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Go East, Young Man

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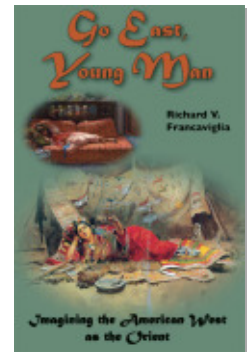
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Finding New Eden

The American Southwest

“ . . . the Southwest is America’s Orient.”

Barbara Babcock, “A New Mexican Rebecca” (1990)

THE EARLIEST PART OF WESTERN NORTH AMERICA to be Orientalized was what Anglo-Americans now call the Southwest and Mexicans call “el norte.” However, it was the Spaniards, not the Anglo-Americans, who deserve credit as the first Orientalizers of the region. We must go back in time nearly five centuries to see how this occurred. The Orientalization of the entire North American continent appears to have begun with Estevanico (circa 1500–1539), who was called “the Moor” by those in the Narváez expedition of 1528. That name Moor—a more or less reflexive Spanish figure of speech for someone dark and different—effortlessly linked exotic person and exotic place. Shipwrecked on the Texas coast with Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Estevanico the Moor was a North African slave who trekked back to Mexico with Cabeza de Vaca by traversing much of the southwestern borderlands in the early 1530s. Although much of North Africa is not universally considered to be part of the Middle East, the spread of Islam throughout that area and into Spain closely links the Moors—and, by association, Estevanico—to it. By many accounts, Estevanico’s skin color was dark, or at least brown. Estevanico was likely the first non-European ethnic visitor to the region, and he brought considerable cultural baggage with him. To Spaniards, the name Moor also suggested distant origins and Islam, but the Native Americans regarded him with awe. Unfortunately, the Moor earned the dubious distinction of being killed by natives on a later expedition into the Southwest—the first “Oriental” victim of violence in a land that would experience a good deal of interethnic warfare in the next several centuries.

That violent act, interestingly, is often attributed to Estevanico's tendency to charm, seduce, and bed native women. If the story is true, those southwestern Native American women may have been the first Americans to be seduced by the East, or a representative of it. Their husbands, however, evidently viewed things quite differently, reacting with startling and lethal force. This story's content, rather than its veracity, is most important here. If the story is true, Estevanico is the first, but far from the last, of the sexualized Oriental seducers on the American continent. There may be a lesson here. Estevanico's mixed reception as accepted lover and executed interloper can serve as a warning that the Orient and its peoples could—and would—be viewed with alarm and apprehension by peoples living in the Americas.

Another early reference to the Orient is Francisco Vázquez de Coronado's use of the term "the Turk" (*el Turco*) for a Pawnee Indian in 1540. *El Turco* was a native guide who led, or rather misled, Coronado's expedition toward the fabled realm of Quivira to find the riches they sought. Coronado evidently named this Indian slave "*el Turco*" for several reasons. Among these were his appearance, his lower status, his non-Catholic faith (the Spaniards of this period having a strong disdain for Muslim "infidels"), his knowledge of the far-ranging, exotic-appearing countryside and its peoples, and his deviousness. After leading the Spaniards on a weeks-long, rambling journey into the Great Plains, *el Turco* finally confessed that he had deliberately led them astray. When asked why, *el Turco* answered that the people of Cicuique (or Cicuyc) begged him to do so in hopes that the Spanish interlopers would die without food or water on the plains. This, *el Turco* noted, was simply a way of paying the Spaniards back for their abuses to the Indians.

Needless to say, this explanation infuriated the Spaniards, who resented this affront to both King and Conquistador; probably, however, the Spaniards were even more upset because of the danger in which they had been placed—as well as their being led to a place that possessed none of the riches they sought. As pay-back, the Spaniards garroted *el Turco* on the spot. It is posited by some that the name *el Turco* was provided after the Turk's lies were revealed, and that "under this suggestion, he was seen as 'evil' like the Turks, enemies of the Christians of the time."¹ There is no evidence for this, however, and it could be speculation by a generation of scholars weaned on politicized Orientalism. Regardless, this incident is of interest because it reveals how a native of the New World was Orientalized long before the arrival of the British. By calling him "the Turk," the Spaniards in effect reenacted European encounters with the East in an entirely new setting. This unfortunate incident represented the second widely recorded association of the western American frontier and its peoples with the Orient.

Throughout the long period from 1598 to about 1810, the Spaniards occasionally referred to the Pueblo Indians using Orientalized terms. The holdouts at the Sky City of Acoma, for example, were sometimes equated with the Jews who held out against the Romans at Masada. Like that incredible stronghold overlooking the Dead Sea, the Indian city was perched high up on a mesa and seemed impenetrable. Another aspect of material culture equated Indians and Turks. The Indians' use of mineral turquoise was based on the blue stone's similarity to the sky. It was a stone of spiritual significance to the natives. We use the term "turquoise" today as a result of the Spaniards, who named it *turquesa* because of the stone's original association with the Turks.²

Perhaps Spaniards were influenced by Islam as they now zealously spread Christianity to infidels in the New World, much as the Moors had spread Islam into the Iberian Peninsula. Despite their strong Islamic traditions, Spaniards soon came to despise Iberia's Moorish heritage. In the New World, it was easy to classify the Native American "other" as a Muslim. As Nabil Matar observed, and Robert Irwin more recently concluded, "The [Spanish] literature of the period frequently compared the barbarous, pagan American Indians to the Muslims and both were regularly accused by Christian writers of idolatry, sodomy and indolence."³ It was, after all, the Moors who had forged a new identity in Spain, creating in effect two societies, dominant Muslims and minority Christians, the latter becoming second-class citizens. Even today in Mexico and the Southwest, that dish of brown beans and white rice is called *Moros y Cristianos* (Moors/Muslims and Christians)—a seemingly innocuous meal and name that represents the darker Moor and the lighter Christian; interestingly, the bean itself is a native of the New World, while rice (symbolizing the whiter Christian) originated in the Old World. The indigenous bean's becoming the infidel Moor reminds us how easily the Native American Indian could be placed in that Moorish role.

By the time European Americans began to arrive in the West in the early nineteenth century, they too were primed to view both landscape and people through the lens of Orientalism. In an early nineteenth-century book of various titles, including *Travels and Romantic Adventures of Monsieur Violet*, Frederick Marryat contended that "the Shoshone women, as well as the Apache and Arrapahoe, all of whom are of the Shoshone race, are very superior to the squaws of the Eastern Indians." By this he meant that "they are more graceful in their forms, and have more personal beauty." This, of course, is sexist, but as Marryat put it, "I cannot better describe them by saying that they have more similitude to the Arabian women than any other race." By this, Marryat meant "they are very clean in their persons and in their lodges; and all their tribes having both male

and female slaves, the Shoshone wife is not broken down by hard labour, as are the squaws of the eastern tribes.” These women, as he put it, “ride as bravely as the men, and are very expert with the bow and arrow.” Marryat seems smitten. These Shoshone women are not only attractive and brave but also faithful to their husbands. As Marryat observed, perhaps with mixed appreciation and disappointment, “I really believe that any attempt upon their chastity would prove unavailing.”⁴ Note here that Marryat’s romantic view has a touch of the ethnographic: as he compares Native Americans to each other, some come out losers and some winners. Note, too, that the term “Arabian” is used in a positive sense.

