

LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY: 1865-1910

On May 1, 1893, a city spread out over a thousand acres along Lake Michigan officially opened its doors to the first of some twenty-seven and a half million people, equal to well over a third of the United States population at the time, who would visit it in the brief six months of its existence. Resplendent with white buildings designed in the classical style, whose peristyles, porticoes, and colonnades shone in the sun and in the reflected light of canals and lagoons and at night were illuminated by thousands of electric light bulbs, this spectacle was the World's Columbian Exposition, otherwise known as the Chicago World's Fair, and, most familiarly, the "White City." The largest international world's fair ever held until that time, built at a cost that today would translate into well over \$300 million, it was the United States' and the world's celebration of the "discovery" of the Americas by Columbus four hundred years before. Its central core of buildings was a marvel of coordinated planning by architects, sculptors, painters, landscape gardeners, and engineers, who in less than two and a half years had transformed an area of swamp and sand into one of terraced parks, broad boulevards, and monumental buildings. Although officially commemorating the arrival of Europeans on the continent and including exhibits from countries throughout the world, the Fair was above all a spectacular statement of the United States' material and technological might on the eve of the twentieth century.

By 1893 just about all of the elements we identify with the modern United States were in place: large-scale industry and advanced technology; densely inhabited urban areas; concentrations of capital in banks, businesses, and corporations; nationwide systems of transportation and print communication; and a heterogeneous population of diverse races, classes, and ethnic groups. It was a nation that looked and was radically different from the cluster of states, primarily agrarian and increasingly riven by sectional strife, that had existed only forty years before. The launching of the Spanish-American War five years after the Fair solidified the final element, imperialistic power, that would characterize the nation in the twentieth century.

A sense of being at a historic divide, looking both back and ahead, animated the speeches given at the Fair's dedication ceremonies (held in October 1892 to mark the official date of Columbus's arrival). The opening oration swept through four hundred years of history to review Columbus's voyages; the struggles of Spain, England, and France for control of the newly discovered territories; the rise of the young American republic; and its darkest moment of threatened disunion during the years of the Civil War. That threat averted, the

nation's postwar history was cast as one of steadily increasing political and material power and progress. Under the benign rule of a strong Constitution, with "the curse of slavery . . . gone," and with its mills, mines, and forests producing their incomparable wealth, the United States had arrived at the moment of the Fair when it could "bask in the sunshine of . . . prosperity and happiness" and proudly "bid a welcome to the world."

This mood of confidence and optimism would be shattered just five days after the Fair opened, when the stock market plunged, inaugurating a four-year depression, one of the worst the nation had ever experienced. If the Fair was proof of American progress, the Panic of 1893 revealed part of the price that progress exacted. What then did the Columbian Exposition show, not just about America's official perception of itself, but also about American realities? In its harmonies but also in its contradictions and disjunctions, both in what it included and what it ignored, the Fair tells us much about the nature of American life at the turn into the twentieth century.

For the many writers who visited the Fair and speculated about it, two impressions dominated: the esthetic unity of its central core of buildings and the awesome sense of power conveyed by its sheer size and its massive displays of technology. For William Dean Howells, one of the country's most respected and successful authors, the two impressions ideally conjoined. The Fair to him was a grand altruistic gesture. To create it, capitalists had placed themselves in the hands of artists, and "for once" American businessmen and entrepreneurs had put aside "their pitiless economic struggle, their habitual warfare" to come together in a mighty "work of peace." Howells's hopeful vision, voiced in *A Traveler from Altruria* (1894) by a visitor from a Utopian land, was one of America's money and technology put in the service of civic virtue, the nation's vast natural resources and manufactured products used for the welfare of all rather than the profit of the few. The Fair's architecture held not only esthetic but also spiritual promise.

Less sanguine was Henry Adams, for whom the Fair marked a crucial moment in that ongoing enterprise of educating himself to which he devoted his life. For him the Fair's architecture was imitative and derivative—"imported Beaux Arts"—and the Fair itself, despite any idealistic impulses in its genesis, was an "industrial, speculative growth." Like Howells, Adams was looking for some principle of meaning in American life, some way of making sense out of what seemed to be the chaos of forces, political, economic, and scientific, that had been unleashed in the post-Civil War period. He looked behind the white facades for answers. Inside the buildings "education ran riot" amidst displays of telephone and telegraph apparatus, steam engines, multiple drill presses, cable-dynamo—the generator producing the electric current that powered and drove so much of the machinery and made possible the Fair's dazzling displays of incandescent lighting—became his symbol of the driving force in American life. It "gave to history a new phase," but one that Adams could not measure by the republican standards he had inherited from his presidential forebears, John and John Quincy Adams. If "Chicago asked for the first time the question whether the American people knew where they were driving," the answer was not easily

arrived at. Adams feared that the uncontrolled application of new scientific discoveries would outpace and vitiate republican ideals.

Adams and Howells had focused on two aspects of the dramatic changes the United States had undergone in the second half of the nineteenth century. The very existence of the Fair testified to one of these: that by the 1890s the United States had become an urban nation. The Fair City (and it was a city, with its own transportation, sewage, police, and governmental systems) was the product of the entrepreneurial drive of Chicago, which had successfully outmaneuvered New York to get it, and Chicago in turn was the most dramatic example of postwar urban development. Little more than a fur-trapping village of about 350 people in 1830, by 1880 it had become a city of half a million people; within another ten years it had doubled its size, so that by the time of the Fair, it was the second largest city in the nation, with a population of over one million. The largest, New York, had also grown at a phenomenal rate: by 1900 it would contain almost three and a half million people. Other midwestern cities—Detroit, Columbus, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, and St. Paul—saw their populations double and triple in the postwar decades, whereas on the west coast Los Angeles went from eleven thousand inhabitants in 1880 to five times that number twenty years later. From being for more than 150 years characteristically a nation of rural dwellers, the United States had within a few short decades become distinctively urbanized. Although at the end of the nineteenth century forty percent of the American population was still rural, the trend to urbanization was irreversible.

Occurring with such rapidity, this growth had taken place with little or none of the civic planning that Howells admired in the White City. Real American cities, he knew, were the result of "the straggling and shapeless accretion of accident." At their strongest and most vivid—again, Chicago was a case in point—they manifested the nation's immense new business and commercial energy, as in the iron and steel skyscrapers of Chicago's architects Louis Sullivan, John Wellborn Root, and William LeBaron Jenney. At their worst—and the worst was widespread—they were places where what housing reformer Jacob Riis in 1890 called "the other half" lived—places of slums and overcrowding, of dirt and noise, lack of sanitation and disease, poverty, child labor, prostitution, violence, and crime. The Fair City officially ignored these urban realities, its white facades implicitly denying that not far away lay the Chicago slums, where settlement worker Jane Addams's Hull House was located among tenements crowded with Irish, Polish, Czech, Russian Jewish, and Italian immigrants, and that also within striking distance was the Union Stockyard, with its four hundred square miles of malodorous cattle pens and runways, which would be the subject of Upton Sinclair's exposé of the meat-packing industry in his novel *The Jungle* in 1906.

The Fair's much-vaunted whiteness was also a symbol of the intensified dominance in the 1890s of white Anglo-Saxon Protestantism in a nation in which African Americans, Native Americans, Mexican Americans, and other racial, ethnic, and religious groups were becoming increasingly apparent. Over the protests of some black leaders, the nation's eight to nine million African Americans were allowed no representation at the Fair's opening ceremonies, and no blacks were appointed to positions of authority on any of the Fair's various

governing commissions. Frederick Douglass, present as commissioner from Haiti, not a representative of the United States, termed the Fair "a whitened sepulcher." Journalist and antifencing activist Ida B. Wells-Barnett published a pamphlet, to which Douglass contributed a chapter, exposing the white supremacy that lay behind "The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbia Exposition" and detailing African groups also were excluded from the United States. Other racial and ethnic groups also were excluded through his attention to the absence of official Native American representation through his pamphlet "Red Man's Greeting." Printed on birch bark and distributed at the event, it reminded fair-goers that the exposition, and the entire city of Chicago, were built on land taken from Indians and never paid for.

The only way the Fair did officially recognize racial and ethnic variety was as something foreign to the United States. South of the main buildings, on the mile-long stretch called the Midway Plaisance, in shops, restaurants, tent shows, and miniature villages, three thousand entertainers and vendors from ethnic cultures throughout the world sold their wares, displayed native costumes, and performed dances and other ceremonies. "[O]dd bits of tribes and nationalities from every quarter of the globe" was the description in the official history of the Fair. Although the Irish Village, Japanese Bazaar, Javanese Village, German Village, and several other re-creations of "foreign" villages drew many visitors, among the greatest attractions were the Dahomey Village and the Arab section, with its "Street in Cairo," "Algerian Village," and "Persian Palace of Eros." Viewing indigenous music and dance, including "dancing girls" from Egypt and elsewhere, as spectacles, many American visitors who prized their nation's supposed homogeneity and propriety exoticized—and savored—difference as something outside U.S. borders. Professor F. W. Putnam, a Harvard professor and the Fair's "Chief of the Department of Ethnography," produced a book of portraits of the "different types of men and women" on display at the Midway Plaisance. In the introduction he captured the way the Fair's very architecture affirmed its fundamental assumption that non-Western peoples were quaint and nondeveloped, in stark contrast to the progressive modernity of the United States. Extolling the "Great Ferris Wheel" that rose in the midst of the Midway, Putnam characterized the elevated view it gave fair-goers of the Midway as at one and the same time physical and cultural: a monument to technology that embodied the superior position from which the world's most "advanced" country could survey and comprehend other cultures. "Our own crowning achievement in mechanics . . . arising in the midst of this magic gathering," he proclaimed, "enabled us to view this mimic world as from another planet, and to look down upon an enchanted land filled with happy folk."

However, if the Midway in effect pinnacled Jews, Arabs, Africans, and others within late-century Western ideas about the stratification of the races and peoples of the world, the Fair also became an occasion for some from supposedly "backward" countries and cultures to convey their own views of themselves—the World Parliament of Religions. From September 11 to September 27, a related event, close to two hundred speakers representing twelve major religions, the Parliament provided a forum for various Protestant denominations and also one

allowing some representative Buddhists and Hindus to explain their religions to the nearly 150,000 spectators who attended. American Protestant control of the Parliament was quickly unsettled, however, as Asian speakers galvanized attendees and the press with their faith, their profound knowledge of both their own religions and Christianity, and their attacks on Christian missionaries' lack of concern about the poverty they encountered and their cooperation with colonialism. Several Asian delegates developed enthusiastic American followings, among them Swami Vivekananda, a charismatic Hindu speaker from Calcutta. Vivekananda, an ascetic, combined religion and nationalism in a powerful repudiation of Western stereotypes of Asian men as effeminate, as Carrie Tirado Bramen explains. The Hindi-based form of celibate, virile, and self-disciplined masculinity he promoted was, in his representation of it, far superior to the sexually active, unrestrained masculinity of Western men.

Swami Vivekananda and others developed an especially large following among the American women who were the majority of the Parliament's attendees. The women's enthusiasm for the Asian religious leaders expressed a commitment to independence of thought and spiritual life that constituted one way in which many American women were beginning to assert their independence. The Fair itself officially recognized that American women were becoming less identified with domesticity and increasingly more visible as a public force. It included them in the Fair's planning to an extent unprecedented at any previous exposition, and it allotted them a "Women's Building" with its own board of managers, which housed an international display of women's achievement in art and industry. The board's chair, Mrs. Potter Palmer of Chicago, observed in her opening address that "Even more than the discovery of Columbus, which we are gathered together to celebrate, is the fact that the general government has just discovered women." Indeed, the forty-five-year-long campaign for women's political and legal rights was bearing some fruit: in the year of the Fair, Colorado became the first state to grant the vote to women, though the suffrage movement's full success came only with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. American women, however, as represented by the Fair, were white: African American women were kept off the board of managers despite their repeated requests for representation, and exhibits in the Women's Building included very little by or about African American women. In response to black women's pressure, however, six black women, including activist/suffragist Frances E. W. Harper and educator Anna Julia Cooper, were eventually invited to speak about African American women's circumstances and achievements at the World's Congress of Representative Women.

