3 The Art of Attachment

Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*

Sarah Orne Jewett's regionalist masterpiece *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896) begins with an instance of return: A summer visitor comes back to the fictional town of Dunnet Landing on the rugged coast of Maine for a writing retreat after having fallen in love with the place several summers prior on a yachting cruise. A vacationer's return is temporary by nature, and as closely as this one gets acquainted with the place and its shrewd old inhabitants during the months of her stay, she does not become a true member of Dunnet's community. The position of the well-versed outsider is a staple of regionalism's investment in matters of belonging, and it is crucial for this book in particular. The mix of proximity and distance on which it thrives allows for an ethnographic view of a place whose remoteness offers more than a spatial sanctuary for the troubled modern soul. It grants access—return—to a different time, an imaginary past in which life is imbued with a powerful sense of stability and rootedness.

It has often been noted that the backwardness of costal Maine has a nostalgic appeal for Jewett's privileged visitor. And if the will to capitalize on the respective yearnings of an elitist audience counts as a hallmark of regionalist fiction, I do not want to contest this view here.[1] The charm of Dunnet Landing is indeed inseparably tied to a peaceful rural life for which the conflicted realities of a society grappling with the rise of urban industrialism serves as a tacit backdrop.[2] But *Pointed Firs* exploits the figure of the intimate outsider not only, and to my mind

1 Raymond Williams was instrumental in establishing this view. Two influential positions in the context of American letters are those of Brodhead and Kaplan.

2 For a long time, the nostalgic renderings of regionalist places were explained in terms of impoverishment: When New England's population and economic growth went elsewhere, political and cultural status vanished, and the region itself seemed to have been feminized: Regionalist writers, themselves predominantly female, were telling their stories to compensate for an actual state of lack or loss. See, for example, Westbrook; Douglas; Cox. With its focus on attachment, this chapter seeks to contest notions of the interplay of, narrative and nostalgia as a spiteful conundrum. This view, which is widely shared in our field, finds poignant expression in Stewart's *On Longing*. For Stewart, nostalgia is not only a thoroughly narrative phenomenon, transforming

not even primarily, to stage longings for a lost home. Rather, its nameless visitor is the narrating agent in an exercise in attachment that, in making porous the boundaries of her self through the love of place, is more than merely regressive. A treatment of place-as-friend provides the affective foundations for this feat, and the tale consummates it through the art of the sketch.

Jewett liked to think of *Pointed Firs* as a collection of "sketches," only rarely referring to it as a novel.[3] But her endorsement of the sketch does not mean that she was writing in its conventions (the literary genre was strictly confined to a historically-minded study of character at the time).[4] She used the description-based narrative mode that it affords to cross boundaries between sketch, story and novel in ways that were "pushing the envelope of conventional fiction," perhaps even probing a kind of "experimental fiction" *avant la lettre* (Goheen 30-34; here: 32). What makes Jewett's sketches so intriguing from the perspective of this study is their tenuous mode of engagement with the physical world; their tactile translation of sensory data into artistic form. The sketch's reputation of being a minor art form hinges on this basic makeup, and it is thus no surprise that associations with it were persistently used to diminish rather than valorize Jewett's work.[5] In what follows, I want to reverse this line of judgment and recalibrate *Pointed Firs*'s accomplishment in terms of the tenuous exercise in attachment conducted through the "minor" art of the sketch. My point of departure is simple: A sketch is always a sketch of some concrete thing in the world, and never a sketch of a mental object or image. Whether sketching is a precursory stage of a larger work or an artistic

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the past into an imaginary shelter—which I agree with—but also a "social disease" (23)—which I find an unproductive generalization that this chapter seeks to complicate.

3 In a letter to her publisher Jewett even suggests advertising *Pointed Firs* as a sketch rather than a novel. Letter to Mr. Garrison on 22 April, partially dated, most likely written in 1880 (quoted in Goheen 32).

4 In the world of American letters, the sketch gained a high profile through Hawthorne's biographical treatment, to which Jewett was clearly not restricting herself.

5 A first reference to the sketch occurs in a letter by Horace Scudder after publishing one of Jewett's early stories. He writes: "Your story disappoints me, now that I read it in print. There seem to be good characters for a story and good scenery but no incident, no story. In other words that here is a sketch and not a picture" (Scudder to Jewett, 2 July 1870; quoted in Goheen 41). Henry James's ambiguous endorsement of Jewett's writing as "a beautiful little quantum of achievement" ("Fields" 30) resonates with these same issues. And while *Pointed Firs* was favorably reviewed, its most dissatisfied reviewer (writing for *Bookman*) ties his disappointment with the book directly to its endorsement of the sketch: "[…] the little volume comes to its quiet ending, leaving the impression that, suggestive and delightful as such books are, they cannot, save in rare instances, leave any deep impression. […] These delicate sketches of life hold the same place in literature as do their counterpart in painting, but no artist can rest an enduring popularity on such trifles light as air" (Anonymous; quoted in Howard, "Traffic" 2).

expression in its own right, it is always an act of familiarization (for the photo-realist painter Robert Bechtel even an act of "taking possession"). But familiarization is never complete, and hence the artist is inclined to move on to the next striking view, person, object, detail or scene before her work has reached a state of consummation.

Stressing the artistic thrust of this inherently unfinished practice is important, however, for art is always double-coded; it *does* something while also staging and reflecting its own doing. Approached this way, the tactile mode of engagement with an immediate "place world" that is key to Jewett's endorsement of the sketch makes tangible a longing to not only be familiar with this world but *attached* to it.[6] Reading *Pointed Firs* with an interest in its art of attachment is inspired by Rita Felski, who, invoking the Latourian notion that "[t]ies […] are not limits to action but a fundamental condition for action," and that emancipation "does not mean 'freed from bonds', but *well*-attached" (Latour, *Reassembling* 218), argues that "attachment is an ontological fact, an inescapable condition of existence" ("Latour" 738; 740).[7] Belonging, conceived here as an existential need for a place in the world, depends on and works through attachment; in fact, one could say that attachment is its basic emotional currency. But how are attachments formed and maintained, what does narrative have to do with it, and how does *Pointed Firs* exploit this relation?

In a most basic sense, attachment is an affective relation with the physical world: to places, people, and things about which and for whom we care because they are familiar to us. We have seen, felt, smelled, heard, or touched them many times, and storing these vast amounts of sensory data in our memory, let alone making sense of and creating connections between its countless bits and pieces across space and time, requires narrative mediation. But recording and storing impressions and memories is neither voluntary nor controllable. On the contrary, the fact that we have very little control over what we record and remember and what we omit, misplace or forget enhances our wish to safekeep and narrativize what we hold dear. It is indeed one of the puzzling paradoxes of using narrative for the purpose of safekeeping that, in demanding selection and combination, narrative creates its own modes of actualizing that to which it wants to attach itself. And if one of the endeavors of this study is to solicit an understanding of narrative as the mediating structure to which we turn to feel and direct our yearning for a place in the world, this chapter zeroes in on one of its most hands-on, and yet most capacious features: the capacity to create, regulate and maintain those attachments to the physical world that it takes to build a place and dwell in it.

6 The term is drawn from Edward Casey.

7 As I was writing this chapter Felski had just started working on her book with this topic, which bears the working title *Hooked: Art and Attachment*.

Regionalist fiction is paradigmatically invested in this operation. It tells stories about remote and backward places because it cares for them, and it is this topophilic disposition that defines its place in the context of late nineteenth-century American literature. Turning away from the urban or international scene that was realism's preferred environment (as a training ground for sensible judgment), regionalism explored the fringes of a rapidly changing society and recorded the quaint and exotic life-forms flourishing there. In terms of form, it favored shortness over length, description or dramatic exposition over dramatic development and consummation, all of which is highly conducive to Jewett's narrative art of attachment. As one of its foremost practitioners, Jewett, whose work has been favorably received throughout her own lifetime and beyond, has been substantial in defining our understanding of the genre. *Pointed Firs*, after *Deephaven* (1877) and *A Country Doctor* (1884), her third and most accomplished book, is of particular interest for conjoining matters of place and form in ways that exemplify narrative's intimate involvement with the physical world. Historically, this was a remarkable move. The need to belong that drives Jewett's tale finds relief in a radically intersubjective, reception-based model of narrative exchange that revolves around matters of familiarization and attachment at a time when its polar opposites, defamiliarization and detachment, were on the rise. These new aesthetic parameters stood in the service of an art that wanted to see the world with fresh eyes in order to overcome modern self-alienation. But these eyes were strikingly disembodied; in fact, the alleged freshness and rigor of their gaze depended on a systematic dissociation from its bearer's affective and visceral corporeality. Cognitive insight thus became a matter of cool introspection, which often went hand in hand with a twofold retreat: into the depth of one's mind and into the sheltered rooms of the private sphere. Henry James's Isabel Archer fully embodies this artistic agenda. In the pivotal moment, she sees Gilbert Osmond and Madame Merle's betrayal in front of her, framed by the doorway like a picture on the wall, yet it is only upon withdrawing to her room and spending the night reflecting on what she has seen that she is able to understand it and redirect her life accordingly.[8] Narrative

8 See James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, chapters XL and XLII. The instance of incomplete recognition, to be completed in Isabel's nocturnal reflection, is described as follows: "Just beyond the threshold to the drawing room she stopped short, the reason for her doing so being that she had received an impression. The impression had, in strictness, nothing unprecedented; but she felt it as something new, and the soundlessness of her step gave her time to take in the scene before she interrupted it. Madame Merle was in her bonnet, and Gilbert Osmond was talking to her; for a minute they were unaware she had come in. Isabel had often seen that before, certainly; but what she had not seen, or at least not noticed, was that their colloquy had for a moment converted itself into a sort of familiar silence, from which she instantly perceived that her entrance would startle them. […] There was nothing to shock in this; they were old friends in fact. But the thing made an image, lasting only a moment, lie a sudden flicker of light. Their relative positions their

agency, when derived from this basic pattern, aims for the power of irritation, for self-transformation as the result of feeling unfamiliar and detached. Modernist art amplifies these dynamics while also casting doubt on the possibilities both of gaining true insight into an individual's inner core and of achieving reintegration into the social world. Yet despite their diverging aesthetic responses, both modernism and realism share the basic assumption that an improved state of belonging (if it can be attained at all) is the result of detachment.

