



American Literature

1865–1914

THE TRANSFORMATION OF A NATION

From the earliest moment in their nation's history, Americans had been pushing westward. Thomas Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase (1803) had added a huge swath of territory west of the Alleghenies; the outcome of the Mexican War (1846–48) brought the entire Southwest, including California, into the nation; and the discovery of gold in California late in 1848 increased the pace of westward movement beyond anything that could have been imagined even one year earlier. The westward settlement by Americans—most of them of Northern European ancestry—from the older parts of the country displaced Native American cultures and Spanish settlements, and the process became more intense and systematic as these whites settled on more and more terrain west of the Mississippi River.

The Civil War, which began in 1861 and lasted for four years, was the ultimate result of economic, political, social, and cultural divisions between North and South—above all, the division between an economy and way of life based on wage labor and one based on slavery. The war cost 8 billion dollars and claimed over six hundred thousand American lives, more than any other war in U.S. history. Nevertheless, the country prospered materially over the following five decades. The war effort had stimulated innovations in methods of efficiently moving large numbers of people, raw materials, and goods. The first transcontinental railroad, completed in 1869, made it possible to cross the country cheaply in just a few days, whereas covered wagon processions on the overland trail (expensive to outfit and difficult to organize) required two or three months. The railroad took settlers west from the eastern seaports, and also allowed for rapid, inexpensive shipments of goods, thereby transporting the American economy itself into the industrial age, once and for all. But the railroad also disrupted the migration of the buffalo herds on which Native peoples of the Plains depended. The telegraph, introduced in the 1840s, now ran into small towns (many of them newly settled) everywhere; electricity was introduced on a large scale; the telephone began to revolutionize daily life; coal, oil, iron, gold, silver, and other kinds of mineral wealth were discovered and extracted, producing many individual fortunes that allowed the nation for the first time to capitalize its own further development. All this development required more people, preferably (from the point of view of employers) in numbers sufficient to keep the cost of labor cheap. Often lured by advertisements from railroad and land companies, immigrants arrived in the United States from the Scandinavian countries and

from Italy, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Russia, and more. Many European newcomers, taking advantage of the railroad's cheap passenger fares, went on to the plains to farm; but most became urban dwellers, causing enormous population growth in such cities as New York, Boston, and Chicago at the same time that Chinese and then Japanese immigrants hastened the growth of San Francisco and other western cities.

The historian Frederick Jackson Turner declared in 1893 that the frontier in which many Americans had believed for so long was now closed, basing his analysis on the census of 1890, which found no place in the United States with fewer than two people per square mile. Now the United States, eager to join the European imperialist nations, turned to imperialist ventures of its own, including expansion into the former Spanish possessions of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines following the Spanish-American War in 1898. U.S. colonization also included Hawai'i. The expanding power of American capitalism and imperialism had long been experienced by indigenous peoples, whose populations suffered enormous declines in the last few decades of the nineteenth century, especially when tribes were assigned to reservations. Along with Native American reservations came a new desire to "study" the tribes—always with the expectation that their members would "vanish." Anthropologists—most of them originally students of Franz Boas—began to study Native American oral productions, even as Euro-American authors such as Helen Hunt Jackson (1830-1885) wrote book-length denunciations of the treatment of Native Americans. While the Lakota writer Zitkala-Ša (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin) (1876-1938) published prose accounts of her life toward the end of the nineteenth century, it was not until the twentieth century, with the work of Native writers such as Charles Alexander Eastman (Ohiyesa) (1858-1939), also a Lakota, among others, that a "modern" Indian literature began to be produced.

With the end of the frontier era, industrialization on a scale unprecedented in Great Britain and Europe came to the fore in the United States. Between 1850 and 1880, capital invested in manufacturing industries more than quadrupled and factory employment nearly doubled. By 1885 four transcontinental railroad lines had been completed, using in their own construction and carrying to manufacturing centers in Cleveland and Detroit the nation's quintupled output of steel from Pittsburgh and Chicago. As major industries were consolidated into monopolies, a small number of men came to control such enormously profitable enterprises as steel, oil, railroads, meat packing, banking, and finance, among them Jay Gould, Jim Hill, Leland Stanford, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Andrew Carnegie, J. P. Morgan, and John D. Rockefeller. Robber barons to some, captains of industry to others, these men successfully squeezed out competitors and accumulated vast wealth and power, social, political, and economic; whereas there had been only a handful of millionaires before the Civil War, now there were hundreds, and they formed a class whose wealth and the styles of life associated with what the sociologist Thorstein Veblen called "conspicuous consumption" had not been seen before in American life.

