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The Long 19th Century in American Literature

The long 19th century (1789-1914) was a historical period of global transformation. In the Americas, this period marked the rise of modernity and nationalism from the roots of coloniality in the New World. Western expansionism and exceptionalism were made possible by technological developments, the growth of industrialization and finance capital, and new scientific discourses that accompanied the violence of racial hierarchies and exploitation of natural resources. Emergent conceptions of citizenship and humanity in this period are byproducts of the institution of transatlantic slavery and its afterlives, Indigenous genocide and relocation, and the subjugation of Latinx and Asian laborers. In short, the long 19th century charts the rise of modernity across the Americas as officially free from formal colonialism, and yet a far cry from liberation for all.

The dehumanization of colonized subjects—those who are made to assimilate, labor, and perish under a capitalistic modern world-system—forms the underside of Western conceptions of the human. The texts below chart the literary strategies and sensitivities of these subjects to their subhuman or other-than-human conditions in captivity and coerced affinity, along with their aesthetic articulations of resistance, rehumanization, and flying under the radar. Additionally, this list examines the ways in which Anglo-American writers imagine their own place in society, often through anxious conceptions of selfhood and demonstrations of power at the expense of their racialized counterparts. Some of the later writers also critique the industrialization of the world-system itself or offer alternative models of belonging in transcendental, posthuman terms.

Primary Texts

1. Samson Occom, from *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom, Mohegan* (1768-1774)
2. Phillis Wheatley, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773)
3. William Hill Brown, *The Power of Sympathy: or, The Triumph of Nature* (1789)
4. Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntley* (1799)
5. William Apess, *A Son of the Forest* (1829)
6. Washington Irving, *Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus* (1830)
7. Black Hawk, *Life of Black Hawk, or Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak: Dictated by Himself* (1833)
8. Lorenzo de Zavala, *Journey to the United States of North America* (1834)
9. Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Roger Malvin's Burial,” “My Kinsman, Major Molineux,” “Young Goodman Brown,” “The May-Pole of Merrymount,” “Dr. Heidegger's Experiment,” “The Great Carbuncle,” “The Haunted Mind,” “The Birth Mark,” “The Celestial Railroad,” “Rappaccini's Daughter,” “Ethan Brand” (1832-1852)
10. Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1843)
11. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845)
12. Herman Melville, *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (1846), *Benito Cerino* (1855); “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids” (1855)
13. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852)
14. John Rollin Ridge, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murrieta* (1854)

15. Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (1855/1892 “Deathbed Edition”)
16. Martin Delaney, *Blake; or the Huts of America* (1859)
17. Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861)
18. María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, *Who Would Have Thought It?* (1872)
19. Loreta Janeta Velázquez, *The Woman in Battle: The Civil War Narrative of Loreta Janeta Velazquez, Cuban Woman and Confederate Soldier* (1876)
20. George Washington Cable, *The Grandissimes: A Story of Creole Life* (1880)
21. Helen Hunt Jackson, *Ramona* (1884)
22. Sui Sin Far, *Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian* (1890)
23. Sophia Alice Callahan, *Wynema: A Child of the Forest* (1891)
24. Henry James, “The Real Thing” (1892), *The Beast in the Jungle* (1903)
25. Richard Harding Davis, *Soldiers of Fortune* (1897)
26. Winnifred Eaton, *A Half-Caste and Other Writings* (1898)
27. Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (1900)
28. W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)
29. Maria Cristina Mena, *The Collected Stories of Maria Cristina Mena* (1913)
30. Mariano Azuela, *The Underdogs* (1915)

Critical Texts

1. Eric Hobsbawm
 - a. from *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789-1848* (1962) [“Introduction,” “The Industrial Revolution,” “The French Revolution,” “Nationalism,” “Science”]
 - b. from *The Age of Capital: 1848-1875* (1975) [“Introduction,” “The Great Boom,” “Building Nations,” “Science, Religion, Ideology,” “Conclusion”]
 - c. from *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914* (1987) [“Overture,” “The Age of Empire,” “Waving Flags: Nations and Nationalism,” “Certainties Transformed: The Sciences,” “Epilogue”]
2. Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (1997)
3. David Kazanjian, *Colonizing Trick: National Culture And Imperial Citizenship In Early America* (2003)
4. Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (2005)
5. Ralph Bauer, *The Cultural Geography of Colonial American Literatures: Empire, Travel, Modernity* (2009)
6. Marissa K. López, *Chicano Nations: The Hemispheric Origins of Mexican American Literature* (2011)
7. Rodrigo Lazo and Jesse Alemán ed., *The Latino 19th Century* (2016)
8. María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given: Racial Geographies across Mexico and the United States* (2016)
9. Carine Ellis, *Antebellum Posthuman: Race and Materiality in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (2018)
10. Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiblack World* (2020)