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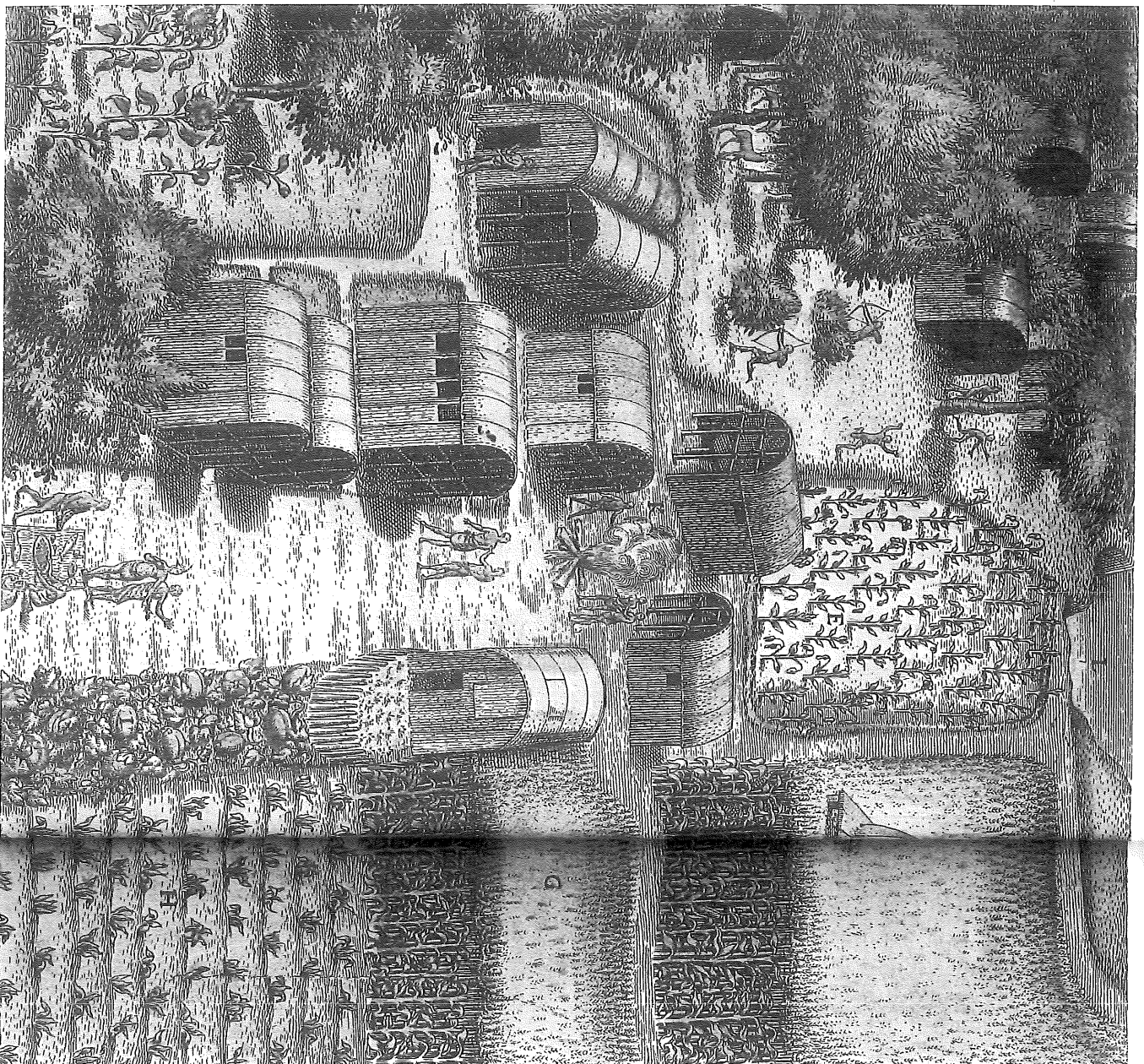
VOLUME I: BEGINNINGS TO 1865

Beginnings to 1820

QUESTIONS OF IDENTITY

n 1631, the English captain John Smith published *Advertisements for the Unexperienced Planters of New England, or Any Where: Or, the Path-way to Experience to Erect a Plantation*, the last and most polished of his works. Smith had been instrumental in the 1607 founding of Jamestown in Virginia, England's first long-lived American settlement, and he later provided guidance for both the Pilgrims who established Plymouth in 1620 and the Puritans who founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony 10 years later. Reading *Advertisements for the Unexperienced Planters* now, when anticolonial and independence movements have made colonization justly suspect, Smith's endorsement of English plantations in North America strikes a discordant note. Smith anticipated such objections, for he heard them from his contemporaries. "Many good religious devout men have made it a great question, as a matter in conscience, by what warrant might one go to possess those Countries, which are none of theirs, but the poore Salvages [i.e., savages]," he wrote. He considered the answer to this objection self-evident: "for God did make the world to be inhabited with mankind, and to have his name knowne to all Nations, and from generation to generation." Although hardly a pious man, Smith saw God's hand at work in England's seizing of the Americas.

On a more mundane level, the dense population and soil depletion in England seemed to Smith sufficient reason to take advantage of the fact that "here in Florida, Virginia, New-England, and Cannada, is more land than all the people in Christendome can



John White, *Indian Village of Secoton* (detail), 1585. For more information about this image, see the color insert in this volume.

manure [i.e., cultivate], and yet more to spare than all the natives of those Countries can use and cultivate." The continent's native inhabitants, he enthused, would "sell you a whole Country" in exchange "for a copper kettle and a few toys, as beads and hatchets." In his text, Smith did not consider that these "sales" might have been based on different concepts of property, nor did he dwell on the deadly epidemics that decimated Native societies following the arrival of Europeans. He based his arguments for colonization on the precedents available in sacred and secular history. Adam and Eve established a plantation, Smith argued, as did Noah and his family after the flood, and so on through "the Hebrewes, Lacedaemonians, the Goths, Grecians, Romans, and the rest." Moreover Portugal and Spain had a one-hundred-and-forty-year lead on England in terms of colony formation, and they were wresting great wealth from the people of the Americas, who once had possessed the natural resources. It would be "neglect of our duty and religion" as well as "want of charity to those poore Salvages" to fail to challenge these Roman Catholic countries for control of the hemisphere, Smith concluded. The difficulty today of seeing European settlement as an expression of "charity" to the "Salvages" means that the "great question" raised by the "good religious devout men" opposed to colonization remains fresh and vital.

In 1805, the Seneca orator Sagoyewatha, or Red Jacket, offered a Native perspective on colonization in an address to the missionary Jacob Cram that can serve as a rebuttal of Smith. "There was a time when our forefathers owned this great island," Sagoyewatha told Cram. "Their seats extended from the rising to the setting sun. The Great Spirit had made it for the use of Indians." When "your forefathers" arrived, he continued, "they found friends and not enemies. They told us they had fled from their own country for fear of wicked men, and had come here to enjoy their religion. They asked us for a small seat. We took pity on them, granted their request; and they sat down amongst us." Sagoyewatha went on to describe the devastating impact on Native Americans of the strong alcohol introduced by Europeans and to relate how the once small colonial populations had grown and spilled over onto lands that the Natives had not meant to relinquish. He also challenged Cram on the relevance of Christianity to Native communities, which, he stressed, had their own religious traditions. In addition, Christianity hardly seemed a unifying force for good. "If there is but one religion," Sagoyewatha asked, "why do you white people differ so much about it? Why [are you] not all agreed, as you can all read the book [i.e., the Bible]?"

In his 1782 book *Letters from an American Farmer*, the French-born writer J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur posed another resonant question: "What is an American?" Crèvecoeur offered his most explicit answer to this question in Letter III, where he described "the American" as a "new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions." The American people were "a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans and Swedes," he wrote, emphasizing that they farmed their own land and peacefully practiced various faiths, including Roman Catholicism, Quakerism, and several forms of Protestantism. Crèvecoeur's description captured important aspects of late colonial society. In its early years, the American colonies were shaped by competing empires: the large ones—New Spain, New France, and the English colonies, including Virginia and New England—and more modest efforts, such as New Netherland and New

Sweden. In the eighteenth century, even as Britain consolidated its empire in North America, an influx of immigrants from Northern Europe produced in the mid-Atlantic colonies the particular mixture that Crèvecoeur described. He contrasted this American "melting" of peoples with life in Europe, where national and religious divisions fueled chronic wars while lingering feudal systems and powerful states oppressed the common people.

Elsewhere in *Letters*, Crèvecoeur complicated his idealized vision of America as a place where Europeans could liberate themselves from the constraints of the Old World. He noted the attractions of the frontier, a borderland where hunting surpassed agriculture as the dominant mode of life. In that contact zone, European Americans adopted the customs and habits of Native Americans even as they sought to supplant them. He also reported on the hierarchical plantation-based societies of the southern colonies, and the horrors inflicted there on enslaved African Americans. His description of a caged slave is one of the most unforgettable passages in the book. In these selections, the liberating potential of the New World is shown to have sharp limits, and the process of nation-formation to have negative ramifications as well as positive consequences.

Letters from an American Farmer proved an immediate sensation, for it offered insights into what the emerging nation might become, and how the result might affect Europe. Though Crèvecoeur was probably a Loyalist supporter of British rule, his work was greeted enthusiastically by political radicals in England and Enlightenment philosophers in France, as well as by the American statesman Thomas Jefferson, who echoed Crèvecoeur's enthusiasm for the yeoman farmer in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787). After a period of relative neglect in the nineteenth century, Crèvecoeur's vision of America was revived in 1908, when Israel Zangwill's "The Melting Pot," a play focused on recent waves of European immigration, became a smash hit. Readers embraced *Letters* as a classic of American literature presenting an archetype of American identity. Unfortunately, the resulting view of *Letters* highlighted the formation of white American identity while marginalizing nonwhites. In recent years, a more comprehensive approach to Crèvecoeur's work has emphasized the sections on slavery and white/Native interactions on the frontier. *Letters from an American Farmer* offers today's readers vivid accounts of assumptions and contradictions that helped shape the early United States and its literature.

Nearly four decades after *Letters from an American Farmer* became one of the literary hits of the age of revolution, Washington Irving cast a backward look at this founding era in his tale "Rip Van Winkle." Irving was born in 1783, the year that the Treaty of Paris brought a formal close to the Revolutionary War, and he was named for the Virginia planter and slave owner who led the Continental Army to victory and later became the first president of the United States. Irving was one of the earliest American-born authors to win international literary celebrity, which he achieved as an expatriate writer living in England. The work that first made him famous was *The Sketch Book* (1819–20), a volume of stories and essays that includes his best-known tales, "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." While these stories take place in the Catskill region of New York and there are two essays on Native American life and history, the bulk of the volume concerns English customs. This fact suggests the limits to revolutionary change in the

literary world of Irving's day. Despite the ambition of many writers to create distinctly "American" works, the literature of the United States remained oriented toward England for decades after independence.

"Rip Van Winkle" emphasizes continuity more than transformation, and it highlights the checkered quality of human nature rather than its potential for radical new beginnings. Based on a German folktale and set in a sleepy Dutch village on the Hudson River shortly before the Revolution, the story features Rip, a slacker who embarks on a hunting expedition to evade his wife's demands. In the mountains, he mysteriously finds himself in the company of the English explorer Henry Hudson, who in 1609 traveled from New York Harbor as far as Albany, sailing up the river that now bears his name. Hudson and his men silently invite Rip to drink with them, and he soon falls into a deep and unnaturally prolonged sleep. When he returns to his village after a 20-year interval, the Revolution has passed, and Rip finds much that is unfamiliar, as well as things that are uncannily familiar yet somehow different. Frustrated, he bursts out, "Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?"—and a version of his younger self is pointed out to him. This person turns out to be the son he left at home two decades earlier, now grown up to be a man much like his father.

Irving invites his readers to consider the disorienting nature of social transformation. He particularly contrasts the quieter, slower colonial world with the bustle and clamor of the newly democratizing political culture. The story suggests that despite some obvious superficial differences, not very much has changed, and that some of the circumstances that have changed have not necessarily improved. These central themes are captured in Irving's description of how the image of King George III on the sign of the local inn has been repainted as George Washington. The sign offers a compelling symbol of how things can remain the same underneath even as external appearances transform. The excitement of radical change and the appeal of tradition and continuity that Irving explores in this story have been fertile themes for many American writers. Questions about the competing values and historical narratives that shape American identities were as relevant for Irving's readers as they had been two hundred years earlier for John Smith.

EXPLORING ORIGINS

The question of identity is often tied to the nature of origins. Most of the earliest surviving writings about the Americas are narratives of discovery, a vast and frequently fascinating category of works that includes Samuel de Champlain's chronicles of New France; Thomas Harriot's descriptions of Native customs and natural resources in the Chesapeake Bay region; and—of great interest to Washington Irving—the account of Henry Hudson's explorations written by Robert Juet, the sailor who later mutinied and set Hudson adrift in the bay that bears his name, never to be seen again. Irving's retelling of the Hudson story in his *History of New-York* (1809) greatly mutes the brutality in Juet's narrative to present a colonial history that is notably relaxed and genial, while explicitly marginalizing Native Americans. Virtually all colonization narratives tell a story that is closer to Juet's than to Irving's. These works show that while some elements of influence



Columbus Landing in the Indies, from *La Lettera dell'isole che ha trovata nonovamente il re di Spagna*, 1493. This woodcut was created to accompany a metrical version, by the Florentine poet Giuliano Dati, of the letter Columbus wrote describing his first voyage. The image is interesting for its symbolic presentation of European authority (in the person of Ferdinand of Spain) and its early conceptualization of what the Taino Indians looked like.

and exchange were peaceful, conflict and violence were major forces shaping this new world. Individually and collectively, these writings demonstrate that "discovery" entailed a many-sided process of confrontation and exchange among heterogeneous European, American, and, eventually, African peoples. It was out of encounters such as the ones described in these narratives that the hybrid cultural universe of the Atlantic world began to emerge.