Against the backdrop of this allegedly sketchy scenario, the present chapter wants to bring into view how Jewett's artistic practice both complements and challenges the dominant path of narrative art at her time. Doing so involves pondering over what kind of activity attachment is, and what forms of (narrative) agency it affords. Moreover, in assigning attachment rather than its opposite the role of a prerequisite of belonging, *Pointed Firs* gives occasion to reevaluate some of our most solid assumptions about narrative (and) agency. For when attachment becomes an explicit end of narration, acts of listening, retelling, mending, and caring—all of which are commonly received as passive, derivative, *female*—assume a proactive role. In telling a story that foregrounds these presumably minor components of narrative exchange, *Pointed Firs* exposes their gendered valences while rejecting supposedly "male" ends of narrative agency (such as transformation or self-realization) as superior means to dwell in the world.[9] It would be shortsighted to think of this agenda can as merely regressive, not least because a narrative agency that is geared toward attachment must forge ties to the physical world—to objects, places, people. It is this tactile, non-self-centered dimension of *Pointed Firs*'s narrative art in which I am interested here as a practical means of dwelling in the world.

Coinciding, furthermore, with the rise of realism and the professionalization of the literary field that dovetailed this development, Jewett's book raises far-reaching questions about the interstices of narrative art and the literary market—and hence, about belonging as a cultural commodity. In fact, *Pointed Firs* was conceived for, and to a viable extent even *by* this market, and the "object life" of *Pointed Firs* unleashed by this market in a series of material incarnations—a magazine and a

absorbed mutual gaze, struck her as something detected" (457-58). The very similar instance, reflected in strikingly similar terms—"The glimpse made a picture; it lasted only a moment, but that moment was experience" (35)—can be found in the programmatic essay "The Art of Fiction," in which James develops his visual theory of recognition and literature's guiding role in it.

9 It is no coincidence that most of regionalism's best-known authors are women—in addition to Jewett, one may think of Kate Chopin, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Mary Austin, and later Willa Cather—who turned the genre into the fertile ground for a female tradition and a hotbed of feminist ideas. Regionalism hence carved out a distinct place for women writers and for female concerns, and this in turn generated a rich body of scholarship. See, for instance, Bell, "Gender and American Realism;" Ammons, "Going in Circles;" Zagarell, "Narrative of Community;" Foote, *Regionalist Fictions*; Fetterley and Pryse, *Writing Out of Place*.

book publication as well as several posthumous editions, the most famous of them by Willa Cather—challenges the fixed and closural form of the book and the novel. New chapters were added and existing chapters rearranged in each of these publications, and many of these changes were unauthorized. And if this "object life" cannot be divorced from the printed matter in which it resides it makes palpable the process in which the book, as a cultural object and consumer good, emerges as a viable site of topophilic investment that this chapter seeks to explore.

Topophilic Dispositions

Pointed Firs tells a story of growing attachment to a place that stands out not because it is the most beautiful stretch of land on the coast of Maine but because it is already familiar. Narration set in with this personal bias—"[p]erhaps it was the simple fact of acquaintance with that neighborhood which made it so attaching"—and from the get-go the relation to this place is rendered in terms of friendship, the freest, most malleable form of interpersonal affection.

> When one really knows a village like this and its surroundings, it is like becoming acquainted with a single person. The process of falling in love at first sight is as final as it is swift in such a case, but the growth of true friendship may be a lifelong affair. (377)

Taking my cue from these opening lines, my guiding question in this section is: How and to what ends does the narrative stage and exploit the topophilic disposition on which it thrives? More specifically, I want to explore the interplay of affect(ion) and narrative mobilized for the purpose of dwelling in the world through *Pointed Firs*'s treatment of place as a friend. With this focus I am less concerned with deciphering what this place *means* and more with finding out what it *does*, especially what kind of (narrative) agency it yields.[10]

10 The meaning of regionalist places is an issue for heated debate, and it revolves around the basic opposition of it being ideologically coopted or resistant. Brodhead and Kaplan stress the reductive regress of tourist retreat and its conservative implications; Foote, Fetterley and Pryse insist on it being heterogeneous and different. *Pointed Firs* is an especially contested case in point. Some of the critics who praised the book for fathoming a quasi-utopian place of a female solidarity and care in the 1980s found it nativist and imperialist a decade later. See, for instance, Ammons and Zaragell. Yet no matter how original and diverse these accounts are, they all zero in on a particular ideological mechanism (nation, class, empire, race, ethnicity, sex, gender) to trace its implications for social formation and subject positioning within the fictional world of the text. The readings thus produced are mostly plausible, consistent, and even insightful when disagreeing with them, but there is a certain predictability about the ways in which they mirror

It is striking how readily the erotic force of an instant crush is dismissed for a presumably truer kind of affection. The primary measure of difference invoked here (through the organic metaphor of "growth" and its "lifelong" prospect) is temporal. The prospect for enduring friendship charges the remote coastal town not only with human virtues (trust, reliability) but also with existential vulnerabilities (growing old and frail). The place-as-friend allegory thus works toward invoking a relation of mutual, self-relativizing devotion and care. So if it has been argued that the subject of *Pointed Firs* "is less Dunnet Landing, its citizens, or even its regional interest as such, and more friendly comportment and its spiritual meaning" (Shannon 241), I almost agree. Jewett's narrative art of attachment programmatically draws these subjects together, materially reinforcing them in its treatment of place as friend.

Jewett's high regard of friendship was subtended by Swedenborgian doctrine, from which she adopted the notion that a special form of love for one's neighbor leads to salvation. Ideas of the Swedish mystic circulated widely in American literary circles at the time, so much so that it has been called his "age."[11] Their impact on Jewett was momentous for helping her overcome a spiritual crisis early on in her adult life, which involved her conflicted feelings for a close female friend.[12] Quite possibly, the mode of affective engagement endorsed in *Pointed Firs* echoes its author's personal struggles, which she came to resolve in intimate same-sex friendships, particularly with her long-term companion Annie Fields. Jewett and Fields lived in a marriage-like relationship for many years after Annie's husband,

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the shifting ideological grounds of the field—thus making palpable that scholarly narratives, too, are engaged in matters of belonging and place-making.

11 For example by F .O. Matthiessen in his preface to *The American Renaissance* (viii). According to religion historian Sydney Ahlstrom, "Swedenborg's influence was seen everywhere [in America at this time]; in Transcendentalism and at Brook Farm, in spiritualism and the free labor movement, in the craze for communitarian experiment, in faith healing, in mesmerism, and half a dozen medical cults; among great intellectuals [for example William James, about whom I will have more to say], crude charlatans, and innumerable frontier quacks" (quoted in Hart 518).

12 Jewett was introduced to Swedenborgian ideas in the 1870s by Theophilus Parsons Jr., a Harvard law professor and one of their main disseminators in the U.S. The two met when Parsons vacationed in Maine. Donovan thinks that Jewett's feelings for her close friend Kate Birckard in the early 1870s were a crucial factor in the crisis that Jewett underwent at this time, and which led her to embrace Swedenborgianism. Be that as it may, the character Kate Lancester in her first novel *Deephaven* is not only named after Jewett's close friend, she also makes the most outspoken Swedenborgian comments in the book. See Donovan, "Jewett and Swedenborg" 732-34. Tempting as it may be to think of Jewett as a lesbian writer, it is important to bear in mind she never overtly addressed sexuality in its post-sexological sense. In Howard's apt words, Jewett "has a place among writers who portray intimacies and devotions that do not follow heterosexual scripts" ("Traffic" 8).

the influential publisher James Fields, had passed away. Such relationships between two women were so common in New England at the time that scholars have invented a name for them, "Boston marriages," and often, as in the case of Jewett and Fields, they consolidated in response to one of them becoming a widow.[13] Yet whereas Swedenborg saw heterosexual marriage as the ultimate expression of divine love in human terms, Jewett replaces the neighbor with the friend, and along with this move she sacralizes the affective domain of friendship (Shannon 236-37). Moreover, and crucially, this sacalization gives friendship a placial quality. Just as a place unfolds from a network of relations and not from a bilateral conjunction, friendship is a mode of affective attachment that is decidedly less exclusive, less normative, less private than marriage while not necessarily being shorter lived. And it is in precisely this vein that *Pointed Firs* features friendship as a place-making agent: Its topophilic disposition both grounds and mobilizes the sacred dimension of friendship in and through the love of place. So if, in "[y]oking together the realms of spiritual and material life, friendship forms the soul's 'country'" that, in turn, "translates, transports and transfigures the self" (Shannon 228), it is through the allegorical treatment of place as friend that *Pointed Firs*'s concerns with dwelling in the world are brought to converge in an overarching concern with attachment to a spiritually enhanced place world.

