

# Regional Consciousness in American Literature, 1860-1930

Kelsey Louise Squire  
*Marquette University*

---

## Recommended Citation

Squire, Kelsey Louise, "Regional Consciousness in American Literature, 1860-1930" (2011). *Dissertations (2009 -)*. Paper 99.  
[http://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations\\_mu/99](http://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations_mu/99)

REGIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE, 1860-1930

by

Kelsey Louise Squire, B.A., M.A.

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,  
Marquette University,  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

May 2011

ABSTRACT  
REGIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE, 1860-1930

Kelsey Louise Squire, B.A., M.A.

Marquette University, 2011

This study establishes a conversation between regional literary theory, ecocriticism, and places studies as a necessary component of a more nuanced understanding of regionalism as depicted by mobile American authors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Between 1860 and 1930, regional writers faced the challenge of making place relevant in an increasingly mobile world. In contrast to scholarly studies that situate the relevance of regionalism as a vehicle for a larger cause (for example, nationalism or feminism), or conversely, studies that focus on articulating an overly rigid "regional identity" of places or authors, I employ the term "regional consciousness" to explore how writers see through a regional lens. Through this concept of regional consciousness I investigate the representation of physical geography in American literature; the role that literature plays in the cultural construction of place; and how place attachment facilitates communal belonging.

In Chapter One I analyze how Mark Twain's use of geographic immersion -- detailed, sensory recordings of place -- facilitates his analysis of cultural geography and his critique of national unity. In Chapter Two I turn to examine geographic and communal isolation and Sara Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, and particularly, the tension between regional place attachment and failed or jingoistic expressions of nationalism. Chapter Three traces the changing dynamics of regional consciousness through national conversations on "civilization" at the turn of the century in the *Atlantic Monthly* by focusing on two distinct types of writing, analytical essays and personal narratives, especially those by John Muir. In Chapter Four I examine how Willa Cather's novel *The Professor's House* challenges the dichotomy between regionalism and modernism. In Chapter Five I continue this conversation on modern regionalism through examining the relationship between cultural geography and social class in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and related short stories. I conclude this study by analyzing four recurring pedagogical issues or questions that run throughout a variety of regional, environmental, and other "place-based" approaches to literature, which are relevant not only to English courses, but to the university culture at large.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Kelsey Louise Squire, B.A., M.A.

My interest in regional literature and place grew out of my coursework and conversations with faculty members at Marquette University, particularly Dr. Sarah Wadsworth's seminar on regionalism and nationalism in nineteenth-century American literature, Dr. R. Clifton Spargo's seminar on F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Dr. Milton Bates's seminar on American environmental literature. Their feedback on drafts of my work provided me with a clear direction for this project.

As the chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Wadsworth was a remarkable source of guidance. Her perceptive questions, observations, suggestions, reflections, and advice were incredibly helpful as I moved from my proposal to this final product. I also appreciate the feedback I received from committee members Dr. Angela Sorby and Dr. Amy Blair, as they helped me to articulate my thoughts with precision. I truly enjoyed sharing my project with my entire committee, and I appreciate their involvement and professional advice.

I am especially grateful for the opportunity to teach as I completed this project. I thank Dr. Krista Ratcliffe and Dr. Virginia Chappell for their dedication to the instructors and students in the First-Year English Program at Marquette University.

An article version of Chapter Four, titled "'Jazz Age' Places: Modern Regionalism in Willa Cather's *The Professor's House*," is forthcoming in *Cather Studies* 9, published by the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. The responses and revisions suggested by the anonymous reviewers were incredibly insightful. I offer further thanks to editors Guy Reynolds and Melissa Homestead, assistant Elizabeth Burke, and their staff for their guidance throughout the revision process.

I found an incredibly supportive community of graduate students at Marquette University. I especially thank the members of my dissertation writing group -- Colleen Fenno, Karen Zyck Galbraith, Sarah Nestor, and Vida Muse -- for their encouragement.

My friends and family have been a continual source of love and support throughout this entire project. Special thanks go to Dr. Ned and Caroline Kirk for their encouragement, professional advice, and conversations. Lastly, I thank my parents and my brother for their unending encouragement and for shaping my definition of home.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	i
INTRODUCTION Mapping the Territory of Regional Literature in America.....	1
CHAPTER ONE Navigating Physical and Cultural Geography in Mark Twain's Domestic Travel Narratives: Immersion, Criticism, and Understanding.....	23
CHAPTER TWO "Remote and Isolated": Isolation in Sarah Orne Jewett's <i>The Country of the Pointed Firs</i> .....	54
CHAPTER THREE The Trouble with Civilization: Imagining Regional Influence beyond Regional Borders in the <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> .....	75
CHAPTER FOUR Between the Country and the City: Modern Regionalism.....	102
CHAPTER FIVE Relocation, Dislocation, and Detachment: F. Scott Fitzgerald as Regional Writer.....	126
CONCLUSION Pedagogy and Place.....	156
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	174

## Introduction: Mapping the Territory of Regional Literature in America

In its March 1911 issue, the *Atlantic Monthly* treated readers to a brief, humorous piece of mock fiction titled "The Scenic Novel" by the prolific Ellis Parker Butler.<sup>1</sup>

Arguing that "the public is planning for a great scenic masterpiece," Butler presents the rationale for his sketch:

Heretofore, it has been the custom to use scenery for the framework of the novel only, and in a frame of local color, weather, hills, and houses, and then filling in with courtship and love, sudden death, happenings and events. But, I believe the time has come when the love-novel is beginning to pall, and I have reversed the thing. I have turned the novel idea wrong side out. I'm using the love and adventure for the inconspicuous frame, and am putting all the excitement into the scenery. (424)

Butler's proposed synopsis -- a story of a man who cannot decide if he should take his tea at home due to inclement weather or venture outside to take tea at an acquaintance's house -- does indeed relegate plots to the margins. The sketch itself is over-wrought with meticulous domestic descriptions, including a comprehensive inventory of the man's possessions and a detailed reflection on the exotic landscape portraits that decorate his tea set. Butler also dwells on the country landscape and changing weather patterns. In these descriptions of the external environment, Butler juxtaposes flowery exclamations -- "All was peace! The hemlock twined around the clinging vine and gave forth its fragrance to the summer seas" -- with more precise observations that employ scientific terminology

---

<sup>1</sup> The author of over 2,000 essays and stories, Ellis Parker Butler was best known for his humorous story "Pigs is Pigs," published in the *American Magazine* in 1905.

concerning barometric pressure and insect vertebrae. As the sketch includes but a single character, the man's passing thoughts are also recorded dutifully, with their quotidian content reflecting and magnifying the trivial nature of the "plot."

As these details suggest, the humor of "The Scenic Novel" rests in its parody of the characteristics of regional "or "local color" fiction popularized in the *Atlantic Monthly* decades earlier. Butler retains many of the core features of this genre through his attentiveness to domesticity, landscape, and the internalized thoughts of a single character. These features become objects of the jest through Butler's never-ending descriptions. Even his choice for the main character's gender contributes to the sketch's humorous tension: a preoccupation with deciding where to take tea would seem more appropriate for an elderly woman -- often a key character in regional fiction -- than for a young man.

Despite its popularity, regional literature was often charged with being "the wrong side out," as Butler's sketch humorously illustrates, by describing minor aspects of the story with undue significance and by being limited in scope. Many previous critical studies of regional literature address the genre's limited scope by arguing that its production and purpose served the interests of a national community scarred by the aftermath of the Civil War. In this narrative of regional literature's national significance, the genre's focus on a static, nostalgic rural past contributed to a shared sense of national roots. According to Nancy Glazener, regional writing was an act of "imaginative national unification" as writers and readers considered how regional "fragments could be glued together to form a vessel for national consciousness and a truly national culture" (190-91). This function of reunification echoes that in "Nation, Region, and Empire," where Amy Kaplan writes that the near destruction of the nation "set the agenda for novelists [as]

reimagining a community and rebuilding a nation" (241).<sup>2</sup> In a less conciliatory mode, Richard Brodhead focuses on the power dynamics of national literature, writing that "this genre's great public flowering began with the Northern victory in the Civil War, in other words with the forcible repression of sectional autonomy in favor of a national union" (119). In its arguments for the national significance of regional literature, it matters little whether a story takes place in the deep South or in the back woods of the Northeast because, by the end of the tale, readers should see a portrait of America.

My project begins, then, with a simple question as a response to these critics: how does regional literature complicate, or even work against, the formulation of a centralized national identity? This question deserves further investigation because for many regional writers the "fragments" of the nation (to return to Glazener's image) cannot be glued together so seamlessly. Indeed, regional writers seem drawn to the gaps between fragments, to places that don't quite "fit" right in this "vessel" of the nation. I find that examining this tension between region and nation necessitates a re-examination of place itself; in order to understand the complexities of regional writing, we must look beyond critical definitions of regional places as static, isolated, detached, and nostalgic portraits of the past. I argue that regional writers often depict regions as vibrant, dynamic, contentious, and engaged places that are distinct -- in terms of both physical geography and culture -- from the nation at large.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Kaplan's phrasing recalls Benedict Anderson's conception of the nation as "an imagined political community" (6).

<sup>3</sup> Drawing on arguments by David Jordan in *New World Regionalism*, Edward Watts identifies distinctiveness as a defining feature of regionalism: "whereas the realist uses place and particulars to bolster the universal," Watts argues, "the regionalist uses the same elements to identify the distinct" (187).

This does not mean, however, that regional writers do not address issues of national concern, nor do these writers completely eschew national values. On the contrary, it is through their attentiveness to liminal, forgotten, or contested regional spaces that regionally conscious writers reveal how the textual exploration of place can be used as a vehicle to examine critically national concerns related to mobility and migration, urbanization, and the spread of "civilized" culture. For what I term as "regionally conscious" writers, the marginal standpoint of regional territory can be used as a means to examine diverse perspectives that are not adequately incorporated into the national discourse.<sup>4</sup> Regional places also provide an alternative context for understanding the ramifications of adopting values commonly accepted by the "imagined community" of the nation; regionally conscious writers lead us to see the power, limits, and consequences of continuing national practices or beliefs.

In the remainder of this introduction I address the need for a richer theoretical vocabulary as a means to understand the complexities of regional literature and its significance. In particular, I consider how more nuanced definitions of place, place attachment, and belonging can reveal that regional literature is not simply a nostalgic portrait of the past, but a spatialized exploration of the contemporary present. In order to provide this terminology, my project situates theoretical approaches to regionalism, environmental literature, and place studies in dialogue with each other.

---

<sup>4</sup> Fetterley and Pryce's studies convincingly argue that regional writing resides outside the national discourse community; their argument that regional writing is exclusively a feminine genre, however, seems unnecessarily limited, as they suggest that male authors (even those residing in regions) only contribute to the national tradition, and that female writers always promote anti-national perspectives. Stephanie Foote's research also contributes to our understanding of regional literature as writing that "defamiliarizes narratives about the origins of national identity in the United States" (6). The goal of my project is to incorporate discussions of physical geography and environmental literary criticism into our investigations of *how* acts of defamiliarization are accomplished.

## Situating Regional Literature by Expanding the Vocabulary of Place and Belonging

In "Writing in Place: the New American Regionalism" (1994) Michael Kowalewski explores the revitalization of the study of regional literature while also addressing possible reasons for the field's neglect. "Though less charitable explanations are possible," he argues, "region may be condescended to by critics or simply ignored as a category because many of them simply lack a vocabulary with which to ask engaging philosophical, psychological, or aesthetic questions about what it means to dwell in a place, whether actually or imaginatively" (174). Even as I write more than a decade later, this lack of vocabulary -- or perhaps, the ramifications of employing particular terminology -- continue to impact the study of regional literature. My investigation of the ways in which regional literature complicates or works against the formulation of a national culture faces a potential pitfall of situating a "national identity" in a strictly contentious relationship to a "regional identity."<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, the term "regional identity" implies that an individual holds a clearly defined relationship of belonging to a particular place: but what about individuals who hold multiple regional affiliations?<sup>6</sup> Or moreover, what about individuals who do not necessarily hold a singular "regional identity," but still remain deeply conscious of regional distinctiveness and a separation between region and nation? I argue that the term "regional consciousness" acknowledges mobility and

---

<sup>5</sup> Although I find the term "regional identity" to be limiting, Wendy Katz and Timothy Mahoney's definition of regional identity is particularly illuminating: it is "a sense of belonging, and awareness of similar traits among people living under similar conditions, or not coincidentally, of how their cultural patterns are distinctive in comparison to other regions or places" (xi). This sense of belonging, awareness, and acknowledgment of distinctiveness resonates throughout regional writing; I would like to suggest, however, that regional writers may have a more fraught relationship to place than this definition suggests.

<sup>6</sup> Wendy Griswold's *Regionalism and the Reading Class* provides a fascinating contemporary study of movement and regional knowledge. In an online study conducted with *National Geographic* in 2000, Griswold found that individuals who moved into a new state knew just as much, if not more, about literature associated with their new state than individuals who were born and continued to reside in the same state.

multiple affiliations, but also a sense of confusion and detachment, which appear frequently in regional writing. The notion of a regional consciousness not only changes our understanding of the relationship between individuals and place, but also encourages us to see a more complicated portrait of places themselves. By acknowledging regional places as both urban and rural, isolated and engaged, quiescent and conflicted, regionally conscious writers challenge us to understand the significance of place and the ramifications of belonging.

I have situated my project within the years 1860 to 1930 because of the unique historical and cultural factors that complicate the American relationship to place during this time period. The Civil War and World War I loomed large during these decades, prompting citizens to consider the ramifications of both regional affiliations and American identities during times of sectional and international conflict. As the authors examined in my study illustrate, however, wars were not the only defining events of this period. Historian J.T. Jackson Lears conceptualizes Reconstruction and the subsequent fifty years through themes of rebirth, and essentially, the beginning of modern America. Rapid growth in communications and transportation after the Civil War brought American citizens closer together; the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893, showcased the progress and advancement of civilization since the age of Columbus, and brought the world to America. During this time of progress, as Huan L. Hsu convincingly argues, regional literatures in the late nineteenth century were very much concerned with "larger scale phenomena such as migrant flows, transportation networks, and international commerce" (37). My project seeks to explore this more complicated portrait of regionalism more closely. Additionally, my project was sparked by a puzzling

gap in discussions of literary regionalism, which, as discussed below, often end with the closing of the nineteenth century, or perhaps, examine texts into the first decade of the twentieth century. Thus, I focus particular attention on the types of regional consciousness that emerged after the turn of the century but before the flourishing of the regional art movement in the 1930s.

### **The Contested Places of Regional Literature**

Two trends predominate in scholarly studies regarding the representation of physical place in regional literature: the first aligns regionalism with depictions of rural environments, and the second suggests that regionalism isn't about place at all. Scholars in the rural camp argue that the burgeoning popularity of regional literature in the late nineteenth century can be attributed to the genre's depiction of rural, premodern societies as both a shared common past and a contrast to contemporary life. The quaint New England villages depicted by Mary Wilkins Freeman and Sarah Orne Jewett, the rustic Appalachian mountain towns described by Mary Noialles Murfree, and the lake country and Southern sketches of Constance Fenimore Woolson were all spatially and temporally removed from modern, urban life; by reading these stories of simple places, readers could remember simpler times. In *Cultures of Letters*, Richard Brodhead argues that nineteenth-century regionalism "requires a setting outside the world of modern development" (115 emphasis mine). Brodhead's argument emphasizes the rural environs of regional literature as cultural constructs, created and consumed by modern or urban writers and readers, in order to "purvey a certain story of contemporary cultures," that is, of the "supersession [of local cultures] by a modern order now risen to national

dominance" (121). In this story of supersession, regional literature performed the cultural work of elegy, reconstructing and mourning the "lost" bucolic cultures, as the nation pursued urbanization and modern development. Like Brodhead, Robert L. Dorman emphasizes an exclusive relationship between regionalism and rural places in his study of American regionalist movements during the period 1920 to 1945, *Revolt of the Provinces*. Dorman writes that regionalists operated "not in the great capitals of art and culture, but rather in obscurer settings," and that "this book will therefore little concern itself with what was happening within the most famous *cosmopolitan* artistic and intellectual circles of New York, Chicago, or Boston" (xii, emphasis original). These "obscurer" rural settings informed an alternative set of values and ideologies embraced by practitioners of regionalism as a way to resist what Dorman calls "the nationalizing, homogenizing urban-industrial complex" (xii-xiii).

Aligning regional literature with strictly rural places often results in emphasizing the genre's nostalgia for the past, which subsequently diminishes its engagement with pressing contemporary issues. Consequently, several critics deemphasize the importance of place in regional literature as a way to illustrate its critical innovations. In *Writing Out of Place* Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryce argue that regionalism "is not a feature of geography" but instead "concerns the consolidation and maintenance of power through ideology" (7). As such, Fetterly and Pryce define regionalism as a "discourse [...] rather than a place." In *American Literary Regionalism in a Global Age* Philip Joseph sees regionalism as a social, rather than physical, space of "civil society" that operates between the family and state levels. In "Verbally Roughing It: The West of Words" Lee Clark Mitchell argues that the West in Twain's *Roughing It* is "first and foremost a verbal

construct. Neither people nor places distinguish the West from the East according to the standards so much as do tall tales that deftly draw attention to their own fictionality" (86). Mitchell suggests that a unique form of Western vernacular, not geography, separates the regions of East and West and America.<sup>7</sup>

As David Jordan cautions, however, "unless we retain the term's literal denotation of a recognizable parcel of real-world geography, regionalism overlaps with other disciplines and the meaning of the term becomes impossibly diffuse" (9). Regional historian Edward Watts draws on Jordan's argument to raise an important question: if place is not a defining feature of regionalism, what separates it from realism? A vivid depiction of geography, a true "sense of place," is, I believe, a central component and distinguishing feature of regionalism. Regionally conscious writers depict characters that immerse themselves in the intricacies of place through detailed observations that engage the senses, experiencing the environment by movements through it and reflection on it.

Although this geographic immersion often focuses on physical geography and nature, regionally conscious writers openly explore the relationship between the environment and human communities. They are keenly aware that our understanding of places is created through participation. As Douglas Powell suggests in *Critical Regionalism*, "to know a place, to acquire that 'sense' of place, is not to consume an experience, or witness a spectacle, or appreciate a landscape, but to participate, through consumption, through witness, through appreciation, in the ongoing creation of that place, of its different interpretations and articulations, of its different 'textual' expressions, as dense and political and historical as culture itself" (35). The writers in my project all

---

<sup>7</sup> While these critics circumvent place, they are valuable for their consideration of how regional writers subvert dominant power structures, examine the relationship between the domestic and public spheres, and employ dialect as a marker of unique, regional expression.

participate by several means in the "ongoing creation" of place that Powell describes. Their verbal renderings of geographic immersion reinforce, challenge, and contribute to the continual definition of the places they encounter. Moreover, these writers' geographic immersion facilitates a more complex portrait of regional life: they consider how population movement contributes to a more expansive sense of regional and national territory, but also risks isolating more remote areas; and they consider how built, urban environments -- or even more nebulous concepts such as "civilization" -- are integral to defining regional places and citizenship.

My focus on locating a more dynamic portrait of place in regional literature resonates with the work of literary critics who call for a more expansive definition of place in studies of environmental literature as well. Ursula K. Heise considers how a globalized perspective of place necessitates a reconsideration of mobility, which is often critiqued in environmental literary criticism.<sup>8</sup> In response to a widespread dismissal of urban places in environmental literary criticism, Michael Bennett argues that "ecocriticism will continue to be relatively pale and undertheorized unless and until it more freely ventures into urban environments" (39).<sup>9</sup> Bennett's articulation of a "social" form of ecocriticism, which considers nature, built human environments, and the sociocultural factors that frame our experiences in these environments, mirrors my own approach to place in regional literature.

---

<sup>8</sup> See especially part 3 of Chapter 1, titled "Localism and Modernity: The Ethic of Proximity" (28-49). Here, Heise questions the necessity and value of the "staying put" localism advocated by Wendell Berry and Scott Russell Sanders.

<sup>9</sup> Although numerous critiques of urban environments by environmental literary critics exist, Neil Everden provides a hallmark example: "the environmental repertoire is vastly diminished in urban life, perhaps to the point of making genuine attachment to place very difficult -- even assuming a person were to stay in one place long enough to make the attempt at all" (100).

These concerns of mobility and situating human-place relationships into a social framework are central to regional literature and my project. Speaking of westward expansion during the period 1840-1890, historian Eugene P. Moehring argues that "urban networks served as an important vehicle for transporting colonialism, capitalism, and other forces through the [Western] region as a means of promoting its conquest and development" (xi). My project considers writers who approach the urbanization of the United States from multiple, regional perspectives. Mark Twain's domestic travel narratives *Roughing It* and *Life on the Mississippi* clearly capture a more expansive portrait of American regions as networks of towns whose existence was shaped by factors of physical geography and increasing urbanization or industrialization. Plane's treatment of the urbanization is complex, as his tone ranges from awe and excitement towards the progress of civilized life, but also incorporates sad reflections on the ramifications of progress. The fictional community of Dunnet Landing, Maine, is no less affected by these same factors in Sarah Orne Jewett's *Country of the Pointed Firs*, as its globally-aware citizens confront ever increasing isolation. Contributors to the *Atlantic Monthly* at the turn of the century continue to explore regions as liminal spaces where the city meets the wilderness and regional citizens must negotiate their relationship to "civilization" beyond the region's borders. Finally, works of modern regionalism by Willa Cather and F. Scott Fitzgerald address the ramifications of dislocation, detachment, and regional determinism.

Studies of place attachment can also provide a more nuanced understanding of regionally conscious writers' forays into the intricacies of places. To associate regional literature with rural places calls to mind a narrow range of relationships between people

and place; individuals are often seen as "native" to that place, being born and raised in a single location. Writing in 1894, Hamlin Garland argued that "in a novel [local color] means that it has such a quality of texture and back-ground that it could not have been written in any other place or by any one else than a native" (53-54). Human geographer Setha Low argues, however, for a more expansive set of relationships. She defines place attachment as "the symbolic relationship formed by people giving culturally shared emotional / affective meanings to a particular place or piece of land that provides the basis for the individual's and group's understanding of and relation to the environment." In order to explain this symbolic relationship, Low presents a typology of six different forms of attachment to place: through genealogy, loss or destruction, economics or law, cosmology (a spiritual or mythological attachment), pilgrimage, and narrative (165). For my purposes, these types are particularly useful as a means to understanding complex forms of regional literature. While many critics assume that regional literature is based on a genealogical attachment to place, regionally conscious writers often incorporate human mobility, and, therefore, must depend on other ways of becoming attached to place.

For regionally conscious writers, a sense place attachment typically brings numerous benefits. Characters who feel a strong sense of attachment often move beyond a surface-level understanding of a region through its stereotypes, and instead, experience a deeper sense of the region's history, territory, and cultures. As Lawrence Buell cautions, however, "your connection to the soil is surely not the sole measure of your health of soul" (76). He continues:

On the contrary, place attachment itself can become pathological: can abet possessiveness, ethnocentrism, xenophobia. [...]. Place-centeredness can also produce an opposite extreme of vulnerability: can make one impotent and maladaptive outside one's home range. A certain capacity for self-deterritorialization seems needful for resiliency and even survival.

Moreover, as novelist-historian Wallace Stenger cautions, "we may love a place and still be dangerous to it," through unwise use born of possessiveness or ecological ignorance. (76-77)

These ramifications of place attachment -- possessiveness or exploitation of the land, ethnocentrism and xenophobia towards people -- occur frequently in regionally conscious writing. Buell's remarks are situated as a critique of "place-centeredness," or the philosophy of "staying put" and forming roots -- a type of genealogical attachment -- advocated by many practitioners of environmental literary criticism. Yet these negative ramifications of place attachment also resonate with the other forms of place attachment explored by regionally conscious writers, particularly those who highlight mobility. As we can see in regional literature, characters who wish to assert their sense of attachment to a place more strongly may resort to possessiveness or ethnocentrism as a way to articulate their own sense of belonging.

### **Participants, Reporters, and Visitors**

In addition to defining places and human-place relationships, regional literature also invites the definition of regional citizenship. Although Hamlin Garland asserts that regional writing could not have been written by anyone but a native suggests that a long,

even multi-generational relationship, is necessary, Powell's emphasis on "participation" encourages critics to consider a broader spectrum of individuals as regional citizens. Participants may not be native, but they definitely can shape and contribute to the character of regional places. These participants include not only long-time residents, but also visitors. As Tom Lutz notes in *Cosmopolitan Vistas: American Regionalism and Literary Value*, travelers and visitors play a central role in regional literature. This contact between visitors and local residents often dramatizes the spatial relationships between urban and isolated places, and while "the urban visitor's perspective is represented as in some ways clearly superior to the rural ones [...] that perspective is far from stable and rarely reliable" (30). This observation resonates with the narrators in Twain's and Jewett's works who, despite their status as outsiders in relation to a particular regional community, adopt a confident, authoritative voice; although more reliable than Lutz implies, their narrators vacillate between openness and close-mindedness. David Marion Holman suggests another perspective on the regional artist as one who "is a participant in as well as a reporter on the region and, as arbitrator of the world outside of and within the region, fully participates in both" (14).

This dual role of the regional writer as both insider and outsider proves to be one of the most fascinatingly complex features of regionally conscious writing. Theoretical interpretations of cultural geography put forth by Edward Relph and Tim Cresswell are helpful for analyzing *how* regional writers participate in communities. Relph suggests that we must account for the intensity of insideness or outsideness. For example, he offers that "existential outsideness" involves an ever-present sense of alienation and disconnection from place or community; in contrast, "objective outsideness" can be used

to identify individuals who deliberately adopt an outsider role (52). His definitions of "vicarious insideness" (the ability of a writer to make outsiders feel like insiders) and "empathetic insideness" ("a willingness to be open to the significances of a place, to feel it, to know and respect its symbols") are quite useful for differentiating between the various expressions of belonging articulated in regional texts.

Tim Cresswell's study on transgression, *In Place /Out Of Place*, explores the interconnections among behavior, power, and cultural assumptions of "normality" as features of a larger discussion on belonging. Cresswell addresses the social component of place, arguing that communal ideologies, or "ideas about what is right, just, and appropriate," work in connection with physical components. Individuals can mark themselves -- or be marked by the community -- as insiders or outsiders based on their adherence to implicit or explicit communally accepted behavior. This negotiation of physical and social space is particularly important for regionally conscious writers who must navigate the boundaries of both terrains. Indeed, many of the individuals and characters present in regionally conscious texts are keenly aware of how their own behavior can assist, or impede, their sense of belonging. Moreover, the sense of belonging can be complicated when one's sense of participation in the national community, or the "civilized" world, conflicts with a sense of belonging to a regional community.

The writers addressed in my project illustrate that individual mobility and cultural classification systems challenge our ability to identify who counts as "native" to a region. Willa Cather, often identified as a Midwestern writer, was born in Virginia and didn't arrive in Red Cloud, Nebraska, until she was ten; although clearly influenced by her

"Midwestern roots," Cather's initial writing career in Pittsburgh and visits to the Southwest also show these places to be influential. F. Scott Fitzgerald, while not quite as closely identified with the Midwest as Cather, experienced even more upheaval: born in St. Paul, Minnesota, Fitzgerald moved to New York state when he was two years old, then returned to St. Paul when he was twelve; Fitzgerald remained in Minnesota only for another two years before moving back to the East Coast to attend boarding school; however, he returned to Minnesota with his parents after a brief stint in the Army just prior to the close of World War I. Finally, although John Muir has become closely identified with the Pacific Coast, his "native" soil lies in Dunbar, Scotland and his childhood roots in the woods of Wisconsin. To return to Low's typology of place attachment, Cather, Fitzgerald, and Muir each exhibit complicated genealogical attachments to place, which subsequently raise questions concerning their status as "native" to the regions of their texts.

The childhoods of Mark Twain in Missouri and Sarah Orne Jewett in Maine make their identification as regional "natives" less challenging. The cultural geography of their home regions, however, significantly complicates their status as regional writers. As I discuss in Chapter One, Missouri's geographic position (along with its historic legacy as part of the Missouri Compromise and participation on both sides of the Civil War) makes the state difficult to place in the culturally constructed regions of the United States: is Missouri part of the South? The Midwest? Or even "the West," as the territory was called during Twain's boyhood? Moreover, Twain's shifting authorial persona -- which encompasses the rugged Westerner, aspiring Eastern gentlemen, and sage Southerner -- allows scholars to make valid arguments for his status as a notable author with ties to

multiple regions. In contrast, Jewett's firm sense of genealogical belonging to Berwick, Maine, and her extensive periods of residence in Boston make her position as a New England writer most secure. Within the staunchly northeastern geography of her works, however, exists a tension between modern life in the urban city and isolated existence in the provinces. Jewett's narrator in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* effectively embodies the tension as she is both insider and outsider in the Dunnet Landing community.

The dual role of regionally conscious writers as both insiders and outsiders allows them to reach multiple audiences, including those within and outside the region(s) under discussion. As studies by Brodhead, Kaplan, Fetterley, Pryce, and Glazener attest, many regional writers captured a national audience with their work. Their critical focus on post-Civil War themes of reunification, however, suggests that the aim of regional writing is ultimately to engage readers in a shared sense of a singular, national identity. In the opposite extreme, Powell's analysis of regional texts emphasizes the enactment of a local identity as an inside writer addresses inside readers through the ritual retelling of local stories (10). In each of these cases, scholars emphasize a shared local or national identity held by both reader and writer. In recognizing the theme of regional distinctiveness, however, I would like to suggest that regional writers can also conceptualize their audience as residents of another region. This inter-regional approach addresses the regional affiliations of writers and readers more directly, and subsequently, allows critics to investigate the tension between regional and national citizenship.

This dual audience, of regional insiders and outsiders, is especially apparent in Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi* and *Roughing It*, the subject of my first chapter. Due to his celebrated status as a national icon, Twain's distinctive regional consciousness

is often overlooked. Through an analysis of these domestic travel narratives, I propose that Twain's national success was facilitated by his ability to speak convincingly from a variety of insider and outsider perspectives in relation to multiple regional cultures. These positions include, but are not limited to that of the curious newcomer, the seasoned regional resident, the objective outsider, and the closed-minded outsider. While adopting these multiple perspectives has an obvious advantage -- they allow Twain to reach a wider swath of the book-buying or lecture-attending public -- they more importantly reveal a more dynamic portrait of regional consciousness. Chapter One explores how Twain's sense of belonging and regional citizenship is facilitated by geographic immersion, or sensual observations and kinesthetic interactions with the landscape. These rather quiescent portraits of region, however, exist in tension with the cultural geography of regional populations, which proved much more difficult to navigate. His vacillating reactions to minority groups ultimately demonstrate that regions are not static, bucolic rural places; instead, regions are home to variance and even conflict.

My second chapter turns to examine the relationship between regionalism and isolation, a relationship central to Sarah Orne Jewett's *Country of the Pointed Firs*. Although the feminist recovery of Jewett's work has led to key critical interpretations, I aim for a more gender-inclusive approach to *Country* through my reading of Captain Littlepage's experiences in the Arctic as a critique of nationalism, one that parallels themes present in the story of Dunnet Landing recluse Joanna Todd. I argue that through her attentiveness to these "remote and islanded" individuals, Jewett contributes to our understanding of the "interior landscape," or a reflective relationship between physical geography and human sense of self. Much like Twain's domestic travel narratives,

however, Jewett's *Country* also exposes problematic mindsets of exclusion and xenophobia. Intriguingly, the most intense moments of xenophobia occur alongside expressions of national identity and assertions of genealogical belonging. Jewett's juxtaposition of isolationism and nationalism ultimately highlights the possible ramifications for regional citizens who adopt the extreme of either form of belonging.

Literary critics often situate *The Country of the Pointed Firs* as the epitome of regional fiction. My project raises an intriguing question as a continuation of this assertion: what happened to regionally conscious writing during the turn of the century? In Chapter Three I turn to the *Atlantic Monthly* (which published the serial version of *Country* in 1896) as a contextual field to explore how regionally conscious writers continued to investigate the dynamics of human-place relationships, but also to consider what new concerns emerge. I argue that while nonfiction contributors to the *Atlantic* from 1895-1911 continue to challenge our definition of regional places -- particularly through their depiction of the relationship between regional and global spaces -- they reveal a more intense preoccupation with non-spatial places, including the figurative concept of "civilization." By drawing on theoretical approaches to regional and environmental literature, I trace the tension between a globally engaged regional culture and a civilized one through the *Atlantic* contributors' use of two distinct forms, the expository essay and the personal narrative. While the expository essay allowed regional writers to take the position of objective outsiders, the personal narrative emphasized the contributor's intimacy with regional life; in both forms, however, contributors reveal the power of civilization discourse to marginalize regional places and citizens. These expository and personal narrative forms should not be regarded as oppositional, as the

contributions of John Muir illustrate. By writing both expository essays and personal narratives to the *Atlantic*, Muir reveals the fluidity of regional consciousness and the way that it shapes an understanding of the relationship between individuals, place, and the world.

The conversation on civilization in the *Atlantic* reverberates in several ways throughout Willa Cather's novel *The Professor's House* (1925), from the cultivated, "civilized" lifestyle of Professor Godfrey St. Peter to his fascination with the cliff dwellers of the Blue Mesa, an ancient yet "civilized" tribe that left their home place before the arrival of Columbus in the New World. Cather's poignant portraits of rural life often lead critics to classify her work as regional. In Chapter Four I argue that in order to truly understand Cather's complex relationship with regionalism, however, her engagement with modern spaces must be acknowledged. As a result, I suggest that *The Professor's House* is a work of "modern regionalism": "regional" because her characters form intense attachments to particular places and use their awareness of place distinctiveness to construct regional and communal borders, but also "modern" because these organic, spiritual meanings of place are complicated by twentieth-century economics, consumerism, and cosmopolitanism. In order to unpack Cather's use, modification, and rejection of regionalism, I situate my examination of *The Professor's House* within the context of her other writings from 1925, and investigating links between her novel and another novel of the same year, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

In Chapter Five I examine the particulars of Fitzgerald's regional consciousness more closely. Although Fitzgerald currently holds a reputation as a nearly archetypal

modern national author, critics in the 1920s suggested that he should concentrate on the world he knew best: the Middle West. Fitzgerald's regional consciousness is most apparent when he explores cultural geographies through his the relationships between social class and physical space. I am particularly interested in the transformation of "Winter Dreams," a story set in a fictional Minnesota resort town, into its eventual form, the novel *The Great Gatsby*. In contrast to the characters in works by Twain and Jewett, who form attachments to a variety of places with relative ease, Fitzgerald's characters experience detachment from place and struggle to form new connections. Fitzgerald's overarching concerns about class mobility are reflected in his characters' seeming inability to move beyond genealogical attachment to place. The ending of *The Great Gatsby* illustrates that one key to forming these new attachments to place is the ability to see the "invisible landscape," or to recognize the multiple historical and cultural layers that shape physical place.

This project would not be complete without considering its pedagogical applications. In fact, one of the reasons that I chose my field of study was that, during initial research as part of my graduate courses connected to regionalism and the environment, I consistently found research sources related to teaching these concepts. As Powell cautions, "the university is almost always populated by people from somewhere else, who often look somewhere else not only for their research interests but also for their values, intellectual stimulation, and emotional satisfaction" (193). A place-based approach to teaching and research asks teachers and students to consider where their interests and values come from, the impact of their scholarly pursuits on regional communities, and the relationship between regions and the nation or world. As a means

of conclusion, I analyze four recurring issues or questions that run throughout a variety of regional, environmental, and other "place-based" approaches to literature. These questions of purpose, of the relationship between academics and place, of the role of "the local," and of individuals' degrees of agency, illustrate that concepts of place are relevant not only to English courses, but to university culture at large.