In 1828, Irving published a biography of Christopher Columbus, the Genoese explorer who sailed across the Atlantic four times on behalf of the Spanish Empire. Columbus's own writings provide a remarkable view into the radical changes that his voyage of 1492 set in motion. His *Letter to Luis de Santangel Regarding the First Voyage* (1493)—better known as the *Letter of Discovery*—was the first printed account of the territory that Europeans later came to call America. This riveting description of the unexpected marvels that Columbus and his crew encountered in the West Indies circulated widely throughout Europe. Columbus lavished praise on the stunning island mountains, the many different types of trees and beautiful forms of vegetation, the rivers that appeared to be full of gold, and the fertile soil promising agricultural riches. He described the indigenous population as welcoming, loosely organized, and largely defenseless. And in a harbinging of

things to come, he told how “in the first island that I came to, I took some of them by force.” He captured these Natives—and took some of them with him on the return voyage to Europe—with the idea that Europeans and Natives could learn to communicate through gestures and, eventually, language. Before long, however, captivity in the service of potentially peaceful exchange yielded to other types of coercion, including enslavement.

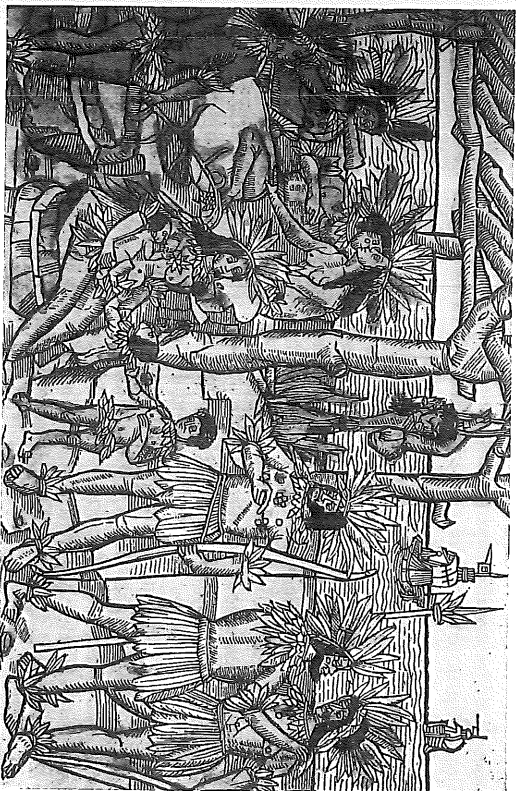
Perhaps it was one of Columbus’s original captives who in 1494 returned home to relate tales of a new world full of “marvels”—that is, the marvels of Spain, which were as unfamiliar to his Native audience as the marvels of the West Indies were to Columbus’s European readers. The man in question was a Taino Indian from the Bahamas, who had been baptized and renamed Diego Colón, after Columbus’s son. (Colón is the Spanish version of the family’s name.) Diego Colón and another captive served as translators for a large party of Spaniards, around fifteen hundred, who arrived in the Caribbean early in November 1493. In the words of the Spanish historian Andrés Bernaldez, who knew Columbus well and edited his papers, Colón regaled the other Natives with tales of “the things which he had seen in Castile and the marvels of Spain, . . . the great cities and fortresses and churches, . . . the people and horses and animals, . . . the great nobility and wealth of the sovereigns and great lords, . . . the kinds of food, . . . the festivals and tournaments [and] bull-fighting.” Colón’s story catches in miniature the extraordinary changes that began to occur as natives of Europe encountered natives of the Americas in a sustained way for the first time in recorded history.

Each group of peoples was of course the product and agent of its own history and brought a unique sense of “reality” to the encounter. For example, the year of Columbus’s first voyage was also the year of the Spanish *Reconquista*, that is, the final defeat of the Islamic Moors of North Africa who had conquered Spain more than 700 years earlier. The *Reconquista* was just one phase of the centuries-long wars between Christian and Muslim empires that shaped European perceptions of, and actions in, the Americas. Captain John Smith had earned his military title fighting in southeastern Europe against the imperial forces of the Ottoman Turks, then at the height of their power. There were recognizably imperial states in the Americas as well. In the two centuries before Columbus’s voyage, the Aztecs had consolidated an empire in present-day Mexico, and over the course of the fourteenth century the Inca Empire had expanded to encompass territory from what is now southern Colombia to Chile. Because of the Aztec and Inca presences, the view of European conquest as a contest of empires is particularly strong in Spanish accounts. The conquistador Hernán Cortés described the sophistication and wealth that existed in the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlán, before he ordered his forces to destroy it. In a more muted way, Smith portrayed English interactions with the Powhatan Indians as the product of their competing imperial projects, with Chief Powhatan undertaking to absorb the English newcomers within his expanding area of influence while Smith struggled to establish dominance.

When the Europeans arrived in the Americas, the indigenous people numbered between fifty million and one hundred million. Mass deaths among the indigenous communities facilitated European expansion. Almost literally from 1492, Native peoples started to die in large numbers. Whole pop-

ulations plummeted as diseases such as smallpox, measles, and typhus spread throughout the Caribbean and then on the mainland of Central and South America. These diseases became even more lethal as a consequence of war, enslavement, brutal mistreatment, and despair. The rapid introduction of slavery of Native Americans by Europeans, which Columbus helped initiate, reflects both historical practices and contemporary developments. The word “slave” derives from “Slay,” which refers to speakers of Slavic languages, in central and eastern Europe; many Slavs were taken as property by Spanish Muslims in the ninth century. Race-based slavery emerged shortly before Columbus’s first voyage: the European slave trade in Africa began in 1441, and in 1452 Pope Nicholas V authorized the enslaving of non-Christians. In 1500 slavery was a common form of labor, with variants around the globe, including in Africa and the Americas. Columbus had intended to create a market in enslaved Americans, and a substantial number of Natives were taken as slaves, but ultimately this project failed because too many Native people died. Europeans began transporting small numbers of enslaved Africans to the Americas shortly after arriving there. Those numbers soon multiplied, and the social and cultural features of this new world became even more complex as the slaves introduced the arts and traditions of various African societies.

The impacts in the Americas of disease and of slavery can be seen in miniature in the history of the Caribbean island Hispaniola. The population of Hispaniola (estimated at between one hundred thousand and eight million in 1492) plunged following the Spanish occupation, partly through disease



New World Natives, from an anonymous German woodcut, c. 1505. The text accompanying this detailed early illustration comments on Native Americans and their customs, praising their physical appearance and healthfulness as well as their distaste for both private property and public government. Only in passing does it assert that they kill and eat their enemies, smoking the dead bodies above their fires, as on closer inspection the woodcut indicates.

and partly through abuses of the *encomienda* system, which gave individual Spaniards claims to Native labor and wealth. Faced with this sudden decline in Native workers, Spain introduced African slavery there as early as 1501. In 1522, the first major slave rebellion in the Americas took place on the island, when enslaved African Muslims killed nine Spaniards. From this point forward, slave resistance became commonplace. Nevertheless, by the mid-sixteenth century the Native population had been so completely displaced by African slaves that the Spanish historian Antonio de Herrera called the island “an effigy or an image of Ethiopia itself.” Hispaniola was the leading edge of broader devastations and transformations: colonization, disease, and slavery had similarly sweeping effects in many parts of the Americas.

It would be inaccurate to picture indigenous Americans as merely victims suffering an inexorable decline. The motif of the “vanishing Indian” that became prominent in the early nineteenth century misrepresents historical realities, which involved unevenly textured cultural developments. Some indigenous Americans made shrewd use of the European presence to forward their own aims. In 1519, the disaffected Natives in the Aztec Empire threw in their lot with Cortés because they saw a chance to settle the score with their overlord, Montezuma. In New England, the Pequot War of 1637 involved a similar alignment on the English side of such tribes as the Narragansetts and the Mohegans, who had grievances with the militarily aggressive Pequots. The Powhatans of the Chesapeake Bay region and the Iroquois in the Northeast seized on European technology and the European market, adopting novel weaponry (the gun) and incorporating new trade goods into their networks as a means of consolidating advantages gained before the arrival of the colonists. Beginning in the eighteenth century, the Comanches built an empire that dominated other Native groups and contested European (and later United States and Mexican) power in the southern plains and southwestern regions of North America. Above all, Native societies were not static. Even as their populations shrank, indigenous Americans resisted, transformed, and exploited the cultural and social practices that Europeans and Africans brought to the Americas. Eventually, these resilient, resourceful peoples embraced writing and print to protect their communities, advance their interests, and convey their vital place in the world.

Meanwhile, the African population in the Americas was expanding. Although free blacks were a growing presence, most of the Africans were slaves who were often forced into heterogeneous groups that brought together members of various cultures speaking distinct languages. Under the harsh conditions of European domination, they created new forms of expression that retained ties to their cultures of origin. One notable instance of this dynamic process involves the West African figure of Esu Elegbara, the guardian of the crossroads and interpreter of the gods, who appears in works of verbal art created in African communities throughout the Americas. Esu features in narrative praise poems, divination verses, lyrical songs, and prose narratives and is particularly connected with matters of heightened (that is, “literary”) language and interpretation. By the eighteenth century, many African Americans practiced Christianity, and the Bible provided a stock of characters and rhetorical postures that they used to articulate their experiences and worldviews and to advocate for their freedom.

LITERARY BACKGROUNDS AND CONSEQUENCES OF 1492

Apart from the literatures of ancient Greece and Rome, few of the works now regarded as classics of European literature had been produced when Columbus sailed in 1492. Those that did exist can be grouped into a few genres. There were epic poems, such as *Beowulf* (English), *The Song of Roland* (French), and Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (Italian); chivalric romances, including *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (English); shorter romances, such as the *lais* of Marie de France; story sequences, including the Italian writer Boccaccio’s *Decameron* and the English poet Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*; sacred lyric poems, such as by Hildegard of Bingen; and sonnets, notably those by the Italian poet Petrarch, who honed the form into a major genre that, during the Renaissance, Shakespeare made important to English literature. Aristotle’s and Cicero’s works were already widely known, and the revival of Greco-Roman classics that characterized the Renaissance was on the horizon. Augustine’s *Confessions* was among the broadly influential works of sacred prose, while secular chronicles and histories attracted many readers. In 1300, Marco Polo’s account of his travels to China began to circulate; *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, a fabulous account of a journey through the Middle East and beyond, appeared five or six decades later. Published in manuscript before the Gutenberg printing press was invented around 1440, both works are thought to have influenced Christopher Columbus’s writings about his “new world.”

Beginning with the publication in 1493 of Columbus’s Letter of Discovery, the printing press became part of the engine driving European expansion in the Americas. Explorers and adventurers produced a large and intriguing body of literature that communicated the wonders of the new world, described Native societies with varying degrees of accuracy and appreciation, and offered explanations and justifications for numerous colonial projects. In some cases, notably that of the Spanish friar Bartolomé de las Casas, writers also testified about the atrocities being committed against Native peoples. Print increasingly made possible the dissemination of texts rich with imagery and practical knowledge, helping to stir individual imaginations and national ambitions with regard to the West Indies and the Americas and, in a few instances, seeking to limit the negative impact of colonization on indigenous Americans.

Cataclysms such as the devastation of the Indies and the Conquest of Mexico produced not only the Spanish narratives of Columbus, Cortés, and Las Casas but also Native responses. For example, in 1528 anonymous Native writers, working in the Nahuatl language of the Aztecs but using the Roman alphabet introduced by the Spanish, lamented the fall of their capital to Cortés:

Broken spears lie in the roads;
we have torn our hair in our grief.
The houses are roofless now, and their walls
are red with blood.

No one reading these four lines will easily glorify the conquest of Mexico or of the Americas more generally. Such testimonies offer an essential outlook on this painful history.

At the time of conquest Native Americans had rich oral cultures that valued memory over material means of preserving texts. There were some important exceptions. The Aztecs and a few other groups produced written works in their own languages, though Spanish conquerors destroyed many of the *amoxilli* and other types of Native “books.” Many indigenous communities used visual records in subtle and sophisticated ways, with a notable example being the Andean quipu, a type of knotted string. North American recording devices included shellwork belts, known as *wampum*, and painted animal hides, tepees, and shields. The histories and rituals encoded in these devices were translated into spoken language in ways that had significant parallels in what is sometimes called print culture. Scripture was regularly interpreted and delivered in a sermon in much the same manner as a *wampum* belt might be “read” at a treaty conference. Again, a printed narrative might be read aloud, similar to the way that Native tales were recounted; while hymns and ballads were designed for singing and provided an early contact point between European and Native verbal artists.

In addition to taking diverse forms, early American literature reflects the linguistic and cultural range of the colonial world. Spanish, French, German and its variants, and other European languages are prominent in the written archive about North America. Dozens of Native languages left traces, which include evidence of at least eight creation narratives, with notable examples being the Iroquois creation story and the Winnebago trickster cycle included in this volume. Although English eventually became the main language in the United States, and thus the dominant medium of classic American literature, it was a late arrival in the Americas. Likewise, although the New England colonies, founded in the early seventeenth century, have conventionally been regarded as the central source of early American literature, the first North American settlements were established elsewhere many years earlier. The Spanish founded colonies at present-day St. Augustine, Florida (1565), and Santa Fe, New Mexico (1610), and Dutch settlers established New Netherland (1614), which came to include New York City and Albany (1614). All of these cities, which started as colonial outposts, are older than Boston (1630), which was not even the first permanent English settlement in North America. That distinction goes to the Jamestown colony, in Virginia (1607).

The writings of Thomas Harriot and John Smith about Virginia’s Chesapeake Bay region are crucial to a full understanding of the English-language literature of the Americas. Harriot produced the first account of England’s new world in *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1588), which combines descriptions of marketable commodities, a detailed and often accurate description of Native beliefs and practices, and a narration of how Wingina, the Algonquian headman on Roanoke Island, interacted with the English colonizers and sought to understand the devastating effects of the illnesses that followed in their wake. As noted earlier, John Smith was an enthusiastic and prolific proselytizer for English colonization, instrumental in the establishment of Virginia and influential as well in the founding of

New England. Smith epitomized those proponents of colonization who came from the underclasses in their native countries, and he made a powerful case for the opportunities that America offered them. Energetic and confident, Smith could be subversive, even mutinous, in his writings as in his life. His works present a vision of America as a place where much that was genuinely new might be learned and created. This vision came to maturity in his writings about New England, and helped to shape what many regard as the most influential body of writings from the early period.

