

BRITISH ORIENTALISMS, 1759–1835

How did Britons understand their relationship with the East in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries? James Watt's new study remaps the literary history of British Orientalisms between 1759, the 'year of victories' in the Seven Years' War, and 1835, when T. B. Macaulay published his polemical 'Minute on Indian Education'. It explores the impact of the war on Britons' cultural horizons, and the different and shifting ways in which Britons conceived of themselves and their nation as 'open' to the East across this period. Considering the emergence of new forms and styles of writing in the context of an age of empire and revolution, Watt examines how the familiar 'Eastern' fictions of the past were adapted, reworked, and reacted against. In doing so he illuminates the larger cultural conflict which animated a nation debating with itself about its place in the world and relation to its others.

JAMES WATT is a former director of the University of York's interdisciplinary Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies. His previous publications include *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre, and Cultural Conflict, 1764–1832* (Cambridge University Press, 1999) and an edition of Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (2003). He has published numerous essays and articles in edited collections and in journals including *Eighteenth Century Life* and *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*.

CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN ROMANTICISM

Founding Editor

Marilyn Butler, University of Oxford

General Editor

James Chandler, University of Chicago

Editorial Board

John Barrell, University of York

Paul Hamilton, University of London

Mary Jacobus, University of Cambridge

Claudia Johnson, Princeton University

Alan Liu, University of California, Santa Barbara

Jerome McGann, University of Virginia

David Simpson, University of California, Davis

Deidre Lynch, Harvard University

This series aims to foster the best new work in one of the most challenging fields within English literary studies. From the early 1780s to the early 1830s, a formidable array of talented men and women took to literary composition, not just in poetry, which some of them famously transformed, but in many modes of writing. The expansion of publishing created new opportunities for writers, and the political stakes of what they wrote were raised again by what Wordsworth called those ‘great national events’ that were ‘almost daily taking place’: the French Revolution, the Napoleonic and American wars, urbanization, industrialization, religious revival, an expanded empire abroad, and the reform movement at home. This was an enormous ambition, even when it pretended otherwise. The relations between science, philosophy, religion, and literature were reworked in texts such as *Frankenstein* and *Biographia Literaria*; gender relations in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and *Don Juan*; journalism by Cobbett and Hazlitt; and poetic form, content, and style by the Lake School and the Cockney School. Outside Shakespeare studies, probably no body of writing has produced such a wealth of commentary or done so much to shape the responses of modern criticism. This indeed is the period that saw the emergence of those notions of literature and of literary history, especially national literary history, on which modern scholarship in English has been founded.

The categories produced by Romanticism have also been challenged by recent historicist arguments. The task of the series is to engage both with a challenging corpus of Romantic writings and with the changing field of criticism they have helped to shape. As with other literary series published by Cambridge University Press, this one will represent the work of both younger and more established scholars on either side of the Atlantic and elsewhere.

See the end of the book for a complete list of published titles.

BRITISH ORIENTALISMS,
1759–1835

JAMES WATT

University of York



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-47266-1 — British Orientalisms, 1759–1835
James Watt
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108472661
DOI: 10.1017/9781108560924

© James Watt 2019

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2019

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd. Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-108-47266-1 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page vi</i>
Introduction: Britain, Empire, and ‘Openness’ to the East	i
1 ‘Those Islanders’: British Orientalisms and the Seven Years’ War	23
2 ‘Indian Details’: Fictions of British India, 1774–1789	57
3 ‘All Asia Is Covered in Prisons’: Oriental Despotism and British Liberty in an Age of Revolutions	90
4 ‘In Love with the <i>Gopia</i> ’: Sir William Jones and His Contemporaries	123
5 ‘Imperial Dotage’ and Poetic Ornament in Romantic Orientalist Verse Narrative	157
6 Cockney Translation: Leigh Hunt and Charles Lamb’s Eastern Imaginings	192
7 ‘It Is Otherwise in Asia’: ‘Character’ and Improvement in Picaresque Fiction	227
Conclusion: British Orientalisms, Empire, and Improvement	260
<i>Bibliography</i>	267
<i>Index</i>	280

Acknowledgements

Three research assessment exercises have passed since the job interview at which I said that this book would probably be ready for the next one. The time that it took to complete it has given me a much clearer sense of my many debts than when I published the book of my PhD thesis, and I would firstly like to offer a belated but sincere thanks to all of my teachers at Goffs School, Cheshunt, and Cambridge University. I was fortunate enough to be able to return to St Catharine's College following the generous award of a Junior Research Fellowship (during which I began preliminary research in the field of Orientalism and empire), and I warmly remember my time back there as a postdoc.

At York it has been a privilege to work in the Department of English and Related Literature and the interdisciplinary Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies (CECS), and I am lucky to be able to count as my current departmental and CECS colleagues Mary Fairclough, Emma Major, Jon Mee, Alison O'Byrne, Deborah Russell, and Chloe Wigston Smith. When I started at York, the experience of working with John Barrell and Harriet Guest made me realize how much I didn't know about the eighteenth century, and John and Harriet – much missed – are still a source of inspiration. I have learned a huge amount from all of my colleagues in CECS, past and present, and it has been very rewarding to work with so many talented MA and PhD students. For their stimulating discussion of some of the subject matter covered by this book, I would like to thank all of the students who took my British Orientalisms MA module and my Empire and British Identities undergraduate module.

I am extremely grateful to Linda Bree for her initial support for this project. Linda, Bethany Thomas, and Tim Mason were very helpful throughout the process of seeing it to completion. Cambridge University Press's anonymous reviewers provided constructive and helpful comments on my manuscript and, among other things, alerted me to my tendency to cite lack of space as an excuse for not discussing a particular writer or work

Acknowledgements

vii

or pursuing a particular argument further. There wasn't space to include discursive footnotes in this book, which means that my engagement with the work of other scholars in this field sometimes appears truncated (or even non-existent). It is a matter of regret that I haven't been able to cite the work of others more extensively (or in some cases at all), and wherever possible I hope to be able to make good this deficiency in person.

The full list of scholars who have in one way or another influenced me during the writing of this book would certainly take me over the Press's word limit. I was enormously fortunate to be supervised as an undergraduate and PhD student by Nigel Leask, and the impact of his groundbreaking work on what follows is obvious. Among others (in addition to those named earlier here) who have offered advice, feedback, help, suggestions, and/or ideas, I would also like to thank Ros Ballaster, Greg Dart, Alun David, Pete Denney, Nick Dew, Markman Ellis, Kevin Gilmartin, Joanna de Groot, Paul Hartle, David Higgins, Peter Kitson, Adam Perchard, Shaun Regan, Jane Rendall, and Daniel Sanjiv Roberts. Although not scholars in the traditional sense of the term, Rogers and Edison deserve to be named here as my most frequent interlocutors during the writing process.

I can't really begin to do adequate justice to the love and support shown by family and friends outside of academic circles during the production of this book. My father, Alex Watt, a graduate of the Open University, didn't live to see its completion, but his example remains with me in numerous ways and many of his enthusiasms have become my own. My wife, Alison O'Byrne, has been a loving companion more or less since I started working on this project, and finishing it has made the everyday life that we share with our wonderful son, Fraser, all the more enjoyable. I dedicate this book with love and affection to Alison and Fraser, albeit in the knowledge that the latter will be slightly disappointed by its lack of train-related content.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-47266-1 — British Orientalisms, 1759–1835
James Watt
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)