When seen by Americans traveling in the mid-nineteenth century, communities in the Mexican borderlands possessed particular “charms,” as some put it, and this often had sexual overtones. This simmering sexuality accompanied US military personnel who entered the region during the 1846–1848 US-Mexican War. American soldiers, who almost invariably mention the mysterious, sensual quality of Mexican women, were especially susceptible to the region’s charms. Both the cultural landscape and the women here seemed exotic enough to enchant troops bent on conquest—that is, making the area part of the United States. In these comparisons, Mexican males did not fare particularly well. The tendency for Anglo-Americans to see ugliness in Mexican men and beauty in Mexican women is noteworthy. As Henry Howe put it in describing New Mexicans in 1853, “The males are generally ill-featured, while the females are often quite handsome.” Moreover, Howe added, there is a “wide difference in the character of the two sexes.” By this he meant that their behavior differed markedly. As Howe put it, “While the men have often been censured for their indolence, mendacity, and treachery, and cruelty, the women are active, affectionate, and open-hearted.” These women, he concluded, possess “a natural sympathy for every suffering being, be it friend or foe; which compensates, in some degree, for the want of a refined education.”⁵

The ability to charm extended easily from people to landscape and lasted for generations. Writing in 1919, more than half a century after the US-Mexican War, historian Justin Harvey Smith noted that American soldiers during the war found San Antonio, Texas, to be a fascinating, if somewhat decadent, community that easily charmed them. As Smith noted using Whitmanesque language, “The moss-covered walls of the Alamo, pitted by Santa Anna’s cannon balls—looked in their eyes like some ancient oriental city ‘just dug up,’ as one of them said; and the cactus, the live-oaks, the mocking-birds, the pellucid river and the many varieties of grapes extinguished soon the memory of past fatigues.” Smith’s term “oriental city” was noteworthy, as it suggested antiquity and mystery.⁶

The realities and seductions of war led American troops far south into the heart of Mexico. With every mile of southward trekking, they encountered cities that cast an even stronger spell based in part on romantic Orientalist literature and art. For American soldier Sam Chamberlain, words were not enough to describe the charm of Mexico. Chamberlain painted scenes rich in color and seduction, including one of himself in bed with two Mexican women—a reminder that the forbidden pleasures of the Orient could also be found on the North American continent. For beleaguered troops inclined toward the painterly, the landscape offered considerable appeal. As one of them noted, “Another comfort was to gaze from a safely remote hill at Vera Cruz, which looked—the soldiers agreed—so oriental, with airy palm trees visible over the white wall, hundreds of buzzards floating in wide circles far above, the dark bulwark of Ulúa set in waves of purple and gold on the left, a forest of American spars and masts on the right, piercing the misty splendor of the yellow beach, the bright sails of fishing boats in the middle distance, and the vast, blue, cool Gulf beyond it all.”⁷⁷ These Mexican communities were exotic, and by such fantasizing, the troops imagined that they were on even more remote foreign soil than the American continent, namely the Orient.

Consider next how even scientific expeditions along the newly created US-Mexico border helped transform the Southwest into the Orient. In the Victorian period, Asia exerted considerable influence on American artists, a number of whom went to the Southwest on government-sponsored expeditions. The scientific illustrations in William Emory’s impressive three-volume *United States and Mexican Boundary Survey* (1857)⁸ are worth a closer look in this regard. Whereas the scientific drawings of specimens such as fossils, snakes, and cacti are close to photographic in their accuracy, the southwestern landscape drawings by James David Smillie (1833–1909) are clearly romantic, even Asian, in their use of contorted vegetation and silhouetted topography. Smillie later became a well-known landscape painter, but he sketched landscapes for Emory’s report when he was in his early to midtwenties, an impressionable age indeed. One of his drawings—*View From Monument XVIII, in the Puerto de la Sierra del Pajarito, looking West Towards Monument XVII on the Cerro de Sonora* (fig. 4-1)—deserves closer scrutiny. Its title sounds clinical enough, but one should note that the method used by Smillie to depict the gnarled tree and shrub in the center foreground speaks volumes about artistic and cultural influences. If that drawing reveals an uncanny resemblance to Japanese (and Chinese) paintings, it is likely because Oriental painting was in vogue at the time. True, that may be a gnarled manzanita bush in the lower center of the drawing, for the manzanita does possess twisting branches



From William Emory's *Report on the United States-Mexican Boundary Survey*, 1857. Courtesy Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington Library, Arlington, Texas

Fig. 4-1. A mid-nineteenth century drawing showing a portion of the US-Mexico border in Arizona Orientalizes aspects of the landscape.

somewhat like the plant that Smillie drew. However, the drawing has an undeniably Asian quality due to the actual style of rendering. Moreover, even the agave (century plant) and other vegetation reveal similar stylistic liberty. Smillie rendered the mountain background with a stylized looseness more characteristic of Asian art than American scientific illustration. Was Smillie influenced by the paintings and drawings by Asian artists? Or was he inspired by fellow artists who had traveled to the Far East in search of inspiration? If the West's rugged landscapes could be softened by artists using the popular Hudson River school style of painting, then there is no reason that those same landscapes could not be rendered in the increasingly popular Asian style by American artists—even those on seemingly scientific missions.

If, as noted earlier, impressions of places are based on both landscapes and inhabitants, then more needs to be said about the Mexican people encountered in this region. Underlying the fascination of Mexican women was their *mestiza* heritage, for many were part Spanish and part Indian. To better understand Anglo-American perceptions of Native Americans, we should consult S. W. Cozzens's *The Marvellous Country* (1875). In words and images, Cozzens's book beautifully reveals how landscape and people fit into the process of Orientalization. As he traveled through New Mexico's Mesilla Valley, Cozzens stated with disarming sincerity: "Could a person familiar with

Bible history be suddenly transported and set down in the Mesilla Valley, he would certainly imagine himself among the Children of Israel, so primitive are the habits and customs of the people.”⁹ Cozzens here references not just the Indians, for Spaniards (in becoming Mexicans) had so thoroughly mixed with natives that they often had much the same identity to visitors here. However, Cozzens is more specifically referring to Indians when he later discusses the fabulous Acoma Pueblo. In characteristically Victorian fashion, and not unlike Frémont’s introduction to the distant view of Pyramid Lake that becomes focused on the familiar, Cozzens translates American Indian settlement and landscape in terms of the Old World:

We could have witnessed no more beautiful or enchanting sight than the sunrise which burst upon us ere we were half a dozen miles from Acoma. Before us rose the peaks of the Sierra Madre one above the other, each of an entirely different hue, reminding us of the ladder which Jacob of old saw set up between the earth and the heaven [sic], or of some vast staircase constructed by the Afreets [supernatural demons in Arabic and Islamic culture], to enable them to ascend to the very gates of Paradise.¹⁰

Thus it is that Indians, especially Indians of the western United States, become dwellers in a land that was read as biblical. Small wonder then, that the American Indian was characterized as (and believed to be) the Israelite in the New World.