LITERARY NEW ENGLAND

The founding of Plymouth Plantation, in 1620, marks a new phase in the literary history of colonial North America. The first months of the Plymouth colony were inauspicious. After landing on the raw Massachusetts shore in November 1620, the Pilgrims braced for winter. They survived this “starving time” with the essential aid of the nearby Wampanoag Indians and their leader, Massasoit. From these “small beginnings,” as the colony’s leader, William Bradford, refers to them in *Of Plymouth Plantation* (c. 1630), grew a community that later came to be invested with a symbolic significance that far exceeded its size and remote location. The Pilgrims’ religious motivation for leaving England is only part of the story. Backed by English investors, the seafaring migration was commercial as well as spiritual. Among the hundred people on the group’s ship, the *Mayflower*, almost three times as many were secular settlers as were Separatist Puritans. The persistent tension between the material and spiritual goals of the Plymouth colonists appears in many early writings about the region. For instance, Thomas Morton portrays this conflict in values in *New English Canaan* (1637), where the Plymouth leaders appear not as holy men but as domineering and repressive antagonists of Morton’s colony at Ma-re Mount. Morton also conveys a different sensibility about relations with the Natives, expressing little desire to convert them to Christianity and focusing instead on joining with them in May Day festivities. Although Morton probably overstated the ideological differences and minimized the economic rivalry with Plymouth, the contrast suggests a spectrum of colonial responses to their new environment.

Much larger than either Plymouth or Ma-re Mount was the Massachusetts Bay Colony, founded in 1630 by Puritans under John Winthrop. The Massachusetts Bay colonists initially wanted to retain their ties with the Church of England, leading to their designation as non-Separating Congregationalists, which distinguished them from the more radical Separatists at Plymouth. On other issues, they shared basic beliefs with the Pilgrims: both agreed with the Protestant Reformation leader Martin Luther that no pope or bishop had the right to impose any law on a Christian without consent, and both accepted the Reformation theologian John Calvin’s view that God freely chose (or “elected”) those he would save and those he would damn eternally.

Puritans have a grim reputation as religious zealots, prudes, and killjoys. These conceptions stem from the Calvinist doctrine of election. However,

reflecting his typically Puritan sensibility. Similar qualities are evident in the works of Anne Bradstreet, a Puritan and the first British North American writer to publish a volume of poetry. Bradstreet confessed her religious doubts to her children, but she emphasized that it was "upon this rock Christ Jesus" that she built her faith.

Religious emotion provided a unifying factor for diverse denominations, leading to the kind of melding that Crèvecoeur would later find characteristic of American life. The closest thing in New England to Crèvecoeur's ideal was in the Providence colony, which the Puritan theologian Roger Williams helped guide toward a more capacious understanding of religious freedom than was accepted in Plymouth or Massachusetts Bay. Williams insisted that "christenings make not Christians." In other words, as he interpreted the doctrine of election, rituals and displays meant less than inner faith. Accordingly, he helped make Providence a refuge for religious dissenters and outsiders, including Antinomians, Quakers, and Jews. He also worked hard—for a time, successfully—to establish good relations with the region's Narragansett Indians. However, harmonious relations were shattered in 1675, when King Philip led the Wampanoags and their Narragansett allies to war against the colonies, with devastating effects on both sides. In her captivity narrative, the Puritan settler Mary Rowlandson movingly describes the mutual betrayal experienced by the indigenous people and the colonists.

Just over a decade after Rowland's captivity, King William's War became the first in a series of conflicts between New England and New France that culminated in 1763 with Britain's victory in the French and Indian War. During the intervening decades, colonists regularly fought alongside European troops and Native allies. European state politics informed the fighting, as did religious differences between Protestant England and Catholic France, which infused events that roiled Puritan communities, such as the Salem witchcraft crisis of 1692. That famous and, in a certain sense, defining crisis reflected complex transformations of colonial authority and identity. Though small in comparison to the witch trials that took place in Europe and the British Isles in roughly the same period, the tragic events at Salem, which culminated in the execution of twenty people, loom large in part because of their distinctive features and overdetermined meaning. The trials unfolded as the new royal charter transformed Massachusetts Bay from a colony to a province, shifting power to the metropolis. Meanwhile, rivals to Puritanism were becoming more visible, not only in New France, but also in other British colonies with different religious identities and competing understandings of the relationship between church and state. Maryland, established in 1634, had a strong association with both Catholicism and religious toleration, while Rhode Island, which had grown from Roger Williams's settlement at Providence, was granted a royal charter in 1663. The founding of the Quaker colony of Pennsylvania in 1681 posed an especially strong challenge to the Bay Colony, both because of the rapid growth of Philadelphia into a major hub and because of Quakerism's competing approach to Christian reform.

One of the most controversial features of Quakerism was its embrace of women's religious leadership. This issue resonated in the colony that had banished Anne Hutchinson in 1638 and, some two decades later, went on

beliefs and returned to Massachusetts to challenge its authorities. In 1661, shortly after the end of the Commonwealth and the restoration of the monarchy, King Charles II rebuked the Bay Colony for executing Dyer and three male Quakers. Concerns about Puritan intolerance contributed to the new regime's approach to the Massachusetts charter, which unfolded over three decades even as the monarchy underwent a sustained period of instability that culminated in the Glorious Revolution of 1688, when the Catholic King James II was replaced by the Protestant monarchs William and Mary. All these developments contributed in important though indirect ways to the Salem proceedings.

Several men were executed during the Salem crisis, but the majority of the condemned were women. What's more, the first person to be accused was the enslaved woman Tituba, who was practicing folk rituals with a group of Puritan girls when the "afflictions" began. Probably an Indian from the South American mainland, Tituba had arrived in Salem by way of Barbados. In 1656, that island had been the immediate point of origin of the first Quaker evangelists to Massachusetts, who were accused of witchcraft and imprisoned. Though the Puritans understood what was happening to their community in different terms than those suggested here, focusing their fears on the presence of the devil in Massachusetts rather than on social, political, and religious pressures, their writings did at times reflect an awareness that many forces inflamed the crisis. The excerpt from Cotton Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693) shows how an internationally renowned Puritan intellectual who was attuned to the new science sought to understand the nature of witchcraft, and gives some insight into this symbolically important moment in early American literary history.

ENLIGHTENMENT IDEALS

The Salem witch trials proved to be a watershed moment, tied to dramatic social and economic changes during the late colonial period. These shifts were gradually matched by transformations in intellectual life. By the early eighteenth century, scientists and philosophers in Europe and the Americas had posed great challenges to seventeenth-century beliefs. Many intellectuals now embraced the power of the human mind to comprehend the universe as never before. What is sometimes called the "modern era"—characterized principally by the gradual supplanting of religious worldviews by scientific and philosophical ideas anchored in experiential knowledge—emerged from efforts to conceive of human existence in new terms. These developments in science and philosophy, known generally as the Enlightenment, did not necessarily lead to secularization. For example, Isaac Newton and John Locke—respectively, the leading English scientist and philosopher of the age—both sought to resolve implicit conflicts between their work and Christian tradition. Newton's study of the laws of motion and gravity had the potential to undermine religious beliefs insofar as it revealed a natural order that was perhaps independent of divine power. Locke's theory of the human mind as a tabula rasa, or blank slate, endowed with powers of perception but without innate content, posed a direct challenge to established forms of Christianity by calling into question the idea of original sin.

Arguing that God worked in reasonable, not necessarily mysterious ways, these thinkers saw nothing heretical in contending that the universe was an orderly system whose laws humanity could comprehend through the application of reason.

Many Enlightenment scientists and philosophers deduced the existence of a supreme being from the construction of the universe rather than from the Bible, a view often called Deism. For many Deists, a harmonious universe could represent the beneficence of God, and this positivity extended to an optimistic view of human nature. Locke said that “our business” here on earth “is not to know all things, but those which concern our conduct,” prompting his followers to consider human actions and motives as worthy objects of study. The philosophers of the Scottish Common Sense school built on Locke’s insights about human faculties to propose that sympathy and sociability functioned as a kind of emotional glue that could unite communities no longer held together by shared beliefs and traditional structures of authority. Indeed, they claimed that one’s supreme moral obligation was to relate to one’s fellows through a natural power of sympathy. Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) was a notably influential contributor to this vein of social analysis. Meanwhile, earlier modes of thought—for instance, Bradford’s and Winthrop’s penchants for the allegorical and emblematic, with every natural and human event seen as a direct message from God—came to seem anachronistic and quaint.

Interest in ordinary individuals as part of nature and society led to developments in literature. While religiously themed works such as John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667) and John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678) remained popular, the novel began to take a recognizably modern shape in the early eighteenth century. English novelists such as Aphra Behn, Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, and Laurence Sterne portrayed emotions and experiences with increasing directness. In the colonies, the influences that were giving birth to the Anglophone novel also engendered new forms of descriptive naturalist and ethnographic writing, exemplified here in selections from Sarah Kemble Knight, Hendrick Aupaumut, and William Barram. The same confluence of intellectual and social developments also gave rise to nonfiction works such as Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography* (written between 1771 and 1790).

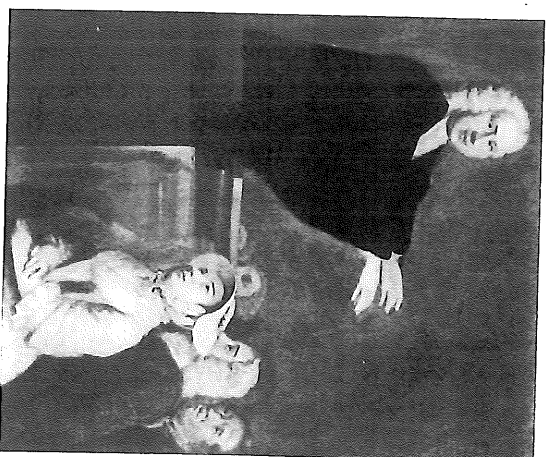
Modernity has often been characterized as a radical break from faith-based forms of thought. Consider, however, that both the religious Bunyan and the more secular Defoe were among Franklin’s literary influences. From the old to the new there were substantial continuities, as well as shifts that were more gradual than immediate. In the first half of the eighteenth century, a number of religious revivals occurred in England and America, but they were fueled by the new emphasis on emotion as a defining component of human experience. For example, the religious fires that burned from 1734 until about 1750 in what became known as the Great Awakening were directly produced by the Locke-inspired cult of feeling that was reshaping narrative prose. Now ministers, echoing the Enlightenment philosophers, argued that humanity’s greatest pleasure—indeed, its purpose—was to do good for others and that sympathetic emotions might guarantee future glory. These ideas, a small part of earlier religious thought, acquired a new salience in connection with revivalism.

The most significant figure in transatlantic revivalism was Jonathan Edwards, a leading minister and theologian who helped form this new culture with a series of “awakenings” in and around Northampton, Massachusetts. Edwards’s description of these events in *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (1737) was hugely influential on the movement. Having read Locke, Edwards believed that if his parishioners were to be awakened from their spiritual slumbers they had to experience religion viscerally, not just comprehend it intellectually. In a series of sermons and treatises, Edwards worked to rejuvenate the basic tenets of Calvinism, including that of unconditional election, the sixteenth-century doctrine

most difficult for eighteenth-century minds to accept.

Edwards insisted that such doctrines made sense in terms of Enlightenment science, and he developed what one literary historian has called a “the-
 oric of sensation” to persuade his listeners that God’s sovereignty was not only the most reasonable doctrine but also the most “delightful” and that it revealed itself to him, in an almost sensuous way, as “exceeding pleasant, bright, and sweet.” In carefully reasoned, calmly argued prose, Edwards brought many in his audience to accept that “if the great things of religion are rightly understood, they will affect the heart.” This “heart religion,” as it later came to be known, involved both the terrors of hell, which Edwards describes in the sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” and the joy that his faith brought him, as he expresses it in his “Personal Narrative” (c. 1740). In Edwards’s work, the pietist strains of Puritan writing—the embrace of emotion and its verbal expression—were amplified and brought close to similar developments in secular literature. For example, the English writer Samuel Richardson’s novel *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740) was a favorite in the Edwards household.

The revivalists’ styles of worship proved more welcoming to Native American and African American Christians than the Puritans’ styles had been. Nonwhites had greater opportunities for literacy and training for the ministry, and mixed-race and nonwhite congregations were formed in increasing numbers. As a result, the Great Awakening fostered greater mingling of white, red, and black expressive styles in sacred song and speech—including hymnody, whose flourishing during the period also contributed to the growth of secular poetry—and led to the writing of some of the earliest



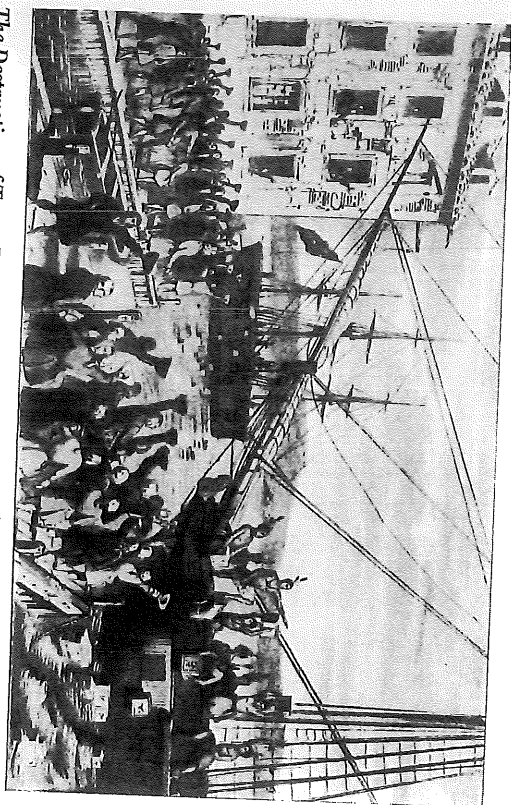
George Whitefield, c. 1741, by John Wollaston. Transatlantic revivalist George Whitefield preaching to a crowded meeting during the Great Awakening.

English-language literature by Native Americans and African Americans. The writers John Marrant, Samson Occom, Hendrick Aupamut, Olaudah Equiano, and Phillis Wheatley emerged from this evangelical melding of cultures. At the same time, a parallel “Indians Great Awakening” revived indigenous spiritual practices and helped catalyze the resistance of leaders such as Sagoyewatha, Pontiac, and Tecumseh to colonial military and cultural power.