Clearly, the strongest friendship bond in the book is that between the nameless narrator and her landlady, the wondrous, widowed Mrs. Todd. And while the rapidly growing affection between the two women is enforced by the fact that they live under the same roof, their shared site is not merely domestic. Mrs. Todd is the local herbalist who runs her business from home, and it does not take long until her tenant helps out in dealing with the frequently calling customers. From this house the place-making power of friendship branches all the way out to the remote channel island where Mrs. Todd's mother and brother live. In fact, the island gains its fabulous appeal through friendship as place (a local constellation of people who are affectively disposed to the narrator and display their affection at particular sites) and form (shared observations, memories, meals, songs).[14] The

13 See Faderman 90; Donovan, "Love Poems" 101. Faderman defines a "Boston marriage" as a monogamous relation based on female values, in which one woman's life was spent primarily with another woman, each giving to the other the bulk of affection and energy (109). The relation between Jewett and Fields lasted for almost three decades, during which they lived together for part of the year, travelled together, corresponded daily, shared interests in books and people, and gave each other a sense of belonging. See Roman and Fryer for an emphatic endorsement of their relationship. Love thinks that this line of work too readily dismisses the loneliness and isolation that homosexual women must have experienced at the time, and that reverberates so strongly and coherently from Jewett's writing that, for her, it emblemizes a "spinster aesthetic" (310-13).

14 "The Bowden Reunion" chapter, in which the visitor gets as close as she will to belonging to Dunnet Landing, and which has recently been predominantly read in terms of a nativist and

place-making power of friendship is also directed inward, where it complicates the intimacy within Mrs. Todd's "quaint little house with as much comfort and unconsciousness as if it were a larger body, or a double shell" (421). These are curious metaphors for a dwelling place, animating it both in human and in non-human terms as a magical equilibrium between separation and unity. And if this nearly perfect state is threatened by the arrival of another visitor, this long-term acquaintance of Mrs. Todd's becomes a "sincere friend" (421) of the narrator within hours of being exposed to her company. It is through recurring instances of this kind that friendship gains a placial quality throughout the narrative: by exploiting the topophilic disposition at its core for the purpose of fostering multilateral acquaintance, and by giving shape to the setting through the caring bonds among female friends (the anxiously awaited houseguest is, of course, yet another elderly woman).

Moreover, and crucially, finding herself in a local web of female affection is essential to the growing state of attachment that motivates the narrator's act of telling. These bonds are especially strong since Dunnet's women are neither bound up in heteronormative commitments nor confined to the domestic sphere. These women make up the thrust of *Pointed Firs*'s narrative-generating love of place, while the men (old and frail as most of them are) are consigned to the margins of a gendered topography that invokes an alternative "female world of love and ritual" (Smith-Rosenberg, "Female World").[15] The fictionality of *Pointed Firs*'s setting might be a tribute to this tacit utopianism, and when wondering what bestows the place with its utopian air, the matrifocal community immediately comes to mind. Like in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*, written a few decades later and possibly inspired by Jewett's novel, this utopia is spatial rather than temporal; no magical time travel is involved in getting there since traveling (back) in time is rendered as a function of traveling across space.[16] In stark difference to *Herland*, however,

elitist exclusionism performed by a local clan, can also be read along these lines. Against claims that the reunion is both a "celebratory mythologization of a rural martifocal community" and a "protofascist" endorsement of "racial purity and white cultural dominance" (Ammons, "Material Culture" 91-92, 96), or of the Bowden family as "one of the many fraternal [sic] organizations—among them the Knights of Columbus and the KKK—that flourished during this period" (Gilman 113), Shannon makes a compelling case for reading it as "a ritual of affiliation, specifically the relationships it suggests between friendship and family," not least since the Bowden clan comprises "almost everyone within a sphere of contact" (Shannon 250-51).

15 Most of the men in *Pointed Firs* have died long ago, and those who are still around are aptly represented by the shrewd Captain Littlepage whose name alone carries a humorous gesture of diminishment. For an inventory of the marginalized male characters in *Pointed Firs* see Bell 67-71.

16 I owe this insight to Katharina Metz, who writes about Gilman's utopian novel in her dissertation *The Language of Altruism*. Female and feminist utopian fiction was a flourishing genre at the time. For an overview see Lewes, *Gynotopia*. *Pointed Firs* is not among her list of over 50 volumes published between 1836 and 1900. Levy, in her study on feminist utopian visions of the home place,

which solves the problem of social reproduction on its all-female world-island through virgin birth, there are no children in the self-contained "land of the pointed firs," not even on the horizon. All of the women whom we encounter are past childbearing (with the exception of maybe the narrator, who seems to be in her forties but does not come across as an aspiring mother).

Pointed Firs's dismissal of procreation is crucial for at least two reasons: It rejects the heteronormative alliance of motherhood and domesticity that was the overpowering ideal of femininity at the time. Even more pertinently, however, it forecloses the future for its community. The enchanted place unfolding from Dunnet's network of loving and caring relations is *dying*, and this creates a powerful paradox. For what do we make of a utopia of old and dying people even if they are as radiant as Mrs. Todd's eighty-something-year-old mother, "a delightful little person herself with bright eyes and an affectionate air of expectation like a child on a holiday" (406), who might be the secret queen of Dunnet Landing but by sheer biological fact is facing the end "of her summers and their happy toils" (408), with children who are themselves old and childless remnants of an earlier age? What ends, we may ask, are served by conjoining elegiac mood and utopian air in and through the love of place as friend? In grappling with this paradox, a crucial distinction is in order: Regardless of the actual place that inspired the narrative (had it already ceased to exist when writing about it, or had it never existed as remembered here in the first place?), the beloved place in the world of the text is not dead; it is dying. The difference is crucial because anticipating death has its own temporality—a heterochronic hyperpresence that absorbs the past in the absence of a knowable future. This extraordinary, "artificial" time creates its own topographic realities in the world of *Pointed Firs*—"waiting place[s] between this world an' the next" (397), one of them being the mythical "country 'way up north beyond the ice" (395) populated by zombie-like, "fog-shaped men" (396), another the small inaccessible channel island ("a bad place to get to, unless the wind an' tide were just right") that served Joanna Bowden for her lifelong hermitage after being "crossed in love" (429).[17] These two sad places find a viable counter-site in Green Island, with its youthful old people, shared meals and song, an abundant growth of rare herbs and affective bonds. It is a place of hospitality and enchantment rather than exile and despair.

Even so, with the queen of Green Island being over eighty years old (which was ancient at the time), Green Island is a waiting place nevertheless. Bestowed with mythic perfection in the narrator's emphatic account—"one could not help wishing to be a citizen of such a complete and tiny continent and home of fisherfolk" (407)—the remote island resembles a heaven on earth. The reason for this is that

uses *Herland* to set the stage for discussing the works of Jewett (with a special focus on *Pointed Firs*), Willa Cather, Ellen Glasgow, Katherine Anne Porter, Eudora Welty, and Gloria Naylor.

17 The term "heterochronic" is, of course, drawn from Foucault.

it materializes friendship as "a consecrated way of life" (Shannon 241). Rife with Swedenborgian ideas about an afterlife in which "old friends renewed their love and brought it to greater intensity" (Donovan 732), it is a place that can dismiss the future because it embodies an extraterrestrial state. Dunnet Landing's difference from its heterotopian otherworldliness is marked by the narrator calling it "large and noisy and oppressive" (420) upon returning there. But the contrast dissolves at night, when "the village was so still that I could hear the shy whippoorwills singing as I lay awake in my downstairs bedroom, and the scent of Mrs. Todd's herb garden under the window blew in again and again with every gentle rising of the sea breeze" (420). That Dunnet Landing resumes this hyperpresence of caressing sounds and smells as the nameless visitor anticipates the "small death" of sleep exposes the degree to which it, too, is a mythical waiting place—possibly of the Green Island variety.

The Sketch and the Journey

Except for the first short chapter, *Pointed Firs* is the first-person narrative of our nameless summer vacationer, and hence the place that we encounter is quintessentially *her* place—filled with her longings, mediated through her senses, put forth in her language and imagery, rendered by her selective taste and compositional skill. Jewett opted for this most subjective of all narrative voices, and yet she gave it neither a name nor much of a life story. In fact, the nameless narrator tells a story that dwells in close contact with the physical world while leaving introspective reflections of temporal matters largely aside. With Edward Casey, I want to think of the point of view endowed here as *placial*: Rather than prompting an immersion in the unfolding of time, which is always closely tied to consciousness and the mind, it engages "an alliance between an outlook into place and our existence as bodily beings. Adopting such a viewpoint […] precipitates us […] into bodily comportment: how we move, where we stand" (452). Jewett's nameless visitor fully inhabits this point of view. Nowhere in her narrative does she delve inward to contemplate the course of her life; introspection—the narrative scheme in which troubled states of belonging are so often reflected and potentially resolved—does not play a role in this book. Instead, narration revolves around the "experience of living through [her] corporeal intentionality as it engages with the places of [her] near sphere—and as they in turn nestle within the containing horizon of [her] immediate place world" (Casey 452). In doing so, the act of telling performed in *Pointed Firs* is always within touching distance (*in Tuchfühlung*) of its subject matter.

