “The sooner California adapts coolie labor, the better it will be for her” (271). In defense of the proposal, he sets a hierarchy between “Asiatic coolies” and white laborers

and envisions a harmonious economic solidarity that, instead of cheapening the white labor, would grant white laborers the position of power and relieve them from the inhuman drudgery of labor. The “Asiatic coolies,” he argues, would carry out the labor of “exhausting drudgery—drudgery neither intelligence nor education are required to fit a man for” (272), thus saving the white men from undergoing the degrading process of inhuman labor. More importantly, his characterization of immigrant labor perpetuates the contemporary perception of the “Asiatics coolies” as being devoid of human intelligence.

While imagining the futuristic vision of the United States and its role in the Asia-Pacific, Twain appropriates the already existing forms of racial and ethnic differences at home and yet imagines the Asia-Pacific as the nation’s desired location, a source of wealth and cultural capital. Addressing the aspirant capitalists in California, he writes:

People are always hatching fine schemes for including Eastern capital to the Pacific Coast. Yonder in China are the capitalists you want—and under your own soil is a bank that will not dishonor their checks. The mine purchased for a song by Eastern capital would pour its stream of wealth past your door and empty it in New York . . . . With the Pacific Railroad creeping slowly but surely toward her over the mountain and desert and preparing to link her [California] with the East, and with the China mail streamers about to throw open to her the vast trade of our opulent coastline stretching from the Amoor [Amur] River to the equator, what state in the Union has so splendid a fortune before her as California? (272-73)

In Twain's optimistic vision of the post-Civil War United States, in which North and South, East and West are seen united for the common cause of national prosperity, Hawai'i occupies the central place as the bridge between the expanding nation and the Asiatic world. His vision of the United States as an emergent force in the global market is consistent to the orientalist construction of California as a "North American road to India." In this mercantilist, geo-political configuration, Hawai'i assumes the role of a new frontier, previously assigned to California.

Although the Orient always fascinated Twain, he finally visited India in 1896, forty years after he voiced the youthful patriotic vision of the Oriental world and its barbarous wealth during his Hawai'ian days. Yet his travelogue on India displays the same degree of ambivalence—nostalgia and disillusionment. Twain's defense of British rule in India supersedes the traditional anthropological interest he shows in the narrative. He views the Indians from the perspective of an orientalist paradigm, a paradigm composed of oriental tales, missionary accounts, and bureaucratic records.

### **"At Home" in India: Oriental Bewitchment, Textual Attitude, and Empire**

The Clemenses sailed from Sydney, Australia, for the Indian sub-continent on 23 December 1895 and arrived in Bombay (Mumbai) on 20 January 1896. Despite chronic health issues requiring cancellation of multiple scheduled lectures, Twain gave some 28 lectures between 24 January to 4 April to an audience mostly comprised of colonial officials, princes, and local dignitaries in various cities of India. As the contemporary newspaper reviews show, his lectures, titled as "At Home," drew enthusiastic reception. His tour was highly publicized event, and each lecture session was followed by a media event. He gave interviews to local and national newspapers. The Indian media presented

him as a celebrated American humorist. On the eve of his arrival in Bombay [Mumbai], for instance, prestigious papers, including the Times of India, the Bombay Gazette, the Hindu Punch, and Kaiser-I-Hind (Anglo-Gujarati) greeted the Clemenses with banner headings. The Times of India of 26 January 1896 urged its readers to welcome him as “the prince of humorists;” Kaiser-I-Hind marked the arrival of “the world’s greatest humorist” as momentous one (qtd. in Mutalik 14). Twain’s affection of India was mutual one. He frequently comes back to the fond memories of India. While writing Following the Equator in Southampton, England, he recalls his days in Bombay nostalgically: “Even now, after the lapse of a year, the delirium of those days has not left me, and I hope it never will” (FTE 2:14). Of all the travels, Twain highly valued his India-tour and devoted a significant portion of Following the Equator in recounting his experience.

Twain’s recollection of Indian and the Orient, like Letters from Hawai’i, is permeated with nostalgia and disillusionment. Upon his arrival at Ceylon on 14 January 1896, he recalls the disappointment he had in Cairo long ago as Cairo betrayed his sense of what the Orient should be like: “Cairo was a tempered Orient—an Orient with an indefinite something wanting” (2: 7). Unlike the Egypt of the Innocents Abroad, he finds the Indian subcontinent “Oriental in the last measure of completeness” with “mysterious relics of the pomp of a forgotten time and vanished race—and this was as it should be” (2:7). The Orient as it appears in Following the Equator is that of continuity without a change, where the past repeats itself as the present. In fact, Following the Equator exemplifies how Twain, despite his keen observation and abundant sense of humor, employs an orientalist paradigm to represent the Orient as a stagnant and passive entity. The moment the Indian subcontinent ceases to frieze in the past, it no longer remains

“Oriental;” it becomes what he encountered in Cairo, a “tempered orient.” There are two important implications of this discursive appropriation: one, it positions the travelling subject within the Western discourse of representation, and second, because of this very positionality, the narrative reproduces the same forms of binaries that the empire employed to justify its rule.

The very narrative structure of Following the Equator establishes the centrality of orientalist paradigm. Although the travelogue has a conventional narrative structure in which an intradiegetic narrator presents a putatively ethnographic account based on an empirical observation of peoples and places, it uses a highly sustained paragrammatic structure,<sup>8</sup> in that the entire text is a collage of quotations. Since Twain’s attributed and anonymous quotes mostly come from texts written by colonial officials, missionaries, and reports prepared by the colonial government, his use of such a prior textual authority supplements the empirical observation and transfers his own narrative authority onto the citational authority of a text used as a paragram. As a result, the apparently dialogic structure of Following the Equator occludes indigenous perspective, thus producing a “mosaic” of discourses whose signification largely depends on their conformity to the already existing orientalist projection of the East. This paragrammatic structure is significant because, by using an embedded narrative authority of a colonial text as the vantage point, the traveling subject reproduces imperial solidarity.

The representation of the Indic Orient follows the similar discursive strategy he used in the Letters from Hawaii. The travelling subject, armed with preconceived notions

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<sup>8</sup> *Paragrammatic* is a term initially theorized by Julia Kristeva to describe the poetic language. According to her, any text is “constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another.” See Julia Kristeva, The Kristeva Reader, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia UP, 1986) 37.

about the locale, encounters the place and its people and when faced with something that does not necessarily fit into the orientalist paradigm, the subject experiences nostalgia and disillusionment. Said discusses the political function of such a textual attitude so pervasive in the Western discourse of representation. He underlines the process through which “ideas about the Orient drawn from Orientalism can be put to political use” (96). In his views, the transition a textual form knowledge to forms of power occurs when the subject uses a particular instance of observation about “specific human detail” to comprehend “the general trans-human” condition (96). In other words, Orientalism turns a transient human phenomenon into a generalized truth about the Orient as a whole, thus generating stereotypical ideas such as the Oriental mind, Oriental sensuality, and passivity. In the colonial context, such generalized ideas reduce a complex reality into semantically manageable concepts. Moreover, these trans-human concepts help formulate a unified colonial policy for the effective functioning of the empire. When faced with the heterogeneity and change, the Orient becomes an incomprehensible object of knowledge that needs to be explained.

