



America's England: Antebellum Literature and Atlantic Sectionalism (Oxford Studies in American Literary History)

Christopher Hanlon

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The wealth of transatlantic scholarship to emerge in recent years has greatly enriched our understanding of the mutual, far-reaching cultural exchange between Great Britain and the United States. Yet scholars often lose sight of this relationship in the years immediately leading up to the outbreak of the Civil War. Drawing on a capacious array of travel narratives, novels, poems, political scuffles, and more, Christopher Hanlon's innovative study examines the patterns of affiliation through which U.S. culture encoded the turmoil of antebellum America in terms of imagined connections with England.

Through engagement with contemporaneous renditions of English race, history, landscape aesthetics, telecommunications, and economic discourse, *America's England* reveals how Northern and Southern partisans re-imagined the terms behind their antagonisms, forming a transatlantic surround for the otherwise cisatlantic political struggles that would dissolve the Union in 1861. Among other ramifications, the re-conceptualization of sectional issues in transatlantic terms undermined the notion that white citizens of the United States formed a unified biological or cultural community, effectively polarizing the imagined ethnic and cultural bases of the American polity. But beyond that, a continued reference to English historical, cultural, and political formations allowed figures such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Frederick Douglass, Henry Timrod, Lydia Maria Child, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Charles Sumner, and others to situate an era of developing national acrimony along longer historical and transnational curves, forming accounts of national crisis that situated questions of a domestic political bearing at oceanic removes from Northern and Southern combatants.

Demonstrating that English genealogies, geographies, and economics shaped the sectional crisis for antebellum Americans on both sides of the Mason-Dixon, *America's England* locates the key crisis points of the period in a broader transatlantic constellation that provided distinctive circumstances for literary production.

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