PURSuing HAPPINESS

In the second half of the eighteenth century, religion continued to play a major role in many colonists’ lives even as politics took on a new importance. After winning the French and Indian War in 1763, Britain consolidated its empire in North America. To help pay for its war debt, the monarchy heavily taxed the colonies. Colonial resentments about increasingly heavy-handed tax policies escalated until April 1775, when the Battles of Lexington and Concord, both in Massachusetts, began the American Revolutionary War against Britain. That summer, representatives from the thirteen British North American colonies convened a Second Continental Congress to take charge of the war effort. In the June 7, 1776, session of this Congress, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia brought a decade of colonial agitation to the boiling point by moving that “these united colonies are, and of a right ought to be, free and independent states.” Another Virginian, Thomas Jefferson, led a committee—including John Adams of Massachusetts and Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania—that drafted a Declaration of Independence, which was issued on July 4. The heart of this document was the statement that “certain truths are self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” These words reflect Jefferson’s reading of the Scottish Common Sense philosophers, particularly Francis Hutcheson and Lord Kames (Henry Home), who built on Locke’s work to argue that a moral sense is common to all humans. This universal sense of right and wrong justified the overthrow of tyrants, the restoration of political order, and the establishment of new covenants—not, as Bradford and Winthrop would have argued, for the glory of God, but, as the Declaration argued, for the individual’s right to happiness on earth.

In January 1776 the young journalist Thomas Paine published his pamphlet *Common Sense*, which proved hugely influential in tipping the scales toward revolution. Though Paine probably did not choose his title to allude to the Scottish philosophers who were so important for Jefferson and other patriot leaders, his manifesto invoked similar ideas. In arguing that separation from England was the colonists’ only reasonable course and that “the Almighty” had planted these feelings in us “for good and wise purposes,” Paine appealed to basic tenets of the Enlightenment. He had emigrated from England to America in 1774 with a letter of recommendation from Benjamin Franklin. Franklin was, among many other things, a successful newspaper editor and printer, and Paine was quickly hired to edit the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, one of the new periodicals transforming the literary scene. The first newspaper in the colonies had appeared in 1704, and by the time of the

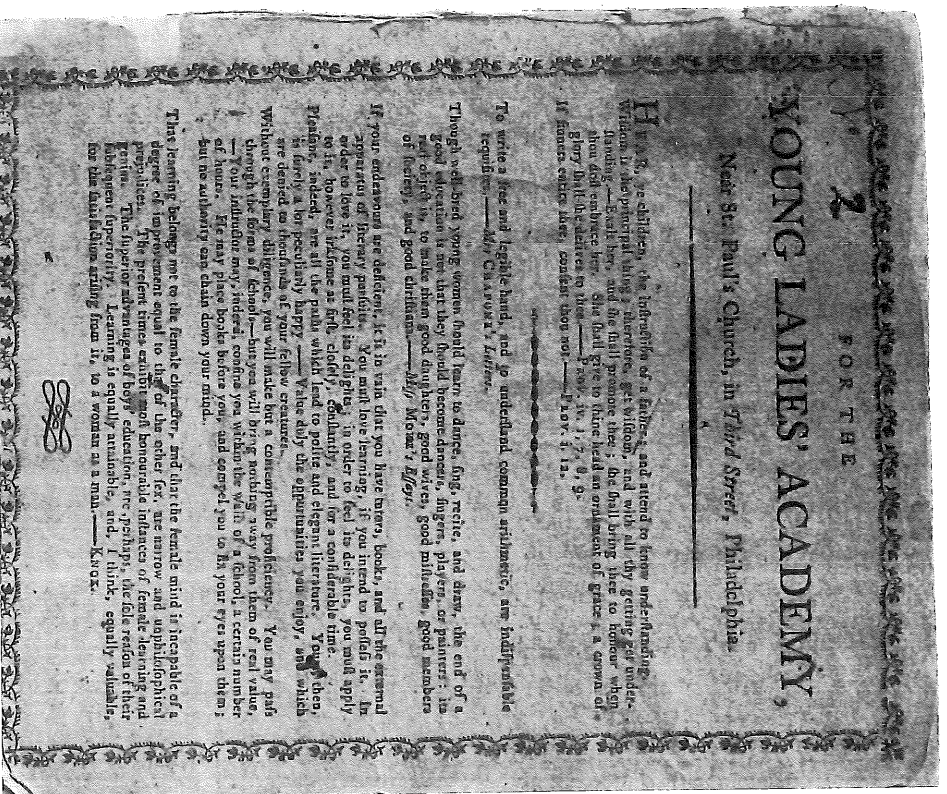


The Destruction of Tea at Boston Harbor, lithograph by Nathaniel Currier. The Boston Tea Party of 1763, when colonists, some disguised as Native Americans, protested a new British tax on tea and other commodities.

Revolution there were almost fifty papers and forty magazines. Paine’s magazine work helped shape a plain style that proved effective in catalyzing revolution. He was the most prominent of a number of writers who took advantage of the transformation in print culture that was to make modern authorship possible.

After the former colonists’ victory over the British in 1783, people from greatly different backgrounds and of varied nationalities now found reasons to call themselves “Americans.” America, as Washington Irving would later note, was a “logocracy,” a polity based in and governed by words, and the political events of the 1770s presented a distinctive opportunity for writers. The most significant works of the period are political writings, and among the most notable of these are the essays that the statesmen Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison wrote for New York newspapers in 1787–88 in support of the new federal Constitution, which are collectively known as *The Federalist* or *The Federalist Papers*. The impact of the revolution on the rise of early national literature can also be seen in the career of Philip Freneau, who aspired to be a full-time writer, combining journalism with belles lettres. Though he failed to sustain himself with his pen, Freneau made numerous contributions to the literature of the Revolution. His volume *Poems Written Chiefly during the Late War* (1786) contains notable patriotic works, and his later political poetry includes a tribute to Thomas Paine.

Women writers, too, expressed a revolutionary political sensibility. In the most famous letter of her lively and informative correspondence with her husband, John, Abigail Adams exhorted the Second Continental Congress to “remember the Ladies” in the new code of laws they were then framing. John and his fellows largely failed to heed Abigail’s call. However, inspired by



Syllabus of lectures from the Young Ladies' Academy, in Philadelphia, 1787. Educational opportunities for girls expanded after the American Revolution. The Young Ladies' Academy opened in 1787, attracting great interest from leaders in what was then the nation's capital.

Enlightenment ideals of reason and equality, women such as Annis Boudinot Stockton, Judith Sargent Murray, Susanna Rowson, and Hannah Webster Foster wrote works exploring women's rights as citizens. Murray tackled the subject in her essays on the intellectual capacities of women, whereas Stockton's poems, as well as the writings of Rowson and Foster, explored the social and legal constraints on women and considered their right to be equal partners in the new nation's democratic experiment. Like such self-consciously "American" productions as Royall Tyler's play *The Contrast*

(first performed 1787) and Franklin's *Autobiography*, these works mark the beginning of a new sense of national identity.

Not all the responses to the new order were enthusiastic or uncritical. For example, fiction offered an avenue for biting social critique. Often considered the first American novel, William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy* was published in 1789, the year that the first government under the new Constitution was established. It tells an anti-utopian tale of incest and suicide. Charles Brockden Brown adapted the conventions of Gothic fiction to explore the dangers and limits of democratic republicanism in works such as his novella *Memoirs of Carwin, the Biloquist* (1803–05), a prequel to his better-known novel *Wieland; or The Transformation: An American Tale* (1798), which develops Carwin's story in tragic ways. Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* (1791) and Foster's *The Coquette* (1797) were important precursors of the many popular sentimental novels of the nineteenth century—most famously, Harriet Beecher Stowe's antislavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852)—that carried powerful social messages.

Perhaps the most hopeful aspects of the Revolution were represented by Benjamin Franklin, whose reputation continued to grow after his death, in 1790. As parts of his *Autobiography* appeared in print in 1791 and 1818—the full text finally became available in 1868—Franklin increasingly came to represent the promise of the Enlightenment in America. He was self-educated, social, assured, a man of the world, ambitious, public-spirited, speculative about the nature of the universe, and in matters of religion content “to observe the actual conduct of humanity rather than to debate supernatural matters that are unprovable”—a stance that John Locke had earlier endorsed. Franklin always presented himself as depending on firsthand experience, too worldly-wise to be caught off guard, and minding “the main chance” (i.e., for personal gain), as a Franklinese character in Tyler's *The Contrast* counsels. These aspects of Franklin's persona, however, belie another side of him and of the eighteenth century: an idealistic assumption about the common good. He absorbed this sense partly from the works of Cotton Mather, which he encountered during his Boston youth, and it forms the basis of the American Revolution's great public documents, especially the Declaration of Independence.

The Revolution established the United States as an independent nation with ideals such as freedom and equality that were both ambitious and deeply ambiguous. The only people who consistently possessed the right to vote in the new government were white men who owned property. Most African Americans were enslaved, and many Native communities were being pushed off their lands. Yet Revolutionary principles appealed to some writers who suffered from their limited application. In 1774, the year she was manumitted, the poet Phillis Wheatley wrote a letter to the Mohican leader and Presbyterian minister Samson Occom that was later printed in a dozen colonial newspapers. Here Wheatley posited that “in every human Breast, God has implanted a Principle, which we call Love of Freedom; it is impatient of Oppression, and pants for Deliverance.” Though they sometimes used language similar to Wheatley's, Revolutionary leaders held conflicting views about slavery. George Washington, the first U.S. president, freed his slaves in his will. Thomas Jefferson, the third president, liberated just five slaves, leaving

the vast majority in bondage at his death. Benjamin Franklin owned slaves for many years. He embraced the antislavery cause late in life, and in 1787 became the president of the first abolitionist organization in the United States. John Adams, the second U.S. president, never owned slaves and sought to gradually end the system through legislation, an effort that succeeded in some places. Even Adams, however, was uneasy with the Quaker-led abolitionist movement, whose at times confrontational strategies he believed counterproductive. The rising urgency of the abolitionists reflected changing realities. After the inventor Eli Whitney patented the cotton gin in 1794, the slave system gained a new lease on its brutal life. The end of the Atlantic slave trade in 1807 led, not to slavery's eventual demise as Adams and many others in the founding generation had hoped, but to forms of enslavement that in some ways were even crueler than before.

The conditions for many Native Americans also worsened in the nineteenth century. Various eastern tribes had sided with the British during the Revolution, driven by their vulnerability to colonial expansion. After the British defeat, they were exposed to the vengeance and greed of white Americans. Entire tribes were systematically displaced from their traditional territories, pushed ever farther west, or forced onto reservations. In an effort to resist the United States' encroachments on Native territory, the confederacy headed by Shawnee leader Tecumseh sided with the British in the War of 1812, a two-and-a-half-year conflict that resolved issues left from the Revolution with a U.S. victory. Meanwhile, Tecumseh's confederation collapsed after American forces killed him in 1813. "Indian Removal" was vigorously debated in the 1820s, with anti-Removal activism emerging as a major social movement. Eventually the movement failed, and Removal became the policy of the federal government.

In 1820, freedom and equality remained future prospects for multitudes of Americans. Many white men still could not vote unless they owned property, though restrictions lessened more quickly over the next decade as universal white manhood suffrage became a reality. Women could not vote, and while the educational opportunities for white women were expanding, their legal status remained sharply limited. They were wards of their fathers until marriage, at which point their legal identities were merged with their husbands', so that they could not own property or keep any wages they earned. Yet many people embraced the idea that with the application of intelligence the principles of liberty could be extended and the human lot improved. This "progressive" or "perfectibilist" spirit was fostered in some places by newer liberal Churches such as the Unitarians and Universalists, as well as the more established Quakers. Imaginative energy flowed into extending the principles of liberty codified by the Revolutionary generation and correcting a variety of institutional and social injustices. In addition to the causes previously mentioned, post-Revolutionary social movements targeted the misuse of prisons, the use of capital punishment, the existence of war, and the treatment of the blind and disabled. Many works of literature reflected on this progressive sensibility, whether to foster it or to question its premises.

While at the start of the period covered in this volume "America" was merely notional—and its literature even more so—by 1820 "American liter-

ature" had come to mean something fairly specific: the poems, short stories, novels, essays, orations, plays, and other works produced by authors who hailed from, or resided in, the United States of America. As this list of genres suggests, "literature" itself had come to resemble its contemporary meaning more closely than it did in 1492. Printed works had become far more accessible, giving rise to an increasingly robust literary marketplace that featured both locally produced works and influential writings from across the Atlantic. Technological innovations such as the cylinder press created sweeping transformations in the book market, and new kinds of writers (women, African Americans, Native Americans, laborers) were finding outlets for their creations. All the while American literature continued to be shaped by its formation in the Atlantic world's crucible of cultures, its distinctive configuration of the sacred and the secular, the influence of the American Revolution, and the intertwined histories of empire and nation.