In 1865 the United States, except for the manufacturing centers of the northeastern seaboard, was a country of farms, villages, and small towns. Manufacturing was more a matter of workshops than factories. In 1870 the U.S. population was 38.5 million; by 1910, 92 million; by 1920, 123 million.

This increase in population was due almost entirely to immigration, as was the shift in the percentages of dwellers in the country and the city. For example, the population of New York City grew sevenfold, from half a million to nearly 3.5 million between 1865 and the turn of the twentieth century, while Chicago, with a population of only 29,000 in 1850, had more than 2 million inhabitants by 1910. These immigrants and their descendants enabled the United States to become an urban, industrial, international, capitalist power while altering the ethnic composition of the still mostly white population and contributing immeasurably to the democratization of the nation's cultural life. By 1890, New Englanders and their descendants were no longer numerically dominant. Long-settled white Americans faced newly arrived white people across divides of power, income, and privilege—worker against owner, farm against city, immigrant against native-born, leading to suspicion and social turbulence on a scale that the nation had not seen.

The transformation of an entire continent involved suffering for millions even as others prospered. Farmers in the Midwest and high plains depended on the railroads for transport of their crops but were squeezed off the land by the pricing policies of these very same railroads—what the novelist Frank Norris characterized as the giant “octopus” of corporate power, especially the Southern Pacific Railroad. 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 available land was donated to railroads to encourage their growth, while speculators bought up much land as well by various subterfuges. It is estimated that only 10 percent of the land opened by the Homestead Act actually went to would-be independent farmers. Buying at high prices, or forced to rent, everywhere such farmers were “under the lion’s paw,” as the midwestern writer Hamlin Garland put it, of land speculators and absentee landlords, or faced with mortgage payments they could not make. Large-scale farming quickly began to squeeze out such small family farms as had been able to develop—even as it increased agricultural yields. And for many, the great cities were also, as the socialist novelists Jack London and Upton Sinclair argued, jungles where only the strongest, most ruthless, and luckiest survived. An oversupply of labor brought about by immigration campaigns kept wages low, and—in the absence of laws regulating factory conditions and working hours—workers faced inhumane and dangerous working conditions.

Neither farmers nor urban laborers organized effectively to pursue their own interests. Legislators usually served the interests of business and industry—sometimes in the honest belief that a healthy economy required capitalism, sometimes via bribery and kickbacks, as in President Ulysses S. Grant’s administration, or the looting of the New York City treasury by William Marcy (“Boss”) Tweed in the 1870s, or municipal corruption cases exposed by the journalist Lincoln Steffens and other “muckrakers,” including the writers Stephen Crane and Frank Norris. Early attempts by labor to organize were often violent, and such groups as the terroristic “Molly Maguires,” active in the 1870s and 1880s in the coal-mining area of northeastern Pennsylvania, bolstered the conviction of those who believed in open markets and free enterprise that labor organizations were un-American. Industrial workers had little significant political leverage until the 1880s, when the American Federation of Labor emerged as the first unified national

voice of workers. But not until collective bargaining legislation was enacted in the 1930s did labor acquire the right to strike. As for farmers, their organizing efforts involved experiments in cooperative farming and storage, which usually failed—partly for lack of funds but also because of the long tradition of independence among agricultural people. It was exactly to own one's own land that immigrants and native-born white people had moved to the prairies in the first place. On the other hand, individual ownership of land parcels was forced on the Native people through the Dawes Allotment Act of 1887, fragmenting the collectively held Native land base and resulting in the loss of some 60 million acres from Native possession.

THE LITERARY MARKETPLACE

Rapid transcontinental settlement and new urban industrial conditions were accompanied by the development of a national literature of great abundance and variety. New themes, new forms, new subjects, new regions, new authors, new audiences—all emerged in the literature of this half century. Inevitably, Americans new and old were drawn into more complex social and cultural engagements as citizens of a nation still largely composed of dispossessed and otherwise “marginalized” people. In literature, realism, naturalism, and regionalism strove to express the challenges and rewards of what President Theodore Roosevelt called—from his perspective as a wealthy and entitled New Yorker—“the winning of the west.” The notion of what makes one an American was defined from diverse points of view. Fictionalized representations of characters rarely encountered before the Civil War became familiar: industrial workers, the rural poor, ambitious business leaders and downcast vagrants, prostitutes and unheroic soldiers, as described by Ambrose Bierce, Bret Harte, Jack London, and Stephen Crane. Women from many social groups, African Americans, Native Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, and immigrants began to write for publication, and a rapidly growing market for their work helped confirm authorship as a possible career.

