

Introduction: Transnational Representations of the Region, 1840-1940

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The region is going through a revival: folk museums are increasingly popular, artisanal local cuisine is fashionable, and courses in regional languages and dialects are in demand.¹ In England's West Midlands, the traditional practice of gleaning is experiencing a resurgence as a reaction to food waste; by popular request, a new Belgian heritage and folklore museum is opening in the historic Porte de Hal in Brussels; and Limburgish and Cornish language courses are seeing a rise in enrolment through online learning programmes and mobile apps.² Several newspapers have commented on the increased interest in regional fashion, music, and folklore, particularly among young people who locate in regional culture an embrace of community, connection to the environment and the seasons, and resistance to the establishment.³ For example, in February 2023, *The Observer* published an interview with Simon Costin, co-curator of *Making Mischief*, an exhibition featuring regional customs from local festivals in the United Kingdom. Costin observes that “younger people [are] tapping into folklore”, not out of nostalgia but because “they’ve realised seasonal traditions are a way to reconnect with the planet”.⁴ Activists throughout Europe are advocating for beleaguered regional languages such as Catalan, Welsh, and Asturian, or are fighting to achieve equal legal standing for regional languages and dialects. There has been a resurgence of interest in preserving and revitalising the Occitan language, for instance, which holds

- 1 Mark C. O’Flaherty, “British Folk Costumes Finally Get the Focus They Deserve”, *Financial Times*, 25 February 2023, <https://www.ft.com/content/37fb9825-6c91-4340-8d3f-b3354ce516c1>; Alice Fisher, “Cool as Folk: Why Britain’s Young Rebels Are Embracing Ancient Rites”, *The Observer*, 12 February 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2023/feb/12/folk-customs-britain-young-generation>.
- 2 Rachel Stevenson, “Why the Ancient Art of Gleaning is Making a Comeback Across England”, *The Observer*, 19 February 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/feb/19/harvest-for-all-why-ancient-art-of-gleaning-is-making-a-comeback-food-banks-food-waste>; Hanneke Drohm, “Cursus Limburgs een Doorslaand Succes”, *De Limburger*, 28 March 2024, https://www.limburger.nl/cnt/dmf20240326_93288629; “Cornish Making a Comeback”, *Language Magazine*, 22 May 2023, <https://www.languagemagazine.com/2023/05/22/cornish-making-a-comeback/>.
- 3 Fisher, “Cool as Folk”.
- 4 Fisher, “Cool as Folk”.

significant cultural and historical importance.⁵ Transcending national borders, Occitan still serves as a symbol of regional identity for many in, for instance, southern France and the south of Piedmont, Italy.⁶ There is, additionally, a noticeable regionalist trend among popular fashion designers in the United Kingdom and Ireland, many of whom are incorporating elements of folk costume, such as traditional embroidery, intricate textiles, and ornate accessories, into their shows and designs. Irish designer Simone Rocha's 2022 runway show at the London Fashion Week, for instance, featured models wearing tiered veils—"a reference to the tradition on the Aran Islands of wearing petticoats dyed red as headdresses to take part in funeral processions".⁷ Similarly, John Alexander Skelton showcased his 2023 men's fall collection through an exhibition of photographs taken on the Orkney Islands, where local community members modelled his designs.⁸ These are only a few examples of a widespread trend.

These movements and projects are not merely about preserving regional vestiges: the revivalist engagement with these elements serves as a form of resistance against processes and policies that accelerate the homogenisation of society and erasure of cultural diversity, and some advocates of local projects and movements perceive the celebration of local variety as an antidote against fascism and racism. For instance, French musician and activist TATOU states that "the fight against centralism has always gone hand in hand with the fight against racism".⁹ By revitalising regional languages and cultures, these initiatives seek to reclaim and celebrate the unique identities and histories of their communities. While the revived interest in regional culture and tradition is often linked to conservatism (or even right-wing populism), the examples above illustrate that the phenomenon is more

5 Martina Niedhammer, "'Lou tresor dóu Felibrige': An Occitan Dictionary and Its Emotional Potential for Readers", in *Emotions and Everyday Nationalism in Modern European History*, ed. Andreas Stynen, Maarten Van Ginderachter, and Xosé M. Núñez (London: Routledge, 2020), 51-65.

