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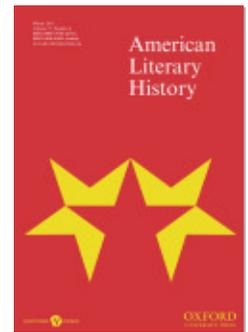
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# Literature and Regional Production

*Hsuan L. Hsu*

For readers, tourists, and politicians alike, the region often serves as a focus of nostalgia and a privileged site of geographical feeling. Both the architects of gated suburban communities and progressive cultural critics represent the local as the scale of familiarity, loyalty, and authentic experience, in contrast with the merely imagined community of the nation and the passionless economic space of globalization; in this view, the only hope for larger scales would be an expansion of local allegiances outward until the entire world is fused together into a “global village.” Thus, one leftist geographer claims that global political movements must extrapolate from local experiences because “for most people the terrain of sensuous experience and of affective social relations (which forms the material grounding for consciousness formation and political action) is locally circumscribed” (Harvey, *Spaces* 85). But David M. Smith reminds us in an essay entitled “How Far Should We Care?” that such an outward expansion of locally rooted feelings would have to stop somewhere. Although he sets out to lay the groundwork for a “universal ethic of care,” Smith’s essay ends up affirming a “distance-decay” model of interpersonal sympathy in which feelings are attenuated by distance (15). But these approaches to place-based identification, which envision community as spreading outward from sentimentalized “closeness” to an abstract obscuring distance, assume that local communities of some sort exist in isolation from large-scale geographical entities such as nations, empires, and transnational economic currents.

In order to present an alternative to models of geographical affect that posit an extension of care outward from a local hearth to a global cosmos, this essay takes as its point of departure the process of regional production, which has been theorized and described by cultural geographers like Doreen Massey, Harvey, and Neil Smith. The relation between literature and regional production involves not only the production of literature about regions but also the ways in which literary works produce, reimagine, and actively restructure

regional identities in the minds and hearts of their readers; moreover, this latter process of regional transformation always occurs in relation to larger-scale phenomena such as migrant flows, transportational networks, and international commerce. This broad concern with the production and continual reconfiguration of regions has led me to examine not only the relatively well-defined literary genre of regionalist writing but also regional themes and rhetorics embedded in broader texts and contexts. Thus, my primary texts include both a definitive regionalist text—Sarah Orne Jewett’s *Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896)—and examples drawn from other genres—Frank Norris’s *Octopus* (1901) and Booker T. Washington’s *Up from Slavery* (1901)—that are explicitly concerned with the geographical and economic relations between region and nation and, more urgently, between region and world. By incorporating regionalist aesthetics into larger contexts, these texts demonstrate that affect originates not only in isolated, local communities but also in the broader spaces of transnational capitalism. Furthermore, the emotional responses evoked by global scenarios of commerce and migration often, and paradoxically, contribute to the formation of regional identifications on the part of narrators, characters, and presumed readers.

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### 1. Dunnet Landing in the Time before Steamships

Local color writing, which enjoyed an immense popularity in literary magazines such as *The Atlantic* and *Harpers*,<sup>1</sup> often features what Raymond Williams calls a “fly-in-amber quality”—an interest in preserving local cultures that were thought to be vanishing in the face of postbellum capitalist consolidation (61). The narrow-minded regional novel, Williams writes, “has initially so isolated its region, and thus projected it as internally whole—‘organic’—that it is unable to recognize the complex internal processes, including internal divisions and conflicts, which factually connect with...wider pressures” (61). This view of regions seems to epitomize a common prejudice against spatial analysis among many historicist thinkers, who treat space as “the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile” (Foucault 70). But when viewed as dynamic and flexible units of production rather than as permanently delineated areas, regions are neither isolated nor fixed—on the contrary, their constitutive and necessary interactions with other scales suggest that space, in its various and contradictory relations, can be as dialectical as time. After all, as Williams reminds us, “A ‘region’ was once a realm or a country, in the sense of *regere* (to rule), but it was also, with a characteristic political ambiguity of such divisions of the earth, a specific

part of a larger ruled area: a diocese, a district, a bounded tract, in the sense of *regere* (to direct)" (59). Regions may administer or fix social and economic relations in a given area, but they are themselves produced or transformed in relation to—and often in the service of—larger, dominant spaces.

Although their work generally focuses on contemporary, late-capitalist developments, cultural geographers provide an indispensable conceptual groundwork for an analysis of nineteenth-century literary regionalism. Just as literary critics are becoming increasingly interested in the interrelations between regionalist texts and the broader historical contexts of postbellum nationalism and US imperialism,<sup>2</sup> geographers are detailing the ways in which regions are culturally and economically produced so as to meet the requirements of an ever-changing "international and national economic system" (Massey 59). No sooner does Neil Smith identify the region as a scale defined by processes of agricultural and industrial production than he adds that "Much as it is internally constructed, the social economy of the region is also fashioned in the swirl of national and international economic processes, events, and developments, and insofar as regions specialize in specific types and conditions of production, making commodities or selling services for a wider market, regional borders are highly porous and changeable" (73–74). Conceptualizing regions as both productive (i.e., insofar as they are organized as increasingly specialized units of production for an increasingly integrated world market) and continually *produced*, this essay will examine both the ideological work that regionalist literature performs by representing affectively charged localities and the larger-scale contradictions of imperialism and commerce that are provisionally resolved by such regional identifications. Such a framework overturns the "distance-decay" model of geographical care: "fashioned in the swirl of national and international economic[s]," regional identification turns out to be constructed from the outside in.

Massey thus emphasizes that locality studies cannot afford to rely on a simple opposition between the global and the local: "Globalization (in the economy, or in culture, or in anything else) does not entail simply homogenization. On the contrary, the globalization of social relations is yet another source of (the reproduction of) geographical uneven development, and thus of the uniqueness of place" (156). The emergence of the world market both requires and exaggerates heterogeneous and unevenly developed places, and the process of uneven development constantly positions and repositions different places as relatively marginal or central within a larger global field. Dea Birkett provides a notable example of this dynamic interplay between globalizing and localizing forces by describing how increased air travel—a phenomenon commonly associated with globalization's

tendency toward “time-space compression” (Harvey, *Condition* 240)—brings about a correlative decline in shipping that increases the isolation of small Pacific islands: “Air travel might enable businessmen to buzz across the ocean, but the concurrent decline in shipping has only increased the isolation of many island communities. . . . Pitcairn, like many other Pacific islands, has never felt so far from its neighbours” (qtd. in Massey 148).

Jewett’s *Country of the Pointed Firs* describes a similar situation in Dunnet Landing, a town whose once busy harbors have been rendered largely obsolete by the rise of railroads, the phasing out of “small wooden ships,” and the centralization of the shipping industry. In the opening paragraph of “The Queen’s Twin,” one of the Dunnet Landing tales completed after the publication of *Country*, Jewett writes,

The coast of Maine was in former years brought so near to foreign shores by its busy fleet of ships that among the older men and women one still finds a surprising proportion of travelers. . . . They shame the easy voyager of the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean; they have rounded the Cape of Good Hope and braved the angry seas of Cape Horn in small wooden ships; they have brought up their hardy boys and girls on narrow decks; they were among the last of the Northmen’s children to go adventuring to unknown shores. More than this one cannot give to a young State for its enlightenment; the sea captains and the captains’ wives of Maine knew something of the wide world, and never mistook their native parishes for the whole instead of a part thereof; they knew not only Thomaston and Castine and Portland, but London and Bristol and Bordeaux, and the strange-mannered harbors of the China Sea. (189–90)

In *Country* itself, this theme of prior cosmopolitanism is set forth elegiacally by Captain Littlepage, a thin and refined old man who bemoans that the decline of shipping has rendered his neighbors less “large-minded”: during the shipping boom of the early nineteenth century, Dunnet’s sailors “saw the world for themselves, and like’s not their women and children saw it with them. They may not have had the best of knowledge to carry with ‘em sight-seein’, but they were some acquainted with foreign lands an’ their laws, an’ could see outside the battle for town-clerk here in Dunnet; they got some sense o’ proportion” (20). *Country* represents Dunnet Landing at the point of transition between this older yet more cosmopolitan role and its new function as a vacation spot for tourists, like Jewett’s narrator, who seek a quiet retreat from urban life. Ironically, the local colorist’s nostalgia for a “prelapsarian” and homogeneous region

that “excludes historical change” leads her to discover the sea captain’s own nostalgia for a historically prior period of cosmopolitan mobility (Gillman 101). Yet the two forms of nostalgia overlap to the extent that Captain Littlepage’s description of the shipping industry conflates labor with tourism: men going “sight-seein’” with their women and children in order to become “acquainted with foreign lands an’ their laws” sound more like “easy voyagers” embarking on Grand Tours than sailors on commercial vessels. It is as if Jewett can only describe the village’s former cosmopolitanism, which was based on labor and commerce, in the terms of its emergent function in a cosmopolitan network of picturesque tourist “retreats.”<sup>3</sup>

Captain Littlepage’s travel narrative further emphasizes the transnational framework of Jewett’s book. When reminiscing about his own voyage “from the London docks to Fort Churchill” in Canada, Littlepage wanders into a description of Gaffett, a sailor whom he met during his adventures “way up toward what we used to call Parry’s Discoveries” (22). Littlepage’s digression soon takes up Gaffett’s own travel narrative about “a town two degrees farther north than ships had ever been”—a town that disappeared when Gaffett and his shipmates landed on shore, and inhabited by “blowing gray figures” that they could only see from a distance (25–26). The embedded travel narratives repeatedly return to this motif of an unbridgeable distance, as the two captains’ stories take us farther and farther north toward a town that can only be seen from afar and mysterious “fog-shaped men” who flit away so that the crew “never could get near them” (25). Moreover, the motif of distance paradoxically links these mysterious northern regions with the seemingly more familiar regional town. For Dunnet Landing itself most impresses the narrator with its tendency to recede from view: “The little town . . . stood high above the flat sea for a few minutes then it sank back into the uniformity of the coast. . . . [W]hen I looked back again, the islands and the headland had run together and Dunnet Landing and all its coasts were lost to sight” (132–33). Throughout the book, uncomfortable distances—whether those that separate urban readers from regional villagers, those that lie between Gaffett and the fog-people, or those that prevent the narrator from ever feeling entirely at home in Dunnet Landing—foreground both the possibility and the difficulty of people coming together across cultural and geographical boundaries.