The energies white women were displaying at the end of the century fascinated Henry Adams, who wondered if here might be a force as significant for the nation's future as that of science and technology. However, technology made the strongest statement at the Fair, visible evidence that the overriding feature of American life, on which the cities depended for their existence and that explained their growth, was the unprecedented industrialization the nation had undergone since the end of the Civil War. Among the most important buildings at the Fair were those devoted to Manufactures, Mechanic Arts, Transportation, and Electricity, and by far the largest and most impressive of these was the Manufactures Building. In the Fair's official history, the Manufactures Building

was described, in the quantitative terms Americans love to use to measure greatness, as three times the size of St. Peter's Church in Rome, four times that of the Roman Colosseum, and big enough that six baseball games could be played on its floor at once or the entire Russian army mobilized inside it. To create such a structure, the powerful forces of the United States' economy and industry had been marshaled.

The decades before the Civil War had seen the development of steam power and the locomotive, making possible the extensive network of railroads that crisscrossed the country by the 1890s, joining all states and sections and creating national markets for agricultural produce and manufactured goods. Fruits and vegetables from California, cattle from Texas, corn from Iowa, lumber from Minnesota, cotton from Georgia and Alabama, coal from West Virginia, and iron from Pennsylvania could all be shipped to processing and manufacturing centers, often located in cities. Chicago's extraordinary growth, in fact, was due to its location at the intersection of several major railroad lines that brought to it the agricultural and mineral wealth of the Midwest and that led in turn to the development of its grain, lumber, meat-packing, steel, and railroad equipment industries. By 1890 the United States had nearly half the railroad mileage in the world, and that mileage represented one-sixth of the nation's estimated wealth.

Before the Civil War, the railroads had helped to open up the Midwest, and in the postwar period they carried settlers to the Great Plains of the Dakotas, western Kansas, and Nebraska, which had been bypassed by earlier pioneers eager to reach the gold fields of California and the fertile acreage of Oregon's Willamette Valley. Now, tens of thousands of families moved on to the Plains, pushing the Native American inhabitants off their lands. The use on the Plains of expensive machinery—harvesters, tractors, and binders—led farmers to increase the size of their holdings. Although the small family farm that Jefferson had celebrated as the locus of the American ideal of independent self-sufficiency continued to exist, the new trend toward farming as a large-scale, mechanized operation meant that agriculture, too, had entered the modern age. The Chicago World's Fair had been the occasion, at the World's Congress Auxiliary held in conjunction with it, for the delivery of Frederick Jackson Turner's paper "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," with its thesis that the existence of the frontier, as an area of free land beyond the line of settlement, had helped determine the national character and national ideals. Now, Turner announced, there was no more open land, and the frontier no longer existed.

Turner celebrated the experience of the frontier as fostering democratic institutions, but the new world of business and industry of which the railroads were both symbol and cause seemed in the postwar decades to make a mockery of many of them. The burgeoning industrial economy had entailed enormous cost in the waste and misuse of both material and moral resources. For example, the railroad companies did not hesitate to use intimidation and cutthroat competition to destroy rival lines or discriminatory rates and rebates to lure customers. Their practices were condoned by a federal government eager to push forward America's industrial expansion and by public officials not averse to reaping from that expansion their own private gain. Whereas the Civil War had

demanding both massive, coordinated planning in the use of material resources and intense moral commitment and sacrifice, the postwar period saw general acceptance of a *laissez-faire* policy under which business, through its enormous economic power, was able to exert often corrupting pressure on government. One particularly notorious scandal erupted in 1872, when the Credit Mobilier, a construction company set up by promoters of the Union Pacific to build the transcontinental railroad at immense profit to themselves, was discovered to have bribed members of Congress and the vice president. The same year saw the conviction of "Boss" (William Marcy) Tweed, head of the infamous Tweed Ring in New York, which for years had systematically plundered the city treasury of from \$75 to \$200 million. The period from the 1870s to the 1890s was marked by corruption—bribery, graft, vote- and office-selling, the spoils system—at every government level, from the federal administration and Congress to the local city ward politician. "The Gilded Age," Mark Twain called it, capturing in the novel of that title (cowritten with Charles Dudley Warner in 1873) its fever of unrestrained speculation and get-rich-quick schemes, its glitter and fraudulence.

Like the railroads, other businesses and industries also consolidated on a national scale. This concentration of vast resources in the hands of a few constituted one of the most drastic changes from the prewar period. No longer an economy of small shops, local craftsmen, and artisans, nor of primarily small- or medium-sized companies producing manufactured goods, the postwar economy was characterized by the growth of giant corporations, monopolies, and trusts, such as Rockefeller's Standard Oil and Carnegie's United States Steel. Such enterprises employed hundreds, and in some cases thousands, of workers, whose traditional skills were increasingly replaced by the new machinery and who were reduced, through techniques devised by "scientific management," to performing small, unskilled, repetitive tasks. The lives of workers were increasingly separated by such experiences, often by language and religion as well, and of course by wealth, from those of company managers and owners.

With the formation of giant corporations and trusts went the making of gigantic fortunes. By 1890 one percent of American families owned over twenty-five percent of the nation's wealth. By 1893 there were over four thousand millionaires in the United States—not an inconsiderable number at a time when \$700 was a comfortable, if modest, annual income. And the millionaires, or plutocrats, flaunted their wealth, spending it conspicuously, as the sociologist

I say that you ought to get rich, and it is your duty to get rich. How many of my pious brethren say to me, "Do you, a Christian minister, spend your time going up and down the country advising young people to get rich, to get money?" "Yes, of course I do." They say, "Isn't that awful! Why don't you preach the gospel instead of preaching about man's making money?" "Because to make money honestly is to preach the gospel. That is the reason. The men who get rich may be the most honest men you find in the community."

Russell H. Conwell, *Acres of Diamonds*, 1888

Thorstein Veblen satirically observed in his anatomy of the rich, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). They built mansions that imitated French chateaux, English castles, and Italian Renaissance palaces; bought up the art works of Europe; and, by heavily dowering their daughters, purchased titles of nobility. They also threw parties costing thousands of dollars for their friends, their horses, and their dogs. Business, *big* business, was the order of the day, and the fortunes reaped from it were justified by an ideology that drew upon the old Protestant ethic of the virtuousness of industry and of the acquisition of wealth as proof of God's favor, and also on the new social thinking, derived from Darwin's biological theories of human evolution, that defended what sociologist Herbert Spencer termed "the survival of the fittest." George F. Baer in 1902 argued that "God in His infinite wisdom has given the control of the property interests of the country" to businessmen, and the imperialist mentality that lay behind his words had also found expression in the Chicago Fair's opening dedicatory speech. Congratulating the Fair's designers and engineers, the speaker observed that "the earth and all it contains have been subservient to your will."

A dramatic proof of the power of American big business occurred in the same year as the Fair, when American sugar growers in Hawaii, aided by United States gunboats and marines, overthrew the Hawaiian government, an event that led to the annexation of Hawaii five years later during the Spanish-American War.

By 1893, then, industrialization in the form of immense, privately owned corporations and trusts had established itself, and monopoly capitalism had become the American economic mode. Thus for Henry Adams 1893 meant not just the Chicago Exposition, but also the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act, a blow to the nation's debtor farmers who had wanted silver coinage in order to increase the money supply and relieve the burden of their debt, and a victory for the gold standard. Adams himself had favored silver, being "against State Street, banks, capitalism altogether," and he saw the year 1893 as symbolically marking the consolidation of power in the capitalist class. Not the farmers who supplied the raw materials nor the urban workers who supplied the physical labor and skills that ran the industrial machine, but the machine's owners—capitalists, industrialists, and bankers—would dominate in political power and significantly determine the nation's future course.

Publishing and Writing

Seen in terms of its production and distribution, literature had also become big business by the 1890s. Like telephones, tractors, or sewing machines, books and magazines were being produced on a national scale. Even before the Civil War, publishing had begun to assume many of its modern characteristics, and the postwar period saw the process accelerated. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, as in the eighteenth, publishing was still primarily local. Village and modest editions of novels or collections of poetry with a limited range of distribution. But by 1860, large publishing houses located in the cities could reach national markets by way of the railroads, and books and magazines could be produced more rapidly and cheaply with the new technology of steam-powered rotary presses, multiple presses, and binding machinery. National best sellers

were already a phenomenon in the 1850s, as novels of domestic realism by women writers found a growing audience among the wives and daughters of the emerging middle class. (At the beginning of the postwar period in 1866, when the nation's population was thirty-six million, one such novel, Augusta Jane Evans's *St. Elmo*, reputedly reached a readership of one million in the year of its publication alone.) The steady increase in literacy in these years, with the development of a system of free public grade and high schools, kept expanding the market for printed reading matter. Publishers in turn both catered to and helped create that market, becoming increasingly aggressive in distributing and advertising their wares. Indeed, large-circulation periodical publishers found that in selling literature, especially by widely known authors, they were also able to sell the products of their advertisers, on whom they increasingly depended for revenues.

One should in fact talk of multiple markets and of different, if also often overlapping, audiences for literature. The technology of mass production and distribution meant both that something approaching a uniform national print culture was possible and also that specialized audiences could be profitably cultivated. The period therefore saw not only greater uniformity in what people read but also the development of many specialized markets. The largest audience was probably that created and served by the "story papers"—newspeers that printed romance and adventure stories in serial installments—and by the new "dime novels" that first appeared in 1860 and quickly reached circulations in the millions. Cheaper than the average novel that sold for twenty-five cents, these books, produced by Erastus Beadle and his many imitators, were like today's paperback romance novels, quickly written by a stable of writers employed by the publisher and with new titles appearing almost weekly. Read by the young and the new working class in the cities, they offered larger-than-life, simpler-than-life heroes and heroines. At a time when the frontier was closing and urban congestion was the reality of many readers' lives, they depicted stereotypically rugged and self-reliant frontiersmen and cowboys, who in their victories over stereotypically savage and treacherous Indians provided readers with the contours of a mythic American past, with elements of adventure, heroism, and spatial freedom. Later, detective stories set in the city offered new heroes in recognition of the new urban world, including its crime and violence. Consonant with the underlying mythos of individualism and self-reliance of the dime novels were the over one hundred novels produced from the 1860s through the 1890s by Horatio Alger. Their titles—*Risen from the Ranks*, *Strive and Succeed*, *Struggling Upward*—were catchy labels for their packaged messages of success achieved through a combination of industriousness, middle-class morality, and luck. That virtue and hard work brought success was a message also conveyed by the maxims and uplifting literary excerpts of the McGuffey readers, over one hundred million of which were used in the schools between 1836 and 1890 and which, like the dime novels and the Alger stories, functioned as an important part of the acculturation process for millions of immigrants, introducing them to the values of white Protestant culture.

At the same time, however, the publishing industry reflected the growing diversity of the American population. The cultures of the many peoples who comprised the nation found outlets in the approximately twelve hundred foreign

Work

Work, work, my boy, be not afraid;
 Look labor boldly in the face;
 Take up the hammer or the spade,
 And blush not for your humble place.
 There's glory in the shuttle's song;
 There's merit in the anvil's stroke;
 There's merit in the brave and strong,
 Who dig the mine or fell the oak.

Eliza Cook, from *McGuffey's Fifth Eclectic Reader*, 1879 edition

language periodicals that were in existence by 1896, serving immigrant groups from the Germans and Scandinavians to the Czechs and Poles, Spanish and Italians. Groups like the Germans and Scandinavians, who maintained strong connections with the old country, published works in their native languages and translated others into English. By establishing strong cultural institutions to sustain them and to aid in the translation of works into English, they both retained and modified their native cultures. In addition, there were by 1896 over 150 African American magazines and newspapers, a well-developed periodical press established by American Indians and publishing their works, newspapers in the Southwest that circulated local and international news as well as the folk songs of Mexican Americans, and several weeklies publishing news and poetry in Chinese.

On yet another level were the literary magazines—*Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's Monthly*, and *Scribner's Monthly* (later the *Century*)—with an influence far greater than the modest circulations of some of them might suggest. It was in these magazines that much of the exciting and important literature of the period appeared. Mark Twain, Henry James, Stephen Crane, Charles Chesnut, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Hamlin Garland, George Washington Cable, Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, and Abraham Cahan all published in their pages. At the center of that magazine establishment was William Dean Howells, whose career was a graph of the postwar publishing industry. Through the editorial positions he held on two of the most important magazines, Howells advanced the careers of all of those writers, disseminated his own work, and pressed his advocacy of realism as the form that literature should take.

