

Rhodes College Digital Archives - DLynx

Nationalizing the Region: Collective Identity and American Regionalist Women Writers

Authors	Comes, Diana Marie
Download date	2025-05-22 04:34:54
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/10267/33630

I give permission for public access to my Honors paper and for any copying or digitization to be done at the discretion of the College Archivist and/or the College Librarian.

Signed _____

Diana M. Comes

Date _____

Nationalizing the Region:
Collective Identity and American Regionalist Women Writers

Diana Marie Comes

Department of English
Rhodes College
Memphis, Tennessee

2008

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Bachelor of Arts degree with Honors in English

This Honors paper by Diana Marie Comes
has been read and approved for Honors in English.

Dr. Leslie Petty
Project Sponsor

Dr. Marshall Boswell
Second Reader

Dr. Gordon Bigelow
Department Chair

Acknowledgements

This project is the culmination of a year's work and many people, whether knowingly or not, have shaped its final appearance. I am extremely grateful to Gordon Bigelow, Judith Haas, and Eddie Mallot for their guidance and for giving me the opportunity to take on this research. I am also indebted to Marshall Boswell for his incisive comments on earlier drafts. Bill Short was an invaluable resource in the library, and JoBeth Campbell, Thomas Cole, Jessica Lotz, and Rebecca Finlayson encouraged me throughout the process.

Mostly, though, I would like to acknowledge the support of Hank Neuhoff, who now understands more about Theodore Roosevelt than any business major should have to know. And above all else, I would like to thank Leslie Petty for her exceptional mentoring, for introducing me to Maine several years ago, and for being a wise guide when I ventured off to Chinatown on my own.

CONTENTS

Signature page	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Contents	iv
Abstract	v
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 Not in Any Way Subject: Sarah Orne Jewett and Regional Agency	18
Chapter 2 A National Romance: <i>My Ántonia</i> and American Higher Education	34
Chapter 3 “Who shall say?”: National Power and Regional Voice in Mary Austin’s <i>The Land of Little Rain</i>	49
Chapter 4 “What was she?”: Illusive Whiteness/Elusive Americanness in Zitkala-Ša and Sui Sin Far	66
Coda	84
Bibliography	91

ABSTRACT

Nationalizing the Region:
Collective Identity and American Regionalist Women Writers

by

Diana Marie Comes

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