But Jewett presents a more optimistic resolution of distance and community formation in “The Foreigner,” a Dunnet Landing tale published in the August 1900 issue of *The Atlantic*. As a sequel in which Jewett revisited the characters and setting of *Country*, “The Foreigner” in some ways represents a retroactive revision of the earlier sketches’ almost xenophobic emphasis on local experience.<sup>4</sup> For, as

the title suggests, this tale introduces a foreigner to the secluded Maine village: Mrs. Tolland, the narrator learns, was born in France, the widow of a Portuguese husband, and living alone in Jamaica when Captain Tolland met and married her. A Catholic who “spoke very broken English, no better than a child” (168), Mrs. Tolland was ostracized by the tight-knit Protestant community of Dunnet Landing. Even Almira Todd—whose character is in many ways the sympathetic center of *Country*—at first feels “provoked” by jealousy when her mother spends time with Mrs. Tolland rather than herself (169).

But after Almira’s mother admonishes her to “neighbor with that poor lonesome creatur” because “she’s a stranger in a strange land” (169), the two women form a sympathetic bond that offers a new perspective on one of *Country*’s most representative local practices. As they are presented in the first chapter of the earlier book, Almira Todd’s herbal medicines embody centuries of tradition and regional myth: “Some of these might once have belonged to sacred and mystic rites, and have had some occult knowledge handed with them down the centuries” (4). Indeed, Almira’s frequent and extensive herb-gathering expeditions are one of the primary sources of her—and, indirectly, of the narrator’s—knowledge of the regional landscape.<sup>5</sup> “The Foreigner,” however, reveals that the herbalist’s expertise, far from being the pure, regional practice it seems, in fact derives in part from foreign sources. Almira reports that more than 40 years ago her immigrant friend “taught me a sight o’ things about herbs I never knew before nor since; she was well acquainted with the virtues o’ plants. She’d act awful secret about some things too, an’ used to work charms for herself sometimes. . . . That first night I stopped to tea with her she’d cooked some eggs with some herb or other sprinkled all through, and ‘twas she that first led me to discern mushrooms. . . . Yes, ‘twas she that learned me the proper use o’ parsley too; she was a beautiful cook” (170). The foreign origin of Mrs. Todd’s herbal remedies revises one of local color’s most characteristic metaphors for rootedness in a specific place: for example, when arguing that local color must be written by someone native to the region in question, Hamlin Garland calls for a “statement of life as indigenous as the plant-growth” (5). (Jewett’s idea of entitling her projected collection of “Irish-American” stories *Transplanted Shamrocks* raises, in the metaphor of transplantation, another objection to the essentializing concept of geographical roots.) But Mrs. Todd’s gardening and gathering do not simply symbolize community—they actively produce it. These practices are essential to the food she cooks for her guests, the teas she shares with visitors, and the nostrums she dispenses to ailing neighbors. *Nostrum*, a word deriving simply from the Latin for *ours*, refers to a medicine whose ingredients are secret and whose efficacy is not publicly recognized.

These homemade remedies form implicit communities among those who believe in their virtues.

Similarly, sociality in *Country* almost always focuses on the activities of communal meals and, especially, teas: gossip, reminiscence, and storytelling occur so frequently over tea that naturalist writers seem to have had Jewett as well as William Dean Howells or Henry James in mind when they criticized the restrained scale of genteel realism in terms of teacups: Norris's complaint of realism's "teacup tragedies" was echoed by Theodore Dreiser's sexist remark that "a big city is not a little teacup to be seasoned by old maids" and Sinclair Lewis's 1930 Nobel Prize speech, which refers to realism as "tea-table gentility" (qtd. in Campbell 4). But the regionalist ritual of tea itself involves herbs that are either gathered with the help of Mrs. Tolland's French and Jamaican knowledge or imported from countries such as India and China. The link between exotic teas and sociability is clearest when the narrator reports of Mrs. Fosdick's visit that "There was an instant sense of high festivity in the evening air from the moment when our guest had so frankly demanded the Oolong tea" (57). In addition to the tea leaves, all the other materials involved in the characters' daily social teas also seem to be imported: Mrs. Todd's mother, while "busy making her tea[,] gave into my hand an old flowered glass tea-caddy," explaining that "My father brought it to my mother from the island of Tobago; an' here's a pair of beautiful mugs that came with it" (51).

Critics often note the abundance of foreign imports in Dunnet Landing<sup>6</sup>—but what were Maine villagers *exporting* in exchange for such exotic goods? The narrator's reference to the "West Indian curiosities, specimens of conch shells and fine coral which [Mrs. Begg's seafaring husbands] had brought home from their voyages in *lumber-laden ships*" quietly reiterates a fact already obliquely registered by the title of Jewett's volume: Maine was trafficking in trees—primarily hardwoods like its prized white pines, but also various products derived from its "pointed" balsam firs (13; emphasis added). Not only did the cosmopolitan sailors and sea captains of Dunnet Landing's past participate in a worldwide shipping industry—they also made shipping possible by supplying white pine masts for the navies and large merchant ships of the world. Most of the lumber Maine exported in the time before steamships was used for shipbuilding. Thus, one maritime historian writes that "In the latter days of wooden men-of-war all the navies of the world flew their pennants at the peak of a Maine mast" (Rowe 44).

In selecting a title for her sketches, Jewett may have preferred the picturesque pointed fir to the prized white pine precisely on account of the former's relative lack of commercial value.<sup>7</sup> But firs were not entirely excluded from the region's lumber industry: Richard

Wood's *History of Lumbering in Maine, 1820–1861* (1935) reports that fir “wood is poor but was used for boxes and . . . wood pulp” (25). Jewett herself seems to hint that even hitherto “useless” trees could be commercialized for export when she describes “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 heights and down to the water’s edge” (29). This maritime “army” of trees emphasizes the degree to which sea power supported Western nations’ military and economic conquests throughout the world. Lumber and pulpwood exports account for both Dunnet Landing’s past as a busy cosmopolitan port town and its reproduction—partly by means of *Country* itself—as a relatively isolated and supposedly unchanged vacation spot. After all, Jewett’s contrast between the “old wharves” and the new “steamer landing” reminds us that it was the transition from tall-masted wooden schooners to modern steamships that rendered Maine’s most sought-after lumber outmoded. The narrator’s last view of the town from her departing steamer is of “the tall masts of its disabled schooners,” relics of an earlier era when Maine supplied the schooners of the world with mast wood. Elsewhere, Jewett likens the nostalgic tone of regionalist discourse itself to such a wooden schooner: “the sails of her narrative were filled with a fresh breeze” (175).

These passages complicate one common view concerning the modest or diminutive scale of Jewett’s work. Richard Brodhead rightly notes that the “issue of size or scale has formed part of every reckoning of Jewett” (163), but he goes on to reaffirm several critical claims about the author’s “limits” and her own “compulsive self-miniaturization” in restraining herself to a “minor,” regional form. Brodhead insists that “in choosing the regional form, Jewett also accepted its generic diminution of her work’s emotional scale. By its formal operations, regionalism limited the literary work’s social horizon to a self-containedly local world” (167). But just as the intense relationships between its female characters belie Brodhead’s suggestion that *Country* explores only diminutive emotions, the book’s references to immigration, voyages of discovery, and Maine’s lumber industry exceed the protocols of regionalism’s spatial and formal constraints. Jewett shows how a community fused together by deeply rooted feelings and day-to-day interactions depends, both economically and emotionally, on commodities and experiences acquired abroad.

If globalization did not render regions obsolete so much as it furnished and continually modified their conditions of possibility,<sup>8</sup> then regionalism need not be synonymous with self-consciously local writing. For, as Donna Campbell notes, when it fell out of

fashion at the turn of the last century “local color did not disappear; it instead became fragmented, dissolving into a host of new literary trends” (47). Norris’s naturalist novels and Washington’s rhetoric of racial uplift both incorporate such fragments of regionalist discourse, but they also juxtapose regional allegiances with larger-scale spaces—specifically, their concern with regions as geographical units of production frequently leads them to turn toward the horizon of international commodity markets for California wheat and Southern cotton. Although they end up taking recourse to reductively sentimentalized or isolated visions of the global (Norris) or the local (Washington), *The Octopus* and *Up from Slavery* nevertheless illustrate the relevance of global economic restructuring to both the “production” and critique of local, place-based identifications.