In this sense, the narrative shift in Following the Equator, from an observed phenomenon to an epistemological conceptualization, largely based on the colonial discourse of representation, leads Twain toward two conflicting trajectories. First, the affirmation of the political and cultural status quo in the colonial world produces a form of colonial/imperial complicity. Second, the critique of the very discourse of Western representation and the colonial excess of power leads to a renewed call for more benevolent forms of Western interventions. The former tendency occurs when the traveler reconciles the observed data with the preconceived notion of reality. The latter

tendency occurs when the subject encounters an epistemological crisis, that is, when the observation does not necessarily fit into *a priori* conception of what the *real* Orient should be like. An attention to Twain's description of he witnessed in the colonial world but also to the textual frame of reference he uses to represent the reality reveals the contradictory representation of race, empire, and colonial relations in his writing.

In a self-reflective note, Twain underscores the power of preconceived notions of Orient. While travelling to India, for example, he writes: "You find your long-ago dreams of India rising in a sort of vague and luscious moonlight above the horizon-rim of your opaque consciousness, and softly lighting up a thousand forgotten details . . . that had once been vivid to you when you were a boy and steeped your spirit in tales of the East" (2: 21). The indulgent romantic vision of the East that resurfaces from his childhood memory of reading oriental tales continues to shape Twain's perception of Indic Orient. On the eve of setting out to the world-tour, Twain wrote a letter to Rudyard Kipling dated on 16 August 1895 from Vancouver. Although he was on his way to Australia, his excitement about the prospect of visiting India, as expressed in the letter, demonstrates Twain's fascination with the Orient. Echoing a typical portrayal of colonial experience, he writes:

Years ago you came from India to Elmira to visit me,<sup>9</sup> as you said at the time. It had always been my purpose to return that visit and that great

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<sup>9</sup> At the age of twenty-four, Kipling paid a visit to the Clemenses at Elmira in the summer of 1889 and left a lasting impression on the Clemenses. Years later, on 13 August 1906, Mark Twain wrote about his impression of Kipling. By then, he had begun to suspect Kipling's unwavering support to imperialism, especially "his protest against a liberalizing new policy of the British government" in South Africa that would "deliver the balance of power . . . in the hands of the conquered Boers." However, he still regarded Kipling as a great writer who had instilled in him a love and admiration of India: "I read the book [*Kim*] every year and in this way, I go back to India without fatigue—the only foreign land I ever daydream about or deeply long to see again." For detail, see *Mark Twain in Eruption: Hitherto Unpublished Pages about the Man and Events*, ed. Bernard DeVoto (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1940) 309-12.



compliment, some day. I shall arrive next January, and you must be ready. I shall come riding my Ayah, with his tusk adorned with silver bells and ribbons, and escorted by a troop of native Howdahs, richly clad and mounted upon a herd of wild bungalows, and you must be on hand with a few bottles of ghee, for I shall be thirsty. (Mark Twain's Notebook 248)

The India of his imagination before he actually visited the country was thus largely derived from his reading of Oriental tales. The humorous image of oriental experience, in which Twain envisions himself riding an elephant, “escorted by a troop of native Howdahs,” demonstrates how the populist imagination about the Orient influenced his views of India.

Despite the aura of an imagined Orient of the Arabian Nights, Twain encountered contradictions, as the world of enchantment collided against the colonial India of dust, hunger, and depravation. The pleasure of encountering the *real* Orient in conformation with the imagined one gives way as he confronts *the* India of poverty and disease. Amidst princely palaces and colonial mansions, he discovered *the* India of complexity and heterogeneity, and yet monolithic enough to fit into already existing patterns of Western perception of it. Twain finds India “theatrically complete”; for him, India appears as the land of “dreams and romance, of fabulous wealth and fabulous poverty, of splendor and rags, of places and hovels, of famine and pestilence, of genii and giants and Aladdin lamps” (FTE 2: 13). The very contradictions that define India paradoxically constitute the monolithic nature of the Orient in its totality.

What fascinates him about the Orient is its extravagance, eccentricity, and above all, what Said terms the “synchronic essentialism”, a sense of permanence that that is

resistant to change and modernity. Like the India of oriental tales, the post-visit India floats in memory. Although Twain encountered contradictions and experienced disillusionment, paradoxically, the memory conjures up the India of “incomparable dissolving view of harmonious tints, and lithe half-covered forms, and beautiful brown faces, and gracious and graceful gestures and attitudes and movements, free, unstudied barren of stiffness and restraints” (2:9). The “unstudied barren stiffness and restraints” characterizes the natives, thus casting them as the relics of a remote past, untouched by the modernity.

The imagined Oriental world that Twain hoped to encounter in India belonged to the mythic past, one rendered accessible to the Western sensibility by the Arabian Nights and oriental pageants, *an India* codified in bureaucratic records and vilified in missionary accounts. When the desire to see the Oriental world in its sheer extravagance, bizarreness, and eccentricities confronts *the* India of “famine and pestilence,” the textual attitude overrides what the subject witnesses. After attending a public reception organized by the Parsi community to honor of the Prince of the state of Gujarat, Mansinhji Surasinhji, for example, Clara Clemens wrote, “One evening we went to the house of a very rich Mohammedan, who was giving an entertainment in honor of the Rajah Montana [sic] who had just received the star of India from Queen Victoria. It really seemed as if we must be in the Arabian Nights” (2:156).<sup>10</sup> Twain also notes that the prince was awarded the knighthood for his contribution in establishing “factories, schools, hospitals,” and launching “reforms,” (2: 48). But as he witnesses the commemoration, he is delighted to

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<sup>10</sup> There are some factual errors in Clara’s account of the event, though. It was not the Rajah of Montana who was honored; it was the prince of Gujarat, Sir Mansinhji Surasinhji, whom Queen Victoria awarded the title of the Commander of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India on 1 January 1896. See Keshav Mutalik, Mark Twain in India (Bombay: Noble Publishing, 1978) 16-17.

see an “abundance of brilliancy—flames, costumes, colors, decorations, mirrors—another Aladdin show” (2:50). The fact that both the princes, the princes of Gaikwar and Palitana, spoke to the Clemens in immaculate English, a colonial language, had modern Western education, and talked about Twain’s novels, however, does not necessarily qualify them as the representative of modern India. Precisely due to the expectations created by the textual knowledge of India, the Clemenses relegate the princes to the time of the Arabian Nights, thus sustaining the stereotype of oriental stagnation. Despite the visible markers of modernity and progress, the fascination of India for Twain lay in its refusal to change.