## Chapter One

### Navigating Physical and Cultural Geography in Mark Twain's Domestic Travel Narratives: Immersion, Criticism, and Understanding

This chapter investigates how mobility and territorial expansion shaped Americans' regional consciousness during the Civil War years and the following two decades. In regards to literary explorations of American regions during this period, no author captures the changing dynamics and complexity of regional consciousness better than Mark Twain.<sup>1</sup> His boyhood adventures, imaginatively reshaped in *The Adventure of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, were played out in Missouri; simultaneously West, North, and South, Missouri captures the difficulty of mapping American regions, particularly for the nation's interior. As Robert Jackson argues, Missouri's regional identity was further complicated by political activities, such as remapping during the Missouri Compromise in 1820. Jackson suggests that Twain's boyhood home and early travels "may have left him with an increasingly problematic sense of his own place, his own kind of border status, in a national context that was seeking more and more to define itself in the strictly binary terms of northern unionism or southern secessionism" (53).

---

<sup>1</sup> Following the custom of numerous scholars, including biographer Ron Powers, I distinguish between Samuel Clemens and his authorial persona, Mark Twain. There is an additional layer of complexity in the voice that emerges in Twain's non-fiction travel narratives; where appropriate to acknowledge this complexity, I refer to the speaking character as "the narrator."

The nation's focus on these binary forces-- North and South, union and secession - - fueled westward expansion. In his history of the "Silver State," James W. Hulse argues that "without the crisis of the war, Nevada would not have evolved through territorial status to statehood as rapidly as it did" (74).<sup>2</sup> The Civil War likewise contributed to Clemens' movement west as, like thousands of other individuals, he attempted to avoid the conflict (and perhaps strike it rich besides).<sup>3</sup> In Clemens' case, his journey to the Nevada territory was facilitated by the opportunity to become the unofficial aide to his brother Orion, who began serving as the territorial secretary in early 1861. Although Clemens failed to discover his own "mother lode" in the mines of the Nevada territory, his adventures and journalistic employment in the Far West provided him with much more, paving the way to Twain's writing career and national stardom.

While most literary critics agree that Twain is a regional writer, there is little agreement concerning which region Twain actually belongs to: convincing cases can be made for his status as a Westerner and Easterner, Northerner and Southerner.<sup>4</sup> The

---

<sup>2</sup> Hulse explains that the Civil War created an absence of southern representation in the national government, which made the creation of states in the Southwest desirable. In a contrasting angle, Richard Grusin examines how preoccupation with war issues, and a belief that particular areas of the West were "for all public purposes worthless [... and] of no value to the Government," contributed to the preservation of areas that would become national parks (17). These competing perceptions of the "value" of the West continue to reverberate in later fiction by Willa Cather and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

<sup>3</sup> Clemens' career as a steamboat pilot was cut short by the presence of blockades and artillerymen on the Mississippi River. In June, 1861, a twenty-five-year-old Clemens was recruited to join the Missouri State Guard, which fought with the South; according to biographer Ron Powers, Clemens reported for duty on a yellow mule named Paint Brush, carrying a squirrel rifle (98).

<sup>4</sup> Bernard DeVoto, in an early twentieth-century biography of Twain, identifies Missouri as part of the nineteenth-century "frontier," and implies that Twain is therefore a Westerner (although, ultimately, a quintessential "American"). In her study of Southern literature anthologies, Jan Gretlund states that "today most people probably think of Mark Twain as a 'southern' writer" (147). In *Mark Twain and the American West* and *Mark Twain, Travel Books, and Tourism*, Joseph Coulombe and Jeffrey Melton, respectively, emphasize that Twain identifies more readily with the East; they suggest that Twain self-consciously created a Western persona. Finally, Ann Ryan argues that associating Twain with any particular region falsely relegates him to a provincial identity; in *Cosmopolitan Twain*, Ryan and co-editor Joseph McCullough argue for an urban, trans-national identity for Twain.

purpose of this chapter is not to argue for Twain's delegation to one particular region, but rather, to explore a set of questions: how did Twain -- one of the most mobile of American writers -- manage to hold numerous regional identities so successfully? What do Twain's regional portraits and multiple regional affiliations reveal about the nature of regional consciousness in America during this time period? In this chapter I focus on two of Twain's domestic travel narratives, *Roughing It* (1872) and *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), due to their shared emphasis on movement and regional exploration. These narratives reveal that Twain's ability to construct sense of regional identity and place attachment depended on immersion in physical geography. Twain's narrator comes to know a place not only through observation, but actively through all senses in order to establish an intimate knowledge of the "spirit" of place, which ultimately facilitates his status as an "insider" in a regional community.

In both *Roughing It* and *Life on the Mississippi*, Twain documents the intricate challenges of navigating some of the United States' most distinct geographic features, including the formidable deserts and expanses of the West, and the meandering, murky waters of the Mississippi River. Traversing these features of physical geography, however, proves to be easier for Twain than navigating the complexities of cultural geography that define these distinct regions. As Sara Blair explains in her article "Cultural Geography and the Place of Literacy," examining cultural geography entails "the articulation of space as a social product" (544). Within Twain's domestic travel narratives, a tension emerges in these social spaces regarding the presence of diversity; while Twain situates a complex cultural geography as an important defining feature of regional places, his expressions of prurient curiosity and disdain reflect social relations to

regional populations. Ultimately, Twain's attitudes of openness and judgment -- towards regional populations and regions themselves -- challenge us to reconsider quiescent, domestic portraits of regions in light of an increasingly mobile citizenry and expanding nation.

### **Physical Geography and Geographic Immersion**

Clemens's regional consciousness as revealed through his domestic travel narratives is complicated not only by his own mobility and multiple regional affiliations, but also by each narrative's unique publication history. A brief overview of each text's publication can provide us with a sense of Twain's audience, which in turn, shapes the regional voice of his persona and his selection of geographic detail.

Twain gathered material for *Roughing It* from his work as a journalist for the *Territorial Enterprise* (Virginia City, Nevada), family letters, and a series of highly successful lectures. The composition of these individual pieces and the eventual book was eclectic, with some designed for consumption in the West and others composed with an audience of non-Westerners in mind. *Roughing It* reflects this multiplicity of original sources and potential audiences through its unique collage of adventures, observations, and tall tales; outlaws, mining towns, colorful characters, breathtaking scenery, the tenderfoot narrator's successes and failures, and duplicity become the highlights of Twain's picaresque portrait of the West. Indeed, the loose organization of *Roughing It* (and eventually *Life on the Mississippi*) resonates with Sarah Orne Jewett's weblike structure of sketches in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, which I discuss in Chapter Two.

In all three of these texts, place -- not plot -- becomes an integral feature that holds the narrative together.

Similar to *Roughing It*, the origins of *Life on the Mississippi* can be traced to multiple sources; one key difference, however, is the decidedly longer time of composition for the latter work. *Life on the Mississippi* began as a series of nostalgic sketches for *The Atlantic Monthly*, titled "Old Times on the Mississippi," published in 1874. In these *Atlantic* sketches, Twain looked back nearly two decades to the beginning of his career as a steamboat pilot in the 1850s. *Life on the Mississippi* would not emerge in book form for another nine years, as Clemens finally completed a return trip to the Mississippi River Valley to collect material in 1882 for the travel narrative's final publication in 1883. This duration of time adds an additional layer of complexity to the final text. As biographer Ron Powers notes, the United States faced a series of cultural upheavals after "Old Times on the Mississippi" was published: in the South, Reconstruction efforts were failing and racially-motivated violence was increasing; in the north, unchecked industrial capitalism prompted further industrialization, city growth, and advanced means of communication and transportation (366). These political and cultural developments clearly shaped the final form of *Life on the Mississippi*. While the "Old Times" sketches, standing alone, reflect a familiar tone of nostalgia common to fictional regional sketches, *Life on the Mississippi* is more ambivalent in tone as Twain attempts to understand the significance of these social and political developments.

Twain's experiences "learning the river" in *Life on the Mississippi* capture his geographic immersion -- through his intense sensual observations, intellectual understanding, emotional engagement, and kinesthetic interactions with the surrounding

physical environment. These immersion reveals multiple ways of knowing and appreciating place. During his early piloting lessons, Captain Horace Bixby directs the young Twain's attention to several points along the river; however, to Twain "they all looked about alike [and ...] they were monotonously unpicturesque" (*Life* 36). When, Bixby asks his apprentice to recall the names of several points, Twain capitalizes on his own naïveté to bring out the humor in their exchange: Bixby asks "what do you suppose I told you the names of those points for?" And Twain replies "well -- to -- to -- be entertaining, I thought" (39). After an outburst of "red hot profanity," Bixby settles down to patiently continue his apprentice's piloting education.

This exchange emphasizes that geographical awareness is more than just entertainment: it is a system of knowledge that aids in navigation. Twain's remark that the points are monotonous and unpicturesque taps into the romantic language of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century landscape appreciation inspired by the philosophy of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. Roderick Nash explains in *Wilderness and the American Mind* that the concepts of the picturesque and the sublime transformed both European and American conceptions of America's rugged landscapes from places to be feared to ones that could be appreciated aesthetically. For Nash, this transformation of landscape was a powerful tool in establishing a national American ethos. Beyond nationalism, promoters of landscape appreciation cited the cultivation of other virtues as well. Writing in 1836, American landscape painter Thomas Cole argued that there are several "advantages [to] cultivating taste for scenery," particularly for individuals "whose days are all consumed in the lowly pursuit of avarice, or the gaudy frivolities of fashion, [and those] unobservant of nature's loveliness" (1, 2). Paintings by Cole and other

members of the Hudson River School, enormous landscape panoramas, books such as William Cullen Bryant's *Picturesque America* (1872), and sketches in popular literary magazines all attempted to make (to use Bryant's words) "strange, picturesque, and charming scenes [...] familiar to the general public" (3).<sup>5</sup> Twain's description of an *unpicturesque* landscape, therefore, deviates from this pattern of national education and cultivation of virtue, while his sketches highlight the existence of places overlooked in the national scale. In order to appreciate and learn from this un-national geography Twain must overcome the expectation of being "entertained" by picturesque landscapes.

During his exchanges with Bixby, Twain begins to understand several alternative ways of engaging with the landscape. Bixby stresses that geographical awareness should go beyond sight. A pilot must know "the *shape* of the river perfectly" and use kinesthetic, spatial abilities to develop instincts that allow him to move through the environment successfully (*Life* 49). In one sketch Twain learns the importance of these instincts when he frantically attempts to pilot the steamboat around a "bluff reef" (ripples on the river that indicate a shallow sandbar). As the boat glides over the reef undisturbed, Bixby explains that the wind may also create reef patterns on the water. When Twain asks how to tell them apart, Bixby replies: "I can't tell you. It is an instinct. By and by you will just naturally *know* one from the other, but you will never be able to explain why or how you know them apart" (57). The ability to pilot the shape of the river in the dark, the unexplainable knowledge of its features, comes only through geographic immersion. By immersing himself in the sensory aspects of place, Twain experiences the Mississippi River as a regional entity, a collection of places and spaces that, despite their

---

<sup>5</sup> Barbara Novak's *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825-1875* provides an accessible introduction to American landscape painting in the nineteenth-century, particularly concerning these visual images as a vehicle for transcendental and spiritual concepts.

distinguishing cultural features, remain connected as a regional whole. This connection is furnished by the river itself. Although the river changes from a broad, deep channel in New Orleans to a tiny stream at its source in Itasca, Minnesota, the communities along its banks define themselves by their relationship to the river.

Geographic immersion significantly alters the way one encounters the landscape. Twain claims that for him, geographic immersion diminished his ability to see the river aesthetically. He explains that after he "mastered the language of this water" he lost something too: "all of the grace, the beauty, the poetry had gone out of the majestic river!" (*Life* 58). To illustrate the contrast, Twain recalls the vivid beauty of a sunset that he remembers from early in his piloting days:

a broad expanse of the river was turned to blood; in the middle distance the red hue brightened into gold, through which a solitary log came floating, black and conspicuous [...]. There were graceful curves, reflected images, woody heights, soft distances; and over the whole scene, far and near, the dissolving light drifted steadily, enriching it, every passing moment, with the new marvels of coloring. (58).

This description captures how the changing light of the sunset alters the river landscape. As the light diminishes, Twain becomes aware of fascinating new colors and shapes, and even his sense of space changes as he observes the "woody heights" and "soft distances." These aesthetic experiences of the landscape, however, derive from unfamiliarity with the region. As Twain becomes more familiar with the river and more immersed in his role as a pilot, his reading of the river changes: now when he looks at the river "all the value any feature of it had for me now was the amount of usefulness it could furnish towards

compassing the safe piloting of a steamboat" (59). Although Twain laments the loss of aesthetic appreciation, he still retains the ability to remember and successfully communicate the aesthetic experiences to others as evidenced by these retrospective passages in *Life*. This successful communication contrasts sharply with modern writers, such as Willa Cather and F. Scott Fitzgerald, who depict communicative lapses and failures in regard to place. Indeed, while Twain's "loss" of aesthetic appreciation highlights his newly-altered perception and emphasizes the practical use of geographic knowledge, he perhaps protests too much. In a sketch of the river below Memphis, Twain lyrically describes summer sunrises on the river. He ends his description (well over 250 words) thus: "well, that is all beautiful; soft and rich and beautiful; and when the sun gets well up, and distributes a pink flush here and a powder of gold yonder and a purple haze where it will yield the best effect, you grant that you have seen something that is worth remembering" (183). This second sunset passage describes a scene between experienced during his material-gathering trip that takes place two decades after his steamboat-pilot days. Although Twain may not be able to appreciate the aesthetic dimensions of the river while engaged as a pilot, he regains this ability once he is separated from his occupation.

In contrast to his experiences of his "home" region of the Mississippi, Twain's experiences with place in *Roughing It* are less intimate and instinctual; nevertheless, he uses his geographic immersion and subsequent familiarity with the Southwest in order to establish himself as an insider. Jeffrey Melton reads *Roughing It* as an "experiment" in local identity in which Twain attempts to circumvent his role as a tourist. The tension between the dual roles of tourist and local is especially apparent in Twain's American

travel pieces, Melton argues, as Twain considers what it means to be "home." Melton argues that one of the strongest indicators that Twain remains a tourist is his continual quest for novelty and movement (and simultaneous aversion to work); "the local -- by definition -- stays put," Melton says (119). In contrast, cultural geographer Tim Cresswell presents a more dynamic definition of belonging in *In Place/Out Of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression*. According to Cresswell, "the use of the term *outsider* indicates that a person does not properly understand the behavior expected of people in a town, region, or nation. Outsiders are often despised and suspected of being trouble-makers. They are people 'out of place'" (25-26). As an example, Cresswell cites homeless people in New York City who were banned from taking shelter -- or creating "homes" -- in subway terminals. Their alternative use of place and their deviation from expected behavior relegates these homeless people to the outside margins of society.

Cresswell's example of the New York City homeless demonstrates that individuals can be simultaneously local, mobile, and outsiders. Moreover, Cresswell's definition of an outsider as one who does not understand (or who does not perform) the expected behaviors in a particular place works against Melton's definition. Based on Cresswell, Twain's narrative persona in *Roughing It* is exactly the opposite of an outsider. He clearly knows what is expected of him in the West and performs the necessary behaviors. Thus, it seems necessary to resist the presumed opposition between "local / insider" and "tourist / outsider" for regional writers. Moreover, as Edward Relph suggests, individuals experience different levels of communal belonging and place attachment. Although Twain may not meet the criteria for an existential insider, that is, an individual who has a genealogical attachment by virtue of being born into a particular

community or place, he begins to act as an empathetic insider as he demonstrates "a willingness to be open to significances of a place, to feel it, to know and respect its symbols" (54). As Twain emphasizes his own status as an empathetic insider, it also becomes clear that he imagines his readers as unfamiliar outsiders to the region. In effect, Twain sets out to "learn" his readers the West in the same way he learned the river: through geographic immersion.

Although Twain's imagined audience includes physical outsiders -- that is, individuals who have never been to the West -- his audience occupies a place of "vicarious insideness" (Edward Relph's term) as they become familiar with places through the experience of another. Relph hypothesizes that while an artist's skill certainly influences his ability to promote vicarious insideness, this type of belonging "is most pronounced when the depiction of a specific place corresponds with our experiences of familiar places -- we know what it is like to be *there* because we know what it is like to be *here*" (53). One example from *Roughing It* is this early description of sage-brush:

I do not remember when we first came across "sage-brush," but as I have been speaking of that I may as well describe it. This is easily done, for if the reader can imagine a gnarled and venerable live oak-tree reduced to a little shrub two feet high, with its rough bark, its foliage, its twisted boughs, all complete, he can picture the "sage-brush" exactly. Often, on lazy afternoons in the mountains, I have lain on the ground with my face under a sage-brush, and entertained myself with fancying that the gnats among its foliage were liliputian birds, and that the ants marching and countermarching about its base were liliputian flocks and herds, and

myself some vast loafer from Brobdignag waiting to catch a little citizen and eat him. (61)

This process of knowing "there" by knowing what it is like to be "here" reinforces regional distinctiveness as Twain's imaginative interaction with the landscape highlights his position as an "insider" speaking to an audience unfamiliar with the regional territory. Setting off "sage-brush" in quotation marks emphasizes the unfamiliarity of the plant and its uniqueness to the region. Twain acts as a liaison by contrasting the unfamiliar feature of the landscape with the oak tree, which would be more familiar to an Eastern audience. Finally, Twain emphasizes his delight with the landscape through his Swiftian fantasy, which appeals to a common cultural background he and his audience share. Through these careful observations of place, Clemens goes beyond the conventional dichotomy between "there" and "here" that Ralph describes by making the familiar "here" both a physical place and an ideological or literary space.

Twain's role as the experienced insider communicating with outsiders often complicates his depictions of Western places. His ambivalent and dismissive attitude towards California in *Roughing It* demonstrates a complex navigation of belonging. Twain opens one sketch of California, "Off for San Francisco," by repeatedly stressing that distance is required in order to appreciate its geography. He says "the mountains are imposing in their sublimity and their majesty of form and altitude, from any point of view -- but one must have distance to soften their ruggedness and enrich their tintings" (407). Here, Twain's highlighting of "sublime" qualities evokes romantic standards of aesthetic landscape appreciation. This language would be expected in the genre of the nineteenth-century travel narrative, and Twain's familiarity with the topography reinforces his role as

an empathetic insider. His critique that "tourists from 'the States' go into ecstasies over the loveliness of 'ever-blooming California'" also serves to further separate him from these tourist outsiders (408). If outsiders lapse into rapturous praise over a landscape, Twain's more realistic portrait demonstrates that he is more than a tourist.

In the subsequent sketch titled "Western and Eastern Landscapes," however, Twain undercuts his empathetic insider position through his contrast between "here" and "there" for his Eastern audience. In his continued critique of tourists' unconditional praise of the West, Twain claims that old Californians would be equally given to praise of the East. He argues that "the idea of a man falling into raptures over grave and somber California, when that man has seen New England's meadow-expanses and her maples, oaks and cathedral-windowed elms decked in summer attire, or the opaline splendors of autumn descending upon her forests, comes very near to being funny -- would be, in fact, but that it is so pathetic. No land with an unvarying climate can be very beautiful" (408). At this point Twain's position switches to that of an Eastern outsider, a booster for his "home" region. At this moment, Twain clearly fails to understand the West as a region. Twain's judgment of the West -- "no land with an unvarying climate can be very beautiful" -- represents a wider cultural attitude towards the region, one which countless writers, such as John Muir, Mary Austin, Edward Abbey, and Terry Tempest Williams, counter in their own descriptions of the West. As Twain's sketches demonstrate, our attitudes towards and assessment of places occur on a spectrum: at one moment, he is able to truly immerse himself in the geography of the region in order to understand its integrity; at another moment, he sees only the surface of a region through an outsider's

eyes, focusing on quirks and curiosities but failing to be "open to significances of a place" (Relph 54).

### **Cultural Geography and Competing Perspectives**

Geographic immersion informs only one aspect of Clemens' regional consciousness; human communities, with their unique relationships to places and distinguishing cultural practices, also define regions. Unfortunately, the phrase "regional communities" conjures an image of provincial rural towns filled with placid, homogenous, and often elderly folks. Yet Twain's travel sketches are particularly notable because his vivid human portraits resist such docility and one-dimensionality. My analysis of Twain's regional communities responds to Douglas Powell's call for a more provocative investigation of regional cultural geography. "Progressive intellectuals and educators," Powell argues, "must reclaim the supposedly tranquil or quiescent (depending on one's political perspective) spaces of regional culture as vital spaces of cultural strife. And to do this means developing critical strategies capable of recognizing conflict and struggle in forms unique to specific landscapes, and implementing tactics for intervention and action specific to those landscapes" (21). Two particularly intriguing, and relatively unexplored, spaces of cultural strife in *Roughing It* involve the narrator's interactions with and representations of Mormons and Native Americans. Through his depictions of conflict, Twain actively participates in region-building as he both reinforces and questions the "outsider" status of these two groups with respect to the national community.

As "undeveloped" territory, the Western regions of the United States provided an area of freedom for individuals and groups occupying the margins of eastern society. Many groups, particularly Native Americans, were forced into exile in these sparsely settled regions. Although Richard Etulain does not make a sustained comparison between Mormon settlers and Native Americans, his history of Western settlement in *Beyond the Missouri: The Story of the American West* suggests several parallels between these two groups. In the nineteenth century Mormons and Native Americans remain on the margins of mainstream national culture and the United States government felt threatened in both cases enough to enact restrictive laws attempting to control these groups. Both groups, in turn, organized their own forces to protect their communities from government officials and discriminatory citizens alike.

The period 1840-1880 was marked by tension between practitioners of Mormonism and the United States government. By 1840 Mormons had been pushed from New England and Missouri into Illinois, where they settled in Nauvoo. Here still, Mormons were harassed by locals. The founder of Mormonism, Joseph Smith, attempted to ameliorate the Mormon cause through a bid for the presidency in 1844. In June of that year, however, Smith and other Mormon leaders were jailed by the Governor of Illinois for starting a riot, and Smith was eventually murdered in his jail cell by an angry mob (Arrington 110-11). Mormon leaders chose the West as their regional home due to favorable features of physical geography and social space. Historians Ronald Walker, Richard Turley, Jr., and Glen Leonard note that the Salt Lake Valley consisted of fertile land suitable for farming and that the surrounding mountains offered physical protection (18). Mormons themselves saw Salt Lake City and the surrounding region as an

opportunity to create a "religious commonwealth," separate from the United States, which would allow them to practice their religion freely (22).

From 1860 to 1880, Western travel writers expressed a range of responses to the Mormon separatist movement, from intense prurient curiosity to open disgust. In "Mark Twain and the Mormons," Herman Nibbelink explores the range of opinions across these travel narratives, many of which, he finds, express moral concerns through their discussion of Mormonism. Traveler George W. Pine, in his 1870 narrative *Beyond the West*, compares Salt Lake City to a modern Sodom and Gomorrah, and proclaims that it is "a dark spot on our now clear-shining sky of a free civilization" (qtd. in Nibbelink 1). Demas Barnes, writing in 1866, also addressed the theme of civilization; while he does offer some tempered praise, he eventually finds that "notwithstanding the evident physical and moral prosperity of this community up to this time, I cannot believe but that a general system of polygamy would retard civilization and work the downfall of any advanced nation" (qtd. in Nibbelink 1).

More familiar to Twains' readers, however, would be popular reports on the infamous 1857 "Mountain Meadows Massacre," describing the deaths of approximately 120 emigrants in an attack organized by Mormon leaders.<sup>6</sup> In 1859 as the trial against the Mormon leaders began, the massacre was featured on the front page of *Harper's Weekly*.

---

<sup>6</sup> Modern historians recognize several factors that led to the massacre, such as increasing altercations between emigrant trains and Mormon settlers over livestock grazing rights, and frustration regarding the relationship with the national government; while U.S. officials depended on Mormon leaders to create and maintain a relationship with Native American tribes in order to prevent outbreaks of violence, the legislature did not respond favorably to Mormon leaders' attempts to form a sovereign state, and threatened military action against the Mormon community (Walker, Turley, and Leonard 29). Although Mormon leaders suggested that the massacre was inevitable due to conflicts among emigrants, Native Americans, and themselves, Walker et al. argue that "all the purported wrongs of the emigrants -- even if true -- did not justify the killing of a single person. The best that could be argued was that during a time of uncertainty and possible war, some of the Mormons, like other men and women throughout history, do not match their behavior with their ideals" (115).

In "The Massacre at Mountain Meadows, Utah Territory," the *Harper's Weekly* correspondent explains his purpose as "to send you [in the States] a plain and unvarnished statement of the affair as it actually occurred" (1). The most compelling feature of the story is the correspondent's reflection on the aftermath of the massacre, which was still evident two years after its occurrence. The correspondent writes that "the empty sockets from their ghastly skulls tell me a tale of horror and of blood. On every side around me for the space of a mile lie the remains of carcasses dismembered by wild beasts; bones, left for nearly two years unburied, bleached in by the elements of the mountain wilds, gnawed by the hungry wolf, broken and hardly to be recognized" (1). The scene becomes the cover illustration, which features human remains and wolves scattered on an open plain underneath a full moon. Due to these grisly details, the correspondent stresses that "I'm writing no tale of fiction; I wish not to gratify the fancy, but to tell the tale of truth to the reason and to the heart. I speak truths which hereafter legal evidence will fully corroborate" (1). Indeed, the details of the *Harper's Weekly* story -- including the steps of the massacre, improper burials, and coercion of Native American tribes -- are corroborated by historians Walker, Turley, and Leonard.

Twain's humorous approach to Western Mormonism departs from the somber tone of the *Harpers Weekly* correspondent and other travel writers. Nibbelink argues that while Twain's humor acknowledges Eastern fears and curiosity, his comparisons between Mormon and mainstream culture make "the gentile tourist as ridiculous as the Mormon" (2). Nibbelink convincingly demonstrates that Twain's humor dispels differences between Mormons and gentiles, particularly through his commentary on marriage, in which he employs polygamy to question *all* forms of marital relationships. As an expression of his

regional consciousness, however, Twain also uses humor and storytelling to reinforce separation between Mormon and gentile culture. These instances of separation depend on the "mythologizing" power of narrative to actively construct regions and places as distinct from one another.

As Setha Low explains in her article "Symbolic Ties That Bind: Place Attachment in the Plaza," narratives and storytelling can play a central role in facilitating place attachment as individuals and groups use stories to explain connections between people and landscape. Although Low focuses on Native American creation myths to explain this principle, she notes that other stories, such as "family histories and political accounts," can also serve this function (171). Twain's sketches are certainly not creation myths, as they do not explain the origins of a group or achieve the necessary level of interconnection between people and landscape. However, Twain's divergence from objective description -- and his incorporation of fantasy, hyperbole, and emotion -- constitutes an act of mythologizing that emphasizes the imaginative "spirit" of place. His introduction to Salt Lake City and Mormonism provides an example:

This was a fairy-land to us, to all intents and purposes -- a land of enchantment, and goblins, and awful mystery. We felt a curiosity to ask every child how many mothers it had, and if it could tell them apart; and we experienced the thrill every time a dwelling-house door opened and shut as we passed, disclosing a glimpse of human heads and backs and shoulders -- for we so longed to have a good satisfying look at a Mormon family and all its comprehensive amplexness, disposed in the customary concentric rings of its home circle. (*Roughing It* 130)

Far from an objective description, Twain's emphasis on curiosity, ogling, and mystery panders to gentile perspectives and stereotypes surrounding the Mormon community. His allusions to fantasy (fairy-lands, enchantment, and goblins) seem to sever the Mormon community from historical reality through mystification. Ultimately, the entry into Salt Lake City stresses the separation of the mysterious fantasy world of the region (and its Mormon communities) from mainstream national communities. In addition to performing this separatist function, however, Twain's fantasy-like language also provides a means of dispelling conflict between the communities. His storytelling relegates atrocities to the past, and this temporal distance diminishes the intensity of previous acts of violence. Situating violence in the past also allows Twain to emphasize the end of conflicts, and this cessation is reinforced through fantastic language, as if to say that "once upon a time" our communities were engaged in combat, but now, we reside together peacefully. The language of fantasy can even suggest that violence resides *only* in the stories, not in reality.

"It is a luscious country for thrilling evening stories about assassination of intractable Gentiles," Twain writes (*Roughing It* 139). In this single-sentence commentary on storytelling, Twain packs in several assumptions and assertions about the relationship between place, people, and history. First, he suggests that the place itself, this "luscious country," provides a hospitable environment for storytelling. This suggestion implies that *the place itself*, its particular qualities and attributes, contribute to the activities of the region, including storytelling. Second, Twain's paraphrase of these stories both acknowledges and deflects violence. The description of the stories as "thrilling" suggests that these tales of Mormon conflict are mainly for entertainment and,

like all entertaining stories, may be prone to exaggeration. In addition, his use of the term "assassination" echoes the emigrant and U.S. government perspective on the Mountain Meadow Massacre. In Twain's context, however, these acts of violence are nearly erased as they are transmuted into elements of a tall tale. Finally, his codification of the gentiles as "intractable" espouses a Mormon point of view. Ultimately for Twain, regional storytelling captures the "spirit" of place and allows participants to shape their conception of place through language, and the way in which perspectives are presented also contributes to the construction of history. By easing but not completely erasing conflict, Twain's acts of storytelling in *Roughing It* promote regional consciousness, as opposed to a national consciousness that seeks to promote a homogenous unity.

Twain's use of fantasy-like language ultimately accomplishes two goals: first, it emphasizes separation between regional Mormon communities and the nation; secondly, this language nullifies past conflict in order to promote peaceful separation. These two functions can be seen together in Twain's description of Salt Lake City. Here, Twain's language emphasizes the "ideal" nature and perfection of the city. He notes the elements of impressive engineering, such as the "broad, straight, level streets, the "trim dwellings" and the "limpid stream rippling and dancing through every street in place of a filthy gutter" (131). His reference to "a filthy gutter" constitutes an act of separation as he distinguishes between the cleanliness of the Mormon community as opposed to other urban communities. In a more shocking contrast, Twain writes that there are "no loafers perceptible [...] noticeable drunkards or noisy people." In this statement, Twain echoes the praise of previous travel writers concerning the moral habits manifested in the Mormon community; while this level of perfection certainly distinguishes this regional

community from others, such separation is hardly threatening. Twain's characterization of Salt Lake City through its "neatness, repair, thrift and comfort" ultimately creates a pacific portrait of a community that is, nevertheless, distinctly "other."

Twain continues to emphasize separation through another regional community present in *Roughing It*, Native Americans; however, the *absence* of Native Americans is first worth noting. Twain dedicates five chapters and two appendices to Salt Lake City and other Mormon topics; he dedicates sixteen chapters to the Sandwich Islands and sketches related to his experiences with Hawaiian culture; he dedicates one chapter to a discussion of the Chinese population of Virginia City, Nevada. Native Americans appear only briefly, and typically through passing references. Literary critics hypothesize that the lack of Native American references may be owing to Twain's problematic -- and changing -- attitude toward Native Americans throughout his life and work. In a 1994 essay titled "Mark Twain Among the Indians," David Newquist echoes the sentiment of Lynn Denton in her 1971 article "Mark Twain and the American Indian" that while many of Twain's earlier works (*Roughing It* included) are regrettable for their prejudice, Twain's attitude "eventually changed to toleration and then to idealism" (Denton 1). In addition to the Native American legends incorporated into *Life on the Mississippi*, Denton and Newquist cite Twain's 1881 speech to the New England Society of Philadelphia, "Plymouth Rock and Pilgrims," as evidence for his change in attitude. Joseph Coulombe uses this pattern (from prejudice, to tolerance, to idealism) to show how Twain's Western experiences influenced his attitudes towards race, not only towards Native Americans, but towards African Americans as well.

While I agree with Denton, Newquist, and Coulombe that, indeed, Twain's representation of Native Americans becomes more sympathetic over time, his treatment of Native Americans in *Roughing It* warrants further examination. Based on Twain's narrative, readers could conclude that Twain rarely encountered Native Americans in his Western sojourns, as they rarely appear. In "The Noble Red Man" (1870), however, Twain assures readers that his scathing critique of Native American representations in literature, particularly the noble Native American characters created by James Fenimore Cooper, are the result of his Western experiences. "This is not a fancy picture," he says regarding his own demeaning portraits of Native Americans, "I have seen it many a time in Nevada" (444). The absence of Native Americans in *Roughing It* reinforces their marginalization and suggests the absence of a Native American "home" region. This absence of "home" demonstrates the effects of policies such as the Indian Removal Act (1830), the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854), the Homestead Act (1862), and countless treaties, all of which promoted the "removal" of Native Americans from particular places.

In contrast to the humorous and "pacific" separation of the Mormon regional community, one particular story in *Roughing It* demonstrates that the West is a more volatile place for Native American communities. In order to demonstrate the particularly high prices that define the West as a region, Twain tells the following story about his encounter with a shoe-shine boy:

A young half-breed with a complexion like a yellow-jacket asked me if I would have my boots blacked. It was at the Salt Lake House the morning after we arrived. I said yes, and he blacked them. Then I handed him a

silver five-cent piece, with the benevolent air of a person who is conferring wealth and blessedness upon poverty and suffering. (159)

After the boy examines the coin for a moment, Twain narrates that

the yellow-jacket handed the half dime back to me and told me that I ought to keep my money in my pocket book instead of in my soul, and then I wouldn't get it cramped up and shriveled up so!

What a roar of vulgar laughter there was! I destroyed the mongrel reptile on the spot, but I smiled and smiled all the time I was detaching his scalp, for the remark he made *was* good for an "Injun."

This story has important implications for both regional approaches to literature in general, and specifically for understanding Twain's representations of regions and race. In terms of regionalism, the sketch is a prime example of Powell's argument that regions serve as "vital spaces of cultural strife" (21). Here, Twain certainly doesn't employ bucolic descriptions of landscapes or rural folkways. Rather than a site of tranquility removed from urban experience, Twain's regional consciousness in this instance situates a story within an explicitly regional framework in order to examine a cultural clash.<sup>7</sup> As Carter Revard argues, these instances of cultural conflict and racism, particularly those concerning Native Americans, are often ignored or "explained away" in critical approaches to Twain. Of this story in particular Revard admits that "the satire [...] seems

---

<sup>7</sup> Eugene P. Moehring's examination of westward expansion and urbanism in the nineteenth century advances a new understanding of the relationship between white communities and Native American communities. Moehring points out that "the towns, state roads, and farm-ranches that made white urban networks in Nevada and elsewhere created enough jobs [...] to promote the integration of more Indians into the white capitalist culture. Interaction with common, given that band of Indians commonly lived along the roads that bound urban networks together" (160). Twain's sketch captures this sort of interaction in the marketplace.

aimed at Twain himself as an innocent tenderfoot, more than at the 'halfbreed' who embarrasses him, and the 'revenge' Twain takes is of course fantasy" (654). Twain's language, however, is anything but humorous: as Revard notes "'halfbreed' carried not only racist but legal, moral, social, and religious sting" as children of mixed-race parentage, perhaps suggesting illegal prostitution, and definitely implying "poor character" (654-5).