## 2. Regionalism and “The Larger View” in *The Octopus*

Naturalism often represents itself as the antithesis of local color. Despite his explicit reference to Howells, Norris’s oft-cited condemnation of literary realism singles out literary elements—smallness, everyday life, and femininity—commonly associated with regionalist writing. “Realism,” he writes, “is very excellent so far as it goes, but it goes no further than the Realist himself can actually see, or actually hear. Realism is minute; it is the drama of a broken teacup, the tragedy of a walk down the block, the excitement of an afternoon call, the adventure of an invitation to dinner” (“Plea” 1166). In contrast with such “minute” domestic settings, naturalist writers preferred action on a larger scale<sup>9</sup>—tales of distant voyages (Jack London’s *The Sea Wolf* [1904]), urban squalor (Stephen Crane’s *Maggie* [1893]), murder (Norris’s *McTeague* [1899]), and survival in the Klondike (London’s *The Call of the Wild* [1903]). Yet Norris is known no less for his Californian settings than for his naturalist aesthetics, and he often incorporates regionalist themes into his texts (*McTeague*, for example, is subtitled “A Story of San Francisco”).<sup>10</sup> By including *The Octopus: A Story of California* within his larger, unfinished “Trilogy of the Wheat,” Norris inserts regionalist aesthetics into an emotionally charged epic of globalization and dramatizes how imperialism and international commerce contribute to the ongoing transformations of a particular wheat-growing region. The novel thus bears out Russ Castronovo’s suggestion that Norris’s sense of aesthetic form originates not in local communities, but in an expansive and potentially fascist globalism: “Before Norris sat down in San Francisco and penned manifestoes about managing literature to serve the masses’ economic and political interests, he sailed as a correspondent to South Africa during the Boer War and

then two years later to Cuba when the U.S. military invaded the island. The aesthetic for Norris has its roots in imperial adventure and global exchange” (165).

Norris’s own critical essays explicitly juxtapose regional and global concerns. He begins a commentary on “The Great American Novelist,” for example, by arguing that American literature must be regional because the nation is too large and too diverse for novels of a literally “national” scope: “[S]uch a novel will be sectional. The United States is a Union, but not a unit, and the life in one part is very, very different from the life in another. It is as yet impossible to construct a novel which will represent all the various characteristics of the different sections. It is only possible to make a picture of a single locality. What is true of the South is not true of the North. The West is different, and the Pacific Coast is a community by itself” (1181). But, Norris momentarily objects, what if the novelist were to go “deep” enough to represent universal truths? For “what is vitally true of the Westerner is true of the Bostonian—yes, and of the Creole. So that if Mr. Cable, say, should only go *deep enough* into the hearts and lives of his Creoles, he would at last strike the universal substratum and find the elemental thing that is common to the Creole and to the Puritan alike” (1181). On this view, regionalism can transcend itself by simply reaching for the universal traits that would show its various (but all male) stock figures—“the Cowboy and Hoosier and Greaser and Buckeye and Jay Hawker” (1181)—to be mere variations of an American type. However, Norris goes on to revoke this objection, effectively eclipsing the nation between local and global allegiances: “[I]f an American novelist should go so deep into the lives of the people of any one community that he would find the thing that is common to another class of people a thousand miles away, he would have gone *too deep* to be exclusively American. He would not only be American, but English as well. He would have sounded the world note; he would be a writer not national but international, and his countrymen would be all humanity, not the citizens of any one nation” (1181–82). Nations do not qualify as stable imagined communities, because the imagination cannot help extending beyond them to the planetary scale.

Norris outlines a similar trajectory from the local to the global in “The Frontier Gone at Last.” After presenting a speculative history of patriotic sentiment from its origins as “the regard of family” through clannish sentiment, civic pride, and provincial identity to nineteenth-century nationalisms, the essay concludes by looking forward to a time when we “may realize that the true patriotism is the brotherhood of man and know that the whole world is our nation and simple humanity our countrymen” (1188). But whereas “The Great American Novelist” seems to reconcile regional writing with

its global relevance by suggesting that writers like Bret Harte and George Washington Cable may indeed express universal truths while writing about specific locales, “The Frontier Gone at Last” presents a teleological, expansive evolution of affect in which each successive scale of identification supplants its precursors. For example, when “patriotism” becomes national it “is a far larger, broader, truer sentiment than that first huddling about the hearthstone of the family”; and when we supersede this “stage” of patriotism we will no longer “arrogantly boast ourselves as Americans” but embrace, instead, the merging of all nations into one (1189). *The Octopus* seems to bear out such a teleological model of geographical affect that radiates outward from family and clan to region, nation, and finally the entire world: Presley’s notorious espousal of globalization’s “larger view”—in which individual suffering appears only as the plight of “Liliputians [and] gnats”—attempts to abandon his involvement with the regional struggles of California farmers in exchange for the sublime rapture that accompanies an international perspective (316). But the bulk of the novel dramatizes how an agricultural region was produced and then reconfigured in conjunction with international market demands, thus suggesting that regional belonging is by no means mutually exclusive with a global patriotism that encompasses all of humankind.

Like most regionalist fiction, *The Octopus* is narrated, for the most part, from the point of view of an outsider. Presley, an aspiring poet who has been on an extended visit to Magnus Derrick’s ranch, is distinguished by both geography and education from the novel’s other characters, having “graduated and postgraduated with high honors from an eastern college” (13). Like that of the narrator’s wife in Charles Chesnut’s *Conjure Woman* (1899), Presley’s trip to the warmer region was motivated by the threat of “consumption”; the other purpose of his trip, like that of Jewett’s narrator, is to get some writing done—specifically, he plans to write a regional epic—“his great poem, his Song of the West” (35).<sup>11</sup> Norris’s narrative often reflects Presley’s interest in California’s literary potential. The principal action of *The Octopus* takes place in the immediate vicinity of four ranches in Tulare County, California, an area of about 100 square miles. Preceded by a map of four ranches, the town of Bonneville, and the mission of San Juan de Guadalupe, Norris’s first chapter uses Presley’s “long excursion through the neighboring country, partly on foot and partly on his bicycle,” to present a detailed picture of the area’s geography: “The Home ranch of the Quien Sabe was in the little triangle bounded on the south by the railroad, on the northwest by Broderson Creek, and on the east by the hop fields and the Mission lands. It was traversed in all directions, now by the trail from Hooven’s, now by the irrigating ditch—the same which Presley

had crossed earlier in the day—and again by the road upon which Presley then found himself. In its center were Annixter’s ranch house and barns” (23).

From the outset, however, Norris undermines any sense of regional enclosure. For the Home ranch is not an isolated place but part of a network of production and exchange, “traversed in all directions” by trail, road, irrigation ditch, and railroad. And the detailed description of the ranches and their environs gives way to a feeling of infinitude that seems to be the antithesis of a local sense of place: “Beyond the fine line of the horizon, over the curve of the globe, the shoulder of the earth, were other ranches, equally vast, and beyond these, still others, the immensities multiplying, lengthening out vaster and vaster” (39). Presley views the ranchos of Quien Sabe, Los Muertos, Broderson, and Osterman not as particular places characterized by local idiosyncrasies, but as metonymic representations of the entire San Joaquin valley, the “colossal . . . feeder of an entire world” (39). Metonymy threatens to blur the specificity of this or any other region as the “expanded” imagination pictures an infinite grid of ranches multiplying beyond “the curve of the globe, the shoulder of the earth” (39).

*The Octopus*’s most dramatic revision of local color, however, occurs when Norris juxtaposes agricultural scenarios with the corporate, mechanized railroad, which literally massacres pastoral conventions when Presley’s reverie is interrupted by a locomotive running over a herd of unsuspecting sheep. In the grotesque metaphor invoked by the novel’s title, the network of red lines representing the Pacific and South West Railroad on an official railway map resembles a monstrous octopus absorbing remote counties and regions into its parasitic system—“a veritable system of blood circulation, complicated, dividing, and reuniting, branching, splitting, extending, throwing out feelers, offshoots, taproots, feeders, diminutive little bloodsuckers that shot out from the main jugular and went twisting up into some remote county, laying hold upon some forgotten village or town, involving it in one of a myriad branching coils . . . drawing it, as it were, toward that center from which all this system sprang” (205). The pallor of Norris’s octopus seems to account for his departure from the aesthetic of local color, for if it incorporates the “forgotten village or town” into its system, it also sucks all the color out of such places: “The map was white, and it seemed as if all the color which should have gone to vivify the various counties, towns, and cities marked upon it had been absorbed” (205). The San Joaquin Valley is not an isolated and “forgotten” place but an agricultural region emerging in tandem with a statewide railroad monopoly. As George Henderson writes in his analysis of cultural geography, agricultural restructuring, and *The Octopus*, “Capital’s production of

scale is thus not just about the tying of one place to another. It is about selective and uneven development” (144).

Unlike Jewett’s provincial villagers, Norris’s San Joaquin ranchers are not natives but adventurous settlers, speculators with no love for the land:

It was the true California spirit that found expression through him, the spirit of the West, unwilling to occupy itself with details, refusing to wait, to be patient, to achieve by legitimate plodding; the miner’s instinct of wealth in a single night prevailed, in spite of all. . . . They had no love for their land. They were not attached to the soil. They worked their ranches as a quarter of a century before they had worked their mines. . . . To get all there was out of the land, to squeeze it dry, to exhaust it, seemed their policy. . . . They did not care. (212)

Paradoxically, the “true California spirit” consists in having no emotional or personal attachments to Californian soil. Even the first name of the ranchers’ leader, Magnus Derrick, indicates that these wheat growers are in fact themselves invested in the immense scale of the railroad that eventually crushes them: “He loved to do things on a grand scale” (51). Former miners and wide-ranging speculators, the San Joaquin settlers themselves embody the boom-and-bust economy which continually configures and reconfigures regions and markets to meet the requirements of large-scale networks of transportation and trade—the very economy whose reconfigurations by the railroad and agricultural overproduction eventually make these ranchers obsolete.<sup>12</sup> Industrial capital absorbs and manipulates these individual farmers in the same way that it absorbs agricultural regions. Thus Henderson notes, “The ultimate totalizing gesture of capital. . . is its absorption of the human body. Capital, we see, moves through every conceivable spatial scale: the global, the regional, the local, the individual ranch, and bodies, which by the end of the novel start dropping like flies” (142).