This conflation got underway early and as destined to endure. Anglo-Americans arriving in the Southwest in the 1850s were prone to see similarities between the Indians and southwestern Asians. Some of these Indians were extremely helpful to early-day travelers, and they were likely to be called “good” Indians. Among these were the Pima-Maricopa peoples of central Arizona, who were a godsend to California-bound travelers in about 1850. In their villages not far from present-day Phoenix, they cultivated gardens and provided much-needed supplies for the travelers, many of whom were in dire straits by the time they reached this location. To help travelers who might otherwise perish of thirst, they dispatched what the travelers called “Good Samaritans of the desert.” These Indians carried “gourds of water, roasted pumpkins, and green corn.” William Emory observed that the Pima, who “surpassed many of the Christian nations in agriculture, [were] little behind them in the useful arts, and immeasurable before them in honesty and virtue.” Putting it more bluntly, the Quaker forty-niner Edward Pancoast stated that the Pimas were “the best type of Indian on the Continent.”¹¹

That concept of the Good Samaritan, of course, was, and is, used for anyone who helps someone in need; it originated in the Bible, wherein Jesus

fondly describes a man from Samaria who helps a man in need who had been robbed and beaten (Luke 10:33–35). This biblical reference helps place the original Good Samaritan in the desert wilderness—much as these Indians in Arizona were positioned to help mid-nineteenth century travelers crossing a seemingly similar and equally dangerous arid region. The Simpson Kern expedition typified this tendency to find the Old World, especially the Near East, in the far Southwest. At this time, the adobe pueblos were especially likely to be equated with the dwellings of the Middle East. These pueblo dwellers were considered to be civilized (i.e., “good”) Indians, as they were sedentary agriculturists.

However, the other types of Indians living in the region were nomadic tribes such as the Comanche and Apache. When these Indians were on horseback, they were equated with Mongols, Tuaregs, or other Asian and Middle Eastern tribes. Regardless of their origins, these nonsedentary Indians, like their mobile counterparts in the Orient, were perceived to be the most dangerous, duplicitous, and cruel of the Native Americans. They struck absolute terror in pioneers from Texas to Arizona.¹²

Some fears, however, were deeper than others—the fear of abduction being the most disquieting of all. The fear and reality of abduction by Indians and captivity in their hands had a long history on the Eastern Seaboard. Captives in the 1600s and early 1700s were likely to relate their experiences in terms of biblical narratives, but by around 1830 to the 1880s, they were far more lurid—a fact that coincided perfectly with the Anglo-Americans’ arrival in the Far West. In addition to the fear of outright physical harm, the strongest fear was that the white person abducted would actually identify with the Indians and stay with them voluntarily—something that happened fairly frequently. Far more rare, but nevertheless written about rather frequently, was abduction followed by sexual abuse. Fears of sexual mutilation on the part of males and the fear of rape on the part of women were common themes. In this, the desert or wilderness had a role, for such sexual depredations were considered more likely in areas far from civilization. With every mile from civilization, it seemed, those fears increased exponentially.

Nowhere was this fear more apparent than in the desert Southwest, but for Anglo-Americans it began farther east in the Great Plains. In migrating across that region to the Intermountain West in 1850, Susan Ellen Johnson Martineau recalled a narrow escape when a young Indian man expressed an interest in trading horses and other things for women—her in particular, with whom he seemed quite smitten. In a classical lead-up to captivity drama, the pioneers refused but the Indian persisted, attempting to dash away with her

after dark. He waited, as it was later related in her husband's diary, "till the night became as dark as Egypt, then brought his horse up near the tent, and waited for a favorable moment" to carry her away. Note how dramatic this description is; it is as much a passage from an Orientalist desert novel as a factual account. Note, too, how quickly and satisfactorily it ended: the woman's screams "instantly brought her help, as she leaped from the horse, while her dusky lover—disappointed and baffled in his daring scheme—dashed away down the [river] bank into the thicket and was instantly lost to sight."¹³ Later, in Arizona, Susan asked her husband, James, to kill her if she were about to be captured by Apache Indians for, as he put it, "I knew, too, that quick death at my hand would be a thousand times more merciful than such tortures as the Apaches had already inflicted upon many women and children." Martineau agreed to Susan's macabre request, adding, "But, Oh! What a dreadful thing it is to be obliged to make so fearful a promise!"¹⁴

It is significant that these Apache-themed dramas took place in the hot, arid sections of the American West. "The desert . . ." as feminist scholar Ella Shohat observes, "functions narratively as an isolating element, as sexually and morally separate imaginary territory." This sexualized desert is fascinating and dangerous country. It is here, as Shohat put it, that "the real dramatic conflicts take place." By this, Shohat means the desert is psychologically far away from the origin point of the white woman, who seems especially vulnerable here. Putting this in Orientalist terms, this is "the desert where women are defenseless and [where] a white woman could easily become the captive of a romantic sheik or evil Arab." Shohat further suggests that this type of "isolated desert locale gives voice to a masculinist fantasy of complete control over the Western woman, the woman 'close to home,' without any intervening protective code of morality." This formula later served Hollywood well as a way to "censure female adventurousness and the male tyranny of harems and rapes—but only, paradoxically, as a way of gratifying Western interracial sexual desires."¹⁵

The contrast between sedentary, well-behaved peoples and unsettled, nomadic barbarians is one of the basic elements inherent in Orientalism. It certainly played out in the Old World as clashes between agriculturists and herders. Colonialists admired those sedentary and ostensibly well-behaved peoples more than their archenemies—the raiding nomads like Genghis Khan. In the New World, this translates into the good Indian-bad Indian syndrome, the "good" Indians being those well-behaved sedentary agriculturists (like the Hopis and Pimas), and the "bad" Indians being the mobile nomads (like the Apaches and Comanches), who could raid settled places with impunity.

In describing why the valleys of Arizona were still unsettled despite the fact that they “are not surpassed for fertility and beauty by any that I have seen, and that includes the whole world,” Charles D. Poston of the newly created Arizona Historical Society noted in 1894 that Apaches had been “a continual source of dread and danger.” There were, however, “evidences of a still more remote and mysterious civilization by an aboriginal race, of which we know nothing, and can learn but little by the vestiges that they left upon the earth.” We now know these indigenous peoples as the Hohokam, but to Poston they were nameless. He did know, however, that “the engineering for their irrigating canals was so perfect as that practiced on the Euphrates, the Ganges, or the Nile.” These Middle Eastern and southern Asian cultures exemplified the highest order of cultural organization, the progenitors of our own culture in the broadest scheme of things.¹⁶

In the West of the nineteenth century, travel writers took part in the wholesale casting of Indians into roles straight out of literature. It was widely believed that the western Indians were not only skilled torturers but also depraved cannibals. Moreover, when this alleged barbarism was coupled with the prospect of sexual licentiousness, it was both titillating and horrifying. As a German traveler reported, or rather bragged, “A number of young Indian girls fell upon me, ripped at my clothes and allowed themselves the most embarrassing grasp of hands.” Historian Ray Allen Billington laconically noted that this man had “barely escaped with his honor.” Given the rich tradition of travelers embellishing the truth, of course, the encounter may have been more the product of fantasy than anything that actually happened. However, it offered a lesson regardless of veracity. The perpetrators of this licentious act were wanton, for this was not the way that proper people behaved. As Billington concluded, “Such liberties were not allowable in Victorian Europe.”¹⁷