BEGINNINGS TO 1820

| TEXTS | CONTEXTS |
|--|--|
| <p>Peoples indigenous to the Americas orally perform and transmit various "literary" genres, including speeches, songs, and stories</p> <p>1493 Columbus, "Letter to Luis de Santangel Regarding the First Voyage"</p> | <p>1000–1300 Anasazi communities inhabit southwestern regions</p> <p>1492 Christopher Columbus arrives in the Bahamas • An estimated 4–7 million Native Americans in what is now the United States, including Alaska</p> <p>1500 Native American populations begin to be ravaged by European diseases</p> <p>• Enslaved Africans begin arriving in small numbers</p> <p>1514 Bartolomé de las Casas petitions Spanish Crown to treat Native American peoples as humanely as other subject populations</p> <p>1519–21 Cortés conquers Aztecs in Mexico</p> <p>1526 Spanish explorers bring first African slaves to South Carolina</p> <p>1539 First printing press in the Americas set up in Mexico City • Hernando de Soto invades Florida</p> |
| <p>1542 Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, <i>The Relation of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca</i></p> <p>1552 Bartolomé de las Casas, <i>The Very Brief Relation of the Devastation of the Indies</i></p> | <p>1558–1603 Reign of Elizabeth I</p> <p>1584 Walter Raleigh lands on "island" of Roanoke; names it "Virginia" for Queen Elizabeth (sometimes called the Virgin Queen)</p> <p>1603–13 Samuel de Champlain explores the Saint Lawrence River; founds Québec</p> <p>1607 Jamestown is established in Virginia</p> <p>• Powhatan confederacy saves colonists from starving; teaches them to plant tobacco</p> <p>1619 Twenty Africans arrive in Jamestown on a Dutch vessel as indentured servants; they are the first known Africans in a British colony</p> <p>1620 <i>Mayflower</i> drops anchor in Plymouth Harbor</p> <p>1621 First Thanksgiving at Plymouth</p> |

Boldface titles indicate works in the anthology.

| TEXTS | CONTEXTS |
|---|--|
| <p>1624 John Smith, <i>The General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles</i></p> <p>1630 John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" (pub. 1838)</p> <p>1630–50 William Bradford writes <i>Of Plymouth Plantation</i> (pub. 1856)</p> <p>1637 Thomas Morton, <i>New English Canaan</i></p> <p>1640 Bay Psalm Book</p> <p>1643 Roger Williams, <i>A Key into the Language of America</i></p> <p>1650 Anne Bradstreet, <i>The Tenth Muse</i></p> <p>1662 Michael Wigglesworth, <i>The Day of Doom</i></p> <p>1673–1729 Samuel Sewall keeps his <i>Diary</i> (pub. 1878–82)</p> <p>1682 Mary Rowlandson's <i>Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration</i></p> <p>1682–1725 Edward Taylor writing his <i>Preparatory Meditations</i> (pub. 1939, 1960)</p> | <p>1630–43 Immigration of English Puritans to Massachusetts Bay</p> <p>1634 The first English settlers arrive in Maryland aboard <i>The Ark</i> and <i>The Dove</i></p> <p>1637 Pequot War</p> <p>1638 Anne Hutchinson banished from Bay Colony for challenging Puritan beliefs</p> <p>1642–51 English Civil War</p> <p>1649 Execution of Charles I</p> <p>1660 Restoration of British monarchy</p> <p>1663 Royal Charter granted to Rhode Island (and Providence Plantations)</p> <p>1675–76 King Philip's War destroys power of Native American tribes in New England</p> <p>1681 William Penn founds Pennsylvania</p> |
| <p>1702 Cotton Mather, <i>Magnalia Christi Americana</i></p> <p>1741 Jonathan Edwards, <i>Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God</i></p> <p>1768 Samson Occom, <i>A Short Narrative of My Life</i> (pub. 1982)</p> <p>1771–90 Benjamin Franklin continues his <i>Autobiography</i> (Part I pub. 1818)</p> <p>1773 Phillis Wheatley, <i>Poems on Various Subjects</i></p> <p>1774–83 John and Abigail Adams exchange letters (pub. 1840, 1875)</p> | <p>1689–97 King William's War (first of four colonial wars involving France, Britain, and Spain)</p> <p>1691 New royal charter creates the Province of Massachusetts Bay, which includes Plymouth</p> <p>1692 Salem witchcraft trials</p> <p>1718 French found New Orleans</p> <p>1726–56 The Great Awakening</p> <p>1741 Vitus Bering discovers Alaska</p> <p>1755–63 French and Indian Wars</p> <p>1773 Boston Tea Party</p> <p>1775–83 American Revolutionary War</p> |

| TEXTS | CONTEXTS |
|--|--|
| 1776 Thomas Paine, <i>Common Sense</i> | 1776 Declaration of Independence |
| 1780s Annis Boudinot Stockton publishes poems in magazines and newspapers | |
| 1782 J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, <i>Letters from an American Farmer</i> | |
| 1786 Philip Freneau, <i>Poems</i> | 1783 Britain opens "Old Northwest" (region south of Great Lakes) to United States after Treaty of Paris ends American Revolution |
| 1787 Thomas Jefferson, <i>Notes on the State of Virginia</i> • Royall Tyler, <i>The Contrast</i> | 1787 U.S. Constitution adopted |
| 1787–88 <i>The Federalist</i> papers | |
| 1789 Olaudah Equiano, <i>The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano</i> | 1789 George Washington elected first president |
| 1790 Judith Sargent Murray, <i>On the Equality of the Sexes</i> | |
| 1797 Hannah Foster, <i>The Coquette</i> | 1791 Washington, D.C., established as U.S. capital |
| 1803–05 Charles Brockden Brown, <i>Memoirs of Carwin</i> | 1803 United States buys Louisiana Territory from France |
| 1819 Washington Irving, <i>Rip Van Winkle</i> | 1812–14 War of 1812 (against England) |
| | 1819 Spain exchanges the Florida Territory for U.S. assumption of \$5 million in debts • Missouri asks to be admitted as a slave state, sparking a crisis resolved the next year through the Missouri Compromise |

Native American Oral Literature

The languages, political economies, and religious beliefs of Native American peoples are extremely diverse, and so are their tales, orations, songs, chants, and other oral genres. Examples of oral works include the trickster tale cycles of the Winnebago Indians (or Ho-Chunks), Apache jokes, Hopi personal naming and grievance chants, Yaqui deer songs, and Yuman dream songs. Many genres have a religious or spiritual dimension, including Piman shamanic chants, Iroquois condolence rituals, Navajo curing and blessing chants, and Chippewa songs of the Great Medicine Society. Most of the works were not translated into alphabetic forms until long after the arrival of Europeans, and the circumstances of their initial creation and development are largely unknown. The use of written records in the precontact Americas was relatively circumscribed, and European conquerors systematically destroyed the bodies of writing in places such as Tenochtitlán (present-day Mexico City), leaving just a handful of the pictograph codices known as *amoxli* to carry forward pre-Columbian practices. Other indigenous American recording devices include Andean *quipu*, which are colored, knotted strings used to represent a numeric system. In North America, painted hides or bark and wampum belts made of shell could serve as prompts for the recitation of tales or in treaty negotiations and other ceremonies. These nonalphabetic texts share some of the mnemonic and narrative functions of literature.

Although the term "literature" comes from the Latin *littera*, "letter," and so has been linked to alphabetic writing, all literature has roots in the oral arts. In keeping with Aristotle's *Poetics* (c. 335 B.C.E.), the earliest surviving work of literary theory, forms of Western literature have traditionally been grouped into lyric, which takes its name from the lyre, a stringed instrument used by the ancient Greeks to accompany a song or recitation; drama, which originated in the religious cultures of ancient Greece and the medieval Christian Church; and epic (more broadly, narrative), developed in and for oral performance. (The first works of Euro-American literature, the *Vinland Sagas* of the thirteenth century, are epics.) Rhetoric and oratory, which Aristotle treated separately from the other forms because of their prominent and distinctive place in ancient Greek culture, also involve the spoken word. There are parallels as well as differences between these Aristotelian genres and the types of oral literature created by the earliest American societies.

From first contact, Europeans were intrigued by indigenous oral performances and sought to translate them into alphabetic written forms. Christopher Columbus and the explorers who came after him described the formal speeches of Native leaders, even though they often did not understand their meaning. Over time, Native artists taught Europeans and European Americans to recognize other kinds of verbal art, such as creation tales and poetic songs. Eventually collaboration and indigenous authorship became more common. Today scholars are actively studying pre-Columbian history and art, and the sources and traditions of the most ancient texts from the American hemisphere are gradually coming to be better understood.

The archive of Native American oral genres continues to expand as new instances are identified in the written record or transcribed in a modern form. The selections in this cluster represent some genres that were common in the repertoires of many North American indigenous societies before 1820: creation and trickster tales,

Michael A. Elliott

ASA GRIGGS CANDLER PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN STUDIES
EMORY UNIVERSITY

Sandra M. Gustafson

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

Amy Hungerford

BIRD WHITE HOUSUM PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN STUDIES
AND DIRECTOR OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES
YALE UNIVERSITY

Mary Loeffelholz

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

SHORTER NINTH EDITION

Robert S. Levine, *General Editor*

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AND
DISTINGUISHED UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR AND
DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR-TEACHER
University of Maryland, College Park

VOLUME II: 1865 TO THE PRESENT



American Literature

1865–1914

THE GILDED AGE

n 1873, Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner published *The Gilded Age: A Tale of To-day*. The novel, Twain's first, portrays the United States as a nation consumed by greed and corruption, a land of get-rich-quick schemes, rampant speculation, and bribery. Twain and Warner filled their pages with Americans—from country villagers to big-city dwellers—who were caught up in the fantasy of making an easy fortune, willing to sacrifice their scruples for the sake of material success. The book revealed an age that too easily mistook gilding for gold.

Commercially and critically, *The Gilded Age* enjoyed only modest success. Some readers were put off by the “pungent” satire; others thought the book was “confused and inartistic.” One reviewer compared the novel to “a salad dressing badly mixed.” But Twain and Warner's contemporaries agreed that *The Gilded Age* had accurately captured something important, if unsettling, about the time in which they lived, and the book shaped the way that we think about this period of American life. Even today, many historians follow Twain and Warner in referring to the late nineteenth century in America as “the Gilded Age.”

Just as important, Twain and Warner's novel reveals significant trends that were emerging in the literature of the United States in the decades following the Civil War. Rather than being concerned with introspection or the perfection of literary forms, American literature in the late nineteenth century privileged the description and documentation of a rapidly changing society—a nation undergoing tremendous changes in terms of the composition of its population, the struc-



Children Sleeping in Mulberry Street, 1890, Jacob Riis. For more information about this image, see the color insert in this volume.

ture of its economy, and the customs of its people. American writers scrutinized the world around them, and their observations on the page were frequently accompanied by social commentary and sometimes, as in the case of Twain, comic wit. Instead of the romantic idealism of antebellum authors like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Harriet Beecher Stowe, Gilded Age America fostered a more measured and pragmatic way of looking at the world. The role of literature, in the words of Twain's contemporary Ambrose Bierce, was to "cultivate a taste for the distasteful," to "endeavor to see things as they are, not as they ought to be."

Labels for literary and cultural periods offer a convenient shorthand for characterizing the complicated reality of any cultural moment. We use them, usually with the benefit of hindsight, to reduce the chaos of the past to some kind of narrative order. For most of the twentieth century, literary histories of the Gilded Age celebrated American authors for their willingness to present a series of increasingly distasteful truths, particularly through novels depicting the excesses and foibles of the urban environments where new fortunes were being won and lost. Mark Twain, Henry James, Stephen Crane, Edith Wharton, and Theodore Dreiser—all authors included in this volume—were recognized as writers who advanced an aesthetic of "realism." The editor and author William Dean Howells was identified as the leading proponent of this movement, and literary historians carefully analyzed his advocacy in the pages of magazines like the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's*.

During the last three decades, scholars of American literature have been concerned that this period in American literature has been too narrowly defined. They have noted that how one defines what is "real" depends on where one sits in society—and that the authors named above were largely located in the nation's urban centers, where they focused primarily on the lives of native-born whites. Scholars have also observed that editors like Howells were in fact interested in cultivating a wider variety of perspectives, including authors from regions across the United States, immigrant writers, and African American authors. If one of the roles of literature is to "see things as they are," then our definition of literature could also expand beyond fiction and poetry to include other forms of writing—such as autobiography, sketches, and folk tales—that proliferated during this period.

Literature, though, does not merely show how things are. It amuses, provokes, cajoles, and inspires. Twain was one of the fiercest critics of his time, but he was also one of its finest entertainers. His writing not only reflected the world that surrounded him, but it also played a significant role in shaping how his readers (including us) understand that world. The realism that flourished between the Civil War and World War I raises as many questions about the purpose of literature as it answers. How should literature respond to the social problems of its time? How can language capture what is real? Who gets to decide what counts as realism and what counts as fantasy? How can literature help us to understand competing perspectives on reality?

These questions remain as pertinent in our time as they were in Twain's. Many of the changes sweeping through Twain's world seem to foreshadow the struggles of our own time. The period encompassing the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth witnessed an influx of immigrants to America, questions about racial equality and racial violence, anxiety about shifting gender roles, and concerns about the accumula-

tion and concentration of wealth. The distance between the late nineteenth century and the present is substantial and the differences between that period and ours are significant, but there are good reasons that some have called the early twenty-first century a "second Gilded Age."

RECONSTRUCTING AMERICA

The Civil War transformed the lives of the four million African Americans who obtained their freedom from slavery, but its costs were staggering. The combined death toll from the Union and Confederate armies equaled more than 620,000 soldiers—or about 2 percent of the total U.S. population. Historians have offered a conservative estimate of an additional 50,000 civilian casualties, mostly in areas that declared secession from the Union. Of those who survived battle, hundreds of thousands sustained injuries, and the fighting obliterated fields, factories, and homes in the war's path. In the face of so much destruction and suffering, the rebuilding of the United States required more than simply repairing railroads and clearing away the debris of war. The reconstruction of America also required a reimagining of what it meant to be an American.

In their quest to rebuild the United States, Americans in the post-Civil War era looked in a variety of directions for the resources needed for renewal: abroad, for immigrant populations that would provide the labor necessary for economic growth; to the west, where land, minerals, and other natural resources seemed to be abundant; and to the south, where the destruction left by the war created opportunities for entrepreneurial investors. Finally, by the turn of the twentieth century, Americans were looking to foreign lands in a new way, as the United States sought to claim its place on the world stage as an imperial power. What united these disparate energies was a drive for material prosperity—an unquestioned belief in economic progress. Signs of this creed were visible in the New York mansions constructed on Fifth Avenue; in the thrumming activity of the stockyards and market exchanges of Chicago; and in the new forms of leisure activities—amusement parks, dance halls, nickelodeons—that catered to working-class people who found they had some extra time and money to spend on pleasure.¹

But that prosperity came at a price. Though wages for blue- and white-collar workers rose during the late nineteenth century, the gains for laborers were far smaller than the fortunes being made and lost by the industrial capitalists who seemed to control a larger and larger share of the American economy every year. The laissez-faire capitalism that generated such spectacular opportunities was also fraught with risk—and the nation endured the consequences of a series of financial panics and market crashes. Though the Homestead Act of 1862 promised free or cheap acreage to every individual or family who would settle and "improve" land according to a set formula, much of the available land was donated to railroads to encourage their growth. The expansion of the railroad network was critical to the larger economic development of the United States, yet it meant that farmers found themselves at the mercy of the large corporations that transported their goods—an economic order that the writer Frank Norris characterized as a giant "octopus" that wielded its power across the land. In the end, large-scale farming took over from the

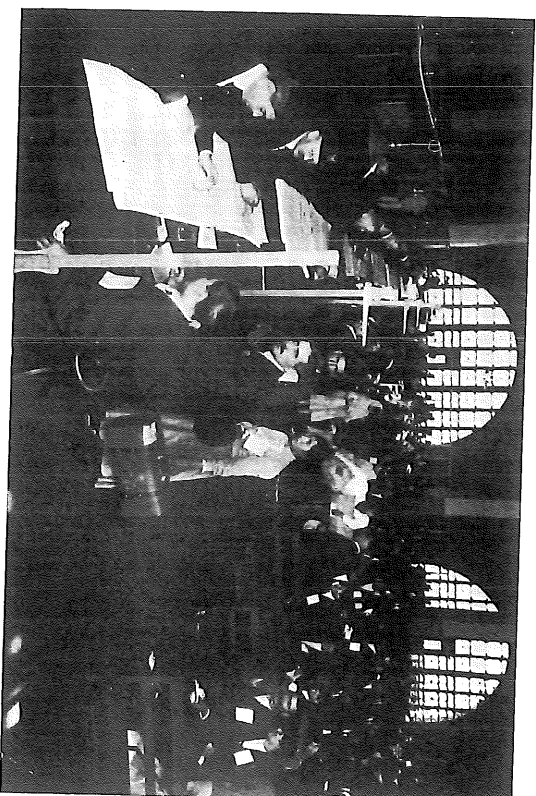


Golden Spike Ceremony. Joining the tracks for the first transcontinental railroad, Promontory, Utah Territory, 1869.

family farm, increasing agricultural yields but forcing many farmers to join the swelling populations of American cities.