Although Henderson convincingly details the ways in which *The Octopus* reflects the effects of industrial capital and overproduction on California wheat farmers, his reading turns on a rigorous critique of the novel’s concluding leap from a regional to a reductively global scale of analysis. Many critics have expressed a similar skepticism about the epiphany Presley experiences as—much like Jewett’s narrator embarking from Dunnet Landing—he watches the faint line of California’s coastal mountains fade into the distance from the deck of the *Swanhilda*, a wheat-laden ship bound for India.<sup>13</sup> Presley had witnessed broken hearts, starving old women, a girl forced into prostitution, and farmers “shot down in the very noon of life,” “*But*

the WHEAT remained. Untouched, unassailable, undefiled, that mighty world force, that nourisher of nations, wrapped in Nirvanic calm, indifferent to the human swarm, gigantic, resistless, moved onward in its appointed grooves. Through the welter of blood at the irrigation ditch, through the sham charity and shallow philanthropy of famine relief committees, the great harvest of Los Muertos rolled like a flood from the Sierras to the Himalayas to feed thousands of starving scarecrows on the barren plains of India" (458).

Of course, the *Swanhilda* is only the first ship in the fleet being prepared by its owner, Cedarquist, whose "new venture—the organizing of a line of clipper wheat ships for Pacific and Oriental trade—was prospering" (455). Presley's rapturous experience of "the larger view" (458)—which subsumes individual suffering to the good of the human race as a whole—seems naïve when contrasted with Cedarquist's explicit description of the India-bound wheat cargo in terms of "manifest destiny," new markets, and his profiteering desire "to sell 'em carpet sweepers for their harems and electric-light plants for their temple shrines" (455).<sup>14</sup> In fact, this notion of a *larger view* was often invoked at the turn of the twentieth century to describe or justify America's commercial and naval interests in the Far East. Norris himself, for example, repeatedly speaks of "the larger view" in "The Frontier Gone at Last" when he describes how US commerce will forge an international community joining the Old World with Asia. Alfred Thayer Mahan, one of the leading proponents of establishing a US naval supremacy to protect the nation's imperial interests, opens his article on "The Problem of Asia" by insisting that foreign policy needs to take "long views" rather than short ones (536).<sup>15</sup>

Henderson rightly points out the ideological underpinnings of Presley's revelation, as well as its logical inconsistencies. Because "he has distanced himself again from detail, from body dramas and micro-spaces, back up to that larger scale of global production and distribution," the novel's protagonist fails to ask searching and potentially subversive questions such as, "wouldn't it be more to the good if the fullness of human life were preserved in the first place?" (Henderson 143). But Presley's view should not be confused with Norris's, for at the conclusion of *The Pit*—a sequel to *The Octopus* that has received considerably less critical attention<sup>16</sup>—Laura Jadwin meditates on this very question: "For a moment, vague, dark perplexities assailed her, questionings as to the elemental forces, the forces of demand and supply that ruled the world. This huge resistless Nourisher of the Nations—why was it that it could not reach the People, could not fulfil its destiny, unmarred by all this suffering, unattended by all this misery?" (420). The very structure of *The Pit*'s ending echoes Presley's departure from California in the final

moments of *The Octopus*: just as Presley “passed . . . in review” all that had transpired since he moved to Los Muertos, Laura reminisces about her husband’s catastrophic attempt to “corner” the wheat trade as the two are leaving Chicago for the West. The distribution of the wheat through the Chicago stock exchange involves a suffering comparable to that of the Mussel Slough massacre: Curtis Jadwin’s attempt to corner wheat leads to his friend Cressler’s bankruptcy and suicide, his own temporary madness, and the near dissolution of his marriage. In addition, Jadwin’s speculative attempt to drive up the price of wheat from 60 cents to two dollars ruins dozens of investors; and if it enriches thousands of wheat farmers it does so by starving millions of consumers throughout the world.

Instead of finding an answer to this dark questioning, Laura’s musings are abruptly interrupted when she notices that her carriage is passing one of the novel’s central, repeated images: “the pile of the Board of Trade building, black, monolithic, crouching on its foundations like a monstrous sphinx with blind eyes, silent, grave” (421). The dizzying, baroque description of the Board of Trade building and the whirling vortex of grain that passes through its wheat pit is formally analogous to Norris’s sublime accounts of the railroad octopus; but whereas the octopus spreads its tentacles over immense swaths of land, the grave and sphinxlike Trade building crouching over a vortex or pit conveys a sense of constrained introversion. Laura’s doubts never yield anything like Presley’s easy and complacent “larger view” of the economic sublime; instead, they question or resist the inevitability of the wheat as it roars, “resistless, along its ordered and predetermined courses from West to East” (*Pit* 419).

A natural and even larger version of the railroad itself, the wheat seems to run to the East along “appointed grooves”—whether from California to India, or from California to Europe (*Octopus* 458). However, this predetermined westward flow of the wheat is interrupted at several moments in the two novels. For, despite his original plan of writing a “Trilogy of the Wheat” that would track “(1) the production, (2) the distribution, (3) the consumption of *American* wheat . . . the story of a crop of wheat from the time of its sowing as seed in California to the time of its consumption as bread in a village of Western Europe,” Norris frequently reminds us that neither California nor America at large is the world’s exclusive producer of wheat (*Pit*, preface; emphasis added). If wheat cannot be cornered, it isn’t because of the notion of *manifest destiny* that Cedarquist uses to describe a flow of *American* wheat into Eastern markets, but rather because wheat is produced and distributed by farmers scattered throughout the world.<sup>17</sup> Norris often describes a centralized model of regional production and national distribution in which wheat is produced in the San Joaquin Valley and sucked away

by the tentacles of an octopus *centralized* in San Francisco, only to be transported to Chicago wheat pit located in “the Heart of the Nation”; but Curtis’s wheat corner is overwhelmed when wheat flows in the opposite direction, when not only California and the Midwest but more distant farms from “The Atlantic Seaboard, New York, and Boston and Philadelphia sent out their tributary streams [of wheat]; London, Liverpool, Paris, and Odessa merged their influences with the vast world-wide flowing that bore down upon Chicago” (*Pit* 380).<sup>18</sup> The larger view works in both directions, so that instead of supplying wheat *to* the rest of the world, America can just as easily receive it *from* the world: “All over the world the farmers saw season after season of good crops. They were good in the Argentine Republic, and on the Russian steppes. In India, on the little farms of Burmah, of Mysore, and of Sind the grain, year after year, headed out fat, heavy, and well-favoured” (189). Whereas *The Octopus* concludes with a shipment of wheat bound for India, *The Pit* highlights the agricultural production of various farmlands in India itself, as well as other foreign farms that shipped wheat to Chicago from the Eastern port of Odessa. Thus when Jadwin’s broker warns him that “you’re fighting against the earth itself” (347), “the earth” refers not only to the productive force of nature but to the planetary network of farmers who would plant—and export—increasing amounts of wheat as its market price rose. Norris’s trilogy turns out to be about wheat from all over the world, not a single wheat crop from California or exclusively American wheat.

However, Presley’s yearning for the larger view also echoes Captain Littlepage’s nostalgia for a “large-minded way of thinking” that characterized Dunnet Landing *before* it was “regionalized” by industrial capitalism. In fact, the novel’s final wheat deal is enabled by prior international contacts that existed at both ends—in the San Joaquin Valley and India. For the Southern Pacific Railroad itself was built by Irish immigrants and Chinese “coolies,” and in the 1880s Mexicans became a significant part of the state’s unskilled agricultural and urban workforce.<sup>19</sup> *The Octopus* entirely suppresses the contribution of Chinese and Mexican laborers to railroads and large-scale agriculture,<sup>20</sup> alluding to these populations only in the condescending terms of cuisine (Presley eats “an omelette in Spanish-Mexican style, frijoles and tortillas” and the Derricks are served by a “Chinese cook”) and racial degeneration (“The Spanish-Mexicans, decayed, picturesque, vicious, and romantic, never failed to interest Presley”) (21). Although Norris gestures toward the importance of immigrant labor in the character of Hooven, the German tenant-farmer—whose “endless flow of broken English” is reminiscent of local color dialects—strikes Presley as disgustingly “sordid”: “These uncouth brutes of farmhands and petty ranchers, grimed with

the soil they worked upon, were odious to him beyond words” (10). The immense ranches of *The Octopus*—as well as the colossal railroad octopus itself—both depend on foreign laborers to such an extent that it becomes unnecessary to look beyond the San Joaquin Valley for the larger view of global forces.