There is evidence that this fascination with the exotic-as-erotic was part of the southwestern American experience, and that it often played out in an Orientalized way. For example, in his military reconnaissance of the Southwest (1846), the “soldier-scientist” William Emory described an encounter that took place near Santa Fe, when Emory’s entourage spotted a group of Apaches. One of the women on horseback not only interfered with army business but was evidently something of an exhibitionist. Emory, himself an archenemy of the Orientalism-prone John Charles Frémont, couldn’t resist describing this woman in great detail in a way that brought to mind Orientalist sexual fantasies. The woman, Emory notes, “had on a gauze-like dress, trimmed with the richest and most costly Brussels lace, pillaged no doubt from some fandango-going belle of Sonora.” So far, she is simply characterized as one of

the wild Indians who preyed on the Spanish nobility, an interesting contrast in itself given Emory's task of taking the northern portion of Mexico for the United States. As if Emory's description weren't fascinating enough, however, he quickly notes that "she straddled a fine grey horse, and whenever her blanket dropped from her shoulders, her tawny form could be seen through the transparent gauze." Emory's readers now imagine that dusky native woman's body astride the steed, at which point things become even more interesting. To show off her horsemanship in front of the troops, "she charged at full speed up a steep hill." However, in the commotion of undertaking this spectacular feat of horsemanship, "the fastenings of her dress broke, and her bare back was exposed to the crowd, who ungallantly raised a shout of laughter." To leave little doubt that she was not intimidated by this calamity, the woman "wheeled short round with surprising dexterity, and seeing the mischief done, coolly slipped the dress under arms and tucked it between the seat and the saddle." At this point, we can imagine a vixen as brazen as Lady Godiva, for Emory concludes that "in this state of nudity, she rode through the camp, from fire to fire, until, at last, attaining the object of her ambition, a soldier's red flannel shirt, she made her adieu in that new costume."¹⁸

The image of a naked (or nearly so) woman going from campfire to campfire suggests a camp follower, but the idea of her desiring a man's flannel shirt appears to suggest less gender swapping than a kind of intimacy wherein the garment worn close to the body of a soldier now clothes a native. Although on the surface there is nothing to identify this as an Orientalist fantasy, the notion of a pillaging, shameless, horse-bound woman certainly recalls descriptions of the tribes of the Asian steppe. On one level, Emory is feigning humor—that is, poking fun at this woman. On another, he reveals that he not only admires but perhaps also desires the abandon she represents.

Recounting his early 1860s travels through the Apache country of southern Arizona in his popular book *Across America and Asia* (1870), American geologist Raphael Pumpelly related the case of a "poor woman" who had been abducted by Apaches. When she was barely able to keep up with the Indians, who kept "prickling her with lances to prevent her falling behind," they finally "lanced her through and through the body" and threw "her over a ledge of rocks, left her for dead." Rather than perishing, however, the tough woman plugged her own wounds with rags and dragged herself home, a painful process taking several days as she subsisted on roots and berries. Even the normally nonjudgmental Pumpelly called these Indians "savages." He noted how much terror they struck in the local settlers, and in him, as he crossed Arizona. Here, especially during the night, when "fancy gives life to the blackened yucca, and

transforms the tall stem of the century plant into the lance of an Apache,” Pumpelly stated that the traveler takes “every object within fifty yards for the lurking-place of an Indian.”¹⁹ This description is similar to those written about “ruthless” or “barbaric” tribes in Arabia and portions of southwestern Asia in “travel accounts” by careful observers such as Richard F. Burton, or in the work of imaginative novelists such as the German Karl May, whose *Oriental Odyssey* contained riveting passages about the Middle East, for example, “these mountains reek to this day with the blood of those who fell victim to racial hatred, wild fanaticism and the desire for rape or bloody vengeance.”²⁰

Undermining civilized colonial order at nearly every turn, except when it was in their favor to cooperate, these American Indian “barbarians” were troublesome but secretly admired by many Europeans. As they moved about the American West, some well-traveled Englishmen compared the fate of American Indians with that of the “Natives” in the British colonies in the Orient. In most cases, they felt the American Indians fared worse. As the Earl of Dunraven put it in traveling in the American West in 1874, “The tribes exclusively inhabiting the United States have suffered more than their brethren who partially or altogether live in British possessions, for they have come more into collision with the superior race.”²¹

The widespread belief that the American Indian was disappearing made Orientalist comparisons all the more poignant and heightened nostalgia for a “vanishing race.” This belief was among the many factors that led Americans to question whether a more humane Indian policy wouldn’t be more advisable—but only after most Indians in the West were either on reservations or had fallen victim to land encroachment by settlers and resource users like loggers, miners, and ranchers. But the colonizers were ambivalent about the process, seeking a tamed (that is, controlled) frontier while increasingly romanticizing the “free” way of life that was lost in the process. That tortured sentiment, of course, is another example of imperialist nostalgia—the lamenting of the noble things lost through colonization, provided that the successful colonizers are the ones privileged enough to do the lamenting.

By now it should be obvious that the Spaniards were not alone in seeing parallels between the Orient and what they experienced on their northern, Indian-dominated frontier. For their part, the Anglo-Americans also tended to view parts of the American Southwest as Middle Eastern well before the Southwest became part of the United States after 1848. The Anglo-American Orientalization of the region may have begun in Texas. In 1839, for example, John Leonard Riddell observed that San Antonio “reminded me of Tadmor in the desert mentioned in the Scriptures.”²² As they traveled deeper into the

Southwest, Anglo-American observers commonly confused Hispanic and Middle Eastern architecture. For example, again quoting S. W. Cozzens's popular book *The Marvellous Country*, Arizona's mission San Xavier del Bac was portrayed as "the most beautiful, as well as remarkable, specimen of Saracenic style of architecture to be found in the country." It should be noted here that this was a complimentary statement, for Cozzens quickly added, "Nor have I ever seen a building in such perfect harmony with its proportions as is this."²³

Located at the end of the long trail from Saint Louis to New Mexico that bears its name, Santa Fe was frequently cast in exotic terms. In 1866, a traveler described Santa Fe as a nearly "pure Mexican" community of about five thousand, observing that "the houses are of adobes, or mud brick, one-story high, with but two or three exceptions." Not content to end the description there, the writer declared that "the material and mode of building are precisely the same as adopted by the ancient Assyrians." Moreover, he observed, "You may find the perfect counterparts of the common adobe houses to-day, on the banks of the Euphrates and the Nile." Santa Fe's adobe buildings likely resulted from cultural diffusion: "The Spaniard in Mexico built his adobe as he had it in Andalusia, whither it was brought by the Moors from Africa, who, in their turn, had received it from the East." Small wonder that viewing the landscape of Santa Fe was at least in theory much the same as experiencing its original in the Near East.²⁴ After all, the word "adobe" itself is Egyptian Arabic (*adobar*) for sun-dried brick.

In fact, Santa Fe has also been considered partly Moorish due to its Spanish architectural roots. Few writers captured the connection between Moorish and Spanish heritage better than Ralph E. Twitchell, who wrote for the Santa Fe Railway, which built its line through northern New Mexico: "Something of that intangible air of mystery that the Moors brought from the Far East to Granada," Twitchell wrote, "was transplanted to American soil by the conquistadores." Here in New Mexico, as Twitchell put it, "among scenic surroundings that must have reminded them of their Iberian home, blossomed the City of Holy Faith, the capital of the Sunshine State."²⁵ This conflation of the New and Old Worlds venerated Santa Fe, adding to its cachet as an "ancient" city. It also helped transform a locale in the Americas into something far more exotic, namely an Oriental-appearing place in the American Southwest.