In contrast to this stagnant India of “Aladdin show” full of “noise,” “dust,” and “picturesque floating of past,” Twain admires the “quiet colors and quiet tastes and quiet dignity” of the colonial establishment (2: 33). The Government House of the Bombay Presidency symbolizes “the English power, the English civilization, the modern civilization” (2: 33). The color, passivity, and lack of progress among the natives, while satisfying Twain vision of the Orient, foregrounds the Western sense of progress and “civilization” symbolized by the colonial establishment. The hierarchical relationship between the colonizer and the colonized rather produces a perfect picture of harmony. He notes that the English greatness was “harmoniously combined” with the colorful “native guards and servants” (2:33).

Twain’s subjective position within the Euro-American discourse of modernity allows him to elide the colonial history so that the history of the Orient can be seen as continuity without change. The fascination of Oriental history, as he puts it, comes from “a hunting sense of the myriads of human lives that have blossomed, and withered, and perished here, repeating, and repeating, century after century, and age after age, the

barren and meaningless process” (2: 121). What defines the *real* Orient is this meaningless repetition of the past without change, oblivious of the modernity that the colonialism has brought in.

Twain admired the British rule in India because he perceived a harmonious existence of two entirely different worlds in a hierarchical structure of power relations. In an interview he gave to Englishman (Calcutta) on 8 February 1896, he reiterated his belief in the racial superiority of the Anglo-Saxons and justified their imperialistic domination over the world. Asked about his opinion on the rising discontent among the Hindus and the Muslims of India over British rule, he praised the “obvious advantages that the British has conferred on India” (Complete Interview 286). Citing “security and prosperity” as examples of colonial benevolence, he insisted that “one cannot help coming to the conclusion that the British Government is the best for India, whether the Hindus or Mohamedans [sic] like it or not” (286). Twain appropriates the pro-imperialistic argument that justified the colonial rule as being indispensable to protect India from the barbaric warfare and anarchy. As a result, he echoes the notion of “white man’s burden” as a duty of the West to cultivate “civilization and establish the rule of law. Explaining his position on colonial relations to the Englishman, he further states:

It is my belief that in the development of the world the strongest race will by and by become paramount—the strongest physically and intellectually. Now, if you look round upon the nations we find that the English [race] seems to possess both these qualifications. It has spread all over the earth. It is vigorous, prolific, and enterprising. Above all, it is composed of merciful people for colonizing the globe. (Complete Interviews 287)

An unwavering commitment to humanistic values and a concomitant belief in the Anglo-Saxon race, as exemplified in its “vigorous, prolific, and enterprising” nature, led him to a triumphant affirmation of British imperialism. His denunciation of French takeover of Madagascar can be understood in the light of an Anglo-centric bias generated due to his favorable views of the British rule in India. He took the British presence in India as an exemplary instance of imperial benevolence and denounced England’s half-hearted efforts to save Madagascar from passing into French dominion: “Without efforts she [England] could have saved those harmless natives from the calamity of French civilization, and she did not do it” (2:267). Reminiscent of his reproof of Bishop Staley in Letters from Hawai’i, he disapproved “French civilization” as being disqualified for colonizing peoples as the French lacked the “vigorous, prolific, [and] enterprising” spirit of the Anglo-Saxons.

Critics have pointed out that Following the Equator also consists of counter discursive moments that often lead to a critique of colonialism. In “The ‘Pleasure of the Text’: Reading Mark Twain’s Following the Equator,” Pramod K. Nayar suggests the possibility of a “contrapuntal” reading, which is attentive to such counter-discursive moments. Nayar argues that Twain, while using Orientalist and colonial texts as lenses to view the Orient, also questions the self-authenticating power of western discourse of representation (88-89). Nayar cites a number of self-reflective commentaries as examples of Twain’s deconstruction of master discourses. A particular case in point is Twain’s commentary—“we white people are merely modified Thugs; Thugs fretting under the restraints of a not very thick skin of civilization”—that follows his extended discussion of “native criminality” (FTE 2: 98). The retelling of populist Thuggee tales of

India, however, provides a telling example of Twain's narrative strategy: the representation of an individual human instance as if it stood for the entire culture. In doing so, Twain transfers his own narrative authority onto paragrammatically available structures of thought about the Orient.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, rather than dismantling the authority of western discourse of representation, as Nayar suggests, he reinforces the same form of oriental stereotype. For instance, his disquisition on the essential native "criminality and depravation" is based on early nineteenth-century texts on Thugees, which Paroma Roy terms "the thuggee archive."<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Twain uses Holwell's Narrative of the Sepoy Mutiny and Sir G. O. Trevelyan's Account of the Mutiny as authority. As these texts are quoted page after page, the paragrammatical structure of Following the Equator, in fact, recasts the self-authenticating power of the Western discourse on the Orient. The massive use of colonial testimonies and oriental tales, as Bhabha contends, produces the ideological discourses of "a hegemonic normality [of] disadvantaged histories of nations, races, communities, and peoples" (Location 246-47). However, it also raises an important question: does the use of paragrammatical structure always produce colonial complicity?

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<sup>11</sup> Derived from the Hindi word "thag," meaning "cheater" or "con-man," the term "Thug" and "Thuggee" assumed currency in the 1830s and 1840s during which the East India Company waged a high level mission under the command of Captain William Henry Sleeman for the eradication of the thuggee problem in colonial India. Generally, thuggee refers to various groups of "native bandits" who robbed and killed unsuspecting travelers in various parts of India in the first half of nineteenth-century. According to Kim A. Wagner, the British "believed they were members of a religious sect who murdered in worship of the Hindu goddess Kali. The procedure of the murder was strictly ritualistic and in accordance with numerous rules of the sect, which relied heavily on omens and the use of a secret language" (932). Sleeman's many books on thuggee, including his decoding of thuggee secret language in Ramaseena, or A Vocabulary of the Peculiar Language Used by the Thugs added mystic dimension to thuggee. According to official records, between 1827 to 1847, some 4227 persons were convicted for thuggee. See Wagner, 933. I do not intend to explore the thuggee tales nor do I intend to provide a counter-discursive reading of thuggee tales here. My objective is to show how Twain's assertion about the native criminality based the paradigm created by imperial and orientalist discourses on thuggee.

<sup>12</sup> Among many texts that Roy includes in the thuggee archive, Twain uses considerable sections from Henry Sleeman's Ramaseena and Report of the Thugees Trials Prepared for the Government in 1839, Philip Meadows Taylor's Confessions of a Thug (1839), and Eugene Sue's Wondering Jew.

There are two fundamental processes at work in Following the Equator that reinscribe the hegemonic discourse of representation. First, the constant shift from a realistic description, a description based on the sovereignty of a witness, to colonial and orientalist discourses, occludes the native perspective on colonial relations. Second, the authority of the seemingly de-centered narrative rendering of the native, with the minimal imposing presence of the witnessing subject, lies elsewhere, that is, in colonial and orientalist texts that Twain utilizes as the ultimate authority on the orient. Twain's writing about the thuggee and the "Indian Mutiny" of 1857 can be taken as examples of how the narrative organization of Following the Equator reproduces a "hegemonic normality," very much informed by the Orientalist paradigm.