An even more ironic version of the big picture appears when we note that Presley leaves America not for the East in its pure, mythical form, but rather for a British colony whose catastrophic famines<sup>21</sup> were partially the result of its own coerced insertion into the capitalist world-system. As Norris’s brief allusions to *Indian* wheat exports indicate, India was actually *exporting* wheat—along with other food items—to England and the rest of Europe in the very same years that it faced some of its worst famines. Ray Baker’s 1899 article on “The Movement of Wheat” repeatedly mentions the importance of Indian wheat exports to Great Britain, and notes that after Europe and America, “Asia (mostly India and Turkey)” (126) produced the greatest amount of wheat in the world. How could one of the world’s leading exporters of wheat have been starved for wheat? Agricultural historians suggest that India’s famines were themselves caused by the commercialization of agriculture for export: “[T]here was a shortfall in food . . . because of a colonially enforced commercialization of production. Food crops were exported (wheat certainly was) and cash crops such as cotton, opium, and indigo . . . drove subsistence crops onto poorer lands, with the result that yield dropped and food prices rose” (Robb 259).<sup>22</sup> In other words, the export of food products directly caused India’s dependence on foreign “charity” for famine relief. “Commercial agriculture, though it provided income to peasant growers, in many areas drove out the sturdy, low quality grains that had provided staple foods, and in so doing made peasants dependent on food grown elsewhere” (Metcalf and Metcalf 125–28). If, in Cedarquist’s terms, Anglo-Saxon wheat would relieve Indian famines, it is important to remember that Anglo-Saxon imperialism was inducing these famines in the first place.

Whereas critics generally object to the vast scope of Presley’s larger view at the end of *The Octopus*, Norris’s references to India’s wheat exports in *The Pit* suggest that Presley’s vision, far from being too panoramic, is not large enough. *The larger view* should be expanded to encompass not only the perspective of the national railroad monopoly and the eastward flow of California’s wheat but also the transnational perspectives of immigrant laborers (who arguably comprise a sort of internal colony) on the one hand and colonized East Indians on the other. Such a view would replace Presley’s assumption that a handful of killings in one corner

of the world saves millions of starving peasants elsewhere with a bigger picture in which *all* corners of the world are transformed and oppressed by an economic system that requires and produces uneven geographical development. This global insight undermines the primary role that the larger view plays for Norris's characters—that of detaching them from local identifications. Individuals, regions, and domestic arrangements stop mattering to Presley and Laura as they embark on westward journeys away from the scenes of capitalism's crimes; but, in light of the ubiquity of (racialized) class conflict and the production of agricultural regions oriented toward commercial export on both sides of the Pacific, we see that they are only entering new crime scenes and different forms of exploitation. The Jadwins, after all, "escape" to the very West that Presley felt the need to escape from, just as Presley voyages to an India that was being systematically despoiled by British imperialism.

### 3. Transatlantic Feeling in Booker T. Washington's New South

Whereas my discussions of Jewett and Norris have emphasized how global restructuring produces and transforms regions in concrete and material ways (i.e., the decline in demand for certain kinds of lumber due to the rise of steamships and the shift from cattle ranching to wheat farming), the following section will focus more on the rhetorical and affective roles that global figurations play in Washington's advocacy of the New South. Of course, all three authors employ rhetorical and fictional strategies to instill feelings of regional nostalgia or the global economic sublime; but Washington's avowed preference for a pragmatic, emphatically *local*, and relatively unsentimental realism makes his occasional reliance on transnational anecdotes all the more conspicuous. On the one hand, Washington frequently maps the opposition of local and global onto a distinction between the real and the fictive; but, on the other hand, his own rhetorical strategies indicate that the region can only be fabricated with the help of transnational "fictions."

In a chapter entitled "Success in Public Speaking," Washington offers his readers a glimpse behind the scenes of his prolific public speeches. Although this chapter covers a broad range of topics from the kinds of audiences he prefers to address<sup>23</sup> to his sources of rest and recreation, it repeatedly returns to the issue of narrative. On one hand, Washington states explicitly that "Fiction I care little for";

on the other hand, he explains that anecdotes are indispensable to the creation of a sympathetic audience:

There is a thread of sympathy and oneness that connects a public speaker with his audience, that is just as strong, as though it was something tangible and visible. If in an audience of a thousand people there is one person who is not in sympathy with my views, or is inclined to be doubtful, cold, or critical, I can pick him out. When I have found him I usually go straight at him, and it is a great satisfaction to watch the process of his thawing out. I find that the most effective medicine for such individuals is administered at first in the form of a story, although I never tell an anecdote simply for the sake of telling one. That kind of thing, I think, is empty and hollow, and an audience soon finds it out. (243)

The use of anecdotes to win the sympathy of listeners plays a crucial role in Washington's technique for—as he calls it—“master[ing] my audience” (243). Despite his disavowal of literary pursuits, Washington suggests here that public speaking depends upon literary language—the story or anecdote—for the forging of a group identity joined by communal feelings of “sympathy and oneness.” On the occasion in question, this technique seems to have met with unprecedented success: James Creelman's account of the Atlanta Exposition Address in the *New York World* notes that “the multitude was in an uproar of enthusiasm, handkerchiefs were waved, canes were flourished, hats were tossed in the air. . . . It was as if the orator had bewitched them. . . . Most of the Negroes in the audience were crying, perhaps without knowing just why” (qtd. in Harlan and Smock 9–10).

Whether or not Washington himself cares for fiction, he is certainly aware of the extent to which the public cares for it—as well as the ways in which literary language can manipulate public emotions. By forging a community of “sympathy and oneness” among his Southern listeners, Washington hopes to lay the affective groundwork for business relationships and economic uplift. For he conceives of capitalism itself in terms of affective, interpersonal relations between black and white Southerners—relations which more or less reinscribe the sentimental bonds that supposedly linked slaves and masters before emancipation. From the anecdote of an ex-slave who continued earning wages in order to “buy himself” (15) even after the Emancipation Proclamation to Mr. Campbell's “fatherly” advice to “always remember that *credit is capital*” (446; emphasis added), *Up from Slavery* repeatedly links relations of capital to relations of trust that don't conform to models of utilitarianism or economic rationality. Credibility depends on the establishment of friendly and

often paternalistic emotions and the corresponding sense of a local community with a shared past and common interests. Washington's repeated hope is that such emotional and economic bonds—fostered by his students' sound business practices and conciliatory character—will end race prejudice without ever confronting it directly.

In order to establish interracial regional sympathy, Washington frequently invokes stock plantation scenes of contented slaves eating molasses in the big house or weeping by the side of a dying master. Thus, he implores Southern whites to cast down their buckets

among the eight million of Negroes whose habits you know, whose fidelity and love you have tested in days when to have proved treacherous meant the ruin of your firesides. . . . While doing this, you can be sure in the future, as in the past, that you and your families will be surrounded by the most patient, faithful, law-abiding, and unresentful people that the world has seen. As we have proved our loyalty to you in the past, in nursing your children, watching by the sick-bed of your mothers and fathers, and often following them with tear-dimmed eyes to their graves, so in the future . . . we shall stand by you with a devotion that no foreigner can approach. (220–21)

Conversely, Washington writes that Southern blacks should “make friends . . . with their next-door neighbour, whether he be a black man or a white man. I have also advised them, where no principle is at stake, to consult the interests of their local communities, and to advise with their friends in regard to their voting” (137). Although the first quote reduces the brutal realities of slavery to romanticized domestic scenes of bedside or graveside sentiment, the latter passage disingenuously suggests that there are cases in which “no principle is at stake” in endorsing “local communities” and asking (presumably white) friends how one should cast one's votes. But restricting one's political affiliations to “local communities” requires the disavowal of any solidarity with “foreigners,” as well as the relinquishment of any sense of a transnational or racial identity.<sup>24</sup>

Nor was this endorsement of an imagined Southern community limited to Washington's public speeches: his preference of local allegiances over the influences of both foreign immigration and the *emigration* of blacks abroad informs both *Up from Slavery* and the Tuskegee Institute's dedication to vocational training. For example, Washington contrasts the local with the global explicitly in his account of the misguided and impractical way in which blacks are educated: “While they could locate the Desert of Sahara or the capital of China on an *artificial* globe, I found that the girls could not locate the proper places for the knives and forks on an *actual* dinner-table,

or the places on which the bread and meat should be set" (123; emphasis added). Here, Washington's conception of the "actual" is limited by both gender and geography. Compared to the "actual" *places* of the dinner table (which recalls the sentimentalized domestic "firesides" and "sick-beds" of the Atlanta Address), global space—metonymically represented here by the *African* space of the Sahara—is merely "artificial" and practically meaningless. Urban, national, and international matters are as artificial as globes, and only local affairs have the concreteness of "an *actual* dinner-table."<sup>25</sup>

But the artificial is not so easily dismissed. Washington's injunction to make friends with one's "neighbour"<sup>26</sup> (as well as his spelling of other words, such as "colour" and "honour" in the passages I cite below) takes the form of a strikingly artificial British affectation, and of course the "proper" places for specific items on a dinner table are based on arbitrary and culturally variable systems of etiquette. Elsewhere, Washington reconsiders his distinction between "actual" physical places and "artificial" geographies when he discusses the origin of the term *Black Belt*: "[T]he term was first used to designate a part of the country which was distinguished by the colour of the soil. The part of the country possessing this thick, dark, and naturally rich soil was, of course, the part of the South where the slaves were most profitable, and consequently they were taken there in the largest numbers. Later, and especially since the war, the term seems to be used wholly in a political sense—that is, to designate the counties where the black people outnumber the white" (108). Here, Washington notes—but expresses no preference for—the original usage of the term *Black Belt*—a usage that would denote a more or less fixed and clearly delineated physical region. The political sense of the term, in contrast, acknowledges the historical process of regional *production* in which a particular configuration of geographical and economic factors led to the large-scale import of slaves to work cotton plantations before emancipation. New economic conditions, in turn, could presumably lead the Black Belt region to expand, contract, migrate, or disappear entirely. The metaphorical associations of the Black Belt have since taken on a significance that is not only political and demographic but *geopolitical*—for it refers to the mass movements of people in accordance with a racial division of labor best characterized by W. E. B. DuBois's assertion that "The Color Line Belts the World."