The regional context of the story becomes especially meaningful here as a place that allows such interactions between races. Within the national imagined community, racial and cultural differences can be managed by prioritizing metanarratives of a shared national past and envisioning a shared national future. Regional communities are defined more by a shared sense of geographic experience. While regions allow for a communal sense of place, regions also encourage competing perspectives as regional history and events are not accurately or fully represented in the national metanarratives.<sup>8</sup> Here, Twain's "halfbreed" story effectively highlights the regional capacity to accentuate differences between cultural groups. Twain's verbal violence reenacts the history of Native American abuse, a history that is particularly important to the Western region, but also a history often silenced in national history narratives. Twain's portrait of this history, however, is far from complete. In light of the attention that Twain devotes to the Mountain Meadows Massacre, modern readers cannot help but notice the absence of

---

<sup>8</sup> Judith Fetterley's article "'Not in the Least American': Nineteenth-Century Literary Regionalism" highlights the "unAmerican" nature of regional (and often non-canonical) texts that resist the national agenda. For Fetterley, *Huckleberry Finn* "provides the paradigm for how 'our' literature has constructed the American" as a "white boy on the run from the 'sivilization' of women" (883). I would argue that Twain's works contain both "American" and "unAmerican"/regional viewpoints or voices, and the tension between these competing narratives can be seen in passages such as the "halfbreed" story.

other massacres, such as the Sand Creek Massacre (1864) and the Washita River Massacre (1868), which were perpetrated against Native Americans.

Twain considers the relationship between politics and cultural geography more deeply in *Life on the Mississippi*, particularly in the "suppressed" Chapter 48. Like many texts first published in serial form, *Life on the Mississippi* has a complex textual history. In May 1914, Caroline Ticknor investigated several of Twain's editorial changes in her article "Mark Twain's Missing Chapter." Ticknor suggested that Twain's decision to exclude his original Chapter 48 was political in nature. She explained that "the author had drawn some rather lively comparisons between the North and South, not essential to the interest of the book, which was thought might have a detrimental effect upon the Southern buyer" (305). The canceled page proofs were recovered after Twain's death, and Ticknor reprinted the "suppressed" chapter in its entirety.

Due to the sketch format of *Life on the Mississippi*, Chapter 48 may not be "essential" as Ticknor interprets it, but this chapter reveals the powerful nature of regional consciousness in nineteenth-century America, and of Twain in particular. One of Twain's goals in the chapter seems to be to question the cultural mindset of the South - and the North as well. He opens the chapter provocatively:

I missed one thing in the South -- African slavery. That horror is gone, & permanently. Therefore, half the South is at last emancipated, half the South is free. But the white half is apparently as far from emancipation as ever. (Twain "The Suppressed Chapter" 306)

As with scenes from *Roughing It*, Twain renders his status as "insider" in the region ambiguous. His opening conceit of "missing" Southern slavery suggests his familiarity

with the South; however, his classification of slavery as a "horror" and his acerbic criticism of Southern "freedom" position his sympathies with the Northern mindset. These two roles, as an experienced Southerner and a critical Northerner, remain in tension throughout the chapter.

In a move to both educate his Northern audience and to emphasize his regional critique as evenhanded, Twain strives to correct Northern misconceptions of life in the South. In commentary very different from his celebration of violence in *Roughing It*, here Twain downplays Southern violence:

It is imagined in the North that the South is one vast and gory murder-field, & that every man goes armed, & has at one time or another taken a neighbor's life. On the contrary, the great mass of Southerners carry no arms, & do not quarrel. In the city of New York, where killing seems so frightfully common, the mighty majority, the overwhelming majority of the citizens, have never seen a weapon drawn in their lives. This is the case in the South. (Twain "The Suppressed Chapter" 307)

While Twain may be correct in his assertion that "the great mass of Southerners" do not quarrel, Southern historians do not shy away from distinguishing between the North and South in terms of violence. In *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, C. Vann Woodward writes that "the South seems to have been one of the most violent communities of comparable size," not only in comparison to northern cities, but to cities abroad as well (159). Woodward argues that "the census figures were admittedly unreliable" during this time, "especially those of the rural, sparsely settled areas," but that even the reported homicide statistics could be staggering: "a Kentucky editor published figures in 1885

demonstrating that there had been an average of 223 murders a year for the past six years in Kentucky, though the census returned only 50 for 1880 [...]. It is not improbable that the amount of homicide was two or three times that reported" (159). Edward Ayers offers similar arguments in *The Promise of the New South*, explaining that "the New South was a notoriously violent place. Homicide rates among both blacks and whites were the highest in the country, among the highest in the world" (155). Both Woodward and Ayers agree that violence cannot be attributed to a single source, but they note a variety of racial, economic, and cultural factors that played a part.

Twain's inaccurate portrait of Southern violence, then, has a larger rhetorical purpose: by removing violence as a distinguishing feature between North and South, Twain can more effectively emphasize his ultimate critique of Southern politics. First, Twain points to the court system, arguing that while northern juries have a keen sense of justice, juries in the South "fail to convict, even in the clearest cases" (307). These legislative failures, more than the acts of violence themselves, are of great concern. Ultimately, however, Twain finds that Southern citizens are complicit in these legislative failures through their political unity. At the end of the chapter, he writes:

How odd it is to see the mixed nationalities of New York voting all sorts of tickets, & the very same mixed nationalities of New Orleans voting all one way -- & letting on that it is just the thing they wish to do, & are entirely unhampered in the matter, & wouldn't vote otherwise, oh, not for anything. (Twain "The Suppressed Chapter" 309)

Here, Twain uses the cities of New York and New Orleans to represent the North and South, respectively. He notes that both cities contain comparatively diverse populations,

and Twain hypothesizes that ethnic diversity would be reflected in the public sphere through political diversity in terms of "tickets," that is, through the election of government representatives from different parties. This is not the case in the "solid" South, according to Twain, where voters vote "all one way," for a single political party (Democrats). Twain's critique of Southern political unity can be historically supported through Carl Harris' detailed analysis of Congress members' party affiliation and voting trends from 1873 to 1897. Although Harris' purpose is to determine whether Southern Democrats voted more frequently with their Western colleagues or their Northern colleagues in matters of national policy, his data clearly shows the decreasing diversity of political party affiliation in the South during this time.<sup>9</sup>

Ultimately, Twain's critique of single-party politics in the South maintains that a truly "regional" region gives room to competing perspectives . Through unified voting, the South acts more like a nation than a region. Within the context of the post-Civil War period, this type of "national" sentiment at the regional level is logical for a region that was once considered to be its own nation. Although from a national perspective such unified viewpoints and behaviors are laudable, Twain suggests that a lack of diversity can encourage myopia, or even worse, lead to conformist pressure. While Twain emphasizes

---

<sup>9</sup> The House of Representatives in 1873 included 47 Southern Democrats and 45 Southern Republicans. In 1875 these numbers shifted to 76 Democrats and 15 Republicans (and one independent), and by 1879 the South was represented by 82 Democrats and only five Republicans (and five independents). The year 1883, the publication year of *Life on the Mississippi*, saw a Southern Congress without any Republicans at all, and the Republican drought would continue for more than a decade, until 1895 (Harris 64, table 1). Twain's argument that the Northern states voted with more diversity is debatable. For the House members' party affiliations in the years after Reconstruction, but prior to *Life's* publication, the North favored Republicans by electing 17 Democrats versus 78 Republicans in 1873, 50 Democrats and 45 Republicans in 1875, 37 Democrats and 59 Republicans in 1877, and 23 Democrats and 68 Republicans in 1879 (Harris 64, table 1). In terms of degree, however, the North does remain slightly more balanced.

political unity as an active choice, his critique recalls widespread practices of voter disenfranchisement and intimidation that facilitated such "unity."

Twain's depictions of particular communities (such as Mormons and Native Americans) and his descriptions of regional cultures (of the North and South, and also West) add complexity to the development of a sense of belonging in a regional community. An exploration of a region's unique cultural geography can bring to light issues of violence, discrimination, and stereotyping that may be absent in national discourse. As seen in his treatment of Native Americans, simply "illustrating" these problems does not in and of itself present a solution; however, as Twain demonstrates in "the suppressed chapter" of *Life on the Mississippi*, the diverse cultural geography of regions can provide a place to acknowledge the benefits of competing perspectives.

### **Conclusions: Mobility, Island 74, and Changes in Place**

In an article for *American Literary Regionalism*, Louis J. Budd calls for an examination of the values inherent in aligning Twain's works with American nationalism: "Twainians [...] need to demand a deeper knowledge about socio-historical currents during the nineteenth century and about a changing national identity, which of course meandered into Northern and Southern sections complicated further by regional identities, especially out west" (266). Part of this "deeper knowledge," I argue, involves recognizing the complexities of regional consciousness that emerged during the Civil War years. It is tempting to cast the development of regional identities during this time as acts of division, where the national "whole" is divided into competing regional "fractions." But, as I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, the Civil War and other conflicts prompted

*expansion*, not just division, as the federal government rushed western territories into statehood. Twain's domestic travel narratives can help us to capture a broader, more expansive portrait of regional places and their citizens.

Twain's sensory observations of place and his efforts to navigate unfamiliar territories facilitate a sense of belonging, of being an "insider," in various regions. His narratives reveal that multiple regional identities can be forged by geographic immersion. Twain's confident insider ethos, however, also creates a sense of tension. In *Roughing It*, Twain's humorous critiques of the western desert landscapes reveal a narrator who is not fully open to truly knowing and respecting the West. As Twain demonstrates through his reflections on the Mississippi River, however, even individuals who are open to knowing the intricate details of a place find their understanding can shift and change over time. Indeed, Twain's narratives suggest that regional citizenship is not simply a binary between insiders and outsiders, but a question of defining -- and redefining -- one's relationship to place; this process of continually redefining one's relationship to place reverberates throughout regionally conscious literature.

In fact, Twain's narratives acknowledge that environmental processes, such as changes in physical geography, add an additional layer of complexity to the relationships between people and place. In one instance from *Life on the Mississippi*, Twain tries to "go ashore" to visit the town of Napoleon, Arkansas, only to learn that it had been washed away years before; Twain writes that "it was astonishing to see the Mississippi rolling between unpeopled shores and straight over the spot where I used to see a good big self-complacent town twenty years ago" (202). Twain hauntingly remembers the people of this now changed place, and this story highlights the active role of

environmental processes in shaping not only human communities but the very meaning of places themselves.

Although communities and nations can define borders and establish boundaries, these human rules are not superior to those of nature. In another sketch from *Life*, Twain discusses "Island 74," which was moved by high water outside of its original jurisdiction in Arkansas but was not moved close enough to shore to be claimed by Mississippi. Of Island 74, Twain says, "whether I've got the details right or wrong, this *fact* remains: that here is this big and exceedingly valuable island of four thousand acres, thrust out in the cold, and belonging to neither one State nor the other; paying taxes to neither, owing allegiance to neither. One man owns the whole island, and of right is 'the man without a country'" (203). Island 74 demonstrates another important feature of regional consciousness: the awareness that places do not only bring communities together, they can also cause isolation. These "islanded" experiences of region are explored more thoroughly by another writer of the nineteenth-century, Sarah Orne Jewett.

## Chapter Two

### "Remote and Islanded":

#### Isolation in Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*

In this chapter I examine the tension between isolation and nationalism that defines Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. The *Country* sketches have long been characterized as quaint, nostalgic portraits of domesticity and feminine community. Far from relying on these cozy themes, however, Jewett's *Country* explores the ramifications of pursuing communal isolation or alternatively participating in national forms of belonging that were faced by regional communities in an increasingly mobile, urban world at the turn of the century.

In the first half of this chapter I examine how isolation shapes the lives of the regional characters in *Country*. In particular, I examine how Captain Littlepage's haunting stories of exploring the isolated Arctic offer a critique of nationalism, and how Joanna Todd's story of self-imposed seclusion demonstrates the benefits of isolation. While the isolation of both characters is at times sad and troubling, their stories illustrate how attachment to the land itself and navigation of physical geography can lead to a deeper understanding of a place's spiritual geography, and likewise, one's own interior landscape. In the second half of this chapter, I turn to consider scenes from the novel that seem to embrace national forms of belonging that privilege racial purity and ethnic homogeneity over attachment to the land itself.

I posit in this chapter that uncovering the intricate complexities of Jewett's representations of community and landscape necessitate a movement beyond feminist

critics' recovery of *Country*. Sandra Zagarell's discussion of *Country* as a "narrative of community," and Elizabeth Ammons' commentary on the multidirectional, weblike form of the novel provide rich insights into Jewett's novel (and, additionally, help to explain why *Country* remained classified as "minor" literature for decades). While close-knit friendships and feminine community remain central to Jewett's novel, an exclusive focus on these elements, however, ignores another reality: Dunnet Landing can be an incredibly lonely place, filled with misunderstandings and exclusions. Unfortunately, feminist approaches to *Country* often risk recapitulating such misunderstandings and exclusions. Thus, another ambition of this chapter is to look at the community of Dunnet Landing holistically by considering both women and men, along with the landscape they share.

### **Isolated Places and the Interior Landscape**

*The Country of the Pointed Firs* tells the story of an unnamed female narrator's visit to Dunnet Landing, a small, isolated community lying off the Maine coast. Although Jewett was surprised by praise for the novel and never considered it to be her best work, *Country's* subject matter -- an intimate portrayal of friendships and reflections on the natural landscape -- seemed to come naturally to her; "not a word of the existing chapters was altered," writes biographer Paula Blanchard, between *Country's* serialization in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1896 and its subsequent publication in book form later that same year (277; also see Blanchard 304). Indeed, Jewett would return to the subject of Dunnet Landing in four subsequent short story sketches published between 1898 and 1910. These stories of Dunnet Landing were admired by Jewett's contemporaries due to their nearly perfect capture of women's "local color" fiction, which satisfied the public

desire "for nostalgia, for a retreat into mildly exotic locales, for semblance of order preserved in ritual, [and] for positively regarded values" (Campbell 14).

One of the "deeper appeals" of local color fiction in the 1890s, argues Donna Campbell, was the form's "possibility of power through restraint," and particularly, its "denial of paternalistic codes of order [...] and its subsequent valorizing of the creation of community through women's rituals" (14). *The Country of the Pointed Firs* highlights women's rituals prominently through the narrator's blossoming relationship with her hostess, Almira Todd, and the numerous activities that they share, including herb gathering, completing domestic tasks, and storytelling. This critical focus on women's lives has led scholars to conclude that "men are quite literally isolated, relatively unimportant presences" in Dunnet Landing (Ammons, "Going in Circles" 88-89). Elizabeth Ammons' harshest critique of the men in Dunnet Landing is reserved for Captain Littlepage, an aging former sea captain, and is worth quoting at length:

He [Littlepage] interrupts both the narrator and the narrative to serve as a living illustration of precisely the type of bookish solitary, climax-oriented, city-focused literature -- significantly coming from a man and totally about men -- that the narrator, sequestering herself from the local dispensary of traditional knowledge and inherited forms, the schoolhouse, has to unquestioningly, perhaps like the schoolmistress she sits in for, accepted as the model. Littlepage tells a story of adventure, scientific quest, masculine competition, failure, and finally death. It is too long and frequently boring. In both of these respects -- in its virile content and in its dominance of space -- it serves as an exemplum of the kind of story --

self-indulgent, learned, male-focused, aggression-based -- that does not otherwise show up in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, and that the narrator, like the narrative, must leave behind. (*Conflicting Stories* 48)

While such statements are corroborated by the attitude of the narrator and Almira Todd towards Littlepage, Ammons' stressed division between men and women overlooks Littlepage's isolated status, and wrongfully ignores Mrs. Todd's active role in marginalizing him. Although Littlepage and his narrative certainly call into question nineteenth-century constructions of masculinity, I argue that his role in the text more importantly represents cultural ambivalence towards a national identity.

At first, the narrator sees Captain Littlepage through the eyes of Almira Todd: he is an out-of-place elderly man, he interrupts her work, he is too absorbed in books and he quotes literature excessively; he may even be senile. But as she speaks with Captain Littlepage directly, the narrator becomes drawn into his fantastic, other-worldly story of the Arctic. She listens with rapt attention as Littlepage describes his travels on the *Minerva* and his encounters with a shipwrecked English explorer named Gaffett. Captain Littlepage, like the Ancient Mariner bound to tell his tale to all, repeats Gaffett's story of Arctic exploration, as his ship ventured 2° farther north than any ship had sailed previously. At this point, Gaffett discovered a colony of fog-like people, which he believed were ghosts waiting to cross into the afterlife. Both the narrator's repetition of the story and Jewett's writing of the Arctic are best explored in the context of nineteenth-century cultural imagining of this remote, northern region.

In *The Coldest Crucible: Arctic Exploration and American Culture* Michael F. Robinson explores the relationship between the United States and the Arctic regions,

arguing that "although the Arctic never wore the colors of a U.S. state on nineteenth-century maps, it became a national landscape nevertheless" (3). Prior to the Civil War, Arctic exploration provided American citizens with the opportunity to pursue several important national projects. Arctic explorers participated in charting new frontiers, in effect recapitulating the exploration of the North American continent. This act of exploration and frontier-crossing created a prime opportunity to exhibit manly characteristics, as the nineteenth-century constructed them, of bravery, leadership, and self-sufficiency. Additionally, through sharing the exploration with scientists, Arctic expeditions could establish the United States as civilized and scientifically competent. Yet Robinson explains, explorers and scientists were not the only participants in this endeavor, as American citizens eagerly took part through their consumption of all-things-Arctic. They flocked to lectures on the Arctic regions, consumed Arctic stories in every form, from newspaper accounts to dime novels, and filled their homes with Arctiana buttons, playing cards and sheet music (Robinson 3). The public support of Arctic expeditions, coupled with the patriotic rhetoric surrounding the expeditions, helped to unite the nation.

Yet after the Civil War, Robinson notes, Americans grew tired and skeptical of Arctic exploration. Not only did many explorations fail to gather adequate scientific data, but the crews were often lucky to escape with their lives after ships became disabled or permanently lodged in pack ice. After abandoning their ships, stranded crews faced the options of "savagery" by integrating themselves with Arctic natives or resorting to cannibalism out of desperation. While the representatives of the expedition were typically able to deflect accusations of "savage" behavior by praising the heroic qualities

of survivors, battle-weary American citizens began to see expeditions in the light of a failed national project that cost too much money and too many human lives.

Captain Littlepage's story of the Arctic emphasizes both geographic and communal isolation, while drawing on the history of actual Arctic expeditions. He explains that his ship, the *Minerva*, became incapacitated as the crew sailed from Hudson Bay to a location that Littlepage calls "Parry's Discoveries" -- perhaps a reference to a location toured by William Edward Parry's 1819 Arctic expedition. Captain Littlepage and his carpenter drift the ship into land and follow the tracks of a man and a dog to a Moravian missionary camp, where they wait for the arrival of a provisions ship that can provide passage back to the United States. The destruction of the *Minerva* corresponds to the fate of many Arctic ships that attempted to navigate pack ice. Many actual Arctic explorers, however, did not have Captain Littlepage's luck at locating civilization in such a remote region. Perhaps the most famous example is the failed expedition of Englishman Sir John Franklin in 1845. Scott Cookman explains in *Ice Blink: The Tragic Fate of Sir John Franklin's Lost Polar Expedition* that twenty-four of Franklin's 129-man crew died while the ship was imprisoned in pack ice for nearly two years. The remaining men attempted to drag boats and provisions 160 miles to Back's River, then to travel by boat to an outpost on Great Slave Lake, nearly 850 miles south; all 105 perished on the journey.<sup>1</sup>

The extreme isolation and harsh geographical terrain of the Arctic land inspired a range of myths and legends, and Captain Littlepage's story incorporates both scientific and spiritual legends of this region. Nineteenth-century scientists believed that the

---

<sup>1</sup> Cookman notes rumors that one man, Captain Francis Crozier (originally second-in-command), survived and lived among a nomadic Arctic tribe called the Chippewyans (185).

northernmost region of the globe was completely free of ice due to ocean currents that would drag up temperate waters. Sailors and scientists called this the "Northwest Passage," and dozens of ships were dispatched to find the first viable commercial route. This quest would span over four centuries, from one of the earliest recorded accounts in the late fifteenth-century to the eventual success of Norwegian Roald Amundsen in 1905-1906 (Cookman 196).

As Captain Littlepage explains, the stranded Englishman Gaffett was on a "voyage of discovery" to find such a passage, and as Gaffett explains to Littlepage, he did: "there was no snow and ice, he said, after they sailed some days with the warm current, which seemed to come right from under the ice they'd been pinched up in and had been crossing on foot for weeks" (395). The natives of this remote and isolated region also inspired stories. As he navigated the geographical Northwest passage, Gaffett claims to have discovered a spiritual "passage" as well between Earth and the afterlife. In this transitional space between the physical and the spiritual, Gaffett sees and describes mysterious "fog-like" inhabitants, which he interprets as ghosts. As simultaneously physical and spiritual entities, the fog-people also suggest a confusion of time: despite public conceptions of the Arctic as a "backward" region, one centered on the past through its "primitive" inhabitants, these phantom figures suggest to Gaffett and Littlepage a future of unlimited eternity.

These fascinating mythical and geographic features, when examined by themselves, point to several commonalities between the stories that the narrator craves to hear and that the women of Dunnet Landing love to tell. Almira Todd dismisses his stories as "flighty spells," however, and she mourns his current eccentricities. "He used

to be a beautiful man," she concludes (400). I argue that the rejection of Captain Littlepage's story by the community serves to emphasize the importance of an isolated, regional consciousness as opposed to a united, national consciousness. Several features of Captain Littlepage's story justify such a reading, with its implicit rejection of nationalism. Captain Littlepage himself is frustrated with the crew of the *Minerva*. In fact, his crew goes "against orders" and abandons the sinking ship (and Captain Littlepage, dedicated to staying with his ship). As readers have not been shown a completely favorable portrait of the Captain himself, this event is open to interpretation: either the crew was lazy, fearful, and disloyal, or Captain Littlepage's behavior and demeanor were objectionable enough to drive away his workforce. In either case, the separation of captain and crew illustrates the breakdown of a people entrusted to carry out national goals. Thus, Littlepage's story might be rejected by the local Dunnet Landing community because to celebrate his story would be to celebrate these floundering national pursuits. The advancement of national pursuits is also rejected through the Geographic Society's refusal to publish or investigate Gaffett's claims of discovering the Northwest passage, presumably in part because Gaffett's narrative focuses on other-worldly, supernatural entities rather than physical geography.

Gaffett's rejection by the Geographic Society speaks to the nation's inability to appreciate the regional construction of place as having both physical and spiritual dimensions. Simply rejecting a national consciousness in favor of regionalism is not without problems, however. The isolation of the Arctic as a region itself illustrates some of the obstacles-- and fears-- associated with regionalism and the accompanying isolation. One such fear is that isolation is an impediment to civilized behavior, and may even

promote "savage" behavior. As Gaffett is removed from society, he becomes haunted by his experiences with the land and its inhabitants. Littlepage says that Gaffett's "mind ran on nothing else," and that while other crew members attempted to explain the fog-people rationally as tricks of the light,<sup>2</sup> Gaffett was searching for someone to validate his perceptions and to perpetuate them by finding "the right men to tell" (Jewett 397). Gaffett becomes increasingly isolated as he lets "two or three proper explorin' expeditions go by him because he didn't like their looks," and while he does share his story with Captain Littlepage, Gaffett will not release his directions to the Northwest Passage (397). Gaffett's hesitance to share his directions reinforces his isolation; however, this act of silence also implies that individuals who could not comprehend the spiritual aspects of place would be unable to navigate it.

Ultimately, Littlepage's story challenges overly-narrow definitions of regional literature. By setting a "regional" story in the Arctic Circle, Jewett complicates the urban / rural dichotomy that usually defines regionalism, for the Arctic is neither. Nor is Littlepage's story concerned with the domestic realm, another feature typically associated with nineteenth-century regionalism. At its core, Littlepage's story examines the intricacies of a narrowly-defined place -- not only through its physical features, but through its history and "spiritual geography" -- and the relationships that form between people as a result of inhabiting this shared place; these constitute the regional qualities that his story shares in common with the other stories represented in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*.

---

<sup>2</sup> Apparently such hallucinations were common during Arctic exploration. Cookman explains that "ice blink" was "the name nineteenth-century sailors gave polar mirages, caused by light reflected off the pack ice" (n.p.).

Joanna Todd's story exemplifies an isolated experience that fits more typically with Jewett's focus on domesticity and the feminine realm; however, her story contains intriguing connections to that of Captain Littlepage. Although these characters are apparently disconnected, Mrs. Todd herself establishes the link between Captain Littlepage and Joanna. She and Mrs. Fosdick explain that Shell-heap Island takes its name from the "queer stories" about it in the indigenous American past: some say "an old chief resided there once that ruled the winds" and rumor that Native Americans left a captive to perish there.<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Todd announces, "I heard say he walked the island after that, and sharp-sighted folks could see him an' lose him like one o' them citizens Cap'n Littlepage was acquainted with up to the North Pole" (428). There are also rumors of cannibalism, which suggests a connection to Arctic disasters and the adoption of savage behavior. Like Gaffett, of Littlepage's tale, Joanna does not actually speak for herself; we hear her story secondhand through the conversations between Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Fosdick. Similar to Littlepage, who has repeated, Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Fosdick have clearly told Joanna's story -- of her abandonment by her lover, her subsequent withdrawal to an island off the coast from the town, and the repeated attempts of townspeople to convince her to return -- to themselves several times. In contrast to Littlepage's story, however, Joanna's story occupies a privileged position through the respect that Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Fosdick grant it.

---

<sup>3</sup> Jacqueline Shea Murphy's "Abenaki Tales and 'Jewett's' Coastal Maine" provides a much-needed, and creative, reading of Jewett's fiction alongside traditional Abenaki (Native American) stories. Although the presence of Native Americans remains a "haunting" one, Murphy suggests that through her attention to an audience of white, upper-class women "Jewett not only recognizes her own historical position of relative privilege in place, but also leaves space for other continuing storytelling practices in and of that place" (684).

While Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Fosdick are sympathetic towards Joanna -- and even protect her from the subtlest of mockery -- they still wonder at her self-imposed isolation. Their conversation suggests an uneasiness towards living without community. Mrs. Todd makes clear that a person would not starve in this "wild place by the sea." As evidence she lists driftwood to burn, a garden for growing potatoes, bushes of wild berries, and fish from the sea; in this sense, a community is not needed for basic survival. But Mrs. Fosdick finds other necessities lacking. She exclaims, "but what I want to know is what [Joanna] did for other things [...] what did she do for clothin' when she needed to replenish, or risin' for her bread, or the piece-bag that no woman can live long without?" (432). Mrs. Fosdick's question recapitulates the question asked of all isolated, regional places: isn't it "backward" for a person or community to deliberately pursue isolation over the conveniences and benefits of a wider community?

Like Captain Littlepage, Joanna seems to appreciate the unique "spirit" of place. In contrast to Littlepage's traumatic experience, however, Joanna deliberately seeks out her isolation. Joanna's island home represents a model of regional life as she successfully integrates domesticity and nature. In order to create her home, she gathers rushes to make mats, uses found pieces of wood, and has "flower set about in shells fixed to the walls, so it did look sort of homelike" (437). Just as she brings the outdoors inside to her domestic life, she brings domesticity out into the natural landscape through her garden and chicken coops (432). Yet despite her idyllic relationship to nature, self-sufficiency, and sustainable lifestyle, Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Fosdick are hesitant to endorse her way of life. Joanna's home is, according to them, only "*sort of* homelike, though so lonely and

poor" (437). Through the reaction of Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Fosdick, Jewett reveals a reluctance to be *too* "regional" (too isolated, too poor).

The larger reaction of the Dunnet Landing community to the stories of Captain Littlepage and Joanna encapsulates the tension between adopting national or regional identities. Like nationalism, the Arctic explorations offer a promise of progress and a "vision for the future"; however, Littlepage's failed journey represents a growing skepticism concerning the ability of multiple individuals (or communities) to come together to accomplish a shared task of national proportions across a varied terrain. Regionalism, it seems, offers a solution as members of the community can form connections with each other and the local geography. As Mrs. Fosdick and Mrs. Todd question, however, a regional identity involves a degree of isolation from others; and this isolation, this "backwardness," may signal an orientation towards the past that impedes forward progression.

Jewett's solution is not to redefine national or regional identities, or to insist that the "outsiders" of regions be drawn "into" the nation. Instead, she imagines external geography as internal human characteristics. During the narrator's pilgrimage to Shell-heap Island, she ruminates on the isolation of places and individuals, reflecting "In the life of each of us, I said to myself, there is a place remote and islanded, and given to endless regret or secret happiness; we are each the unaccompanied hermit and recluse of an hour or a day; we understand our fellows of the cell to whatever age of history they may belong" (444). Nature writer Barry Lopez labels the projection of this exterior landscape within an individual as the "interior landscape," and he argues that this interior landscape is the sustaining power of narrative for national literatures. By foregrounding

isolation, however, Jewett's narrator classifies this interior landscape as a distinctly regional one. This feature of isolation can be manifest in several ways: through geographic location and spatial distance, but also through a sense of marginalization or distinctiveness from other members of the community. Paradoxically, though, this experience of isolation is also one of kinship. Here, Jewett transforms regional identity from eccentricity or backwardness to a common experience.

Storytelling plays a central role in the Dunnet Landing community, and through recognizing the isolation of regional citizens, Jewett's storytellers actively create community and place by reconfiguring spatial relationships. Throughout *The Country of the Pointed Firs* Jewett experiments with the representation of place and spaciality: remote places become centers, islands become continents, and dense forests are filled with open spaces. In her opening description of Dunnet Landing, Jewett's narrator characterizes Dunnet Landing as a village that successfully contained the oppositions inherent in of being "all that mixture of remoteness, and childish certainty of being the centre of civilization" (377). Although Joanna and Captain Littlepage are physically and socially marginalized, respectively, by the Dunnet Landing community, their "places" undergo a spatial reconfiguration similar to the town itself. The repetition of their stories and the narrator's active participation as a listener allow Joanna and Littlepage to become "centers."

### **"No More a New England Family"**

Despite Jewett's poignant depictions of friendship and community, literary critics recognize that the citizens of Dunnet Landing exhibit signs of narrowness, clannishness,

and ethnocentrism. Most troubling is the final Bowden reunion scene. As Ammons explains, the reunion is typically interpreted "the way the narrator interprets it": the reunion is "a naïve, joyful, old-fashioned rural festival affirming traditional American values of family loyalty, sainted motherhood, abiding patriotism, and spontaneous benevolent accord with nature" ("Material Culture" 91). Ammons admits that she herself has interpreted the reunion this way in the past, but increased scholarly attention has revealed systems of dominance and exclusion in the episode. The narrator repeatedly celebrates racial purity and genetic belonging through her tracing of the Bowden clan through its European and Anglo-Norman roots, and the militaristic overtones turn from healthy patriotism to jingoism. Ultimately, Ammons argues, the reunion "celebrates white ethnic pride, with the extended Bowden family's Anglo-Norman lineage, which is militantly asserted and religiously affirmed in all the orderly marching and solemn worshipping" (96).

An equally troubling, yet not fully examined, aspect of the reunion scene involves a shift in geographic apprehension from a regional view of the landscape to an archetypal characterization of nature through references to classical mythology and idealized pastoral landscapes. In her investigation of classical architects in Jewett's fiction, Sarah Way Sherman argues that "the narrator's initiation into this pastoral world reaches a kind of climax, if not a conclusion, with the Bowden Reunion" (219). Graham Frater continues Sherman's argument, noting that the reunion scene emphasizes the isolation of the Bowdens and Dunnet Landing "not only in time and space, but from the tide of progress sweeping across America [...] their continuity has less in common with the fast-arriving machine age than with the order and archetypes of antiquity" (256). Clearly,

Jewett draws on these archetypal characters and landscapes throughout *Country*, and particularly in the reunion scene. I argue, however, that the "universal" nature of these archetypes constitutes the antithesis of her regional consciousness, which emphasizes a web of unique, local places and the stories that connect these places. I find that Jewett's turn toward archetypal experiences of place is not a coincidental occurrence, but serves to emphasize the increasingly nationalistic community depicted at the end of the novel.

Prior to the reunion scene, Jewett depicts the landscape as a dynamic entity present in the lives of the Dunnet Landing citizens. The land itself, it seems, becomes a character in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. For example, as the narrator and Mrs. Todd discuss the former's conversation with Captain Littlepage, the narrator pauses to observe the landscape:

We were standing where there was a fine view of the harbor and its long stretches of shore all covered by the great army of the pointed firs, darkly cloaked and standing as if they waited to embark. As we looked far seaward among the outer islands, the trees seemed to march seaward still, going steadily over the height and down to the water's edge. (400)

The narrator's army metaphor captures several features of the pines, including their significant numbers, uniform features, and straightness. While her metaphor anthropomorphizes the trees and depends on human consciousness, it also endows the trees with agency and the ability to act as they "march" towards the sea. Here, the landscape is vast, powerful, and captivating.

Through her recognition of the "character" of the landscape and its role in the Dunnet Landing community narrative, the narrator employs regional consciousness to

facilitate her integration into the community. Her trip to Green Island to visit the mother of her hostess exemplifies how her appreciation of the harmony between the built and natural environment contributes to her desire to belong:

The house was just before us now, on a green level that looked as if a huge hand had scooped it out of a long green field we had been ascending. A little way above, the dark spruce woods began to climb the top of the hill and cover the seaward slopes of the island. [...]. There was a great stretch of rough pasture-land round the shoulder of the island to the eastward, and here were all the thick-scattered gray rocks that kept their places, and the gray backs of many sheep that forever wandered and fed on a thin sweet pasturage that fringed the ledges and made soft hollows and strips of green turf like growing velvet. I could see the rich green of bayberry bushes here and there, where the rocks made room. The air was very sweet; one could not help wishing to be a citizen of such a complete and tiny continent and home of fisherfolk. (407)

The human features of the landscape, the house and pasture, do not dominate the landscape. Instead, they are equal components of the natural environment. The openness of the pasture balances the shadows of the forest. The gray sheep resemble the gray rocks which (like the "army" of firs) seem to have agency of action as they "made room" for the bayberry bushes and keep "their places." Here too the woods "climb" actively over the contours of the land. As the narrator remarks, the landscape is "complete" because of the balance between wild spaces and images of domesticity (which echoes in the "velvet" of the green turf and the "sweet air").

In contrast to the regional specificity of the landscapes and stories in the early chapters of the novel, the final reunion scene emphasizes classical or archetypal representations of place. This abandonment of regional landscapes reflects and contributes to the displacement of the regional community by an ethos of nationalism and domination. Notably, the narrator "had no wish to hurry" to the reunion because "it was so pleasant in the shady roads" (454). As with her experience on Green Island, the narrator sets her sights on a vast landscape of hills, fields, haze from the sea, mountains, schooners, and sailboats. She concludes that this is "a noble landscape," and her personal meditation is followed by Mrs. Todd and her mother, Mrs. Blackett, connecting the landscape to family stories. Once at the reunion, however, the narrator's interpretation of place moves from the regional to the archetypal. As she and her companions form a "procession" into the reunion, she observes, "what might have been a company of ancient Greeks going to celebrate a victory, or to worship the god of harvests in the grove above [...] we were no more a New England family celebrating its own existence and simple progress" (460).

Jewett's abandonment of regional consciousness in favor of the pastoral view of place at the end of the novel can help to explain critical dissatisfaction with the final reunion scene. In fact, the reunion scene demonstrates that participation in a national community necessitates such archetypal or universal views of place and ultimately erases regional distinctiveness. The archetypal references create an "un-regional" landscape, and their prominence in the reunion scene ultimately signals separation between place, community, and story. As she observes the reunion, the narrator notices "with great interest the curiously French type of face which prevailed in this rustic company" (462).