The rapid urbanization of the United States in the late nineteenth century permanently changed the cultural landscape of the nation. Between 1865 and the turn of the twentieth century, New York grew from a population of 500,000 to nearly 3.5 million. Chicago, with a population of only 29,000 in 1850, had more than 2 million inhabitants by 1910. Yet Upton Sinclair titled his great novel of Chicago life *The Jungle* (1906) for good reason. Urban workers often faced brutal, even dangerous, conditions, and the late nineteenth century witnessed the rise of industrial labor movements. Americans were shocked when strikes turned violent in cities such as Pittsburgh and Chicago, though ultimately neither blue-collar laborers nor small farmers were fully successful in opposing the forces of capital. Until the regulations of the early twentieth century, legislators and other elected officials believed that the welfare of the nation required that the forces of capitalism remain unchecked. Kickbacks, bribes, and other forms of corruption further ensured that corporate and industrial interests were well-represented by politicians.

The growth of industry and the urbanization of the United States were fueled by unprecedented levels of immigration. In 1870, the U.S. population was 38.5 million; by 1910, 92 million; by 1920, 123 million. A large percentage of this increase came from the arrival of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe: Russia, Poland, Italy, and the Balkan nations. As much as these new Americans were crucial to the prosperity of the nation, they were also a source of anxiety who provoked recurring questions about what it means to acquire an American identity. Throughout this period, native-born Americans, particularly whites, worried that the surge of immigrants would



Ellis Island. Staff interviewing new immigrants, c. 1910. From 1892 to 1954, New York's Ellis Island was the gateway for millions of immigrants to the United States.

change the racial and religious character of the nation. From a very different perspective, immigrant writers like Abraham Cahan—a Jew fleeing the oppression of his native Belarus—told stories about newcomers to America grappling with the demands of a new language and new customs, including in his novel *Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto* (1896). After the turn of the twentieth century, Americans found a new metaphor to describe the experience of immigrants. The hero of Israel Zangwill's play *The Melting-Pot*—first staged in the United States in 1909—proclaims: “America is God’s Crucible, the great Melting-Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and reforming!”

Not everyone, of course, wanted to melt or reform. For American Indians living in the western half of the continent, the expanses of the United States threatened their political and cultural autonomy. From the time of the earliest treaties with the United States, Native nations had agreed to cede large tracts of land with some territory specifically “reserved” for themselves. What we currently think of as Indian reservations came about as a result of President Ulysses S. Grant’s policies of the late 1860s, which sought—and mostly forced—the agreement of various Native nations to limit themselves to lands designated by the federal government. In the 1880s, an organization of eastern philanthropists calling itself “Friends of the Indian” began to implement an agenda for assimilating Native Americans into the white mainstream. This organization meant well, but its methods inevitably devalued Native ways of life in favor of white schooling, white patterns of town settlement and agriculture, and above all white religion. Native writers such as Zitkala-Ša (Yankton Sioux), Francis LaFlesche (Omaha), and John Milton Oskison (Cherokee) wrote about the effects of such efforts on their people. At the same time that government and missionary boarding schools were attempting to strip Ameri-

can Indians of their tribal cultures, the government was working to separate them from their land. In 1887, the U.S. Congress approved the Dawes Severalty Act, which set in motion a process for dissolving the communal land holdings of tribal reservations and assigning smaller parcels of land to individual Indians. The Dawes Act fragmented the collectively held tribal lands and reduced the total Native land base by some ninety million acres before the policy was abandoned in 1934.

For most white Americans, the melting pot also excluded African Americans. Of all the social conflicts that animate the literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, none matches the force or complexity of the continued subjugation of black Americans during this period. After the surrender of the Confederacy, U.S. federal troops occupied its former states and attempted to make good on the promise of equality. Twelve years later, in 1877, that promise was abandoned as members of Congress worked out a deal that would break a deadlocked presidential election. In exchange for sending Rutherford B. Hayes, a Republican, to the White House, members of his party agreed that the federal government would withdraw soldiers from the South and appropriate funds for railroads and other infrastructure needs there. In the years that followed, this political compromise would give way to a broader cultural consensus among white Americans. Reconciliation between North and South became of paramount importance, and white Americans would avoid reopening sectional wounds by ignoring the growing political and economic disempowerment of African Americans in the former states of the Confederacy. In spite of the genuine progress that had occurred since the Civil War, African Americans often found themselves returning to the questions that had underlain that terrible conflict. Speaking on "The Race Problem in America" at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, the famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass faced down a crowd of hecklers. "Men talk of the Negro problem," he declaimed. "There is no Negro problem. The problem is whether the American people have honesty enough, loyalty enough, honor enough, patriotism enough to live up to their own Constitution."

THE LITERARY MARKETPLACE

Douglass's words remind us that for all that was new about post-Civil War America, there were also substantial continuities with what had come before. Writers like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Walt Whitman remained active and influential figures into the 1880s and the 1890s. Emily Dickinson's most productive years as a poet occurred during the Civil War, but she would not become widely known as a poet until the 1890s, when her verses were published in heavily edited versions. Herman Melville published three books of poetry in the 1870s and 1880s, and then composed the masterful novella *Billy Budd*, which remained unpublished until long after his death in 1891.

In spite of the influence of such writers in the years following the Civil War, many American writers of this era began to understand themselves as belonging to a distinct generation. Indeed, the late nineteenth century was when scholars and critics began dividing the literature of the United States into distinct historical periods, seeking to create a coherent history of

American writing. The turn of the twentieth century witnessed the publication of several influential anthologies of American literature—and even the first college courses on the subject. By that time, the realm of literature of literary writing and reading—had undergone substantial changes. The post-Civil War decades saw the United States create and import many features of the literary marketplace that we now take for granted: the standardization and proliferation of book reviewing; the circulation of best-seller lists; the growth, simultaneously, of several classes of readers, including well-educated white-collar readers, middle-class readers who attended book clubs, and increasingly literate working classes who might encounter literature through newspapers or dime novels. The commercial realm governing both author and text changed in significant ways, most crucially with the ratification of the International Copyright Act of 1891, a law supported by literary figures such as Mark Twain and William Dean Howells. The act extended copyright protection to foreign writers in the United States and enabled American authors to receive the same protection abroad.

During this period, the center of the growing publishing industry migrated from New England to New York, and commercial publishing became a more professional and specialized enterprise. As the American reading public grew, publishing houses increasingly focused on different segments of the literary marketplace and devised new methods to excite publicity and increase sales. The turn of the twentieth century fostered the rise of literary celebrity in the United States, most obviously epitomized by Mark Twain. Like later authors such as Jack London, Ernest Hemingway, and Gertrude Stein, Twain became a public figure whose actions and words were reported regularly in newspapers and in the press, and he was arguably the most recognizable American in the world for several decades.

The development of the railroads and the growth of urban markets both contributed to the development of mass cultural expression in the post-Civil War United States. Readers of literature could purchase new works by subscribing to them, as one might subscribe to a magazine, or find them in the increasing number of lending libraries—or they might encounter poems, short stories, and serialized novels in periodicals. Middle- and professional-class readers were the target audience of magazines such as the *Atlantic*, *Century*, and *Harper's*—where they could find writers such as Henry James, Constance Fenimore Woolson, and Sarah Orne Jewett. In San Francisco, the *Overland Monthly* emerged as the leading western literary periodical with a regional focus; it published Bret Harte, Ambrose Bierce, Sui Sin Far, and Mark Twain, among others. Abraham Cahan founded the Yiddish newspaper the *Jewish Daily Forward* in 1897, and Pauline E. Hopkins serialized her sensational novels in the *Colored American Magazine*, founded in 1900. As these examples suggest, new forms of cultural expression did not translate into a single, unified reading public. For white nativists—who were worried about the increasing number of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe, as well as the influence of African Americans and Asian Americans—the visible diversity of American literature exacerbated their fears about the future of their country.

FORMS OF REALISM

Nowhere was the anxiety about the state of American literature and its relationship to the American populace more on display than in the debates about literary realism that transpired in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. *Realism* was (and is) a slippery term, one that could be applied to a variety of literary projects; most commonly, it was used to refer to literary fiction that was rooted in the observation and documentation of the details of everyday life. American realists saw themselves as being influenced by the development of realist fiction in Britain and continental Europe; they looked to writers as diverse as George Eliot (England), Ivan Turgenev (Russia), and Henrik Ibsen (Norway). However, the author and editor William Dean Howells contended that literary realism had a particular function in the democratic society of the United States. Howells held that by documenting the speech and manners of a wide variety of people—representing a diversity of social classes—literary realism could foster a shared democratic culture. “Democracy in literature . . . wishes to know and to tell the truth,” he wrote. At a time when American society seemed on the verge of fracturing into divisions of class, race, and ethnicity, literature could help cultivate empathetic bonds that would hold it together. Howells continued, “Men are more alike than unlike one another: let us make them know one another better, that they may be all humbled and strengthened with a sense of their fraternity.”

A cluster in this section presents several key arguments about realism and how it might be defined, including an example of the substantial criticism that Howells’s vision faced. Some critics believed that realism abandoned the moral purpose of art in favor of the vulgar and commonplace; others believed that realist fiction relied too much on dull observation instead of dramatic storytelling. In spite of this opposition, Howells’s ideas set the agenda for the American literary establishment in this time. Indeed, this volume is filled with writers that Howells encouraged, published, or reviewed favorably during his career. He was an early champion of his contemporaries Henry James and Mark Twain—maintaining close ties with both writers for decades—and later promoted younger writers such as Stephen Crane, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Charles Chesnut. These writers, he believed, would usher in an age in which the United States could stand on the world stage as an equal to other nations as a contributor to world letters.

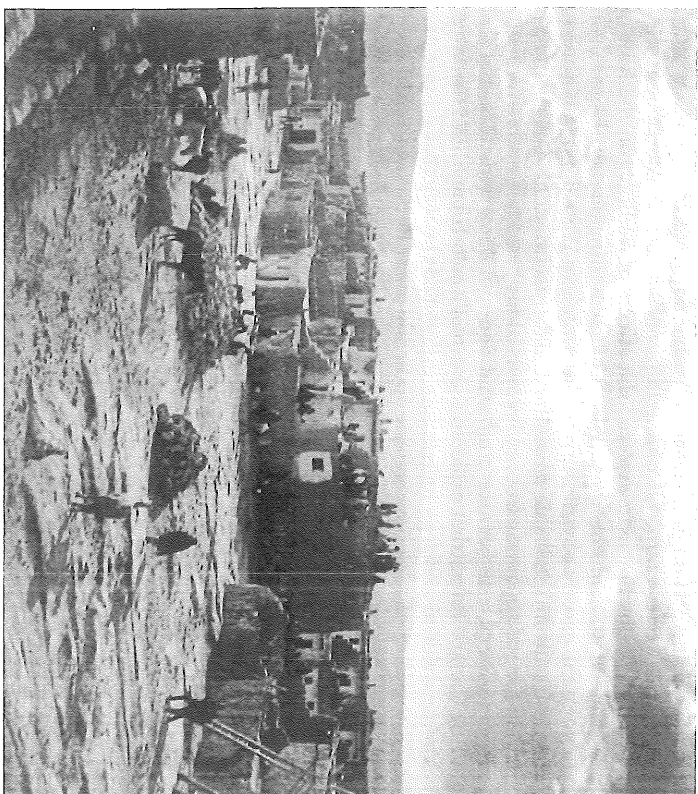
The interest in forms of literary realism was especially welcoming of regional writing from throughout the United States. On a practical level, regional writing flourished with the proliferation of mass magazines, for which short stories and sketches were ideal, and which catered to urban audiences with an interest in learning about distant peoples and their cultures. By the end of the nineteenth century, virtually every region of the country had one or more “local colorists” dedicated to capturing its natural, social, and linguistic features. These works, such as Joel Chandler Harris’s plantation tales, could be suffused with nostalgia. In other cases, such as in the writing of Constance Fenimore Woolson and Charles Chesnut about the South, or the Maine fiction of Sarah Orne Jewett, regional writers portrayed the stresses and complexities of particular locales under the pressure of tre-

mendous change. Hamlin Garland, a visible advocate of regional writing, depicted midwestern farmers coming to terms with harsh economic truths, and Mary Wilkins Freeman explored the effects of tradition on the lives of New England women. The appetite for regional writing played a large role in launching the careers of writers from the American West. First published in 1865, Mark Twain’s tall tale from the California frontier, “The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County,” remained his best known work for many years, and Bret Harte became a national figure in 1868 with “The Luck of Roaring Camp,” a story that explores and exploits colorful myths of the West.

Literary realism and regionalism also influenced the way that writers portrayed the lives of racial and ethnic “others”—nonwhites seen as different from the majority of American readers. Both white and African American writers, for instance, depicted black characters as speaking in a vernacular that was distinct from the speech of their white characters, and they often took advantage of white interest in African American folk beliefs. Joel Chandler Harris’s “Wonderful Tar Baby Story” (1881), told by Uncle Remus, was immensely popular, and the superstitions voiced by Jim in Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) contributed to its success. Charles Chesnut’s conjure tales offered a new take on the practice of presenting African American traditions to white readers, one that allows the reader to see an African American storyteller as much less naïve in his engagement with white audiences. The interest in vernacular speech extended to poetry as well, as Paul Laurence Dunbar manipulated the rhythms of African American speech into some of the best-known verse of his time.