Literature in the sense of fine writing figured at the top of a market that began with newspapers, which had been important to the political, social, and cultural life of America since colonial times. After the Civil War their numbers and influence grew. Joseph Pulitzer established the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in 1878, and in 1883 he bought the *New York World*; both papers were hugely successful. William Randolph Hearst, a Californian who inherited a fortune from his mining entrepreneur father, made the *San Francisco Examiner* the dominant newspaper in the Far West, then bought the *New York Journal* in 1895 to compete with Pulitzer's *World*, and gradually acquired newspapers across the country. In 1897 the *Jewish Daily Forward*, in Yiddish, was founded by Abraham Cahan; its circulation eventually reached 250,000, and it was read by three or four times that number. Many “writers” who went on to become “authors” started as newspaper journalists: Ambrose Bierce, Abraham Cahan, Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, Jack London, Sui Sin Far, Joel Chandler Harris, William Dean Howells, Frank Norris, and Mark Twain among them. Perhaps of equal importance to the development of literary careers and literature as an American institution was the establishment

of newspaper syndicates in the 1880s by Irving Bacheller and S. S. McClure. These syndicates, which distributed material to newspapers and magazines in all sections of the country, published humor, news, and novels—Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*, for example—in installments.

Magazines became another feature of American life as early as the mid-eighteenth century. After the Civil War, East Coast magazines such as *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (1850), *Scribner's Monthly* (1870), *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* (1881), the *Atlantic Monthly* (1857), and the *Galaxy* (1866) provided outlets for such figures as Kate Chopin, Sarah Orne Jewett, Henry James, William Dean Howells, Sui Sin Far, and Mark Twain. On the West Coast, the *Overland Monthly* (1868) emerged as the leading literary periodical; designed to showcase western-themed writing, it published Bret Harte, Ambrose Bierce, London, Mary Austin, Sui Sin Far, and Twain among others. Without the periodicals, many writers would not have been able to support themselves; the income and audiences these magazines provided were crucial to the further formation of the complex literary tradition of a vast nation undergoing modernization.

Periodicals also contributed to the emergence toward the end of the nineteenth century of what the critic Warner Berthoff calls "the literature of argument"—powerful works in sociology, philosophy, and psychology, many of them impelled by the spirit of exposure and reform. It would be hard to exaggerate the influence—on other writers as well as on the educated public—of works such as Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* (1879), Henry Demarest Lloyd's *Wealth against Commonwealth* (1894), Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Women and Economics* (1898), Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), and William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). For many women writers, magazines provided an important public forum in which to explore new views of women and women's rights.

In short, as the United States became an international political, economic, and military power during this half century, its literary production kept pace, and it welcomed (in translation) works by the leading European figures of the time, such as Leo Tolstoy, Henrik Ibsen, Anton Chekhov, and Émile Zola. American writers in this period, like most writers of other times and places, wrote to earn money, gain fame, change the world, and express themselves in a permanent art form. The nature of that form—what might be called the "realistic international art story"—was itself a product of the interplay of historical forces and aesthetic developments apparent, in retrospect, since the publication of the French writer Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856). Among the most critically praised American writers of the period were Mark Twain, Henry James, Edith Wharton, and William Dean Howells, two of them from the Midwest and two of them easterners, whose literary styles encompassed the comic vernacular, ordinary discourse, and impressionistic subjectivity. These writers recorded life on the vanishing frontier, in the village, small town, and turbulent metropolis, as well as in European resorts and capitals. They established the literary identity of distinctively American protagonists, specifically the vernacular boy hero and the "American Girl," the baffled and strained middle-class family, the businessman, the psychologically complicated citizens of a new international culture. They set the example and charted the future course for the subjects, themes, techniques, and styles of fiction we still call modern.