As the locale of considerable military activity in the US-Mexican War (1846–1848), the Southwest was astride an early route of migration to Southern California along which pioneers experienced "ancient ruins, magnificent landscapes, and exotic peoples." As Lea Dilworth observed, their "regionalist (and nationalist) rhetoric was often similar to the discourse of Orientalism."²⁶ In

a process that Marta Weigle astutely calls “Southwesternism,” the American Southwest answered Americans’ need for an Orient. “Unlike the Plains Indians, who were usually represented as savage (though sometimes noble) warriors, the Pueblos were a ‘semi civilized’ self-sufficient, settled, and agricultural people who lived in houses and produced attractive handicrafts.”²⁷ Artist Henry Cross depicted the Hopi Indians as an “oriental curiosity.”²⁸ The classic images of the “olla maidens”—women with pottery jars balanced on their heads—gave the region an exotic, Asian quality. According to Barbara Babcock, this image was the most common icon for indigenous southwestern women. It was well developed by the late nineteenth century, but the Orientalization of natives in the Southwest by Anglo-Americans began more than half a century before that.

The Southwest-as-Near-East also relies, in part, on the lifestyles associated with certain Indians. As in the Middle East, some indigenous peoples here are sedentary, while others are nomadic. In both places, it should be noted, even nomadic peoples might live in one location for a season or more. Yet they conveyed the popular impression that they were constantly on the move. Then, too, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and well into the nineteenth century, portions of the area resembled the Near East, as a thriving slave trade existed here. Those Indians who raided communities and took captives as slaves usually hoped to ransom some and thus improve their status vis-à-vis the European Americans. This, as historian James Brooks notes in *Captives and Cousins*, was a time-honored tradition among certain American tribes before Europeans arrived. However, it was also reminiscent of Muslim-Christian interaction in Spain circa 1200 AD. As Brooks noted, “A broadly held code of male honor superseded ethnic and religious differences in Early Modern Spain, providing the moral framework within which contests for honor, territory, subjects, and women took place.” The symbolic drama of “los moros y cristianos,” reenacted annually for more than two centuries in the Southwest as “Los Comanches,” reflected the varied ways of life here. This event was a simulated taking of a virgin Spanish or New Mexican girl by Indians. The girl would in turn be ransomed as a way for both societies, Indian and European, to interact and save face. As Brooks concludes, the phenomenon of seizing a captive who will then be returned through *rescate*, or ransom, “had parallels in the ‘Old World’ that would prove more meaningful when both worlds met in the Southwest Borderlands.”²⁹

Given the tendency to see or, rather, imagine concrete connections between this part of North America and the Middle East, it is understandable that Jicarilla Apache Indians were given the title of Faraónes—or Pharaohs—by



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Arlington, Texas

Fig. 4-2. As illustrated in Cozzens's *The Marvellous Country* (1875), a natural geological formation in the American Southwest appears to be an ancient ruin, complete with walls and towers.

the Spaniards. Like the ancient Egyptians, the Jicarilla Apaches kept slaves. The upshot of this is that the Indians' behavior seemed familiar indeed. Much like the Moors and Arabs, their cultures used captives as a natural part of the social interaction process; small wonder, therefore, that Indians were frequently equated with Turks, Berbers, and the like by travelers. Interestingly, this propensity to barter with captives in the Muslim world seems somehow barbaric and ancient to westerners today, yet it is a deeply rooted tradition in that part of the world. Small wonder, too, that American military action in the Middle East today is characterized as something out of the Wild West, where natives not only use unconventional and seemingly barbaric military tactics but seize hostages whom they literally view as pawns that will be exchanged for valuable players—their own seized warriors.³⁰

Cozzens's florid narrative in *The Marvellous Country* deserves closer examination because it is quite instructive regarding how natural features in the Southwest were, through vivid imagination, turned into turreted, domed, and otherwise Oriental cities. Traveling through southern New Mexico, Cozzens and his fellow travelers found themselves staring at "some remarkable sandstone formations" that appeared to be an ancient city. As Cozzens put it, "We found about forty columns, worn by the winds and rains into most singular shapes. Some looked like churches, towers, castles, or barracks,

and others very like human beings of colossal proportions. So striking were these resemblances," Cozzens added, "that it was hard to believe [that] the hand of man had nothing to do with their formations."³¹ As Cozzens's book illustrated these natural features (fig. 4-2), they are given a clearly architectural character. This, of course, is as much artistic sleight of hand as Cozzens's enthusiastic description.

But things became even more architecturalized the farther Cozzens and his companions traveled in the vicinity of the Organ Mountains. Always up for diversions of interest to share with his readers, Cozzens noted that his guide urged them to visit an even more spectacular, fantastic sight. Near a series of lakes in the mountains, the guide told Cozzens about "a very peculiar sandstone formation, well worth seeing." Pondering the word *peculiar*, Cozzens agreed. Moving in that direction, Cozzens spied something in the distance. "Bringing our glasses to bear upon that portion" of the countryside, he noted, we "saw what seemed to be a large city, with its spires and domes and towers glittering in the bright sunlight, and rivalling in splendour even the creations of the genii conjured by 'Aladdin's wonderful lamp.'"³² As one of the stories related in *The One Thousand and One Nights*, (or simply the *Arabian Nights*), "Aladdin and the Magic Lamp" was read by an avid public in both the United States and Europe. Its blend of magic and intrigue epitomized Orientalist tales. A landscape that seemed out of that story was irresistible. Naturally, Cozzens and several others hiked closer to get a better look (fig. 4-3). Not content to leave the reader only intrigued, Cozzens then explicitly described the sight that greeted him the next morning. In one of the most vivid passages ever penned transforming natural objects into architectural forms, he wrote:

The next morning the guide called us to behold the wonderful effect of the rising sun upon the city of enchantment that we had seen from the mountain the day before. As we approached this marvellous architecture of the elements, we could not repress our exclamations of wonder and delight. Streets were plainly visible; massive temples with their spires and domes; monuments of every conceivable shape; castles of huge proportions; towers and minarets, all formed of pure white silica, which glittered in the sunlight like walls of crystal. It was hard to persuade ourselves that art had had no part in forming these graceful testimonials to the wonders of nature.³³

Note here the use of terms like "temples" and "minarets," a way of further distinguishing the towers and castles as Near Eastern, which is to say Oriental. To place this awesome location in the context of his group's members, Cozzens revealed the general incredulity about this city of stone. "'Surely,' said Dr.



Courtesy, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington
Library, Arlington, Texas

Fig. 4-3. This illustration of “A City not made with Hands” in Cozzens’s *The Marvellous Country* (1875) transforms New Mexico’s Organ Mountains into a magical cityscape of towers and minarets.

Parker, ‘this must be a city.’ ‘Yes,’ replied I, ‘a city, but not made with hands.’”³⁴

In this exchange, we witness Cozzens doing something that represented an increasingly common trend, namely, endowing the American landscape itself with a kind of spiritual quality that ostensibly transcends culture. How did this spiritualization of the landscape work? First of all, Cozzens had to find some way of showing the greatness of this majestic landscape, and so he went to considerable effort to show that nature herself had created a spectacle that could mock the most majestic works of man. That those works belonged to the Old World, and particularly to the Orient, reveals a sense of appreciation, even reverence, for that original landscape. However, Cozzens was part of a trend that would ultimately change the way we would view landscape—no longer in the context of works of man but of works of the Great Creator. In that sense, Cozzens was yielding to a more naturalistic philosophy, including that held by Native Americans, rather than that espoused by the patriarchs of old. Such views were more typical of radical Walt Whitman than conservative prophet Brigham Young. For our purposes here, however, the thing to remember is that this more natural philosophy would ultimately undermine Orientalist appreciation and lead to a new way of describing and promoting regional identity, namely, as exceptionally American in nature.