Mrs. Todd, always ready with an appropriate story, explains the connection between lineage and Santin Bowden's militaristic tendencies: "'they used to say in the old times,' said Mrs. Todd modestly, 'that our family came of very high folks in France, and that one of 'em was a great general in some o' the old wars'" (462). This description emphasizes an intriguing connection between genetics or blood relations and nationalism, a more exclusive form of belonging than the "imagined" national community described by Benedict Anderson and Ernest Renan. In this light, the national community becomes more difficult for outsiders to enter. While Mrs. Todd and the narrator's discussion remains centered on France, the reunion implicitly raises the issue of how genetics, or belonging by "blood," is manifest in the United States as well, particularly for African-Americans and other immigrants after the Civil War. Santin's militaristic behavior, therefore, becomes a significant representation of how military powers are dispatched under the banner of nations in order to enforce codes of belonging.

The presence of overtly nationalistic themes and the archetypal landscape at the end of the novel raise the question of causality: can an archetypal view of the landscape give rise to, or somehow promote, nationalism? Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* promotes this hypothesis: "long after the machine's appearance in the landscape" Marx argues, "[the pastoral ideal] enabled the nation to continue defining its purpose as the pursuit of rural happiness while devoting itself to productivity, wealth, and power" (226). A clear benefit of the archetypal landscape is that it allows Jewett, and other American authors, to avoid the uncomfortable isolation of regionalism. One of the few references to regionalism in the reunion scene is the narrator's remark that the participants "did not expect to see one another again very soon; the steady, hard work on the farms, the

difficulty of getting from place to place, especially in winter when both were laid up, gave double value to any occasion which could bring a large number families together" (468). This comment reinforces the isolation that permeates regional places and communities. Yet within Jewett's pastoral landscape of the reunion we do not see only the "ideal;" we also see representations of military dominance and genetic exclusion. For example, the most often quoted line of exclusion, Mrs. Todd's comment that "Mari' Harris resembled a Chinee," occurs in this pastoral context (463). As much as the pastoral presents unification, it also promotes clannishness. "I fancied that the old feuds have been overlooked," the narrator remarks, "and that the old saying that blood is thicker than water had once again proved true" (469).

Ultimately, the archetypal landscape of the final reunion scene acts as another form of exclusion because it alienates the community from its distinctive regional landscape. The stories that comprise the heart of Dunnet Landing, here exemplified by Joanna and Captain Littlepage, are intimately connected to place, and they could not occur within the idealized pastoral landscape of the reunion scene. And while exclusion occurs within the regional landscape as well, as seen in the marginalized characters, the very structure of regionalism allows for marginal or "backward" people and places to become centers. As Willa Cather reflects on a *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, she praises Jewett for her ability to write of these quotidian, overlooked individuals, "of the people who grew out of the soil and the life of the country near her heart" ("The Best Stories" 55). Although the final reunion scene is inconsistent with the preceding stories in *Country*, Jewett's turn away from regional consciousness at the end of the novel reinforces the generative power of place to form vivid, particular communities; for

without a relationship to the regional landscape, the community looks back to past generations and former national origins to create a sense of belonging.

### **Conclusions: The Tension between Isolation and Expansion**

Due to its pastoral scenery, focus on female friendships, employment of dialect, and restrained tone, *The Country of the Pointed Firs* in many ways epitomizes late nineteenth-century regional literature in America. What makes *Country* distinctive, however, is its underlying sense of tension between different forms of isolation: physical isolation due to physical geography (and its accompanying psychological ramifications) and the practice of a Eurocentric form of isolationism. Through her tales of Dunnet Landing, Jewett confronts the loneliness, sadness, and contentment that accompanies solitude, but also calls us to consider the trade-offs between solitude and exclusion.

Jewett's portrait of regional life complements Mark Twain's domestic travel narratives in several ways. Both consider the ramifications of an expanding, increasingly industrialized nation: Twain by exploring areas of expansion and reconstruction, and Jewett by fictionalizing a regional area "left behind." Although it may be easy to characterize Dunnet Landing as a static, unchanging place, Hsuan L. Hsu points out that prior generations of Dunnet Landing citizens had a transnational, cosmopolitan scope due to their involvement in the shipping industry. Jewett's particular focus on isolation serves to highlight the contrast between Dunnet Landing's past and present. Twain and Jewett also emphasize their "un-static," dynamic regional consciousness through their choice of narrator. These narrators occupy liminal positions as observers and participants, and as potential outsiders, they must exert conscious effort to participate more fully in a regional

community.<sup>4</sup> The *Country* narrator, similar to Mark Twain's narrative persona in his domestic travel narratives, cultivates a sense of regional citizenship through immersing herself in the physical geography of coastal Maine; indeed, the offshore islands facilitate her empathetic relationship with isolated individuals like Captain Littlepage and Joanna Todd.

Although Twain and Jewett's narrators encounter regional places during a time of dramatic change, these narrators form affiliations and attachments to multiple regional places with relative ease due to their observations of and openness towards the physical environment. But both the decline of cosmopolitan engagement with the world for regional citizens (as represented in Jewett's novel) and regional expansion and development (as represented in Twain's travel narratives) began to raise important cultural questions for American citizens: are regional spaces isolated, unproductive areas? What is the relationship between these "remote and islanded" places and the nation, or even the rest of the civilized world? As I examine in my next chapter, public debates concerning the very meaning of "civilization" itself were to play a significant role in defining the relationship between regions, the nation, and the world at the beginning of the twentieth century.

---

<sup>4</sup> Stephanie Foote's *Regional Fictions: Culture and Identity in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* is especially helpful for examining the complexities of the narrator's identity in *Country*.

### Chapter Three

#### The Trouble with Civilization: Imagining Regional Influence beyond Regional Borders in the *Atlantic Monthly*

"The distribution of periodicals is so managed that California and Maine cut the leaves of their magazines on the same day" -- Meredith Nicholson, "The Provincial American"

Between November 1874 and September 1880, Mark Twain contributed twenty-two essays and stories to the *Atlantic Monthly* including a series titled "Old Times on the Mississippi," which formed the initial base for *Life on the Mississippi*; in a twenty year span from 1881 to 1901, Sarah Orne Jewett published fifty-one contributions in the *Atlantic*, including a serialized form of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* in 1896. During these decades, the *Atlantic Monthly* played a powerful role in shaping the culture of America's elite classes through its literary selections and essays. Scholarly studies by Richard Brodhead, Nancy Glazener, and Ellery Sedgwick reveal that even the vernacular voices of regional literature published within the *Atlantic* put forward "a certain story of contemporary culture," one in which local cultures were superseded by "a modern order now risen to national dominance" (Brodhead 121). The timelines of their studies suggest, however, a decline in the *Atlantic's* cultural authority during the opening decade of the twentieth century, and perhaps unrelatedly, a decline in the importance of regional

literature (both to the periodical and to American culture at large). Indeed, Willa Cather and F. Scott Fitzgerald barely registered in the pages of the *Atlantic*.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter I examine how the *Atlantic* documents competing, shifting perspectives on the relationship between regional cultures and national or global ones. As Ellery Sedgwick admits, "serial fiction did not tell the full story" of periodicals such as the *Atlantic* (*Atlantic* 263). Following up on this claim, I take a wider view of the *Atlantic*, one which reveals that nonfiction essays were also preoccupied with the supersession of regional culture by national civilization. My aim is to explore how conceptions of cosmopolitan "world citizenship" -- captured through its discussions of "civilization" -- shape the construction of regional places in the nonfiction essays of the *Atlantic Monthly*. In doing so, I focus particularly on essays appearing alongside, and thus providing an immediate contemporary context for, those of John Muir.<sup>2</sup>

My understanding of the relationship between cosmopolitanism and place has been influenced by the research of Tom Lutz and Ursula K. Heise. In *Cosmopolitan Vistas: American Regionalism and Literary Value* Lutz argues for a more nuanced understanding of American regionalism during the period of 1850 to 1930 through recognition of its cosmopolitan features. "The hallmark of local color and later regionalist writing, then," he explains "is its attention to both local and more global

---

<sup>1</sup> Willa Cather published a book review in the *Atlantic* in 1898; in the early 1930s, she published one poem ("Poor Marty," May 1931) and one short story ("A Chance Meeting," February 1933). At the time of finalizing my project, I could not find any references to F. Scott Fitzgerald ever publishing in the *Atlantic*. The *Atlantic* did, however, publish reviews of works by both Cather and Fitzgerald.

<sup>2</sup> "Civilization" evokes myriad definitions. My own use of the term is influenced by Gail Bederman, who, speaking of the turn of the century, writes that "the interesting thing about 'civilization' is not what was meant by the term, but the multiple ways it was used to legitimize different sorts of claims to power" (23). Bederman notes that issues of gender and race often defined the role of individuals seeking to participate in "civilization discourse." Although the role of place does not extinguish the role of gender and race, conceptions of "civilized" environments do complicate conversations on civilization at the turn of the century. This is particularly true for white males, whose contributions to "civilization" may seem questionable -- despite their gender and race -- if they speak from a "regional" environment.

concerns, most often achieved through a careful balancing of different groups' perspectives" (30). Lutz's focus on cosmopolitanism and globalism as a new direction for regional criticism parallels Heise's recent challenge to ecocriticism in *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. Citing an over dependent on local or bioregional analysis in ecocriticism, Heise conceptualizes "eco-cosmopolitanism," or "environmental world citizenship," as a means of acknowledging deterritorialization and "the increasing connectedness of societies around the globe" (10). Both Heise and Lutz demonstrate new avenues of critical inquiry that broaden our conceptions of place as they emphasize interconnectedness and influence.

My purpose in this chapter is to place conversations of literary regionalism and ecocriticism in dialogue with each other in order to examine, within the *Atlantic Monthly* at the turn of the twentieth century, the kinds of connections between the regional and the global that Lutz and Heise explore in their respective studies. As Heise suggests, ecocriticism requires new ways of conceptualizing the relationships between places. In the turn-of-the-century *Atlantic*, the "outer" regions of the United States -- the South, the Midwest, and the West -- were considered to be part of "another world," one which was (potentially) removed from the global arena of civilization. Yet, as the quotation from Meredith Nicholson at the beginning of this essay demonstrates, advances in transportation and communication allowed readers across the United States to "cut the leaves" of their periodicals at very nearly the same time. With an eye towards this expanding national audience, the editors of and contributors to the *Atlantic* during the turn of the century investigated not only the changing dynamics of American regions but

also how these regions contributed to -- or were influenced by -- the "civilized" world at large.

This chapter argues that civilization was a powerful, but ultimately restrictive, concept invoked by turn-of-the-century writers in their attempts to imagine regional places and citizens engaged in a world beyond their regional borders. The contributors to the *Atlantic* discussed in this chapter all grapple with the cultural assumption that to be "regional" is to be limited in reach or scope, and their exploration of an expanded role for regional places and people can be united in a set of common questions: Are regional lives, histories, and practices significant only to citizens of that region, or are they relevant to those people and places living outside the region? Are regional citizens "behind the times" and living in the past, or are they actively engaged in contributing to the "advancement" of society? In the late 1890s, nonfiction contributors to the *Atlantic* adopted civilization discourse as a means of articulating the significance of regional places to the nation and world at large; civilization was also invoked, however, as a way to reinforce a portrait of regions as underdeveloped. Whether they argued for a progressive or backward portrait of regions, these contributors in the 1890s employed an analytical style and relied on a distant tone to bolster their respective arguments concerning civilization and progress in the United States.

A wider survey of the *Atlantic* reveals that by the early years of the 1910s, contributors did not employ civilization discourse with confidence. Instead, these writers began to showcase the individual lives of regional citizens as a means of exploring how concepts of civilization can negatively impact or limit individuals' relationships with their regional environments. These writers' employment of personal narrative, I argue, allows

them to oppose the sweeping, stereotypical portraits of regions presented in the *Atlantic* two decades before. Specifically, these writers challenge stereotypical regional portraits by highlighting multiple, conflicting perspectives on place, emotion, and detailed descriptions of regional places.

More broadly, in this chapter I am interested in exploring a shift in the regional consciousness of American citizens from confidence to anxiety. As I have argued previously, late nineteenth century writers such as Twain and Jewett highlight narrator characters who easily form attachments to multiple places, even while the regions these narrators encounter are depicted in a state of change and flux. Turn-of-the-century writers, particularly contributors to the *Atlantic Monthly*, adopt a more critical, analytical stance in regards to the dynamic changes taking place in American regions; their scrutiny fosters a multi-vocal conversation regarding the relationship between regional places and the world at large. Indeed, in this chapter I focus particularly on the contributions of John Muir to the *Atlantic* because his writings reflect both analytical and personal approaches to understanding the role of regions in civilization.

### **The Expository Essay: Evaluating Regional Contributions to the Progress of Civilization**

William Cronon's landmark essay "The Trouble with Wilderness" marks an important turn in approaches to environmental literature as he challenges critics to recognize the ways in which culture frames our conception of nature. Many nature writers and ecocritics define "nature" or "the wilderness" as "a pristine sanctuary where the last remnant of an untouched, endangered, but still transcendent nature can at least for a little while longer be encountered without the contaminating taint of civilization"

(Cronon 1). Cronon argues that this definition of wilderness is "a product of that civilization" itself, one that emerges from sublime aesthetics and frontier mythology and that allows citizens to enact particular values and identities (1). One of the primary problems with this dualistic relationship, according to Cronon, is that it "give[s] ourselves permission to evade responsibility for the lives we actually lead" by allowing individuals to "inhabit civilization while holding some part of ourselves [...] aloof from its entanglements" (11). Many recent ecocritical inquiries into literature participate in the redefinition of nature Cronon calls for: Heise suggests eco-cosmopolitanism (ecologically-oriented thinking that connects to global culture and the planet as a whole); Scott Hess proposes further attention to "everyday nature" that permeates our day-to-day activities; and Timothy Morton dismisses the concept of "nature" altogether, and in his latest work, proposes that "ecological thinking" involves attentiveness to "the mesh" or the interconnectedness between humans and non-humans. While each of these critics provides important tools for understanding nature and the environment, an equally important task rests in defining the "civilization" that produces our conceptions of the environment.

The index to *John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir* seems to offer an indication of Muir's thoughts on civilization; while "civilization" includes a single entry, "civilization, evils of" yields three results. Even the single entry for "civilization" still places the term in an unfavorable light, as Muir writes "in God's wilderness lies the hope of the world -- the great fresh unblighted, unredeemed wilderness. The galling harness of civilization drops off, and the wounds heal ere we are aware" (Wolfe 317). In this binary relationship between civilization and the wilderness,

the latter assumes the shape of Edenic perfection, and serves as a healing salve for the wounds caused by the "harness," or restraints, of civilized life. In another journal entry, however, Muir's critique of civilization becomes decidedly more complex, as he writes "civilized man chokes his soul as the heathen Chinese their feet" (Wolfe 82; also see Nash 128). Through this simile of spiritual and physical incapacitation through binding forces, Muir's criticism of civilization depends on a simultaneous critique of "heathen" or "uncivilized" cultural practices; the definition of what constitutes "civilized" and "uncivilized," however, remains ambiguous.

Muir's contributions to civilization discourse pair well with projects to redefine the audience of the *Atlantic Monthly* during the turn of the century. At its inception, the *Atlantic Monthly* aimed to fulfill the literary and cultural needs of an elite, well-educated, and upper-class audience on the Northeast coast. Between Muir's first publication in the *Atlantic* in 1897 and his last in 1913, however, the four editors-in-chief faced a series of questions concerning the periodical's purpose and mission: should this target readership be maintained, or should the *Atlantic* reach out to a more general and diverse population? What type of literature (realism, regionalism, sentimental historical fiction) would be most satisfying to this audience? Should nonfiction, current events, politics, and other social issues have a marginal or prominent position? A brief overview of how each editor answered these questions illustrates marked fluctuations. Horace Elisha Scudder (1890-98) increased the number of essays dedicated to social issues but maintained the *Atlantic's* commitment to publishing "high, pure literature" (Sedgwick, *Atlantic* 202). Although Walter Hines Page was editor-in-name for only a brief period (1898-99), he exerted considerable influence in the *Atlantic's* content from 1896 to 1899. In contrast to

Scudder, Page conceived of an audience that was "popular but cultivated" and interested in contemporary, relevant events rather than literature (Sedgwick, *Atlantic* 254). Bliss Perry (1899-1909) promoted a return to the literary nature of an earlier *Atlantic*, but simultaneously recognized the changing demographics of the magazine's audience. In a letter to Henry James, Page puzzles over this new audience, writing that "more than half of [the *Atlantic*'s] circulation [...] is now west of the Mississippi, and there are more subscribers in Wisconsin than in any state except Massachusetts. I confess that I am not very certain about the temper of this audience, but I know it differs markedly from the old *Atlantic* circle of readers" (Sedgwick, *Atlantic* 281). Ellery Sedgwick (1909-29) aggressively pursued this broader audience, and his goal coincided well with his own preferences for personal, non-fiction narrative essays (Sedgwick *History*). Cumulatively, these editors published literary nonfiction to serve a variety of purposes: in the case of Scudder, to meet the expectations of a narrower, more cultivated audience, and in the case of Sedgwick, to meet the needs of a more diverse readership.

During the waning years of the nineteenth century, many *Atlantic* contributors participated in a national conversation concerning the value of "civilization" and the United States' role in cultivating civilization among its own citizens and those around the world. In "Five American Contributions to Civilization" (October 1896) Harvard President Charles W. Eliot confidently insists that the United States' promotion of "peace-keeping, religious toleration, the development of manhood suffrage, the welcoming of new-comers, and the diffusion of well-being" has secured its contribution to world culture (446). Eliot acknowledges that these "contributions" could be contested, and indeed, they call for nuanced explanation. For example, the claim of the United States'

aversion of war requires significant omissions: "if the intermittent Indian fighting and the brief contest with the Barbary corsairs be disregarded, the United States has had only four years and a quarter of international war in the one hundred and seven years since the adoption of the Constitution," Eliot argues (433). Although the specific contributions of the United States to civilization remained under debate, Eliot's essay clearly situates the promotion of civilizing forces as a national occupation; by introducing his essay by summarizing the contributions of classical (Greek, Hebrew, Roman) and European nations, Eliot participates in popular modes of discourse that situate "civilization" within the endeavors of Euro-American males carried out on an international scale.

In contrast to Eliot's global perspective and accompanying tone of confidence in the American nation, regionally-focused contributions to the *Atlantic* expressed some anxiety concerning the role of regions in the progress of global civilization. Most fictional works of regionalism emphasized distinctly local voices through vernacular speech.<sup>3</sup> The non-fiction regional essays published in the late 1890s, however, adopted the stance of an objective outsider, even though the authors of these pieces were often members of the regional communities they described. As a means of distancing themselves from their regional communities, these writers merge civilization discourse with scientific rhetoric as they attempt to classify populations, determine the region's position in the "evolution" of civilization, and evaluate the cultural lessons that the region brings to the nation as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Brodhead notes that vernacular speech, typically "a mark of [...] inferior "civilization," became "valuable literary capital" within the realm of regional fiction" (117).

<sup>4</sup> French biologist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck proposed that the evolution of species could be explained as each generation passed on its learned adaptations to its offspring. Many cultural critics at the turn of the century applied these concepts of "Lamarckian" theory to humans as well, proposing that the species followed a predictable path of progress, and that differences in populations (and races) were the result of occupying

In "Dominant Forces in Southern Life" (*Atlantic* January 1897), for example, University of the South (Sewanee) professor and native Virginian William P. Trent uses the discourse of civilization to present a more complex portrait of the South as he "endeavor[s] to determine what the Southern people stand for to-day in economics and politics, in letters and art and science, in morals and manners and education, or, to be brief, in culture" (42). In this essay, Trent exhibits many characteristics of the expository essays that dominated the *Atlantic's* conversation on American regions, as he undertakes a broad cultural survey via classification and attentiveness towards the region's "progress." In terms of classification, Trent finds that "the two leading types of Southern population are plainly the Virginian and the South Carolinian," both of which, he argues, are similar to the original "Englishman" colonizers. In fact, these "two leading types" are "distinctly less American in their habits of thought and action than are Georgians or Tennesseans, New Yorkers or Iowans" (44). As Gail Bederman notes, classification schemes based on race were often evoked in civilization discourse at the turn of the century to denote "a precise stage in human racial evolution," as communities evolved "from simple savagery [...] to advanced and valuable civilization" (25). Trent's interpretation that particular Southern communities are "less American" suggests differences between national and regional character; "there are, to be sure, varieties of Georgians," Trent says, "and different phases of civilization are represented in different sections of the State [...]" (46). An ardent supporter of the "New South," Trent had argued previously that "progress and slavery are natural enemies," (qtd. in Stephenson

---

different evolutionary stages. See Kingsland and Bederman. Also see Coleman's analysis of Lamarck's influence on Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier hypothesis.

161). Trent's *Atlantic* essay reaffirms that "progress" towards an advanced, "civilized" culture necessitates an alignment with the national (Northeastern) culture.

Other writers of expository essays appealed to civilization discourse as a means of promoting the "advanced" character of particular regional communities. Although William Allen White finds enough continuity in his home state of Kansas to write an article on "A Typical Kansas Community" (August 1897), he suggests that "chiefly by reason of its newness and a certain cosmopolitan aspect, the Kansas town differs from villages elsewhere in the United States" (171).<sup>5</sup> White marks the distinction of Kansas not through its regional (and therefore potentially "backward" characteristics), but through its embrace of "cosmopolitan" culture and civilized habits. Not to be left out, New England writers also consider how (or even, if) the region is advancing civilization. For example, Alvan F. Sanborn (August 1897) proposes that the social stratification that accompanied an influx of immigrants to "a Massachusetts shoe town" is the natural result of progress.<sup>6</sup> "May it not be that class distinctions are an inevitable product of civilization?" he asks. In contrast to the "social democracy" of the "unlovely pioneer society," Sanborn argues that "stratification is among the marks of maturity, and New England is getting old enough to have some of the characteristics of maturity" (185).

It is within the context of these articles investigating regional instances of civilization that John Muir's first essay appears in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Titled "The

---

<sup>5</sup> According to Elizabeth S. Sargeant in 1927, "White stands out as one of the leading figures and builders of a prairie civilization that is gradually assuming a common American shape" (quoted in Agran 35). Edward Gale Agran notes that White was actively involved in both national politics and national publication during the early twentieth century, saying "by the end of the Roosevelt presidency in 1909 the small-town Kansas editor had become one of the nation's most prominent progressives" (51).

<sup>6</sup> A journalist, Alvan F. Sanborn's contributions to the *Atlantic* and numerous other publications (most notably those in *Forum*) examine urban and class issues; he also spent time as a reporter in France. For commentary on Sanborn's reports on the Arts and Crafts movement, see Lears (*No Place* 91, 93). For commentary on Sanborn's urban investigative journalism, see Pittenger

American Forests," it was published in the same year as Trent's essay and in the same issue as the essays of White and Sanborn (August 1897). The *Atlantic's* editorial staff clearly considered "The American Forests" to be a worthy contribution; not only did the essay garner a prominent place as the lead article in the issue, but the staff further emphasized Muir's argument through an editorial contribution, "A Forest Policy in Suspense," which concluded the issue. Interestingly, "A Forest Policy" highlights the regional aspects of forest management more prominently than Muir's. "Western forests," the staff writes, "are so remote and difficult of access, being confined for the most part to the slopes of high mountain ranges, that it is hard to make the people of the East understand their importance or realize the dangers which assail them" (269). By situating forest policy as an (inter)national rather than a regional issue, however, Muir is able to use civilization discourse more effectively as he affirms the narratives of civilization's progress familiar to *Atlantic* readers.

Similar to the *Atlantic* contributors addressed above, Muir situates regions (in this case, generic "frontier" regions) as places that represented various stages in the process of civilization; Muir's depiction of progress, however, is undercut by irony. "I suppose we need not go mourning the buffaloes," he writes, "in the nature of things they had to give place to better cattle, though the change might have been made without barbarous wickedness. Likewise many of nature's five hundred kinds of wild trees had to make way for orchards and cornfields" (146). Muir speaks with a double voice as he simultaneously endorses and critiques forward progress. Through references to buffalo and native trees, Muir evokes iconic elements that speak to the richness of American regional landscapes. In contrast, the cattle, orchards, and cornfields anticipate a homogenous -- but also

bountiful, useful, and safe -- landscape. Muir continues with his narrative of progress as he turns from modifications of the landscape to analyzing the first wave of regional citizens: "in the settlement and civilization of the country, bread more than timber or beauty was wanted; and in the blindness of hunger, the early settlers, claiming Heaven as their guide, regarded God's trees as only a larger kind of pernicious weeds, extremely hard to get rid of" (146). Pairing "timber and beauty" and juxtaposing them with "bread," Muir taps into a discourse of civilization, reinforcing a hierarchy between early settlers and contemporary readers. Muir's early settlers were motivated by the fulfillment of basic needs, and they demonstrate a less developed sense of spirituality. The "civilized" audience, in contrast, is called to higher concerns of usefulness and ingenuity through the proper allocation of timber resources, and by demonstrating a higher capacity for aesthetic and spiritual edification through the acknowledgment of "beauty."

While regions serve as sites to observe the evolution of civilization, the nation serves as a more stable site to nurture the highest levels of civilization. In a sense, it was understandable for Southern or (Mid)Western residents to be caught at lower levels of civilized development; "Americans," as Eliot's essay suggests, were held to a higher standard of civilized behavior. The assumed links between the progress of civilization and place become an avenue for Muir to question and adopt the powerful rhetoric of civilization. Muir evokes civilization discourse for two reasons: first, to level a critique of uncivilized areas, and second, as a call to action for citizens to participate in national and international arenas. "Every other civilized nation in the world has been compelled to care for its forests," Muir argues, "and so must we if waste and distraction are not to go on to the bitter end" (147). As evidence Muir incorporates detailed references to

conservation laws and policies from countries including France, Switzerland, Russia, Japan, and India. By situating his forest management models across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, Muir's essay challenges Europe's role as the primary font of "civilization," and additionally, suggests that narratives of progress are not uniquely American. Concerning central Europe, Muir writes that "in its calmer moments in the midst of bewildering hunger and war and restless over-industry, Prussia has learned that the forest plays an important part in human progress, and that the advance in civilization only makes it more indispensable" (147). Through his references to global forest policies, Muir challenges the supposedly antagonistic relationship between civilization and the wilderness: "civilized" countries make and enforce forest preservation legislation. Here, Muir calls *Atlantic* readers to consider themselves "cosmopolitan citizens" engaged in world affairs, who can respect -- and maybe even learn from -- countries around the globe. While Muir depicts "civilization" as a positive force for driving the progress of the nation and its participation in global culture, he also acknowledges civilization as a destructive force in regional environments.

Indeed, the detrimental specter of "overcivilization" played an equally important role in shaping Americans' views of and experiences in natural environments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In "On Being Civilized too Much" (June 1897) Henry Childs Merwin advises *Atlantic* readers that "man can retain his strength only by perpetually renewing his contact with Mother Earth" (830). Several options for renewing contact with the "uncivilized" environment burgeoned at this time. Although American artists had been pursuing "bohemian" lifestyles on the margins of civilized society since the 1850s, San Francisco's Bohemian Club (founded in 1872) -- which counted John

Muir among its members -- provided an organized opportunity for artists and social elites to oppose the prescriptions of civilized life. Similarly, Theodore Roosevelt's Boone and Crockett Club (founded in 1887) and his prescription of "the strenuous life" (outlined in a speech to his Chicago men's club on April 10, 1899) provided more "manly" avenues of combating overcivilization through wildlife excursions, hunting, and vigorous activity.<sup>7</sup> As Joanna Levin and Gail Bederman explain in their interpretations of bohemianism and "manly activity," respectively, contradictions emerged from these movements designed to combat the presumed anxieties and weaknesses inherent in "civilized" life; through their activities of social dissent, many participants in bohemian or vigorous lifestyles reinforced elitism and bourgeois ideals.<sup>8</sup>

As a result of these contradictions, some of the clearest critiques of civilization in the *Atlantic* at the turn of the century come from individuals already marginalized from "civilization" by race or ethnicity. The contributions of Zitkala-Ša, of the Lakota tribe, are especially noteworthy as she examines how civilization discourse places strictures on the ways in which individuals understand and inhabit their environment. In "Why I Am Pagan" (December 1902) Zitkala-Ša rejects the "jangling phrases of a bigoted creed" of Christianity. While racism plays an integral role in Zitkala-Ša rejection of "civilized" religion, she argues that paganism allows her to have deeper, more fulfilling experiences in the environment. Her "excursions into the natural gardens" allow her to hear "the voice of the Great Spirit" through environmental phenomena: "the twittering of birds, the

---

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Philippon outlines the history and foundational principles of the Boone and Crockett Club; see especially pages 54-56. Interestingly, Gail Bederman does not include the club in her examination of Roosevelt's contributions to "Manhood, Nation, and 'Civilization'"; for her analysis of the "strenuous life" philosophy, see pages 192-96.

<sup>8</sup> See especially pages 198-204 in Levin.

rippling of mighty waters, and the sweet breathing of flowers" (803). By questioning the "taming" of "uncivilized" landscapes in the name of progress, Zitkala-Ša suggests that a more intimate level of awareness of nature is needed, especially to hear its subtlest sounds, such as the "sweet breathing of flowers."<sup>9</sup> This "ecological theme," as Jeffrey Myers calls it, would have been familiar to *Atlantic* readers through other nature essays, such as those by John Burroughs (117).<sup>10</sup> Zitkala-Ša's essay stands out from these other nature essays, however, because she emphasizes conflict that is personal in nature but that also reflects larger cultural concerns. Her vigorous defense of her own creed also differs sharply from the objective ethnographic studies of civilization discussed earlier in this essay. These personal narratives, however, would not gain a more prominent position in the *Atlantic* until the editorship of Ellery Sedgwick in 1910. Although the rise in publication of personal narratives can be attributed to Sedgwick's literary preferences and his vision for increasing the *Atlantic's* subscription rates, the personal essay allowed writers more flexibility to question the relationship between civilization and the environment, particularly through scenes of conflict.

### **The Personal Narrative: Exploring Regional Lives Through a Critique of Civilization Discourse**

In 1908 Ellery Sedgwick founded The Atlantic Monthly Company and purchased the *Atlantic Monthly* from Houghton Mifflin Company for \$50,000 (Sedgwick *History*

---

<sup>9</sup> Barbara Chiarello's reading of Zitkala-Ša as a response to the more "imperial" visions of progress promoted by Theodore Roosevelt is especially noteworthy. Chiarello situates Zitkala-Ša's *Atlantic* contributions and speeches as an alternative, but ultimately marginalized, contribution to civilization discourse; her assessment differs, therefore, from Myers (discussed below), who situates Zitkala-Ša's ideas as more "familiar" to readers.

<sup>10</sup> Myers' also frames Zitkala-Ša's essay as a specifically racial response to the whiteness in Muir's *Atlantic* essay, "The American Forests." See pages 117-21.

32). At the time of purchase, subscription numbers hovered around 16,000; although *Atlantic* sales would never reach the proportions of the most popular periodicals (such as *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, and *Ladies' Home Journal*, each with circulations in the millions), Sedgwick's gradual yet significant editorial changes would increase the *Atlantic's* circulation numbers to nearly 100,000 by 1919 (Sedgwick *History* 88, 98). Somewhat curiously, Sedgwick's "personal tastes in prose fiction were both definite and oddly limited," and his appreciation for modern literature was "rather confined" according to the younger Ellery Sedgwick. The elder Sedgwick himself admits that he disliked the "single-sided view" of realism and naturalism in which "the human spirit was perpetually dwarfed and crushed by the natural world," (Sedgwick *History* 75-8). As a result, Sedgwick turned to "vivid, well-written non-fictional narratives of personal experience" that "had the pulse of felt life without the bitterness and brutality of much realism" (79). As Edward Weeks (Sedgwick's editorial successor) notes, "[Sedgwick] had an inexhaustible interest in the first-person singular -- the more singular the better -- and when he found an adventurer, man or woman, who could write, he paid them and pressed them for more" (quoted in Sedgwick, *History* 79-80).

This description effectively captures Muir's "My First Summer in the Sierra," which appeared in serial form in the *Atlantic* from January to April 1911. Two other frequent contributors to the *Atlantic*, Herbert Ravenel Sass of Charleston, South Carolina and Margaret Lynn of Iowa, also use their narratives of personal experience to examine the complex relationship between civilization and the environment. In contrast to the expository essays published a decade before, Muir, Sass, and Lynn's personal essays revolve around subjective and emotive portraits of their engagement with regional places,

filled with vivid detail. This sort of environmental engagement and close observation was also present in numerous contributions to the *Atlantic* by well-known nature writers such as John Burroughs, Dallas Lore Sharp, and Bradford Torrey.<sup>11</sup> Muir, Sass, and Lynn, however, also include a sense of cultural conflict as they depict how their environmental experiences differ from, or are shaped by, the lingering voices of civilization discourse.

"My First Summer in the Sierra," a condensed version of Muir's book of the same name (which would be published a year later), takes the form of journal entries based on his experiences in the Yosemite region in 1869, working with a group of shepherds.<sup>12</sup> The four decade interim between the actual "first summer" and the published version clearly influences the narrative voice that emerges. Speaking of the book publication, Michael Cohen observes that "the young Muir [of *First Summer*] was not yet committed to preservation, or even to a life in the wilderness, but an older, sterner Muir knew that he would be, and knew further that while the young man would never achieve the complete freedom for which he hoped, his vision of freedom was nonetheless essential to accomplish anything" (351). Thus within the intimate space of these journal entries, readers do not encounter a naïve voice seeking to "figure out" the events as they occur

---

<sup>11</sup> Eric Lupfer's article "Before Nature Writing: Houghton, Mifflin and Company and the Invention of the Outdoor Book, 1800-1900" provides excellent insights into the importance of these nature writers to the *Atlantic Monthly's* publishing house.

<sup>12</sup> Recent criticism on Muir cautions that many of his works, and *My First Summer in the Sierra* in particular, should not automatically be classified as accurate autobiography. Muir continually revised his journals; according to Stephen J. Holmes, Muir's original journal from 1869 is lost, and Muir created the text of "My First Summer" based on a revised journal from 1887. Through archival research, Holmes documents that Muir developed a more sustained narrative, dropped events or parsed one event into two, incorporated themes (particularly the scientific theme of glaciation and more religious themes of conversion), and even incorporated passages from letters (255-57).

but instead hear a mature Muir delving into the intricacies of a place he has loved for over forty years.

"It is easier to feel than to realize, or in any way explain, Yosemite grandeur," Muir writes (342). This statement is not meant apologetically, or as a preventative attempt to rationalize explanatory lapses; instead, this statement situates "feeling" as an alternative rhetorical strategy to exposition or analysis. Throughout "My First Summer," Muir emphasizes a subjective relationship to the landscape. He develops a sense of geographic immersion that allows readers not only to see, but also to feel, this landscape along with him: "The mountains, too, along the eastern sky, and the domes in front of them, and the succession of smooth, rounded waves between, swelling higher, with dark woods in their hollows, serene in massive, exuberant bulk and beauty, tend yet more to hide the grandeur of the Yosemite temple, and make it appear as a subdued, subordinate feature of the vast harmonious landscape. Thus every attempt to appreciate any one feature is beaten down by the overwhelming influence of all the others" (342). Here, Muir carefully guides readers through the visual landscape of mountains, domes, and woods, with this "tour" supplemented by tactile and kinesthetic sensations ("smooth rounded waves [...] swelling higher"), and mental sense of serenity, which is transferred from the landscape to the human observer. The gentle pace of the landscape description gradually builds tension with each feature, reaching a crescendo that emphasizes the "massive, exuberant bulk and beauty" of the entire vista before relaxing into an alternative suggestion of a "subdued" scene. The conventions of written language require Muir to focus on "one feature" at a time, but, as his concluding statement suggests, these features ultimately can only be understood holistically. The emotive qualities of Muir's

language allow him to move beyond capturing a single feature -- or succession of features -- in order to demonstrate how the components of the landscape modify, magnify, diminish, and ultimately construct the valley as a whole.