Assistant editor and then editor in the 1860s and 1870s of the prestigious *Atlantic Monthly* in Boston, Howells moved to New York in the 1880s, signaling the shift of literary power to that metropolis. For the next thirty-five years he was associated with *Harper's Monthly*, and the literary criticism, book reviews, and social commentary with which he filled his *Atlantic* and *Harper's* editorial columns comprised the most sustained body of commentary on the postwar literary scene. When in 1892 Howells signed an agreement to write for Edward Bok's *Ladies' Home Journal*, he was still abreast of the time, for Bok's magazine

heralded the advent of a new era in periodical journalism: that of the lower-priced, mass-circulated commercial magazine heavily dependent on advertising for its revenues. By then the great days of the literary magazines were ending, and a new era in American publishing had begun.

Like any label, "realism," used to describe the literature Howells wrote and encouraged others to write, obscures differences among writers to whom it is collectively applied, but it also serves to suggest certain common features of what became the distinctive form of prose fiction in the second half of the nineteenth century. Realism was the response of writers to the sweeping economic, social, and political changes of postwar life, to the recognized need to capture, report, and interpret the world of the developing cities and the declining rural regions. In order to convey the nature of an urban world of speeded-up tempos, crowded spaces, new kinds of work, and new mixtures of people, or to represent the landscapes and speech patterns, habits, and manners of the nation's rural areas, such conventions of prewar romance fiction as its often leisurely narrative pace, use of allegory and symbolism, and frequent focus on the exceptional individual no longer seemed appropriate. Rather, realists like Howells emphasized situations and characters drawn from ordinary, everyday life, and the use of authentic American speech and dialogue rather than authorial comment as primary narrative mode.

On the simplest level, realism was a matter of faithfulness to the surfaces of American life, and in its interest in accuracy it reflected the rise of science and, by the end of the nineteenth century, the social sciences, as a source of empirically derived truth, an interest that was also manifest in everything from the spate of investigative journalism to the popular fascination with the Kodak camera, invented in 1888. However, literature of course is never merely a photograph or a mirror that passively reflects external reality; like all imaginative writing, works of realism were also the products of their authors' individual perspectives conveyed through and shaped by language, literary conventions, and the literary traditions that writers inherited. For Howells and Henry James, this last included Hawthorne, especially his concern with moral ambiguities. Although they would not have been aware of this, they also built on the tradition of domestic realistic fiction developed by prewar women writers, with its interest in manners and behavior. These were as important as the French and Russian realist writers such as Balzac and Turgenev, who initially helped provide Howells with his esthetic of realism and whom he introduced to the American reading public.

Three novels that appeared in 1885 (all in the pages of *Century* magazine) suggest something of the range of realistic writing. Howells's *The Rise of Silas Lapham* was the story of a self-made American businessman encountering social situations and moral dilemmas for which his rural upbringing had scarcely prepared him. James's *The Bostonians* dealt, ambivalently, with what James saw as the most salient feature of postwar life—the changing status of women, their greater public and political visibility. And Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, although it takes place in rural and small-town mid-America before the Civil War, dealt with issues crucial in the postwar period—racial and class divisions, the fragility of the family as an institution, social hypocrisy and pretension, and violence and crime. Among them, these three novels engaged issues

central to American life in the last half of the nineteenth century: the effects of the new business economy on individual lives, the changing relationship between the sexes, and the intensification of white supremacy after the Civil War.

The 1880s were the height of realism, which could capaciously embrace everything from Twain's disreputable runaway, Huck, with his ungrammatical speech and fear of "civilization," to Howells's decent but puzzled average Americans, to the heightened consciousness and psychological acuties of the characters who inhabited James's country houses and drawing rooms. Meanwhile, the term "realism" also encompassed the explorations of new subject matter and the perspectives of a host of other writers: the accounts of mill and factory life of Rebecca Harding Davis, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, and Upton Sinclair; Paul Laurence Dunbar's stories of black life during and after Reconstruction; Charles Chesnut's black dialect tales and stories of the color line and racist violence; Kate Chopin's examinations of marriage, female sexuality, and racial relations; Hamlin Garland's and Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's studies of the deprivations and resilience of rural life in the Midwest and New England; and Abraham Cahán's fictions of New York Jewish ghetto life. Much of this work, given its regional focus, has been subsumed under the labels "local color" or "regional" writing—labels that at best call attention to its distinguishing concern with locale and culture, but that at worst have implied minor status for its authors. As Eric Sundquist has noted, the term "realist" has tended to be reserved for those in or nearest the seats of power in the cities, while those at a remove—midwesterners and southerners, blacks, women, immigrants—have been categorized as regionalists or local colorists. That a great deal of post-Civil War literature was regionalist in origin and emphasis should not be overlooked; regionalism was an important defining characteristic of the period's writing. In the face of the increasing homogeneity and standardization of life attendant on mass production and mass distribution of goods and entertainment, interest in preserving local and regional folkways and traditions and attention to atypical or nonnormative people was widespread. Further, as Richard Brodhead has suggested, such writing appealed to middle-class readers as a kind of cultural tourism. It complemented the development of the vacation industry in places like rural New England and Florida. Such interests helped open markets for the stories and sketches of northern New England written by Sarah Orne Jewett and by Freeman. Indeed, throughout the postwar period, numerous authors would be closely identified with the particular areas they chose to treat: Jack London with the Pacific Coast and Alaska, Cable and Chopin with Louisiana, and Twain, of course, with the Mississippi.

The city was also a region, a new space whose contours and contents were being imaginatively mapped. As Howells continued to explore this new urban space from the mid-1880s through the 1890s, however, he found it harder to accommodate it to his version of realism, which had carried with it a democratic, egalitarian faith in "the large cheerful average of health and success and happy life." The "average" he had implicitly equated with the middle class, by 1890, however, the industrial working class far outnumbered the middle class (by 1915 their lives, their relative helplessness against the massed might of the industrial

Men were nothings, mere animalcules, mere ephemerides that flattered and fell and were forgotten between dawn and dusk. Vanamee had said there was no death. But for one second Presley could go one step further. Men were naught, death was naught, life was naught; FORCE only existed—FORCE that brought men into the world, FORCE that crowded them out of it to make way for the succeeding generation, FORCE that made the wheat grow, FORCE that garnered it from the soil to give place to the succeeding crop.

Frank Norris, *The Octopus*, 1901

machine, began to make a mockery of one of realism's prevailing tenets—the belief in the free moral agency of the individual, the capacity, despite adverse or countervailing pressures, to exercise choice and to a significant extent determine one's own fate that had distinguished a Silas Lapham, a Huck Finn, and the heroes and heroines of James's fictions and that had given to the great novels of realism their pivotal dramatic moments. Choice began to seem less operative than chance, as the very titles of Howells's New York novels of 1890 and 1893, *A Hazard of New Fortunes* and *The World of Chance*, recognized, and his middle-class protagonist and alter-ego, Basil March, found himself increasingly bewildered and alienated by a city he had, twenty years earlier, fondly and comfortably embraced. Increasing strife between capital and labor, which would climax in 1894 with the killing of scores of workers during the Pullman strike in Chicago, led one journalist that year to proclaim that "probably . . . in no civilized country in this century, not actually in the throes of war or open insurrection, has society been so disorganized . . . never was human life held so cheap."

As the 1890s advanced, realism darkened its hues, and a new literature by a younger generation emerged with a distinctively new emphasis. "Naturalism" is the term used to describe a dominant element of the fiction, of writers like Stephen Crane, Jack London, Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and others, where environmental forces, whether of nature, of economic and social systems, or of the city, outweigh or overwhelm human agency, the individual can exert little or no control over determining events, and the world is at worst hostile and at best indifferent to humankind. Crane's "The Open Boat" pits puny human beings against a natural force—the sea—that mocks their efforts to survive. And in Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, personal success or failure is as much a matter of accident as of ability and will, as individuals often helplessly rise or fall within the surging, anonymous urban mass. Influenced by Darwinian ideas on the importance of environment in shaping human life and by other forms of scientific determinism, such naturalistic fiction also took issue with popular notions of heroism, including heroic interpretations of the Civil War, which had become mythologized in the fiction of southern writers and through articles on heroic battles and generals in the popular press. In *The Red Badge of Courage* or a story like "A Mystery of Heroism," Crane adopts a point of view more akin to that of the second half of the twentieth century, where

courage," in the words of Michael Herr on the Vietnam War, was "only undifferentiated energy cut loose by the intensity of the moment." Ambrose Bierce's short story "Chickamauga" exposed the vainglory of war by pitting a child's pre-tend heroics against scenes of actual and meaningless slaughter. By the turn of the century, Crane's ironies and Bierce's cynicism were matched by the increasingly dark, even nihilistic, views of Mark Twain, whose "The War Prayer" (1905), *The Mysterious Stranger*, and other writings toward the end of his life betrayed a bitterness rooted not only in personal disappointments and family tragedies, but also in disgust at the United States' growing imperialistic stance, a bitterness anticipated in the dark doubts about human goodness that had also threaded their way through the idyllicism of *Huckleberry Finn*.

Such dark views of human nature and human possibility, however, ultimately comprise only one strand in the totality of post-Civil War realistic fiction, a body of writing that offered America a rich diversity of views of its landscapes and cityscapes, its people, their actions and their feelings, especially in narrative. The second half of the nineteenth century was above all an age of narrative prose, in which the short story and the novel predominated as literary forms, reaching out to include whole new areas of subject matter, acquiring increased formal sophistication and linguistic suppleness, and providing a legacy that later writers would inherit and develop.

Scholarly judgments of the poetry produced in the late nineteenth century were generally not favorable until recently. The early 1890s saw the deaths of most of the well-known (and long-lived) poets who had been part of the dominant New England tradition of literature at midcentury: James Russell Lowell, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Oliver Wendell Holmes all died between 1891 and 1894, although their portraits would continue to hang on schoolroom walls into the early decades of the twentieth century as the tradition they represented became enshrined as the nation's "official" culture. They would become part of what the philosopher George Santayana in 1911 called "the genteel tradition"—a literature of uplift and refinement written by latter-day New Englanders in emulation of its Transcendental past but increasingly distant from the realities of American experience and the new sources of its intellectual vitality. Walt Whitman, whose poetry had radically challenged that of the "schoolroom poets," died in 1892, and no new generation of poets had by then emerged to assume his mantle, although Edwin Arlington Robinson, working in isolation, and Paul Laurence Dunbar, writing in both black vernacular and mainstream English, were harbingers of things to come, as were numerous women poets whose substantial body of work in the postwar period has only recently begun to be systematically examined. The early 1890s also saw the first published editions of Emily Dickinson's poems, which Stephen Crane may have read and to which his own poetry bears interesting, if coincidental, resemblance. The clipped, laconic verses that Crane produced toward the end of his short life, as well as the imagist lyrics published in the 1890s by women poets, anticipated, in their ironies and understatements, one dominant mood and style of the modernists who would inaugurate a great new age of American poetry after 1912 and who would find in Dickinson and Whitman their eminent precursors.

Still, this was a flush time for the writers of verse. The explosive growth of periodicals and newspapers of all kinds in the last two decades of the nineteenth century created countless new outlets for poetry. In fact, poetry was in demand everywhere, from local papers to highbrow national magazines, and the need produced both professional and amateur poets. Much of this poetry falls into two general categories: mainstream verse in conventional English and what came to be termed "dialect poetry," an important development that paralleled the "local color" movement in fiction and is beginning to receive scholarly attention as a many-faceted cultural phenomenon. On the surface, it represented attempts to render in verse the vernacular ethnic speech of everyday Americans, and there is dialect poetry allegedly written in the voices of blacks, Chinese, Jews, Irish, Germans, rural whites, and others. Much of it was little better than doggerel, however, and it was frequently produced by writers who were not members of the groups whose language habits they were often caricaturing. Indeed, much dialect verse followed predictable formulas that had little to do with how people spoke, and it served to ridicule groups viewed as outsiders in a manner similar to that of the minstrel shows in which white men in blackface impersonated African Americans. In this way, dialect poetry reflects the complex cultural tensions resulting from the new racial and ethnic social interactions that immigration from abroad and the internal migration of certain groups spawned.