The sketch is the perfect form for this kind of narrative, for no other artistic practice is so genuinely directed toward the immediate place world of the person engaged in it. Where one stands, and how one moves vis-à-vis one's subject matter affects the outcome immediately. And while the translation of sensory data into

artistic form is never unmediated (simply because there is no such thing as unmediated experience), sketching stands out in its relatively direct engagement with the physical world. And this brings me back to my earlier claim that the most basic impulse behind the art of the sketch is familiarization. It is both literal—for the promise of unobstructed encounter—and serial—because acquaintance is never complete. A new angle on the same object, a slight change of light, a rivaling site of interest in the vicinity will start the familiarization process anew. How seamlessly compatible this potentially open-ended type of artistic production is for the purpose of catering to an audience craving for a tangible, familiar world as a commodity will concern us later on. For now, I want to focus on the affordances of the sketch as a narrative mode. Stemming from the repertoire of the visual arts, the sketch brings to mind techniques such as pencil drawing or water coloring, both of which capture the nook of the world in front of the artist in a few precise gestures. Some playful lines on paper are enough to evoke the object or scene at hand (along with the body of the artist).[18] In the world of letters much of the discrete physicality of the sketch is lost; what remains—and is masterfully put to use in *Pointed Firs*—is the translation of select physical details into evocative signs. Selection can be as random as putting two juvenile chickens into the domestic setting of Mrs. Todd's upbringing on Green Island, arguably the sacred core of the entire fictional place world. Approaching the "small white house" from the landing, the narrator registers "the bright eyes and brainless little heads of two half-grown chickens who were snugged down among the mallows as if they had been chased away from the door more than once, and expected to be again" (408). The image evoked here is uncannily precise and suggestive. Placing the chickens at Mrs. Blackett's doorstep, tucked in with the mallows (just like the house itself is tucked "iceberg"-like into the landscape "as if [it was] two-thirds below the surface" [408]) gives the domestic scene an air of wholesomeness. Dumb and ordinary as they are, the juvenile birds have a place in this perfect little world.

Jewett's sketches thrive on being descriptive for sure, but this is not to say they are transparent or neutral. Finding chickens—not one but two—important enough to put in the "Green Island" sketch, combining them with further details (the tender mallows, the doorstep to Mrs. Blackett's house), describing them affectionately (the birds are "snugged" to the ground by the door), all of these choices attune our perception of the place world made visible here with the caressing gaze of the narrator. And if description is always geared toward making something visible, how this is done modulates our perception of and relation to its subject matter. But Jewett does not engage vision as the disembodied master sense of truthful

18 For Byerly, the sketch in visual art is "a rapidly drawn picture that sacrifices aesthetic finish for a sense of spontaneity." This idea, when appropriated into literature, displays a certain disdain for *techne* and removes the layer of artifice so distrusted by displaying the kind of honesty gleaned from spontaneity.

perception which classical realism (especially of the Henry Jamesian kind mentioned above) values as a primary tool of self-assertion.[19] Her sketches take us close, so close that the visual sense is pushed back on behalf of the less assertive senses—especially sound and smell, which make us feel at their mercy rather than in control. Without a shutting mechanism, their default *modus operandi* is pure exposure: They break down distance and bring the world up close, and Jewett's narrator exploits them to this very end. Mrs. Todd's "queer little garden," for instance, is described through the "fragrant presence" of the herbs flourishing there. The "bushy bit of green" gains discernible contours when the breeze comes in from the sea, "laden with not only sweetbrier and sweet-mary, but balm and sage and borage and mint, wormwood and southernwood," and after a short while the narrator knows "in exactly which corner of the garden [Mrs. Todd] might be" (378) based on the smells set free by the stroke of her skirts and the weight of her feet. Likewise, the soundscape around Shellheap Island—"gay voices and laughter from a pleasure-boat" (444)—deepens the narrator's understanding of Joanna Bowden's hermitage. More examples could easily be found, and in all of them the placial point of view endorsed in *Pointed Firs* is crucial for their synesthetic renderings of proximity. In fact, it is through this technique that familiarization is fathomed in terms of attachment—as a fully embodied, multi-sensual form of close contact in which reception and description are seamlessly intertwined.

A brief comparison of Jewett's style with that of another regionalist writer, Kate Chopin, is instructive here: Chopin's writing is equally sensuous for sure, yet whereas her impressionistic style resorts to a semantic field of bodily and emotive—erotic—stimulus with the aim of engendering an aching desire for change, Jewett's descriptive mode stresses the sensuous materiality of the physical world with the aim of engendering attachment. And while Chopin mobilizes Edna, her heroine in *The Awakening*, to the degree that she realizes that social norms and expectations make it impossible to build a viable dwelling place, turning temporal relief (death) into the ultimate resort of self-realization, Jewett lets her nameless narrator record her near sphere in ways that make building and dwelling seem feasible. But are there not pitfalls to such a descriptive mode, and if yes, how do they play out in *Pointed Firs*? For Susan Stewart, "all description is a matter of mapping the unknown unto the known" (26); doing so involves a hierarchization of information, and hierarchization means imposing significance and value.[20] The chicken detail,

19 For matters of vision and visuality in Henry James see especially Brosch, Schneck, and Seltzer; for a counter-agenda of regionalist writers such as Jewett and Freeman see Bader, "Dissolving Vision."

20 Again, Stewart's stance on the matter is highly representative of our field. This is how she further elaborates her point: "Descriptions must rely upon an economy of significance which is present in all of culture's representational forms, an economy which is shaped by generic conventions and not by aspects of the material world itself. While our awe of nature may be born in the face of her infinite and perfect detail, our awe of culture relies upon a hierarchical organization of

for instance, values ordinariness, creatureliness, togetherness, organic belonging to a domestic cosmos, and the list could easily be continued. But the sketch makes this detail suggestive rather than definitive; the reality that it helps construe is tentative rather than solid. And while detail is certainly used realistically in *Pointed Firs*, it does not so much mime reality as *authenticate* it. Jewett's use of detail neither adheres to the logic of abundance employed in realism's signature style of verisimilitude nor does it seek to create a mental image that is believable because it is accurate. Rather, the "reality effect" of the sketch aims for credibility by using just a few spontaneously selected details that are prone to capturing our interest but require further affective and hermeneutic investment.[21]

This kind of realism—Jewett herself referred to it as "imaginative realism" (Cary, *Jewett Letters* 122)—is typical of the art of the sketch as a whole. Its mode of description is thin rather than thick, its valorizations are tentative rather than thorough; hence the air of the fleeting and the provisional that always surrounds the sketch. As an ephemeral art it asks not only for a high degree of participation but also for our care. Moreover, and crucially, in exposing a generic dependency on the physical world, the sketch also displays—and in *Pointed Firs* empathically—the yearning for material intimacy that drives it. And this is where Jewett's description diverts from Stewart's assessment in ways that trouble Stewart's analytical grid. In embracing the new, object-based epistemology that came to fruition in the 1890s and in which "physical things attach people to place" (Brown 197), significance becomes determined by generic conventions *and* by aspects of the material world.[22] The details that make up the storyworld of *Pointed Firs*—rocks, trees,

information, an organization which is shared by social members and which differs cross-culturally and historically. Not our choice of subject, but our choice of aspect and the hierarchical organization of detail, will be emergent in and will reciprocally effect the prevailing social construction of reality. As genres approach 'realism,' their organization of information must clearly resemble the organization of information in everyday life. Realistic genres do not mirror everyday life; they mirror its hierarchization of information. They are mimetic of values, not of the material world. Literature cannot mime the world; it must mime the social" (26). Of course, I agree that description (like any representation) is social and thus laden with value. But the mimetic understanding of realistic genres suggested here fails to do justice to the dialogical dimension inherent to it. They do not so much mirror or mime social reality as proactively participate in their construction, which also means that they negotiate rather than simply perpetuate values. In fact, the selective use of detail serves precisely this end.

21 The term is drawn from Barthes, "L'Effet de Réel." See also *S/Z*. For a lucid discussion of realism's inherently dialogical form that counters received notions of realism as a straightforward mimetic extension of ideology see Ickstadt, "Concepts of Society."

22 Recent scholarship has given a heightened attention to object and material culture in *Pointed Firs*. See especially Bill Brown's chapter on Jewett in his landmark study on the interstices of material culture and literature, *A Sense of Things*, which was published separately as "Regional Artifacts"

houses, herbs, tools, pieces of furniture, animals, items of food and drink—are molded straight from the environment about which Jewett writes, and how she writes about them oscillates between fiction and ethnography.

Such writing calls for a special use of details, one that exceeds the aim of producing a resemblance of reality in the reader's imagination, that uses details not as mere signs or referents but as facts, or rather: as *data*. In close correspondence to the sketch as a literal record of sensory imprints, Jewett's details function as material inscriptions of reality into the storyworld.[23] Charged with a discrete physicality and inscribed with a history of long-term exposure (to seasons and weather, work routines and daily chores), they saturate bodily life and gain corporeality in and through Jewett's characters. Or, as Willa Cather puts it in her preface to *Pointed Firs*: "Miss Jewett wrote people that grew out of the soil" ("Preface" 8). And while *Pointed Firs* is, at the end of the day, clearly a work of fiction with invented places and characters and a made-up course of events, the factual gravity of its naturalistic use of detail-as-data is crucial to its persuasiveness as a literary text. Mrs. Todd's brother William, for instance, is described as "an elderly man, bent in the shoulders as fisherman often are" (411), and Captain Littlepage has "the same 'cant to leeward' as the wind-bent trees on the height above." With his "thin, bending figure," his "narrow, long-tailed coat" and walking stick he looks, to the narrator, "like an aged grasshopper of some strange human variety" (384-85). It is through descriptions like these that Jewett evokes an acute intimacy between the place and its people, a sense of human bodies being molded into shape by the routines and conditions that physically define the place world to which they belong. Couched in her narrator's casual rendering, the old sea captain's peculiar shape is the "natural" course of things in a world in which nature and culture are continuous, interlocking forces.

