

America, Asia, Racial Form, and American Literature, 1893-1945



America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893-1945 by Colleen Lye

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

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The encounter between America and Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a complex and transformative one. The rise of Asian immigration to the United States, the growth of American imperialism in Asia, and the increasing global interconnectedness of the world all contributed to a new awareness of Asia among Americans. This encounter had a profound impact on American racial ideology and literary expression.

In the late nineteenth century, the United States experienced a wave of immigration from Asia, particularly from China and Japan. This immigration was met with a mixture of fear and fascination. Many Americans feared that Asian immigrants would take jobs away from white workers and lower wages. They also worried that Asian immigrants would bring with them their own cultures and customs, which they believed would threaten the

American way of life. These fears were often expressed in racist terms, with Asian immigrants being portrayed as inferior to white Americans.

At the same time that Asian immigration was increasing, the United States was also expanding its empire in Asia. In 1898, the United States annexed the Philippines, and in the following years it acquired control over Guam, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii. This expansion of American power in Asia was driven by a number of factors, including economic interests, strategic concerns, and a desire to spread American values and institutions around the world. The United States' imperial ambitions in Asia were often justified in terms of racial superiority, with Americans believing that they had a duty to "civilize" the "backward" peoples of Asia.

The encounter between America and Asia had a profound impact on American racial ideology. The rise of Asian immigration and the growth of American imperialism in Asia led to a new awareness of racial difference and to the development of new forms of racial discourse. Americans began to see race as a more salient category of difference, and they increasingly defined themselves in opposition to Asians. This racialization of American identity was reflected in popular culture, literature, and politics.

American literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was deeply shaped by the encounter with Asia. Writers such as Mark Twain, Jack London, and Pearl S. Buck explored the complex relationship between America and Asia in their work. They examined the ways in which American racial ideology was shaped by the encounter with Asia, and they challenged the racist assumptions that underpinned American imperialism. These writers helped to create a new understanding of the American

nation, one that was more inclusive and more aware of its own racial diversity.

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