

The Landscapes of African American Short Stories, 1887 – 2014

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Mapping African American Short Stories, 1899- 2014

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Abstract: My dissertation addresses the dearth of scholarship on short stories by using quantitative data and text-mining software to explain how the repeated inclusion of short fiction by Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Toni Cade Bambara, Alice Walker, and Edward P. Jones in anthologies across decades shapes the contours of African American literary tradition. My research also reveals why specific geographic locations have become, over time, fundamental to the study of African American literature.

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In Toni Morrison's 1977 novel *Song of Solomon*, Guitar Baines declares to the story's protagonist, "Goddamn, Milk, I do believe my whole life's geography" (114). Guitar's comments underscore the historical importance of geography in African American life and history. Whether artistic movements such as the Harlem Renaissance or political protests such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, geography has the ability to dictate black people's interactions with their environments. However, to what extent does geography shape engagements with African American literature? Also, in what manner does geography influence circulation practices? The answers to these questions may suggest that geography plays a significant role in the circulation of black writing.

The Landscapes of African American Short Stories, 1887 – 2014 addresses the dearth of scholarship on short stories, especially those by African American authors, by connecting two elements: circulation of texts and literary geographies. I am especially interested in the use to which new technologies can be put in answering questions about the impact of the short story on the African American literary tradition. What can a focus on the most frequently anthologized short stories—by Charles Chesnutt, Zora Neale Hurston, Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Toni Cade Bambara, and Alice Walker, referred to here as the Big Seven—tell us?

In my project, I ask one central question: How has the frequent circulation of short stories by the Big Seven in the last forty years collectively made specific locales central to African American literary representations? I answer this question by focusing on representations of place descriptions in selected short stories in order to highlight the importance of settings and geographic spaces. I employ "geocoding" as a method for examining racial-spatial dimensions of African American culture. My term "Literary geo-tagging." therefore, refers to the manner in which a writer constructs his or her environment with geographical markers: specific landmarks,

street names, neighborhoods as well as regional dialects. Secondly, what implications does this geographical diversity have for the speech of those characters associated with the various regions. In this context, literary geo-tagging also refers to the cultural and racial distinctions writers employ as their characters navigate different social terrains. Ultimately, literary geo-tagging demonstrates the ways in which authors participate in location identification processes that position characters and plots in relation to the ideas their stories explore.

The Landscapes of African American Short Stories, 1887 – 2014 is not a thematic analysis of short stories. Instead, I am interested in identifying trends and recurring patterns in the selected anthologized black short fiction. As an interdisciplinary study, this study calls for the use of quantitative data and text-mining software to illuminate the significance of geography and the predictive function of core texts. Quantifying information about the Big Seven reveals those factors that define the specific practices black short story writers most consistently employ. Based on the compiled biographical data for the Big Seven, each writer was between the age of 29 and 35 at the time a short story appeared in a national, widely circulating publication. Except for Baldwin and Bambara, the publication of their short stories launched the careers that led to publication of their first novels. Chesnut's "The Goophered Grapevine" in the 1887 issue of *The Atlantic*, for example, helped him to broker a book contract with Houghton Mifflin. In 1925, Alain Locke selected Hurston's "Spunk" for inclusion in the *New Negro* anthology, raising Hurston's visibility among financial supporters that made possible the publication of her first and best known novel. Wright's publication of *Uncle Tom's Children* in 1938 earned him a Guggenheim Fellowship, essential to the completion of *Native Son*. *Horizon* published Ellison's "Battle Royal" in 1947, the short story that became part of his award-winning novel *Invisible Man*. After editing the anthology, *The Black Woman* in 1970, Toni Cade Bambara's early short

stories caught the attention of Random House editors who published a series of short stories by Bambara between 1972 and 1977. Generally, if a writer did not have a distinguished short story circulating in a publication with broad readership before 1975, he or she is less likely to appear in today's anthologies.

In terms of short stories, editorial decisions by anthologists play a major role in the locations in the South and New York City as the most popular short story settings. Even though authors set their stories in New Orleans, Detroit, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles, the South overall and New York are dominant locations, and, therefore, provide a focus for this study.

Mississippi, Florida, and New York represent the most common place markers for some of our most important African American short story writers. While African American migration remains a significant subject in literary and historical scholarship, geography itself has not been a major feature of literary analysis. Yet attention to geography reveals black writers attempts to address place-specific dimensions of history, race, and culture. Soja's "thirdspace" expands conceptions of geography by capturing "what is actually a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings" that shapes a person or group of people's interactions with a specific region or location (56). His multilayered view of "space" clarifies the manner in which economics and history shape a person's impressions of a particular geographic location and underscores the manner in which people and institutions have always worked together as "active participants in the social construction of our embracing spatialities" (1). To provide a theoretical framework for this study, I also make use of Thadious Davis's term "social geographies." According to Davis, "spatial organization and racialized voices" allow for "a reformulation of marginalization and domination," forming the basis of such a consideration. (Southscapes 3). Attention to social geographies can better clarify a character's impressions of

an environment and cultural perceptions of race. Analyzing the significance of social geographies might be useful for scholars and general readers who want to understand the role editorial decisions and circulation play in shaping the broad contours of African American fiction.¹