Dialect verse was exceedingly popular and, in fact, provided a medium for two men who were among the country's first poets to make their livings largely with their pens: James Whitcomb Riley and Paul Laurence Dunbar. The former wrote verse in Hoosier dialect (that of white midwestern farming folk); the latter was celebrated for his verse in southern African American dialect—though he, too, produced some Hoosier dialect poetry. While constrained by the limited conventions of dialect verse, Riley and Dunbar, along with other ambitious writers, often transcended the restrictions of the form to produce works of complexity, subtlety, and rich humanity. Dunbar, for example, produced dialect poems that subverted, usually through humor, the problematic cultural and racial assumptions that most writers of black dialect took for granted. In an important way, these accomplished dialect poets can be seen as carrying on, even if indirectly, the groundbreaking work of poets who, like Whitman, were committed to making verse out of the plain speech of plain American folk. Thus they can be seen in conjunction with the literary terrain for the modernist poetic innovators who appeared in the years just before and after World War I.

Circumstances and Literature of Women

The single most significant fact about women, especially white, middle-class women, as a group in the postwar period was their visibility, as they increasingly moved beyond domestic discourse to lay claim to the public world. The extent to which these women became the subject of attention by male writers in the period is one index to the changes taking place in their situation and status. In Daisy Miller, Isabel Archer of *The Portrait of a Lady*, and a host of other fresh, young heroines, Henry James created "the American girl," a type of the modern woman in her independent adventurousness. And in *The Bostonians*, as suggested earlier,

The woman had been set free... One had but to pass a week in Florida, or on any of a hundred huge ocean steamers, or walk through the Place Vendôme, or join a party of Cook's tourists to Jerusalem, to see that the woman had been set free... Behind them, in every city, town and farmhouse, were myriads of new types,—or type-writers,—telephone and telegraph-girls, shop clerks, factory hands, running into millions on millions, and, as classes, unknown to themselves as to historians... all these new women had been created since 1840; all were to show their meaning before 1940.

Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*

be directly addressed the implications of the new public roles women were assuming. Howells offered a portrait of the new professional woman in *Dr. Breen's Practice* and in *Marcia Gaylord of A Modern Instance* a woman, rare in fiction in the 1880s, of strong sexual feeling. Henry Adams wrote two novels with strong female heroines, exploring his sense of women as a potentially vital new force, and other novelists, such as Robert Herrick, would devote significant portions of their careers to studying the new, emancipated woman.

However, if the appearance of such characters was an encouraging sign, their fictional fates were not. Most often they were contained within the conventions of the traditional romantic plot, punished rather than rewarded for their forays into the world by endings that offered only a choice between a confining marriage and death—witness to their authors' ambivalence about the new freedoms women were assuming. Older attitudes toward women also persisted: woman as civilizing agent who censors man's freedom, in *Huckleberry Finn* or Crane's "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," or woman as helpless victim, in Crane's narrative of a young girl driven to prostitution, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. Hamlin Garland approached women with much more sympathy, but his female characters were also often victims—the overworked and defeated women of isolated, impoverished midwestern farms.

Collectively, women writers told a more varied and complex story about the realities of their lives, lives that were responding to and shaped by new circumstances. Among the most important changes affecting women as a group in the second half of the nineteenth century were the increased educational and employment opportunities available to them and their increasing involvement in political and reform activity. The prewar period had seen higher involvement begin to open up for women, and the momentum quickened in the postwar period as the public midwestern land grant colleges admitted more women (partly due to the dearth of males as a result of the Civil War) and as private women's colleges were established. The period saw the establishment of such elite eastern institutions as Vassar, Smith, Wellesley, Bryn Mawr, and Barnard. Although serving only a limited (and privileged) group, their success nevertheless importantly demonstrated that women could be the intellectual equals of men, thus countering the still prevalent belief in women's intellectual inferiority. (A new

source of resistance to women's education did arise when influential medical practitioners warned that women's development of their brains would sap reproductive and maternal energy.) Although racism operated to curtail educational opportunities, black women were attending the new coeducational and single-sex institutions established after the war, such as Howard University and Spelman College. From these and other schools came women, many of them with postgraduate training as well, who by the end of the century composed a class of professional and intellectual leaders in education, in the women's club movement, in medicine, and in the new area of work spawned by the needs of the cities—social work, including settlement house work.

Meanwhile, an expanding economy and rapid population growth were creating other forms of employment that drew ever larger numbers of women into the paid labor force. The new commercial and business world demanded higher levels of literacy of its workers, and as public elementary and high school education spread throughout the states, women were enlisted as teachers. (They could be paid less than men, and the work was seen as a suitable extension of their child-rearing capacities.) In addition, women, especially middle- and lower-middle-class white women, began entering the new business world directly, as department store clerks, telephone and telegraph operators, and "typewriters," as the earliest workers on that newly invented machine were called. Mostly young and unmarried, with incomes of their own, dressed in the slim (if still long) skirts and trim shirtwaists that had replaced the bustled and flounced, heavily layered, and cumbersome clothing of earlier decades, these women were one of the more visible manifestations of the "new woman," as the economically and socially emancipated woman at the turn of the century came to be described. Such emancipations were limited for all women, however, and sharply limited by race. As a group, women were routinely paid less than men, and only sixteen percent were in clerical, trade, or professional positions. Black women were largely confined to agricultural and domestic work, northern immigrant women to domestic work and factory labor. Many of the latter worked in the sweatshops of New York and other cities, where unsanitary and unsafe working conditions led to disasters like the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire in 1910, in which 146 women lost their lives. Such disasters, together with the organization of unions in the clothing and other "light" industries, eventually led to successful agitation for industrial reform in hours, wages, and working conditions.

Labor legislation was but one of many reform activities in which women were involved by the turn of the century, when they were an important part of the progressive movement, helping to secure not only improved working conditions, but also better housing, sanitation, recreational, and educational facilities for the industrial class, and when they were working within the international peace movement and the suffrage movement. The woman's rights movement, the longest organized reform movement in United States history, officially dated from the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848. In abeyance during the Civil War, it resumed its work for women's rights in the postwar years and moved into a period of new activism in the 1880s and 1890s, launching state and national campaigns for women's suffrage and steadily increasing the number of its adherents. The period also saw the founding, in 1874, of what would become the largest women's organization in the world, the Woman's Christian

Temperance Union. Initially created to deal with the high degree of alcoholism in the country at the time—a condition that especially affected married women, who often still lacked legal rights to their own property and wages and were dependent on husbands for their support—the WCTU, under the charismatic leadership of Frances Willard, adopted a broad reform agenda that included not only temperance legislation, but also advocacy of the eight-hour workday, child care centers for working mothers, prison reform, and suffrage.

The woman's club movement that began in the 1870s and spread rapidly among both white and black women was by the end of the century yet another major institution through which significant numbers of women were working to educate themselves and to improve social conditions. Indeed, for black women, who were excluded on account of their race from many of the movements in which white women were active, the club movement was a crucial means of fostering racial uplift and forging connections among African Americans across the nation. It also provided the means of mounting activist responses to the racist portrayals of black women as sexually uncontrolled that pervaded both the scientific and the popular media at the time. In 1895, for instance, the National Federation of Afro-American Women formed as a direct result of a piece by a white journalist contending that black women were impure.

The quest for full legal, economic, and social equality for women would still need to be pursued in the twentieth century, and racism would remain a persistent obstacle for women of color. By 1900, however, white women of the middle and upper classes had made significant strides. The prevailing ideology of the prewar decades that had idealized the "true woman" as domestic and maternal had been largely replaced by the image of the "new woman," whose educational level, social mobility, relative economic self-sufficiency, and, by the time of World War I, greater sexual freedom had released her from much of her earlier dependency.

Post-Civil War fiction by women reflected and responded to these broad social changes. By the 1870s, women had a record of more than a half-century of substantial achievement in prose fiction; some women had established themselves as best-selling authors; some had initiated directions that realistic writing would take. In the postwar period, women writers carried further themes introduced by women before the war, and they introduced new themes and concerns. For example, women authors pioneered in writing about the conditions of unflinching narrative of the dehumanizing conditions of work in the iron mills of West Virginia; in 1873 Elizabeth Stuart Phelps published *The Silent Partner*, one woman's efforts to bridge the gap between the prospered and the working classes. Work—especially the kinds available to women—became a paramount subject in the postwar decades. It was the central concern of Louisa May Alcott's novel *Work* (1873), which explored some of the options—as a domestic, a paramour, a seamstress, an actress, a Civil War nurse—available to working and middle-class women in the period just preceding and immediately following the Civil War. Stemming from the prewar women's literary tradition of domestic realism, Alcott's novel focused on her heroine's pursuit of her own autonomy, the development of a strong and independent sense of self, to which rewarding work was seen as essential. This search for self-fulfilling work was seemingly

encouraged by increased acceptance of women's aspirations and talents, but it was often in conflict with society's and women's own expectations and desires for marriage and motherhood. Some version of this conflict underlays a series of important postwar fictions by writers from Rebecca Harding Davis, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman to Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Pauline Hopkins, Kate Chopin, and Mary Austin.

Such fictions frequently took the romance plot beyond its conventional ending to explore the realities of women's lives after marriage, with a new emphasis on the conflicts their heroines experienced. Davis produced a number of stories in which women characters are torn by ambivalence as they try to balance their own needs for creative expression and self-fulfillment against their families' needs. In Phelps's *The Story of Avis*, the heroine's artistic talent wastes away under the incessant demands of the daily domestic routine, and in *Dr. Zoy*, the question of whether marriage and the heroine's medical practice are compatible is left unanswered. In Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper" and Chopin's *The Awakening*, two radical nineteenth-century fictional critiques of the effects of marriage and motherhood on middle-class white women, those institutions ultimately destroy the artist-heroines. Despite living in an age of greater economic and sexual freedom for women, Mary Austin in the early twentieth century still experienced the same conflict, which she dealt with in her autobiography, *Earth Horizon*, and her semi-autobiographical novel, *A Woman of Genius*.

Gilman's, Chopin's and Austin's Frank analyses of marriage and motherhood as harmful to women's continuing development brought them censure—Chopin, for instance, wrote little after the storm of criticism that greeted *The Awakening*. Nevertheless, their writing, which by the 1890s was supported by a growing body of feminist criticism of women's role and status in society, was a logical culmination of themes introduced by prewar women writers, who had examined the stresses for women of marriage and family life, the authoritarian roles of fathers and husbands, and women's need to develop an independent sense of self while still acknowledging the claims of others and women's ties to their families. Prewar writers, by contrast, had often embraced the primacy of the values that marriage and family ideally fostered: the role women had as wives and mothers in advancing values of cooperation, connection, and responsibility to others. They saw such values, transferred to the public world, as potentially transformative, challenging and even replacing the competitiveness and materialism of capitalism. Their vision, rooted in antebellum domestic ideology, was inherited at the end of the century by Sarah Orne Jewett. Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* and "The Foreigner" depict communities of women where ties of friendship and respect for nature create the basis for living (a vision that Charlotte Perkins Gilman would also offer in her Utopian fiction *Herland* [1915]). However, Jewett's world of rural New England was nonetheless a world in economic decline, a region existing on the edges of the industrial world, and the note she struck was elegiac. Even as she wrote in the 1890s, a new cult of masculinity was emerging, partly in reaction to women's increased visibility—exemplified in the big game hunting of Theodore Roosevelt, the adventurous journalism of Rebecca Harding Davis's son Richard, the popularity of Owen Wisler's novel of the West, *The Virginian* (1902), and America's imperialist expansion. Though similarly situated in declining New England rural regions, women

in the stories of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman often cultivate domestic life for their own self-sustenance and even pleasure. The sometimes stark confrontations with male power and the wresting of small but suggestive victories by some of Freeman's women also testify to continuing problems of gender conflict as some women writers understood them.

Circumstances and Literature of African Americans

In the postwar period, literature by African American writers drew upon and reflected crucial realities in their lives. The most critical event, of course, had been the abolition of slavery. With the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1865, four million black people were freed, and with emancipation came Reconstruction—the federal government's radical attempt to restructure the South. The brief period of Reconstruction (1867-1877) saw massive economic rehabilitation, the greatest black participation in local state, and national politics before the late twentieth century, and the education of a quarter of a million black people. This last was effected especially through the efforts of the Freedman's Bureau, which established some four thousand schools staffed by black and white teachers from the North who went to the South to teach the former slaves. In the hopeful years immediately following the end of the Civil War, many important southern black colleges and universities were also established. Between 1866 and 1868 alone, Fisk, Morehouse, Howard, and Atlanta Universities and Talladega College were founded, as well as Hampton Institute, where the young, ambitious Booker T. Washington arrived in 1872, having walked and begged rides to cover the long distance from his West Virginia home.