In their representations of African Americans, these authors sought to depict ways of speaking that were notably different in vocabulary and pronunciation from the English spoken by their readers. To capture that difference, they represented African American voices in the form of a *dialect*—a variation of a language that is particular to a group or region. For writers, putting dialect on the page involved changing the spelling and punctuation of characters’ dialogue so that it purported to match the spoken patterns of a particular race, class, or ethnicity. This practice of writing dialogue in the form of a dialect became common in the late nineteenth century, and it extended to the representation of all those thought to be outside the mainstream society of middle- to upper-class Anglo-America. African Americans, recent immigrants, and the urban poor were all presented in literature as speaking a non-standard English. This vogue for dialect literature, which extended from newspaper sketches to literary novels, can make the writing of this period challenging for the twenty-first-century reader. But the difficulty serves a purpose. For writers like Mark Twain, Charles Chesnut, and Stephen Crane, transcribing dialogue as nonstandard dialect was a means of representing the social distances that existed among their characters—distances that could have results that were comic, tragic, or both—as well as the distance these writers presumed between their characters and their middle-class readers. Indeed, it could, in fact, be part of the purpose of a work of literature that readers must struggle to understand speakers from racial or ethnic backgrounds different from their own.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the literary interest in the traditions of “the folk” was visible everywhere in American literature. When Kate



A *Feast Day at Acoma*, Edward S. Curtis, 1904. In 1892 Curtis (1868-1952) opened a studio in Washington Territory and began to photograph local Indians. Curtis traveled widely, portraying Native people and scenes in an elegiac manner, attempting to document what he understood to be the last days of the “vanishing Indian.” Whatever his intentions, *A Feast Day at Acoma* shows a bustling scene of Pueblo people in the Southwest.

Chopin sought an audience for her tales of rural Louisiana, she titled her volume *Bayou Folk* (1894). When W. E. B. Du Bois published his groundbreaking collection of essays about race and racism in the United States, he called the book *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). During the final decades of the nineteenth century, the publication of dialect literature, folktales, and local-color sketches coincided with the rise and professionalization of social sciences that were oriented toward the same materials. For Native Americans, the development of anthropology in the United States had particular significance. Even as American Indians were a target of assimilation campaigns to erase their languages, cultures, and religions, anthropologists were traveling the continent attempting to document those very things. Sponsored both by the federal government and by universities, the anthropologists transcribed songs, stories, and ceremonies—collecting them on the page just as they collected physical artifacts for natural history museums. Native American authors such as Zitkala-Ša could find their way into print by producing their own versions of tribal stories, a practice that continued to this day. Just as important, she and other Native writers reminded Americans that Indians would continue to persist *outside* of museums.

In expanding the diversity of American writing, realism did not cure any of the social ills of the Gilded Age. However, the interest in realism allowed for a more socially engaged literature, one in which the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction could become blurred. Looking back to the Civil War, Ambrose Bierce’s dark, violent tales of the conflict and Twain’s comic “Private History of a Campaign That Failed” (1885) were both published alongside the more serious accounts of battles and generals; Constance Fenimore Woolson and Charles W. Chesnut both wrote searing stories of Reconstruction at a time when the economic future of the South was a frequent topic of national discussion; and Booker T. Washington’s *Up from Slavery*, published in 1901, offered a blueprint for African American uplift and was instantly recognized as a masterpiece of autobiography, only to meet with a sharp rejoinder two years later by W. E. B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk*—a mix of memoir, polemic, social science, and fiction. The turn of the twentieth century was a time of lively, even heated, argument about the future of the nation, and literary realism was an invitation for authors to dive into those debates rather than to turn away.

THE “WOMAN QUESTION”

One such debate was about how the role of women in American life would be defined—or even whether it should be defined at all. In the post-Civil War era, females raised in middle- and professional-class homes had increasing access to secondary and even higher education. They had access to new forms of mass entertainment, and urbanization offered new forms of cultural and political activity. The consumer culture of the late nineteenth century allowed women increasing opportunity to assert their own wants and desires, and the decreasing price of magazines was coupled by an increase in the number of periodicals that sought a female readership.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, women increasingly participated in social clubs of all kinds, a movement that facilitated the discussion among women of the cultural and political issues of the moment. Women’s clubs might invite speakers or select books for discussion, and the “clubwoman” could exert significant influence in a community. While women’s clubs were often identified, in the popular press, with liberal attitudes about gender roles, they could also act as conservative forces—organized around traditional lines of class, religion, and race. Indeed, in the 1890s women formed separate national organizations for white and African American women’s clubs. For immigrant and working-class communities, women’s clubs were an opportunity to discuss the challenges of urban environments. For African American women, clubs allowed members to share in an agenda of racial advancement and to achieve the middle-class respectability often denied them in their daily lives.

The “Woman Question,” to use a common phrase from this period, was actually more than a single question; it was a host of issues related to education, participation in the workforce, and the social influence of women on issues such as temperance. Although marriage and matrimony defined, in the popular imagination, the conventional roles for women of all classes, changes in the divorce laws during the 1890s fueled debates about female

autonomy and the institution of marriage. The chief political issue identified with women during this period was suffrage. Proponents of female suffrage were bitterly disappointed by the 1870 ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which extended—at least in theory—the voting franchise to African American men but not to women of any race. Membership in the National Woman Suffrage Association, founded in 1869, grew dramatically in the late nineteenth century. However, the question of voting rights also fostered racial and ethnic division throughout the period, as white, native-born women often raised their claims to the ballot by deriding the fact that others they deemed less worthy, including new immigrant and African American men, could vote. Black suffragists were often excluded from national events, and many formed their own suffrage organizations.

The quest for female suffrage would not be complete until the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, but throughout the decades between the Civil War and World War I, Americans had a sense that women were claiming new forms of autonomy. At such a time, even something as ordinary as a bicycle, increasingly popular in the late nineteenth century, could become a symbol of female emancipation. ("It gives women a feeling of freedom and self-reliance," Susan B. Anthony famously said.) The questions and anxieties about the changing place of women in American culture reverberate throughout the literature of this period. By portraying an "American girl" attempting to navigate the world of leisure and desire, Henry James struck a nerve with the publication of *Daisy Miller* in 1879, and he returned to these themes throughout his long career as a novelist. In a different vein, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper"—a story that was quickly recognized as a classic when it was first published in 1892—depicts how the medical regime of the late nineteenth century attempted to contain the creative energies of American women. Two important novels published within a year of one another, Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) and Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900), both feature protagonists who attempt to achieve autonomy and fulfill their desires—with very different outcomes. Edith Wharton's short stories, including those that appear in this volume, find comedy and pathos in an upper-class world in which divorce is increasingly common.

Female writers of color wrote about many of these same issues, but they also addressed the ways in which racism created a social landscape even more challenging than that faced by their white counterparts. Ida B. Wells-Barnett's accounts of lynching and other forms of anti-black violence revealed the cruelties that threatened the safety and well-being of all African Americans, male and female; in her autobiographical essays, Zita Kala-Ša wrote about the pressures of assimilation brought to bear on Native Americans who sought an education; and Pauline Hopkins published sensational tales, like "Talma Gordon" (1900), that called into question the social fictions that upheld racial inequality. Taken together, these works reveal that categories like "race" and "gender" could mean quite distinct things to writers at the turn of the twentieth century. What all of these authors share, though, is a sense that writing had a vital function to play in helping Americans to understand the complex problems of their time.

UNSEEN FORCES

As the century neared its close, Americans increasingly felt that their society was being shaped by unseen forces beyond their control. The industrialization of the United States created large corporations that seemed to obey their own laws; engineers were harnessing the power of electricity, bringing energy to cities that were growing faster than anything Americans had previously seen; in 1895, scientists discovered how to harness X-rays to penetrate the secrets of the body; and a communications network that included telephones and telegraphs spread across the nation and the globe, delivering news at unprecedented speed. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, an American could drive an automobile, see the flickering image of a moving picture, and hear voices recorded on a phonograph—all wonders of a new age. Surrounded by the machinery and scientific advances on display at the Great Exposition in Paris in 1900, Henry Adams described himself as having "his historical neck broken by the sudden irruption of forces totally new." For the sixty-two-year-old historian, the grandson and great-grandson of U.S. presidents, the turn of the twentieth century was a time of promise and peril, unleashing "occult, supersensual, irrational" forces that exerted the same power in the modern world that the Christian cross had wielded in the Middle Ages.

One force that changed how many Americans understood the physical and social world was the emerging theory of evolution. In *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871), Charles Darwin theorized that human beings had developed over the ages from nonhuman forms of life, successfully adapting to changing environmental conditions. Darwin, a naturalist, was not interested in the competition that took place among human societies, but in the 1860s the English philosopher Herbert Spencer began using the theory of natural selection as a lens for understanding competition among people. Spencer coined the phrase "survival of the fittest" to describe this process, and Darwin even included it in later editions of *The Origin of Species*. Though relatively few Americans read Spencer himself—and even fewer actually read Darwin—ideas about evolution, natural selection, and even competition would shape American thought over the next half century. As it was most often invoked, evolution could describe a social world in which progress was achieved only through ruthless competition. Given the collateral damage caused by the dramatic booms and busts of the business cycle during the late nineteenth century, it is small wonder that some of the leading American businessmen happily adopted this rhetoric to describe the value of capitalism. Andrew Carnegie, for example, argued that unrestrained competition was the equivalent of a law of nature designed to eliminate those unfit for the new economic order.

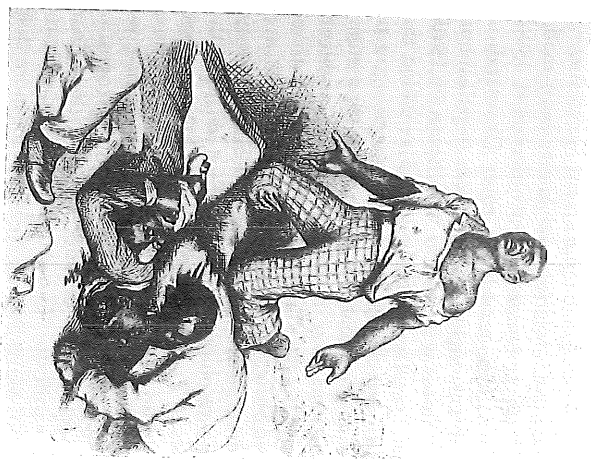
Darwinism could justify other forms of violence as well. Fear that the racial character of the United States would be contaminated by Asian blood—and therefore rendered "unfit"—was one rationale offered for the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which prohibited immigration from China. White Americans believed that the forces of evolution destined American Indians to the margins of history, and this belief drove both the final nineteenth-century campaigns to eradicate Native military resistance to the United States and the

Americanization efforts of self-described "Friends of the Indian." In the South, the language of social evolution and racial competition contributed to the violent suppression of African Americans, particularly African American men. White supremacists claimed that they were protecting the purity of white women and ensuring the future of the white race as they terrorized their black neighbors through the spectacle of lynching. In this distortion of Darwinian evolution, it was all too easy to understand any form of group violence as nothing more than the expression of natural law.

In the realm of literature, American authors at the end of the nineteenth century began to grapple more explicitly with the meaning of evolution and other social forces in the development of literary *naturalism* in the United States. Naturalism grew from, and overlapped with, literary realism, but there were key differences. Like Howells and his fellow realists, literary naturalists felt that they had an obligation to bring social conflict to the page, but they found Howells and his followers too mild and too focused on the manners of the professional and upper classes. Naturalists thought that realism had left literature bloodless by failing to depict the genuine violence that they saw everywhere in the ruthless, modern world; they sought to explore how biology, environment, and other material forces shaped lives—particularly the lives of lower-class people, who had less control over their lives than those who were better off. Naturalism introduces characters from the fringes and depths of society, far from the middle class, whose lives really do spin out of control; their fates are seen to be the outcome of degenerate heredity, a sordid environment, and the bad luck that can often seem to control the lives of people without money or influence. The protagonist of Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893) cannot escape the seamy violence of Manhattan's Lower East Side; Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906) compares the working-class immigrants of Chicago's meatpacking district to the pigs that they slaughter.

Literary naturalists emphasized *plot* to a greater degree than did the realists of previous decades. Their works engaged more deliberately with romance and myth, even when the result was to deflate conventional notions of heroism, as in Crane's Civil War novel *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895). In the twentieth century, Jack London would take this romantic turn further with his adventure novels and stories—works that often returned to the theme of the bestial instincts that lay beneath civilization. In London's highly popular *The Call of the Wild* (1903), the canine protagonist Buck is stolen from a California ranch and transported to Alaska, where he awakens to his primal memories of wild life and becomes transformed into the "Ghost Dog" of the wilderness. London later wrote *White Fang* (1906), a novel that reverses this movement by bringing a dog of the "savage, frozen-hearted Northland Wild" into the civilization and domesticity of the south. In both cases, the drama turns on a clash between the power of social environment and the primal force of instinct.

With their emphasis on men of action—whether in the gold fields of Alaska or the stock exchanges of Chicago—the naturalist fictions of London, Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, and Upton Sinclair portrayed a world of masculine violence. (Even Jack London's canine protagonists are male.) For decades, some commentators in the United States had expressed concerns that "overcivilization," thanks to the growth of professional and



Race and Reconstruction. This 1876 cartoon by Thomas Nast (1840–1902) comments on the failure of the federal government to protect African Americans in the South. The caption reads, "Is this a republican form of government? Is this protecting life, liberty, or property? Is this equal protection of the laws?" *Harper's Weekly*, September 2, 1876.

white-collar occupations, was leading to a kind of softness among American men. This anxiety was shaped by the growing material prosperity of the upper and professional classes, who increasingly worked in occupations that did not require physical strength, and it was also a response to the efforts by women to increase their cultural, economic, and political power. Throughout this period, cultural commentators spent considerable time and effort wringing their hands about what the fluctuating roles of men and women would mean for the future of American civilization.