FORMS OF REALISM

The term *realism* labels a movement in English, European, and American literature that gathered force from the 1830s to the end of the century. Realists attempted to record life as it was lived rather than life as it ought to be lived (the term used for this at the time was *idealism*) or had been lived in times past (the term used for this at the time was *romance*). As defined by William Dean Howells (1837-1920), the magazine editor who was for some decades the chief American advocate of realist aesthetics as well as author of over thirty novels, realism "is nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material." Henry James spoke of the "documentary" value of Howells's work, thereby calling attention to realism's preoccupation with the physical surfaces, the particularities of the sensate world in which fictional characters lived. Characters in Howells's novels were "representative" or ordinary characters—people much like the readers themselves, without fame or huge fortunes, without startling accomplishments or immense abilities. Realism, as practiced by Howells, particularly in *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), the novel many literary historians have identified as the epitome of American realism, seeks to convince readers that the life in the book's pages is true to ordinary people in familiar surroundings.

Edith Wharton's realism, like Henry James's, is less about middle-class people than about characters' psychological and moral interiors. Wharton (1862-1937) holds a mirror up to New York high society, especially as its dramas of human consciousness play out; the achievement of what might be called upper-class realism is to convince readers that the inner lives of these wealthy people accord with the truth of human nature. In novels such as *The House of Mirth* (1905), *The Custom of the Country* (1913), and *The Age of Innocence* (1920), Wharton's primary concerns are with the intangible—thwarted desire, self-betrayal, murderous emotion, repressed voices. In this sense, her depiction of the struggles of individuals such as Lily Bart of *The House of Mirth* to survive in a seemingly pleasant but actually hostile society goes beyond realism to reflect an almost Darwinian view of upper-class life.

In fact, it proved impossible for any realist to represent things exactly as they were. Present-day literary theorists are probably more aware of what may be called "the crisis of representation"—the difference between the representation and the thing represented—than were these realists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But whether they could actually duplicate "reality" or not, these writers insisted that their work called attention to areas of experience that literature had not dealt with before and made such areas legitimate subjects for serious writing. The two most acclaimed artists of the era—Mark Twain and Henry James—understood that language was an interpretation of the real rather than the real thing itself. Twain's work was realistic in its use of colloquial and vernacular speech and its parade of characters from ordinary walks of life. For many later writers, the simple language of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) signified the beginning of a truly American style. But Twain (1835-1910) is also a comic genius whose language goes well beyond the demands of realism. The author of *Huckleberry Finn* is funny in ways that Huck could never be—Twain's writing resembles performance art, and, indeed, he achieved enormous success as a public reader of his own work. (At the same time, readers misinterpret Twain if they

read him only for his jokes and do not sense the pessimism about humankind that lies not far beneath the surface.) He was, as a western writer, ambiguously attached to an oral tradition of vernacular speech. At the other extreme, Henry James (1843–1916) worked his way from recognizably realistic fiction, with a large cast of socially specified (typically upper-class) characters described by an all-knowing narrator, as in *The American* (1876), toward increasingly subtle metaphorical representations of the flow of a character's inner thought, as in *The Golden Bowl* (1904). All strong realist writers believed in the power of language to represent reality in ways that were aesthetically satisfying and thus demanded the skill of a literary artist as well as the observational precision of a journalist.

Naturalism is understood by some as an extension or intensification of realism; it introduces characters from the fringes and depths of society whose fates are determined by degenerate heredity, a sordid environment, and/or a good deal of bad luck. Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, Jack London, and Frank Norris are usually identified as the leading American naturalists of this period, but before we turn to their work, the philosophic and scientific backgrounds of naturalism require some attention.

One of the most far-reaching intellectual events of the last half of the nineteenth century was the publication in 1859 of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*. This book, together with his *Descent of Man* (1870), hypothesized on the basis of massive physical evidence that over the millennia humans had evolved from "lower" forms of life. Humans were special, not—as the Bible taught—because God had created them in his image, but because as a species they had successfully adapted to changing environmental conditions and had passed on their survival-making characteristics. Indigenous Native traditions were consistent with Darwinism in their sense that humans were, indeed, the last creatures to develop, but Native traditions also saw the last formed as handicapped by their belatedness, needing the wisdom derived from their winged and four-legged brothers and sisters, beings that had been on this earth for a great deal longer. In the 1870s, the English philosopher Herbert Spencer's application of Darwin's theory of evolution to social relations, applying the concept of "survival of the fittest" to human groups, was enthusiastically welcomed by many leading American businessmen. Andrew Carnegie was only one of the successful industrialists who argued that unrestrained competition was the equivalent of a law of nature designed to eliminate those unfit for the new economic order.