A number of transatlantic scenarios register the importance of international markets and migrations to Washington's representation of a unified South. Perhaps the most striking of these moments takes the form of the famous anecdote of a ship lost at sea that Washington employs in his Atlanta Exposition Address to produce a sympathetic or regional identification among Southerners of both races. Simulta-

neously urging his audience to embrace the interracial economic community of the New South and arguing that thoughts of migration northward to America's urban centers or across the Atlantic to the more racially tolerant countries of Africa and Europe are counter-productive pipe dreams, the orator abruptly introduces a vague maritime anecdote:

A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal, "Water, water; we die of thirst!" The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, "Cast down your bucket where you are." A second time the signal, "Water, water; send us water!" ran up from the distressed vessel, and was answered, "Cast down your bucket where you are." And a third and fourth signal for water was answered, "Cast down your bucket where you are." The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, cast down his bucket, and it came up full of fresh, sparkling water from the mouth of the Amazon River. To those of my race who depend on bettering their condition in a foreign land or who underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the Southern white man, who is their next-door neighbour, I would say: "Cast down your bucket where you are"—cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded. (219)

In order to illustrate why blacks should not look to foreign lands for more equitable working conditions, Washington incongruously presents an anecdote about foreign travel. If the anecdote's punch line requires the repeated mystification of the geographical location "where you are," the fact that that location turns out to be the "foreign" mouth of the Amazon off the coast of Brazil merely emphasizes that both these ships are already caught up in transatlantic circuits of travel and exchange.

Whereas Washington employs anecdotes in order to win his audience members' sympathy, this particular anecdote evokes a broader sense of sympathy and audience than he intends: at the same time as it endorses regional identification, it invokes movements and identifications involving a larger, transnational scale. After all, the Christian sermons that provided the source for the anecdote use the illustration to emphasize the universal and boundless nature of divine love.<sup>27</sup> Instead of distinguishing Southern blacks from "foreign" immigrant laborers, Washington here identifies blacks with a migrant "ship lost at sea." Far from imagining international relations as an extension of local feeling, the anecdote produces regional

identification with the New South by drawing from an illustration of transnational or even universal sympathy.<sup>28</sup>

Although the ship at the mouth of the Amazon seems out of place in Washington's address, it perfectly fits the speech's occasion—the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition. The Atlanta Exposition was just one of a series of large-scale Southern expositions (others were organized by New Orleans in 1885, Tennessee in 1897, South Carolina in 1901–02, and Jamestown in 1907) attempting to attract investors and laborers to the region from both Northern states and foreign countries: “[T]hese fairs...represented attempts to catapult the poverty-ridden South into the forefront of national and international economic growth” (Rydell 73). Walter Cooper's documentary history of the exposition gives the following account of its geographically confounding title: “In naming the Exposition, its originators had two ideas in view—one was to make an exhibition of the resources of the cotton States, and the other was to stimulate trade with the Spanish American countries. These ideas gave character to the Exposition, and both found expression in its name” (5).

The confusion of scales—urban, regional, international—involved in the exposition's title is further explained by Clark Howell, who strongly endorsed the exposition in the *Atlanta Constitution*. Entitled “The Gateway,” Howell's article proclaims that “Atlanta is the Center of a Vast and Important Region . . . The Very Heart of the Cotton States and the Sub-Tropics.” The map which accompanied the piece ambitiously but somewhat inaccurately portrays Atlanta as the midpoint of several important trade routes: Cooper's *Official History of the Exposition* claims that Howell's illustration “demonstrated that a line drawn from any point in North America to any point in South America, Central America or Mexico, must necessarily pass through Atlanta” (14; Fig. 1).<sup>29</sup> This theme of “America for the Americas” highlights the international setting of Washington's bucket-casting anecdote, a “Vast and Important” *supranational* region unified by shared economic interests that cut across national and racial lines. But the exposition's agenda extended even beyond this hemispheric scope. *Nicaragua: The Gateway to the Pacific*, a pamphlet distributed at the exposition, repeatedly emphasizes that the proposed Nicaragua Canal would connect the eastern seaboard with Pacific markets. The pamphlet's centerfold, a world map “Showing Distances Saved by the Maritime Canal of Nicaragua,” reminds us that the vulnerable position of Washington's “ship lost at sea” could be avoided altogether by a canal that would bypass Cape Horn.

The image of the ship at sea echoes Washington's description of the relative freedom of a transatlantic steamship trip home from Europe, which contrasts his generous reception by prominent American passengers with the account of “how [Frederick Douglass] was not

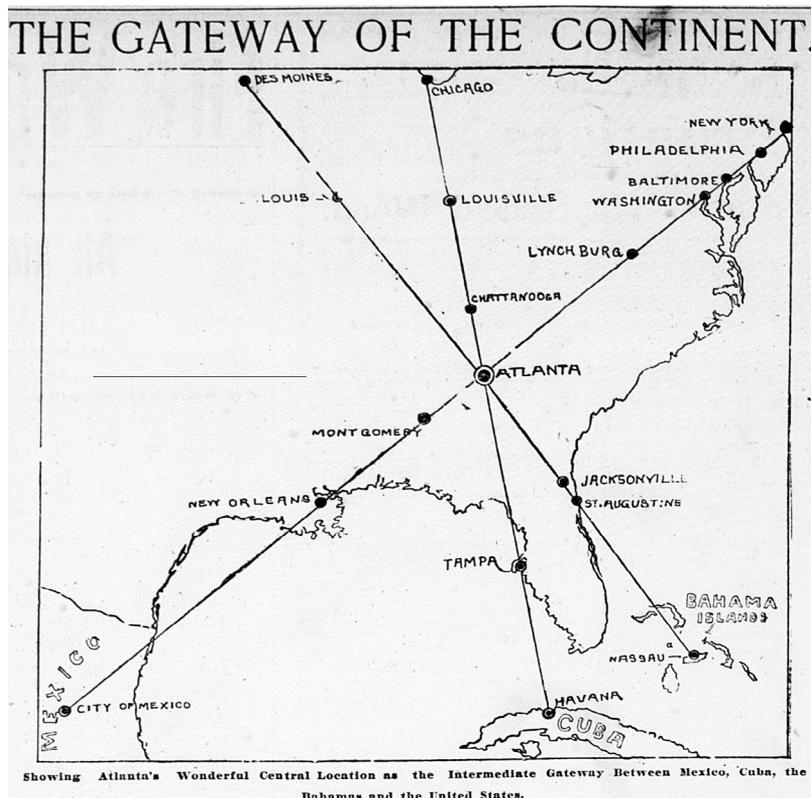


Fig. 1. Clark Howell, "The Gateway of the Continent" (© 2004 The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Reprinted with permission from The Atlanta Journal-Constitution; provided by the UC Berkeley library).

permitted to enter the cabin, but had to confine himself to the deck of the ship" on a similar voyage (288). Washington's commentary—a complacent dismissal of "people who are bold enough to say that race feeling *in America* is not growing less intense!"—once again confuses a ship in international waters with American soil (141; emphasis added). Paul Gilroy, whose *Black Atlantic* (1993) stresses the distinction between a transnational traveling "interculture" and fixed nation-states, identifies the ship as a prominent "chronotope" for the history of African diaspora: "[S]hips were the living means by which the points within that Atlantic world were joined. The ship provides a chance to explore the articulations between the discontinuous histories of England's ports, its interfaces with the wider world" (17). The cultural and geographical fluidity embodied by ships in the Atlantic connects Washington's ships not with America or the South alone, but also with the wider world of international capitalism.<sup>30</sup> (If, in *that* world, race feeling is growing less intense, it may simply be because locally grounded feelings of paternalism and credibility themselves are no longer necessary for an economy increasingly based on the formal equality of contracts and statistics.) This autobiographical anecdote, whose comparison with Douglass

frames it as “literary,” again inadvertently indicates a broader sympathy than Washington explicitly endorses—a global rather than regional sense of oneness. Whereas Washington claims that literary anecdotes enable him to “master” and sympathetically unite detached members of his intended audience, the two anecdotes of ships end up drawing Washington himself into the global scale toward which he feels “doubtful, cold, or critical” (243).

In addition to the steamship episode, Washington’s first trip to Europe—which he embarked on reluctantly and describes only in a cursory manner—provides one of the only other exemplary instances (excepting, of course, Washington’s own severely compromised and politically compromising “success”) of successful racial uplift in *Up from Slavery*. Washington reports of the popularity enjoyed by the painter Henry O. Tanner that “When we told some Americans that we were going to the Luxembourg Palace to see a painting by an American Negro, it was hard to convince them that a Negro had been thus honoured” (280). Washington draws several inferences from this episode: First, the plausible claim that “In the long run, the *world* is going to have the best, and any difference in race, religion, or previous history will not long keep the *world* from what it wants” (281; emphasis added). The second inference again attempts to import the relatively tolerant and progressive community of Europe (which Washington has already reminded us that Americans found disturbing) into the context of interracial relations in the New South. Washington advises his race to “make itself of such indispensable value that the people in the *town* and the *state* where we reside will feel that our presence is necessary to the happiness and well-being of the community. No man who continues to add something to the material, intellectual, and moral well-being of the place in which he lives is long left without proper reward. This is a great human law which cannot be permanently nullified” (281–82; emphasis added). A black emigrant painter working in Europe becomes an unlikely metonym for black laborers working in Southern factories and farms. *Up from Slavery* thus inverts Norris’s shift toward the large-scale capitalist laws of global supply and demand in *The Octopus*: blacks, it seems, live in “towns” and “states,” but not in the *world*.