A more complicated portrait of the environment emerges, however, through Muir's encounters with Billy, a shepherd who resists Muir's attempts to engage him in the landscape's beauty. Billy's occupation puts him into a difficult relationship with the environment and society: his shepherding work places him into immediate contact with wild landscapes that went unvisited by upper-class tourists, but his relationship with his environment is not one of admiration, but one of hostility; although shepherding relegates him to a lower class, Billy displays a tireless dedication to work, one which could be seen as participating in the "progress" of an evolving nation. As Kevin DeLuca and Anne Demo suggest, Muir's dismissal of Billy, a "blue collar" laborer working in the wilderness, is problematic as it "models an attitude that environmentalists have imitated to great detriment" (553). DeLuca and Demo's argument takes an important step in recognizing the history of class issues that permeate the environmental movement in the United States, but ultimately, DeLuca and Demo focus more on *Muir* and his attitude while Billy's "voice" remains hidden.

Both Muir's and Billy's perceptions are shaped by divergent emotional reactions to the environment, which in turn, influence and are influenced by each man's perceived relationship to "civilization." "What," asks Billy, "is Yosemite but a cañon, -- a lot of rocks, -- a hole in the ground, -- a place dangerous about falling into, -- a d -- --d good place to keep away from?" (345). Billy rightly acknowledges the inherent dangers of the region where he lives and works. Billy's perspective is guided by attentiveness to

security and hazards; in contrast, Muir remains dedicated to his perspective of interconnectedness, which he displays throughout the essay. 'But think of the waterfalls, Billy,' Muir offers, "-- just think of that big stream we crossed the other day, falling half a mile through the air, -- think of that and the sound it makes. You can hear it now like the roar of the sea" (345). Both of these perspectives are grounded in an intimate awareness of the region, and their distinct voices signal their disagreements. Their inability to adopt or appreciate one another's perspective ultimately leads to frustration. Billy cannot recognize that his perspective -- guided by attentiveness to potential danger -- engenders a mindset of fear. "I would be afraid to look over so high a wall," Billy says, "It would make my head swim; there is nothing worth seeing anyway, only rocks, and I see plenty of them here. Tourists that spend their money to see rocks and falls are fools, that's all. You can't humbug me. I've been in this country too long for that" (345). Billy's resistance to Muir's worldview suggests that a wider range of emotional engagement with the environment is needed, and that this emotional engagement can only be achieved by renegotiating definitions of "nature," with a particular focus on the natural environments individuals encounter in their everyday lives.<sup>13</sup>

Herbert Ravenel Sass' contribution to the February 1911 issue of the *Atlantic* (appearing with the second installment of "My First Summer") also seeks to renegotiate definitions of nature.<sup>14</sup> Sass admits that "some will smile when they read the title" of his

---

<sup>13</sup> These redefinitions of "nature" continue to be important in environmental approaches to more contemporary literature. As Scott Hess argues, "we cannot afford to define 'nature' as the place we imagine or go to only in leisure, while ignoring the 'nature' we consume and interact with in the rest of our lives" (98).

<sup>14</sup> Herbert Ravenel (occasionally spelled "Ravenal" in the *Atlantic*) Sass was a frequent contributor to both the *Atlantic* and *Harpers*. Some of his other publications in the *Atlantic* include "Po' Jo and his Neighbors" (January 1909) and "Wild Music" (September 1911); both essays, like his April 1911 contribution, examine Charleston's wildlife.

essay -- "Wild Life in a City Garden" -- because it is "common knowledge that wild life does not exist in city gardens," as cities are "the stronghold of man" and therefore "avoided by those timorous creatures of the woods and marshes" (227). In direct but polite fashion, Sass corrects this assumption: "there was never a greater mistake, nor a more popular fallacy; and as evidence I will submit the record of my garden" (227). Sass' essay appeals to the "genteel" readership of the *Atlantic* by speaking to a wider cultural interest in gardening and ornithology as proper domestic pursuits, such as those promoted by Mabel Osgood Wright and her revival of the National Audubon Society.<sup>15</sup> He takes care, however, to emphasize the *wildness* of birds through his emotional expressions of wonder at their utilization and occupation of urban spaces. His records include regular sightings of cardinals, mockingbirds, waxwings, sparrows, nuthatches, and thrushes, and also rare sightings, such as a loon and a yellow-crowned night heron. Although these rare birds generate more discussion, Sass clearly relishes the presence of common birds as well. Although Sass' ornithological observations resonate as a leisure activity -- undertaken with and for pleasure, and made feasible through his comfortable class-status -- his urban, "backyard" location calls for individuals to be more attentive to natural elements in their everyday lives.

Cultivating this sort of attentiveness and wonder, however, could also be challenging as Margaret Lynn explores in her *Atlantic* essay "A Step-Daughter of the Prairie" (March 1911).<sup>16</sup> Lynn's personal narrative exposes a conflict between the

---

<sup>15</sup> Mabel Osgood Wright (1859-1934), a suburban housewife, channeled her love of gardening and wildlife into both preservation efforts and writing. The title of one of her works, *Garden of a Commuter's Wife* (1901), speaks to the type of "urban nature writing" presented in Sass' essay. See Philippon 72-105.

<sup>16</sup> According to the "Atlantic Monthly Advertiser" of July 1913, Margaret Lynn "is a member of the English Department in the University of Kansas" and should be "familiar to *Atlantic* readers as a chronicler

cultivation of a civilized identity (through reading literature) and developing a relationship with the region of her daily life. Lynn opens her essay with a vivid, literary portrait of the prairie landscape she encountered as a child looking out a household window: "Far away on the almost bare line of the prairie's horizon, a group of trees used to show. There was a tall one and a short one, and then a tallish crooked one and another short one. To my childish eyes they spelled l-i-f-e, as plainly as any word in my second reader was spelled" (379). Her act of reading the landscape resonates with Twain's description of "reading the river" in *Life on the Mississippi*. Although this image suggests harmony between Lynn's education and her environment, subsequent events in her personal narrative illustrate dissonance. She says, "I always had a suspicion of a distinct line between literature and life, at least life as I knew it, far out in Iowa" (380). As Lynn reveals, the environments of the very best of the literature she consumed -- mainly poetry from England (Wordsworth, Burns, and Tennyson) and New England (Lowell and Whittier) -- were difficult to translate into her own regional experience. She concludes that "to live in one kind of country and feed on the literature of another kind of country is to put one all awry" (381). This displacement is captured most poignantly in her attempts, along with other children, to search for the flowers named in their favorite poetry in their backyards. "We had wild flowers in abundance," Lynn says, "but unnamed. And what are botanical names to a child that wants to find foxglove and heather and bluebells and Wordsworth's daffodils and Burns's daisy?" (381). Lynn notes that the guidance offered by Eastern poets, and even the Eastern parents of the prairie children, is slightly off course; we "wanted names that might have come out of a book. So we traced

---

of prairie life" (884). *Atlantic* readers would have encountered "A Step-Daughter of the Prairie" in the same issue as the third excerpt of "My First Summer."

imagined resemblances, and with slight encouragement from our elders -- *they* came from back East where well-established flowers grow -- named plants where we could" (381).

As Hamlin Garland remarks in his essay on "Provincialism" (1894), many American writers at the turn of the century thought that "Art [... was] something far away, and literary subjects must be something select and very civilized" (14). Indeed, Lynn's essay reveals the consequences of this mindset. Although the title of her essay could suggest that Lynn herself was born in the East, her acceptance of the role of "step-daughter" suggests a hesitance to become a full-fledged "daughter" of the prairie. This hesitance has deep roots in the lack of regional literature that Lynn encountered as a child. As I have argued earlier in this study through exploring works by Mark Twain and Sarah Orne Jewett, the representation of regions in literature significantly shapes both insiders' and outsiders' construction of regional environments. Lynn's essay highlights an intriguing component of regional consciousness as she considers how the *lack* of regional literature also informs the cultural construction of regions. If only her favorite poets had written "of slough-grass and ground-squirrels and barb-wire fences" Lynn comments, "those despised elements would have taken on new aspects" (385). This reflection highlights regional literature's capacity for transformation and restriction. Outwardly, Lynn acknowledges the power of regional literature to transform one's perception of place, revealing "new aspects" of the surrounding environment. But her reflection also reveals an inability to move beyond logocentricism, and consequently, a sustained misreading of place. Her inability to interpret the region around her, and her resulting attachment to "someplace else" due to its presumed cultural value, ultimately reveals a profound lack of belonging. Although Lynn now recognizes the unique beauty of the

prairie, her essay reverberates with a sense of loss. This sense of alienation resulting from the misreading of place is one of the defining features of modern regional consciousness, and my discussion of it will continue in subsequent chapters of this study.

### **Conclusions: Civilization and Conflict**

The sense of conflict within these narratives of personal experience could easily be overlooked without the context of their more analytical predecessors. The tropes of these expository essays -- classification, evolution, and documentation of progress -- played a defining role in shaping civilization discourse; and indeed, expository essays on both national and regional character continued to be published alongside narratives of personal experience in the *Atlantic* into the 1910s. The classist and racist assumptions underlying the rhetoric of civilization discourse in these expository essays, unfortunately, reflect ways in which "civilization" was used as a means of reinforcing cultural hierarchy. For many contemporary critics of environmental literature, these expository essays may be deficient in "nature." Their way of understanding and interpreting the relationship between human communities, their regional environments, and the wider global world, however, had important implications for the way in which *Atlantic* readers understood their own regions in light of global culture. In turn, social constructions of the environment guided decisions on where to plow fields, erect cities, build parks, or preserve forests, and why. Muir's expository contributions to this cultural conversation urged readers to see the inherent paradox of civilization discourse as he appealed to desires for achieving civilization as a means of protecting the national landscape from the destructiveness of these same "civilizing" forces.

When read alongside the expository essays, these narratives of personal experience effectively reject (to borrow *Atlantic* editor Ellery Sedgwick's phrasing) a "single-sided view" of each writer's homeplace and its relationship to the larger world. Although Muir introduces a "double-sided view" of civilization in his expository essay on "The American Forests" -- in which civilization is a positive force for national progress but a detrimental force in regional environments -- these narratives of personal experience explore the complexities of liminal spaces, those caught between civilization and the "wilderness" of provincial places. Lynn and Sass capture how culture possibly limits their environmental understanding: if he subscribed to the prevalent, culturally enforced dichotomy between the city and nature, Sass could overlook the wonder and natural beauty of his own backyard; the youthful Lynn struggled to reconcile her provincial, regional landscape with the "civilized" environments of great literature. Yet these personal narratives offer no easy solutions. Lynn, in particular, demonstrates that simply denying cultured civilization is not an option, nor would it even be desirable; she cherishes her books, and all the civilization that they represent. Instead, she must reconcile her civilization with her environment. Muir's portrait of Billy offers another challenge as Muir's solution -- to encourage Billy's aesthetic sense -- seems problematic, as it could push Billy towards a consumptive relationship with the environment that he associates with elite, tourist "outsiders." Ultimately, the conflict between Muir and Billy illustrates a need for more nuanced approaches to cultural-environmental relationships. In a sense, by inserting these "wild" or "provincial" places into the leaves of the *Atlantic*, thereby sending them into the homes of civilized readers, these writers open an exploratory dialogue on navigating these cultural-environmental relationships. These

issues and questions that framed the regional consciousness of the expository essayists and contributors of personal narratives continued to be explored in fiction of the 1920s.

## Chapter Four

### Between the Country and the City:

#### Modern Regionalism

The sense of conflict between participation in a national or global society and cultivating a rich regional life, as illustrated in the pages of *Atlantic Monthly* during the turn of the century, is also the focal point of controversy in Willa Cather's *The Professor's House* (1925). The novel contrasts the highly "civilized" life of Professor Godfrey St. Peter -- a life filled with intense scholarly study, cultural consumption, and travels abroad -- to the somewhat romantic figure of Tom Outland, a rough young ranch hand from the Southwest. The novel explores this theme of civilization simultaneously through its engagement with place, as it juxtaposes the archaeological ruins of a lost civilization of cliff dwellers (discovered by Tom) with modern mansions and urban centers in the Midwest. *The Professor's House* represents a challenge not only to investigations of regional literature, but also to scholarly understanding of Cather. Most celebrated for her portraits of rural life in Nebraska, Cather's work often places her on the margins of American modernism; on closer investigation, however, her depictions of place are quite different in tone from regional literature of the nineteenth century. As Guy Reynolds suggests, "this, finally, is the lesson that Cather teaches us about regional thinking: that we need ever more supple, inflected, nuanced definitions in order to understand the complexities of the inter-connections between writing and place" (18).

In this chapter I argue that Cather is a modern regionalist: "regional" because her characters form intense attachments to particular places and use their awareness of place distinctiveness to construct regional and communal borders; "modern" because the organic, spiritual meanings of places are complicated by twentieth-century economics, consumerism, and cosmopolitanism. I propose three texts published in (or just before) 1925, the same year as *The Professor's House*, as a contextual field for understanding Cather's position as a modern regionalist: Cather's introduction to *The Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett* (1925), her interview with *New York Times* reporter Rose Feld (21 December 1924), and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925). Cather's introduction and interview provide insights into regionalism as an affective relationship between artists and the world around them. This relationship between artists and the modern world can be explored further through correspondences between *The Great Gatsby*, as an exemplary modern text, and *The Professor's House*. Both novels complicate earlier modes of literary regionalism as they examine how urbanization, consumption, and exile impede the development of place attachment. In the first half of this chapter I examine how Cather's respect for -- but ultimately departure from -- Jewett's regional approach informs both Godfrey St. Peter's and Tom Outland's inability to articulate their attachment to place. In the second half of this chapter I agree *The Professor's House* alongside *The Great Gatsby* to illuminate how consumption and mobility foster a sense of dislocation in these modern regional texts. Ultimately, Cather's novel reveals that regionalism, far from being a concern of the past, remains an integral force in modern American culture.

### Soil Writers: Articulating the Significance of Place

Places, regions, and the land form the anchor of Cather's regionalism, and while she clearly appreciated the representation of regions in works by other writers, she resists classifying herself within the "limited" scope of regional writing. Cather's complex engagement with the history of regionalism threads through several projects that emerged in 1925. In her introduction to the writing of Sarah Orne Jewett, Cather praises Jewett's ability to write "of the people who grew out of the soil and the life of the country near her heart" ("The Best Stories" 55). Yet Cather also downplayed the importance of the "soil" in her own work around this time. In a December 21, 1924 *New York Times Book Review* interview with Rose C. Feld, Cather was asked "Is *My Ántonia* a good book because it is a story of the soil?" Cather responded in the negative, insisting "No, no, decidedly no. [...] I expressed a mood, the core of which was like a folksong, a thing that Grieg could have written. That it was powerfully tied to the soil has nothing to do with it" ("Restlessness" 72). Cather qualifies that while "*Ántonia* was tied to the soil," the story itself was not; "Chicago could have told the same story," she asserts. Cather demonstrates the flexibility of her regional consciousness as she continues, imagining the mood of this urban story: "It would have been smearier, joltier, noisier, less sugar and more sand, but still a story that had as its purpose the desire to express the quality of these people. No, the country has nothing to do with it; the city has nothing to do with it; nothing contributes consciously" ("Restlessness" 72). Cather's statement demonstrates her resistance to regionalism as she refuses to celebrate a stereotypical reading of *My Ántonia* as "a good book" simply because it takes place in the country. If, then, as

Catherine insists, the soil "has nothing to do with it," how *do* places contribute to the "core" or mood" of her stories, especially the "smearier, joltier, [and] noisier" places?

One of Cather's shared concerns in her introduction to Jewett and her interview with Feld is the influence of place on artists as inspiration for artistic creation. In her introduction to Jewett's collected works, Cather defines two aesthetic approaches in Jewett's sketches, one that is "fluid and formless" but full of "perception and feeling"; and one that is "tightly built and significant in design" ("The Best Stories" 48-49). It is through the unity of these two approaches that Jewett achieves the height of aesthetic quality, Cather argues, as Jewett's "sketches are living things, in the open, with light and freedom and air-spaces about them. They melt into the land and the life of the land until they are not stories at all, but life itself" (49). Although Cather does not mention the word "regionalism" in her description of Jewett's work here, these stories that "melt into the land" are in fact regional in nature because her impressions of the landscape allow Jewett to capture a community situated within a wider spatial network. In the Feld interview Cather is much more critical of American literature and art; however, she returns to the natural, organic relationship between the artist and his life by inventing a fictional French artist and examining his artistic philosophy and activities: "The Frenchman doesn't talk nonsense about art, about self-expression; he is too greatly occupied with building the things that make his home. His house, his garden, his vineyards, these are the things that fill his mind. He creates something beautiful, something lasting. And what happens? When a French painter wants to paint a picture he makes a copy of a garden, a home, a village. The art in them inspires his brush"

("Restlessness" 71). This philosophy can also describe Jewett, whose "brush" gained inspiration from the villages, gardens, and landscapes around her.

In *The Country of the Pointed Firs* Jewett exemplifies how an artist sees through a regional consciousness as the narrator forms place attachments by appreciating the aesthetic, communal, and spiritual dimensions of places. Through this "topophilia," or love of place, Jewett's characters recognize regions not only by distinctive geography, but by the stories, emotions, and sensations that connect places to each other.<sup>1</sup> In *The Professor's House*, Cather too incorporates aesthetic appreciation of geography as a way to express place attachment to areas where the characters feel most "at home." Tom Outland expresses his attachment to the Blue Mesa through his sensory observations: the "bluish rock in the sun-tanned grass, under the unusual purple-grey of the sky, gave the whole valley a very soft colour [...]" (198). St. Peter holds a similarly multi-textured memory of Lake Michigan. As he recalls his childhood, he sees the geography of the "shaggy pines" of the shore and brilliant chunks of lake ice, "crumbly and white, throwing off gold and rose-coloured reflections from a copper-coloured sun behind grey clouds" (31). Like Jewett and Cather's imaginary French painter, Tom and St. Peter appreciate the inherent "art" in the physical geography of regional landscapes. Unlike the French artist and Jewett, however, St. Peter is unable to express the physical geography of the landscape and the spiritual feelings it evokes in him. He tries to explain the nature of "le Michigan" to the two boys he tutors in France as a young man, but he finds that his descriptions are inadequate: "it is altogether different. It is the sea, and yet it is not salt.

---

<sup>1</sup> "Topophilia," broadly defined by Yi-Fu Tuan, includes "all of the human being's affective ties with the material environment"(93).

It is blue, but quite another blue. Yes, there are clouds and mists and sea-gulls, but -- I don't know [...]" (32).

St. Peter's inability to adequately articulate and convey the impressionistic sense of the lake is only one instance of communicative failure concerning the affective dimensions of place. In fact, there are several such occurrences throughout *The Professor's House*: St. Peter struggles to express the value of his old house, and Tom fails twice to explain the value of the mesa, first to Rodney, then to the Washington officials. It is important to note that both men have successful communicative experiences as well: St. Peter's books and articles capture the Southwest to the satisfaction of Father Duchene, and Tom fascinates St. Peter and his daughters with his vivid tales of the mesa. Both men, however, see their inability to communicate their love of place as a deep crisis. Cather illustrates that this crisis has its roots in the incompatibility between traditional patterns of place attachment as reflected in literary regionalism and the upheaval of modern experience.

Although Tom and St. Peter clearly identify with and become attached to particular regional places, their attachment is complicated by their genealogical backgrounds. One of the primary modes of forming a lasting attachment to place, according to environmental psychologist Setha Low, is through a family history of occupying the same area for generations. For ancient cultures, a history of occupation promoted an intimate understanding of physical geography that was necessary for survival and facilitated a place-based, communal identity in children through the telling of regional stories and family history. Many regional texts employ genealogical references in order to establish a similar occupational history. In *The Country of the*

*Pointed Firs*, for example, the citizens of Dunnet Landing repeatedly tell stories that emphasize their residency through familiarity with the community's past. The narrator becomes aware of her role as an empathetic insider in this community when Mrs. Todd brings her to a "sainted" place where pennyroyal grows; Mrs. Todd had "never [shown] nobody else but mother where to find this place" (416).<sup>2</sup> Such access to the intimate places of a region allows the narrator to participate actively in community life. Her sense of place attachment and her participation in storytelling together allow the narrator to surmount her status as a genealogical outsider, to the extent that she even takes part in the Bowden family reunion.

In *The Professor's House*, however, Cather demonstrates that the lack of genealogical belonging cannot be overcome so easily. Tom Outland's childhood migration to the West and the subsequent death of his parents emphasize his lack of genealogical connection. Through Tom Outland's experiences, Cather explores genealogical revision as a means of place attachment, as Tom claims the ancient Pueblos as his "grandmothers." This move is clearly, in his eyes, a testament to the attachment that he feels towards the mesa. Within the context of the novel, however -- especially in the unacknowledged actions of the conquistadors that St. Peter devotes his life to studying -- Tom's attempts to adopt himself into the native community are on the borderline between deep appreciation and appropriation. As Deborah Lindsay Williams argues, Tom "links understanding with uncovering and ownership" (164). When Tom returns to the mesa after his falling out with Rodney over the sale of the artifacts, he

---

<sup>2</sup> Relph defines an "empathetic insider" as someone who understands "that place as rich in meaning, and hence [identifies] with it, for these meanings are not only linked to the experiences and symbols of those whose place it is, but also stem from one's own experiences" (54-5).

examines the landscape and realizes that it was "the first time [he] ever saw it as a whole" (249). Tom doesn't state what this vision consists of, but it seems to be a synthesis of all of the mesa's individual parts -- the landscape, its colors, its ancient inhabitants, its architecture, its history, stories, and myths -- into a collective whole. Tom describes this feeling, saying, "it was possession" (250). While Tom's holistic understanding of the intimate connections between place and community do promote his appreciation of the mesa's intrinsic value, his assertion of his genealogical "rights" to the landscape moves him from a position of citizen to owner, and from a feeling of belonging to one of possessing.

The other path of genealogy -- the one most frequently adopted by American regionalists -- is to trace one's roots back to pre-colonial geographies of origin. This move strangely undercuts one of the presumed aims of regional literature: to be truly "American." For Cather, the tension in negotiating this type of genealogical attachment is embodied in St. Peter's garden. The garden is described as "French": "there was not a blade of grass," but instead gravel, carefully planned hedges and walls, and symmetrical trees (15). These features emphasize the "unnatural" qualities of the garden and suggest that it is an "imported" place. Mark Facknitz interprets the garden as a sign of St. Peter's repression, arguing that the garden seems determined "to make something work where it does not belong" (297-8). The Professor himself seems to acknowledge its "out of place" character, as he sits in the garden and attends to it especially when he feels homesick for "other lands" (15). Ultimately, the garden represents St. Peter's genealogy of mixed French-Canadian and American farmer stock; even those American farmers are

"imported" from somewhere else, and St. Peter relishes this imported quality in both the garden and himself, particularly through remembering his experiences in France.<sup>3</sup>

Considered in the light of Cather's praise for Jewett and the art of the imagined Frenchman, the positive qualities of St. Peter's garden emerge. The garden is a place where land melts into life itself. It was built through a sometime-shared effort between St. Peter and the landlord; although the landlord refuses to pay for any repairs to the house, he pays for part of the garden wall, participates in the gardening, and freely dispenses advice (14-5). The garden also figures into the family's relationship with Tom Outland. St. Peter is working in the garden when Tom first arrives at the house; it is the site of their first conversation. The garden itself contains not only the ornamental plants, but salad greens. The family holds meals in the garden, and it is the place where Tom enacts imaginary adventures with the girls. Perhaps most importantly, the garden is a place of mentoring and friendship where the Professor and Tom "used to sit and talk half through the warm, soft nights" (16). Overall, the garden co-mingles natural and cultural aspects of gathering, hospitality, and belonging.

In these two places -- Tom's mesa and St. Peter's garden -- Cather raises serious questions concerning how individuals participate in place. She celebrates place attachment through the experiences of Tom Outland and St. Peter, but she recognizes the challenges to forming such attachments. How is Tom, as a non-indigenous American, to form a meaningful place attachment without "possessing" the landscape? How can St. Peter's garden, with its rigid structure and foreign elements, inspire organic relationships

---

<sup>3</sup> James Woodress' and Kari Ronning's detailed explanatory notes to the scholarly edition reveal the degree of importation that St. Peter's garden contains. While the plants are notable for their popularity in European gardens, several have trans-continental origins including the geraniums (native to Africa), the French marigolds (native to Brazil), and the dahlias (native to Mexico and Central America).

and inclusiveness? Although Tom and St. Peter experience genuine attachments to place, their inability to articulate an appropriate expression of the place's meaning reveals an unstable relationship to place. As a result, several of Cather's characters embrace market or economic value as a way to overcome their inability to express place attachment. This tension between "love of place," attachment, and market value defines the modern experience of place, and represents Cather's more modern approach to regionalism.

### **Navigating Dislocation**

Identifying Cather's works as modern can be challenging as elements of her own life seem at odds with the "modern" era. Novelist Fanny Hearst notes that the traditional furnishings of Cather's domestic space and her circle of friends were "no more a part of Fitzgerald's twenties than of Mars" (quoted in Acocella 24). As Hearst demonstrates, Cather's and F. Scott Fitzgerald's lifestyles were radically dissimilar. In "Echoes of the Jazz Age" (1931), Fitzgerald describes the twenties as "the most expensive orgy in history," a time marked by gaiety and cynicism, sexual exploration, and drunkenness, and he attributes such wild behaviors and intense feelings to "all the nervous energy stored up and unexpended in the War" (21, 13). As Joan Acocella notes, Cather was two decades older than Fitzgerald, and as a result, she retained more nineteenth-century qualities in her life and her writing than did other modernists (23). Yet Fitzgerald was actually a vocal enthusiast of Cather's work. In his letters he called *My Ántonia* "a great book!" and he ranked Cather along with Wharton, Dreiser, and Norris among those "literary people of any pretensions [... who] have been more or less bonded together in the fight against

intolerance and stupidity" (*Correspondence* 78-9).<sup>4</sup> He deeply admired *A Lost Lady* (1923), and he anxiously apologized to Cather because he believed his portrait of Daisy Buchanan too closely resembled Marian Forrester; Cather allowed that she did not notice any correspondence between the two women in her own reading.

Walter Benn Michaels' examination of modernism in *Our America* remains foundational for understanding how both *The Professor's House* and *The Great Gatsby* participate in the construction of national identities. Michaels primarily investigates who counts as a native, that is, who "belongs" as an insider in a particular place; my interest lies in *how* people belong, which can be seen through the regional consciousness that permeates Fitzgerald's and Cather's novels. Earlier regional novels, such as Jewett's *Country*, suggest that outsiders can become insiders through an appreciation for regional geography, which forms the foundation for place attachment through traditional means. The understanding of regions shifted in the modern era to encompass urban centers and to accommodate greater mobility, and in their novels of 1925, both Cather and Fitzgerald question the ability of individuals to form attachment to place. Although Cather's characters are able to form some attachments to place in *The Professor's House*, she also examines how materialism and feelings of exile or rootlessness impede such attachments. Through an understanding of Fitzgerald's and Cather's common ground concerning the anxiety of forming place attachment, we can not only better understand Cather's

---

<sup>4</sup> From a letter to Thomas Boyd, the literary editor of the *St. Paul Daily News*, which Boyd subsequently printed as a feature item in the newspaper. Fitzgerald discusses the current state of literary art in America by beginning with the argument that the "history of a young man" formula has been overworked. He turns to an examination of the upper-class reading public who simply "read what they're told" and believe that they are cultured.

engagement with modernism, but we also add complexity to our conceptions of literary modernism.

Tom Lutz examines the modernization of regionalism in *Cosmopolitan Vistas*; as his title suggests, Lutz advocates increased attention to the cosmopolitan features that appear in regional literature when insiders meet outsiders, the local meets the global, and the rural meets the urban. Commenting on one of the "hallmarks" of regional literature -- a city visitor who narrates his or her trip to the country or provincial enclave -- Lutz notes that while "in these texts the urban visitor's perspective is represented as in some ways clearly superior to the rural ones," this perspective "is far from reliable" (30). Lutz continues, arguing that "the visitor does not, in the end, determine our reading, but helps give these texts their cosmopolitan flavor, since the competing cultural views voiced by visitors and visitees mirror and contend with one another."<sup>5</sup> Just as the city forms an integral part of regional writing, "the provinces" also inform notable modern texts. Susan Hegeman questions the assumption that "the city" is the primary inspirational source for modernism: "why would Faulkner write about life in the rural South; or why would Georgia O'Keefe abandon her fascination with New York skylines to paint the rural environs of Taos, New Mexico?" she asks (21). Hegeman convincingly argues that the rise of anthropology inspired a "spatial reconstruction of one's relationship to the past" particularly for modern artists, who began to look at the history of non-western cultures in Africa, Asia, and the Americas as the inspiration for artistic expression (37).

---

<sup>5</sup> Lutz's arguments continue an avenue of inquiry established by Stephanie Foote, as she suggests that "although regional texts focused almost exclusively on rural concerns, their nostalgic tone shows them to have been profoundly shaped by an awareness of the globalizing and standardizing tendencies of urbanization and industrialization" (3). Foote's reading of regionalism addresses globalization and urbanization more directly than Brodhead or Fetterley and Pryce; however, as this quote indicates, Foote still identifies regional literature as nostalgic and rural. Lutz's argument, like my own, investigates a less dichotomous approach to the relationship between regional and urban places.

I would argue further that this spatial reconstruction was not relegated to the past alone, and that modern writers reconstruct their spatial relationships to the present through a negotiation of the urbanized regional landscape.

Fitzgerald illustrates the urbanization of landscapes in the Midwest through the eyes of narrator Nick Carraway in *The Great Gatsby*. He writes, "That's my middle-west -- not the wheat or the prairies or the lost Swede towns but the thrilling, returning trains of my youth and the street lamps and sleigh bells in the frosty dark in the shadows of holly wreaths thrown by lighted windows in the snow" (184). Nick effectively captures several elements that traditionally define regional places, such as pastoral landscapes (wheat, prairies) and provincial towns that have a shared genealogical background (lost Swede towns). At the same time, however, he provides an alternative definition that reflects a dynamic, urban landscape. Specifically, his focus on trains suggests mobility, industrialization, and a movement away from genealogical definitions of belonging. Nick's alternative regional definition does more than simply shift the cultural regional consciousness from rural to urban areas. His attachment to place highlights objects -- street lamps, sleigh bells, wreaths, and windows -- and this emphasis asserts the role of an increasingly commodified culture as part of the modern regional experience.

As Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman point out in *Modernism in the Magazines*, many modern artists viewed their work as a reaction against commodified culture, especially as magazines and periodicals turned ever more to advertisements as a means of sustaining or increasing circulation. Scholes and Wulfman posit that "during the rise of modernism [...] the power of advertising was seen mainly in a sinister light, as having an adverse effect on literature," particularly by Ezra Pound (127). Yet, as Scholes

and Wulfman argue, these advertisements would have informed readers' contextual field of understanding serialized literature. Indeed, Charles Johanningsmeier argues through his study of the serialization of *The Professor's House* in *Collier's Weekly* that Cather's story "was deeply and inextricably immersed in the commercialism and materialism of this culture" (93).<sup>6</sup>

Although Cather outlines a rather firm critique of commodified culture in the Feld interview, the novel reveals a much more complicated portrait of cosmopolitan consumption. During her Feld interview, she laments that while "so many more of us are buying chiffoniers and bureaus and mirrors and toilet seats" this new purchasing power should not be confused with culture; homes have increased in "comfort and luxury," she continues, but "every home has not increased in beauty" ("Restlessness" 69). While Cather's statement clearly prioritizes "beauty" over "comfort and luxury," St. Peter's habits suggest that consumption based on aesthetic appreciation ultimately facilitates the acquisition of comfort and luxury. His picnic lunches -- "chicken sandwiches with lettuce leaves, red California grapes, and two shapely, long-necked russet pears," served with linen napkins (100); his alcohol -- taken through "the City of Mexico [...] without duty" (97); his furs and furniture, and his trips abroad all reflect his epicurean tastes and his efforts to surround himself with beauty, craftsmanship, and quality.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Johanningsmeier writes from the assumption that both Godfrey St. Peter and Tom Outland hold "anti-materialist stances," and that "due to the class and ideological affiliations of *Collier's* readers, they would have been more likely to regard these characters' anti-materialist attitudes as almost un-American" (71). While I agree that this original group of readers would have been put off by St. Peter in particular (a feeling which may be shared by contemporary readers as well), I don't believe that St. Peter or Outland can be labeled "anti-materialist" so easily.

<sup>7</sup> Christopher Nealon argues that St. Peter's "nostalgia for French and Spanish culture," and his distaste for the "feminine" shopping spree of his daughter, form the foundation for his domestic alienation (84). Further treatment of the significance of objects in Cather's fiction can be found in Janice Stout's (ed.) *Willa Cather and Material Culture*.

The true effects that this cosmopolitan lifestyle and the practice of conspicuous consumption have on place attachment, however, become clear during St. Peter's two trips to Chicago; although these trips have very different purposes, and opposing emotional outcomes, both trips emphasize his acquiescence to luxury, and ultimately reveal an anemic world too featureless to inspire any real connection. After arriving by train in the middle of a snowstorm, St. Peter and his wife join the Marselluses at their hotel, Chicago's famous Blackstone: "tea was served in Louie's suite on the lake front, with a fine view of the falling snow from the windows. The Professor was in a genial mood; he was glad to be in a big city again, in a luxurious hotel, and especially pleased to be able to sit in comfort and watch the storm over the water" (89). In contrast to other evocations of place, such as Tom Outland's awe-struck depictions of the mesa and St. Peter's vivid childhood memories of Lake Michigan, the Blackstone experience lacks vivacity. The simplicity of the diction (the "fine view," the "big city") reinforces St. Peter's complacent mood; the place is smooth and mesmerizing, and any details that could disturb his comfort have dissolved into generalities. Underneath St. Peter's ease, however, is a sense of disconnection; in this Chicago scene, Cather demonstrates the difficulty of forming an attachment to place within a cocoon of luxury that walls off the individual and dulls the senses.

The ramifications of disconnection and a lack of attachment to place are apparent in St. Peter's second trip to Chicago, as he accompanies Rosamond and Louie to select furniture for their new estate. Chicago is not valued as a place of spiritual renewal in Cather's novel; it does not facilitate a sense of belonging, and it does not foster relationships between individuals. Instead, St. Peter and his family have created a

---

marketplace identity for Chicago; its function is to provide access to luxury items, such as Spanish bedroom furniture and fur coats.

St. Peter does not attribute the commodified turn of mind in his family to a particular place, however. Instead, he blames his son-in-law Louie, who is Jewish. The stereotypical link between Jews and materialism in *The Professor's House* has led to charges of anti-Semitism, most notably in Michaels' *Our America*. Cather's anti-Semitic stereotypes are regrettable; however in my reading Louie's cultural heritage becomes a vehicle for the exploration of a torn, modern relationship to place through themes of diaspora and exile.