The decade of reform ended, however, when federal troops were withdrawn from the southern states in 1877. Abandoned by the Supreme Court and the Republican party, southern blacks were disenfranchised in the ensuing decades; by

The nation was rushing forward with giant strides toward colossal wealth and world dominion, before the exigencies of which mere abstract ethical theories must not be permitted to stand. The same argument that justified the conquest of an inferior nation could not be denied to those who sought the suppression of an inferior race. In the South, an obscure jealousy of the negro's progress, an obscure fear of the very equality so contemptuously denied, furnished a rich soil for successful agitation. Statistics of crime, ingeniously manipulated, were made to present a fearful showing against the negro. Vital statistics were made to prove that he had degenerated from an imaginary standard of physical excellence which had existed under the benign influence of slavery. Constant lynchings emphasized his impotence and bred everywhere a growing contempt for his rights.

Charles W. Chesnut, *The Marrow of Tradition*, 1901

1910 all eleven of the states of the former Confederacy had effectively abolished black voting rights. In addition, newly passed "Jim Crow" laws established segregation in everything from public transportation and schools to drinking fountains. Meanwhile, the Civil War had not fully dismantled the plantation system of large landholdings, and some sixty percent of southern land was owned by ten percent of whites, with the result that freed blacks, as well as poor whites, soon found themselves forced into sharecropping or tenant farming. By 1900 over three-quarters of the southern black population were tenant farmers, with black women working in the fields beside black men, as they had in the days of slavery, or hiring themselves out as domestic workers in white houses.

In these post-Reconstruction years, both illegal and legal methods of constraint and intimidation increased. Beginning with the Ku Klux Klan, first organized in 1866, white vigilante groups launched systematic campaigns of terror and violence. In the two years between 1868 and 1870, thousands of blacks were killed and tens of thousands driven from their homes, and such violence continued throughout the postwar decades. Lynchings, which often entailed torture and being burned alive, escalated in the latter part of the century. At least thirty-five hundred lynchings occurred between 1885 and 1910, with the alleged rape of white women by black men constituting the most frequent rationalization. Such intimidation and violence was not confined to the South; segregation and race riots occurred in the North as well. So virulent were attacks on the black community between 1880 and 1900 that the period has been described as "the nadir" of the free black experience.

The attacks were not only physical. Mental and psychological violence was done by the widespread propagation of negative racial stereotypes. Stereotypes are one window on relations between minority groups and the dominant culture. As cultural prescriptions for behavior, postbellum racist stereotypes denigrated blacks, limited their perceived possibilities, and denied them opportunities. The postwar period saw attacks especially on blacks' morality: men depicted as animalistic rapists and women as "Jezebels," promiscuous and lascivious. Also harmful were the stereotypes, perpetuated through such popular cultural forms as minstrel shows, of the happy dandy, the loyal, self-sacrificing Mammy; and the superstitious, lazy, country folk—images that, among other purposes, served to rationalize the economic exploitation of blacks as field and domestic workers. The stereotypes were further bolstered by pseudo-scientific studies produced by white historians, sociologists, and anthropologists that appeared in the wake of Darwin's theory of evolution, claiming that blacks were nonhuman—a different species than whites—and likely doomed to extinction. Retrogressionist arguments also appeared, asserting that, once freed from the discipline of slavery, blacks had deteriorated. Such ideas—and similar ones existed to explain the alleged inferiority of women, Native Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, and the new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe—fed into and in turn were exacerbated by the imperialist and colonializing mentality that solidified in the late nineteenth century with the Spanish-American War, the annexation of Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines; and America's growing role as a world power.

In addition, such stereotypes played a crucial role in the nostalgic depiction of prewar life that came to be known as the "plantation tradition" of writing.

Produced mainly by southern white writers like Thomas Nelson Page, this literature mythologized the South as a noble, well-ordered patriarchal world run by kindly masters and inhabited by contented slaves. The grimmer underside of such depictions emerged in the pro-Ku Klux Klan novels of Thomas Dixon, whose *The Clansman* inspired one of the most important silent movies of the newly developing film industry. D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). Other white southern writers, however, produced thoughtful, sensitive portrayals of black individuals as part of their interest in exploring both the strengths and the stresses of a multicultural society. The Louisiana writers George Washington Cable and Kate Chopin wrote of the Creoles, Acadians, blacks, whites (Anglo-Americans), and those of mixed blood in their region, exposing in the process the false idealization of the antebellum South and reflecting on the actualities of racial mixing and the light it cast on white claims to racial purity. In addition, the Georgia writer Joel Chandler Harris, through his collections of black dialect tales and creation of the character Uncle Remus, offered to white audiences sympathetic though patronizing and often distorted readings of black slave culture.

For black writers, the postwar decades provided increased publishing opportunities and a larger readership. As black literacy increased, so too did the number of newspapers and magazines addressing them as an audience, among them the *Colored American Magazine*. Some black writers published as well in the pages of the major nationally circulated journals like the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, and *McClure's*. However, the new opportunities were accompanied by constraints. Although the postwar period saw growing interest in reclaiming and preserving slave culture, especially the spirituals and work songs that had been the slaves' major expressive outlets, the association in the public mind of dialect and vernacular language with comic ignorance and inferiority posed a dilemma for the black writer who wanted to represent the racial experience in the language of the rural black masses. Like others of his generation, Paul Laurence Dunbar, one of the most popular poets in the postwar period, faced what Marcus Cunliffe has called the "double burden of racial and linguistic definition." Throughout his career, Dunbar wrote both in the vernacular and in the more formal and conventional language of late-nineteenth-century genteel poetry, but influential whites like Howells wanted him to produce only "dialect" literature. The agonized debates he conducted with himself over the use of folk language and art forms would be repeated by other black writers in the years of the Harlem Renaissance before black vernacular became fully acceptable in literature. Meanwhile, Charles Chesnut, consciously trying to undermine racist preconceptions, used dialect to create the sly ironies of his conjure tales, where the ex-slave narrator, Uncle Julius, drawing upon rich black oral traditions, scores victories over his white listeners. Moreover, through the interactive play of black and white pre- and post-Civil War society,

White mainstream literary conventions and audience expectations also posed serious obstacles for black women writers. Chesnut might ironically declare that "the object of my writings would not be so much the elevation of the colored people as the elevation of the whites," but postwar novelists like Pauline Hopkins and Frances Harper, whose *Lola LeRoy* in 1892 culminated a

distinguished career as writer and reformer that stretched back to the pre-Civil War period, saw their mission very explicitly as one of "racial uplift"—that of improving not just the public image but also the self-image of blacks, and especially of black women, for whom the Jezebel stereotype, which blamed them for the sexual exploitation they suffered, was especially pernicious. Some heroines in *Lola LeRoy* and in Hopkins's novels, including her most important work, *Contending Forces* (1900), are pale-skinned and light-haired—physical features associated with racial and moral superiority. In creating black heroines who were thus often physically indistinguishable from whites, Harper and Hopkins reveal the power of reigning middle-class white cultural standards, but their work is centered primarily in issues crucial to black women: family stability, education and finding worthwhile employment, ending sexual exploitation, the advancement of African American community, and racial pride. By the late nineteenth century, with the growth of a substantial black middle class, especially though not exclusively in the North, African American professional women, often working through their extensive network of women's clubs and organizations, were a significant force for racial progress. Educator Anna Julia Cooper, whose feminist essays, *A Voice from the South*, appeared in 1892, proclaimed that the status of black women would be a crucial determinant of the condition of the entire race. Only the black woman can say, Cooper asserted, that "when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole Negro race enters with me."

By the turn of the century, the terms on which blacks could or should enter into mainstream society were in fact the subject of extensive and ongoing debate, crystallized in the opposing positions of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois. The dominant black political leader at the end of the nineteenth century, Washington argued for conciliating and accommodating to the white world. His famous Atlanta Exposition Speech in 1895, while promoting black pride and extolling self-help, urged blacks to eschew any hopes for social equality with whites and to limit their expectations for legal and economic advancement as well. By the turn of the century, a vocal younger generation was demanding a more militant posture, refusing to be defined as a separate underclass. Du Bois's rejoinder to Washington, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), articulated his demand not only for civil rights for blacks, but also for the right to equal participation in higher education and liberal learning. By the beginning of the twentieth century, in poetry, fiction, and nonfictional prose, African American writers had established the terms for many of the major issues that the rest of the century would continue to confront.

Circumstances and Literature of Native Peoples

During the four decades following the Civil War, Native peoples suffered social discontinuity on a larger scale and to a greater degree than ever before or since, as white American society penetrated and firmly rooted itself in even the remotest interior of the trans-Mississippi West. War, confinement to reservations, and the resulting poverty, disease, and dispossession through fraud contributed to many white Americans' belief that Native peoples were casualties of the

sweep of the Caucasian (abetted by Western technology) across the face of the continent and that they were destined to vanish, losers in the struggle for the fittest survivors. Opposed to this view were those well-meaning reformers who believed that with certain adjustments in their way of life, “American Indians” could be saved. Thus during this period assimilation became the watchword, and federal policy drifted slowly from one of trying to defeat Native peoples in warfare to attempting to make them over in white America’s image. To do so required drastic changes in Native peoples’ relation to the land, new directions in their education, and a revolution in their way of life, all of which bore significantly on literary production among Native peoples.

To obtain the “proper” relation between Native peoples and land, the federal government had to undo its former policy of removal, which involved sending tribes in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). Both before the Civil War and in the twenty years after it, removal had chilling and sometimes devastating effects on individual and tribal life, including sharp rises in mortality rates. It was not, however, until after the forced march of the Poncas in 1877 from Dakota Territory to Indian Territory that any substantial sentiment rose against the policy. In significant measure, this shift in public attitude occurred in response to the efforts of a small group of writers, both Native and white, who shaped the new public awareness of the effects of removal and contributed significantly to the development of an Indian policy reform movement that culminated in a major step toward assimilation—the General Allotment Act of 1887, or Dawes Act.

The first protest literature emerged from the Omaha Ponca Committee and the people they attracted. Consisting of Standing Bear (Ponca), Susette La Flesche (Omaha), her brother Francis La Flesche, and journalist Thomas H. Tibbles, the committee toured the East in 1879 and 1880, lecturing to inform the public about the dire effects of the Poncas’ march. Capturing the public’s attention, they won the support of reform and religious groups and of writers such as the aging Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Helen Hunt Jackson, who took the Indians’ situation to the periodical press. In 1881 Jackson published *A Century of Dishonor*, an indictment of federal Indian policy and an important step in the movement for reform. The book that captured the public imagination, however, and became a Native *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, was Jackson’s popular novel, *Ramona* (1885). In the dispossession of Alisandro’s people from their ranchara, readers found the archetype of dispossession of all Native peoples in the past.

The General Allotment Act of 1887 dissolved collective tribal title to the land and allotted plots to individual Natives, who received deeds just as their Euro-American counterparts did throughout the country. The balance of unallotted land, which was always sizeable, was put up for sale, with the proceeds to be held in trust for the Native nations by the U.S. government. Allotted Native people also became citizens subject to state laws and liable to taxation. The idea that private property would serve as an effective engine of democracy was an old one. The nation’s agrarian founders had believed that the best life was that of the yeoman farmer, and ownership of land had figured prominently in the definition of the good citizen. In transferring the idea to Native nations, however, reformers ran roughshod over tribal traditions, gender and family, and

collective land use; they also failed to consider Natives’ lack of operating capital, the poor quality of much Native land, and their lack of enough legal knowledge to prevent them from losing their land. They also failed to calculate the scale of white American land hunger. Reactionary elements and land-hungry railroads had supported the General Allotment Act for their own reasons. They viewed reservation land as a vast resource waiting to be exploited by the forces of expansionist capitalism. By 1887 Native peoples had lost all but 150 million acres of their aboriginal three-billion-acre landhold. By 1934, when the General Allotment Act was repealed, only 48 million acres, less than 1.5 percent of aboriginal America, still remained in Indian hands.

