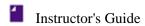# Sites Unseen: Architecture, Race, and American Literature (America and the Long 19th Century)

William A. Gleason

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Sites Unseen examines the complex intertwining of race and architecture in nineteenth and early-twentieth century American culture, the period not only in which American architecture came of age professionally in the U.S. but also in which ideas about architecture became a prominent part of broader conversations about American culture, history, politics, and—although we have not yet understood this clearly—race relations. This rich and copiously illustrated interdisciplinary study explores the ways that American writing between roughly 1850 and 1930 concerned itself, often intensely, with the racial implications of architectural space primarily, but not exclusively, through domestic architecture.

In addition to identifying an archive of provocative primary materials, *Sites Unseen* draws significantly on important recent scholarship in multiple fields ranging from literature, history, and material culture to architecture, cultural geography, and urban planning. Together the chapters interrogate a variety of expressive American vernacular forms, including the dialect tale, the novel of empire, letters, and pulp stories, along with the plantation cabin, the West Indian cottage, the Latin American plaza, and the "Oriental" parlor. These are some of the overlooked plots and structures that can and should inform a more comprehensive consideration of the literary and cultural meanings of American architecture. Making sense of the relations between architecture, race, and American writing of the long nineteenth century—in their regional, national, and hemispheric contexts—*Sites Unseen* provides a clearer view not only of this catalytic era but also more broadly of what architectural historian Dell Upton has aptly termed the social experience of the built environment.

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