Howard Wettstein explains that, especially from a Jewish standpoint, diaspora and exile can be seen as opposing terms.<sup>8</sup> He defines "diaspora" as a "geopolitical dispersion," which may be involuntary, but the term also encompasses a voluntary dispersion for people who "simply [decide] to leave, say for want of economic improvement or cultural enrichment" (47). Exile, in contrast, is a more religious concept that involves "involuntary removal from homeland" and "being somehow in the wrong place," often as punishment. Louie embodies the more positive concept of diaspora, rather than exile, as he voluntarily moves between and within regions. This mobility allows him to pursue economic improvement and cultural enrichment, and his characterization suggests a link between diasporic behavior and cosmopolitanism. Although St. Peter and his other son-in-law, Scott, explicitly critique Louie's pursuit of money and cultural opportunity, the former, in particular, exhibits similar diasporic

---

<sup>8</sup> Wettstein opens his essay by explaining that "diaspora is a relatively new English word and has no traditional Hebrew equivalent" (47). According to his notes, the first OED reference occurs in 1876, and by 1881 was used by *Encyclopaedia Britannica* to refer specifically to Jewish relocation (58, note 1).

tendencies. Through St. Peter's criticism of Louie and the novel's underlying critique of St. Peter, Cather conveys reservations concerning cosmopolitanism, as both men fail to investigate the relationship among their consumer lifestyles, the "cultural enrichment" these lifestyles propose, and the effects of consumption and cosmopolitanism on their own sense of place.

Conspicuous consumption in both Cather's and Fitzgerald's novels provides one means of pursuing these missing place attachments; through the acquisition of more goods, especially goods that are aesthetically pleasing or luxurious, the characters increase their potential avenues of attachment. The Marsellus mansion, "Outland," provides an excellent example. While the Outland mansion was ostensibly created to honor its namesake (particularly through museum spaces for Tom Outland's laboratory materials and library), many of its features are incongruent with this purpose. Instead, the mansion functions as a showcase to display opulence and wealth. Louie and Rosamond select a pristine location on Lake Michigan, where their Paris-trained architect plans to build "a Norwegian manor house, very harmonious with its setting, just the right thing for rugged pine woods and high headlands" (40). Clearly, the Marselluses consider the aesthetics of place as they build their home; however, "Outland" becomes a cosmopolitan marketplace -- like Chicago -- where products are to be consumed and displayed, such as the perfect wrought-iron hinges and latches that are more distinctive (and expensive) than Colonial glass knobs. In addition to the Outland mansion, St. Peter's (new) house and Gatsby's mansion constitute critical portraits of erratic consumerism, one driven by preoccupations with display. Each of these places embodies the critique of modernization that Cather expressed in her Feld interview, for these houses have indeed

increased in "comfort and luxury," but not necessarily beauty, through the accumulation of goods (see "Restlessness" 69).

Cather's characters are not blind to the consequences of consumption and their ramifications for attachment and belonging. St. Peter recognizes that his attachment to his garden was cultivated through an intimacy with the place, his own work to create the garden, and its role in his family's life. As St. Peter prepares to move, he anticipates that the new occupants will not value the garden due to their own separation from its creation and history. After one gardening session he asks his wife, "what am I to do about the garden in the end, Lillian? Destroy it? Or leave it up to the mercy of the next tenants?" (76-7). In contrast to Louie's embrace of diasporic mobility, in this instance St. Peter leans towards exile and regret in anticipation of his move because he is painfully aware of the difficulty of forming an attachment to a new place.

As the novel closes the garden remains intact, and it seems safe to say that St. Peter does not follow through with his destructive suggestion. But the full impact of his thoughts can be seen in light of the story of the cliff dwellers that haunts the text. These ancient people, by choice or by force, did what St. Peter is afraid to do: they left everything behind.<sup>9</sup> St. Peter's anxiety concerning the appreciation of place is realized through the experience of the cliff dwellers, for while Tom becomes attached to the mesa

---

<sup>9</sup> In the novel, Father Duchene hypothesizes that the able-bodied members of the tribe were ambushed by a hostile tribe while farming away from the cliff dwellings, and that the elderly population remaining in Cliff City abandoned the site when the farmers did not return. Anthropologists continue to examine evidence from several different types of ancient structures, including the cliff dwellings, to understand their migration. David Stuart analyzes Chacoan settlements and argues that an increasingly class-stratified society, in combination with drought, put communities under tremendous stress which ultimately led to increased ritualistic behavior, possible violence, and abandonment. Mark Varien and Richard Wilshusen's collection of anthropological essays on the Mesa Verde region are more technical in nature, but offer intriguing investigations of environmental and community stress that could cause depopulation or migration.

through his aesthetic appreciation of its physical geography, and even asserts a genealogical attachment to this place and people, the belongings of the cliff dwellers have been left "to the mercy of the next tenants." Tom's endeavors to preserve this historic place cannot be sustained through modern regional consciousness: he and Rodney fight over the economic value of the artifacts, Tom's requests for government aid go ignored, and dozens of objects -- including human remains -- are disturbed in the process. Ultimately, Cather's novel suggests that a highly individualized sense of place attachment, one that cannot be successfully communicated or shared with others, will be unsustainable due to the competing definitions of value that various members of society might espouse in a modern industrial world.

*The Professor's House* represents a modern approach to place as Cather examines and questions the formation of place attachment in a changing modern landscape. The concluding section of the novel considers a concept that remains unexplored in earlier forms of regional writing: the attempt to learn to live in exile, or in "the wrong place." In *The Great Gatsby* Nick Carraway recognizes his own exile when the East becomes "haunted" for him, like a grotesque El Greco painting, after Gatsby's death (185). When Nick confidently states that he "decided to come back home," he suggests that mobility is an antidote for exile. In *The Professor's House*, in contrast, Cather emphasizes the impossibility of return due to the passage of time as the Professor's efforts to reconcile himself with exile do not lead him into the future, but into the past. While St. Peter attempts to renew his attachment to place through his childhood memories and his memories of Tom Outland and their time on the mesa, a temporal return is impossible; St. Peter's attempt to live in the past of the old house nearly kills him. His resulting

acquiescence to life in the new house, in a place where he does not feel at home, suggests that exile is a permanent condition. Cather, who seems unwilling to leave "the old house" of regionalism, ultimately suggests that exile can be endured through knowing one's place: "at least," the Professor notes, "he felt the ground under his feet. He thought he knew where he was" (283).

### **Conclusions: National Citizenship and the Regional Citizen**

Much of this chapter has, like *The Professor's House* itself, explored the complexities of place through the filter of Godfrey St. Peter's consciousness. As a means of conclusion, I would like to turn to one of the most puzzling elements of Cather's novel, her liberal alterations of the historical "discovery" of the Mesa Verde cliff dwellings by Richard Wetherill in 1888. Scholars situate Cather's revisions, and her subsequent idealization of the Southwest, as an artist's celebration of universal humanity. Cather's idealization of both the mesa and archaeological site cannot be disputed. On the other hand, Tom Outland's disastrous trip to Washington is not a story of universal humanity, but one that exemplifies the tension between national citizenship and regional affiliation.

Richard Wetherill, a member of a ranching family from Mancos, Colorado, is credited with finding Cliff Palace in Mesa Verde with his brother-in-law, Charlie Mason. Wetherill, along with several of his brothers, embarked on amateur archaeological excavation of the site; they also continued to explore the region and found several more sites of abandoned ancient Pueblo dwellings. Although Cather claims that she followed this original story "very closely," literary critic David Harrell's extensive research on Mesa Verde and *The Professor's House* illustrates her numerous deviations from

historical records. Harrell particularly notes Cather's idealization of place as one of these deviations. The actual archaeological site would have been dark and filled with debris; Cather's Cliff city, as discovered by Tom Outland, is clean and well lit. This imaginative perfection of place spreads to the mesa itself, which Harrell appropriately summarizes as a "world full of superlatives: the most spectacular coloration, the loudest thunder, the most inaccessible places, the purest air, the cleanest and coldest water" (132). For Harrell, these deviations from reality play an important part in Cather's development of what he calls "the Kingdom of Art." Through Tom Outland's story, Harrell argues, Cather explores the tenets of artistic life, which include a religious devotion to craft and an inhabitation in a mythical or allegorical world. In *Practical Ecocriticism*, Glen Love builds on Harrell's research by investigating the archetypal elements of Tom Outland's story and the idealized "pastoral" nature of the mesa. Cather's idyllic representation of place, Love argues, celebrates the "universals of human experience" and "the major similarities that unite us as a species" (115). Both Harrell's and Love's emphasis on the "universal" appeals of Cather's story, however, overlook multiple instances of "non-universal" forms of belonging and other complicating factors.

For example, Love cites several statements by Tom and Father Duchene to emphasize their sense of the universal, saying "to Tom, Father Duchene calls the cliff dwellers '*your people*,' a characterization that Tom accepts when he later upbraids his friend Roddy for selling the artifacts that belonged '*to all the people ...*, to boys like you and me that have no other *ancestors* to inherit from ... I'm not so poor that I have to sell the pots and pans that belonged to *my poor grandmothers* a thousand years ago" (99, emphasis and ellipses Love's). Love suggests that this emphasis on ancestry and general

fascination with ancient cultures points to a celebration of our "shared human condition." In citing these passages, however, Love excises critical information. In the two missing sections, indicated by Love's use of ellipses, are the phrases "to this country, to the State, and," and for the second ellipses, the sentence "you've gone and sold them to a country that's got plenty of relics of its own," which instigates a discussion between Roddy and Tom concerning the notorious Dreyfus case.<sup>10</sup> These missing phrases highlight issues of ownership and nationality, and add a decidedly political component to Tom and Roddy's argument. The sale of the artifacts demonstrates that their meaning is anything but universal -- for if that was the case, Roddy and Tom would have easily agreed on how the artifacts should be handled. The characters themselves subject the artifacts to an array of meanings: symbols of universal humanity, yes, but the artifacts are also treated as commodities, national artifacts, gifts, symbols of Tom Outland's brilliance and love, and, even as one of the clerks at the Indian Commission office sees them, exotic ashtrays.

These multiple interpretations of the artifacts' significance reflect a larger ambiguity concerning the significance of the Southwest as a whole. Tom's journey to Washington exposes these multiple interpretations of the Southwest, and the failure of his mission suggests a tension between regional life and national citizenship. As Marilee Lindemann notes, Tom's trip to Washington, DC highlights his desire to act upon his national citizenship and participate in activities of the nation. This national consciousness allows Tom to trace multiple similarities between the regional landscape of Cliff Palace

---

<sup>10</sup> Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer in the French army, was accused of supplying secrets to the German government. Dreyfus was convicted of treason in 1894; although subsequent evidence was found to reveal that another individual was responsible, Dreyfus was not exonerated until 1906. Susan Meyer further explores the links between Tom and Roddy's argument, Louie's Jewishness, and war attitudes in her essay "On the Front and at Home: Wharton, Cather, the Jews, and the First World War."

and the national landscape of the capital. Both spaces are "monumental," and emphasize human ingenuity through their designers' attentiveness to order (Lindemann 48).

Moreover, both places foster a deep "religious feeling" in Tom's soul (47). These common elements between the two places, however, are not universally acknowledged by others. As readers of the novel well know, the Washington officials and Smithsonian researchers ascribe little importance to Tom's artifacts or requests.

According to Harrell, the Wetherill brothers did not experience the same degree of rejection by the Smithsonian officials as the fictional Tom Outland did (99). Cather's modification of this element of the story becomes especially fascinating in light of the timeline that Harrell suggests for the novel, which places Tom's trip to Washington from January to June, 1906 (appendix, 217). The Antiquities Act, proposed by President Theodore Roosevelt, was passed June 8, 1906. Roosevelt's legislation was proposed specifically to address looting problems at prehistoric archaeological sites in the Southwest by placing such sites underneath the protective powers of the national government. John Wetherill served as a guide to the southwestern archaeological sites for government officials responsible for drafting the Antiquities Act.

Tom's failure in Washington does more than make Cather's story more dramatic; it proposes an alternative relationship between regions and the nation. Roosevelt's legislation was responsible for placing the most distinctive regional places under federal control. In *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America*, Douglas Brinkley explains that in addition to the Antiquities Act, Roosevelt used other national tools to facilitate his conservation efforts: "as an ardent believer in statehood for the Territories, Roosevelt now [in 1906] indicated that admittance into the Union entitled

a quid pro quo -- turning over natural and archaeological wonders like the Grand Canyon, the Canyon de Chelly, and the Petrified Forest to the Department of the Interior to become national monuments" (649). Certainly, Roosevelt's policies were aimed at preserving irreplaceable wilderness areas, but these practices also raise important questions: what are the ramifications of transforming a "regional" place into a "national" one? In fact, one of the original proponents of creating a Mesa Verde National Park in the 1900s, Virginia McClurg, eventually argued that a national park should not be created because of the "exclusive control" granted to federal officials. Instead, she argued that the land should remain under state jurisdiction (Robertson 70).

Cather's version of the story keeps region separate from nation. Although Cather casts this separation as a failure, her story imagines an alternative reality for the regional lands of the West. Her emphasis on the tension between regional and national perspectives, and the inability of Tom as a regional representative to communicate successfully with national figures, situates Cather's novel in a tradition of regional consciousness. This tension echoes the struggles depicted by *Atlantic Monthly* contributors, such as Margaret Lynn, as they attempt to reconcile regional experiences with citizenship in the civilized national community. Cather's Tom Outland, like the *Atlantic* contributors, manages this tension by forming rich relationships to regional places; this sense of attachment amid tension provides a contrast to the subject of my next chapter, the ambivalent and detached place relationships depicted by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

## Chapter Five

### Relocation, Dislocation, and Detachment:

#### F. Scott Fitzgerald as Regional Writer

In the previous chapter, I examined Willa Cather's *The Professor's House* alongside F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* in order to demonstrate the fluidity of regional consciousness as modern writers in the twentieth-century both incorporate and react to earlier forms of regional writing. Regionalism has been, and continues to be, an important critical approach to Cather's works, one which has resulted in a rich array of scholarly material. In contrast, Fitzgerald and his works occupy a curious position in the field of regionalism. Due to his birth in St. Paul, and his returns to the city in order to write, several small biographies and anthologies celebrate his status as a Minnesotan writer; however, Fitzgerald is rarely approached from a regional perspective within the academic community.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter contends that recognizing and investigating Fitzgerald's regional consciousness is key to understanding his thematic explorations of social class in the

---

<sup>1</sup> In terms of biography, John J. Koblas' *F. Scott Fitzgerald in Minnesota: His Homes and Haunts*, David Page and John J. Koblas' *F. Scott Fitzgerald in Minnesota: Towards the Summit*, and Lloyd C. Hackl's *F. Scott Fitzgerald and St. Paul: "Still Home to Me"* document Fitzgerald's life in Minnesota in meticulous detail through maps and (black-and-white, not particularly high quality) photographs. Patricia Hampl and David Page's appropriately titled anthology, *The St. Paul Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, collects thirteen stories that reference the city. This task of "identifying" the places depicted in Fitzgerald's fiction remains the primary task represented in scholarly regional approaches. For example, Scott Donaldson's essay "St. Paul Boy" (from the anthology *Place in American Fiction*) contains mainly a biographical summary of Fitzgerald's life in Minnesota; Donaldson's essay lacks any analysis beyond biographical identification of places, and represents a typical "regional" approach to Fitzgerald's work. One notable exception is Jonathan Barron, who finds numerous correspondences between "cultural and geographical hierarchies" in *The Great Gatsby*, which result in rich conversations about regionalism in his teaching at universities in both Minnesota and Mississippi (60).

1920s. Particularly, Fitzgerald establishes a link between the ability to achieve a higher social or economic status and people who are influenced by, but not tied to, a particular place. I argue that understanding Fitzgerald's regional consciousness must go beyond analyzing his use of "symbolic settings," as the symbols do not quite accurately capture the social nature, or cultural geography, of place in Fitzgerald's fiction. In the first part of this chapter I analyze the sense of regional determinism that emerges in "The Ice Palace" and "Winter Dreams." Although characters in these stories continually express a desire to move to other regions, their inability to move beyond regional stereotyping enhances their sense of place detachment, even in their "home" region. As I argue in the second part of this chapter, this sense of regional determinism permeates Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Through the relocation of characters within both *The Great Gatsby* and its precursor story "Winter Dreams" -- and the eventual displacement of the Midwestern setting onto the East in the final tale -- Fitzgerald captures the cosmopolitan nature of modern regionalism in the early twentieth-century.

### **"The Only Milieu He Thoroughly Understands": Regional Determinism**

One of the most prevalent approaches to understanding the role of place in Fitzgerald's fiction addresses metaphor and symbolism. Lionel Trilling effectively demonstrates this approach through his analysis of *Gatsby* and his own "Platonic" self-creation. Trilling asserts that "*Gatsby*, divided between power and dream, comes inevitably to stand for America itself. Ours is the only nation that prides itself upon a dream and gives its name to one, 'the American dream'" (19). In order to understand and justify many of the particular place details incorporated into Fitzgerald's fiction, critics

often turn to discussions of symbolism. For example, in *The Illusions of a Nation: Myth and History in the Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, John Callahan sees the novel as confronting the "complexities of Western history" and a creative unfolding of "Western man's first contract with America" in mythic form (10-11). Robert Ornstein takes a similar approach to *The Great Gatsby*, arguing that Fitzgerald "[creates] a myth with the imaginative sweep of America's historical venture across an untamed continent" (139). He continues, saying that this "fable of East and West" is primarily concerned with "the unending quest for the romantic dream." Within this mythic structure, "East" and "West" are not actually places at all, but symbols encompassing historic, romantic metanarratives of the nation. In *Enchanted Places: The Use of Setting in F. Scott Fitzgerald's Fiction*, Aiping Zhang takes a different approach, organizing his text around specific locations such as schools, bars, and Hollywood. Zhang emphasizes the "parabolic quality" of these places that, in Fitzgerald's fiction, "[function] suggestively as a microcosm of the whole American society" (1). Zhang's work parallels other critics who situate Fitzgerald as perpetuating the symbolic places of other national writers, such as Fitzgerald's "valley of ashes" as an expansion of T.S. Eliot's "unreal city" in *The Waste Land* (see Trilling, Lee). Within the discourse of regionalism, Diane Quantic sees Fitzgerald's symbolic places as part of a larger mythology. Although she admits that readers may not classify *The Great Gatsby* "as a Great Plains novel," Quantic argues that "the link to the optimistic Western myth of manifest destiny and the garden is obvious." Building on the interpretations of Leo Marx, Quantic (like Trilling) also substitutes characters for place, saying that "Nick recognizes the tension between the myth of the ideal garden -- Daisy -- and the threat of encroaching reality -- the Valley of Ashes" (133).

In contrast, a few scholars resist these overarching symbolic readings in order to examine what they ignore -- Fitzgerald's realism -- particularly by identifying connections between his biographical experiences and his fiction. Matthew J. Bruccoli adopts a nuanced approach to Fitzgerald's representation of place as a hybrid construction encompassing both "actual" geography and "fictional" geography, which captures the emotional resonance of place. Bruccoli touches on the presence of these two geographies in *The Great Gatsby*, explaining that "as a social historian, Fitzgerald utilized real places and real details for the denotations and connotations these references generated in the informed readers [...]. As an impressionist, Fitzgerald sought to convey, by means of language and style, the emotions associated with actual and fictional settings" ("The Text" 192-93). Bruccoli's choice of terms ("impressionistic," "denotations and connotations," "emotions") reflects a theoretical approach to place that moves beyond setting or symbolism. These distinctions between documentary and impressionism remain central to critical approaches to Fitzgerald's fiction as he incorporates people, events, and places from his life into his fiction in order to reach emotional, not factual, truths.

Through a blend of both actual and fictional places, Fitzgerald's short stories grapple with the complex cultural geography of American regions in the early twentieth-century. Many of these stories illustrate that places cannot be separated from their social, and particularly economic, meanings. Indeed, Fitzgerald's regional consciousness, as expressed in his fiction, constructs regions as a means of organizing American culture. Edmund Wilson's March 1922 review of Fitzgerald's work clearly acknowledges not only Fitzgerald's regional consciousness, but also the cultural perceptions regional

characterizations that shaped the reception of Fitzgerald stories. This review is worth quoting at length:

In regards to the man [Fitzgerald] himself, there are perhaps two things worth knowing, for the influence they have had on his work. In the first place, he comes from the Middle West -- from St. Paul, Minnesota. Fitzgerald is as much of the Middle West of large cities and country clubs as Sinclair Lewis is of the Middle West of the prairies and little towns. What we find in him is much what we find in the more prosperous strata of these cities: sensitivity and eagerness for life without a sound base of culture and taste; a structure of millionaire residences, brilliant expensive hotels and exhilarating social activities built not on the eighteenth century but simply on the flat Western land. And it seems to me rather a pity that he has not written more of the West: it is perhaps the only milieu that he thoroughly understands. When Fitzgerald approaches the East, he brings to it the standards of the wealthy West -- the preoccupation with display, the appetite for visible magnificence and audible jamboree, the vigorous social atmosphere of amiable flappers and youths comparatively untainted as yet by the snobbery of the East. In *The Beautiful and the Damned*, for example, we feel that he is moving in a vacuum; the characters have no real connection with the background to which they have been assigned; they are not part of the organism of New York as the characters in, say, the short story *Bernice Bobs Her Hair* are part of the organism of St. Paul.

(32)

Wilson's conception of regions, the effect of regions on individuals, and the representation of regions in literature, contains several important observations. First, Wilson notes the complexity of social life in the Middle West, which includes not only the remote hinterlands but also lavish displays of urban wealth. Wilson's distinction between Lewis and Fitzgerald anticipates the latter's eventual conception of the Midwest in *The Great Gatsby*, which goes beyond the "lost Swede towns." Second, Wilson identifies regional differences in the way that such wealth is expressed. His depiction of Midwesterners as energetic yet naïve, lacking in "culture and taste" but full of vivacity (perhaps too much so, through their "preoccupation with display") identifies common traits associated with the region. Lastly, Wilson remains skeptical of mobile regional citizenship and representation. Wilson questions Fitzgerald's ability to capture the "organism" of Eastern places or the "real connections" between his Eastern characters and their region. This questioning of regional mobility stands in contrast to the unquestioned regional movement represented in Mark Twain's works (as he can be a reliable narrator for many regions), and in Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (as her narrator moves from an urban community into a provincial one).

Wilson's review presents a useful prompt for considering how cultural factors related to regionalism, in addition to biographical factors, emerge in Fitzgerald's fiction. For example, many works that feature St. Paul or other Minnesotan locations -- such as *This Side of Paradise* (1920), "Winter Dreams" (1922), "Absolution" (1924), and the Basil Duke Lee stories (beginning in 1928) -- feature the protagonists as children. As a result, many critics turn to biographical criticism and Fitzgerald's own childhood as an interpretive lens. Wilson's characterization of the Middle West population as naïve,

energetic, and under-cultured, however, suggests a regional component of these stories as well: Midwesterners behave like children. These novels and stories also depict a preoccupation with transforming oneself in order to become more cultured or successful, a transformation that coincides with the process of growing up. In *This Side of Paradise* and "Winter Dreams," this transformation is achieved, in part, while the protagonists attend Eastern schools. "Absolution," a darker story set in the Red River Valley about eleven-year-old Catholic Rudolph Miller's undermining of his own confessions, features another means of transformation through imagination. Rudolph creates a secret alter ego of "suave nobility," whom he names "Blatchford Sarnemington," as a means of escaping from his father and from God (163). These two means of transformation -- physical relocation and self-invention -- appear frequently in Fitzgerald's fiction and are often tied to regional portraits.

"The Ice Palace" (1920) is notable not only because the story addresses interaction between the North and the South (as opposed to the East-West, which occurs more regularly in Fitzgerald's fiction), but also because the story depicts a failed relocation from one region to another. The story opens with the protagonist, nineteen-year-old Sally Carrol Happer, lounging listlessly in the hot afternoon sun with her friends in her hometown of Tarleton, Georgia. When pressed by friend Clark Darrow to explain her engagement to a "Yankee," Sally Carrol insists on the rightness of her choice: "I want to go places and see people. I want my mind to grow. I want to live where things happen on a big scale" (287). While she appreciates Southern qualities of "living in the past, the lazy days and nights you have, and all your carelessness and generosity," Sally Carrol feels limited by her regional culture. The second half of the story depicts Sally Carrol's

visit to her Yankee (Minnesotan, actually) fiancé Harry Bellamy and his family in St. Paul. As critic David Ullrich explains, however, "Sally Carrol discovers that the material forces of culture operating in the North are almost identical to those of the South, and equally oppressive" (423). After enduring cold stares from her future in-laws concerning her bobbed hair and smoking habits, Sally Carrol eventually panics during a tour inside a festival palace made of ice. She returns home to the South the next day, and it is implied that she has broken off her engagement.

"The Ice Palace" illustrates a narrow definition of regional belonging as Sally Carrol's identity is permanently tied to her region of birth. The story repeatedly employs classification as a means of grouping individuals, and as a result, dictating avenues of belonging. For example, Sally Carrol "always [thinks] of people as feline or canine, irrespective of sex" (297). Although she is not able to explain exactly how or why individuals fall into these groups, beyond the fact that "most Southern men an' most of these girls [at the party]" are feline, her theory implies that these inexplicable qualities determined by one's regional environment and culture. Harry believes that regional influences are inescapable as well, as he openly insults "those damn Southerners!" in front of his fiancée. "They're sort of -- sort of degenerates -- not at all like the old Southerners. They've lived so long down there with all the colored people that they've gotten lazy and shiftless" (301). Although Harry assures his fiancée that such comments don't apply to her -- and reminds her that she has professed similar judgments on the South herself -- Harry's regional assumptions about the South implicate Sally Carrol by association; on the basis of Harry's logic, how could she, as a Southerner, *not* be degenerate, lazy, or shiftless?

In addition to Harry's deterministic statements, his actions inhibit Sally Carrol's ability to cultivate a sense of belonging in his region. Several times throughout the story Sally Carrol expresses a desire to play with children in the snow and go sledding. These activities are cast as expressions of regional identity, as the children display not only their tolerance for the cold but also their health and exuberance -- a showcase of the "pep in the air," that contrasts with the imputed laziness of the South (89). But when Sally Carrol cries "oh, I want to do that! Can we Harry?" he dismisses her request, explaining "that's for kids" (88). By denying Sally Carrol an opportunity to participate in regional activities, essentially ones that would allow Sally Carrol to create an alternative "Midwestern" childhood for herself to replace her Southern one, Harry prevents his fiancée from moving into the regional culture. Sally Carrol and Harry's rigid regional ideologies prove to be inescapable and exacerbate the flaws in their relationship. By holding to their beliefs in regional determinism, Sally Carrol and Harry not only destroy their relationship, but also limit their potential to function outside the narrowness of their home regions. Fitzgerald continues to explore the ramifications of regional determinism on the lives -- and relationships -- through his characters in "Winter Dreams" and *The Great Gatsby*.

Lastly, the ice palace itself represents a regional example of Wilson's claim that the Midwest displays "sensitivity and eagerness for life without a sound base of culture and taste." Described as a marvelous feat of engineering, the ice palace "was three stories in the air, with battlements and embrasures and narrow icicled windows, and the innumerable electrical lights inside made a gorgeous transparency of the great central hall" (303). Harry is filled with excitement as they approach the palace, crying "my golly, it's beautiful, isn't it! They haven't had one here since eighty-five!" He is also fascinated

by its construction details ("it's a hundred and seventy feet tall [...] covers six thousand square yards") (303-4). Ullrich argues that, through Harry's enthusiasm, Fitzgerald "offers a frank and unflinching critique of the North as blindly seeking to propagate its mythologies" (424). This argument ignores two important facts about Fitzgerald and the Midwest. First, Fitzgerald often critiques practices or opinions that he simultaneously endorses, for example, lavish and wealthy lifestyles. Fitzgerald's process of critique and endorsement, moreover, represents facets of a wider regional culture. The St. Paul Winter Carnival (actually first held in February 1886) was created in response to a New York newspaper's claim that the city was "another Siberia, unfit for human habitation in the winter" ("History of the St. Paul Winter Carnival"). Through the creation of the carnival, city leaders literally embarked on a project to create a sense of culture and tradition that the region is popularly accused of lacking: as a result, the ice palace is more than a blind mythology; it is an attempt to transform disparaging assumptions about the region into sources of regional pride. While Fitzgerald's fascination with "self-creation" is often explained as personal, the construction of the ice palace demonstrates a larger regional project along the same lines. Once again, even this regional attempt at self-creation is tied to children through Fitzgerald's representations. Harry's enthusiasm sounds like the remarks of an excited boy, and Sally Carrol is eager to join children in sledding and building snowmen. Emphasizing St. Paul's status as a young, "three generation town," Fitzgerald's focus on youth and display reinforces more widespread regional attempts to generate culture self-consciously.

In contrast to his examination of a regional-cultural event in "The Ice Palace," Fitzgerald turns to a more thorough examination of cultural geography in his short story

"Winter Dreams." The fictional town of Black Bear Lake in "Winter Dreams" is based on White Bear Lake, Minnesota, a fashionable resort town located a few miles north of St. Paul. Fitzgerald is not the first writer to memorialize the town. In *Life on the Mississippi* Twain describes "White-bear Lake" as "a lovely sheet of water [being utilized] as a summer resort by the wealth and fashion of the State" although it is "less known" than resorts in Minneapolis and St. Paul (347). Nor was Fitzgerald the city's most notorious guest; it is rumored that gangsters laid low in White Bear Lake resorts during the 1920s and 30s ("City History"). As for Fitzgerald, the resort town became an extension of the wealth he encountered on Summit Avenue in St. Paul, as White Bear Lake was a popular destination for city dwellers with summer homes and secondary residences. During his childhood and teenage years, Fitzgerald visited White Bear Lake as a guest at the summer homes of friends, and two of his earliest plays were performed (during the fall of 1913 and 1914) at the White Bear Lake Yacht Club.<sup>2</sup> As adults, Scott and Zelda lived in Dellwood on White Bear Lake from August to October 1921; from there the couple moved to the Commodore on Summit Avenue in St. Paul. They returned again to White Bear Lake during the summer of 1922, and were asked to leave in August after their parties disturbed other guests.

Black Bear Lake proves to be a useful place to consider the relationship between geography and economics. In "Winter Dreams," Fitzgerald prioritizes a relationship to place that encompasses Bruce Robbins' definition of cosmopolitanism: "yes, we are connected to the earth -- but not to 'a' place on it, simple and self-evident as the surroundings we see when we open our eyes. We are connected to all sorts of places,

---

<sup>2</sup> In addition to Brucoli's definitive biography, the biographies of John Koblas, David Page and Koblas, and Lloyd C. Hackl provide material specifically focused on Fitzgerald's life in Minnesota

casually if not always consciously [...] (3). These casual connections can be problematic, as Robbins acknowledges the accusation that cosmopolitan individuals "wallow in a privileged and irresponsible detachment," without any sense of responsibility (4). The use of "privileged" here implies that this type of detachment is most problematic for upper-class members of society. Many of Fitzgerald's mobile regional characters, in their struggle to find a balance between meaningful (albeit casual) connections to place and "irresponsible detachment," also belong to (or want to belong to) the upper echelons of society.

"Winter Dreams" opens with an exposition on economic hierarchy within place: "some of the caddies were poor as sin and lived in one-room houses with a neurasthenic cow in the front yard, but Dexter Green's father owned the second-best grocery-store in Black Bear -- the best one was 'The Hub,' patronized by the wealthy people from Sherry Island -- and Dexter caddied only for pocket-money" ("Winter Dreams" 108). Dexter, the protagonist hero, is clearly not in the lowest economic levels of this society; his story is not of the "rags to riches" variety. Instead, Dexter's story questions the national American narrative of prosperity through hard work. Although his father is successful and Dexter does not work out of necessity, their wealth is not the same as the wealth of those from Sherry Island.

Fitzgerald's fictionalized portrait of a young man haunted by a sense of economic deficiency reflects a larger preoccupation in the regional culture. One of the most striking examples is Minnesotan Thorstein Veblen and his economic philosophy in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, published in 1899.<sup>3</sup> In fact, in his introduction to *The*

---

<sup>3</sup> Veblen, too, is often situated as a "national" writer, and he provides a means to understand issues of consumption and wealth in a variety of texts, including those by Edith Wharton and Henry James. William

*Theory of the Leisure Class*, John Kenneth Galbraith compares Veblen and Fitzgerald, saying that "the nearest thing in the United States to an academic legend -- the equivalent of that of Scott Fitzgerald in fiction or of the Barrymores in the theater -- is the legend of Thorstein Veblen" (v). The "legend" of Veblen, raised on a farm an hour south of Minneapolis and one of several children born to Norwegian immigrant parents, also concerns the economic status of his family. Throughout his life, Veblen spoke of the poverty and oppression that he endured as a child. Evidence and reports from his siblings, suggests, however, that their lifestyle was actually quite comfortable for Norwegian immigrants of the time. Veblen's life illustrates this comfort as he was sent to college instead of being required to work on the farm.

Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* anticipates many of Fitzgerald's own interests in the lives of the rich. Veblen writes that "wealth is now itself intrinsically honorable and confers honor on its possessor. By a further refinement, wealth acquired passively by transmission from ancestors or other antecedents presently becomes even more honorific than wealth acquired by the possessor's own effort" (37). He notes that wealth is not interchangeable with comfort, as the desire for wealth "can scarcely be satiated in any individual instance" (39). For Veblen, the world becomes polarized dichotomies, with the leisure class encompassing honor and wealth, and the industrial class endlessly toiling in detestable work. It is unclear if Fitzgerald was particularly familiar with Veblen's work; however, Veblen frequently contributed to *The Dial*, both as a writer of economic articles and an editor in conjunction with John Dewey and others

---

Barillas suggests, however, that Veblen's theories derive from, and are particularly applicable to, Midwestern regionalism (51, 230n11).

from 1918 to 1920, just prior to the publication's retooling as a literary magazine for the 1920s.

In "Winter Dreams," Dexter's love interest, Judy Jones, exemplifies the honorific type of wealth Veblen describes, and Dexter's encounter with her as a child illustrates the tension that arises from cross-economic interactions. Eleven-year-old Judy Jones arrives at the Sherry Island Golf Course bearing signifiers of her wealth: "a white linen nurse and five small new golf-clubs in a white canvas bag," and the surname of Jones, the daughter of club regular Mr. Mortimer Jones who drives a Pierce-Arrow automobile ("Winter Dreams" 110). Although Dexter finds the situation humorous -- when the little girl has to wait for a caddy, she ends up in an argument with her nurse that culminates in Judy's attempts to strike the nurse with a golf club -- he also cannot submit to carrying her clubs. Dexter is overwhelmed by her. Judy is not yet beautiful (she is "beautifully ugly," our narrator states, "as little girls are apt to be who are destined after a few years to be inexpressibly lovely"), but Dexter finds that he is unable to look away from her convincing smile ("Winter Dreams" 109). Judy's security of attitude and confidence are a mark of her "Sherry Island wealth." Dexter, too, has a degree of economic security; he has the ability to quit his caddying job rather than caddy for Judy. Yet if Dexter's family wealth equaled that of the Joneses, he would not have been a caddy in the first place.

