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Nationalizing the Region:  
Collective Identity and American Regionalist Women Writers

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## ABSTRACT

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by

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Though late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century women who wrote about particular regions of America are often lost between the giants of the American canon, brushed aside as inconsequential “local color” dilettantes, they deserve to be read with a broader understanding of context and influence. Regionalist writers such as Sarah Orne Jewett, Willa Cather, Mary Austin, Zitkala-Ša and Sui Sin Far have been marginalized for more than their ostensible lack of artistic merit. These women, in their complicated responses to regional-national relations, to an industrial impulse colliding with a domestic economy, and to variables of race and citizenship, developed a powerful critique of a perfunctory mythos of America as white, boldly expansionist, and pluralistically united. These writers have long been absent from the canon of American literature due to their disinclination to acquiesce to increasingly pervasive notions of masculine, imperialistic nationhood, found in particular in the rhetoric, speeches, and writings of Frederick Jackson Turner and Theodore Roosevelt. The texts of this project develop a portrait of an agitated country, a nation which, by its very attempts at self-definition and cohesive imagining, must overlook the often devastating consequences of collective being if it hopes ever to realize itself as a viable global presence