Another response to Darwin was to accept the deterministic implications of evolutionary theory and to use them to explain the behavior of characters in literary works. As Émile Zola (1840–1902), the influential French theorist and novelist, put the matter in his essay "The Experimental Novel" (1880):

[W]e must operate with characters, passions, human and social data as the chemist and the physicist work on inert bodies, as the physiologist works on living bodies. Determinism governs everything. It is scientific investigation . . . and will replace novels of pure imagination by novels of observation and experiment.

A number of American writers adopted aspects of this form of naturalism, though each brought naturalism into his or her work in individual ways. For Frank Norris, naturalism was not a "realistic" genre or "an inner circle of

realism." To be a naturalist, Norris believed, was to enter the zone of romance:

[W]e must leave the rank and file . . . [and] separate ourselves; we must become individual, unique. The naturalist takes no note of common people, common as far as their interests, their lives, and the things that occur in them are common, are ordinary. Terrible things must happen to the characters of the naturalistic tale. They must be twisted from the ordinary, wrenched out from the quiet, uneventful round of every-day life, and flung into the throes of a vast and terrible drama that works itself out in unleashed passions, in blood, and in sudden death.

Characters may be "common," but what happens to them cannot be: "These great, terrible dramas no longer happen among the personnel of a feudal and Renaissance nobility . . . but among the lower—almost the lowest—classes; those who have been thrust or wrenched from the ranks who are falling by the roadway." Certainly the slum families in Norris's "Fantaisie Printanière" and Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893) experience "terrible things" and react in predictable "terrible" ways. Though American naturalists were concerned on the one hand to explore the new territories opened up by Darwin, Spencer, and Zola—the pressures of biology, environment, and other material forces—in depicting people, particularly lower-class people, they allowed in different degrees for the value of human beings, for their potential to make some sense out of their experience, and for their capacity to act compassionately—even altruistically—under the most adverse circumstances. Even though these writers were challenging conventional wisdom about human motivation and causality in the natural world, the bleakness and pessimism sometimes found in their fiction are not the same as despair and cynicism.

Stephen Crane (1871-1900) believed, as he said of his pitiful protagonist in *Maggie*, that environments such as slums count for a great deal in determining human fate. In the wild, nature is not hostile, he observes in "The Open Boat," only "indifferent, flatly indifferent." Crane, like most naturalists, is ambiguous, accepting of paradoxes. In his *Red Badge of Courage* (1895), the soldier Henry Fleming responds to the chaos and violence that surround him with alternating surges of panic and self-congratulation, never fully understanding himself and his place in the world. After granting an apparently naturalistic perspective to Crane, we are left with his distinctiveness, especially his use of impressionistic literary techniques to present incomplete characters in a broken world—a world more random than scientifically predictable. We are also left, however, with the hardly pessimistic implication of "The Open Boat": that precisely because human beings are exposed to a world of chance where death is always imminent, they would do well to learn the arts of sympathetic identification and solidarity, arts often learned at the price of death. Jack London's "To Build a Fire" (1908) illustrates the fate of those who decide to do without trail mates.

Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945) did not share Crane's tendency to use words and images as if he were a composer or a painter; his sense of the solidity of the real world called out a heavily solid prose. But he did share, at least early in his career, Crane's skepticism; like Crane, he was inclined to see men and women as moths drawn to flame rather than as lords of creation. Still, it

is not Dreiser's beliefs that make him significant in American letters: it is what his imagination and literary technique do with a rich set of ideas, experiences, and emotions to create the "color of life" in his fiction. If Crane gave American readers a new sense of human consciousness under conditions of extreme pressure, Dreiser gave them in novels such as *Sister Carrie* (1900) and *Jennie Gerhardt* (1911) a sense of the fumbling, yearning, confused response to the simultaneously enchanting, exciting, ugly, and dangerous metropolis that had become home to such large numbers of Americans by the turn of the century.

Jack London (1876–1916) is also far from a "pure" naturalist or determinist; a powerful current of myth and romance underlies his most successful works, such as *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *The Sea-Wolf* (1904), and most of his nearly two hundred short stories. London is a writer notorious for his contradictions, at once a socialist and an individualist, a believer in Anglo-Saxon superiority who attacked white racism and colonialism. As the critic Earle Labor has noted, "[T]he essential creative tension for [London's] literary artistry is the opposition of materialism versus spiritualism—that is, the tension between the logical and the scientific on the one hand and the irrational and mystical on the other." In "The Law of Life" (1901) Old Koskoosh—an imagined not a realistic representation of an indigenous person—when about to be left to die by his tribe, thinks: "Nature did not care. To life she set one task, gave one law. To perpetuate was the task of life, its law is death." This thought suggests a deterministic view of life—that nothing individuals do is of real significance. Yet the bulk of the story is given over to Old Koskoosh's memories, particularly to the re-creation of a formative moment from his youth when he and a companion came upon an old moose struggling against the wolves that have wounded and will soon devour him. In re-creating this extraordinary moment in all of its vivid, dramatic power, and in identifying with the totemic figure of the moose, Koskoosh, it might be argued, has erased his earlier generalization about evolutionary necessity and the meaninglessness of the individual.