Due to his lack of ancestral riches, Dexter self-consciously creates his own place within the upper-class through his imagination. In fact, his favorite season is winter because in his idleness (there is little caddy work to do in the winter) Dexter can engage in what he calls "winter dreams." During these self-indulgent daydreams, Dexter "became a golf champion and defeated Mr. T. A. Hedrick in a marvelous match played a

hundred times over the fairways of his imagination, a match each detail of which he changed about untiringly -- sometimes he won with almost laughable ease, sometimes he came up magnificently from behind" ("Winter Dreams" 108-9). Dexter's adversary, Mr. T. A. Hedrick, is a wealthy patron of the golf club, and Dexter implicitly links financial success with achievement in other areas of life, such as being a successful sportsman. These dreams of being a success, a champion, influence many of Dexter's future decisions: he passes up an opportunity at a state school in order to pursue an Eastern education; he fights in a war; and he creates a profitable laundry business. Through the right education, the glory of battle, and business savviness, Dexter believes that he can gain access to the upper-class position he desires.

In "Winter Dreams," social class is marked by more than simply one's bank account, however. It is also marked by attitude. Wealth -- that is, inherited wealth, is accompanied by a sense of carelessness. Dexter's attempts to promote himself as wealthy and successful, however, necessitate a different attitude, one of careful calculation. Dexter's actions and mannerisms are orchestrated to maintain his image and distance himself from his heritage, and specifically from his mother, who "was a Bohemian of the peasant class and she had talked broken English to the end of her days" ("Winter Dreams" 118). Instead, Dexter observes and adopts the habits of the wealthy he sees at Sherry Island and his Eastern university, even ordering his clothes from the "best tailors in America" ("Winter Dreams" 118). Yet the caution that Dexter needs to employ in order to maintain his image contrasts with the careless attitude of the truly wealthy. Dexter "knew that to be careless in dress and manner required more confidence than to be careful. But carelessness was for his children" ("Winter Dreams" 118). Dexter finally

attains carelessness when he breaks his engagement with Irene Scheerer to pursue Judy. Dexter's other decisions, for example about his clothing, are carefully selected, as Dexter considers how the action will affect his image. In the case of Judy, his decision is more impulsive than calculated, and he shows disregard for what others in the community will think of him based on his actions.

In the character of Dexter, Fitzgerald establishes a link between the ability to achieve a higher social or economic status and people who are influenced by, but not tied to, a particular place. The communal structure of Black Bear Lake allows Dexter voyeuristic access to the lives of the wealthy inhabitants of Sherry Island. Although he feels excluded and separate from their experience, Dexter is able to observe their habits and incorporate them into his own life. Part of his adaptation includes manipulating his geographic origins. Although Dexter lives in Black Bear Village, he identifies himself by the city of his birth, Keeble, "a Minnesota village fifty miles farther north" ("Winter Dreams" 118). Towns such as Black Bear Village were "inconveniently in sight and used as footstools by fashionable lakes." By advertising his Keeble origins Dexter can appear as a truly brilliant young man who works his way out of a small town. In other instances Dexter obscures his hometown origins for a similar purpose of maintaining his image. After his final break with Judy, Dexter moves East and cuts his ties to the West. Except for a brief visit after the war, Dexter "had not been West in seven years," and when a the visitor learns that Dexter is from the West, visitor remarks "that's funny -- I thought that men like you were probably born and raised on Wall Street" ("Winter Dreams" 130). Throughout the story, Dexter maintains an ability to move from town to town, from region to region, without much sense of loss for the places he leaves behind; instead, he

focuses intensely on the present and future acquisition of success. Thus, Dexter attempts to use, but also escape from, his past (and the places he has lived) in order to accomplish his future goals. This tension between time and place anticipates one of *The Great Gatsby's* hallmark themes.

### **Displacement, "Pathfinders," and the Invisible Landscape**

Fitzgerald creates a further a sense of detachment as he transfers some of the "Midwestern" places from "Winter Dreams" onto *The Great Gatsby*. Brucoli notes that the description of Judy Jones's house on Black Bear Lake from the magazine text of "Winter Dreams" becomes the description of Daisy Fay's house in Louisville in *The Great Gatsby* (*Grandeur* 170). While *The Great Gatsby* is often thought of as a novel of the city, the fictional geography of East Egg and West Egg is far enough removed from the city for Nick to call it a "commuting town" in the "country" (*Gatsby* 8). Thus, East Egg and West Egg resemble Black Bear Lake as a fashionable district of grand houses and wide lawns somewhat removed from, but within commuting distance to, the city. Water and the shoreline are also essential to each of these communities; just as Gatsby stares fondly at the green light shining from the Buchanan's dock, Dexter Green has his first personal encounter with an adult Judy as he swims in the lake and she drives a motor boat. The lawns, elegant homes, and shoreline access each contribute to the emotional associations of wealth with the Long Island "Eggs" and Black Bear Lake.

The ability of one place to *replace* another also reinforces the classic Gatsby-esque theme of the desire for upward social mobility. Gatsby's social climbing requires a dislocation from place. The subsequent relocation, however, impedes the fostering of a

sense of belonging within both place and class. Nick captures the spirit of geographical detachment in his description of Tom and Daisy Buchanan's past:

Why they came east I don't know. They had spent a year in France, for no particular reason, and then drifted here and there unrestfully wherever people play polo and were rich together. This was a permanent move, said Daisy over the telephone, but I didn't believe it -- I had no insight into Daisy's heart but I felt that Tom would drift on forever seeking a little wistfully for the dramatic turbulence of some irrevocable football game.

*(The Great Gatsby 10)*

The Buchanans, like Judy Jones, are careless people. Unlike Dexter, with his carefully planned life, the Buchanans are aimless except in their haphazard pursuit of people like themselves. Not only does their wealth give Tom and Daisy the ability to move at whim, but it also allows them to displace their local attachments. Nick's remark that the Buchanans occupy places where "people play polo and were rich together" effaces "region" as a meaningful category for characterizing a particular community. As a result, regional or physical geography has little or no bearing on the type of activities that wealthy individuals can pursue. Although Nick's observations downplay the importance of regions -- or even of place in general -- they bear out Wilson's comments in his review of Fitzgerald's work concerning regional behavior as he argues that Fitzgerald's characters are not part of the "organism" of the East. While Wilson sees these "out of place" characters as an artistic failure, I suggest that this sense of displacement is a deliberate strategy on Fitzgerald's part to paint -- and even critique -- the rich as unnaturally divorced from the places they inhabit. Through their attempt to circumvent

regional consciousness, Fitzgerald's characters try to relocate the "organism" that they belong to from a region-based place to a class-based place without geographic boundaries.

One of Nick's first important experiences as an insider who belongs in the East takes place when he offers directions to another man:

It was lonely for a day or so until one morning some man, more recently arrived than I, stopped me on the road.

"How do you get to West Egg Village?" he asked helplessly.

I told him. And as I walked on I was lonely no longer. I was a guide, a pathfinder, an original settler. He had casually conferred on me a sense of freedom of the neighborhood. (8)

The scene begins with an emphasis on Nick's emotional state, his loneliness, as a companionate emotion to his sense of being an outsider. As seen in the American travel narratives of Mark Twain and Sarah Orne Jewett's *Country of the Pointed Firs*, in this scene familiarity with geography, understanding the "lay of the land," facilitates a sense of belonging. In contrast, however, is the momentary nature of Nick's interaction. The relationship is not sustained, unlike the narrator of *Country*'s relationship with the women of Dunnett Landing, or Twain-as-narrator's relationship with his readers (who depend on him and his insider status for the duration of his narrative). The fleeting nature of Nick's interaction with the lost man reflects the fluctuating nature of Nick's insider/outsider status throughout the narrative. It is perhaps due to his unstable status as an insider that Nick turns to the language of conquest and discovery. This language is powerful, and using it reinforces Nick's sense of authority; it also returns in the memorable conclusion to *The Great Gatsby*. His diction also reinforces the notion that belonging and place

attachment somehow seem to belong to the past, to the "pathfinders" and "original settlers" of the wilderness, rather than to the modern inhabitants of bustling, concrete cities.

In addition to communicating his sense of belonging, Nick's fluctuating emotions draw attention to his role as a storyteller. Through these emotions and his self-conscious storytelling, Nick reveals portraits of regional places that defy stereotypical expectations. For example, although his description of the Valley of Ashes aligns symbolically with other literary depictions of cities as dark, crowded, dirty, and corrupt, Nick's sense of the city is more complex. He says: "I began to like New York, the racy, adventurous feel of it at night and the satisfaction that the constant flicker of men and women and machines gives to the restless eyes. I liked to walk up Fifth Avenue and pick out romantic women from the crowd and imagine that in a few minutes I was going to enter into their lives, and no one would ever know or disapprove" (61). Several parallels exist between this description of the city and Nick's previous experience of belonging when he offers directions. Nick's description of the city, again, begins from an emotional perspective, highlighting its "racy, adventurous feel." His sense of the city's "geography" goes far beyond its physical features -- people, and even machines, become integral to developing the city's sense of place. Indeed, his sense of place depends partly on his own imagination, just as he imagines himself to be "a pathfinder, an original settler." Finally, Nick also emphasizes the momentary nature of city encounters as an important component of the city's adventurous environment.

Although this initial portrait depicts "positive" qualities of the city, and Nick's emotional / imaginative investment in his environment, he simultaneously communicates

a sense of distance. As his description of the city continues, Nick recalls how "at the enchanted metropolitan twilight I felt a haunting loneliness sometimes, and felt it in others -- poor young clerks who loitered in front of windows waiting until it was time for a solitary restaurant dinner" (61-2). Members of this "imagined community" of the city participate in shared emotional experiences, here, of "haunting loneliness." This loneliness resonates with Jewett's description of the "remote and islanded" place within each individual that characterizes shared, paradoxical isolation. In this scene, Nick's position as an observer, rather than a participant, reinforces a pervasive sense of isolation. He describes people in the city: "forms leaned together in the taxis as they waited, and voices sang, and there was laughter from unheard jokes, and lighted cigarettes outlined unintelligible gestures inside. Imagining that I, too, was hurrying towards gayety and sharing their intimate excitement, I wished them well" (62). Although the "momentary" interactions between individuals in the city are exciting, people are only "forms." Nick again needs to rely on his imagination to facilitate a sense of belonging; in this scene, however, imagining himself to be part of a group that does not acknowledge his existence only emphasizes his outsider position.

Ultimately, Fitzgerald's regional consciousness is marked by imagining oneself outside of a particular community. Barron sees regional differences as the primary divide between Daisy and Gatsby, arguing that "Daisy's southernness matters because in the end it defeats Gatsby. He thinks he can overcome its requirements, but he cannot" (66). Yet Fitzgerald seems to be making a different claim about regionalism through narrator Nick Carraway, who states that "I see now that this has been a story of the West, after all -- Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possess

some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life" (184). Although much of the novel is preoccupied with the class and regional differences between Gatsby and Daisy, here Fitzgerald groups all of the "Western" characters together in the region (or classes) to which they have moved. Nick's articulation of a Western "deficiency" calls back to Wilson's claim that Fitzgerald (and perhaps other writers) are best suited to understand their own regional culture. The "deficiency" that Nick speaks of suggests that regions promote exclusiveness, particularly by encouraging individuals to imagine a set of ingrained cultural behaviors or attitudes that cannot be transferred to outsiders. While individuals may move between regions (or classes), Fitzgerald implies that they will always be outsiders when not in their originary place.

Both "Winter Dreams" and *The Great Gatsby* address this correlation between regional mobility and class mobility through similar plot structures; the end of these works, however, demonstrate notable revisions that address a more expansive sense of place in *The Great Gatsby*. A side-by-side comparison seems beneficial to illustrate correlations and divergence between the two conclusion.

The dream was gone. Something had been taken from him. In a sort of panic he pushed the palms of his hands into his eyes and tried to bring up a picture of the waters lapping on Sherry Island in the moonlit veranda, and gingham on the golf-links and the dry sun and the gold color of her neck's soft down. And her mouth damp to his kisses and her eyes plaintive with melancholy and her freshness like new fine linen in the morning. Why, these things were no longer in the world! They had existed and they existed no longer. ("Winter Dreams" 132)

And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes -- a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder. (*The Great Gatsby* 189)

The ending of "Winter Dreams" centers on the relationship between Dexter and Judy, with a particular focus on Dexter's gut-wrenching sense of loss: Judy is now a housewife, in an unhappy marriage. Dexter's success and his movement into upper-class society seem worthless once Judy has lost her beauty and classiness. In an attempt to recapture the upper-class Judy, and the desired lifestyle that she represents, Dexter undertakes an imaginative retreat back to Sherry Island. In a world where beauty fades and class standing can be altered in a moment, Sherry Island stands for an unchanging place of sun-dappled golf links, lapping waters, and moonlit verandas.

In *The Great Gatsby*, Nick's final reflection also takes the form of a retreat into the past, not to Sherry Island, but to "the old island here that flowered once." The presence of moonlight remains in both endings, along with a sense of "freshness": in the first for Judy's kisses, but in the second for the "green breast of the new world." Even

without a side-by-side comparison of these two texts, the gendered language at the end of *The Great Gatsby* recalls the tradition of feminized landscapes. These metaphors are analyzed most notably by Annette Kolodny in *The Lay of the Land*, which discusses the implications of mastering a "virgin territory," or conversely, a sense of horror that accompanies a "raped and deflowered" landscape (7). The ending of *The Great Gatsby*, however, manages to avoid overt suggestions of possession that often accompany feminine metaphors for the Earth; nor is there exactly a sense of "deflowered" landscape. Although Fitzgerald employs feminized metaphors for the land, the novel's ending has moved significantly away from the narrow, relationship-centered ending in "Winter Dreams."

Instead, the gendered language acts as a vehicle for Nick's attempt to map an "invisible landscape." As folklorist Kent Ryden explains in *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, "since places are fusions of experience, landscape, and location, they are necessarily bound up with time and memory as well" (39). The "invisible landscape," according to Ryden, contains elements of history and memory that are not actually present in the physical geography, but nevertheless, remain central to a place's identity. Nick looks beyond the current state of the landscape, sees it "melt away," to expose the "old island." While Nick remains completely conscious of how the land has been transformed -- through the "vanished trees" that "made way for Gatsby's house" -- this transformation is not viewed with horror (especially in comparison to the "panic" that Dexter expresses towards transformation) but with wonder.

In the end, Nick's final vision emphasizes "aesthetic contemplation" of the landscape within an expansive sense of history. Unlike the fixed Sherry Island in Dexter's final

vision, Nick's retreat into the invisible landscape of the past accentuates the dynamics of change: explorers, culture, the pursuit of modernization and development -- all are forces that alter the physical landscape. These forces, in combination with time, also alter the way that the landscape is viewed by people. Although "for a transitory enchanted moment" an individual (or culture) can view the landscape with wonder, this wonder is itself transitory and variable. Changes in physical geography and in the way the land is "seen" or interpreted by a given culture can raise significant obstacles to belonging. At the beginning of the novel, Nick feels as though he belongs in the East when he "knows the territory" and can explain it to the lost man; this sense of belonging depends on fixed physical features. Nick's concluding reflection on the mutability of place reflects the place-based tension that runs throughout the novel and its precursors. Several of Fitzgerald's characters, such as the "Westerners" in *The Great Gatsby* and Sally Carroll in "The Ice Palace," are unable to overcome their fixed regional identities in order to settle in another regional culture because they do not meet the rigid criteria for belonging in a particular place. The ending of *The Great Gatsby* critiques such rigidity by highlighting the work of time and history on place, suggesting that an even deeper sense of belonging results when individuals, and communities, can acknowledge and negotiate altered landscapes, as well as the invisible impress of history.

### **Conclusions: Exploitation and Reimagining Regional History**

Fitzgerald's regional fiction is characterized by its inherent tension between regional determinism and boundless imagination; individuals sense that they cannot escape from a personality or future based on the region of their birth, but such limitations

seem only to encourage reimagining one's history (especially as "a pathfinder, an original settler") and attempts to imagine the "invisible landscape." As a means of conclusion, I turn to consider Fitzgerald's most powerful reimagining of regional history, which occurs in his short story "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" (1922). This story's engagement with Southern slavery and westward expansion returns to topics and territories explored by Mark Twain decades earlier, but with a fictionalized re-imagination of history that allows Fitzgerald to confront the ramifications of commercial exploitation. Indeed, "Diamond" is a cautionary tale that demonstrates how a culture of possession leads not only to environmental degradation, but also to human subjugation.

"Diamond" appears in Fitzgerald's short story collection *Tales of the Jazz Age* (1922), along with "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button," under the subheading of "Fantasies"; this generic classification reflects the outrageous opulence and fairy tale-like plot of the story. The protagonist, John T. Unger (originally from Hades -- "a small town on the Mississippi River"), is being sent to St. Midas School outside of Boston (913). He becomes friends with a schoolmate named Percy Washington and accepts an invitation to spend the summer at Percy's home "in the West," in Fish, Montana (915). As St. Midas' is "the most expensive and most exclusive boys' preparatory school in the world," all of the boys come from rich families. Percy, however, proclaims that his father "is by far the richest man in the world" (914-5).

The opulence seen in Gatsby's mansion, or the homes of Professor Godfrey St. Peter and the Marselluses, is carried to an extreme in the home of Percy Washington and his family. John's bath, the morning after his arrival, is an event of fantastic luxury. After his bed tilts in order to roll him down a "fleecy incline," John "plumped gently into

water the same temperature as his own body" (923). The bath itself is surrounded by an aquarium filled with exotic fish, and once inside, John is treated to a "hot rosewater and soapsuds" soak, followed by "a cold salt-water bracer and cold fresh finish," and finished with an oil, alcohol, and spice rub, a close shave, and hair trimming (923-24). John politely declines an offer to view a moving picture show during his ablutions. Overall, John's morning toilet -- and the general environment of Percy Washington's home -- emphasizes acts of exorbitant pampering within richly furnished rooms that reflect the Washington family's wealth. This wealth, however, has been acquired through malicious, and even illegal, means. The Washington family's home rests upon a mountain that isn't a mountain at all: it is a solid, massive diamond, discovered by Percy's grandfather, Fitz-Norman Culpepper (also called Colonel) Washington, when he became lost out West.

Colonel Washington's mining discoveries depend on exploiting aspects of Western geography. As Percy brings John to his home he announces: "this is where the United States ends" (919). The Washington home sits on five square miles of land, the only land "in the country that's never been surveyed." Here, Fitzgerald's characterization of the West clearly emphasizes its remoteness from seats of U.S. civilization, and the government, situated in the East. Although the topography is fortuitous it is not adequate to protect the Washingtons' wealth, and the family goes to extreme lengths to guard their fortune. Percy explains how his family foiled the surveyors: first, his grandfather "corrupted a whole department of the State survey"; then, his grandfather "had the official maps of the United States tinkered with." After these acts of corruption and deception, Percy's father (Mr. Washington) resorts to technology, through devices that alter the area's magnetic field, and to brute force; in addition to "half a dozen anti-aircraft guns"

the Washington compound contains a prison to house, and to kill if necessary, explorers who happen across their land.

By bestowing the name of the founding father upon one of the key characters in this story, Fitzgerald re-creates United States history as the fictional Mr. Washington establishes a sovereign state in a land replete with resources. "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" illustrates the firm connections between capitalist pursuits and corruption. The landscape of the "diamond" mountain is only valued by Mr. Washington for utilitarian purposes: it has no aesthetic or spiritual value. Mr. Washington's pursuits are myopic, and he is willing to employ extreme measures of landscape alteration as a means of safeguarding his interests.

The Washingtons can only gain and maintain their property through unethical means; unfortunately, their corruption affects the human community as well. John's bathing routine and other chores in the Washington household are carried out by African-American servants. As Percy explains, Colonel Washington believes "there was no alternative" but to guard and protect the mountain:

[Colonel Washington] sent South for his younger brother and put him in charge of his colored following -- darkies who had never realized that slavery was abolished. To make sure of this, he read them a proclamation that he had composed, which announced that General Forrest had reorganized the shattered Southern armies and defeated the North in one pitched battle. The negroes believed him implicitly. They passed a vote declaring it a good thing and held revival services immediately. (926)

As Fitzgerald re-creates United States history, he considers alternative paths that the country could have traveled: what if the South had won? What if slavery still existed? Through the deceptive actions of Colonel Washington, Fitzgerald reinforces several unfortunate cultural factors that depend on one another: to be rich requires servants (or slaves), and thus requires a class-based, hierarchical society; to be rich requires a utilitarian relationship with the landscape, one that is to be guarded and isolated from others at all costs. Exploitation of both the environment and humans is not only allowed, but necessary, in this worldview.

Perhaps the most disturbing element in "Diamond" is John's response. He finds little wrong with the Washingtons' lifestyle -- with one self-interested exception, when he finds out that the friends the Washington children bring to their home never return to the outside world. "Stunned with horror," he reproaches Percy Washington's sisters, saying, "but -- I fail to understand why you kept on inviting them!" (939). In fact, John is eager to participate in the luxury that surrounds him, readily accepting the service of the slaves, and paying little attention to the environmental manipulation.

As Charles Waugh argues, the lens of environmental justice can provide a means for "understanding the cultural foundations of environmental destruction" and other cultural foundations, such as racism or sexism (114). Ultimately, "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" demonstrates how cultural values can shape environmental awareness. In contrast to Nick Carraway's liminal and detached position -- from both region and society -- which allows him to imagine a historicized landscape that no longer exists, the Washingtons' detachment breeds destruction. The environmental degradation and human abuse that occur in the Washingtons' world are a logical result of a culture that values a

singular pursuit of wealth. John's participation in the Washingtons' world seems to prevent him from seeing acts of injustice around him. Through this reimagining of Southern and Western history, Fitzgerald's story raises significant questions concerning the relationship between people and place. Why are discourses of discovery and conquest so powerful and repeated so frequently; and what are the ramifications of these discourses? How are acts of environmental exploitation intertwined with acts of human exploitation? How do narratives both reflect and alter our understanding and inhabitation of place? These questions occur not only in the context of Fitzgerald's fiction but run throughout the course of regionally conscious literature. Students and teachers can begin to explore the various answers to these questions more deeply through a pedagogy deeply invested in place.

## Conclusion:

### Pedagogy and Place

During my initial dissertation research, I was intrigued by the number of secondary sources I found that connected theories of place to teaching practice. Some were critical interpretations of literature and regional culture, such as Douglas Powell's *Critical Regionalism* and Pavel Cenkl's *This Vast Book of Nature*, which conclude by exploring the application of their interpretive work in the classroom. Others focused exclusively on teaching: *Teaching about Place* (Laird Christensen and Hal Crimmel), *Teaching North American Environmental Literature* (Laird Christensen, Mark C. Long, and Frederick Waage); *Teaching Women's Literature from a Regional Perspective* (Leonore Hoffmann and Deborah Rosenfelt); *Teaching in the Field* (Hal Crimmel); and *Ecocomposition* (Christian R. Weisser and Sidney I. Dobrin), to name just a few. In all of these texts, each author's theoretical interpretation of literature or writing was made richer through practice in a classroom setting. Likewise, many of these critics examine how their teaching has influenced their research. Cheryl Glotfelty explains that, arriving as a new faculty member at the University of Nevada Reno, she volunteered to teach a "nearly defunct course" called Literature of the Far West and Nevada. As a new member of the region, she was unfamiliar with any Nevada texts; instead of including them on her syllabus, she asked students to give reports on a Nevada book they discovered, which both Glotfelty and her students found to be fascinating. "Their reports changed my life," Glotfelty says, "setting the course of my research for the next decade and beyond" (346).

As a means of conclusion, I would like to consider four recurring issues or questions that run throughout these pedagogical discussions and that link to the foregoing chapters of this dissertation. First, issues of purpose: why study place in an English course? Second, the relationship between academics and place: how are studies of place influenced by university culture, and particularly, the conditions under which professors enter into their university jobs? Third, the role of the "local" in place-based pedagogy: what (and who) counts as "local"? And lastly, individual agency: what level of responsibility do individuals have in acting as agents for change in their communities? My goal in exploring these issues is to understand the way in which they can significantly inform pedagogical approaches and shape classroom experiences.

It is important to note that although approaches to teaching place are exceptionally engaging and creative, the terminology in classifying such approaches is often inconsistent, and, as a result, potentially confusing. Courses dealing with regionalism, environmental literature / justice, travel literature, or those that contain an "eco-" prefix may consider place extensively; some courses in these areas, however, may place more emphasis on other issues (for example, courses on environmental literature may emphasize contemporary issues in science). In the following discussion, I use the term "place" to denote areas of (bio)regional or state scope, that is, areas large enough to contain multiple towns or cities, yet still bounded by a shared (albeit subjective) sense of common geography. Many practitioners of "place-based pedagogy," however, operate under the assumption that the "place" under discussion is defined as "local." For example, Eric L. Ball and Alice Lai's study "Place-Based Pedagogy for the Arts and Humanities" states that "in addition to teaching the local, this pedagogy listens to the locals by paying

close attention to local students' interests and by examining text, artifacts, and performances of local cultural production, and it empowers the local by legitimating local cultural production as literature and art" (261-62). Certainly, this attention to local art and culture is well deserved. As I discuss below, however, I find focusing exclusively on "the local" to be problematic for several reasons, including the risk of romanticizing clicks. As a result, in this discussion I distinguish between "teaching about place" and "teaching about *local* places." It is impossible to teach about place without considering the local, but I argue that well-rounded approaches to place should consider the relationship between and among places as well.

### **Purpose: Why Study Place in an English Class?**

The importance of this question is illustrated by David Thomas Sumner in his analysis of syllabi submitted under the name of "composition" to the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE). Many of the courses, Sumner explains, incorporated engaging readings by canonical nature writers and urged students to grapple with environmental concerns. Sumner found the writing assignments, however, to be infrequent and limited in rhetorical aims (mainly reflections or observation journals). He concludes that "although these courses look very useful and meet valuable pedagogical goals by addressing many of my own environmental concerns, I'm not convinced that they concentrate heavily enough on the rhetorical skills of written reasoning to fulfill the more general goals of composition" (268). As Sumner points out, composition is one of the few courses still universally required for all students, and it has gained this position because of a specific pedagogical goal: to improve students' writing. "If the primary

focus of composition strays from written reasoning," Sumner argues, "it will be difficult to justify composition as a general requirement" for all students.

Sumner's study points to a tension between the disciplinary objectives of a literature or writing course and content knowledge. Fortunately, once this tension is acknowledged, teachers can purposefully use place-based content to meet a variety of disciplinary goals in a creative way. "All places are endlessly complex," as SueEllen Campbell eloquently says, as they are "intricately composed not only of the immediate and personal but also of what other people can see, know, and remember; what is present but invisible; what is past and future" (84). It is this "endless complexity" of place that makes it a worthy realm of investigation: while the immediate and concrete nature of places can obscure its complexity, this is also what makes place compelling.

Many common learning goals emerge after examining numerous examples of English courses with place-based components. These goals are grounded in disciplinary objectives, but they are also colored by the complexity of place-based content. Although certainly not exhaustive, the following list articulates general examples. Upon the completion of these courses, students could be able to:

- use close reading to analyze the rhetorical and/or literary dimensions of texts
- produce convincing oral and written arguments for a scholarly audience
- recognize multiple, competing perspectives
- produce writing within several genres for multiple audiences, including  
a general, public audience
- exhibit creative problem solving
- understand the combined influences of geography, history, politics, and culture

that combine to create places

- recognize and examine how/why places change over time
- engage in multiple activities of discovery, including primary / archival research and field experiences
- synthesize disciplinary conversations (put two different theoretical approaches to literature into "dialogue" with each other)
- explain the importance of ethics (in regards to environmental priorities, communal decision-making, and academic research)
- appropriately employ theory to make / support arguments

My aim is not to create a definitive list; indeed, I am sure that more goals beyond these can be achieved through place-based courses. Instead, I hope that these goals illustrate the wide range of possibilities for exploring the nature of places in literature, and additionally, for incorporating challenging writing assignments into these courses.

### **The Relationship between Academics and Place: How are Studies of Place Influenced by University Culture?**

In the pedagogical essays I surveyed, teachers often discuss their own relationships to places as part of their reflections on teaching about place. Even within the subjective realm of reflections on teaching, these deeply personal narratives of place -- especially those that range to locations well beyond the boundaries of the classroom -- may seem "out of place" in traditional scholarship. Douglas Powell, however, insists that such narratives are in integral part of teaching about place. As he describes pedagogical techniques that he terms "critical regionalism," Powell argues that teachers have a responsibility to engage in the same critical investigations that they ask of students: "if

critical regionalism requires people to take careful stock of their own locatedness within the social, political, and cultural structures of their homes, communities, regions, then its practitioners must do the same" (185).

Due to the limited number of tenure-track jobs available in any given year, many of these teacherly reflections on place explore themes of dislocation. In the introduction to *Teaching about Place*, editors Laird Christensen and Hal Crimmel write that "this collection is born of that displacement, a response toward decades spent chasing education, adventure, or employment. The tension between the appeal of the road and our desire for roots has defined our lives" (ix). Christensen and Crimmel's phrasing manages to situate "displacement" in a positive light. They present academics as active agents, "chasing [...] adventure," but still "at home" in a variety of places. Their reference to "roots" plays on another popular theme in these academic reflections, that of "the rootless professor." Several writers cite Eric Zencey's appropriately titled article, "The Rootless Professors," as a means of exploring academic dislocation. Zencey vehemently protests against the cosmopolitan detachment expected of professors who, "as citizens of the *cosmo polis*, the mythical 'world city,' [...] are expected to own no allegiance to geographical territory; we're supposed to belong to the boundless world of books and ideas and eternal truths, not the infinitely particular world of watersheds, growing seasons, and ecological niches" (15). In "Place-Based Pedagogy for the Arts and Humanities," Ball and Lai repeat Zencey's argument as an accurate portrayal of university culture. James M. Cahalan's explanation of "teaching hometown literature" relies on Zencey, along with other promoters of "rootedness," such as Wendell Berry and Scott Russell Sanders, as a justification for his pedagogical techniques (259, 261).

Zencey, Berry, and Sanders advocate "staying put" as a means of facilitating an "allegiance to territory. They do not completely acknowledge, however, the territorial allegiance still present in the lives of professors who move to pursue academic positions, and the misery that these dislocations can promote. Writing for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, "Thomas H. Benton" (William Pannacker) explores the ramifications of relocation in "Growing Where You Are." He plays on the metaphor of "the rootless professors," explaining that "a new position in an unfamiliar place presents a perennial dilemma: should you put down roots or remain self-contained -- a kind of potted plant -- in anticipation of the next relocation?" (A37). His story is worth exploring because it captures an anxiety about place and mobility that is familiar to most academics. Despite several (temporary) moves away from his hometown of Boston to pursue graduate studies, Benton finds himself unable to integrate himself into the community of Holland, Michigan, where he received a tenure-track position in English. Speaking on his relationship to this new place, Benton writes that "outside of the college, I'm almost entirely disengaged: Work and home constitute 99 percent of my life. I can count the conversations I've had with my immediate neighbors on one hand" (A39). It seems difficult to imagine how this extensive, unhealthy disengagement can be offset by the benefits of an academic life.

As Powell explains, "the university is almost always populated by people from somewhere else, who often look somewhere else not only for their research interests but also for their values, intellectual stimulation, and emotional satisfaction" (193). Teaching about place seeks to remedy the situation by turning one's attention from "somewhere else" to "here." Kent Ryden suggests that in his own classroom he is "allowing place to

teach me" ("Beneath the Surface" 125). These lessons include listening to and seeking out the history of places to understand how culture shapes physical space throughout time. Summarizing the hoped-for outcomes of teaching about place, Ryden suggests that "we can increase their [students'] pleasure in their experience of the world, and, if we are lucky, make them more responsible human beings as well" (135). These lessons are available for teachers to learn too.

This awareness of change as it relates to place is often overlooked in the "stay put" philosophies of Berry, Sanders, and Zencey. Again, Benton's reflection demonstrates the importance of adaptability in the face of change. Benton reveals one of his idle habits: cruising through old neighborhoods via Google Earth. Through these moments of nostalgia, Benton recognizes that he desires to return to a "place" that no longer exists: family and friends have either died, moved, or drifted away; the landscape has been modified, old buildings torn down and new ones built. Perhaps, if Benton had lived in his old neighborhood while these changes occurred they would seem inconsequential. But the fact remains that even if academics find a way to stay where they are "rooted," places *change*, both literally, and figuratively as our own lives change within them. Indeed, as Lawrence Buell cautions, "place-centeredness can also produce an opposite extreme of vulnerability: can make one impotent and maladaptive outside one's home range. A certain capacity for self-deterritorialization seems needful for resiliency and even survival" (76-77).

These conversations reveal that current and prior relationships to place, and particularly expectations concerning mobility, deeply affect the lives of university teachers. While one's relationship to place or community *outside* of the university may

seem inconsequential, as Powell suggests, one's center for values and enrichment does indeed influence teaching and research. As many descriptions of teaching about place indicate, teachers who incorporate discussions of place into their classrooms are often already convinced of its value and, most likely, already feel a sense of connection to their local environment. In order for these conversations to flourish, however, it seems necessary to incorporate texts and lessons that explore the multiple ways of relating to place -- not only connection, but also disconnection; not only celebration, but also ambivalence, fear, disgust, and alienation.

As the texts in my project demonstrate, even the individuals in "idyllic" communities like Dunnett Landing experience multiple, contradictory ways of relating to place. Joanna Todd is "rooted" to Shell-Heap Island, but also completely alienated and isolated. The nuances and variations of place attachment in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* raises several important questions: what does it mean to be "rooted" to a place? How does this "rootedness" enrich the lives of individuals or communities? And conversely, what limitations does being "rooted" impose?

Willa Cather's *The Professor's House* is well-suited to explore the reciprocal relationship between academics and place in regard to discussions of rootedness. Professor Godfrey St. Peter fluctuates between aloof disengagement with the world (holed up in his office) and complicated entanglement with the historical, desert places of his research and the increasingly commodified places of his home life. *The Professor's House* raises questions concerning not only relationships between teachers and their

communities, but also those of the university itself: what is the role of the university in relation to the world and communities surrounding it?<sup>1</sup>

### **What (and Who) Counts as "Local"?**

Overwhelmingly, the benefits of some type of engagement with local landscapes, communities, and history are cited as a justification for teaching about place. In their description of a course on "Southern Women's Literature and Culture," Rose Gladney, Alice Parker, and Elizabeth A. Meese used a variety of texts, including images, archival materials, and oral histories, in order to reconsider stereotypes of the South and Southern women. They explain that the most significant development was "a sense of personal value that students found in the experience of the course." They continue, saying that students "felt encouraged to view members of their families, their communities, houses, and land in new ways. They began to regard their pasts as important and see relatives as possessing valuable information" (129). At the end of the course, both students and teachers were left with a firm set of questions to prompt additional research. In another very different course, J. Scott Bryson describes his pedagogical approaches to teaching the literature of Los Angeles. As part of his course, students contribute to a website (aimed at a non-LA audience) with the intent to help readers "more slowly experience the 'LA-ness'" of various novels. In this type of project, students' own knowledge of the area contributes to their ethos as experts. As part of this project, students tracked references to

---

<sup>1</sup> In addition to the pedagogical sources discussed throughout this conclusion, Jennifer Sinor and Rona Kaufman's *Placing the Academy: Essays on Landscape, Work, and Identity* examines the relationship among universities, places, and teachers through the form of personal, nonfiction essays. Peggy F. Bartlett and Geoffrey W. Chase's *Sustainability on Campus: Stories and Strategies for Change* presents institutional stories that examine various strategies to strengthen the connections between universities and their surrounding environments / communities.

landmarks, buildings, and streets, generated maps, collected photographs, and translated Spanish phrases in order to help their audience acquire a new sense of place. As both of these courses illustrate, incorporating materials related to local places can help students reconstruct the significance of places and communities in which they reside.

