

Region and the Short Form in American Literature. Symposium in Honor of Jochen Achilles
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Abstract

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"The Empire Plays Back: Of Music, Magic, and Migration in Sarah Orne Jewett's 'The Foreigner'"

As many debates in recent decades have shown, migration is one of the most essential phenomena of globalization. Migration intimately connected to questions of strangers, self vs. other, home, diaspora, exile, traveling cultures, space/location, and the creation of new identities across borders, in the borderlands, and in cultural contact zones, as Mary Louise Pratt has famously argued. I will focus on the idea of the stranger and on the dichotomy of self and/vs. other in order to show how intercultural encounters are always negotiations of these concepts. The particular form of migration underlying Sarah Orne Jewett's short story "The Foreigner" (1900) is that of American imperialism enhancing a constant flow of people, goods, capital, and culture between, in this case, Maine in New England and the Caribbean. The effects, as I see them, are part of what I will call transculturation.

In my presentation, I will show how music and a form of magic in the context of migration work as catalysts that effect changes in the rural town of Dunnet Landing and, in particular, in Mrs. Todd, one of the two female protagonists. This change, I argue, is a form of transculturation, resulting from the intrusion of otherness into a community which in spite of its attempts to preserve monoculturalism gradually turns transcultural.