6 Gianluca Tramontana, "'Our Government Sees It as Cute but Unimportant': The Musicians Keeping France's Occitan Language Alive", *The Guardian*, 5 July 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2023/jul/05/our-government-sees-it-as-cute-but-unimportant-the-musicians-keeping-frances-occitan-language-alive>; Silvia Marchetti, "Couboscuro: The Italian Village that Doesn't Speak Italian", *CNN*, 24 January 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/the-italian-village-that-doesnt-speak-italian/index.html>.

7 Fisher, "Cool as Folk"; Valerie Flynn, "Aran Islands Traditions Inspire the Knit Wits of High Fashion", *The Times*, 25 September 2022, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/aran-islands-traditions-inspire-the-knit-wits-of-high-fashion-fb9rxkpx>.

8 Liam Hess, "John Alexander Skelton Fall 2023 Menswear collection", *Vogue*, 24 January 2023, <https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2023-menswear/john-alexander-skelton>.

9 Gianluca Tramontana, "Our Government Sees It as Cute but Unimportant."

complex and multifaceted than this: regional culture can also be linked to anti-racist action or environmentalist causes.

The international popularity and cross-pollination of these developments moreover underscore the fact that regionalism frequently displays intrinsically *transnational* dimensions: regional movements (like many regions themselves) are not necessarily limited by national borders, and sometimes they influence each other. For example, movements that promoted the resuscitation of Catalan and the official promotion of Welsh have been credited with inspiring Occitan artists, activists, linguists, and cultural organisations to foster a renewed sense of pride and enthusiasm among Occitan speakers and enthusiasts.¹⁰ These and other efforts are moreover supported through EU and EU-led policy-making, premised on international agreements such as the 1992 European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which states that the protection of such languages “contributes to the maintenance and development of Europe’s cultural wealth and traditions”.¹¹

Though notable, the current revival of interest in the region is not in fact new, and neither is its transnational resonance: the nineteenth century, too, witnessed an upsurge in interest in the region. Representations of the region were popular across Europe and North America, in media ranging from the village tale to the illustrated periodical and from visual arts to architecture.¹² Weeklies such as *L’Illustration* in France, the *Illustrated London News* in the United Kingdom, *Harper’s Weekly* in the United States, and the *Illustrirte Zeitung* in Germany, for instance, exhibited a fascination with European regions, and frequently printed reports and engravings that detailed various dialects, folk costumes, regional labour practises such as gleaning, and local ceremonies and festivals.¹³ Local colour fiction was popular throughout Europe, especially from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, and it

10 Ros Taylor, “The Lost Tongue of Provence”, *The Guardian*, 6 September 2006, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/blog/2006/sep/06/thelosttongue1>.

11 European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Council of Europe, *European Treaty Series* 148 (1992), preamble.

12 Linda E. Connors and Mary Lu MacDonald, *National Identity in Great Britain and British North America, 1815-1851: The Role of Nineteenth-Century Periodicals* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013); Dirk de Geest et al., “The Case of Regional Literature as a Provocation for Literary Studies”, in *Sources of Regionalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Leuven: Leuven UP, 2008), 90-99; and Eric Storm, *The Culture of Regionalism: Art, Architecture and International Exhibitions in France, Germany and Spain, 1890-1939* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2011).

13 See Sophie van Os, “The Transnational Dimensions of the Region in European Illustrated Periodicals, 1842-1900” (PhD diss., Radboud University, forthcoming 2025).

was widely published, read, republished abroad, and translated.¹⁴ The circulation of such representations across national borders was furthered by an expanding transnational infrastructure of cultural production through which media representations of and local colour fiction about European regions were transmitted transculturally across and beyond Europe. The second half of the nineteenth century especially saw the emergence, widespread adoption, and interaction of various new media innovations and technologies for “the electrical transmission of information (telegraphy, telephony), for mass print multiplication (mass dailies, illustrated magazines), and for technical reproduction (photography, phonography).”¹⁵ Fuelled by such developments, the period witnessed an immense increase in the circulation of information about and representations of Europe’s regions and regional identities.