Twain's three-chapter-long reflection on "native criminality" is a case in point. The section begins with the description of a murder trial that took place in Bombay during his stay in the city. A young woman was killed by the family that she was visiting, reportedly for trifle ornaments she was wearing. Twain follows the murder trial very closely. For him, the case was "most interesting," as it resembled "a terribly realistic chapter out of the Arabian Nights" (FTE 2:55). In Twain's observation, the case defied rational explanation: the murder was committed in the broad daylight and the murderers showed no repentance, quietly sleeping the entire night without disposing of the dead body. Hence, the oxymoronic "realistic chapter out the Arabian Nights," as the case conforms to the "thuggee lore" and meets the expectation of an observer looking for something bizarre, irrational, and eccentric about the Orient.

The case offers a comparative perspective into Oriental world: "This thing could have been done in many other countries, but hardly with the cold business-like depravity,

absence of fear, absence of caution, destitution of the sense of horror, repentance, remorse, exhibited in the case” (2:55). Because Twain believed in the humanistic values, there is nothing suggestive of inherent bias in Twain’s representation of the case. As he continues to reflect over the nature of native criminality occasioned by the case, however, the narrative loops back to the orientalist paradigm: “The thing reads like a Meadows Taylor thug tale as maybe seen by the official report of the trial” (2:56). Quite interestingly, a network of hierarchically positioned narrative authorities, external to his own travelogue, authenticates Twain’s description of the case and the claims he draws about the Orient. A preconception formed by orientalist tales makes it possible to view the case “realistically,” meaning that a case which would have been an exceptional occurrence elsewhere becomes typical in India. Twain’s observation and the paragrams that he uses mirror each other, both structurally and semantically.

The suppression of thugees in the early half of nineteenth-century India by the East India Company through the dual mechanism of military force and legal procedure, as scholars contend, produced complex social and discursive formations. At the social level, as Roy argues, “the campaign for its exposure and extirpation was to form a significant constitutive component of the authoritarian and interventionary reform of the 1830s and 1840s, and to contribute to the still emerging project of discovering India” (121). At the same time, the mystic lore of thuggee also gave rise to a wide range of texts—legal, fictive, and confessional that, while consolidating the British presence in India, catered to the Western reading public. Moreover, as Roy maintains, “the phenomenon designated thuggee by colonial authority in nineteenth-century India, a phenomenon whose emergence, codification, and overthrow was to become perhaps *the*



founding moment for the study of indigenous criminality” (121). One important offshoot of this discursive formation, however, was to legitimize a form of “imperial apology” that justified the British presence in India as an indispensable force against sectional violence and anarchy.

As Twain scrutinizes the contemporary instance of murder from the perspective of the thuggee archive, his reflection on a transient human phenomenon mirrors the very argument that the apologists of empire used to consolidate British hold in India. Twain also invites the Western reader to share the historical past through his own perspective on the present. Authenticating the source of his narration, he writes:

We have now followed the big official book through, and we understand what Thuggee was, what a bloody terror it was, what a desolating scourge it was. In 1830 the English found this cancerous organization embedded in the vitals of the empire, doing its devastating work in secrecy, and assisted, protected, sheltered, and hidden by innumerable confederates . . .  
(2:108)

The meta-narrative comment appears at the end of a lengthy citation from “the official book,” a record of court the proceeding of thuggee trials. The inclusive “we” rhetorically anticipates the reader’s “repugnance” at the “bloody terror” of the past. The reader must believe it because the citation comes from the official book, which Twain stamps as “the most noble work.” Since he expects the reader’s familiarity with popular oriental stories such as Meadows Taylor’s Confessions of a Thug and Eugene Sue’s Wandering Jew, his own account of the contemporary murder case as an example of “native criminality” and “depravation” gains authority, as it is homologous to the fictive renderings of similar

incidents that happened a hundred years ago. Twain final reflection on the native criminality justifies the colonial rule as a benevolent institution. He cites Captain Valency's estimate of the enormous task of eradicating the "far-spread evil" as something that would "immortalize British rule in the East" (qtd. in Twain, FTE 2:108). "Knowing what we know," Twain asserts, "It would be hard to word a claim more modestly than that [Valency's evaluation of the importance of British mission to eradicate thugees] for this noble work" (FTE 2:108). Twain's observation and the prior sets of discourses of representation that he uses in the narrative complement each other. While colonial and orientalist discourses reinforce the imagined notion of Orient, Twain's own empirical observation of present complements the historical authenticity of colonial discourse. As a result, *the India* of the texts and *the India* of the real time and space complement each other, one *authenticating* another's existence.

Twain supplements his limited perspective on the native by reading a body of texts.<sup>13</sup> In this sense, traveling takes the form of a double journey: geographical as well as textual. In "Travel and Reading," Michel Butor argues that travel writing "effects and demonstrates this double journey that is all reading" (55). He associates "reading" with the experience of dislocation and displacement: "it can carry the perpendicular path along with it to effect a displacement of the reader, to change his mental location, and finally, it can change his physical location" (55). While Butor is theorizing about "reading" as a

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<sup>13</sup> Among numerous authored and anonymous texts he cites on India and the Orient, Lord Elgin's Diary and Letters; Buckle's Travels of Two Mohammedans thro India and China in the Ninth-Century; Private Life of the Eastern King, the Expansion of England; Meadows Taylor's Thugee Tales; Alexander William Kinglake's Eothen; Macaulay's History of India; Eugene Sue's Wandering Jew; Major Sleeman's Report of the Thugees Trials Prepared for the Government in 1839; Rev. Parker's Guide to Benares (Rev. Parker also acted as guide to the Clemens during their visit to the Hindu temples in Benares); Holwell's Narrative of the Sepoy Mutiny; Sir George Otto Trevelyan's Account of the Mutiny; Bayard Taylor's Travel to India stand out as extensively quoted texts.

neutral activity not necessarily related to the destination, his concept that reading vertically intervenes with the linear thought process of a traveling subject can be extended to examine the narrative authority of a “historical witness” available in the texts a travel narrative employs as paragrams. For instance, in his account of the “Indian Mutiny,” another subject that fascinated him, Twain employs the authority of “historical witnesses” available in colonial texts, including George Otto Trevelyan’s Accounts of Mutiny and Lady [Julia Thesinger] Inglis’s The Siege of Lucknow: A Diary.

The “Indian Mutiny” of 1857 is one of the few topics that received extensive treatment in Following the Equator. By the time Twain traveled India, the “Mutiny” had already become lore in Western imagination, commemorated in fiction, memoirs, eye witness accounts, and monuments. The fictional treatment of the “Indian Mutiny,” especially by British writers, as Hilda Gregg observes, often abound with the themes that dichotomously pit the native “cruelty” and “savagery” against British “valor and heroism” (218), raising questions about the nature of colonial memory and its contribution in consolidating British imperialism. Explaining the function and politics of colonial memory, Astrid Erll argues that the “Mutiny was quickly turned into a foundational myth of the British that contributed to grand scale imperial self-fashioning and helped legitimate British rule in India” (164). While the depiction of native “treachery” and “blood thirstiness” harped on the notion of Indian ingratitude toward “British benevolence” (Erll 164), the focus on the suffering of women and children constructed India as a British domestic space, whose defense and sanctity depended on British “valor” and “heroism.”

