American Orientalism: A Study of Ethnic American Literature in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century

Xiaodong Liu
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Follow this and additional works at: http://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd

Recommended Citation
http://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd/671

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Knowledge Repository @ IUP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations (All) by an authorized administrator of Knowledge Repository @ IUP. For more information, please contact cclouser@iup.edu, sara.parme@iup.edu.
STUDENT HAS RESTRICTED ACCESS TO FULL TEXT OF THE DISSERTATION.

ONLY COVER PAGES AND ABSTRACT ARE AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME
AMERICAN ORIENTALISM: A STUDY OF ETHNIC AMERICAN LITERATURE
IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

A Dissertation
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Xiaodong Liu
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
May 2015
We hereby approve the dissertation of

Xiaodong Liu

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

_________________                         _________________________________________
Todd Thompson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of English, Advisor

_________________               _________________________________________
Tanya Heflin, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of English

_________________               _________________________________________
David Downing, Ph.D.
Professor of English

ACCEPTED

_________________     _________________
Randy L. Martin, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research
My dissertation is primarily conceived as an application of Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism to the study of American ethnic writers’ “writing back” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This historical period witnessed a dramatic change of American society and a rise of the US global power. It was also marked as a period of Orientalism with its exoticism, subjugation, and condescension. Set in this historical context, I argue that the American literature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when American imperialism flourished, was repressive in terms of the denial of ethnic representations, namely, those of African Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans; however, American realism in the 1880s, which embraced the explorations of new subject matters in the nation, also provided a kind of soil for ethnic writers to “write back” by challenging white cultural hegemony with literary works that represent their own ethnic identity and indigenous cultural heritage. My study expands the notion of “Orient” by distinguishing American Orientalism from the traditional European Orientalism. While the traditional European Orientalism is more geographically specific, the American Orientalism is basically culture-based, about a relationship between “the civilized” and “the savages.” All the chapters of my dissertation, in different ways, aim to show to what extent the theory of Orientalism and the notion of cultural hegemony help us to understand the literary works produced by the Other at the turn of the century.