Across these different media, regionalism offered a response to industrialisation and accompanying feelings of social alienation.¹⁶ Additionally, the rise of regionalism has long been linked to nationalism and nation-building: scholarship suggests that it was a direct “consequence of a romantic search for the roots of the nation”.¹⁷ According to cultural historian Joep Leerssen, national identity is shaped by ideals of both progress and modernity and of continuity and tradition. The latter ideal is largely dependent on regions that are imagined as rooted in a premodern past and, by that token, as safeguarding traditional customs. At the same time, under the influence of modernisation theory—which attempts to identify the social variables that contribute to social progress and development of societies and seeks to explain the process of social evolution—many definitions of nationalism presupposed that an increase in societal communication and a weakening of local and regional identities were necessary preconditions for nation-build-

14 See Josephine Donovan, *European Local-Color Literature: National Tales, Dorfgeschichten, Romans Champêtres* (London: Continuum, 2010); June Howard, *The Center of the World: Regional Writing and the Puzzles of Place-Time* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2018); Anneloek Scholten, “Peripheral Fictions? The Transregional Dimensions of Dutch Regional Writing, 1843-1919” (PhD diss., Radboud University, 2025).

15 Felix Brinker and Ruth Mayer, “Fleeting, Fast, and Everywhere: An Introduction to Periodical Modernity”, 2.

16 Linda van Santvoort, Jan De Maeyer, and Tom Verschaffel, “Introduction”, in *Sources of Regionalism in the Nineteenth Century: Architecture, Art and Literature*, ed. Linda van Santvoort, Jan De Maeyer, and Tom Verschaffel (Leuven: Leuven UP, 2008), 7.

17 Joost Augusteijn and Eric Storm, “Introduction: Region and State”, in *Region and State in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Nation-Building, Regional Identities and Separatism*, ed. Joost Augusteijn and Eric Storm (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 4; see also Joep Leerssen, “Notes Towards a Definition of Romantic Nationalism”, *Romantik* 2, no. 1 (2013): 9-35.

ing in the nineteenth century.¹⁸ This perspective has resulted in the region and its identities often being implicitly perceived as “pre-modern vestiges” and treated as “a symptom of weak nation building and a possible forerunner of minority nationalism”.¹⁹ Consequently, representations of the region have primarily been studied as forms of cultural resistance to “the enforcement of national social norms” and processes of national standardisation; within models which suggest the loss of the local through nationalisation; or, conversely, as emblematic of national tradition and identity.²⁰

Such methodological nationalism has meant that the transnational dimensions of regionalism—in its themes, as well as its publication and circulation—have often been overlooked. In fact, media representing the region circulated across borders: literary depictions of the region were translated or republished abroad, local colour genres such as the village tale enjoyed widespread popularity in numerous languages, illustrations of regions were reprinted in different national contexts, and regional culture received attention at several world fairs between 1851 and 1913.²¹ According to sociologists, times of increased globalisation are often linked with increased attention for regional culture.²² However, this does not entail that region-