In sum, despite a residual insistence on humanity's elevated place in the universe and a middle-class readership that disliked ugliness and "immorality," urban America and the sparsely populated hinterlands offered much material for realistic and naturalistic literary techniques and ideas. The "Realism and Naturalism" cluster in this volume brings together diverse voices to debate these important terms of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century American literature.

REGIONAL WRITING

Regional writing, another expression of the realist impulse, resulted from the desire both to preserve a record of distinctive ways of life before industrialization dispersed or homogenized them and to come to terms with the harsh realities that seemed to be replacing these early and allegedly happier times. At a more practical level, much of the regional writing was a response to the rapid growth of magazines, which created a new, largely female market for short fiction along with opportunities for women writers. By the end of the nineteenth century, virtually every region of the country, from Maine to Cal-

ifornia, from the northern plains to the Louisiana bayous, had a "local colorist" (the implied comparison is to painters of so-called genre scenes) to immortalize its natural, social, and linguistic features. Though often suffused with nostalgia, the best work of the regionalists both renders a convincing surface of a particular time and location and investigates psychological character traits from a more universal perspective. This *mélange* may be seen in such an early example of regional writing as Bret Harte's "The Luck of Roaring Camp," which, when it was published in 1868, made Harte a national celebrity. The story is locally specific as well as entertaining, and it created mythic types as well as offered realistic depictions of frontier characters, though these depictions were later called into question by Ambrose Bierce, among others.

One school of regionalist writing that developed quickly, once the "West" was "won," was the "Western." Although the origins of this type go back to James Fenimore Cooper's tales of the frontier when it was located in western New York State, the addition of gold mines and cowboys to the formula identified the genre with the Far West. Diverse writers such as Owen Wister, author of the popular novel *The Virginian* (1902), Mark Twain, Bret Harte, Ambrose Bierce, Mary Austin, and Jack London all contributed to the work of depicting the West as a legendary region—or (as in the case of Twain and Bierce) to the work of debunking the legends. Native Americans also described their lives and traditions—especially as these were imperiled by white advances into their territories. Navajo chants and Chippewa songs; the native oratory of Cochise, Charlot, and Wovoka; and the writings of Zitkala-Ša, Sarah Winnemucca, and Charles Alexander Eastman (Ohiyesa) have not only been increasingly added to the discourse of the West but have challenged the Euro-American identification of the West with the moving line of the frontier as it incorporated territory for that particular ethnic group. One of the great themes of Native American literary work is the land and the people's relation to it, whether in oratorical performances that dramatize this relation or in chants and tales about its sacredness. But Native American conceptions about land were radically at odds with the profit-oriented conceptions of the settlers and the railroads. "With beauty all around me, may I walk" is the prayer of the Navajo Night Chant, but though these traditional songs and other communal and artistic practices are kept alive today, a new theme emerged in Native American cultures in general: loss of the beloved land. Zitkala-Ša writes as a citizen of the modern age, educated in eastern schools by missionaries, but she still laments the vision of "my mother far away on the Western plains." Similarly, the voices of Mexican Americans, as in the "corridos," or border ballads of the Mexican Revolution, are now understood as important to an enlarged understanding of the U.S. literary West.

Hamlin Garland (1860-1940), rather than creating a myth, set out to destroy one. Like many writers of the time, Garland was encouraged by William Dean Howells to write about what he knew best—in his case the farmers of the upper Midwest. As he later said, his purpose in his early stories was to show that the "mystic quality connected with free land . . . was a myth." Garland's farmers are not the vigorous, sensuous, and thoughtful yeomen of Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) but bent, drab figures. In Garland's "Under the Lion's Paw," from the collection *Main-*

Travelled Roads (1891), local color is not nostalgia but realism deployed for social protest—another way in which realism could never be only “realistic” but was always something more.