Historian Anne Farrar Hyde noted that people in the nineteenth century tended to find “the far away nearby”—as did Frederick Dellenbaugh, who

explored the Grand Canyon with John Wesley Powell and saw in a rock formation “the airy structures evolved by the wonderful lamp of Aladdin.” Hyde notes that Major Clarence E. Dutton, who also explored the Grand Canyon with Powell, was a masterful describer of the unusual landscapes here. Dutton observed that travelers whose experience was with the eastern United States or Europe “would enter this strange region with a shock” because they had seen nothing that could compare with the bizarre landforms of the Southwest. Nothing, however, may be too strong a word, for art and literature provided many examples that would fit. Although Dutton used many abstract terms in describing and naming topographic features here, he clearly succumbed to the Orient on a number of occasions. As Hyde put it, Dutton “often chose references to the Far East to express the alien and exotic quality of the landscape.” It was Dutton who “filled the depths of the Grand Canyon with shrines, temples, thrones and castles lived in and sat upon by Woton, Shiva, Vishnu, Isis, and even King Arthur.”³⁵

The important point to remember here is that the combination of people and setting work to substantiate place and at the same time create new places in the imagination. As two southwestern anthropologists recently put it, “Landscapes and people cannot be separated; one entails the other.”³⁶ This is evident in a placid scene that was used to illustrate Lee C. Harby’s article titled “Texan Types and Contrasts” in the July 1890 issue of *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*. The artist is Frederick Remington, and the subject is simply titled “Woman Vending Fruit on a Street Corner” (fig. 4-4). Remington made this photo engraving of a street scene in El Paso, Texas. That explanation seems straightforward enough, but consider again this scene’s timelessness and, if you will, placelessness. In scrutinizing this engraving, one cannot tell the time period it represents (for it appears to be devoid of modern technology) or where it was encountered (that is, in what hemisphere Remington encountered it). In reality, this scene could be in Tangier or Texas. The background helps a bit, for those adobe buildings with their viga beams suggest the Southwest or Mexico, but in truth the scene’s architecture appears to be as much from North Africa or Asia Minor as it is “southwestern.” Placelessness, though, may not be quite the correct word here, for the locale is indeed generic, conveying places in both the Orient and the West that look similar enough to be confused. Timelessness, too, may be incorrect because the scene represents a place where an indistinct period of time—that is, tradition—trumps modernity. Then, too, the woman’s profile, her covered head, her dress, even her wares, might be as Middle Eastern as they are Hispanic Texan. Remington paradoxically portrays a southwestern American subject that could be southwestern



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Fig. 4-4. Although depicting the American Southwest (El Paso), Frederick Remington's *Woman Vending Fruit on a Street Corner* features a subject and locale reminiscent of North Africa, the Near East, or Asia Minor.

Asian. That ambiguity, again, is part of the seductiveness that occurs when new regional identities are created by building on old ones.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Santa Fe Railway played a major role in promoting and Orientalizing the southwestern pueblos. Their route from Chicago to Los Angeles ran near some of the pueblos and directly through one, namely, Laguna Pueblo in New Mexico. Ever aware of opportunities to increase revenues as well as increase the support of the native peoples here, the railroad stopped passenger trains to enable passengers to purchase handmade items from the Indians. It also sponsored art contests to encourage artists to render the indigenous landscapes and peoples. Many of these artists did just that, using the Orientalist motifs prevalent at the time.

Moreover, the Santa Fe also worked closely with the Fred Harvey Company, which supported ethnographic research enabling them to more effectively promote the “authentic” heritage of the region—and to market that heritage. The Santa Fe Railway created a corporate identity around the Southwest and its indigenous peoples, as did the Southern Pacific railroad that crossed the region closer to the Mexican border.

Along its more southerly route across the Southwest, however, the Southern Pacific had none of the spectacular pueblos, although it did run close to the ancient, multistory adobe “apartment house” called Casa Grande. This part of the region also had the “civilized”—that is, peaceful—Papago or Tohono O’odham Indians. But those civilized Indians had a singular counterpoint: also in Southern Pacific country were the Apache Indians, whose reputation for wildness and cruelty was well known as early as the mid-nineteenth century. The railroads took advantage of the literary fascination with the region, incorporating both fictional and real historical identities into their advertising. Of all railroads operating in the American West a century ago, however, only one actually incorporated the name “Orient” in its official title. That railroad was the Kansas City, Mexico and Orient (KCM&O), a line built southwestward from Kansas City through Oklahoma and Texas into Mexico on its way to the port of Topolobampo. That exotic-sounding port was the Orient railroad’s destination, to establish a presence on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. However, the ultimate goal of the “Orient,” as it was called, was the Far East.³⁷

The railroads and other corporations, including townsite developers, were highly influential in this region. They exercised considerable power in creating both a southwestern, and a romanticized Oriental, heritage here. There is an implication of rejuvenation or rebirth in the Southwest, especially for jaded easterners. Consider Phoenix, Arizona, which still enchants some visitors with its date palms and dry air, especially those willing to overlook its gridlocked traffic and deteriorating air quality. The name *Phoenix* became quite common in the United States in the nineteenth century, and it then had an “Oriental” quality in the popular mind. The phoenix is a legendary bird portrayed in Egyptian stories as native to Arabia. The phoenix lives for a thousand years and then dies after singing a beautiful song and sacrificing itself on a funeral pyre. In a miraculous act, the phoenix is then reborn to live another thousand years after it rises from the ashes. This legend, which is Middle Eastern in origin but is also found in Greece and farther east to southwestern Asia, reminds one how readily Americans incorporated what were originally Oriental motifs into place naming. Naming a community after the phoenix implied that it too would not only be reborn, but would be reborn even stronger and better than

the original. In the case of Phoenix, Arizona, settlers in the 1860s and 1870s were well aware of the evidence of an “ancient” culture, the Hohokam, which left an elaborate irrigation system of impressive ditches but had otherwise vanished by the nineteenth century. As both pragmatists and romanticists, these latter-day settlers realized the name *phoenix* resonated as something legendary, irrepressible, and magical—just the qualities that the new, but also very old, city of Phoenix, Arizona, would possess. This may seem fanciful and even more than a little naive today, but it represents the romantically inspired boosterism of the time.³⁸ Speaking of latter-day settlers, the Mormons were also part of the growing European American population, but added another interpretation: they considered some of these Hohokam earthworks near Phoenix to be the fortifications of ancient Book of Mormon people.