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- 18 Henry Bernstein, “Modernization Theory and the Sociological Study of Development”, *Journal of Development Studies* 7, no. 2 (1971): 141–60; Hans Blokland, *Modernization and Its Political Consequences: Weber, Mannheim, and Schumpeter*, trans. Nancy Smyth van Weesep (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2006), and Peter Wagner, *Modernity as Experience and Interpretation: A New Sociology of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008).
- 19 Xosé M. Nuñez Seixas and Eric Storm, “Introduction: Region, Nation, History”, in *Regionalism and Modern Europe: Identity Construction and Movements from 1890 to the Present Day*, ed. Xosé M. Nuñez Seixas and Eric Storm (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 5. See also: Joost Augusteijn and Eric Storm, “Introduction: Region and State”, in *Region and State in Nineteenth Century Europe: Nation-Building, Regional Identities and Separatism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012), 1–12, and Timothy Baycroft, “Introduction”, in *Culture, Identity and Nationalism: French Flanders in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1–10.
- 20 Donovan, *European Local-Color Literature*, 68; Ad de Jong, *De dirigenten van de herinnering: Musealisering en nationalisering van de volkscultuur in Nederland, 1815–1940* (Nijmegen: SUN, 2001), 13.
- 21 See for instance Lynne Tatlock, *German Writing, American Reading: Women and the Import of Fiction, 1866–1917* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State UP, 2012); Thomas Smits, *The European Illustrated Press and the Emergence of a Transnational Visual Culture of the News, 1842–1870* (London: Routledge, 2020); Stephanie Palmer, *Transatlantic Footholds: Turn-of-the-Century American Women Writers and British Reviewers* (New York: Routledge, 2019); Marcus Twellmann, *Dorfgeschichten: Wie die Welt zur Literatur kommt* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2019); Storm, *Culture of Regionalism*; Sophie van Os, “Contested Boundaries: Visual Representations of Travel to Colonial Regions within Europe, 1860–1900”, *Victorian Periodicals Review* 56, no. 4 (2023): 625–47.
- 22 Manuel Castell, “Globalisation and Identity: A Comparative Perspective”, *Transfer: Journal of Contemporary Culture* 1 (2006); Stefano Tartaglia and Monica Rossi, “The Local Identity Functions in The Age of Globalization: A Study on Local Culture”, *Community Psychology in Global Perspective* 1 (2015): 106.

alism necessarily or merely *resists* globalisation. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, regional identities were articulated not only in relation to national identity but also in relation to transnational cultural repertoires. They were also informed, in part, by tourism, as regional identities were marketed for foreign visitors, who in turn sometimes published accounts of their travels.²³ Networks of regional writers and translators transcended national and linguistic borders.²⁴ Moreover, many regions extend(ed) across national borders, such as Frisia, or, conversely, emerged as a result of the geographical demarcation of political entities such as nation-states, like Northern Ireland. For some regions, such as Silesia and the Alsace, their national status changed at various points in history, for instance as a result of war or political crisis. Such complex processes highlight that regional identity and belonging cannot be articulated solely in relation to the nation-state.

Transnational Representations of the Region, 1840-1940 attends to the often-overlooked transnational connections, cultural transfer, and categories of belonging that are involved in the cultural imagination of regions. Exemplifying the developments described above, it focuses on areas that are culturally *imagined* as regions, without pre-imposing a definition of what a region is, as definitions vary between disciplines and contexts.²⁵ In particular, the transnational perspective it offers centres the “sustained linkages and ongoing exchanges among non-state actors based across national borders”, as opposed to a focus on the *international*, which refers to relations between institutional and state actors.²⁶ The term ‘transnational’ “recognises the significance of national frameworks alongside the potential of cultural production both to reinforce and to transcend them”.²⁷ It acknowledges that the local, national, and global are interdependent and shape each other, thus

23 Eric Storm, “Tourism and the Construction of Regional Identities”, in *Regionalism and Modern Europe: Identity Construction and Movements from 1890 to the Present Day*, ed. Eric Storm and Xosé M. Nuñez Seixas (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019); Herman Roodenburg, “Marken als relict: Het samengaan van schilderkunst, toerisme, volkskunde en fysische antropologie rond 1900”, in *Volkskundig Bulletin*, ed. J. Helsloot (Amsterdam: SUN, 1999), 209.

24 Giulia Bruna, “Ian Maclaren’s Scottish Local-Colour Fiction in Transnational Contexts: Networks of Reception, Circulation and Translation in the United States and Europe”, *Translation and Literature* 30 (2021): 318-21; Marguérite Corporaal, “Irish Women Writers and Their (Trans) National Networks: Making and Translating Local Colour Literature”, *English Studies* 104, no. 6 (2023): 1002-18.

25 See e.g. Laura Edwards, “What Constitutes a Region?”, *Diplomatic History* 36, no. 3 (2012); Albert Guttenberg, “Classifying Regions: A Conceptual Approach”, *International Regional Science Review* 2, no. 1 (1977); Luk van Langenhoven, “What is a Region?: Towards a Statehood Theory of Regions”, *Contemporary Politics* 19, no. 4 (2013): 475.