Regional writers created not only places but also themes that assumed increasing importance in the twentieth century. The work of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, Sui Sin Far, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Winnemucca, and others may be seen as considering the world from the perspective of women awakening to, protesting against, and offering alternatives to a world dominated by men and male interests and values. Mary Austin was a feminist, and much of her writing, including her classic *Land of Little Rain* (1903), invites readers to see the world from a woman’s perspective. But Austin’s larger claim on literary history is to have made the deserts of southern California palpable for the first time in literature, as in “The Walking Woman” and other sketches. The marginal characters that people this inhospitable terrain cannot be imagined as existing anywhere else. Stowe, Jewett, and Freeman do more than lament the post-war economic and spiritual decline of New England; their female characters suggest the capacity of human beings to live independently and with dignity in the face of community pressures, patriarchal power over women, including women artists and writers, and material deprivation.

Kate Chopin (1850–1904) may be thought of as a regional writer interested in the customs, language, and landscapes of the northern Louisiana countryside and, downriver, New Orleans. But in addition to preserving local color, Chopin wrote probing psychological fiction. Edna Pontellier of *The Awakening* (1899) looks back to Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* and forward to Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*. Chopin began her writing career only after she returned to her native St. Louis from a long sojourn in Louisiana, and in her narratives she memorializes the relaxed and sensuous way of life of the Creole population. As an urban outsider, Chopin was perhaps all the more sensitive to the nuances of Louisiana country life. Perhaps, too, as a woman, she was attracted to a way of life that centered on families and small communities. In any case, her treatment of New Orleans and of Natchitoches Parish provides a fine example of the literary portrayal of a distinctive region—one less severe and less repressed than the towns and villages portrayed by the New England regionalists. Yet Chopin, especially in *The Awakening*, with its portrayal of the interior life of a Protestant woman in a conservative Catholic community, gives the ugly side as well. That *The Awakening* has served to crystallize many women’s issues of the turn of the nineteenth century, and since, shows that regional realism, even if its settings and characters are marginal to modern life, is by no means a marginal genre.

REALISM AS SOCIAL ARGUMENT

Between the end of the Civil War and the outbreak of World War I, a vast body of nonfiction prose was devoted to the description, analysis, and critique of social, economic, and political institutions and to the unsolved social problems that were one consequence of rapid growth and change. Women’s rights, political corruption, the degradation of the natural world, economic inequity, business deceptions, the exploitation of labor—these became the subjects of

articles and books by numerous journalists, historians, social critics, and economists. Much of this writing had literary ambitions, survives as literature, and continues to have genuine power. In his ambitious work of moral exhortation, *The Education of Henry Adams* (1918), Henry Adams registers through a literary sensibility a historian's sense of the disorientation that accompanies rapid and continuous change. Among the most significant and influential voices of the period were those of African Americans speaking out against racism, including W. E. B. Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Anna Julia Cooper.

Several selections in this volume address the long, shameful history of white injustices against black Americans, as the shift from Reconstruction to Jim Crow laws and the "separate but equal" decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) defined and redefined racial inequalities in America. Two works by black writers and leaders from the turn of the century have a special claim on our attention: the widely admired autobiography of Washington, *Up from Slavery* (1900) and the richly imagined *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) by Du Bois, with its brilliantly argued rejection of Washington's philosophy. The Washington-Du Bois controversy set the major terms of the continuing debate between black leaders and in the black community: which strategies will most effectively hasten equality for blacks educationally, socially, politically, and economically? It is fair to say that in very different ways *Up from Slavery* and *The Souls of Black Folk*—admirable literary achievements in themselves—carried forward the antebellum traditions of such writers as Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs and helped encourage other African American writers of the era such as Wells-Barnett and Cooper, leading eventually to the powerful statements of Harlem Renaissance modernism. In fiction, characters in Pauline Hopkins's novel *Contending Forces* take opposite sides of this argument, while its various implications are also addressed by Charles Chesnutt and James Weldon Johnson in their work. In poetry, authors such as Paul Laurence Dunbar gave voice to African American identities. Their interrelated perspectives on race and national identity are among those in our cluster on "Americanization."

This volume begins with perhaps the two most fundamental American writers of their time and subsequent decades, Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson. These poets, whose roots are in the antebellum period, continued their work into the 1880s. Though their influence would be felt most strongly after World War II, in hindsight they can be seen as the fountainheads of two major strains in modern poetry: the expansive, gregarious open form of the self-celebratory Whitman and the concise, compact idiosyncratic verse of the radically private Dickinson. Whitman especially, with his interest in the city, prefigures realism and naturalism in surprising ways, while Dickinson focuses on the inner life of the psyche.