The fabled Phoenix was not the only ancient symbol appropriated by southwestern developers and image builders. In what came to be called “the Valley of the Sun” near Phoenix, the developers used other symbols, including the camel, to connect the new city with the ancient Near East. A revealing advertisement in the 1914 issue of *Progressive Arizona* magazine shows a man clad in Middle Eastern garb overlooking the valley near Phoenix, while his camel nearby also ponders the scene. This advertisement by the Scottsdale Investment & Land Company uses explicit symbols, but some could be more abstract. Consider, for example, the swastika, which appears to be rather universal in that it was known in both the Old World (especially South Asia) and the Native American Southwest. Railroad and mining companies appropriated the swastika in the early twentieth century as a characteristically southwestern symbol. The swastika’s adoption is easy to understand. This symbol stood for good luck or good fortune and integrated the four directions of the compass into a potent design. In the period from about 1910 to 1920, the Swastika Coal Company in New Mexico used that symbol on its logo, or herald. Similarly, the Pecos and Northwestern Railroad used the swastika on its logo. This railroad emblazoned the swastika on its locomotive tenders as well as its coal-carrying gondola cars. In the early twentieth-century industrial Southwest, then, it was not unusual to see the swastika in both Native American and Anglo-American contexts. Such iconography naturally vanished by the late 1930s as Adolph Hitler rose to prominence in Germany.³⁹

This use of the swastika represents the simulacrum, which on one level simply means an image or representation of something, but on another demands scrutiny as an insubstantial form or semblance of something that insinuates itself broadly and deeply into a culture. The forms or images can

be repeated *ad infinitum*, becoming, as Jean Baudrillard calls them, “second order simulacra.” To Baudrillard, these are in essence forgeries that were born out of the Renaissance and manifested in a wide range of objects, “from the deceptive finery on people’s backs” to “Baroque theatrical scenery.”⁴⁰ This again represents a critical view, but people often readily adopt such imagery as part of the process of romanticizing past peoples. Although it involved counterfeiting others—other peoples, other places, other objects—the predisposition to imagine the Orient enabled the East to possess the Southwest.

There was a lot to start with here. The design of the original pueblos greatly contributed to the “Oriental” impression because their cubic form and adobe construction had strong similarities to settlements in parts of North Africa and the Middle East. This imagination-inspired perception also dates from Spanish times here. Explorers from Coronado’s time imagined the Indian pueblos they spied from a distance to be fabulous cities that rivaled or eclipsed cities in the Old World. On closer examination, the cube-shaped adobe buildings of both the Native Americans and Spaniards were often considered by travelers in the nineteenth-century Southwest to be duplicates of Old World structures. Scholars too noted the similarities, despite the fact that the two styles of architecture originated in two widely separated but similarly arid regions of the world. In northern Mexico, for example, geographers Robert West and John Augelli attributed the design and exterior appearance of such houses to both Berber and Native American building traditions.⁴¹ Small wonder that the Spaniards felt so at home here, though the Indians often took a different view of their presence.

As historian Jerold Auerbach demonstrated, soldiers and writers were not alone in their tendency to see the Orient near, or south of, the US-Mexico border. By the 1880s, ethnographers were also among those who Orientalized the Southwest and its peoples. Primed with a solid dose of Orientalist thinking from Europe, as well as his own creative imagination, ethnographer Frank Hamilton Cushing saw similarities between the Near East and the southwestern tribes. As Cushing put it, “How strangely parallel have been the lines of development in this curious civilization of an American desert, with those of Eastern nations and deserts.” By Eastern, of course, Cushing meant southwestern Asia and the Middle East. Cushing seemed especially enchanted by the “eastern” aspects of southwestern Indians. As natives moved through the region on burros, Cushing mused that he was instead observing “a caravan crossing a desert waste.”⁴² Moreover, it was not just any Eastern people Cushing encountered here in the Southwest, but a decidedly biblical people. To him, they evoked “a Scripture-like scene” on the one hand, while their religious ceremonies, he



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Fig. 4-5. This illustration from *The Illustrated Police News* (1886) of Matilda Cox Stevenson confronting a Hopi Indian man at Oraibi, Arizona, personifies colonial authority and indigenous submission.

contended, were “strangely like those of the ancient Egyptians and Greeks.”⁴³ This reminds us that although the religious component of Orientalism may have weakened by century’s end, it was never completely erased.

Cushing was not alone. His colleague, ethnologist Matilda Cox Stevenson, was also prone to romanticize the Southwest, as were others, who observed that the settlements of the Southwest were similar to “the villages of ancient Egypt and Nubia, Nineveh and Babylon,” and that “we must cross deserts and scale mountains till we reach the Eden of the West.”⁴⁴ Few images better reveal Victorian-era prejudices and stereotypes than one showing Stevenson at Oraibi, in 1886 (fig. 4-5). Stevenson, who began her career studying women and children, arrived with her husband, James, in that Arizona Hopi Indian village expecting to be warmly welcomed by the natives. Her goal, after all, was to study the natives under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution. Upon arriving at Oraibi, however, the Stevensons “encountered stiff resistance to their being in the village, an incident sensationalized some months later by *The Illustrated Police News*.”

This illustration shows the two ethnographers standing amid the Hopi Indians, but it is Mrs. Stevenson who commands our attention as she upbraids

a resistant Indian man. As depicted in the scene, Mrs. Stevenson is in full Victorian dress—a symbol of propriety and order—and seemingly in full control. She leans menacingly toward the Indian man, who has evidently fallen or been pushed back against the wall. For our purposes, the Indian is the consummate “other”; true, he is a native of the Southwest, but he might just as well be from the Asian steppe or India itself. In the racist wording of the time, the illustration is derisively titled “cowed by a woman,” and provides nominal proof that Indian men—like children—can be disciplined and controlled even by the fairer sex. As the illustration’s title continues, “A Craven Red Devil Weakens in the face of a resolute White heroine,” who had “exciting adventures in an Indian village in Arizona.” The illustration and its caption suggest that these Indians are really not so brave or threatening after all—at least not in the face of a determined Anglo-American. For his part, Mr. Stevenson stands still and aloof, almost like a statue dressed in explorer’s attire. His silent presence here is a symbol for a broader colonial authority that empowers—backs up, as it were—the orders from Washington, DC.⁴⁵ One can only wonder what would have transpired had the Stevensons confronted Apache or Navajo Indians, rather than the more gentle and docile Hopis. The year of the illustration—1886—suggests considerable bluster as well as bravado, as the battles with Indians like Cochise and Geronimo were beginning to wind down at just this time.

It is here that we need to look more closely at how the native peoples responded. Although it is easy to think of them as victims of a pernicious process of cultural transference and denigration—and that is partly true—it is not the whole story. In fact, Indians were becoming expert at playing the game of seeming primitive while fitting into a broader capitalist economy at just the time that the Santa Fe Railroad penetrated this region in the early 1880s. Within ten years, even the Apaches were serving as goodwill ambassadors at the World’s Fair in Chicago, at which simulated southwestern Indian villages were constructed. By 1904, Indians were depicted along with other examples of “primal” peoples from remote parts of the world at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in Saint Louis. As anthropologist Don Fowler noted, “The expositions from 1889 through 1904 took place during the time when literary, artistic, and touristic attention began to be focused on the Southwest and the commodification of the Indian ‘arts and crafts’ market got underway.”⁴⁶ Some Indians were ruined by the process, others tried to avoid it in one way or another, and some managed to benefit from it—taking on a new identity on one level, and increasing their fortunes as a consequence.

Because Anglo-Americans were ambivalent about the peoples of the East, reactions to the Indians here varied. Some Christians were especially critical of



Courtesy Palace of the Governor's Photo Archives (NMHM/DCA, negative no. 012422)

Fig. 4-6. Philip E. Harroun's cyanotype photograph of "A New Mexican Rebecca" (1896) helped endorse the popular view that New Mexico's indigenous peoples were similar to those described in the Bible.

the similarities between Indians and Arabs. Not especially positive about the Orient or the Orientals he encountered in the American Southwest, bombastic and pushy easterner George Wharton James described the Indians negatively. James called them "the Bedouins of the United States, who rival in picturesque-ness if not in evil, their compeers of the deserts of the Nile."⁴⁷ It should be noted, however, that the southwestern Indians were highly attractive people to the more hedonistically inclined elite of America—Mabel Dodge Luhan being a case in point. She took (and later married) an Indian lover and otherwise went native, or rather Bohemian, in her new Southwestern setting.