The historical monuments and landmarks not only remind Twain of the past, but they also initiate him into a parallel journey into colonial discourses. He incorporates a body of mutiny literature in his travelogue to authenticate his experience of commemorating the “Indian Mutiny.” In doing so, he mediates the discourse of colonial memory for the North American audience by adapting the perspectives of “historical witnesses” embedded in colonial accounts of “Mutiny.” Primarily because of this reliance on the prior forms of representation, he comes to the conclusion that “the crushing of the Mutiny” was the “the greatest chapter” in British military history (FTE 2: 202), thus reinforcing the notion of British “valor” and “heroism” as opposed to native “treachery” and “vengeance.” Twain begins with a common historical explanation that the initial defeat of the British, especially in Cawnpore and Lucknow, was due to British complacency: “[the British] loved their native solders and would not believe that anything could move them to revolt” and by arming the natives with modern weapon and war skills, the British undermined their own self-interests (2: 201-2). However, Twain adds that these reasons would not have sufficiently worked because “the bravest and best Indian troops had a wholesome dread of the white solder” (2: 202). What actually seemed to have incited the native solders, in Twain’s assessment, is that “the propagators of mutiny painted to the native soldier the wrongs his people were suffering at the hands of the English and made his heart burn for revenge” (2: 202). Twain’s use of words such as “painted” and “burn for revenge” appropriates the colonial perspective on the Insurgency, as British accounts of the Insurgency emphasize upon the fact that the strategic circulation of propaganda against the British fueled the rebellion. The colonial perspective in memorializing the “Mutiny,” while exonerating the brutal measures

employed during the counter-insurgency, demystifies the political nature of the widespread rebellion and portrays it as a simple act of vengeance.

George Otto Trevelyan's history of the "Mutiny" and Lady Inglis's memoir offer the British perspective on the native barbarity and vengefulness. Twain's quotes from Trevelyan run page after page. Trevelyan uses testimonies of the victims to foreground the theme of British heroic ordeal against the callous vengefulness of the Indian natives. In particular, Twain cites a section in which Trevelyan uses testimonies of women. Even the falling of the British high-ranking soldiers is presented from the perspective of a witnessing victim. For instance, in Trevelyan's account, the fall of General Wheeler is presented from an eyewitness account of two "half-caste Christian women," who witnessed the bizarre killing of General as well as their own sons:

As General [Wheeler] got out of the palkee, head foremost, the trooper gave him a cut with his sword into the neck, and he fell into the water. My son was killed near him. I saw it; alas! Alas! Some were stabbed with bayonets; others cut down. Little infants were torn into pieces. We saw it; we did; and tell you only what we saw. Other children were stabbed and thrown into river. (qtd. in Twain, FTE 2: 207)

As the above excerpt cited by Twain shows, the embedded voices of those who had "witnessed" the gruesome murders of the "innocents" lend an authority to Trevelyan's historical account of the "Indian Mutiny." The repeated use of perceptive verb "see" in the women's account of the incident lends the power of authority to Trevelyan's narrative as it comes not from a fellow British officer but from a seemingly subaltern position held by the two "half-caste" women. The narrative emphasizes the suffering of children, a

familiar trope employed in British account of the Mutiny. This is, however, not to suggest that the account is devoid of material truth; it is important to note that the whole incident, as it focuses on the act of killing and the resultant suffering of women and children, strategically sets the act of killing beyond historical and political context. Just as Trevelyan appropriates the narrative authority to the women who witnessed the incident, so does Twain in viewing the incident from the perspective offered by Trevelyan's narrative position. Thus the use of colonial testimonies in Twain not only complements his inadequate act of witnessing as a traveler, but it also supersedes his own narrative authority. Moreover, the colonial discourse helps the traveling subject bridge the temporal gap between the present and the historical past.

More importantly, in his travelogue, Twain retains the perspective of a historical witness and incorporates it as a lens to view his own experience of commemorating the Insurgency. Having read about the "vengeful fury" of the natives, he begins to envision the landscape by transporting himself to the historical past: "And we saw the scene of slaughter of the helpless women and children" (2:219). In a colonial situation, however, it is more of a matter of the availability and accessibility of an alternative perspective about significant historical events such the Mutiny. Along with the bureaucratic management, one thing that the empire did so well was to maintain the record, utilizing the power of narrativizing colonial encounters. In a book that came out one hundred years after the "Mutiny," Surendranath Sen counters the colonial account of the Mutiny. According to him, in Kanpur, Neill Ritchie (one of the heroes in Trevelyan's narrative), who was entrusted to restore order in the city, "directed that each person sentenced to death [for Mutiny] would be taken to the house of slaughter and forced to clear a small

portion of the bloodstains. The poor wretches were made to lick the blood, in the shedding of which they very probably had no hand” (161). As Erll suggests, the narrative representation of what actually happened during the mutiny would hardly “stand up to historical enquiry even if one relies solely on British sources” (164). The issue here is not to question the truthfulness of Twain’s sources. Rather, it is to demonstrate how the use of such a textual frame of reference reinforces the colonial stereotypes and produces colonial complicity in the form of what Rosaldo terms the “demystification” of colonial myths. Writing about the ethnographic work done by Western scholars in the distant cultures and colonial world, Rosaldo contends that scholars “demystify imperialist nostalgia through a more frontal assault: they vigorously assert that the past was no better, and most probably worse” (109). By incorporating the “thuggee archive” and the “mutiny lore” in his travelogue implicitly and, at times explicitly, Twain justifies the British rule in India as a remedial intervention for the moral regeneration and humanitarian good of the natives.

As a humorist, Twain looked for theatricality, melodrama, and bizarre irrationality in the Oriental world. When disappointed, he discovered a historical anomaly. Besides being a “birthplace of civilization,” India “is the mother and home of wonders—caste—and that mystery of mysteries, the satanic brotherhood of the Thugs” (2:64). This anomaly explains why India succumbed to colonization. India should have been the leader, “delivering law and command to every tribe and nation;” instead, she ended up being a “meek dependent of an alien master” (2: 64). Twain considered India’s linguistic, ethnic, and racial diversity as the source of lawlessness that made colonial rule a historical necessity. In such a condition, he notes, “patriotism can have no healthy

growth” (2:64). From a postcolonial perspective, Twain’s thinking about the colonial rule in India sounds a familiar one, an argument that nineteenth-century apologists of imperialism employed to justify the colonial rule. His appreciative views of the British rule in India, to a large extent, reveal a humanitarian impulse that allows him to rationalize colonial violence as an act of benevolence.