In the half century from 1865 to 1914, material, intellectual, social, and psychological changes in the lives of many Americans went forward at such extreme speed and on such a massive scale that the diverse writing of the time registers; at its core, shocked recognition of the human consequences of these radical transformations. Sometimes the shock is expressed in recoil and denial—thus the persistence, in the face of the apparent triumph of realism, of the literature of diversion: nostalgic poetry, sentimental and melodramatic

drama, and swashbuckling historical novels. The more enduring fictional and nonfictional prose forms of the era, however, try to come to terms imaginatively with the individual and collective dislocations and discontinuities associated with the closing of the frontier, urbanization, unprecedented immigration, the surge of national wealth unequally distributed, revised conceptions of human nature and destiny, the increasing assertion of the full rights of humanity and citizenship by marginalized minorities, the reordering of family and civil life, and the pervasive spread of mechanical and organizational technologies.

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
1878 Henry James, "Daisy Miller"	1879 Thomas Edison invents the electric light bulb • female lawyers permitted to argue before Supreme Court
1880 Joel Chandler Harris, <i>Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings</i>	1880–1910 Massive immigration from Europe
1881 Helen Hunt Jackson, <i>A Century of Dishonor</i>	1881 Tuskegee Institute founded
1883 Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus"	1882 J. D. Rockefeller organizes Standard Oil Trust • Chinese Exclusion Act instituted
1884 Twain, <i>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i>	1884 Tailor's strike in New York City brings national attention to sweatshops
1885 María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, <i>The Squatter and the Don</i>	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"	1887 General Allotment Act (Dawes Act) passed, limiting the amount of tribally held land
1890 Ambrose Bierce, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge"	1889 Violating treaties with Native peoples, Congress opens Indian Territory to settlement, giving rise to the "Oklahoma Land Rush"
1891 José Martí, "Our America" • Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, "A New England Nun" • Wovoka, "The Messiah Letter"	1890 Census Bureau declares frontier "closed" • Seventh Cavalry massacre at Wounded Knee ends Native American armed resistance to U.S. government • Ellis Island Immigration Station opens
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
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>	1896 <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> upholds segregated transportation

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
1897 Crane, <i>The Open Boat and Other Tales of Adventure</i>	
1898 Abraham Cahan, <i>The Imported Bridegroom and Other Stories</i>	1898 United States annexes Hawai'i 1898-99 Spanish-American War
1899 Charles Chesnutt, <i>The Conjure Woman</i> and <i>The Life of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line</i> • Kate Chopin, <i>The Awakening</i> • Frank Norris, <i>McTeague</i>	
1900 Theodore Dreiser, <i>Sister Carrie</i> • Ida B. Wells-Barnett, <i>Mob-Rule in New Orleans</i> • Pauline Hopkins, <i>Contending Forces</i>	1900 U.S. population exceeds seventy-five million
1901 Zitkala-Ša, <i>Impressions of an Indian Childhood</i> , <i>The School Days of an Indian Girl</i> , and <i>An Indian Teacher Among Indians</i> • Norris, <i>The Octopus</i> • London, "The Law of Life" • Booker T. Washington, <i>Up From Slavery</i>	1901 J. P. Morgan founds U.S. Steel Corporation • first transatlantic radio • oil discovered in Spindletop, Texas
1903 W. E. B. Du Bois, <i>The Souls of Black Folks</i> • London, <i>The Call of the Wild</i> • Washington Matthews edits <i>The Night Chant: A Navajo Ceremony</i>	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
1904 Edith Wharton, "The Other Two"	1904 National Child Labor Committee formed
	1905 Industrial Workers of the World (the Wobblies) founded
	1906 April 18: San Francisco earthquake and fire
1907 Henry Adams, <i>The Education of Henry Adams</i> , privately printed	
1909 Mary Austin, <i>Lost Borders</i>	1909 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) founded
1910 Jane Addams, <i>Twenty Years at Hull-House</i> • Sui Sin Far, <i>Mrs. Spring Fragrance</i> • Francis Densmore publishes <i>Chippewa Songs</i>	1910 Mexican Revolution
1912 James Weldon Johnson • <i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man</i>	
	1914 U.S. Marines invade and occupy Vera Cruz, Mexico • Panama Canal opens