The goal of assimilation into mainstream society was pursued not just by disrupting Native peoples’ communal land base and thus undermining tribal sovereignty and self-determination, but also by an educational policy that separated individuals from their tribal heritage and customs. On the reservations, education was mainly mission based, giving Natives instruction in Christian dogma and basic skills. In 1878 the government began a policy of off-reservation education by creating a number of boarding schools far from the reservations. Students were taken from their homes for a number of years, given Christian instruction, discouraged from speaking their own languages or following traditional practices, and provided with vocational training in the trades. The assumption underlying this plan was that the educated students could not return to the reservation and feel satisfied with conditions there. Rather, they were to enter mainstream America, participate in its economic system, and share its goods. Hamlin Garland and others, including the Santee Sioux writer Charles A. Eastman, believed that the transition would be easier if, like the immigrants arriving from abroad, Native peoples’ names were “Americanized.” In the early twentieth century, Eastman, funded by the U.S. government, assigned Anglicized names to the Sioux.

Much literary production by Native people in this period was in some way a response to these efforts at assimilation. Susette La Flesche initially believed that individual land ownership and citizenship were the only means by which Native peoples could protect themselves; later she became disillusioned and concluded that the American economic system favored the rich over the poor, no matter what their color. Her brother, Francis, however, remained faithful to his early views, while also using his knowledge of traditional Indian life in writing autobiographical works, stories, legends, and a libretto for an opera. Although Charles A. Eastman found it difficult to reconcile the Christian faith he had embraced as a teenager and the Army’s massacre of Native people at Wounded Knee, he continued in his Christianity and also championed Native cultures. In the face of growing evidence that full participation in American society was not possible for Native peoples, writers such as Zitkala-Sa, who had early embraced white America’s ways, became embittered, professed their “paganism,” and began a revival of interest in Native peoples’ cultures. Her work, and that of others in her generation, led directly to the reforms in the 1920s and 1930s that attempted to arrest many of the devastating effects of allotment and recognized the value of cultural pluralism.

Representing another development in American Indian writing are those authors from tribes in the Indian Territory (especially the Cherokees, Choctaws,

and Creeks) that had been there for many years before the Civil War. Having reestablished themselves as constitutional nations following removal in the 1830s and 1840s, they had developed systems of public education, embraced modern farming and ranching techniques, and were, in most respects, on the road to assimilation well before the U.S. government promoted assimilation. The educated populations in those tribes were well read in mainstream U.S. literature, and from their ranks came a number of writers who, by the end of the nineteenth century, were adept in the rhetoric and conventions of that literature. By the late 1870s, the Cherokees, for instance, had established libraries, reading circles, and debating societies, and they subscribed to the popular magazines from the states, gaining access to the poetry and fiction of mainstream U.S. writers. In their local newspapers appeared works by writers such as Mark Twain, Josh Billings, and Joel Chandler Harris. Cherokee writers such as D. W. C. Duncan (Tooquastee), John T. Adair, D. J. Brown, and John Oskison carried on the literary tradition begun by pre-Civil War Cherokees, including Elias Boudinot and John Rollin Ridge.

Literary activity also flourished elsewhere in the Indian Territory. Writers like Carrie Le Flore followed pre-Civil War Choctaw authors such as Israel Folsom and George Harkins. In the Creek Nation, writers James Roan Gregory, Charles Gibson, and Alexander Posey emerged, as did William Jones among the Sac and Fox and Bertrand N. O. Walker (Hen-toh) among the Wyandots.

Many Native writers responded to literary movements in mainstream America. Dialect and humor became favorite forms of expression for writers such as Alexander Posey and, later, Will Rogers (Cherokee), and lesser-known writers contributed pieces to local publications after the fashion of Billings and other popular literary comedians. Posey created dialect poetry from his Creek background just as Paul Laurence Dunbar and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper did from their African American one. Walker wrote animal stories in the manner of Harris's Uncle Remus stories, and Posey, Jones, and Oskison produced a number of stories in the tradition of the regional writers.

Through the efforts of the Indian Territory writers, the La Flesches, Zitkala-Sa, and Eastman from the Great Plains, or Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Plaines, Native literature began to find a national market. Autobiographies were of special interest, dealing as they did with the problem of a double identity that members of other ethnic groups were struggling with at the turn of the century, both of increasing cultural diversity and of pressures to conform to mainstream ways. Simultaneously, the sharply increased interest in compilations of Native peoples' oral traditions and tribal lore indicated a growing awareness of the erosion of indigenous cultural life. Native writers by the end of the century created a rich corpus of writing that is taking its place both as American literature and as Native literature.

Circumstances and Literature of Latino/as

For the Latino/as of the Southwest, the fifty years after 1865 comprised a period during which their traditions and literature evolved into a distinctive culture and body of expression. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the

Mexican War in 1848, transformed Spanish-speaking peoples from California to New Mexico into Americans only in a political sense, and a generation passed before they began to delineate new geo-cultural realities. The literature that Latino/as created includes historical and personal narratives; fiction; the *columnista* sketch (a sketch of customs or manners); poetry; various folkloric forms such as the folktales, the legend, and the *corrido* (a type of ballad); and, occasionally, the novel.

Aside from the question of Americanization, the issues that gripped the attention of writers in more populous regions of the United States—urbanization, technological innovation, the entrenchment of industrial capitalism—were regarded with considerably less enthusiasm in the Latino/a Southwest, which remained, defiantly, a place apart. Its heritage was unique among all the regions of the United States: a *mestizo* blend of Spanish, Native, and Mexican traditions that contrasted vividly with the English traits of the dominant culture. Additionally, the primary religious influence was Catholic, not Protestant. For many Latino/as in the last third of the nineteenth century, the fountainheads of mainstream American culture and politics—Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington—seemed remote if not irrelevant. What was decidedly neither remote nor irrelevant was the physical presence of the *gringos*, arriving in the Southwest in ever larger numbers, presumably to take Latino/as land and to deminish their culture.

Among American ethnic groups, Latino/as of the Southwest occupied a curious position, being neither immigrants—the United States, after all, had absorbed them—nor a minority in many of the southwestern communities they inhabited. Latino/as took pride in the fact that they could trace a longer history in North America than Anglo-Americans: Juan de Oñate had established a permanent settlement in northern New Mexico along the Rio Grande in 1598, nine years before the founding of Jamestown and twenty-two years before Plymouth. Another factor that separated Latino/as from other ethnic groups was the proximity of their homeland. The United States and Mexico shared a border that stretched some two thousand miles from the Pacific to the Gulf of Mexico, and most Latino/as lived within easy traveling distance; many lived on or near the border itself. While ethnic Europeans mourned the decline of their traditional cultures far away from their homelands, Latino/as had easy access to theirs.

Their long presence in the Southwest and their enduring cultural vitality and pride help to explain the vehemence with which Latino/as responded to the many Anglo-Americans who came into the region with little respect for them and little interest in cultural accommodation. Numerous historical and personal narratives appeared to denounce the arrogant and bigoted *gringos*. Not surprisingly, many of the fiercest condemnations came from once-wealthy and prominent landowners who had lost the most to the acquisitive Anglos. Writers of such works included Mariano Vallejo, Ignacio Sepúlveda, Juan Bautista Alvarado, Juan Bandini, and Maria Arparo Ruiz de Burton.

Even as they denounced the Anglo interlopers, Latino/as recognized that their world had changed and would change still more. Here, then, were the components of a distinctive Latino/a sensibility: ethnic pride and a powerful sense of history and endurance forged within the dynamics of the border.

In the late nineteenth century, easily the most popular literary form among Latino/as was poetry, much of which appeared in the hundreds of Spanish-language newspapers that proliferated in the Southwest. Much of the poetry was lyrical, generally in the prevailing Spanish and Latin American styles, and a great deal was political, treating such issues as the quality of education available for Latino/as, the necessity of learning English, and land grant disputes. A particularly explosive issue debated in verse was the Spanish-American War of 1898. Some poets encouraged their readers to support the war effort as a show of patriotism; others maintained that the United States had done nothing to deserve Latino/a loyalty.

While the production of conventional literary works increased steadily toward the end of the nineteenth century and beyond, folkloric forms also flourished. The *corrido* ballad tradition matured around the turn of the century and thrived thereafter. The *corrido* proved to be a perfect medium for expressing both dispossession and cultural conflict with Anglos. *Corridos* were composed—usually anonymously—and sung across the Southwest, attaining epic proportions in the lower border regions of Texas. Here, in an environment of intense conflict with the Anglo community and true transculturalism, “border Mexicans” celebrated the exploits of such figures as Gregorio Cortez and Jacinto Treviño, common men who stood up to Anglo injustice with, as the saying went, pistols in their hands.

Although Latino/a literary works, including the narratives of Miguel Otero and Andrew García, occasionally appeared in English, Spanish remained the primary language of expression in both conventionally literary and folkloric forms until well into the twentieth century. Indeed, the Spanish of Latino/as had become a distinctive literary and oral idiom, incorporating English words and phrases and creating new expressions from both standard Spanish and English.

Along the central and southern East Coast of the United States, there was also ferment among Spanish-language writers and activists connected with the Antilles and more generally with the Caribbean and Latin America. Best-known of these figures among English-speakers today is Cuban revolutionary and writer José Martí. The scope of Martí’s activities and accomplishments, as well as his heroism, were exceptional, but his life and work attest to the hemispheric scope of the anticolonial movements in which he took part and, in many ways, spurred. Exiled from Spanish-ruled Cuba for his political activity for much of his life, he lived and was politically active in Spain, Venezuela, Guatemala, Mexico, and the United States. His associations with and publications in Spanish-language periodicals in many countries bespeak the supranational networks among Latino/as during the late nineteenth century. Among those periodicals were *La República* (Honduras), *La Nación* (Buenos Aires), *La Opinión Pública* (Montevideo), and *La América* (New York City); in the United States he also founded and published in the Spanish-language *PATRIA* (Fatherland) and published in the *English-language Hour*. He was also chair of the Spanish-American Literary Society in New York City. As for many others in the Antillean exile community, for Martí, writing and political activity were fused. If much of his writing was political, advocating the common interests of hemispheric Spanish-speaking countries, He was the Uruguayan, Argentine, and Paraguayan consul in New York and Uruguay’s representative to the International Monetary Conference in Washington

in 1891. He was also tireless in organizing resistance to Spanish rule in Cuba—which, in his view, had to be part of a broad Latin-American movement for democracy and cultural self-determination—and in 1892 founded the Cuban Revolutionary Party. Joining Cubans in their war for independence from Spain shortly after it began, he was killed in it in 1895.

Martí’s most famous essay, “Nuestra América” (1891), speaks in many ways to the pan-Americanism he embraced. Written in New York City, it appeared in Spanish in *Revista Ilustrada* (New York) and in *El Partido Liberal* (Mexico City). Long recognized as a pioneering expression of Latino/a self-determination and a major work of *modernismo*, it continues to be read in Spanish throughout Latin America and in the United States. That in “English” translation it also enjoys an ever-increasing non-Spanish readership reflects a deepening recognition within the United States, as elsewhere, that “America” has always signified far more than the national contours of any single country.

Circumstances and Literature of Asian Americans

At the turn of the twentieth century, Asian Americans constituted a comparatively small percentage of the population of the United States. Out of a total of fourteen million immigrant arrivals between 1860 and 1900, less than half a million were of Asian descent. Of this number, Chinese immigrants comprised roughly 260,000 but experienced discrimination out of all proportion to their modest numerical presence. Indeed, in the post-Civil War period, Sinophobia became widespread, and cities, states, and the national government passed repressive legislation. The Chinese had been the primary labor force in the building of the transcontinental railroad east from Sacramento, doing the backbreaking and dangerous work of tunneling through the Sierra Nevada and Rocky Mountains. With the railroad’s completion in 1869, however, they found themselves barred from other occupations, a situation that worsened throughout the 1870s, when a nationwide depression led to a scarcity of jobs. In California they were largely confined to cooking, laundry, and domestic work; elsewhere, employers’ exploitation of them as strikebreakers exacerbated hostility against them. Designed primarily to increase contributions, accounts of missionaries working in China that described the Chinese as “heathens living in darkness” served to encourage feelings of distrust and disgust among whites. By the late nineteenth century, the Chinese were contributing to American society in a variety of fields, including innovations in the Florida citrus fruit and the California wine industries; nonetheless, the prevalent stereotype saw them as “coolies,” slant-eyed and idolatrous.

