

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

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“Region as Micro-Cosmos: Sarah Orne Jewett’s *The Country of Pointed Firs*”

Regionalism is widely understood as a literary and artistic movement that emerged in the late nineteenth century as a critical response to processes of industrialization, urbanization, and modernization. Critics of regionalist writing have often decried that approach for accommodating anti-modern, nostalgic, and nativist impulses. Sarah Orne Jewett did not escape such accusations, but as Sandra A. Zagarell recently argued, *The Country of Pointed Firs*, rather than succumbing to mere provincialism, provides its readers with a more intricate and complex view of the world, one that is based on Jewett’s “particular blend of localism and cosmopolitanism.” In my contribution, I will argue that Jewett’s cosmopolitanism can not only be attributed to the metropolitan narrator’s distanced curiosity about rural life but also to the narrative’s more general proclivity for presenting Dunnet Landing as a sort of Humboldtian *micro-cosmos*, i.e., as the ordered system of a region created by the forces of nature and history.