26 Steven Vertovec, *Transnationalism* (London: Routledge, 2009), 3.

27 Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney, “Introduction”, in *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales*, ed. Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 4.

allowing scholars “to grasp the multi-scalarity of socio-cultural processes”, as Nina Glick Schiller argues.²⁸ Conceptualising the region as an inherently transnational phenomenon, the essays in this volume consider cultural representations of the region during the long nineteenth and early twentieth century across different media and from a range of disciplinary perspectives, including history, literature, media studies, visual arts, theatre, and musicology.

The period between 1840 and 1940 is, of course, one of significant political, social, and cultural tumult in Europe and elsewhere. Political and military conflict meant that national borders were often redrawn, most notably at the end of the First World War (1914-1918), a period which, for instance, witnessed the collapse and redistribution of Austria-Hungary and the German, Ottoman, and Russian empires. Geopolitical developments could have a significant impact on conceptualisations of the region and its relation to the nation-state, as in the case of Alsace-Lorraine and northern Schleswig/Southern Jutland, but also in Europe’s expansive colonies. The American Civil War (1861-1865) and the abolition of slavery in the United States redefined the meaning of the ‘South’ within the broader context of US political and cultural formation. Centralisation policies in France aimed at consolidating the primacy of the nation-state harmed the expression of regional identities and languages, while the unification of Germany in 1871 among other things similarly affected the position of regional language varieties, a development also visible in other nation-states that instituted national language policies, for instance through standardised school curricula. As such, the notion of the region and its political, legal, and cultural framing were undeniably in flux during this period.

Similarly, the idea of the region was influenced by increased mobility across borders, not just because of the emergence of mass tourism, but also as a result of mass migration and settler colonialism, to North America and elsewhere. Leaving home, emigrants did not instantly abandon regional self-identifications, even as they were becoming integrated in their new homes. On the contrary, regionalism could be a productive mode for the construction of new cultural identities, and transnational synergies emerged between regional identity formations. In German- and Irish-American local colour writing from the period, for instance, the regions migrants

28 Nina Glick Schiller “Transnationality, Migrants and Cities: A Comparative Approach”, in *Beyond Methodological Nationalism*, ed. Anna Amelina, Devrim Sel D. Nergiz, Thomas Faist, and Nina Glick Schiller (London: Routledge, 2012), 23.

had left were sometimes recoded and combined with American regionalist self-images, as in the work of Fernande Richter (who published under the pseudonym Edna Fern), which offers amalgamations of German and American regional affiliations.²⁹ A similar dynamic is visible in the work of the Irish-American priest-novelist John Talbot Smith, in whose narratives Irish regional antagonisms are often reproduced in the social hierarchies of the border region between the state of New York and Canada.³⁰ In the context of migration, too, the region thus proved a culturally dynamic and inherently multi-scalar category.

Partly as a result of the developments and events outlined above, the period 1840-1940 witnessed important expressions of regionalism in various European countries, from the emergence of regional literatures to regionalist movements in architecture and the organisation of world fairs.³¹ And in the way it was marked by changing borders, migration, and the increasing globalisation of culture, media, and politics,³² it is not unlike our present moment. As such, while historical in scope, the essays in this volume are highly timely and offer important context for understanding the dynamics between regional, national, and transnational exchanges today. Our contributors underscore that regionalism is not solely (or primarily) nostalgic or conservative, but rather (potentially) expansive, generative, and disruptive. By thinking regions beyond nations, this volume highlights the multiple connections, communities, and entanglements that contribute to spatial identities. While its coverage is not comprehensive, the case studies surveyed in these chapters exemplify processes and phenomena that often also translate to other contexts not discussed at length here, for instance, transnational representations of regions in Central and Eastern Europe such

29 For more on Richter's fiction, see Christopher Cusack and Thomas Massnick, "'Wealthy American Farmers?': German Americans and Transatlantic Regionalism in the Work of Fernande Richter", in *The Regional Fictions Podcast*, produced by Giulia Bruna, podcast, <https://theregionalfictionspodcast.buzzsprout.com>.

