



The Rise of Multicultural America: Economy and Print Culture, 1865-1915

By Susan L. Mizruchi

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Between the Civil War and World War I the United States underwent the most rapid economic expansion in history. At the same time, the country experienced unparalleled rates of immigration. In *The Rise of Multicultural America*, Susan Mizruchi examines the convergence of these two extraordinary developments. No issue was more salient in postbellum American capitalist society, she argues, than the country's bewilderingly diverse population. This era marked the emergence of Americans' self-consciousness about what we today call multiculturalism.

Mizruchi approaches this complex development from the perspective of print culture, demonstrating how both popular and elite writers played pivotal roles in articulating the stakes of this national metamorphosis. In a period of widespread literacy, writers assumed a remarkable cultural authority as best-selling works of literature and periodicals reached vast readerships and immigrants could find newspapers and magazines in their native languages. Mizruchi also looks at the work of journalists, photographers, social reformers, intellectuals, and advertisers. Identifying the years between 1865 and 1915 as the founding era of American multiculturalism, Mizruchi provides a historical context that has been overlooked in contemporary debates about race, ethnicity, immigration, and the dynamics of modern capitalist society. Her analysis recuperates a legacy with the potential to both invigorate current battle lines and highlight points of reconciliation.

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Editorial Review

Review

Takes the reader on a comprehensive journey through many of the major prose writings of the Gilded Age.--*H-Net*

As a disciplinary achievement in English literary studies [Mizruchi's] book admirably succeeds in this. . . . Could be a very useful text for upper-level literature courses surveying the period, for it gives a robust and lively context for the writing. Moreover, paralleling the customary lecture sequencing of such courses, the book's eight thematic chapters unfold in a rough chronology.--*American Studies*

A remarkably comprehensive, meticulously researched, and lucidly written account of her subject.--*American Literary History*

This is a great book, well written and well thought through. Anyone interested in print culture should read it and use it as a model for further work on the role of print culture in shaping culture and multiculturalism.--*American Historical Review*

[Mizruchi's] argument is deft and appealing and deserves to be taken very seriously. . . . Mizruchi has put her finger on a critical moment in American literary history and identifies a compelling confluence of themes that made the period so generative. . . . Stands to inspire new questions about the history of multicultural thinking in America.--*Studies in American Culture*

A compelling and informative study of American culture in the latter third of the nineteenth century.--*Yearbook of German-American Studies*

The impressive scope of Mizruchi's volume will prove useful for those seeking a survey of the period's multiplicity of texts and perspectives.--*Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*

Mizruchi's sprawling narrative is impressive, well written, and well illustrated (her readings of photographs and advertisements are compelling, if daring) and, overall, a must-read for anyone interested in capitalist print culture at the turn of the last century.--*Journal of American History*

A comprehensive journey through many of the major prose writings of the Gilded Age--H-Net

[A] fascinating study of the convergence of capitalist development and ethnic identity. . . . Highly recommended.--*Choice*

Review

A capacious yet focused and illuminating book. Mizruchi brilliantly shows multiculturalism, capitalism, and literature to be utterly entwined. Smart and persuasive at all turns, the book is full of savvy starting points and sharp contextualizations that will serve teachers as well as scholars.--Thomas J. Ferraro, Duke University

Susan Mizruchi interweaves approaches from women's studies, Black studies, and Native American studies into close readings of major and minor figures of American literature to produce an impressively comprehensive study that should be of interest to the scholar of literature as well as to the historian and the sociologist.--Werner Sollors, Harvard University

About the Author

Susan L. Mizruchi is professor of English and American studies at Boston University. Her four previous books include *The Science of Sacrifice: American Literature and Modern Social Theory*.

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