Perhaps William Dean Howells's grasshopper varieties have prompted this image of Littlepage: "the ideal grasshopper, the heroic grasshopper, the impassioned grasshopper, the self-devoted, adventureful, good old romantic card-board grasshopper," all of which "must die out before the simple, honest, and natural grasshopper can have a fair field" (*Fiction and Criticism* 13). Featured in one of Howells's influential *Harper's* editorials that he used to flesh out and promote the new literature that he found apt for his age, these grasshoppers make up the satirical thrust of an attack against the "culturally constructed type"—and against a narrative art in the service of cultivating the ideal rather than being "simple, natural, and honest […] like a real grasshopper" (12-13).[24] Jewett's grasshopper is

in *Critical Inquiry*. Ammons, in "Material Culture," reads Jewett's object world as manifesting the author's ideas about nativism and imperialism.

23 This understanding of detail in naturalism draws from Howard, *Naturalism* 147.

24 Howells wrote his monthly statements "From the Editor's Study," which were later published as *Criticism and Fiction* between 1886 and 1892. Patchworked as they are, his editorials are the most

also humorous (in an endearing rather than a disseminating kind of way), but it is certainly not "real" in Howells's sense of referring to no more than the living creature itself. Indeed, Jewett's realism does something quite different than what her former mentor had in mind.[25] Naturalistically inclined as her details are, they invoke a material history of the metonymic trace. Describing the old sea captain as an aged grasshopper not only makes present physical force as it equally affects man and animal, flora and fauna, live and dead matter. It invokes a narrative trajectory in which the shape of a human figure embodies a state of rootedness. Doing so also hints at the alternative lives that did not or could not materialize for this human figure in the given circumstance. But rather than further dwelling on this unrealized matter, Jewett lets her narrator proceed instantaneously, with the effect of turning a detail that so clearly stands for more than the literal meaning lingering on the descriptive surface into a viable echo chamber.

"Don't write a 'story' but just *tell the thing*" was a piece of advice that Jewett liked to give to younger writers (Cary, *Jewett Letters* 120; emphasis in the original). And if storytelling thrives on the dramatic art of emplotment—of which Jewett thoughtherself as incapable—*thing-telling* thrives on the tactile, descriptive art of the sketch.[26] So yes, Jewett's advice clearly harks back to the object-orientation of her narrative art. But the idea of transmitting the physical world as faithfully as possible is not materialistic *per se*. It is charged with a symbolism that is steeped in Swedenborgian doctrine.[27] Besides being taken with the Swedenborgian notion of "use" (which Jewett was able to translate into a professional and artistic sense of purpose), it was the idea of the spiritual permeating the material world that profoundly impressed her. And because she thought of her writing as striving to express this relation, she found herself at odds with "Mr. Howells [who] thinks […] that it is no use to write romance anymore"—marveling instead "how much of it there is left in every-day life after all" (*Letters of Jewett*, ed. Fields 59). But while the residual symbolism stemming from this belief was didactic and overt in her earlier work (especially in her first book *Deephaven*), it becomes a tacit feature of everyday

comprehensive account of Howells's understanding of realism, and publication with *Harper's* saw to their wide circulation. The grasshopper passage is part of the December editorial of 1887.

25 Howells was an avid supporter of Jewett's early work. He published some of her first stories during his time as the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* and was pivotal in encouraging the production of her first novel, *Deephaven*, published by Osgood and Co. (later Houghton Mifflin) in 1877.

26 In an often quoted letter to Scudder, Jewett writes: "[…] I don't believe I could write a long story […] In the first place I have no dramatic talent. The story would have no plot. I should have to fill this out with descriptions of characters and meditations. It seems to me I can furnish a theatre, and show you the actors and the scenery, and the audience, but there is never any play!" (*Jewett Letters* 29)

27 In my account of Swedenborg's influence on Jewett's artistic practice I am substantially drawing on Donovan, "Jewett and Swedenborg."

life and its object world in *Pointed Firs*, where naturalistic details are allegories for something unstated. Jewett had distanced herself from the direct, didactic allegory promoted by Swedenborg, and yet she remained invested in his idea that language is founded upon correspondence. In fact, her notion of "telling things" places *things* in a context of unstated correspondence (both in the relational and the communicative sense) in which they become part of a larger whole precisely because they are *told*.

Pointed Firs exploits this dynamic as its form-giving principle: Cosmic unity becomes tangible in metonymic traces, and what these traces reveal under the careful scrutiny of the narrator's caressing gaze are lives devoted to daily routines and chores (and an act of living resembling the act of writing a narrative script). The narrator's visit to Mrs. Blackett's bedroom is a case in point. The intimate space that she enters here revolves around a mundane everyday object, Mrs. Blackett's rocking chair. The adjectives used to describe it (old, quilted) as well as the activities conducted when sitting in it (resting, reading) value the object through a material intimacy with the human body. The object becomes *legible*, and what we read is a story of human attachment through touch. And as the narrator grasps that the old chair is part of an assemblage of other things she beings to elicit the following narrative: The "worn bible on the lightstand," the "heavy, silver-bowed glasses," the "thimble […] on the narrow wood-ledge," the "thick striped-cotton shirt that she was making for her son" and that now lay "folded carefully on the table"—every little detail in this passage is part of an everyday routine that ties the old lady, through the modest possessions gathered here, to an object world of used and useful things. But it is the needlework the captures her attention most acutely. The imaginative act inspired by it turns a tedious chore into a labor of love and the object world gathered by it into a virtual shrine of belonging. "Those dear old fingers and their loving stitches, that heart which made most of everything that needed love! Here was the real home, the heart of the old house on Green Island!" (420)[28]

The shirt that the old mother is sowing for her elderly son brings to mind all the shirts she has ever made for him (and for other members of her family) when sitting in this very spot. In the legible, object-based presence of repetitive routines and domestic rituals description veers into narrative, and what we are told is a mythical tale about the true meaning of this nuclear place. And if no belonging (and no narrative) is possible without repetition and ritual, in Jewett's descriptive

28 The narrator's visit to Mrs. Blackett's bedroom is one of several instances in which Jewett uses of needlework as a metaphor for female bonding and intergenerational collectivity, as well as for psychic and somatic integration. And if the old quilted rocking chair in which the work is routinely performed is the "heart" of the home, the "little brown bedroom" is both a literal room and an allegory of a peaceful psychic state. Tropes of quilting, sewing, weaving, or knitting, even though they are rallying points of feminist scholarship, have to my knowledge not been explored with regard to Jewett's work. For general scholarly work on the topic see Hedges; Torsney and Elsley.

style repetition and ritual are agents of topophilic stability and enchantment. The move from tactile description to emphatic meditation that is a defining feat of this style is conducted via a heightened intensity (the two final sentences of the rocking chair passage have exclamation marks). Shifts like these occur throughout the text, and often the move beyond the domain of the literal is indexed by imagistic or fictional markers ("like," "as if"). In moments like these, the metonymic trace on the surface of an object is prone to eliciting not only narrative but also attachment. The operative principle of Jewett's descriptive mode becomes tangible here: The yearning for attachment that drives narration from sketch to sketch is told *intermittently*, in the recurring shifts from tactile description to emphatic meditation.

Thematically, the episodic instances of familiarization strung together this way may best be described as a series of reduced and yet highly evocative expositions of different states of belonging. There is the wondrous Mrs. Todd, a longtime widow to a seafaring husband, who leads her admirably self-determined life as the village's eminent herbalist. There is Captain Littlepage whose deep-seated fear of death entraps him in the story of the mysterious "waiting place" between this world and the next way up in the Arctic Sea. There is Mrs. Blackett's perfect homestead on Green Island, which magically keeps her young. There is her son William's shrewd withdrawal from other people, ended in a later Dunnet Landing story with his marriage to a shepherdess. There is the long-anticipated visit of a friend equipped with the skills to make a whole way of life out of visiting (and one should, of course, bear in mind that "visiting" was a social institution at the time that meant taking someone into one's home for weeks and months on end). There is Joanna Bowden's self-imposed exile after disappointed love. There is the yearly reunion of the Bowden family, a social event of unmatched grandeur in which the narrator gets to participate. And there is the poor fisherman Elijah Tilley and his inconsolable grief about his long-deceased wife. The states of belonging invoked here alternate between isolation and embeddedness, lack and abundance. It has been argued that this pattern creates a unified whole in the end (Berthoff, "Pointed Firs;" Waggoner); in terms of belonging, this New Critical sense of unity might translate into a state of aesthetic transcendence that resides in an artfully crafted story and has the power to redeem alienation.

The stronger and more obvious force holding the sketches together, however, is the travel motif that is so typical of longer narrative forms. And while travel depends on narrative to grapple with the unfamiliar that it always encounters, "[t]he different stages of travel—departure, voyage, encounters on the road, and return—provide any story with a temporal structure that raises certain expectations for things to happen" (Mikkonen 2007, 286). Thinking of narrative in terms of travel is indeed so pervasive that "we have come to understand personal life and mental development as a voyage" (286). The travel motif in *Pointed Firs* exploits this tacit conundrum. The trip to the remote coastal town ignites a process of spiritual transformation that is broadened and deepened in the manifold travel

activities conducted over the course of the summer; the tale that we read is an account of both journeys.[29] For a scarcely plotted story like *Pointed Firs* the travel motif provides a temporal baseline that follows the logic of the itinerary: The narrative moves from place to place, and it is at these places—which are always particular, and always interrelational—that events happen, one after another. In the narrator's account of her summer, the consecutive relation between places and events is at times more explicit than at others. It is accentuated, for instance, when, right after Captain Littlepage's dreadful story about the mysterious "waiting place" in the Arctic Sea, the magical illumination of Green Island by the evening sun inspires the voyage to this place that is the theme of the following sketches. But when Mrs. Fosdick comes for a visit after the narrator's return from Green Island it is not clear at all; in fact, we do not even get a sense of how much time passes between the separate events in this latter case. In this episodic structure, acts of familiarization and attachment are amplified, while a more forceful plot would have diminished their emotive force.