Additionally, these courses provide students with a meaningful context for ambitious research projects.

This focus on "the local," however, is not without its special problems and challenges. Ball and Lai suggest that place-based pedagogical approaches may be hampered by divergent, pre-formed attitudes that shape teachers' and students' perceptions of place. For example, they suggest that Wendell Berry's approach to local communities can "seem like a rather quaint way to defend against insular localisms and regionalisms" (267). Teachers may romanticize "the local" as "self-evidently natural or authentic," a view which can impede more critical approaches to place. Turning to the students' perspective, while educators argue that place-based education allows students to "connect their learning in meaningful ways to their own lives," this position "assumes that the local is indeed already meaningful to students' lives" (268). Students, however, may not consider their local environment to be interesting, important, or deserving of further inquiry. Speaking of his experiences teaching at campuses in urban New York neighborhoods, Derek Owens recognizes that students enter his classroom with the intent of escaping their local environment.

Another factor to consider is how teaching local (or even regional) literature can be seen as limiting. For example, in "Teaching Hometown Literature," Cahalan explains that "hometown literature also helps students better understand their own identities

because part of who we are is determined by where we are from and where we are now" (250). As an example of the value of hometown literature, Cahalan cites George R. Stewart's "The Regional Approach to Literature" (1948), where Stewart's California students were unmoved by Chaucer's description of May's "freshe flowers" in *Troilus and Criseyde*, as May marks the dry season in southern California; in contrast, students "easily related" to the California poetry of Robinson Jeffers (253). While Stewart's teaching experience suggests how regional identities can and should be taken into account in literature classrooms, the scenario is simultaneously worrisome in its implications: if you are "from here" you can't understand literature from "over there," or at least, you can't understand it as well. It is the equivalent of suggesting that male readers can understand *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* more easily than women, that women understand *The Awakening* more easily than men, or that African-American readers understand *Native Son* more easily than white readers. Such an overdependence on identity as a means of understanding literature is severely limiting because it fails to take into account the complexity of places, the capacity of imagination, and additionally, variations in students' relationships towards place.

Many of the texts examined in my dissertation can complicate our definitions of local places and local citizenship. Margaret Lynn's "A Step-Daughter of the Prairie" investigates the dissonance between her immersion in the prairie landscapes of her childhood and the world as represented by writers from New England or Britain. By discussing the "distinct line between literature and life," Lynn explores how the lives of regional citizens were situated outside the elevated sphere of literature, and more broadly, of highbrow culture at the turn of the century (380). Her essay demonstrates that the

production of regional literature does more than simply acknowledge the existence of regional citizens and their lives: it provides a new vocabulary for understanding the elements of place.

As Jewett's *Country of the Pointed Firs* demonstrates, the "local" town of Dunnet Landing can not be understood in isolation. The movement of individuals including Captain Littlepage and the narrator add a further layer of definition as Dunnett Landing is "placed" within a larger context. To understand Dunnet Landing, it is necessary to understand its relationships to these other places. The works of Mark Twain also cause us to reconsider definitions of "local." Although many features of *Roughing It* situate Twain as a tourist (for example, his endless pursuit of "novel" experiences and his avoidance of settling down into a permanent dwelling or job), he also acts as a regional "insider," explaining the unfamiliar West to outside readers. Twain's narrative asks us to move from questions of classification -- "is Twain a local?" to questions of cause and effect: how is Twain's understanding of the western climate influenced by his "Eastern" perspective? Why would Twain, technically a "Westerner" through his birth in Missouri, adopt an "Eastern" perspective?

*The Great Gatsby* asks readers to consider how stories are influenced by -- but not necessarily tied to -- particular places. "Winter Dreams" and *The Great Gatsby* are indeed "local" stories due to their intimate representations of specific locations; Fitzgerald's reworking of "Winter Dreams," however, reinforces the later novel's central theme of dialogue between the East and Midwest. Narrator Nick Carraway's assertion -- "I see now that this has been the story of the West, after all" (184) -- challenges us to see through the eyes of regionalism. Nick illustrates that adopting a regional perspective

allows us to see elements of the story that may otherwise go unnoticed; in this particular case, Nick's statement draws attention to the sensation of being "out of place" that haunts the characters throughout the novel. More broadly, *The Great Gatsby* asks us to consider how the stories of one region can permeate another.

**Individual agency: What Level of Responsibility Do Individuals Have in Acting as Agents for Change in Their Communities?**

One final element that runs through discussions of place-based teaching is the opportunity for action. Teachers use discussions of place as a means of prompting students to apply their new knowledge, asking students to imagine ways to improve community life and create a more sustainable world. Before calling students to action, however, teachers may want to consider their own ideologies. Will the teacher stress individual citizenship and responsibility to students? Or will the teacher emphasize the necessity of more systematic changes, such as those in law or government policy? In the following discussion, I do not mean to suggest that one of these approaches is preferable to the other. Instead, I would like to consider the ramifications of emphasizing individual agency or systematic change, with the hopes that this discussion can lead teachers to reflect on the implications of their own ideological approaches.

One pedagogical approach asks students to consider practices of citizenship, situating individual agency and responsibility within a community context. In a discussion on "ecological citizenship," Michael B. Smith argues that "an evolving sense of oneself as an agent of change" is a primary marker of such citizenship. He continues, saying that "a citizen understands that although institutional and other systemic forces can limit personal action, agency remains" (167). In Smith's approach, this type of

agency can be empowering for students as they learn to evaluate their own personal decisions in light of larger ecological or communal ramifications. In consciously adopting the role of citizen, students also develop skills to recognize and adapt to the complexities of community relationships with place. As Smith suggests, through emphasizing citizenship, students can "develop commitments to local places and empathy for the challenges other people in other communities face" (168).

In another reflection on citizenship, Rebecca Nowacek uses the example of a "knotty local problem" in order to demonstrate not only how students can apply their knowledge in community settings but also to convey that solving such problems requires cross-disciplinary communication and cooperation. For example, she highlights the work of three students (majoring in biological sciences, computer science, and mechanical engineering) who came together to research Milwaukee's handling of wastewater. Nowacek's students shared their research with the community by publishing an essay through a local community group, the Friends of Milwaukee's Rivers; the students also organized a canoe trip with their classmates down the Milwaukee River, which allowed the class to see elements of the sewer system (103-04). Through this type of interdisciplinary project, each student was called to act as an individual while sharing his or her unique disciplinary knowledge and insights with their collaborators, the class, and the public. These individual actors, however, must work in cooperation with individuals from other disciplines. Through this synthesis of individual action, students can develop insights on their own possible contributions to the communities around them.

As Tim Lindgren points out, many courses in the environmental humanities place a strong emphasis on cultural critique "without offering [students] viable alternatives" for

the changes that they can make in their own lives, or in the lives of others (118). Even when "viable alternatives" are offered and embraced by students, solely emphasizing individual responsibility in terms of ecological behaviors and choices can lead to feelings of guilt, or that one "isn't doing enough" (Middlemiss 149). Lucie Middlemiss suggests that individual responsibility should be "reframed" to incorporate not only one's personal capacity for decision-making but also to include a consideration of access to sustainable practices through infrastructure (provided by businesses or government, for example) and community organizations; cultural norms and values, Middlemiss argues, also have a place in considerations of individual responsibility (160).

Lindgren's course on "the rhetoric of eco-effective design" introduces students to possibilities for systematic changes that can increase the range of ethical actions available to individuals. Lindgren uses William McDonough and Michael Braungart's innovative book *Cradle to Cradle* as a model for systematic change. The book -- which is printed on recyclable synthetic waterproof "paper" -- describes McDonough and Braungart's work redesigning ineffective factories and removing the "planned obsolescence" of products. In the spirit of this innovation, Lindgren transfers this sense of design to his composition classroom: instead of asking students to create texts with a "planned obsolescence" of usefulness only as class exercises, he provides students with opportunities to use their writing to solve problems and present their findings to a larger audience through technological media. In some of these assignments, students are asked to look at the design of the university and its relationship with the surrounding environment or neighborhoods. Through primary and secondary research, students design written

artifacts that "foster both a more meaningful sense of place and deeper insight into how places are designed" (122).

Many of the courses that consider individual agency and / or systematic change and its relationship to the larger context of communities and the environment are engaged with quite contemporary issues. These twenty-first-century conversations resonate with those in the *Atlantic Monthly* a century before. In his essay on the American forests, for example, John Muir calls for an act of systematic change as he presents an appealing case for government forest regulation. His chosen venue of the *Atlantic* clearly seeks an audience beyond a handful of government officials, which suggests that the support of ordinary citizens is necessary. The personal narratives of the *Atlantic* turn to the voices of these ordinary citizens by highlighting their struggles with individual agency. To highlight one example, Margaret Lynn suggests that her ability to exercise individual agency and appreciate the prairie landscape surrounding her was stymied by a larger cultural conversation that evaluated places by "civilized" criteria. Her subsequent act of sharing her struggle with *Atlantic* readers, however, demonstrates her re-appropriation of individual agency. Lynn, along with Herbert Ravenal Sass, John Muir, and Billy the shepherd illustrate how individual voices can reshape communal perceptions of place.

This survey of pedagogical approaches to place offers only a glimpse of these teachers' ingenuity and enthusiasm. My purpose in situating a final discussion of my project in this pedagogical context is to further explore the reciprocal relationship between teaching and research. Indeed, just as the regional writers in my project faced the challenge of making place relevant in a rapidly changing, mobile world, so do teachers and researchers today. Through my investigation of regional consciousness, I

aim to provide researchers and teachers with a more complex, nuanced vocabulary for investigating the representations of physical geography in American literature, and subsequently, for investigating the role that literature plays in the social and cultural construction of places and communities. My hope is that this study encourages not only a reevaluation of regional literature between 1860 and 1930 but also suggests how the regional consciousness of authors such as Mark Twain, Sarah Orne Jewett, Willa Cather, F. Scott Fitzgerald -- and even the writings of little-known contributors to the *Atlantic Monthly* -- can resonate with our own sense of place today.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Acocella, Joan. *Willa Cather and the Politics of Criticism*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000. Print.
- Agran, Edward Gale. *"Too Good a Town": William Allen White, Community, and the Emerging Rhetoric of Middle America*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998. Print.
- Ammons, Elizabeth. *Conflicting Stories on American Women Writers at the Turn into the Twentieth-Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. Print.
- . "Going in Circles: The Female Geography of Jewett's *Country of the Pointed Firs*." *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 16:2 (1983): 83-92. Web.
- . "Material Culture, Empire, and Jewett's *Country of the Pointed Firs*." *New Essays on The Country of the Pointed Firs*. Ed. June Howard. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. 81-100. Print.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006. Print.
- "Antiquities Act of 1906." Archaeology Program, National Park Service. 7 April 2010. Web. 6 May 2010.
- Arrington, Leonard J. *Brigham Young: American Moses*. New York: Knopf, 1985. Print.
- Ayres, Edward L. *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. Print.
- Blanchard, Paula. *Sarah Orne Jewett: Her World and Her Work*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1994. Print.
- Ball, Eric L. and Alice Lai. "Place-Based Pedagogy for the Arts and Humanities." *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture* 6.2 (2006): 261-287. Web. 31 July 2010.
- Barillas, William. *The Midwestern Pastoral: Place and Landscape in Literature of the American Heartland*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006. Print.
- Bartlett, Peggy F. and Geoffrey W. Chase. *Sustainability on Campus: Stories and Strategies for Change*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2004. Print.
- Bederman, Gail. *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Print.

- Bennett, Michael. "From Wide Open Spaces to Metropolitan Places: The Urban Challenge the Ecocriticism." *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* 8.1 (Winter 2001): 31-53. Web. 3 September 2010.
- Benton, Thomas H. (William Pannacker). "Growing Where You Are." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 22 May 2009: A37+. Print.
- Berman, Ronald. *The Great Gatsby and Modern Times*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994. Print.
- Blair, Sara. "Cultural Geography and the Place of the Literacy." *American Literary History* 10.3 (Autumn 1998): 544-567. Web. 29 March 2008.
- Brinkley, Roosevelt. *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009. Print.
- Brodhead, Richard H. *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993. Print.
- Brucoli, Matthew J. *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur*. 2<sup>nd</sup> revised ed. Columbia, South Carolina.: University of South Carolina Press, 1981. Print.
- . "The Text of *The Great Gatsby*." In *The Great Gatsby*. Ed. Matthew J. Brucoli. New York: Scribner, 1992. 191-194. Print.
- Bryant, William Cullen, ed. *Picturesque America, Or the Land We Live in*. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1874. *Sabin Americana, 1500-1926*. Web. 6 April 2010.
- Bryson, J. Scott. "Children of the Asphalt: Teaching the Nature of Los Angeles Literature." Eds. Laird Christensen, Mark C. Long, and Fred Waage. *Teaching North American Environmental Literature*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2008. 363-368. Print.
- Budd, Louis J. "Mark Twain Sounds off on the Fourth of July." *American Literary Regionalism* 34:3 (2002): 266-280. Print.
- Buell, Lawrence. *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and the Environment in the U.S. and Beyond*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2001. Print.
- Butler, Ellis Parker. "The Scenic Novel." *Atlantic Monthly* 107 (March 1911): 424-427. Print.
- Cahalan, James M. "Teaching Hometown Literature: A Pedagogy of Place." *College English* 70.3 (January 2008): 249-274. Web. 31 July 2010.

- Callahan, John. *The Illusions of a Nation: Myth and History in the Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972. Print.
- Campbell, SueEllen. "The Complexity of Places." *Teaching about Place: Learning from the Land*. Eds. Laird Christensen and Hal Crimmel. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2008. 83-97. Print.
- Campbell, Donna M. *Resisting Regionalism: Gender and Naturalism in American Fiction, 1885-1915*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1997. Print.
- Cather, Willa. "The Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett." 1925. *On Writing: Critical Studies on Writing As an Art*. Forward by Stephen Tennant. New York: Knopf, 1949. 47-59. Print.
- . *The Professor's House*. 1925. Willa Cather Scholarly Edition. Ed. James Woodress et al. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002. Print.
- . "Restlessness Such as Ours Does Not Make for Beauty." Interviewed by Rose C. Feld. *New York Times Book Review*. 21 December 1924. Reprinted in *Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters*. Ed. L. Brent Bohlke. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986. 67-72. Print.
- Cenk, Pavel. *This Vast Book of Nature: Writing the Landscape of New Hampshire's White Mountains, 1784-1911*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006. Print.
- Chiarello, Barbra. "Deflected Missives: Zitkala-Ša's Resistance and its (Un)Containment." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 17.3 (2005): 1-26. Web. 4 August 2010.
- Christensen, Laird and Hal Crimmel. "Introduction: Why Teach about Place?" *Teaching about Place: Learning from the Land*. Eds. Laird Christensen and Hal Crimmel. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2008. ix-xvii. Print.
- Christensen, Laird, Mark C. Long, and Fred Waage, eds. *Teaching North American Environmental Literature*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2008. Print.
- "City History." City of White Bear Lake. Web. 26 April 2008.
- Cohen, Michael P. *The Pathless Way: John Muir and American Wilderness*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984. Print.
- Coleman, William. "Science and Symbol in the Turner Frontier Hypothesis." *The American Historical Review* 72.1 (October 1966): 22-49. Web. 12 July 2010.
- Cole, Thomas. "Essay on American Scenery." *The American Monthly Magazine* 7:1 (January 1836): 1-12. *American Periodical Series Online*. Web. 16 February 2010.

- "Contributors to the July Atlantic." *Atlantic Monthly Advertiser* 112 (1913): 1-30. *Google Books*. Web. 11 October 2010.
- Cookman, Scott. *Ice Blink: The Tragic Fate of Sir John Franklin's Lost Polar Expedition*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000. Print.
- Coulombe, Joseph L. *Mark Twain and the American West*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003. Print.
- Cresswell, Tim. *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. Print.
- Crimmel, Hal, ed. *Teaching in the Field: Working with Students in the Outdoor Classroom*. Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2003. Print.
- Cronon, William. "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." Web. 10 June 2010. Originally published in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. William Cronon, ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995. 69-90. Print.
- DeLuca, Kevin and Anne Demo. "Imagining Nature and Erasing Class and Race: Carleton Watkins, John Muir, and the Construction of the Wilderness." *Environmental History* 6.4 (October 2001): 541-560. Web. 12 May 2010.
- Denton, Lynn W. "Mark Twain and the American Indian." *Mark Twain Journal* 16:1 (1972): 1-3. Print.
- DeVoto, Bernard. *Mark Twain's America*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978. Print.
- Donaldson, Scott. "St. Paul Boy." *Place in American Fiction: Excursions and Explorations*. Eds. H. L. Weatherby and George Core. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004. 149-182. Print.
- Dorman, Robert L. *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993. Print.
- Eliot, Charles W. "Five American Contributions to Civilization." *Atlantic Monthly* 78 (October 1896): 443-447. Print.
- Etulain, Richard W. *Beyond the Missouri: The Story of the American West*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006. Print.
- Evernden, Neil. "Beyond Ecology: Self, Place, and the Pathetic Fallacy." *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Eds. Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996. 92-104. Print.

- Facknitz, Mark A. R. "Character, Compromise, and Idealism in Willa Cather's Gardens." *Cather Studies: Volume 5, Willa Cather's Ecological Imagination*. Ed. Susan J. Rosowski. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003. 291-307. Print.
- Fetterley, Judith. "'Not in the Least American': Nineteenth-Century Literary Regionalism." *College English*. 56.8 (December 1994): 877-895. Print.
- Fetterley, Judith and Marjorie Pryce. *Writing out of Place: Regionalism, Women, and American Literary Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003. Print.
- "A Forest Policy in Suspense." *Atlantic Monthly* 80 (August 1897): 268-71. Print.
- Fitzgerald, F. Scott. "Absolution." 1924. *The Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*. Ed. Malcolm Cowley. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988. 159-172. Print.
- . *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*. Eds. Matthew J. Bruccoli and Margaret Duggan. New York: Random House, 1980. Print.
- . "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz." *Novels and Stories 1920-1922*. Notes by Jackson R. Bryer. New York: The Library of America, 2000. 913-953. Print.
- . *The Great Gatsby*. 1925. Ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli. New York: Scribner, 1992. Print.
- . "The Ice Palace." 1920. *Novels and Stories 1920-1922*. Notes by Jackson R. Bryer. New York: The Library of America, 2000. 284-309. Print.
- . *This Side of Paradise*. 1920. *Novels and Stories 1920-1922*. Notes by Jackson R. Bryer. New York: The Library of America, 2000. 5-248. Print.
- . "Winter Dreams." 1922. *The St. Paul Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*. Eds. Patricia Hempel and Dave Page. St. Paul, Minnesota: Borealis Books, 2004. Print.
- Foot, Stephanie. *Regional Fictions: Culture and Identity in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001. Print.
- Frater, Graham. "'A Brave Happiness': Rites and Celebrations in Jewett's Ordered Past." *Jewett and Her Contemporaries: Reshaping the Canon*. Eds. Karen L. Kilcup and Thomas S. Edwards. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999. 251-264. Print.
- Garland, Hamlin. *Crumbling Idols*. 1894. Ed. Jane Johnson. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960.
- Gladney, Rose, Alice Parker, and Elizabeth A. Meese. "Southern Women's Literature and Culture: Course Development and the Pedagogical Process." *Teaching*

*Women's Literature from a Regional Perspective*. Leonore Hoffman and Deborah Rosenfelt, eds. New York: MLA, 1982. 118-131. Print.

Glazener, Nancy. *Reading for Realism: The History of the U.S. Literary Institution, 1850-1910*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997. Print.

Glotfelty, Cheryll. "Finding Home in Nevada? Teaching the Literature of Place, on Location." Eds. Laird Christensen, Mark C. Long, and Fred Waage. *Teaching North American Environmental Literature*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2008. 345-353. Print.

Gretlund, Jan Nordby. "When Did Mark Twain Become a *Southern* Writer and What Do We Read by Him Today?" *Flannery O'Connor Review* 6 (2008): 147-156. Print.  
Griswold, Wendy. *Regionalism and the Reading Class*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008. Print.

Grusin, Richard. *Culture, Technology, and the Creation of America's National Parks*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Print.

Hackl, Lloyd C. *F. Scott Fitzgerald and St. Paul: "Still Home to Me."* Cambridge, Minnesota: Adventure Publications, 1996. Print.

Hampl, Patricia and Dave Page, eds. *The St. Paul Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*. St. Paul, Minnesota: Borealis Books, 2004. Print.

Harrell, David. *From Mesa Verde to The Professor's House*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992. Print.

Harris, Carl V. "Right Fork or Left Fork? The Section-Party Alignment of Southern Democrats in Congress, 1873-1879." 1976. Reprinted in *Origins of the New South Fifty Years Later: The Continuing Influence of a Historical Classic*. Eds. John B. Boles and Bethany L. Johnson. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003. 59-95. Print.

Hegeman, Susan. *Patterns for America: Modernism and the Concept of Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. Print.

Heise, Ursula K. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.

Hess, Scott. "Imagining an Everyday Nature." *ISLE* 17.1 (2010): 85-112. Print.

Holman, David Marion. *A Certain Slant of Light: Regionalism and the Form of Southern and Midwestern Fiction*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995. Print.

- Holmes, Steven J. *The Young John Muir: An Environmental Biography*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999. Print.
- Hoffmann, Leonore and Deborah Rosenfelt, eds. *Teaching Women's Literature from a Regional Perspective*. New York: MLA, 1982. Print.
- Hsu, Hsuan L. "Literature and Regional Production." *American Literary History*. 17.1 (2005): 36-64. Print.
- Hulse, James W. *The Silver State: Nevada's Heritage Reinterpreted*. Third edition. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004. Print.
- Jackson, Robert. "The Emergence of Mark Twain's Missouri: Regional Theory and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*." *The Southern Literary Journal* 35.1 (2000): 47-69. Web. 25 October 2007.
- Jewett, Sarah Orne. *Country of the Pointed Firs*. Ed. Michael Davitt Bell. *Novels and Stories*. Library of America Series. New York: Penguin, 1996. Print.
- Johanningsmeier, Charles. "Determining How Readers Responded to Cather's Fiction: The Cultural Work of *The Professor's House* in *Collier's Weekly*." *American Periodicals* 20.1 (2010): 68-96. Web. 30 July 2010.
- Jordan, David M. *New World Regionalism: Literature in the Americas*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994. Print.
- Joseph, Philip. *American Literary Regionalism in a Global Age*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007. Print.
- Kaplan, Amy. "Nation, Region, and Empire." *The Columbia History of the American Novel*. Gen. ed. Emory Elliott. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991. Print.
- Katz, Wendy J. and Timothy R. Mahoney. "Regionalism and the Humanities: Decline or Revival?" *Regionalism and the Humanities*. Eds. Wendy Katz and Timothy Mahoney. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008. ix-xviii. Print.
- Kingsland, Sharon E. *The Evolution of American Ecology, 1890-2000*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005. Print.
- Koblas, John J. *F. Scott Fitzgerald in Minnesota: His Homes and Haunts*. St. Paul, Minnesota: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1978. Print.
- Kolodny, Annette. *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975. Print.

- Kowalewski, Michael. "Writing in Place: the New American Regionalism." *American Literary History* 6.1 (1994): 171-183. Web. 30 March 2009.
- Lears, Jackson. *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009. Print.
- Lears, T. J. Jackson. *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*. New York: Pantheon, 1981. Print.
- Lee, James Kyung-Jin. "This City as Region." *A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America*. Ed. Charles L. Crow. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwells, 2003. 137-153. Print.
- Levin, Joanna. *Bohemia in America, 1858-1920*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010. Print.
- Lindemann, Marilee. "Fear of a Queer Mesa?: Faith, Friendship, and National Sexuality in 'Tom Outland's Story.'" *Willa Cather and the American Southwest*. Eds. John N. Swift and Joseph R. Ugo. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002. 43-54. Print.
- Lindgren, Tim. "Composition and the Rhetoric of Eco-Effective Design." *Coming into Contact: Explorations in Ecocritical Theory and Practice*. Eds. Annie Merrill Ingram, Ian Marshall, Daniel J. Phillipon, and Adam W. Swetting. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007. 111-127. Print.
- Lopez, Barry. "Landscape and Narrative." *Crossing Open Ground*. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. Print.
- Love, Glen. *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003. Print.
- Low, Setha M. "Symbolic Ties That Bind: Place Attachment in the Plaza." *Place Attachment*. Eds. Irwin Altman and Setha M. Low. New York: Plenum Press, 1992. 165-185. Print.
- Lupfer, Eric. "Before Nature Writing: Houghton, Mifflin and Company and the Invention of the Outdoor Book, 1800-1900." *Book History* 4 (2001): 177-204. Web. 12 May 2010.
- Lutz, Tom. *Cosmopolitan Vistas: American Regionalism and Literary Value*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004. Print.
- Lynn, Margaret. "A Step-Daughter of the Prairie." *Atlantic Monthly* 107 (March 1911): 379-385. Print.

- "The Massacre at Mountain Meadows, Utah Territory." *Harper's Weekly*. 13 August 1859: 1-2. Print.
- Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964. Print.
- Melton, Jeffrey Allen. *Mark Twain, Travel Books, and Tourism: The Tide of a Great Popular Movement*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002. Print.
- Merwin, Henry Childs. "On Being Civilized too Much." *Atlantic Monthly* 79 (June 1897): 838-847. Print.
- Meyer, Susan. "On the Front and at Home: Wharton, Cather, the Jews, and the First World War." *Cather Studies 6: History, Memory, and War*. Ed. Stephen Trout. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006. 205-227. Print.
- Middlemiss, Lucie. "Reframing Individual Responsibility for Sustainable Consumption: Lessons from Environmental Justice and Ecological Citizenship." *Environmental Values* 19.2 (May 2010): 147-167. Web. 31 July 2010.
- Mitchell, Lee Clark. "Verbally *Roughing It*: The West of Words." *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 44.1 (1989): 67-92. Print.
- Michaels, Walter Benn. *Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995. Print.
- Moehring, Eugene P. "Urbanism and Empire in the Far West, 1840-1890." Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004. Print.
- Morton, Timothy. *The Ecological Thought*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010. Print.
- Muir, John. "The American Forests." *Atlantic Monthly* 80 (August 1897): 145-157. Print.
- . "My First Summer in the Sierra." *Atlantic Monthly* 107 (January-April 1911): 1-11, 170-181, 339-349, 521-528. Print.
- Murphy, Jacqueline Shea. "Replacing Regionalism: Abenaki Tales and 'Jewett's' Coastal Maine." *American Literary History* 10:4 (1998): 664-690. Web. 20 November 2009.
- Myers, Jeffrey. *Converging Stories: Race, in Ecology, and Environmental Justice in American Literature*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005. Print.
- Nash, Roderick Frazier. *Wilderness and the American Mind*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001. Print.

- Nealon, Christopher. *Foundlings: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion before Stonewall*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001. Print.
- Newquist, David L. "Mark Twain among the Indians." *Mid-America: The Yearbook of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature* 24 (1994): 59-72. Web. 12 October 2009.
- Nibbelink, Herman. "Mark Twain and the Mormons." *Mark Twain Journal* 17.1 (1974): 1-5. Print.
- Nicholson, Meredith. "The Provincial American." *Atlantic Monthly* 107 (March 1911): 311-319. Print.
- Novak, Barbara. *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825-1875*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Print.
- Nowacek, Rebecca S. "Understanding Citizenship as Vocation in a Multidisciplinary Senior Capstone." *Citizenship Across the Curriculum*. Eds. Michael B. Smith, Rebecca S. Nowacek, and Jeffrey L. Bernstein. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010. 91-109. Print.
- Orstein, Robert. "Fitzgerald's Fable of the East and West." *College English* 18.3 (1956): 139-143. Web. 21 March 2010.
- Owens, Derek. *Composition and Sustainability: Teaching for a Threatened Generation*. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 2001. Print.
- Page, David and John J. Koblas. *F. Scott Fitzgerald in Minnesota: Towards the Summit*. St. Cloud, Minnesota: North Star Press, 1996. Print.
- Philippon, Daniel J. *Conserving Words: How American Nature Writers Shaped the Environmental Movement*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004. Print.
- Pittenger, Mark. "A World of Difference: Constructing the 'Underclass' in Progressive America." *American Quarterly* 49.1 (March 1997): 26-65. Web. 6 August 2010.
- Powell, Douglas Reichert. *Critical Regionalism: Connecting Politics and Culture in the American Landscape*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007. Print.
- Powers, Ron. *Mark Twain: A Life*. New York: Free Press, 2005. Print.
- Quantic, Diane Dufva. *The Nature of the Place: A Study of Great Plains Fiction*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. Print.
- Relph, Edward. *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion Limited, 1976. Print.

- Renan, Ernest. "What Is a Nation?" 11 March 1882. *Nation and Narration*. Ed. Homi K. Bhabha. New York: Routledge, 2006. 8-22. Print.
- Revard, Carter. "Why Mark Twain Murdered Injun Joe -- and Will Never Be Indicted." *The Massachusetts Review* 40:4 (1999/2000): 643-670. Web. 20 February 2010.
- Reynolds, Guy. "The Politics of Cather's Regionalism: Margins, Centers, and the Nebraskan Commonwealth." University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Digital Commons, 2003. Web. 21 September 2009.
- Robbins, Bruce. "Introduction Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism." *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*. Eds. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998. 1-19. Print.
- Robertson, Janet. *The Magnificent Mountain Women: Adventures in the Colorado Rockies*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990. Print.
- Robinson, Michael F. *The Coldest Crucible: Arctic Exploration and American Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. Print.
- Ryan, Ann M. Introduction. *Cosmopolitan Twain*. Eds. Ann M. Ryan and Joseph B. McCullough. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008. 1-20. Print.
- Ryden, Kent C. "Beneath the Surface: Natural Landscapes, Cultural Meaning, and Teaching about Place." *Teaching about Place: Learning from the Land*. Eds. Laird Christensen and Hal Crimmel. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2008. 125-138. Print.
- . *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993. Print.
- Sanborn, Alvan F. "A Massachusetts Shoe Town." *Atlantic Monthly* 80.478 (August 1897): 177-185. Print.
- Sass, Herbert Ravenal. "Wild Life in a City Garden." *Atlantic Monthly* 107.2 (February 1911): 226-233. Print.
- Scholes, Robert and Clifford Wulfman. *Modernism in the Magazines: An Introduction*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. Print.
- Sedgwick, Ellery. *The Atlantic Monthly, 1857-1909: Yankee Humanism at High Tide and Ebb*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994. Print.
- . *A Literary History of the Atlantic Monthly Magazine: 1909-1929*. Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1978. Print.

- Sherman, Sarah Way. *Sarah Orne Jewett: An American Persephone*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1989. Print.
- Sinor, Jennifer, and Rona Kaufman, eds. *Placing the Academy: Essays on Landscape, Work, and Identity*. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2007. Print.
- Smith, Michael B. "Local Environmental History and the Journey to Ecological Citizenship." *Citizenship Across the Curriculum*. Eds. Michael B. Smith, Rebecca S. Nowacek, and Jeffrey L. Bernstein. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010. 165-184. Print.
- Stephenson, Wendell H. "William P. Trent as a Historian of the South." *The Journal of Southern History* 15.2 (May 1949): 151-177. Web. 15 July 2010.
- Stewart, David E. *Anasazi America: Seventeen Centuries on the Road to the Center Place*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000. Print.
- Stout, Janis P., ed. *Willa Cather and Material Culture*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005. Print.
- Sumner, David Thomas. "Don't Forget to Argue: Problems, Possibilities, and Ecomposition." *Ecomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches*. Eds. Christian R. Weisser and Sidney I. Dobrin. New York: State University of New York Press, 2001. 265-280. Print.
- Ticknor, Caroline. "'Mark Twain's' Missing Chapter." *The Bookman*. 39:3 (May 1914): 298-305. American Periodical Series Online. Web. 15 September 2009.
- Trent, W. P. "Dominant Forces in Southern Life." *Atlantic Monthly* 79 (January 1897): 42-53. Print.
- Trilling, Lionel. "F. Scott Fitzgerald." *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society*. New York: Scribner's, 1945. Reprinted in *Critical Essays on F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby*. Ed. Scott Donaldson. Boston: GK Hall & Co., 1984. 13-20. Print.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1974. Print.
- Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Frontier in American History*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920. Print.
- Twain, Mark. *Life on the Mississippi*. 1883. Introduction by Bill McKibben. New York: The Modern Library Press, 2007. Print.
- . "Plymouth Rock and the Pilgrims." 22 December 1881. *Mark Twain: Collected Tales, Sketches, Speeches & Essays, 1852-1890*. New York: Library of America, 1992. 781-785. Print.

- . "The Noble Red Man." September 1870. *Mark Twain: Collected Tales, Sketches, Speeches & Essays, 1852-1890*. New York: Library of America, 1992. 442-446. Print.
- . "The Suppressed Chapter." Reprinted in *The Bookman*. 39:3 (May 1914): 306-309. American Periodical Series Online. Web. 15 September 2009.
- . *Roughing It*. 1872. Ed. Hamlin Hill. New York: Penguin, 1981.
- Ullrich, David W. "Memorials and Monuments: Historical Method and the (Re)construction of The Memory in F. Scott Fitzgerald's 'The Ice Palace.'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 36 (1999): 417-436. Web. 31 March 2008.
- Varien, Mark D. and Richard H. Wilshusen, eds. *Seeking the Center Place: Archaeology and Ancient Communities in the Mesa Verde Region*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2002. Print.
- Veblen, Thorstein. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. 1899. Ed. John Kenneth Galbraith. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1973. Print.
- Walker, Ronald W., Richard E. Turley Jr., and Glenn M. Leonard. *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.
- Watts, Edward. *An American Colony: Regionalism and the Roots of Midwestern Culture*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002. Print.
- Waugh, Charles. "'Only You Can Prevent a Forest': Agent Orange, Ecocide, and Environmental Justice." *ISLE* 17.1 (2010): 113-132. Print.
- Weisser, Christian R. and Sidney I. Dobrin, eds. *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001. Print.
- Wettstein, Howard. "Coming to Terms with Exile ." *Diasporas and Exiles: varieties of Jewish Identity*. Ed. Howard Wettstein. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. 47-59. Print.
- Williams, Deborah Lindsay. "'Fragments of Their Desire': Willa Cather and the Alternative Aesthetic Tradition of Native American Women." *Willa Cather and Material Culture*. Ed. Janice P. Stout. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005. 156-170. Print.
- Wilson, Edmund. "F. Scott Fitzgerald." 1922. *Literary Essays and Reviews of the 1920s and 30s*. New York: Library of America, 2007. 30-36. Print.

White, William Allen. "A Typical Kansas Community." *Atlantic Monthly Magazine* 80 (August 1897): 171-177. Print.

Wolfe, Linnie Marsh, ed. *John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1938. Print.

Woodward, Vann C. *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*. 2nd ed. History of the South Series, Volume 9. Eds. Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971. Print.

Zagarell, Sandra A. "Narrative of Community: The Identification of a Genre." *Signs* 13.3 (1988): 498-527. Web. 18 July 2008.

Zencey, Eric. "The Rootless Professors." *Rooted in the Land: Essays on Community and Place*. Eds. William Vitek and Wes Jackson. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996. 15-19. Print.

Zhang, Aiping. *Enchanted Places: The Use of Setting in F. Scott Fitzgerald's Fiction*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1997. Print.

Zitkala-Ša, "Why I Am a Pagan." *Atlantic Monthly* 90 (December 1902): 801-803. Print.