Around the turn of the century, then, the Southwest took on the cachet of an exotic and desirable locale. This was a time of florid prose and artistic photography, as Philip E. Harroun's stunning picture of "A New Mexican Rebecca" (1896) reveals (fig. 4-6). To these travelers and photographers, the Pueblo Indians were remarkable survivors of ancient cultures; moreover, their days were numbered, or so travelers thought. This made the tendency to snatch trappings from their culture—rugs, pots, jewelry—all the more tempting. These appeared throughout the Midwest and Eastern Seaboard, as parlors and mantels sported artifacts from America's own ancient land. Native customs also provided a glimpse into what seemed an ancient, Asian world. For example, the Pueblo Indians' fascination with, and use of, the snake in various ceremonies (such as the Hopi Snake Dance) titillated Anglo-American

Protestants. The latter regarded snakes with terror and disdain and equated the Indians who handled them with the “snake charmers” of the East. That one element alone—veneration of snakes—helped cast Native American identity here in terms of the Orientals who felt no compunction about venerating the same serpents that had tempted Eve.

Well into the twentieth century, ethnographers and physical anthropologists alike Orientalized the American Indians of the Southwest as they searched for connections linking them to the peoples of antiquity. Consider, for example, Aleš Hrdlička, a Czech-Bohemian-born American medical anthropologist who believed in the oneness of the human race. Widely read and widely traveled, Hrdlička made an interesting observation while in Mongolia in 1912. Of the village of Urga, Hrdlička claimed that “people are swarming in the markets which is a harvest [that is, feast] for my eyes; and so many resemble the [American] Indian that I feel as if I were in a Mexican rather than an Asiatic town.” Hrdlička was obsessed by the similarities between Asians and Native American Indians, for as he put it, “There can be no question about it that many of these [Mongolian] people have the same blood in them as the American natives.”⁴⁸ This claim is, of course, partly true in the genetic sense, but its cultural implications are enormous. Rather than being racists, many observers like Hrdlička viewed race as a series of physical traits that could ultimately unify all of humankind. Also enormous was the realization that cultural similarities, like the crowding of a marketplace, united peoples on two continents. This kind of Orientalism, then, is paradoxically something that differentiates at the same time it unifies.

Orientalism can work both ways, or rather in both hemispheres. Therefore, we must also recall that Anglo-Americans who experienced the Southwest could travel to the “real” East and bring New Mexico with them. In traveling into the hills near Beyrout (Beirut), Lebanon, American writer Bayard Taylor was accompanied by two men: “Dervish, an erect, black-bearded, and most impassive Mussulman [i.e., Muslim], and Mustapha, who is the very picture of patience and good-nature.” These men, Taylor claimed, “are both masters of their art, and can load a mule with a speed and skill which I would defy any Santa Fé trader to excel.” The use of the name *Santa Fe* is noteworthy here, for Taylor was at least six thousand miles from that New Mexico community. Yet he could in effect Occidentalize the Muslims here in the Middle East by comparing them to their New World counterparts, who were ironically often compared to their Old World counterparts.⁴⁹

Being interfaces between words and pictures, maps of the time can help us understand the subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) relationship between the



Courtesy Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington Library, Arlington, Texas

Fig. 4-7. This map of Asia Minor superimposed on Texas, which appeared in Jesse Lyman Hurlbut's *The Bible Atlas* (1884), provides a size comparison but also equates the two places in the popular mind.

American Southwest and the Orient. Consider a map of Texas on which Asia Minor is superimposed. This "Map Giving Comparative Size of Asia Minor and Texas" was first published by Rand McNally. It appeared in the *Bible Atlas: A Manual of Biblical Geography and History* by the Reverend Jesse Lyman Hurlbut (1884) and was published in numerous editions into the twentieth century (fig. 4-7). That name *Asia Minor* served to identify an area that was transitional between the real Asia and Europe and included Turkey. The juxtaposition of Asia Minor on Texas, purportedly to provide a size comparison, is doubly interesting, as Texas is likewise a transition from the eastern United States and the real West, which reportedly began in the vicinity of Fort Worth. Significantly, that city is about centered on the Asia Minor portion of the map.

By the early twentieth century, postcards perpetuated Orientalized images of both the landscapes and the peoples of the Southwest. In them, more or less anonymous Indian pueblos could double, or nearly double, for villages in the Middle East or southwestern Asia. Consider, for example, Laguna Pueblo



Author's collection

Fig. 4-8. In popular art and photographs, New Mexico's Indian pueblos were depicted as timeless places that could be in either the Near East or the American Southwest. Postcard titled "Plaza and Old Church, Laguna Indian Pueblo," distributed by the Southwest Post Card Co., Albuquerque, ca. 1930.

(fig. 4-8), which at first glance could be a colorized postcard from Turkey. Only by looking more closely do we make out the church, but the architecture and colorful apparel suggest the East as much as they do the American West. Then, too, consider the "formula" that such postcards' photographers employed. The photographer usually stands facing a row of stone or adobe buildings and includes the rugged setting behind the village as a background. This reveals the seemingly minimal impact that the population has had on the surrounding environment. A lone figure or two in costume usually stands in the scene, enabling the viewer to identify the person as indigenous and the village as occupied rather than abandoned.

When the human subject is central to the scene, as in "Pueblo Indian Woman at Spring" (fig. 4-9), the photographer emphasizes the indigenous person's role in a traditional activity—herding, spinning, or collecting water. In point of fact, many such postcards are enhanced; the costumes are made even more colorful and the artifacts' details more ornate than they were in real life. After all, these figures are supposed to look (and hence be) exotic. In a telling blurring of Indian and environment, the verso of the postcard points out "the Indian head which nature has sculpted into the rock." That stone face, presented side by side with the living person, implies that the Indian, like the



Author's collection

Fig. 4-9. Images and words frequently portrayed Native Americans in the Southwest as ancient or natural subjects. The verso of this postcard (ca. 1930) titled “Pueblo Indian Woman at Spring” adds: “Note the Indian Head which nature has sculptured into the rock above.”

environment, is timeless. Unlike the Anglo-American, the Indian is portrayed as more a part of nature than modern civilization.

These landscapes-as-cultural-analogies are fascinating, and they often lead us back to images captured in the real Orient—images that appeared in the popular press of the time. Naturally, the tendency to “see” the Orient in Native American culture says more about Anglo-Americans than it does about Indians, or for that matter Asians, but that does not make the process any less real. The point here is that by around the turn of the twentieth century, a perceived taming of the Southwest, through the subduing of Native Americans and the arrival of sufficient civilizing, orderly elements, finally won out over those political and social interests who resisted giving statehood to this once seemingly lawless and barbaric region. The marketing of the images of peoples and landscapes here also helped lay the groundwork for a modern tourist industry based in part on enduring stereotypes of the Asian or Middle Eastern exotic in what now became home after New Mexico and Arizona were both finally permitted to become states just a century ago (1912).