These international scenarios remind us that, while the Tuskegee Institute prepared blacks for Southern industrial and agricultural jobs, the New South was producing goods largely for export to distant markets and in support of an overseas US empire. Tuskegee’s function thus far exceeded the Southern scope that Washington so often attributes to race relations and vocational education. Even the Tuskegee system of education itself—like General Samuel C. Armstrong’s Hampton Institute, upon which it was based—proved to be surpris-

ingly malleable in supporting imperialist expansion within and beyond the nation's boundaries: as Robert Rydell puts it, "Proponents of the New South were ready to apply the lessons of race management on a regional, national, and international scale" (89).<sup>31</sup> But not only were techniques of race management exported to other scales—the Hampton Institute *imported* colonial methods of racialization and industrial education in the first place from manual labor schools for Hawaiian boys. Armstrong, who grew up in Hawaii, reports that "these schools, over which my father as Minister of Education had for fifteen years a general oversight, suggested the plan of the Hampton School. The Negro and the Polynesian have many striking similarities" (213). Like Hawaii's programs of colonial education, Hampton and Tuskegee focused education not on conveying knowledge so much as on inculcating *character*—a notion that embodies capitalist traits like responsibility, perseverance, and conciliation.

In describing apprenticeship for directing the Tuskegee Institute, Washington's chapter entitled "Black Race and Red Race" recounts his work in educating Native Americans "on a large scale" at the Hampton Institute in the 1880s (97). Glossing over the fact that most of the Reservation Boarding School students were prisoners of frontier wars, he reports that General Armstrong "secured" over a hundred "wild and for the most part perfectly ignorant Indians" for Washington to educate, discipline, and assimilate (97). In one of the regular articles he published in *The Southern Workman* detailing the progress of Native American education, Washington employs an extended maritime metaphor that vividly allegorizes the Native Americans' forcible insertion into a global world economy: "While a part of them have begun to make efforts in the right direction, is this not the most auspicious time to move the whole Indian race at once? With the boat once started from the sand bar, no force must be relaxed until she sails in the broad deep sea" (qtd. in Harlan and Smock 103). Whereas Washington frequently urged Southern blacks to remain in the South as sharecroppers and skilled manual laborers, he envisions students from over sixteen tribes bringing their industrial and agricultural training back home to their people. Washington's later work in training ten students from Cuba and Puerto Rico in the wake of the Spanish-American War similarly assumes the portability of a Tuskegee education.<sup>32</sup> And although he argued against the annexation of the Philippines and Cuba, Washington not only trained black soldiers at Tuskegee but also sent them to fight in Cuba during the war.

Capitalism is often criticized for attenuating place-based emotions, but in fact it depends on such local loyalties for establishing and reproducing differentiated regions of agricultural and industrial

production. The ubiquitous exportability of Washington's system of industrial education, uplift through labor, and local allegiance not only indicates that global capitalism is perfectly compatible with the notion of relatively enclosed and cohesive regions—it also demonstrates that different regions share common structures of oppression, and that political movements can potentially jump<sup>33</sup> from local to transnational scales by focusing on these commonalities. Although Washington generally scales emotions down from transnational anecdotes to regional referents, the transatlantic and hemispheric geographies he invokes may be channeled toward larger scales of community formation that exceed, qualify, or restructure the regional: to that extent it is reassuring that Washington *depends* upon transnational scenarios to produce his audience's emotional identification with the New South.

Such a view of regionalism as dialectically produced by and productive of the world market avoids what Harvey claims is “a common error of both analytical understanding and political action [which] arises because we all too often lock ourselves into one and only one scale of thinking, treating the differences at that scale as *the* fundamental line of political cleavage” (*Spaces* 79). In the texts I have examined, regional identification—which often takes the form of nostalgia for past modes of production—coalesces from the outside in. Affect does not expand from the hearth outward into the nation and then the world, but rather originates in moments of prior, present, or imagined cosmopolitanism. Hence what Henderson describes as *The Octopus's* “core contradiction: When viewed from enough distance, all manner of events and details that might be cared about are rendered moot by Presley, even though, it is through the same narrative tactic of shifting scales that the novel finds a way to care about anything at all” (139–40). The contradiction between Presley's panoramic indifference to regional matters and his ability to care about anything at all only “through” a global perspective resonates with Neil Smith's reminder that scale is “double-edged”: “By setting boundaries, scale can be constructed as a means of constraint and exclusion, a means of imposing identity, but a politics of scale can also become a weapon of expansion and inclusion, a means of enlarging identities” (78). Artists and critics must find a way to care about both the distant and the local—to analyze regional communities without losing sight of the larger global community that requires and enables the production of regions. For although the local may provide a forum for resisting and critiquing nation-states and world systems, anticapitalist struggles can only succeed by imagining and inhabiting larger terrains of sympathy, solidarity, and collaboration.

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## Notes

1. See Brodhead 107–210 for the definitive account of how regionalist writers negotiated a literary market dominated by such periodicals and their leisure-class readerships.
2. Jim Wayne Miller, e.g., calls for a “cosmopolitan regionalism” (“Anytime the Ground Is Uneven: The Outlook for Regional Studies and What to Look Out For,” *Geography and Literature: A Meeting of the Disciplines*, ed. William E. Mallory and Paul Simpson-Housley [Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1987] 13); Amy Kaplan suggests that the “profusion of literature known as regionalism contributed to the process of centralization or nationalization” (“Nation” 250); and in her recent exchange with Jacqueline Shea Murphy in *American Literary History*, Sandra Zagarell emphasizes “the cosmopolitanism integral to the regionalization of rural New England” in Jewett’s *Deephaven* (“Troubling Regionalism: Rural Life and the Cosmopolitan Eye in Jewett’s *Deephaven*,” *American Literary History* 10.4 [1998]: 656). In *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* Kaplan persuasively argues that domestic and national culture were inextricably linked to the US seizure of an overseas empire between the 1840s and World War I. For a broad survey of how cultural geography has influenced American literary critics, see Sara Blair, “Cultural Geography and the Place of the Literary,” *American Literary History* 10.3 (1998): 544–67.
3. On Jewett’s complicity with “the vacationing habits of an urban upper class,” see Brodhead 144–49; for a broader discussion of relations between regionalist writers, anthropological discourse, and touristic desire, see Kaplan, “Nation” 252. Brodhead explains that domestic regions were discursively interchangeable with foreign spaces in magazine writing of Jewett’s period: “This pairing of high-cultural European and rustic-domestic vacation spots finds its reflection in the quality journals’ nonliterary writing array: in their complementary featuring of Persia and Kentucky, northern Michigan and Biarritz, and so on. It is equally reflected in such magazines’ selection of literary features: in their coproduction of international theme novels and American regional fiction, genres that typically ran side by side” (132).
4. Cynthia Davis makes a similar point: “‘The Foreigner’ may be fruitfully read as a story *outside* a story, haunting the parameters of *Pointed Firs* just as its foreign character haunts the storyteller, Mrs. Todd” (89). For an extended account of the narrator’s own feelings of foreignness as well as the foreignness inherent in Dunnet Landing, see Stephanie Foote, *Regional Fictions: Culture and Identity in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (2001), 17–37.
5. Bill Brown, e.g., writes that “If there is one occupation and preoccupation that makes the sketches cohere as a novel, just as it solidifies the relationship between the narrator and Mrs. Todd, it is the gathering of plants” (201). He suggests that plants, for Jewett, epitomize the regionalist vision of intimate, organic links between people and place: “nature comes to saturate bodily life. . . . Which is why the metaphorization of the Dunnet villagers themselves as both flora and fauna seems so artless: it simply reads like the rhetorical effect of the narrated fact of intimacy between people and place” (203).
6. Several scholars have noted how souvenirs, gifts, and other objects imported from foreign ports link Jewett’s scenes to contemporary forms of cultural imperialism such as museum displays (Brown 199–201) and cultural nativism (Ammons 92–93). Brown suggests that, by emphasizing the Maine village’s relations to exotic places, Jewett “perpetually elides the national as it marks the interaction between the local

and the global (Dunnet and the South Seas, the Mediterranean, London, Bordeaux, the China Sea)" (213). Elizabeth Ammons argues that "The function of all this colonial exotica—whether tea caddies from the other side of the equator or shells left on an island from pre-Dunnet days—is to situate Dunnet at the center of a far-flung empire. It does not matter that the town's seafaring heyday has passed; Dunnet still occupies a position of cultural power" (93).

7. In his appendix to *The Maine Woods*, Henry David Thoreau discusses both the fir's lack of practical value and its abundance of aesthetic value: "A dealer in lumber with whom I talked called [fir] a weed, and it is commonly regarded as fit neither for timber nor fuel. But it is more sought after as an ornamental tree than any other evergreen of these woods except the arbor-vitae" (298). White pines had already been significantly depleted by Thoreau's time—and their commercial value as ship masts probably led to their incorporation into Maine's state seal by 1820, as well as their adoption as the state's official tree in 1945. Yet the aesthetic value of fir trees emphasized by Jewett emerged only as a result of centuries of lumber production, because balsam firs grew in fir-spruce stands, and their characteristic pointed tops became visible only after the taller spruce trees were cut down for timber.

8. Cf. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, who argue against the notion that "Local differences preexist the present scene and must be defended or protected against the intrusion of globalization," explaining that "What needs to be addressed, instead, is precisely the *production of locality*, that is, the social machines that create and recreate the identities and differences that are understood as the local" (45).

9. Norris phrases his criticism of Howells's excessive refinement in terms of "scale": whenever we "kill a man or two, or get mixed up in a tragic affair, or do something *on a large scale*, such as the amassing of enormous wealth or power or fame, Mr. Howells cuts our acquaintance at once" ("Zola" 1106; emphasis added).