30 See Lindsay Janssen, "A Real American 'Spakes English': Ethnicity, Religion, and Respectability in John Talbot Smith's 'How the McGuinness Saved His Pride' (1891)", *Religion and Literature* 52, no. 3 / 53, no. 1 (2020-21): 146-53. See also Christopher Cusack, "'Here at least and at last is reality!': Catholic Graveyards and Diasporic Identity in Irish North American Fiction, 1859-92", in *The Graveyard in Literature: Liminality and Social Critique*, ed. Aoileann Ní Éigeartaigh (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2022), 159-73.

31 See e.g. Augusteijn and Storm, "Introduction", 2; Donovan, *European Local-Color Literature*; Marguérite Corporaal and Tom Sintobin, "'Gemeen Volk': Zigeuners in Europese streek-literatuur", *De Moderne Tijd* 3 (2019): 253.

32 See e.g. Michael Wintle, *The Image of Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), 153, 191.

as Bohemia, Transylvania, and Siberia. As such, it complements important recent scholarship that considers regionalism in multi-scalar terms.³³

The collection was conceived and developed as part of the research project *Redefining the Region: The Transnational Dimensions of Local Colour* (PI Prof Marguérite Corporaal), funded by the Dutch Research Council NWO. The five subprojects of *Redefining the Region* considered the region and its cultural representations as dynamic, not static, always defined by a complex web of forces and relations, as well as forms of transfer, that run parallel to, transcend, or indeed subvert nation-based understandings of regional identity.³⁴ *Transnational Representations of the Region, 1840-1940*, too, is premised on the contention that a comprehensive understanding of the concept of the region, be it historical or contemporary, must take into account not just local, regional, and national scales, but also the transnational.

Chapter overview

This volume—which covers a range of European regions as well as the United States—explores the transnational dimensions of regions around four themes: reception, mobility, cultural repertoires and cross-border regions. Each theme illuminates how regional belonging transcended national borders and how regional identities were conceptualised through transnational transfer and exchange. While this volume has neither the scope nor the ambition to provide a comprehensive overview of how regions were imagined between 1840 and 1940, since inevitably many regions and nations are not represented, the case studies it offers demonstrate in multiple ways the benefits of considering the transnational dimensions of the regionalist cultural imaginary.

The European and North American interest in regional traditions and modes of existence prompted the republication of regional fiction abroad—in its original language and in translation. For example, Rosa Mulholland's local colour novel *The Wild Birds of Killeevy* (1880), set in County Armagh, was translated into German by Clara Commer;³⁵ Ioan Slavici's local colour story of Transylvania "La Moara Cu Noroc" (1881) was published in English translation in *The Lucky Mill* by New York company Duffield and Co (1919);

33 See for instance Núñez Seixas and Storm, eds., *Regionalism and Modern Europe*, and Twellmann, *Dorfgeschichten*.

34 For an impression of how local colour fiction travelled across Europe and North America, see the project repository: Marguérite Corporaal et al., *Redefining the Region*, 2025, <https://redefiningtherregion.rich.ru.nl/catalogue/>.

35 See Corporaal, "Irish Women Writers and Their (Trans)National Networks", 1011.

and Grazia Deledda's *Cenere* (1900), a novel set on the island of Sardinia, was translated into German, Polish and English.³⁶ The first section, "Transnational Reception", examines the translation and/or republication of regional writings as an example of transnational cultural transmission. The first two essays in this section explore the reception and circulation of popular American local colour writer Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's fiction in various transnational literary circles, reader communities, and periodical markets. Stephanie Palmer's contribution demonstrates that regional fiction, which has often been characterised as a rooted genre, is in fact edited, published, disseminated, and read far beyond the confines of its region. Her essay considers this paradox by relating the writings of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman (1852-1930) to regional writing by the English author Mary E. Mann (1848-1929), the Irish writer Jane Barlow (1857-1917), and the German writer Ilse Frapan (1849-1908). Palmer demonstrates that each of these authors can serve as a lens through which we can reread and rediscover another. This lateral reading suggests that the nascent or subtle feminism associated with Freeman, Jewett, and other American women regionalists, for example, was shared, albeit unevenly, by other nineteenth-century women regional writers across the globe.

