This book began during my time at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill under the directorship of Jane Thrailkill, who was everything I could wish for in a mentor: caring and rigorous, kind and professional, able to see through messy drafts and vague, hand-waving descriptions to the kernel of the idea beneath. It was my privilege to be her student, as it is now my delight to be her friend. Other scholars at UNC contributed immeasurably to the book: Philip Gura, Laurie Maffly-Kipp, Tim Marr, and Eliza Richards deserve my utmost gratitude, and Joy Kasson, Matthew Taylor, and Joseph Viscomi each contributed in crucial ways to my career. In addition to these mentors, I was blessed with peers who patiently and repeatedly read drafts of this book, and whose intellectual and emotional support made (long) years of work not only bearable but joyful. My long-standing writing group—Kelly Bezio, Ben Bolling, Angie Calcaterra, Harry Thomas, and Jenn Williamson—deserve more thanks than I can possibly express. It’s no exaggeration to say that I couldn’t have completed this book without them. Other colleagues provided intellectual and personal support; they include Erin Branch, Katie Carlson-Eastvold, Graham Culbertson, Meredith Farmer, Joe Fletcher, Megan Goodwin, Meredith Malburne-Wade, John D. Martin III, Kate Massie, Christin Mulligan, Will and Sarah Shaw, Heath Sledge, Sarah Tolf, and too many others to name.

The English Department at Virginia Tech has been a wonderfully welcoming place to continue this book; here I’m grateful for guidance from many senior colleagues including Tom Ewing, Virginia Fowler, Bernice Hausman, Peter Potter, and Katrina Powell. I have benefited from a grant-supported writing group (for which many thanks go to Rachel Gabriele and the VT Office of the Provost) that includes Katie Carmichael, Tiffany Drape, Estrella Johnson, Christine Labuski, Erika Meitner, Sarah Ovink, Claire Robbins, Sharone Tomer, and Megan Wawro. I am also constantly buoyed by the friendship and collegiality of Silas Moon Cassinelli, Katharine Cleland, Carolyn Commer, Rachel Gross, Shaily Patel, and Abby Walker.
I must acknowledge some specific debts to mentors and fellow scholars. Melissa Homestead provided advice about navigating the Catharine Maria Sedgwick Papers on microfilm and supplied copies of two unpublished conference papers on Catharine Maria Sedgwick that shaped my thinking in chapter 1. Nicole Livengood provided transcriptions of Elizabeth Stoddard’s *Daily Alta California* columns, facilitating my work on chapter 5. And Tazeen Ali shared research in progress on the Women’s Mosque of America that informs my conclusion. Additionally, Claudia Stokes provided crucial advice on the publishing process; Jared Hickman gave timely critique at the proposal stage; and Justine Murison has been a miraculously kind and generous mentor since the first moment we met. I am grateful to each of them.

Institutional support for this project has come in the form of a Thomas F. Ferdinand Summer Research Fellowship from the UNC Graduate School, a Richardson Fellowship from the UNC Department of English and Comparative Literature, a faculty mentoring grant from the Virginia Tech Office of the Provost, a Niles Research Grant from the VT College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, and a publication support grant from the Virginia Tech Center for Humanities. Start-up funding from Virginia Tech enabled me to hire a developmental editor, Heath Sledge, whose thorough critique was crucial to the revision process. Both UNC and Virginia Tech also provided travel funds that allowed me to present portions of this work at numerous conferences and institutes; while I cannot list all of them here, I’m particularly grateful to audiences at the 2010, 2014, and 2017 Catharine Maria Sedgwick Society Symposia and workshop participants at the 2012 and 2016 Futures of American Studies Institutes for their helpful feedback.

I must also thank the incredible libraries and librarians who have lent their resources and expertise to the book. I owe particular thanks to Tommy Nixon of the UNC Libraries and to Virginia Tech’s Newman Library staff for their willingness to fulfill endless interlibrary loan requests and for the incalculable gift of campus mail book delivery. I am also grateful to the staff of the Schlesinger and Houghton Libraries in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and to Beth Burgess and Cindy Cormier of the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, who welcomed me warmly to Hartford and provided insight and assistance with their collections. English Department staff members at both UNC and Virginia Tech have provided cheerful and efficient support. I’m particularly indebted to Linda Horne and Mark Richardson at UNC and to Kristen Cox, Laura Ferguson, Judy Grady, Patty Morse, Sandra Ross, Sally Shupe, Bridget Szerszynski, and Eve Trager at Virginia Tech.

Portions of chapter 5 appeared as “‘I Have No Disbelief’: Spiritualism and Secular Agency in Elizabeth Stoddard’s *The Morgsons*” in *J19: The Journal of*
Acknowledgments

*Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 5, no. 1 (2017): 151–77. I am grateful to the editors of *J19* and to the University of Pennsylvania Press for permission to reprint them here. I also thank the Sterling Library at Yale University, the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center for permission to reproduce quotations from the letters of Harriet Beecher Stowe that appear in chapters 4 and 5.

My editor at Cornell University Press, Mahinder Kingra, has been a generous reader of this monograph and has shepherded it (and me) through the process of publication with grace and patience. I am grateful to him, to the editorial and production staff at Cornell, and to the two anonymous readers of the manuscript who provided generative responses that, I trust, improved the final product.

Finally, I am grateful to my family for their unwavering support. To my parents, Ralph and Sharon Reed; my sisters, Heather Turner and Shannon Herring; my brothers-in-law, Richard Turner and Daniel Herring; and my nieces, Grace Turner, Abigail Turner, Eden Herring, and Amelia Herring, I offer my thanks and love.
HEAVEN’S INTERPRETERS