Moreover, and no less importantly, the implied chronology in the order of the sketches that needs to be *in place* to grasp that the narrator's spiritual journey diverts from the travel narrative's usual scheme: It does not move from departure to return but proceeds the other way around. The result is a narrative in which the sense of belonging yearned for by the narrating agent and found in Dunnet Landing is not a safe haven to be reached at the end of her journey. It is a thoroughly transient, cyclical state, in which belonging is gained, lost—and possibly regained again, here or elsewhere.

Receptive Agency

The plot of *Pointed Firs* is quickly recounted: A nameless visitor from the city, probably Boston, spends her summer in Dunnet Landing as the lodger of Mrs. Todd's after having fallen in love with the place at an earlier occasion, grows attached to it during her stay, and leaves again. What happens in the episodic narrative filling this simple timeline is strikingly eventless and devoid of drama. And while the narrator seems to suffer from a spiritual crisis when arriving to Dunnet Landing, her troubles are merely hinted at; at no point do they take on a questing or desiring kind of urgency that could become a driving force in this first-person narrative. To

29 Pennell reads *Pointed Firs*, somewhat along these lines, as a "transformation of a literary form long familiar to New Englanders, the spiritual biography. […] In Jewett's fiction, sorority, the bonding together of women in an acknowledged sisterhood, becomes a manifestation of spiritual union and fulfillment, and it allows Jewett to shift the means of establishing the identity of women away from the relationships with men and patriarchal institutions and center it instead in ties to other women and to a female heritage and tradition" (193-94).

reiterate an earlier point, the narrator assumes her role decidedly not (and entirely unlike the letter-writing narrator of *Edgar Huntly*) by dwelling on herself. In fact, it is because she abstains from herself that she comfortably dwells in her surroundings. And if the placial point of view and the sketch, with their tactile directedness toward an immediate place world are a perfect match in terms of giving form to this narrative, what kind of narrative agency is at work in *Pointed Firs*? Immediately striking in this regard is the attention that is given to the narrator reading her surroundings and listening to the people whom she gets to know over the course of her summer. In one of the numerous examples that could illustrate this point she strolls along the shore where she meets one of the shrewder fishermen of Dunnet Landing. He "was carrying a small haddock in one hand, and presently shifted it to the other hand lest it might touch my skirt" (474), from which she concludes that her company is accepted, and the short walk that they take together leads to a visit to the fisherman's modest home later that day.

It is by virtue of the persistent and careful directedness toward the world in which the narrator finds herself that narration is guided, first and foremost, by a willingness to take this world *in*. In this basic makeup, it is neither active nor passive but both. The affective engagement with the world on which it thrives depends upon a sensory openness that is at once an active endeavor (an opening up) and a passive state (a being open); the German term *einlassen* perfectly captures this mix. In the resulting narrative act, emphatic contemplation of what is observed marks the highest degree of narratorial self-assertion. These moments are powerful because they are short and suggestive. Afterwards, the narrative gravitates toward attaching itself to the physical world once again. The first thing to be noted about the agency put to work in this kind of narrative, then, is the tactile degree to which it endorses reception and receptiveness. In the recurring shifts from tactile description to emphatic meditation discussed above, the narrative operation performed by the text weaves moments of acute, multi-sensual perception and receptive exchange into sketches, and sketches into a communal texture that reads like—evokes, creates—a viable dwelling place.

The resulting narrative is meandering rather than linear. The narrator tells us about returning to Dunnet Landing and settling in at Mrs. Todd's; renting the Schoolhouse for the solitary work of the writer, yet soon abandoning it again to be more immersed in the everyday life of Dunnet's community; taking trips to some islands and walks along the shore; cherishing the twosome intimacy within Mrs. Todd's house until "some wandering hermit crab of a visitor marked the little spare room for her own" (421); participating in the Bowden family reunion and leaving shortly thereafter. The gallivanting movements performed by the narrative exploit the temporal impulse of emplotment for the purpose of building a place without getting stuck in it. At the center of the weblike structure thus created stand Mrs. Blackett's house on Green Island and the close-by grove where Mrs. Todd's favorite herb, pennyroyal, grows in lavish abundance; it is here that real

friendship between her and her lodger, our narrator, starts to emerge. The farthest and bleakest outpost in this imaginary geography is the mystical "waiting place" in the Arctic Sea, construed as a thoroughly male fantasy and told by one old sea captain to another in a life-threatening deadlock. Mrs. Todd calls it one of Littlepage's "great narratives" and thinks it might be the product of the excessive reading that he did during "his seafarin' days" (400). The old sea captain's name mocks his bookishness (he recites Milton and brags about his knowledge of Shakespeare on an earlier occasion), and hence it is no surprise that the antidote to this harmful, "male" circulation of narratives is located in the structures of oral storytelling that, in the world of *Pointed Firs*, are predominantly maintained by women.

The combination of a gyratory and emphatic style and a plot that prioritizes communal care over individual advancement has been praised as prototypically female.[30] The world of *Pointed Firs* is devoid of conflict and the progressive development ignited from trying to solve it. One can read the disposition toward harmony and sense of stasis that it invokes as specters of nostalgic retreat; I prefer reading them as a willful rejection of the future-bound implications of narrative that serve the purpose of dwelling in the present. Mrs. Todd's favorite herb symbolizes this latter implication. It bears strong associations to childbirth, but with procreation not being an issue in the world of *Pointed Firs*, it does not work toward procuring tomorrow's community; rather, it deepens the bonds among its childless, aging women *in the present*.[31] And if neither the place nor its shrewd old people change over the course of the narrative other than in terms of increasing attachment, this is precisely the point. As a paradigm for the productive conjunction of narrative and belonging *Pointed Firs* is of interest, then, for staging an affectionate process of place-making by means of engaging in an unusual kind of storytelling. Instead of being driven by an individual quest or bundled desire (and thus generative of a narrative agency geared toward the pursuit of that quest or desire), the story is almost entirely devoid of self-determination. In fact, in the world of *Pointed Firs* individual action, be it narrative or other, tends to meander while (narrative) agency dissolves into intersubjective exchange and communal interdependency—a utopia, possibly female, that not only dismisses the romantic ideal of liberating the individual from social constraints but also steps back from the realist formula of "self-assertion through painful experience plus conversation," which remains stubbornly centered on the self—fixed on transforming individuals at the expense of fostering communal ties in comparison.

30 See, for instance, Ammons, "Going in Circles;" Zagarell, "Narrative of Community;" Folsom; Pennell.

31 As Ammons points out, pennyroyal is a strong and potentially dangerous herb, and as such, a perfect symbol of Mrs. Todd, Jewett's "midwife of the spirit." The herb's stimulus of menstrual flow and uterine contractions is used in childbirth, where it helps to expel the placenta and is thus involved in the healthy delivery of new life. But it is, for the same effects, also associated with miscarriage and abortion, and thus the end of new life. Ammons, "Jewett's Witches" 175.

Telling and reading or listening procedures are intertwined so closely in *Pointed Firs* that reception and receptiveness become a major theme, motif and driving force of the narrative. And this also means that narrative agency becomes receptive agency to a substantive degree. The merger is endorsed early on in the story, when the narrator wakes up to hearing Mrs. Todd outside her window. "By the unusual loudness of her remarks to a passer-by, and the notes of a familiar hymn which she sang as she worked among the herbs […] I knew that she wished I would wake up and come and speak with her;" indeed, the commotion outside of her window feels "as if directed purposely to the sleepy ears of my consciousness" (402). Just a few moments later the two women converse through the blinds of the narrator's room (which is, in this passage, decidedly not rendered as an interior space of enclosure but as a space that is permeable even in its delicate early-morning privacy).

> "I expect you are going up to your schoolhouse to pass all this pleasant day; yes, I expect you're going to be dreadful busy," she said despairingly.
>
> "Perhaps not," I said. "Why, what's going to be the matter with you Mrs. Todd." For I supposed that she was tempted by the fine weather to take one of her favorite expeditions along the shore pastures to gather herbs and simples, and would like to have me keep the house. (402)

Note how the last sentence is unvoiced. And yet, Mrs. Todd's eager reply can only mean that she has heard it.

> "No, I don't want to go nowhere by land," she answered gayly,—"no not by land; but I don't know's we shall have a better day of the summer to go out to Green Island and see mother. I waked up early thinkin' of her. And the wind's light northeast,—'twill take is right straight out, an' this time o' year it's liable to change round southwest an' fetch us home pretty, 'long late in the afternoon. Yes, it's going to be a good day." (402)

The two women, it seems, have settled into a permeable state of consciousness in which an extrasensory communication is a casual routine. Mrs. Todd and her mother are able to communicate long distance in this same fashion, and again, the semi-consciousness of arousing from sleep is rendered conducive to it. Moreover, the reading and listening skills put to work here and elsewhere display an acute intimacy with the environment. Increasing smoke from Mrs. Todd's mother's hearth is a gesture of welcome—"Look at the chimney, now: she has gone right in and brightened up the fire" (405)—, her backward potatoes speak of a lack of rain, and the weedy potato patch gives away William's preoccupation with catching herring. This also means that the narrator does not monopolize the receptiveness on which the narrative thrives; on the contrary, it is a shared sensibility. That, after the narrator and Mrs. Blackett had known each other for just a few hours, they "understood each other without speaking" (420) testifies to her increasing participation in this conducive state. But it is Mrs. Todd who is most keenly attuned to it. She brings

the onion that her mother needs for their stew, catches a perfectly-sized haddock for their shared meal, adds a special blend of herbs to her usual spruce beer brew to calm the narrator's nerves on the day of Mrs. Begg's funeral, and once she even talks to a tree. Having found it "drooping and discouraged" on an earlier occasion, she hails with "that quick reassuring nod of her head which was usually made to answer for a bow" (454) when seeing it next.