Giulia Bruna's essay dives into the early reception and translation of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's fiction by focusing on three francophone periodicals: the French *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and the Swiss *Semaine Littéraire* and *Bibliothèque Universelle et Revue Suisse*. Such periodicals often featured additional translations of regional fiction that were not always published in books and are important sources to contextualise the work of translators who have historically suffered from an invisibility complex. Bruna compares the French translations of Freeman's stories by, for instance, Thérèse Bentzon and Auguste Glardon, and underlines that these translations and adaptations illuminated the wider reception of Freeman's regional work in Francophone areas. In doing so, Bruna's contribution highlights the transnational resonance and adaptability of local-colour literature as well as the importance of translation in the transnational literary field.

In the final essay in this section, Tim van Gerven traces how the indigenous Sámi – and the transnational region of the Cap of the North they inhabited – have been imagined in both European and Norwegian culture.

³⁶ See Marguërite Corporaal et al., *Redefining the Region*, 2025, <https://redefiningtheregion.rich.ru.nl/catalogue/>. The authors are grateful to Marguërite Corporaal for suggesting these examples.

In particular, Van Gerven discusses the hugely successful reception abroad of Norwegian scholar-author Jens Andreas Friis's Sámi narrative *Lajla* (1881), though he argues that its influence tends to be overstated, given the many representations of the Sámi that already circulated as well as the broader craze for local colour writing. Van Gerven analyses the ambiguities of Friis's characterisations and shows how the novel's reception often reflected regionally coded Social Darwinist views on 'primitiveness' and 'modernity'. The influence of Friis's novel and other representations of the Sámi, Van Gerven argues, demonstrate the complex interaction between transnational, national, and regional frames of signification.

Section II, "Travelling Regions", examines how notions of regionalism and images of particular regions were conceptualised through world fairs and (representations) of tourism. In his chapter, Eric Storm considers the representation of regional vernacular cultures at world fairs. The essay not only shows how the popularity of the region was boosted because organisers saw the need to be more distinctive in order to compete with other fairs. As Storm demonstrates, this process resulted in "cultural isomorphism": capitalising on the success of regional displays, organisers began emulating each other's approaches in representing vernacular culture. This, in turn, resulted in the transnational formation of specific templates for the representation of regional identities, such as dioramas and the ethnographic village, but also the demonstration of crafts and performances. Analysing this dynamic in relation to world fairs in San Diego and Seville, the essay concludes that these "global isomorphic mechanisms" were crucial elements of the construction of regional identity during the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In his contribution, Christian Drury examines how transnational, national, and local processes interacted in the construction of Jotunheimen in Norway as a tourist region, beyond its existing national symbolism. As Drury shows, its emergence as a popular destination for travellers eager to experience its spectacular landscape – supposedly unspoiled by modernity – was the result of the concerted efforts of multiple actors, including the British mountaineer William Cecil Slingsby, and the Norwegian Trekking Association (DNT), which operated within transnational networks. Travellers such as Slingsby wrote extensively about their sojourns, and the DNT not only developed material infrastructure to facilitate easier access to the region but also provided channels for the distribution of information. Drury's chapter, then, demonstrates how the notion of an ostensibly national landscape such as Jotunheimen can in fact be a product of transnational co-creation.

Exploring nineteenth-century French conceptualisations of the centre-margin logic that often underpin regionalism, Sophie Horrocks David's essay considers seasonal tourism in mid-nineteenth-century French spa towns such as Dieppe in Normandy and Pau and Bagnères in the southwestern Pyrenees. In particular, she focuses on the central yet complex function of the state-mandated theatrical and musical repertoire transported from Paris to these resorts. With particular attention for Eugène Scribe's play *La Calomnie* (1840) and the European music it references, Horrocks David analyses how such repertoire engages with both rhetorical constructions of foreignness and the actual presence of travellers from abroad. In so doing, she demonstrates that the transnational nature of seasonal spa culture in these towns reconfigured discursive relationships between centre and periphery, and thus complicated the hierarchical construction of capital versus province or region that buttressed the centralist policies of the mid-century French state.