In Twain’s travel writings, the use of orientalist paradigm, however, also produces counter-discursive moments. Such moments occur when Twain questions the veracity of the Western discourse. Twain’s use of colonial discourse about the Orient in his narrative, therefore, does not always produce complicity to empire; it also leads him to a discovery of a native voice that questions the master discourse. While reading the official report of the suppression of the thugees and the subsequent court trial, for instance, Twain comes across a recorded statement of a thug, in which the thug challenges the Western legal discourse, setting boundaries between criminality and innocence. In a moment of reflection, Twain reasons that it should be the “joy of killing,” a savage instinct, that motivates the “human race at large” to resort to unimaginable brutality (2:98). Taking the thug’s analogy between Englishman’s passion for hunting and thuggee as a point of departure, Twain interrogates the binary between “civilization” and “savagery”: “We white people are modified thugs; thugs fretting under the restraints of a not very thick skin of civilization” (2: 98). The questioning of the Western discourse of self-legitimacy infuses a heteroglossic moment in the travelogue in that the voices of the colonized and suppressed are embedded within the discourse of representation. Such heteroglossic instances in Following the Equator, while demonstrating Twain’s ambivalent attitude toward asymmetrical power relations between the West and the East,



do not necessarily contradict his belief in the Western intervention as being essentially humanistic and benevolent.

As the ship, *Warrismoo*, bound to Australia, nears the island of Fiji, the sighting of native Fijians provokes Twain to contemplate the nature and consequences of the changes that colonialism has brought to the people of the island. He uses Reverend M. Russell's historical account of the Polynesian islands as the frame of reference to contrast Russell's "prophetic" vision of spreading "civilization" in the Polynesian islands with the hollow colonial mimicry that the promise of "civilization" has brought for the people of Fiji.<sup>14</sup> In his account, Russell predicts that the Anglo-Saxon march would not be confined to "the Rocky Mountains" in the West; rather, as a race that possessed "the scepter of the globe," the Anglo-Saxons would finally encircle the East and the "Oriental world" (qtd. in Twain, *FTE* 1: 60). Russell's futuristic vision, however, promises a benevolent course of the empire. It would not be a repetition of the brutal subjugation of the West; armed with Christianity and "civilization," the Anglo-Saxon march in the Oriental World would be a mission of "humanizing, not destroying" the "enthralled races of the East" (qtd. in Twain, *FTE* 1:60). Although by the time the Clemenses were traveling to Australia on route the Islands of Fiji, the colonial practice of indentured labor through forced recruitment of Kanakas was a historical past, Twain uses the strategy of textual triangulation to interrogate the colonial practice of uneven power relations.

Twain reads Russell's agenda of benevolent imperialism against reports of forced recruitment of the Fijians, who used to be transported to Queensland as plantation

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<sup>14</sup> Twain strategically reads sections from M. Russell's text, in which he prophesizes the march of Anglo-Saxon onto the Oriental world but envisions a peaceful conquer of the East through Christian civilization. See Right Reverend M. Russell, *Polynesia, or an Historical Account of the Principal Islands in the South, including New Zealand, Introduction of Christianity, and the Actual Condition of the Inhabitants in Regard to Civilization, Commerce, and the Arts of Civil Life* (Edinburg: Oliver and Boyd, 1844).

workers. Based on his reading of missionary accounts and a memoir of a Captain of a recruiting vessel, he finds an uncanny parallel between the forced indenture prevalent in the Polynesian islands and more organized form of trans-Atlantic slave trade. To Twain, the recruiting vessels looked like “old time slavers,” and he questions the promise of “civilization.”

As a counterpoint to Russell’s history, Twain reads Rev. William Gray’s missionary pamphlet, in which he has listed the material and spiritual gains of a typical Kanaka laborer, exiled to Queensland:

When he comes from home he is a savage, pure and simple. He feels no shame at his nakedness and want of adornment. When he returns home he does so well-dressed, sporting a Waterbury watch, collars, cuffs, boots, and jewelry. He takes with him one or more boxes well filled with clothing, a musical instrument or two, and perfumery and other articles of luxury he has learned to appreciate (qtd. in Twain, FTE 1:58).

In Twain’s formulation, the goods acquired by the laborer, the ostentatious symbols of modernity, stands for the exploitative form of colonial relations. Parodying Russell’s imperialistic vision, Twain mocks at the Western mission of “civilization”: “A hat, and umbrella, a belt, a neckerchief. Otherwise stark naked. All in a day the hard-earned civilization has melted away to this” (FTE 1:59). Responding to the pro-recruitment argument, often presented by the Queensland planters, that the immigration of Fijian Kanakas to Queensland saved them from inter-tribal conflicts, Twain concludes, “Thus exile to Queensland—with the opportunity to acquire civilization, and an umbrella, and a pretty poor quality of profanity—is twelve times as deadly for him as war” (FTE 1:62).

Twain's scathing critique of the promise of "civilization" as a façade to disguise the uneven economic and ethnic relationships that came with the expansion of imperial dominions over the distant cultures and people, however, has another dimension as well.

The repudiation of modernity's inroad into distant cultures from the vantage point of a Western traveler, as Rosaldo argues, produces a form of imperialistic nostalgia. Rosaldo contends, "When the so-called civilizing process destabilizes forms of life, the agents of change experience transformations of other cultures as if they were personal losses" (108). In Rosaldo's notion, "imperialistic nostalgia" results from a sense of "loss" experienced by the Western subject, very much in tune with the process of mourning. The imperialistic nostalgia, according to Rosaldo, takes the form of a collective guilt when the travelling subject mourns the loss of the so-called primitive societies. Instead of tragic sense of "loss" and subsequent experience of "mourning," Twain's writing demonstrates a sustained use of lighthearted humor that operates at the level of parody and as such lacks the experiential quality of the participatory guilt.

In this sense, the imperialistic nostalgia in Twain's writing only emerges in a much broader sense, especially when he equates the scenes of devastating consequences of colonial and imperial encounters abroad with American experience at home. While in Adelaide, Twain observed the Commemoration of the Reading of the Proclamation of Independence of 1836, which founded the Province. As he listened to the rhetoric celebrating the achievement of the pioneers who established the Province, he was reminded of an incident recorded in Mrs. Campbell Praed's Sketches of Australian Life, in which she mentions the mutually devastating conflicts between the early settlers and the Australian aborigines. Twain finds one incident, in which a white man invited the

local tribe at Christmas dinner and invariably poisoned them, as being helpful in understanding the patriotic rhetoric of the Commemoration of the Declaration of Independence. He sees a powerful irony in the situation, a universally recognizable method of ethnic cleansing:

[In poisoning the aborigines], The white man's spirit was right, but his method was wrong. His spirit was the spirit which the civilized white has always exhibited towards the savage, but the use of poison was a departure from the custom. True. It was merely a technical departure, not a real one; still it was departure, and therefore a mistake, in my opinion . . . . In many countries we have chained the savage and starved him to death; and this we do not care for, because custom has inured us to it; yet a quick death by poison is loving-kindness to it . . . . In more than one countries we have hunted the savage and his little children and their mother with dogs and guns through the woods and swamps for an afternoon sport, and filled the region with happy laughter over their sprawling and stumbling flight, and their wild supplications for mercy; but this method we don't mind because custom has inured us to it; yet quick death of poison is loving kindness to it. (FTE 1:173)

Reminiscent of the speaker in Swift's "The Modest Proposal" who proposes to eat up the suffering children as a remedy to Irish poverty, largely induced by the improper taxation and colonial system of land holding, Twain, in his reflection, satirizes the Western pretentious notion of "white man's burden" carried out by the West in the guise of humanitarian intervention. The refrain "loving kindness" not only parodies the rhetoric of

“benevolence,” with familiar narrative tropes of Southern practice of hunting the fugitive slaves, it also forces the reader to peruse the events taking place in distant places and cultures against the backdrop of their own national experience. Rhetorically, the reader is forced to disagree with the speaker’s surmise that the genocidal killing by mass poisoning was anything but an act of “loving kindness,” yet with a recognition that it was nothing compared to our own dealing with the “savages.” Thus he questions the dichotomy between the “civilized” and the “savage,” yet in his most pronounced anti-imperial statements in the travelogue, while castigating the functioning of empire, he approves of the benevolent intent behind the imperialistic intervention.

In Following the Equator, Twain also offers a scathing critique of imperialism without necessarily rejecting the empire’s humanitarian mission. The European scramble of Africa, in particular the French claim on Madagascar, deeply troubled him. On the diary entry of 29 April 1896 that he included in Following the Equator, he records a long meditation over the resurgent imperialism. Working through his much quoted definition of imperialism as “pilfering” of rags from a cloth-line, he develops an extended analogy to explain how imperialism functions (2: 265). Imperialism, according him, is all about stealing territories. In his familiar sartorial metaphor, he explains,

All the territorial possessions of all the political establishments in the earth—including America, of course—consist of pilfering from other people’s wash. No tribe, howsoever insignificant, and no nation, howsoever mighty, occupies a foot of land that was not stolen. When the English, the French, and the Spaniards reached America, the Indians tribes had been raiding each other’s clotheslines for ages, and every acre of

ground in the continent has been stolen and stolen five hundred times. (2: 265-66)

He keeps on listing Germans, Russians, and all the prominent imperial forces, which have perfected this art of pilfering. Twain's analogy of "clotheslines" not only sounds profound but also homely enough to distill the complexities of imperial formations into a handy image. Twain recognizes the ugly dimension of imperialism. What is interesting about his analogy, though, is the naturalizing tendency implicit in his analogy. At least in principle, he equates all forms of tribal struggles and territorial expansions of "mighty" nations as something universal. If that is the case, then the difference between one form of imperialism and another is in degree not in kind. This is where Twain's anti-imperialism becomes selective and relational.

Having observed the European competition for more territories in Africa, Twain declares, "I am not sorry, but glad" to see "the signs of the times [which] show plainly what is going to happen" (2:267). Although imperialism to him seems morally repugnant and he equates it with "pilfering," he approves of it because "[a]ll the savage lands in the world are going to be brought under subjection to the Christian governments of Europe" (2: 267). Precisely because of his belief on humane and caring governance, he sees a distinction between "pilfering" that has beneficent outcome and "pilfering" that leads to more bloodshed and anarchy. As an example to this benevolent function of empire, he cites British rule in India as being exemplary:

The sooner the seizure is consummated, the better for the savages. The dreary and dragging ages of bloodshed and disorder and oppression will give place to peace and order and reign of law. When one considers what

India was under her Hindu and Mohammedan rulers, and what she is now. When he remembers the miseries of her millions then and the protection and humanities, which they enjoy now, he must concede that the most fortunate thing that has ever befallen that empire was the establishment of British supremacy there. (2: 267).

Twain here does not necessarily support imperialism for the sake of imperialism. From the perspective of “law, order, and protection” his assessment of the Indian progress under the British rule sounds accurate. As a humanist, he sides with “peace and order and reign of law” against “bloodshed, disorder, and oppression.” Yet his assessment of the benevolent function of empire, as I argue in the previous section, comes from the very discourses that justified imperialism on the same ground—the humanitarian function of empire. Therefore, Twain’s criticism of American involvement in the Philippines and the British high-handedness in South Africa during the Boer War is directed toward a *failed* promise of empire, not toward the notion of *empire* itself. This brings me back to the question I raised at the beginning of this chapter. In view of Twain’s association with the Anti-Imperialist League and his opposition to U.S. occupation of the Philippines, how are to we to understand his shifting attitude toward imperialism?

In his interview to the New York Herald, Twain stated that he transitioned from being an imperialist to an anti-imperialist during the period he toured the world and lived in Europe. It is also meaningful that Herald greeted him with a headline “Mark Twain Home, An Anti-Imperialist.” First, the headline is an announcement of Twain’s arrival as an anti-imperialist. Second, it suggests that Twain has changed the “camp,” thus implying that he was finally “at home” with the anti-imperialist cause. This was also the time when

his involvement with the Anti-Imperialist League as a Vice President began. While a member of the League, Twain wrote numerous essays and pamphlets supporting the anti-imperialist cause, including some notable ones such as “To a Person Sitting in Darkness,” “A Salutation to the Twentieth Century,” “The Stupendous Procession,” and “King Leopold’s Soliloquy.” Moreover, Twain’s anti-imperialistic writing during this time, to use Zwick’s metaphor, became a “weapon,” full of caustic, biting satire, to the extent of appearing to be a weapon of personal effrontery. Then, the question is: how do Twain’s early views on empire—especially on Hawai’i and India—reconcile with his anti-imperialism?

Critics often associate Mark Twain’s anti-imperialism with his increasing disillusionment with life, his understanding of human nature as being essentially corrupting, and his struggle to come to term with personal tragedies—financial failure, death of his beloved daughter, and his failing health. In What is a Man? a book he liked to call his personal gospel, Twain questions human capacity of moral judgment. “Where there are two desires in a man’s heart he has no choice,” he declared; there is “no such thing as free will in the composition of any human being that ever lived” (Mark Twain in Eruption 239). Due to this conflation of vehement critique of imperialism with the matter of fact admission of the innate corruptibility of human nature in Twain’s later writings, critics have struggled to view his anti-imperialism in a proper perspective.

In “Mark Twain’s Anti-Imperialism” Hunt Hawkins, for instance, examines Twain’s anti-imperialism in relationship with the growing pessimism that marks Twain’s latter writings. According to him, Twain’s anti-imperialistic position, though quite genuine in itself, “was progressively undercut by his despairing world-view” (31).