10. See, e.g., Campbell's analysis of the Old Grannis-Miss Baker subplot in *McTeague* as a local color fiction embedded within Norris's naturalist novel (67–74). Hochman points out that "in its treatment of the Annixter action, *The Octopus* complicates and extends the tenuous optimism projected through the minor figures of Old Grannis and Miss Baker in *McTeague*" (82).

11. Presley's project reflects Norris's own interest in "the last great epic event in the history of civilization . . . I mean the conquering of the West, the subduing of the wilderness beyond the Mississippi"; in "A Neglected Epic" he laments that despite its heroic and epic qualities the frontier has produced no literature beyond "the dime novel" (1202).

12. In an unpublished document entitled *The Mussel Slough Tragedy* James Brown provides a detailed account of the incidents surrounding the conflict, in which five settlers and two railroad agents were killed.

13. Charles Duncan provides a detailed summary of critical dismissals of the novel's "hollow" ending and its "disjunction of modes" (56–57). June Howard focuses on the erasure of Otherness and class conflict that underwrites Presley's position as a distanced spectator of the Mussel Slough massacre: thus the "philosophical optimism [of the novel's ending], affirming that a benevolent order is immanent in nature, assures the spectator that there is indeed no *need* for action" (125). In *Bodies and Machines* (1992), Mark Seltzer explains that the "larger view"

of deterministic forces presented at the novel's conclusion sees humans not as laboring producers but as mere middlemen in an entirely naturalized and thus politically empty process of production (26).

14. Cedarquist's equation of Far Eastern commerce with "manifest destiny" recalls Frederick Jackson Turner's claim, in "The Problem of the West" (1896), that territorial and commercial expansion into the Pacific represents the logical extension of the Western frontier: "[T]he demands for a vigorous foreign policy, for an interoceanic canal, for a revival of our power upon the seas, and for the extension of American influence to outlying islands and adjoining countries, are indications that the movement will continue" (219). Turner thus rescales the West from a US region to a transnational expansive impulse, just as he often claims that the frontier is the definitive source of America's *national* identity: "The Western problem is no longer a sectional problem: it is a social problem on a national scale" (220).

15. Mahan goes on to claim that the historical "progress of the world" has resulted in an inevitable "enlargement of scale" such that "Every nation or race deals with its own problems . . . but the fortune of each exerts a specific influence upon the greater outcome" (536).

16. Critics tend to focus on one of two themes in Norris's novel: Howard Horwitz (*By the Law of Nature: Form and Value in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* [1991]) and David Zimmerman ("Frank Norris, Market Panic, and the Mesmeric Sublime," *American Literature* 75.1 [2003]: 61–90) emphasize economic themes like private property and market panic, while Clare Eby ("Domesticating Naturalism: The Example of *The Pit*," *Studies in American Fiction* 22.2 [1994]: 149–68); S.N. Verma (*Frank Norris, A Literary Legend* [1986]); and Joseph McElrath (*Frank Norris Revisited* [1992]) discuss Norris's turn to a female protagonist and romantic and domestic conventions. Graham puts the opposition between these two aspects of the novel in terms of a failure of perspectival scale: "Neither Laura nor Jadwin possesses a large enough perspective, an aesthetic view comprehensive enough to contain both [the economic and the aesthetic] worlds" (156).

17. Cf. Castronovo: "[A]s Richard Hofstadter reported over a half century ago, U.S. wheat farmers in the 1890s increasingly relied on world markets to export surplus grain, changing the nature of economic risk. 'Agrarian depressions, formerly of local or national character, now became international'" (158).

18. Ray Baker, whose article on "The Movement of Wheat" probably influenced the conception of Norris's wheat trilogy, thus complements his description of a vast eastward-moving tide of wheat from the Americas to Europe with an international account of "the northward march of the harvesters": "This begins at the bottom of the world, in November, with the harvests of Peru and the southern tip of Africa. Then comes Burma in December; in January, Australia and Argentine; in February and March, the East Indies and Upper Egypt. In April, the wheat belts of Asia Minor, Persia, and India, and, on our own continent, Mexico" (128). On Norris's probable uses of Baker's article, see John C. Waldmeir, "A New Source for Frank Norris's 'Epic of the Wheat,'" *English Language Notes* 31.3 (1994): 53–59.

19. Cf. Henderson: "Incorporated into the Anglo project of inventing 'Southern California' was a racial division of labor. After the Southern California Chinese dwindled in number, Mexican Californians labored in the fields, towns, and cities of Southern California" (159).

20. Cf. Howard's account of "the erasure of the laborer" throughout *The Octopus*, despite its occasional invocation of populist politics.

21. In 1880, the year of the Mussel Slough massacre, Britain established its Famine Commission to address the increasingly severe famines that ravaged India's countryside.

22. See also Navtej Singh's *Starvation and Colonialism: A Study of Famines in the Nineteenth Century British Punjab, 1858–1901* (1996) and Mike Davis's discussion of "The Wheat Boom's Hunger" in *Late Victorian Holocausts*, 317–23.

23. Here it is telling that Washington lists local audiences *behind* the metropolitan capitalists whose feasts "in Boston, New York, Chicago, and Buffalo" remind him of "getting molasses to eat once a week from the 'big house'" (245): "Next to a company of business men, I prefer to speak to an audience of Southern people" (246).

24. For a detailed account of Southern attempts to attract and retain low-wage Scandinavian, German, Irish, and Chinese laborers, see Matthew P. Guterl, "After Slavery: Asian Labor, the American South, and the Age of Emancipation," *Journal of World History* 14.2 (2003): 209–41. Although Pan-Africanism had already established a strong presence in the South by 1895, the Atlanta Exposition's "Congress on Africa" featured speeches in which Alexander Crummell and Dr. E. W. Blyden—a former president of Liberia—explained their turn from emigrationism to a position that favored the modernization and Christianization of Africa through the agency of European colonists and indigenous missionaries (see Moses 251–2).

25. Houston Baker makes a similar point when he paraphrases Washington's reasons for preferring local to large-scale (in this case, national) issues: "Epic gives way to pastoral. . . . [T]he aspirations that characterized a *federal* period of Reconstruction . . . must be relinquished. More *realistic* goals are necessary to meet incumbencies of a new *regional* . . . era in which blacks will cast down their buckets where they are and seek advice and counsel from southern whites" (26). Baker's distinction between the "aspirations" of federal Reconstruction and the "more realistic goals" of the New South shows that Washington's rhetorical preference of pastoral to epic involves a shift not only in literary mode, but in geographical scale.

26. The passage read "neighbor" in 1900, and the British spelling "neighbour" was adopted only in the revised 1901 edition.

27. An 1877 article in the *Pacific Christian Advocate* presents the anecdote as an example of how "we, poor thirsty souls, sailing on the boundless ocean of God's love, [are] heedless of the Divine voice which saith, 'If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, 'Give to me drink,' thou wouldst of asked of him, and he would have given thee living water'" ("Water"). Although Washington cites a Thanksgiving sermon delivered by Hugh Mason Browne in 1893 as his direct source, it seems reasonable to assume that Browne followed the precedent of this article in emphasizing the universal nature of divinity; the anecdote is still frequently used to such effect in present-day sermons (Harlan and Smock 410).

28. Ironically, the organizers of the exposition committed the very sin of conflation that Washington deplors when they lumped African-Americans with the foreigners and other examples of regional "local color" exhibited in the hodgepodge "Midway Plaisance": "This street swarmed with horn-blowing Dahomeyans, gorgeous

pig-tailed Chinamen, somber-eyed Mexicans, fat Germans, American Indians, swaggering cowboys, old-time Negroes in old-time costumes and South Americans in every conceivable garb” (Harlan and Smock 7).

29. “The sketch printed here gives some highly interesting information. Look at the line drawn from New York to the City of Mexico, with Atlanta as its central point. The line drawn from Chicago to Havana passes directly through Atlanta and Atlanta is its middle. Run a line from the West Indies to Des Moines in the northwest and you will see that it passes through Atlanta and that Atlanta is its middle point” (Howell).

30. Houston Baker, who criticizes the vagueness of Gilroy’s comments on ships, rightly emphasizes the ultimately *immobilizing* role of the slave ships that both confined and transported blacks to Southern plantations (*Turning* 84–88). The Atlanta Exposition bears this out: its organizers estimated that they “saved over \$100,000 by using chain-gang labor to excavate ‘about a million yards of earth during the early months of construction’” (Rydell 80). But such an emphasis on slave ships, immobility, and coercion overlooks how Washington’s transatlantic ships attempt to straddle regional, national, and international scales.

31. Rydell also notes that “Washington’s speech, commemorating the end of chattel slavery, located blacks as part of an industrial and agricultural work force that would produce raw materials and manufactured goods for American expansion into Latin America” (89).

32. Washington details the education of Cubans and Puerto Ricans at Tuskegee in chapter 15 of his first autobiography, *The Story of My Life and Work* (Harlan and Smock 1: 118–19). See also Minns’s 1901 letter (successfully) urging Washington to have *Up from Slavery* translated into Spanish because “The condition of the Colored population [in Cuba] is not very unlike that of our own colored people after the war—or perhaps worse” (Harlan and Smock 6: 123). Speer even quotes missionaries in China and Japan who read *Up from Slavery* aloud to their students and attested that “The practical wisdom and sagacity which Booker Washington has brought to bear upon the education of Negroes is the same that is largely needed in dealing with the poorer classes in China” (Harlan and Smock 6: 524).

33. On “jumping” scales, see Neil Smith.

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