So yes, extrasensory communication includes non-human life-forms and inanimate matter (on the way home from Green Island the wind picks up as if being called upon). And when the narrator—toward the end of her stay and thus at the height of being part of Dunnet Landing's panpsychic consciousness—visits a local fisherman who is trapped in grief for his long-deceased wife, her receptiveness even reaches the dead. As she reads the old man's house (a shrine of his mourning, unchanged since his wife passed away) and listens to his litanic lament the dead person becomes present at her former dwelling site—"I began to see her myself in her home" (478). In a later, posthumously published Dunnet Landing story, "The Foreigner," the theme of bringing back the dead is amplified (the deceased person is evoked so powerfully in the story told by Mrs. Todd to the narrator that she returns as a ghost that both women can see) and more explicitly tied to the occult (the ghost is the mother of a woman of Caribbean descent from whom Mrs. Todd learned many of her special powers). Yet, the most puzzling thing about these extrasensory powers is how utterly ordinary they are in the world of *Pointed Firs*. They are nothing that deserves further notice, and the utter casualness with which they occur throughout the tale has the effect of amplifying their capacity to perforate the boundaries between self and other, here and there, now and then in emphatic acts of attachment to a concrete, beloved, and densely storied place world. Hence a psychic disposition toward permeability subtends the general openness toward the world on which the topophilic disposition of the narrative thrives. Contrary to Brown's erring letter writer, whose narrative act sutured a gasping rift between forcefully disjointed worlds, the receptive agency at work in *Pointed Firs* makes inner and outer worlds seamlessly continuous. And if Edgar Huntly's psyche was fathomed (with Darwin, Locke and Hume) as wounded by a violent exterior with which it could reconnect only in the absent-minded state of sleepwalking, the spiritistic ideas undergirding the psychic imaginary of *Pointed Firs* invoke a mystic state of interconnectedness, not only with the material world but also with the afterlife.

Such mystic ideas were taken quite seriously at the time; they were a feasible part of making sense of a world caught in transition from metaphysical to secular, scientific ways of construing one's place in it, and as such, they have a persistent place in Jewett's work.[32] A fellow thinker in this regard was William James, whom

32 An impressive historical record of Spiritualism in mid-Nineteenth century America is *Emma Harding's Modern American Spiritualism: A Twenty Year Record of the Communication Between the*

Jewett read and admired, possibly because of their striking like-mindedness (he, too, was strongly influenced by Swedenborgian ideas, being exposed to them at home and through some of his most important interlocutors).[33] Throughout his career, James was keenly interested in questioning the confines of an individual's psyche, an interest that led him to reconsider the significance of religious, spiritual, and mystic experience in his late work, especially in his monumental *Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*.[34] At the core of religious experience, according to James, lies an acceptance of something "more," which is beyond the individual's grasp. To further define this "more," which connects the material with a spiritual world, James put forth his central hypothesis about the subliminal constitution of consciousness: "whatever it may be on its farther side, the 'more' with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on its

Earth and the World of Spirits, first published in 1870. Harding, herself a famous medium, gave lectures that were instrumental in circulating the ideas of Spiritualism at the time. For more recent accounts, with a special focus on the interrelations of Spitirualism and woman's rights in Nineteenth century America, see Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society*; Ann Baude, *Radical Spirits*. Ammons traces Jewett's lasting concern with the occult and its manifestation in a series of female characters with mystical powers in "Jewett's Witches."

33 James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* came out six years after the publication of *Pointed Firs*; Jewett writes enthusiastically about it in a letter to Annie Fields (*Jewett Letters*, ed. Fields 90). The letter is dated 1892 in Fields, but as Ammons rightly points out, this must be a mistake, for *Varieties* was not published until a decade later ("Jewett's Witches" n33). James's interest in the occult dates back to at least 1882, when he was introduced to the work of the Society of Psychical Research while visiting his brother Henry in London; his father died that same year, making him feel "as [he] never began to do before, the tremendousness of the idea of immortality" (James in a letter to his wife; quoted in Blum 78). James's father, Henry Sr., was also responsible for his exposure to Swedenborgian ideas; in fact, he was to one of their most influential disseminators in America, bringing such intellectuals as his close friend (and William's Godfather) Ralph Waldo Emerson and Charles Sanders Peirce into their orbit. For a concise discussion of James's high-powered social milieu see E. Taylor, "Spiritual Roots."

34 A foremost figure in establishing psychology as a scholarly discipline, James was also involved in empirical research of spiritistic and occult phenomena; in fact, he set up an American branch of the London-based *Society for Psychical Research* that was at the forefront of conducting this research, and served as its president for a term. Only recently, Deborah Blum has delivered a book-length study, *Ghost Hunters,* about James's obsession with finding scientific proof for life after death. The group of researchers under scrutiny in this fascinating account includes Alfred Russel Wallace, Henry Sidgwick, Fredric Myers, William Crookes, and Edmund Gurney. That James's fellow "ghost hunters" were among the most renowned scholars of their time underscores the degree to which spiritism was indeed a serious scientific concern.

hither side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life" (556-57).[35] With its endorsement of receptive agency and permeable boundaries between inner and outer worlds, here and there, now and then, *Pointed Firs* reaches out to this "more." Against the suspicion that this agenda marks its author as shrewd, esoteric, and backward, association with James makes tangible that Jewett, too, was a bridge figure between the intellectual culture of the mid-nineteenth century and the modernist movements to come.

But her path lay not in exploring the literary tenets of "stream of consciousness" interweaving discrete instances of experience into a continuous sense of flow, as was done by James's brother Henry and so many modernist writers thereafter (William was, of course, the one who had developed the idea in the "Stream of Thoughts" chapter of his monumental *Principles of Psychology*). Counteracting concerns with mapping internal procedures, Jewett turned toward the physical place world to dwell on what would become a foremost implication of James's doctrine of "pure experience": that "our fields of experience have no more definite boundaries than our fields of view. Both are fringed forever by a 'more' that continuously supersedes them as life proceeds" ("Pure Experience" 35). Her haptic mode of description, her tacit symbolism of unstated facts, and the receptive agency drawn from their midst are the outcome of this experimental agenda.

Consecutive Endings, Editorial Care, and the Book as Dwelling Site

Pointed Firs endorses the receptive agency on which it thrives tacitly. The narrator's initial obligation to get on with a joyless writing job wears thin as she finds herself spending more and more time fostering her sprawling attachments. What we are reading may very well be what she wrote during or after her summer instead of the commissioned work that she seems to abandon early on. Even so, the narrator's deepening bonds do *not* mean that she is becoming a full member of Dunnet's community; they mean—demand—that she, being a writer who has to leave again at the end of her summer, must tell about it. This need to tell mobilizes both her narrative and her attachments. But ironically, it also sets her apart from

35 Concerns with the "fringe of consciousness" run through James's work. Developed originally in *The Principles of Psychology*, subliminal consciousness assumes a key role in *Varieties*, where it becomes the medium that makes religious experience possible and in which religious experience in all its varieties takes place. Acting as an embodied relay between the material and the spiritual world, it concretizes individual notions of the absolute. As the cornerstone of James's "science of religion," the subliminal (or transmarginal) consciousness also mediates between the domains of religion and science whose antagonistic relation James seeks to resolve with his late work. See Albers, *Spiritismus*.

the predominantly oral mode of narrative exchange and communal belonging that reverberates through her tale (just as none of Dunnet's storytellers will ever become a professional writer). Her need thus sparks an act of telling that consecrates *their* stories in and through the written text. The difference is crucial, for it marks narration as acting upon a need to tell that is both circular and self-serving. Through the solitary act of writing and the literary products that are its results, narrative proceedings seize the place of the community, with the result of both compensating for and distancing it. At the risk of stating the obvious, this pattern (memorably described in Walter Benjamin's "The Storyteller" four decades later) repeats itself on the side of consumption: Jewett's readers are engaged with printed matter, not with a place and its people. Her tale may have inspired travel and vacationing, but the formative experience was that of a literary text.

Conceived at the historical juncture when narrative consummation of belonging coincides with the consolidation of print capitalism, the act of telling that becomes manifest in *Pointed Firs* partakes in erecting this constellation. In doing so, it replicates and reinforces a logic that turns cultural artifacts into commodified (and socially stratified) sites of topophilic investment.[36] Approached this way, *Pointed Firs*'s object-life in a series of material incarnations emerges as a busy trajectory with immediate impact on its narrative form. Like many literary works at the time, *Pointed Firs* was first published serially in a magazine, the prestigious *Atlantic Monthly*, which featured it in four installments over the course of the year of 1896.[37] That these installments were spread out to appear in the January, March, July, and September issues signals a reorientation in the business of publishing magazine fiction: away from the monthly installments of the serialized novel, which had been its staple for decades, and toward the short story and short serial that was Jewett's preferred métier. *Atlantic* editor Horace Scudder, who also happened to be editor-in-chief at Houghton Mifflin, the renowned publishing house where Jewett's collection of sketches was scheduled for book publication later that year, had not only solicited the tale that was to become *Pointed Firs*. He had encouraged Jewett to submit a short serial rather than a singular piece, which led her

36 That the consolidation of the literary field at the time contained well-defined "regions" of distinction and taste is another manifestation of the shifting, highly mobilized parameters of emplacement at the time. The genre of regionalist fiction was clearly not regarded to be "high" literature, but relative proximity to this consecrated sphere (through the same publishing venues and promoters) made it suitable for the needs of an audience inclined to believe that a comfortable dwelling place was a matter of making the right investments. Perhaps it is rooted in this constellation that investment could become such common form of attachment in our own time. My understanding of the consolidation of the field of American letters is indebted to Florian Sedlmeier, *Field Imagination*.