THE NEW AMERICAN EMPIRE

The increasing assertiveness of American women—or the "New Woman," to use a phrase made popular in the 1890s—made it all the more imperative to shape American manhood properly. One late-nineteenth-century movement, "muscular Christianity," attempted to merge physical and moral development through institutions like the Young Men's Christian Association. Indeed, a central premise of the age was that white men could best prepare themselves for the Darwinian struggle by becoming both mentally *and* physically fit. Theodore Roosevelt urged men to engage in the "strenuous life," and he looked back on *The Winning of the West* (1889–96)—the title of his four-volume history of American expansion—as a grand drama of heroism and sacrifice. However, in the eyes of most white Americans, the West had already been "won" by the 1890s. The historian Frederick Jackson Turner declared in 1893 that the western frontier, which he regarded as crucial to the formation of America's democratic character, no longer existed.

Having completed the work of building a U.S. empire on the North American continent, Americans looked abroad. “Idleness and luxury have made men flabby,” a contributor to the *North American Review* observed in 1894, “and the man at the head of affairs [U.S. president Grover Cleveland] is beginning to ask seriously if a great war might not help them to pull themselves together.” When the United States went to war with Spain in 1898, Americans quickly embraced what Secretary of State John Hay called the “splendid little war” in Cuba, and Roosevelt organized a volunteer regiment of “rough riders” that he could lead into combat. For those advocating imperial expansion, the Spanish–American War addressed several problems simultaneously. It gave U.S. industry access to new markets, easing fears of “overproduction”; it gave the United States the chance to establish itself as a legitimate rival to European imperial powers; and it created a new proving ground for American men. At the resolution of the conflict in 1898, the nation had acquired new territories in Puerto Rico and the Philippines, and it would acquire the territory of Hawaii that same year. One ostensible cause of the conflict was the American desire to secure Cuban independence, yet after Spain’s defeat the United States did not hurry to withdraw its troops. In effect, Cuba remained a U.S. protectorate for decades. In 1892, the Cuban patriot José Martí had written a manifesto, “Our America,” warning Latin America of the “giant” to their north. Martí lived in New York for more than a decade, and he understood the imperial aspirations of his temporary home all too well.

In 1899, the Filipino independence movement began to revolt against the U.S. military forces occupying the islands, and the armed conflict lasted for three years. Increasingly vocal critics founded the American Anti-Imperialist League. The anti-imperialists included figures as diverse as the industrialist Andrew Carnegie, the social worker Jane Addams, and the philosopher William James (Henry’s brother). As in any movement, participants’ motives varied. For some, the prospect of empire seemed in conflict with the principle of self-determination that they believed to be a core American value; others were, less nobly, anxious about any territorial grab that could increase the number of nonwhites living under the American flag. William Dean Howells and Mark Twain were members of the Anti-Imperialist League, and both distrusted the exercise of military power and the rhetoric of patriotism that accompanied it. In his story “Editha” (1905), Howells depicts a young woman so captivated by the romance of war that she sends her fiancé off to die in it—and suffers no regret, even after she encounters the scornful mother of the deceased. Twain, whose celebrity made his views especially newsworthy, penned several works opposing military ventures abroad, including “The War Prayer,” a story so dark in its outlook that, after a magazine rejected it for publication in 1905, he left it unpublished in his own lifetime. Twain explained his decision in a letter to a friend: “None but the dead are permitted to tell the truth.”

With Twain’s passing in 1910, the generation of men and women who had lived through the American Civil War was passing too. By the early 1900s, the first stirrings of modernism were visible: Henry James’s deep explorations of consciousness in his late novels anticipated the prose experiments of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce; in 1912 James Weldon Johnson would publish his *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, a novel that presages the fiction

of the Harlem Renaissance in its fascination with alienation and the boundaries of racial identity; and for many readers, the tight, elliptical verses of Emily Dickinson, first published in the 1890s, seem now to have more in common with the twentieth-century verse of poets like Hilda Doolittle or William Carlos Williams than with anything written in her own time. Indeed, many of the authors considered today to be significant influences on American modernism—such as Robert Frost, Ezra Pound, and Gertrude Stein—were already writing and publishing by the year of Twain’s death. Realism and naturalism, in other words, overlapped considerably with the artistic movements that would dominate the decades following World War I. When the United States entered the Great War in 1917, its transformation into a global power became complete; as Europe imploded, the United States exerted political and cultural power far beyond what anyone might have imagined a half century earlier, when America was coming to terms with the aftermath of its own terrible war.

AMERICAN LITERATURE 1865-1914

| TEXTS | CONTEXTS |
|---|---|
| 1855 Walt Whitman, <i>Leaves of Grass</i> | 1860 Short-lived Pony Express runs from Missouri to California |
| 1860-65 Emily Dickinson writes several hundred poems | 1861 South Carolina batteries fire on Fort Sumter, initiating the Civil War • Southern states secede from the Union and found the Confederate States of America |
| 1865 Walt Whitman, <i>Drum-Taps</i> | 1865 Civil War ends • Reconstruction begins • Lincoln assassinated • Thirteenth Amendment ratified, prohibiting slavery |
| 1867 Mark Twain, <i>The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County and Other Sketches</i> • Horatio Alger, <i>Ragged Dick</i> | 1867 United States purchases Alaska from Russia • Jesse Chisholm maps out the Chisholm Trail, connecting Texas cattle ranches to railheads in Kansas City, Cheyenne, Dodge City, and Abilene |
| 1868 Louisa May Alcott, <i>Little Women</i> | 1868 Fourteenth Amendment passed, guaranteeing citizenship to all peoples born in the United States (exclusive of Native peoples) • Congress institutes eight-hour workday for federal employees • sweatshops, using mostly immigrant labor, begin to proliferate in cities |
| | 1869 First transcontinental railroad completed by construction crews composed largely of Chinese laborers • Susan B. Anthony elected president of American Equal Rights Association; Elizabeth Cady Stanton elected president of National Woman Suffrage Association |
| 1870 Bret Harte, <i>The Luck of Roaring Camp and Other Sketches</i> | 1870 Fifteenth Amendment, giving African American men the right to vote, ratified |
| | 1871 Indian Appropriation Act ends the practice of negotiating treaties with the tribes as sovereign nations |
| 1872 Mark Twain, <i>Roughing It</i> | 1872 Yellowstone, first U.S. national park, established |
| | 1873 Economic panic; financial depression lasts until 1879 |
| | 1874 Women's Christian Temperance Union founded in Cleveland • invention of barbed wire effectively ends the open range |
| 1876 Charlot, "[He has filled graves with our bones]" | 1876 Custer's regiment defeated by the Sioux and Cheyenne at Little Big Horn River, Montana • Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone |
| | 1877 Reconstruction ends • segregation-ist Jim Crow laws begin |
| 1878 Henry James, <i>Daisy Miller</i> | |

Boldface titles indicate works in the anthology.

| TEXTS | CONTEXTS |
|--|---|
| 1879 Chief Joseph, "An Indian's Views of Indian Affairs" | 1879 Thomas Edison invents the electric lightbulb • female lawyers permitted to argue before Supreme Court |
| 1880 Joel Chandler Harris, <i>Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings</i> • Constance Fenimore Woodson, <i>Rodman the Keeper: Southern Sketches</i> | 1880-1910 Massive immigration from Europe |
| 1883 Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus" | 1881 Tuskegee Institute founded |
| 1884 Twain, <i>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> | 1882 J. D. Rockefeller organizes Standard Oil Trust • Chinese Exclusion Act instituted |
| | 1884 Tailors' strike in New York City brings national attention to sweatshops |
| | 1886 Statue of Liberty dedicated • Haymarket Square labor riot leaves eleven dead • American Federation of Labor organized |
| 1889 Theodore Roosevelt, <i>The Winning of the West</i> • Hamlin Garland, "Under the Lion's Paw" • Andrew Carnegie, "The Gospel of Wealth" | 1887 General Allotment Act or Dawes Act permits the president to divide tribally owned lands into individual allotments to be held in trust for twenty-five years, with "surplus" lands to be sold to non-Indians. This led the Indians to lose some 90 million acres of land by the time Dawes was repealed in 1934. |
| 1890 Ambrose Bierce, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" • Emily Dickinson, <i>Poems</i> | 1890 U.S. Bureau of the Census declares the "Frontier" "to be closed." There is no more "free" or "unoccupied" land • Sitting Bull killed. Massacre of Big Foot's Minneconjou band by federal troops at Wounded Knee Creek ends the Ghost Dance among the Sioux • Ellis Island Immigration Station opens |
| 1891 José Martí, "Our America" • Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, "A New England Nun" | |
| 1892 Anna Julia Cooper, <i>A Voice from the South</i> • Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wall-paper" | |
| 1893 Stephen Crane, <i>Maggie: A Girl of the Streets</i> • Frederick Jackson Turner, <i>The Significance of the Frontier</i> | 1893 World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago • economic panic and depression, set off by the collapse of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroads |
| 1895 Crane, <i>Black Riders and The Red Badge of Courage</i> | |
| 1896 Paul Laurence Dunbar, <i>Lyrics of a Lowly Life</i> • James Mooney publishes <i>Ghost Dance Songs</i> • Abraham Cahan, <i>Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto</i> • Sarah Orne Jewett, <i>The Country of the Pointed Firs</i> | 1896 <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> upholds segregated transportation |
| 1897 Crane, <i>The Open Boat and Other Tales of Adventure</i> | |
| | 1897-98 Klondike Gold Rush |

| TEXTS | CONTEXTS |
|---|--|
| 1899 Charles Chesnut, <i>The Conjure Woman</i> and <i>The Wife of His Youth</i> and <i>Other Stories of the Color Line</i> • Kate Chopin, <i>The Awakening</i> • Frank Norris, <i>McTeague</i> | 1898 United States annexes Hawaii |
| 1900 Theodore Dreiser, <i>Sister Carrie</i> • Ida B. Wells-Barnett, <i>Mob-Rule in New Orleans</i> • Pauline Hopkins, <i>Contending Forces</i> • Francis LaFlesche, <i>The Middle Five</i> | 1898–99 Spanish–American War |
| 1901 Zitkala-Ša, <i>Impressions of an Indian Childhood and The School Days of an Indian Girl</i> • Norris, <i>The Octopus</i> • Jack London, “The Law of Life” • Booker T. Washington, <i>Up from Slavery</i> | 1900 U.S. population exceeds seventy-five million |
| 1903 W. E. B. Du Bois, <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> • London, <i>The Call of the Wild</i> | 1901 J. P. Morgan founds U.S. Steel Corporation • first transatlantic radio • oil discovered in Spindletop, Texas |
| 1904 Edith Wharton, “The Other Two” | 1903 Henry Ford founds Ford Motor Co. • Wright brothers make the first successful airplane flight • <i>The Great Train Robbery</i> is first U.S. cinematic narrative |
| 1905 William Dean Howells, “Editha” | 1904 National Child Labor Committee formed |
| 1906 Upton Sinclair, <i>The Jungle</i> | 1905 Industrial Workers of the World (the Wobblies) founded |
| 1907 Henry Adams, <i>The Education of Henry Adams</i> , privately printed | 1906 April 18: San Francisco earthquake and fire • dozens of African Americans killed in Atlanta race riots |
| | 1908 Israel Zangwill’s “The Melting Pot” first performed |
| 1910 Jane Addams, <i>Twenty Years at Hull-House</i> • Sui Sin Far, “Mrs. Spring Fragrance” | 1909 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) founded |
| 1912 James Weldon Johnson, <i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> | 1910 Mexican Revolution |
| | 1914 U.S. Marines invade and occupy Vera Cruz, Mexico • Panama Canal opens |

WALT WHITMAN 1819–1892

Walt Whitman revolutionized American poetry. Responding to Emerson’s call in “The Poet” (1842) for an American bard who would address all “the facts of the animal economy, sex, nutriment, gestation, birth,” Whitman put the living, breathing, sexual body at the center of much of his poetry, challenging conventions of the day. Responding to Emerson’s call for a “metre-making argument,” he rejected traditions of poetic scansion and elevated diction, improvising the form that has come to be known as free verse, while adopting a wide-ranging vocabulary opening new possibilities for poetic expression. A poet of democracy, Whitman celebrated the mystical, divine potential of the individual; a poet of the urban, he wrote about the sights, sounds, and energy of the modern metropolis. In his 1855 preface to *Leaves of Grass*, he declared that “the proof of a poet is that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it.” On the evidence of his enormous influence on later poets—Hart Crane, Langston Hughes, Robert Lowell, Allen Ginsberg, Adrienne Rich, Cherrie Moraga, and countless others, including Spain’s Federico García Lorca and Chile’s Pablo Neruda—Whitman not only was affectionately absorbed by his own country but remains a persistent presence in poetry throughout the world.

Whitman was born on May 31, 1819, in West Hills, Long Island (New York), the second of eight surviving children of the Quakers Louisa Van Velsor and Walter Whitman. In 1823, Whitman’s father, a farmer turned carpenter, sought to take advantage of a building boom by moving the family to Brooklyn—then a town at the western and most urbanized part of Long Island. Whitman left school when he was eleven, and was soon employed in the printing office of a newspaper; when his family moved east on Long Island in 1833, he remained in Brooklyn on his own. He began contributing to newspapers in his midteens and spent five years teaching at country and small-town schools on Long Island, interrupting his teaching to start a newspaper of his own in 1838 and to work briefly on another Long Island paper. By early 1840 he had started the series “Sun-Down Papers from the Desk of a School-Master” for the Jamaica, New York, *Democrat* and was writing poems and fiction. One of his stories prophetically culminated with the dream of writing “a wonderful and ponderous book.”

Just before he turned twenty-one Whitman stopped teaching, moved to Manhattan, began work at the literary weekly *New World*, and soon became editor of a Manhattan daily, the *Aurora*. He also began a political career by speaking at Democratic rallies and writing for the *Democratic Review*, the foremost magazine of the Democratic Party. He exulted in the extremes of the city, where street-gang violence was countered by the lectures of Emerson and where even a young editor could get to know the poet William Cullen Bryant, editor of the *Evening Post*. Fired from the *Aurora*, which publicly charged him with laziness, he wrote a temperance novel, *Franklin Evans*, or *the Inebriate*, for a one-issue extra of the *New World* late in 1842. After three years of contributor to the *Long Island Star*, assigned to Manhattan events, including theatrical and musical performances. All through the 1840s he attended operas on his journey, he could never have written *Leaves of Grass*. Just before he was twenty-seven he took over the editorship of the *Brooklyn Eagle*, writing most of the literary reviews, which included books by Carlyle, Emerson, Melville, Fuller, and Goethe, among