The third section, "Mapping Regional Identities", explores how borders, geopolitical redistribution, and internally constructed regional distinctions simultaneously reflect and influence transnational perceptions of both regional and national identity. Peter George explores Normandy as a transnational region, particularly in the local press of Jersey and mainland Normandy towards the end of the long nineteenth century. George argues that the transnationality of Norman identity was part of what made it distinctive: Normanness was constructed partly through historical connections with countries the Normans had conquered or where they had settled. Moreover, in the nineteenth century, the identity was shared across a national border, and similarities between Jersey and Normandy were part of its transnational identity. Simultaneously, for both Jersey and mainland Normandy, regional identity was subordinate to their respective national identities. Regional, national, and transnational levels productively collide in this essay: George demonstrates that regional identities could be based in a transnational past and cross national boundaries, while simultaneously being positioned within national frameworks.

Aurélie Marks Toitot writes about the border region of Alsace and its role in the construction of both France and Germany: the region changed nationality four times between 1870 and 1945, demonstrating the historical variability and contingency of the relationship between regional identity and national belonging. Alsace developed a hybrid local identity associated with French political culture and Germanic dialect and traditions. Moreover, its identity remained transnational, as the local population maintained networks and exchanges across the border. Toitot explores this hybrid identity

through the figure of the *Alsacienne* and analyses the use of her image on the political, social, and cultural scene. Toitot considers print media as well as performances by the local population to provide insights into how the *Alsacienne* functioned as a political character, and how her image was appropriated to support different political and national narratives.

Finally, Frank Mehring's chapter explores the external construction and national and international popularisation of the American South as a symbolic region by studying the composition and reception of the popular music of composers Stephen Foster and the German-born Kurt Weill, neither originally from the South. As Mehring shows, Foster's and Weill's remediations of Southern culture divest the region of its violent history of slavery, racism, and segregation. Instead, works such as Foster's exceptionally successful song "My Old Kentucky Home, Good Night" and Weill's highly popular folk opera *Down in the Valley*, which repurposes well-known American songs, fashion and promote a romanticised image of the South as a quintessential rural locus of American culture and values. Highlighting the complicated regional, national, and transnational dynamics underpinning the composition and reception of works such as these, Mehring demonstrates the utility of music as a vehicle for both constructing and analysing regional identities.

Transnational Representations of the Region, 1840-1940 concludes with a wide-ranging coda by June Howard that emphasises the urgency of transnational perspectives on the region. Howard brings everyday understandings of regionalism into conversation with scholarship on regional writing and with theories of geography and temporality. She considers the interrelationships of time and place, suggesting that rethinking place aids recognition of the multiplicity of *time*, integrating past, present, and future. Her essay, crucially, considers the implications of these insights for inhabiting the Anthropocene. For Howard, region is a powerful category for thinking about connections in favour of scales, hierarchies, and centres.

Together, these essays offer a variegated survey of the transnational dimensions of the construction and representation of the region. In so doing, they both enrich and move beyond existing scholarship that focuses on the relationship between nation and state. Moreover, they add to the growing body of research that advocates for a "multiscalar optics" attending to the multiple connections between local, national and transnational.³⁷ The vol-

37 Joep Leerssen, "Regionalism in the Low Countries", in *Regionalism and Modern Europe*, ed. Xosé Nuñez Seixas and Eric Storm, 228; See also Augusteijn and Storm, "Introduction: Region and State"; Nuñez Seixas and Storm, "Introduction: Region, Nation, History", 2-5.

ume thus aims to offer a useful starting point for explorations of the various ways in which the transnational dimensions of the region can be conceptualised and studied. Above all, *Transnational Representations of the Region, 1840-1940* emphasises the necessity of expanding our awareness of the scales at which the region and regional identity are identified, imagined, perceived, and promoted. As such, these essays present a vital contribution to our understanding of the interplay between scales in constructing spatial identities, from local to transnational.

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