37 My account of *Pointed Firs*'s intricate publication history closely follows Sedgwick and Goheen.

to expand her initial idea for a story about old sea captains into a more general tale about a place and its people.

The internal units that so clearly stand out even from *Pointed Firs*'s loosely plotted narrative bear the mark of the serial: The four "Green Island" chapters appeared in the March issue, the four "Poor Joanna" chapters in the July issue, and the four "Bowden Reunion" chapters in the September issue. In fact, the gentle, almost leisurely alternation between states of communal embeddedness and lack thereof that subtends the narrator's journey gains its tact from a publication mode in which the story will eventually be continued, with a need to go on that is casual rather than throbbing. Following the story in its various installments over the course of the year made the reader subscribe to a sense of belonging with an amiable ebb and flow—and subscribe not just in the metaphorical sense: The first installment appeared in the January issue that was instrumental to committing the magazine's readers for the year. Thematically less unified and formally more piecemealed than latter installments (it uses four short sketches to introduce the setting and the main characters, and another three to tell Captain Littlepage's story), the first installment ends not with an interim conclusion but pilot-like: with making plans to visit the remote channel island "struck" by "a gleam of golden sunshine" where Mrs. Todd's mother lives. "The sunburst upon that outermost island made it seem like a sudden revelation of the world beyond which some believe to be so near" (400). Subscribing to the magazine for the year meant subscribing to dwelling in this world.

In the fall, with the book publication drawing close and Scudder feeling "that his readers would not greatly miss a narrative conclusion to the serial" (Sedgwick 84), the end of the Bowden feast came to serve—incidentally—as the end of the narrative's first incarnation. That *Pointed Firs* assumed a second material form was a pleasant surprise to its author. "How little I thought of the 'Pointed Firs' […] turning into a book of parts when I began," Jewett wrote to her sister Mary in August (quoted in Sedgwick 84). The book that came out in October was indeed to a substantial degree the making of a keen and persuasive editor acting under the pressures of the literary market on two intersecting fronts (book and magazine publishing). Jewett only slightly revised the existing sketches for the book publication, but she added two more chapters at the end. Considerably shorter than they would have been as the serial's final installment, these new chapters alter the narrative decisively. The first of them, "Along the Shore," about Elijah Tilley's endless mourning, elevates the receptive agency endorsed by the tale to an unprecedented level of permeability. Even acuter, however, is the impact of the book's final chapter, "A Backward View," which postpones and revises the former ending. Whereas the magazine publication had left things with the Bowden reunion—suggesting, through the performative power of the ending, the narrator's initiation into Dunnet's community—the new ending turns this happy moment into a transient, cyclical state. With the narrator's departure spelled out rather than merely

pending, belonging can only be consummated in textual form—ideally as the unified literary object, a souvenir of the reader's journey to be kept on her shelf, which *Pointed Firs* had become in its second incarnation as a book.

Later, posthumous publications, the most famous of them an edition by Willa Cather, added even more chapters, again with the effect of producing substantial change but this time without consent from the author. The version of *Pointed Firs* that has been consecrated through Cather's reputation as a writer extends the tale both into the past and the future, bringing the narrator back to Dunnet Landing to celebrate William's wedding, and introducing the wondrous shepherdess who will become his bride in a chapter set prior to the narrator's blissful summer. None of the posthumous publications made palpable to its readers that it was diverting from the authorized text (Jewett's endorsement of *Pointed Firs* as a collection of sketches may have invited this peculiar editorial practice). Since 1924, additions have included a third chapter about a visit to an alleged twin of Queen Victoria, residing in the Dunnet area. All of these changes were made prior to Cather's edition, and yet it is puzzling that she, who must have been fully aware of their weight, stuck with the unauthorized twenty-four-chapter version. She must have even felt the need to "improve" it by rearranging the new chapters. Placing "The Queen's Twin" in between "A Dunnet Shepherdess" and "William's Wedding" is the most elegant solution in terms of narrative flow (the future wife is introduced, and the interim between this event and the marriage is bridged by another chapter, which is also set at the end of the summer). For Goheen, Cather's rearrangement epitomizes, for precisely this reason, not only an illegitimate seizure of authorship but also the "unmaking" of a story that was "perfect" in striving against the dictates of plot that her editorial work enforces retroactively (37-40).[38]

In terms of respecting the integrity of Jewett's work, Cather's actions are a definite violation, a seizure of authorship on behalf of an editor who was, furthermore, a disciple and a close friend. But what happens when these actions become part of our understanding of Jewett's art of attachments? It is well documented in their

38 If there is a structural logic at work here, it may best be described as a gradual movement from adding on further Dunnet stories to merging them with the authorized body of the text. The first edition, coming out with Houghton Mifflin in 1910, the year right after Jewett's death, featured two additions at the end of the authorized text. "A Dunnet Shepherdess" had appeared in the *Atlantic* in December 1899, "William's Wedding" (though most likely still unfinished when Jewett died) was published there July 1910. "The Queen's Twin," first published in the *Atlantic* in February 1899, made its first appearance in the 1919 edition, where it was, just like the earlier additions, placed at the end. The 1924 edition changed this order insofar as it reinstalled "The Backward View" chapter, which concludes the authorized text at the end. Goheen also points out that the added sketches/stories/chapters, all of which are divided into numerous subsections, bear a greater resemblance to the collection of sketches as a whole than to its individual chapters, which are consistently made up of one single section.

Willa Cather wearing a necklace from Sarah Orne Jewett. Studio portrait by Aimé Dupont, c1912.
Kaufman, Anne L. and Richard H. Millington (Eds.). *Willa Cather and the Nineteenth Century.* Lincoln and London: U of Nebraska P, 2015. Frontispiece.

lettered correspondence that Cather's editorial work was steeped in a relationship fervid with friendly affection, professional mentoring, artistic kinship, and personal grief (when Jewett died unexpectedly in 1909, the two women had been acquainted for sixteen short yet intense months).[39] Can the multiple, partially violent

39 The relationship between Jewett and Cather is a much-studied subject, both in terms of literary influence and in terms of the question of open or closed lesbianism. For the latter, see especially Homestead and Love. Scholars concerned with their literary relationship take issue with the massive influence that Jewett allegedly had on Cather, who was much younger and the less established writer at the time of their friendship. See Cary, "The Scuptor and the Spinister" for an early effort to relativize the impact of Jewett's mentorship. For an extremely nuanced reading of Cather's changing relationship to her deceased mentor and friend, see Carlin.

and transgressive outcomes of Cather's editorial work—commemoration, canonization, re-authorization, and self-assertion among them—be detached from the printed matter in which they reside? And does the possessive exegesis of editorial care not also expose a desire for the narrator's return to the place, for the friend to which she had grown so attached? A desire that may cut across these various outcomes while amounting, first and foremost, to producing yet another book?[40] Perhaps Cather even toys with slipping into the role of *Pointed Firs*'s narrator in this charade. In a well-known studio photograph taken in 1910, the year after Jewett's premature death, she wears a jade necklace given to her by Jewett as a token of their friendship (see previous page)—just as the narrator receives a coral pin from Mrs. Todd when it is time to say farewell.[41]

In the space opened up by the trail of objects and writings left behind by the Jewett-Cather relationship (the necklace, the photograph displaying it, the letters written back and forth, the edited volumes thereof, Cather's essay "Miss Jewett," and its revised version prefacing her edition of Jewett's work), the Cather edition emerges as a remarkably durable site. When it first came out in 1925 (Cather had just been awarded the Pulitzer Prize), many libraries acquired this book for its prestigious editor, and to this day it is this version of the text that is most easily available for purchase. With the Cather edition as a firmly established presence, critical awareness of the limits of Jewett's authorized text—a text whose form engendered by multiple, "serial" agencies including narrative genres, literary objects, editors, readers, writers—begs special importance.[42] Reconstructing these limits, which had been buried in and through the proliferating posthumous editions, has been an important critical task, and like most of those engaged in this task, I, too, prefer the authorized text to its later editions. Yet to assess the full scope of Jewett's art of attachment, a rigid "border patrol" of the original text is just as unsuited as being oblivious of the violation of borders—not least because fostering affective bonds always entails the possibility of possessive transgression. And has not the

40 These questions bring to mind Winters's lucid discussion of possession as a pervasive issue in Cather's work. All her novels are concerned with it, with each of them presenting a different take on the questions what can be possessed, and who possesses it. Explorations range from the posessives carried in the titles of *My Antonia*, *One of Ours*, and *My Mortal Enemy* that ask who owns a person's story, to the question who owns a place and its memory in *O Pioneers* and *Death Comes to the Archbishop*, to the possession of houses, of one's family's happiness, of the artifacts of bygone civilizations in *The Professor's House* (38-40).

41 Mrs. Todd's gift is clearly double-coded: The coral pin used to belong to Joanna Bowden; passing it on to the narrator is both a token of their lasting friendship and a tacit acknowledgement of the narrator's loneliness—and by extension possibly also an emblem of the loneliness of lesbian women at the time.

42 The term "serial agencies" is drawn from Kelleter's actor-network-theory inspired study with the same title.

most vital incarnation of *Pointed Firs* been conceived from the consecutive labor of two affectionately connected "mothers"? With a bit of good will, one can read the Cather edition as an empowering gesture of collective female authorship, whose violation of the historically fixed body of the work transports regionalism transhistorically into literary modernism. In short-circuiting authorial desire and editorial care, it invigorated Jewett's tale, prolonging the literary life of its enchanted place world while producing yet another, inherently progressive and remarkably durable site of topophilic investment.