From the 1870s on, local and state laws in California limited not only the employment of Chinese but also their freedom to engage in their own cultural practices. Violence against them also escalated, with over a thousand killed and injured in California, Washington, Wyoming, and Colorado. The repression took legal form in 1882 with the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which banned the entry of all Chinese except for a few diplomats, students, teachers, merchants, and tourists. Further legislation in 1888 voided Certificates of Return, leaving twenty thousand Chinese stranded outside the United States with useless reentry permits.

Compared to the antipathy directed toward the Chinese, mainstream American attitudes toward Japanese immigrants were relatively benign for a time. Modest immigration flows, coupled with Japan's military power (manifested by its victories over China in 1872 and 1895 and over Russia in 1905), helped prevent anti-Chinese sentiment from spilling into violence and discrimination against Japanese. Still, the Gentleman's Agreement of 1908, which limited but did not completely bar Japanese immigration, portended greater restrictions on Japanese as the United States became increasingly isolationist and as racist social theory continued to fuel segregationist domestic policies.

The status of Koreans in the United States in the early twentieth century was tied closely to Japan's imperialistic drive to control Korea, which it made a protectorate in 1905 before formal annexation occurred in 1910. Upon becoming subjects of the Japanese emperor, the roughly eight thousand Koreans in the United States were directly affected by the Gentleman's Agreement. The loss of their sovereignty generated considerable nationalist sentiment among them, and in 1905 Koreans in Hawaii sent a letter to President Theodore Roosevelt asking for American intervention in the wake of the Japanese takeover of Korea. This political appeal was but one manifestation of what was to be a vibrant independence movement among Koreans in this country.

That few Asian American writers of this period came to the notice of mainstream readers should not cause us to overlook the plentiful material produced by every Asian group in the United States. Much of the writing by Koreans consisted of tracts, pamphlets, and sermons in Korean. It would take another generation for authors like Younghill Kang during the 1930s to begin expressing in English some of the aforementioned political sentiments that marked the Korean American community.

Filipino literary expression was marked by a strong nationalist strain as well, with exiles from the Philippines such as Felipe Agoncillo, Sixto Lopez, and Galicano Apacible writing to dispel American colonialist stereotypes of their people and to prove Filipino competence. Although these authors generally did not write for or about the several thousand Filipino workers in the United States, their nationalist fervor would inspire the next (the "manong") generation to focus attention on the experiences of this group.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, native Hawaiian cultural workers (including the overthrown Queen Liliuokalani) composed poems and songs that quietly but defiantly expressed resentment against continental U.S. missionary and business interests intent on expropriating Hawaii's resources and lands. The lyrics of *Kaulana na Pua*, for instance, exhort the children of Hawaii to remain loyal to the land in the face of the "evil-hearted messenger" with his "greedy document of extortion," but because the song was sung in Hawaiian, its protest statement went unrecognized by the colonizers even as it out the islands and inspired writers on the mainland in the twentieth century.

The best-known early Asian American authors were Edith and Winnifred Eaton. The Canada-raised daughters of a Chinese mother and an English father, both adopted pen names that reflected the ethnic identities they chose to assume. Under the Chinese pseudonym Sui Sin Far, Edith Eaton published short fiction in the major magazines of the day that portrayed intricacies of Chinese

Americans' lives with subtlety and respect, thereby becoming the first Chinese American to write on their behalf. Winnifred Eaton, in contrast, chose a Japanese-sounding name. Onoto Watanna, under which, between 1899 and 1925, she published hundreds of stories and nearly a score of novels, mostly set in Japan. Her widely popular fiction may sometimes seem to conform to racial and sexual stereotypes of the time—noble, martial Japanese men and shy, charming Japanese young women—but it often played against or troubled the Orientalism in which it seemingly participated. Following a different course, Edith Eaton portrayed Chinese Americans facing discrimination, the anguish of being in Chinese-Caucasian marriages that predated the antimiscegenation laws that obtained in many states, the havoc that U.S. cultural conventions could create for Chinese women and men who settled in the United States, and also the imaginativeness with which people navigated the dangerous circumstances of being Chinese in the United States. In presenting in her autobiographical work a sense of her own split identity as a person living in two cultures but feeling at home in neither, she also explored a sense of dual belonging that later Asian American writers would affirm, challenge, or revise in their own contexts.

Two other writers, Yone Noguchi (Noguchi Yonejirō) and Sadakichi Hartmann, sought recognition as artists—writers whose work was of significant aesthetic merit. Each made use of Japanese forms in some of his writing; each also hoped to make Americans aware of Japanese aesthetic traditions. Noguchi, who lived in the United States between 1893 and 1903, modeled two fictional travelogues, purportedly by a wealthy young Japanese woman who visits the United States, on a Japanese genre of travel writing: while his own poetry tended towards the conventional, he urged American poets to "create a new poetics" by adapting a form of Japanese *haiku*, as Mayumi Takada tells us. Hartmann, the son of a German father and Japanese mother who came to the United States in 1882 and soon became a U.S. citizen, immersed himself in American art, publishing *A History of American Art* in 1902. A gifted and versatile writer, he wrote journalistic pieces, a play, a novel, and short stories as well as poetry; some of it influenced by Whitman, whom he revered (and visited), some of it in the Japanese *haiku* and *tanka* forms, some of it elegantly lyrical and quite sensuous.

By the early twentieth century, Asian American literature was varied and noteworthy, if not yet extensive. Whether this literature reflects on Asian Americans' lives or tropes on Japanophilia and whether it takes the form of lyric poetry, satiric travelogue, drama, essay, or fiction, Asian American literature of this period creatively mixes aesthetics, cultures, and styles. At the same time, much of it also preserves the cultural, social and racial tensions that inform it. It is distinctive in the traditions on which it draws and how it does so: its subject matter is frequently distinctive as well. For these very reasons it also shares commonalities with the vast body of U.S. literature in which diverse traditions, histories, and circumstances are complexly brought into play.

Immigration, Urban Conditions, and Reform

If the need to balance the claims of one's ethnic or racial heritage against those of the dominant culture was an imperative for African Americans, Native peoples, Latino/as, and Asian Americans, so too at the turn of the century it became

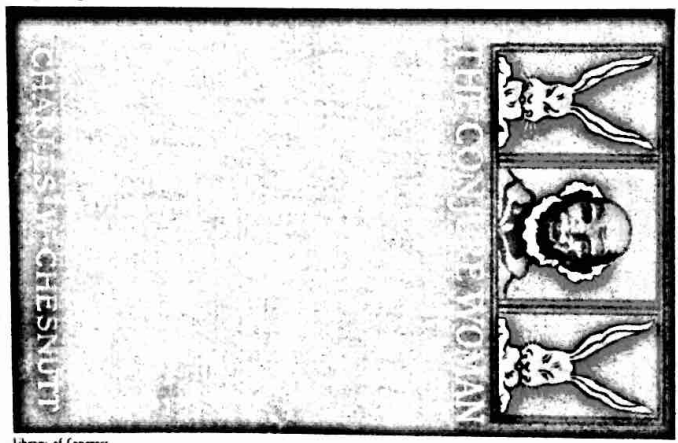
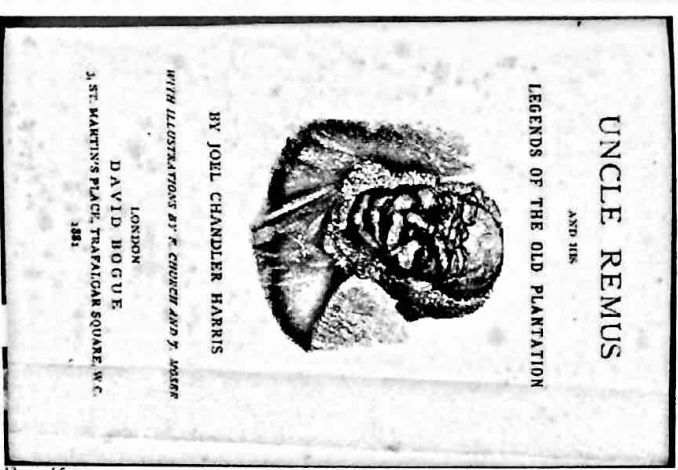
the paramount literary subject for the first generation of writers to emerge from among those called the "new immigrants," the southern and eastern Europeans who entered the United States in unprecedented numbers in the decades after the Civil War. Before 1860 most immigrants had come from Great Britain, Ireland, Germany, and Scandinavia, and while their entry was steady, it was not overwhelming: five million had arrived in the forty years between 1820 and 1860. The next forty years, however, saw fourteen million new arrivals to the United States, the vast majority of whom came from Italy and Poland, Russia, Austria, Turkey, Greece, and Syria. Heavily Catholic or Jewish and non-English-speaking, they settled primarily in the cities of the Northeast and Midwest, where they frequently took the least skilled industrial jobs and were viewed by the native-born and by earlier arrivals with apprehension and distrust. Their sheer numbers radically altered the ethnic composition of the nation, and their different manners and customs, modes of dress, and religious observances were seen as threatening and disruptive to Anglo-Saxon hegemony and power. Reaction to the new immigrants took the form of expressed fears of race suicide or a dilution of "American" racial stock, which led after World War I to major legislation restricting immigration into the country.

Increased cultural diversity created increased pressure to conform, and as with American Indians, assimilation was the prescribed goal. The idea of the United States as a melting pot in which ethnic and racial differences would be dissolved into a common identity prevailed, and by the end of the century that common identity was being consciously defined as based on spoken and written English and on Anglo-Saxon cultural values. As with Native peoples, education was an essential mechanism for accomplishing the process. The public school, as Mary Antin declared, was to be "the immigrant child's road to Americanization."

The ways in which the new immigrants responded to the expectations of their newly adopted country differed from those of other minority groups, primarily because, unlike blacks, who were brought to America forcibly, or Native peoples and Latino/as, who first inhabited the land and were then subjugated by white settlers, the new immigrants largely chose to come. True, they came because conditions at home were often intolerable—wars, religious and political persecutions, crop failures and famines, overpopulation and unemployment—but they came, like Abraham Cahan in 1882 or Mary Antin's father in 1892, because they saw America as a land of economic opportunity and political freedom. The terms on which they struck their bargains with the new land, the conflicts they experienced, and the accommodations they made, therefore, bore the marks of their own unique situations.

Some immigrant groups, such as the Jews and the Germans, brought with them traditions of literacy and often cultural networks and institutions. Others, such as southern Italians, Poles, and many Irish, came from peasant stock with well-developed oral but not written literary traditions. Among the new arrivals, Jewish immigrants took quickly to print, and their autobiographies and novels expressed the eagerness to assimilate that distinguished the new immigrants as a whole from most of the other American minority populations. The immediate popularity of Mary Antin's autobiography, *The Promised Land*, which appeared in 1912 after having first been serialized in the *Atlantic Monthly*, was to a significant extent due to the glowing portrait it presented of the acculturation

AN IMAGE GALLERY 1865–1910



■ **TITLE PAGE FROM JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS'S *UNCLE REMUS AND THE LEGENDS OF THE OLD PLANTATION* (1881 edition). COVER OF CHARLES WADDELL CHESNUT'S *THE CONJURE WOMAN* (c. 1899).** Joel Chandler Harris's narrator, Uncle Remus, remains one of the most controversial characters in American literature. Scholars dispute whether he is a stereotypical symbol of the Old South or a more complex storyteller who uses his tales to correct an unequal balance of power in favor of whites in postbellum Southern society. Wildly popular among readers in both the North and the South, Harris's writing exemplifies the school of literature termed the "Plantation Tradition." In addition to several of Harris's Uncle Remus tales, this volume includes a cluster of African American folktales collected from a range of sources. Although the illustration on the front cover of Charles Waddell Chesnut's collection of short stories appears to capitalize on the popularity of Harris's Uncle Remus tales, Chesnut's works directly contest the figure of Remus. Like Harris's character, Chesnut's Uncle Julius is an elderly ex-slave who tells his captivating stories to white listeners. However, Julius is clearly an ingenious trickster who seeks to manipulate his auditors and he usually succeeds in doing so. Moreover, Chesnut's conjure tales expose the complacent sense of racial superiority of Julius's listeners and dramatize the exploitative, dehumanizing side of slavery that was skirted, if not denied completely, in plantation tradition literature. This volume includes one of Chesnut's conjure tales—"The Goophered Grapevine."