Hawkins sees the lack of progressive political agenda in Twain's anti-imperialism. He argues that Twain's pessimistic world-view complicates the ideological basis of his anti-imperialism. Hawkins maintains that Twain's anti-imperialism focuses on "the greed of individuals such as King Leopold of Belgium" thus undercutting the larger economic basis of imperial ideology (32). Although Hawkins accepts the traditional interpretation of Twain's pessimism to be the result of his personal tragedy and financial trouble that Twain faced during the later part of his career, Hawkins insists that Twain's pessimistic vision comes from naturalistic mode. Aligning Twain with prominent naturalistic writers such as Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, and Theodore Dreiser (U.S.) and Thomas Hardy, George Gissing, and George Moore (British), Hawkins contends that Twain's pessimism emanates from naturalistic ideas, "a loose network derived from a bleak interpretation of Darwinism and other nineteenth-century scientific discoveries" that led the writers toward "disillusionment with the positivist doctrine of progress, and a conviction of man's unshakable inner bestiality" (34). Although there is a degree of validity in Hawkins's argument, it is also pertinent to ask if Twain's pessimism also is a result of his disillusionment over the benevolent promise of Western interventions in Asia and Africa.

In the last sections of Following the Equator, where he discusses European imperialism in Africa, Twain demonstrates a profound sense of disillusionment not so much with the condition of human nature, as Hawkins suggests, as with the failed Western mission of "civilizing" the colonized people. Having witnessed the U.S.-Philippine War, the Boer War in South Africa, and the Congo Crisis, Twain began to realize the gap between what Euro-American imperialism promised to deliver and what it actually delivered. Twain's anti-imperialistic argument, therefore, is based on three

important premises: that the imperialistic ambition of the United States undermined the nation's democratic ideals and republican values, that the United States has sacrificed the old ideals of promoting democracies and instead has become the imitator of European empires, and that western intervention in Asia and Africa has produced violence rather than disseminating "civilization" and democracies.

The most famous of his anti-imperialist essays, "To a Person Sitting in Darkness," written in response to the Boxer Rebellion in China, is full of this sense of disillusionment. Twain begins the essay with a catalogue of promises that the West professes to deliver to the "person sitting in darkness"—"love, justice, gentleness, Christianity, protection to the weak, temperance, law and order, liberty, equality, mercy, education" ("To a Person" 2). He then rhetorically asks, "Is this good? Sir, it is pie" (2). The problem he sees in this "benign" intent of exporting "civilization" is that all these promises finally turn out to be the "outside cover only," and, in actuality, the West delivers violence and bloodshed that "the person sitting in darkness buys with his blood and tears and land, and liberty" (2). The distinction Twain makes between the appearance and reality in the Western dealing with the colonized is crucial to understand Twain's disillusionment over imperialism.

In the essay, Twain also makes a distinction between American version of "old fashioned" imperialism and European imperialism. From this distinction emerge two notions of empire: one, the Jeffersonian "empire of liberty" and another, the European one, based on colonization, territorial occupation, and exploitation of the natives. Later, in the same essay, Twain offers telling details about these two forms of imperialism.

Accusing U.S. government for compromising American values and imitating the “game” of European imperialists, he writes:

In Cuba, he [Theodore Roosevelt] was playing the usual and regular *American game* . . . . There, in Cuba, he was following our great traditions in a way which made us very proud of him, and proud of the deep dissatisfaction which his play was provoking in Continental Europe . . . . For, presently came the Philippine temptation. It was strong; it was too strong, and he made that bad mistake: he played the European game, the Chamberlain game. (“Person” 7-8)

This partly explains why Twain supported the annexation of Hawai’i as well as U.S. involvement in Cuba. Being a humanist and a strong believer in democratic values, he approved of Western interventions in the colonial world for the greater good of the multitude. Twain also echoes the Monroe Doctrine of promoting fledgling democracies in South America and the Caribbean. Implicit in Twain’s idea of “American game” is the notion of American exceptionalism. It is the betrayal of this national identity of American exceptionalism by imitating the European colonialism that Twain considers to be one of the major problems with American imperialism. However, by advocating the universal cultivation of American values, deemed “exceptional,” he also inscribes the very logic of neo-colonialism. In his early support of “imperialism,” he saw the humanistic side of this neo-colonial logic only. It was only when the “American game” adapted the rules and strategies of European colonialism that Twain began to reject “imperialism” as a corrupting institution. What makes Twain’s rejection of contemporary development in

U.S. foreign policy remarkable is that he saw the idea of American exceptionalism turning into a rhetorical justification of the pursuit of empire.

My study of the Asia-Pacific imaginary in nineteenth-century U.S. culture demonstrates how the formation of a national identity does not necessarily occur within the borders of a nation-state. As exemplified by the configuration of U.S. nationhood in important cultural documents, a sustained nationalist project derives ideological legitimacy by positioning the nationhood within broader colonial and imperial formations abroad. To return to Fishkin's question that I allude to at the beginning of this study—"What would be the field of American Studies like if we include transnational perspective" in the study of American culture?—my study shows that a transnational perspective, although demystifies the myth of a unified national culture, does not necessarily de-center *the national*. In fact, both globalizing and nationalist tendencies sustain each other, revealing a contradictory tendency in the formation of national identity. While globalization facilitates border-crossing in terms of the movement of capital, goods, and people, it also promotes the increasing nationalist rhetoric, especially in the cultural front.

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## ABSTRACT

### THE INDIC ORIENT, NATION, AND TRANSNATIONALISM: EXPLORING THE IMPERIAL OUTPOSTS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY U.S. LITERARY CULTURE, 1840-1900

By Anirudra Thapa, Ph.D., 2008  
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My dissertation examines the representation of the Asiatic Orient in nineteenth-century U.S. literary culture and the implication of such transnational imaginings in the formation of U.S. national and imperial identity. Building upon the critique of Orientalism initiated by Edward W. Said and followed by others, such as Malini Johar Schueller, who have examined U.S. discourses of Orientalism, my project investigates the intersection of the Asiatic Orient and U.S. national imagination in the light of current theories of transnational and global cultural exchanges. In doing so, I demonstrate that the orientalist construction of the Asia-Pacific region in U.S. cultural narratives provided an ideological basis for the dual articulation of U.S. national identity, an identity imbued with postcolonial anxiety and imperial desire.

The bulk of existing scholarship on Western representations of the Orient either critiques orientalist discourse as the West's attempt to legitimize its power over the East through colonization and imperial subjugation or views such discourse as benign cross-cultural understanding. Instead, I ground my study in the cultural and material changes

that the Orientalist imaginary has produced within Western metropolises in order to understand how seemingly localized national identities are forged transnationally.

My project interrogates and challenges popular approaches in current scholarship in nineteenth-century U.S. literary studies. It goes beyond the critique of Orientalism in showing how the discourse of Orientalism, in the specific context of the nineteenth-century United States, complicated internally stratified racial, gender, and ethnic differences at home. Moreover, it establishes the roots of transnational imaginary within the nationalist project of nineteenth-century U.S. culture and demonstrates how the so-called transnational turn in American studies may not necessarily be a post-ethnic or post-national.