Library of Congress

Library of Congress

■ VIEW OF THE EARTH AS SEEN BY THE APOLLO 11 CREW TRAVELING TOWARD THE MOON (1972). This image has been

interpreted in many different ways. When it was taken in 1972, Americans saw the earth as part of a larger universe—"the last frontier"—that was just beginning to be explored. From a twenty-first-century perspective, with the earth's resources in peril, we view this globe as a delicate ecosystem that is under attack.



Getty Images



Photo: Scott Krimm

■ NUYORICAN POETS CAFE. Founded in 1973, this

coffeehouse on Manhattan's Lower East Side was a site of artistic and cultural display for the city's burgeoning population of Hispanic and Latino artists and became a model for a national movement toward ethnic solidarity. Styled after the Beat generation readings of the late 1950s, the Nuyorican Poets Cafe also set the stage for the poetry "slams," or competitive open mike readings, that became popular in the 1990s and remain so in the twenty-first century. Early figures from the Nuyorican Poets Cafe such as Tracie Morris and Saul Stacey Williams are included here, and their legacy is clear in the work of the poets in our concluding "In Focus: Spoken Word Poetry."

process. Antin was eager to exchange her "hateful homemade European costume" for "real American machine-made garments" and her "impossible" Hebrew name, "Maryashe," for "Mary." But her truly transformative experience came when she was enrolled in the public school—a moment of supreme fulfillment for her father as well, who through his children thus vicariously "took possession of America." More problematic was the experience recorded in the novels of Abraham Cahan, which assessed the emotional and spiritual cost of economic success for his immigrant heroes, a price paid in a sense of self-division and even self-betrayal by the sundering of family, religious, and class bonds. Like most Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe, the titular hero of his novel *Yekl* (1896) lives both in the Old World with its biblical and Talmudic roots and values and in the New World of hustle and competition. The claims of the Old World, and of his own former self, he is "neither willing to banish from his memory nor able to reconcile with the actualities of his American present." The tensions that begin to surface in *Yekl* are more fully exposed in Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), a classic rendition of the immigrant experience. Levinsky's rise to business success as a cloak manufacturer can be compared to that degree of personal and cultural dislocation, and of the increased precariousness of the self, given the greater estrangement between one's cultural origins and one's new social and economic goals.

Antin's autobiography and Cahan's novels recognize that the success of some is built on the deprivation of others—Antin's older sister, Frieda, who must work in a factory if the younger children are to be educated, or the fellow tailors whom Levinsky abandons when he rises above their ranks. For the mass of the new immigrants, the good fortune of an Antin or a Cahan was elusive, and the nightmare side of their American success dream was powerfully captured by socialist writer Upton Sinclair, whose hero Jurgis in *The Jungle* (1906) is also an immigrant, for whom Chicago initially holds the promise that Boston held for Antin or New York for Yekl and Levinsky. Jurgis's life, however, both as factory worker and as husband, father, and provider for his extended family, becomes a series of brutalizing defeats, as the impersonal workings of the industrial economy crush, one by one, all of his hopes and efforts to rise.

Based on actual investigation of the filthy working conditions and contaminated products of the Chicago meat-packing industry, Sinclair's novel was one instance of the "muckraking" literature that appeared in the 1890s and early 1900s—journalistic exposés intended to underscore and bring to public attention the plight of groups like the factory workers and the business and government practices that were often responsible for their plight. Such exposés, often first appearing in the new mass circulation magazines such as *McClure's* and *Cosmopolitan* and later published as books, included Ida Tarbell's articles on Standard Oil, Jacob Riis's on the conditions of New York city tenements, and Lincoln Steffens's on graft and corruption in municipal governments. In turn they were a part of what had become by the turn of the century a groundswell of social protest writing that also included, for example, Ray Stannard Baker's and Charles W. Chesnut's on race riots and Ida B. Wells's on lynching. Such writing was indicative of the ever-deepening concern of writers, social workers, sociologists, economists, and social philosophers over the destructive effects both for

social stability and democratic ideals of the unregulated growth and periodic breakdowns of the industrial economy and of the inequities inherent in America's social and economic structures. This extensive literature of social protest, which took the form of novels, journalistic articles, and book-length scholarly analyses, addressed major social problems and offered programs for change that ranged from Utopian visions of radically restructured societies to remedies that would alleviate specific social ills.

One of the distinguishing features of realistic fiction throughout the postwar period, of course, was its awareness of and concern for the effects of the industrial economy on individual lives, social groups, and regional cultures. Indeed, much of the fiction (as well as nonfiction) of the post-Civil War period that seems most alive to us today is that dealing with the social dislocations created by America's overwhelming material progress, and such writing is often informed, at least implicitly, by political engagement. Often, therefore, writers crossed the line—an arbitrary one at best—between esthetic and political intent to produce narratives, like *The Jungle*, with a deliberate "message." Hamlin Garland, for example, always the advocate of the midwestern farmer, responded to their worsening conditions in the early 1890s—falling crop prices exacerbated by often exorbitant railroad freight and bank loan rates—by writing novels that made the case for specific legislative reforms, including the single tax on land that Henry George had proposed in *Progress and Poverty* in 1879, and other legislative remedies advocated by the Populist party, formed in the early 1890s in response to agrarian and labor needs. And in *The Octopus* (1901), Frank Norris exposed the railroads' immense power over the farmers. Other writers used the genre of the Utopian novel as a vehicle for their visions of transformed societies based on principles of social justice. The most famous and influential of these was Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888), the first Utopia of the industrial age, which depicted the United States in the year 2000 as a nation where government ownership of the means of production and the rational, "scientific" rule of a managerial class guaranteed economic equality and happiness for all citizens. Bellamy's work, which was still selling as many as ten thousand copies a week in the early 1890s, inspired a host of successors—several hundred Utopian fictions appeared between the 1880s and the early 1900s, including Howells's *A Traveler from Altruria*, a work that, like Bellamy's, envisioned a socialist state. Many Utopias by women, including Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915), addressed crucial issues of women's continuing subordination, which male writers were likely to ignore.

On balance, however, it was the conditions of urban life and of the industrial workers that increasingly catalyzed writers and reformers and that led to the outpouring of social protest literature, as well as to direct political action. The periodic breakdowns of the economy that resulted from uncontrolled industrial growth affected all groups, including farmers and the middle class; however, they had their most dramatic, because most visible and most violent, impact on the working class in the congested cities. The severe and prolonged depressions that began in 1873 and again in 1893 were especially devastating, leading to massive unemployment; in 1894 the situation reached crisis proportions, with twenty percent of the labor force out of work. With the formation of the Knights of Labor and later the Industrial Workers of the World and the

The golf links lie so near the mill
That almost every day
The laboring children can look out
And see the men at play.

Sarah N. Cleghorn

American Federation of Labor, the postwar period saw the steady growth of the trade union movement, which, however, reached only a portion of workers and met with widespread employer resistance. Labor dissatisfaction therefore took the form of strikes, which management countered with armed force and violence. The extremity of the conflict between capital and labor can be read in the fact that between 1881 and 1905 the nation witnessed over thirty-six thousand strikes involving some six million workers. The Chicago Fair was bracketed by two of the most notorious: the Homestead Strike in 1892, which broke the organizing efforts of the iron and steel workers, and the Pullman strike in Chicago in 1894, in which scores of striking workers were killed when state militia and federal troops were called in and the American Railway Union, led by Eugene V. Debs, was broken. It was the specter of such industrial violence, already apparent in the 1880s, and the fear of social chaos that had led Bellamy to conceive his Utopia, where state control of the industrial machine precludes the potential anarchy of free enterprise.

Efforts to implement social change peaked in the Progressive Era, the period from the 1890s until the eve of World War I, which saw the first nationwide reform movement in modern history, when calls for social justice issued in a flood from the nation's presses. To the exposes of the muckrakers were added gists calling attention to the social ills of free-wheeling capitalism: the uneven and unplanned growth of the cities with their rapid influx of population, which had led to hastily built tenement housing with its attendant problems of lack of sanitation, overcrowding, dirt, and noise; the existence of a working class, and heavily immigrant, population dependent on an inadequate weekly wage and vulnerable to the erratic shifts in a profit-oriented market economy; the resulting poverty that led to long working hours, child labor, prostitution, and crime; and the rule of corrupt party bosses that blocked reform. The settlement house movement, described in Chicagoan Jane Addams's *Twenty Years at Hull House* (1910) and exemplified in the work of reformers like Lillian Wald and Vida Scudder, had since the 1880s attempted to rectify some of the worst living and employment problems of the urban poor and to acculturate the poor to middle-class values. Their efforts contributed to the passage of local, state, and federal laws regulating the hours and working conditions of women and children, providing workers' compensation, and improving living, educational, and recreational facilities in urban slums and ghettos.

Such laws, the first significant body of reform legislation in the nation's history, represented a major, indeed a profound, shift in national attitudes from

those that had prevailed earlier, in the heyday of unrestrained industrial growth. Then, the ideology of Social Darwinism, as purveyed by writers like William Graham Sumner, had justified a hands-off approach to economic development, arguing that social, like biological, evolution was governed by natural laws that should not be interfered with. The literature of social protest constituted a strong collective rejoinder to that ideology, and the reform legislation was official recognition of the need for greater governmental involvement and responsibility, for legislative controls, and for social planning, if American society was to fulfill its democratic promise. Essentially the work of middle-class reformers, the progressive movement functioned to repair some of the damage done by an unfettered capitalist system while containing resistance to capitalism, which remained intact despite a briefly successful challenge from socialists, who mounted a series of political campaigns and in 1912 garnered 900,000 votes for Eugene V. Debs as presidential candidate and elected socialist mayors in thirty-three cities.

Some socialist tendencies colored progressive reform thought, including that of the Social Gospel movement that spread inside liberal Protestantism in the 1880s and 1890s. Dedicated to improving society through the application of Christian ethical precepts, emphasizing morality rather than theology, and social rather than individual redemption, the Social Gospel movement included writers like economist Richard T. Ely, whose arguments appeared in *Social Aspects of Christianity* in 1889; ministers like Walter Rauschenbusch, who offered a form of Christian socialism in *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907) and *Christianizing the Social Order* (1912); and popularizers like Congregational minister Charles M. Sheldon, who wrote one of the nation's most popular novels, *In His Steps* (1897), in which urban residents reform a city by asking "what would Jesus do" and acting accordingly. Social Gospel thinking also influenced William Dean Howells, who was increasingly concerned in the mid-1880s with issues of poverty and labor unrest. *The Minister's Charge* (1886) is the story of a clergyman who realizes the need for changed clerical attitudes and broader involvement in issues of social justice and reform.

In the Social Gospel movement, religion remained a visible force in American life, and it continued to be a source of spiritual strength and cultural cohesion for blacks. More generally, the influence of religion, specifically the Protestantism on which the nation had been founded and that had provided a common set of values and assumptions for over 250 years, weakened as new denominations continued to appear and as scientifically derived empirical findings challenged biblical revelation. Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), which undermined belief in the possibility of a separate creation of the human species by God, dealt religion a powerful blow, and indeed the Social Gospel movement can be seen as an effort to regain for ministers some of the status that science was steadily eroding.

The age had a strong secular strain, however, and intellectual authority increasingly passed to scientists, social scientists, and other university-trained and -based scholars and philosophers, as professionalization replaced the general amateurism of earlier New England cultural leaders. The very American philosophy of Pragmatism, invented and expounded by William James in the final decades of the century and further developed by John Dewey in the twentieth, was an

effort to provide the country with a philosophy that responded to new social complexities while retaining the traditional American belief in individualism: recognizing the constrictions of environment and circumstance on human life, pragmatism nonetheless argued for the ameliorative power of human agency to effect constructive change. Other schools of thought, however, which would gain increased currency in the years after World War I, offered less sanguine outlooks. The ideas of Marx and Freud, brewed in the ferment of nineteenth-century Europe, would constitute major intellectual shifts in the twentieth. Both served to accelerate the undermining of traditional ideas regarding the development and organization of society, and individual psychological and moral development as well, and both reinforced the widespread tendency toward a determinist view of individual and social life. As the twentieth century began to take shape in the years before World War I, these and other powerful new intellectual developments would drastically alter the cultural landscape.