I used eighty-six anthologies to create the dataset of short fiction with accompanying publication histories. The dataset confirmed that stories by Charles Chesnutt, Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Toni Cade Bambara and Alice Walker are those that routinely get reprinted. The process by which editors—knowingly or unknowingly—decide what and who to reprint has contributed to the popularity of the general South and New York City as identifiable locations deserving the most literary attention as parameters for the organization of black literature and culture.²

Without specifically focusing on the short story, scholars have addressed several related topics. For instance, Houston Baker, Thadious Davis, and Dana D. Nelson address ‘new southern studies,’ which is crucial to understanding thematic aspects of African American fiction.³ Leon Jackson and Kenneth Kinnamon focus on book history and circulation practices.⁴

¹ Presently, James Nagel serves as a prominent figure examining the history of short stories and their significance to representing the pluralistic nature of American culture. He notes, “The short-story cycle in modern American fiction is patently multicultural, deriving, perhaps, both from the ethnic cross-fertilization within the literary community and from a shared legacy reaching back to ancient oral traditions in virtually every society through the world, uniting disparate peoples in a heritage of narrative tradition” (4-5). An interpretation of Nagel’s quote may also suggest that his comment presupposes a relationship between location and narrative.

² My dissertation utilizes quantitative data, surveying 86 anthologies in order to identify the most frequently anthologized short story writers and the subsequent stories that appear over an 80 year publication span.

³ Dana Nelson, along with Houston Baker co-edited the 2001 *American Literature*’s special issue “Violence, the Body and The South,” and coined the phrase “New Southern Studies” in the introduction of the collection. Baker also served on the University of Georgia Press advisory board for a series of books on “new southern studies” that published over 14 books such as Riché Richardson’s *Black Masculinity and the U.S. South* and Erich Nunn’s *Sounding the Color Line*. Similarly, the University of North Carolina Press released a similar series of books on New Southern Studies which includes Thadious M. Davis’s *Southscapes*.

⁴ Leon Jackson’s essay “The Talking Book and the Talking Book Historian” calls for more integration between book history and the thematic pillars of African American culture and literature to thoroughly account for the commercial relationship between writers, publishers, and book production. Kenneth Kinnamon’s essay “Anthologies

And, since December 2010, blogging activities by Ted Underwood, whose focus is the digital humanities, have emphasized that the broad contours of literary history are “in fact not well understood” (“We Do Not Yet...”). The work of these scholars confirms the need for interdisciplinary methods in analyzing black literature. This thinking reflects the research methods and findings of this project that underscore the significance of interactions between editors, writers, and readers. Text-mining software better accounts for the specific ways in which geography figures into in the broad study of African American short fiction.

A triadic relationship between individual authorial choices, interests of the publishing world, and frequency of circulation makes social location central to the study and organization of African American literature and publishing history. While these pre and post World War II writers have gained primary recognition as novelists, their short fiction in dozens of anthologies reveal the degree to which placement and distribution shape views of African American literature. It is possible to extract from the dataset information the repeated appearance of these specific writers in designated historical periods, overtime, created frames, categories, and presumed order to the study of African American literature through short fiction. The presentation of those frames and categories also results in groupings or cohorts of black writers that an anthology’s table of contents reflects. Editors place writers in broad historical periods such as “The Reconstruction Era,” “The Harlem Renaissance,” “The Black Arts Movement,” and “The Contemporary Era.”

Literary Geo-Tagging and Digital Humanities

The investigation began by building the dataset of most frequently reprinted short stories by black writers with the assistance of Voyant—a text-mining interface that marks specific

of African-American Literature from 1845 to 1994” examines the periodization and organization of anthologies and pinpoints which features facilitate the circulation and broad dimensions of African American literature.

words related to setting descriptions, cultural landmarks, and street names. There are more than 200,000 words in the selected stories, and with Voyant, I can identify specific trends and identify recurring word choices. In particular, I survey black writers' use location-specific words to situate African American characters within cultural and geographic landscapes. In addition, I pay particular attention to the use of African American Vernacular English as way to mark geographic distinctions between characters from southern and northern sections of the United States.

Word density, also known as lexical density, plays a major factor in my short story analysis. Word density measures the ratio of content words (nouns, adjectives, most verbs, and most adverbs) to grammatical words (pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliary verbs, some adverbs, determiners, and interjections). Word density considers the number of unique words used in a given story. More specifically, the more a word appears or is re-used in a single text reduces the overall lexical density. The higher numbers of content words usually indicates that the text is very specialized; on the other hand, the lower number of content words may signal that the story is easier to understand.

The word density is a way to evaluate the technical features of language in a given story, but it does not necessarily assess the sensory or sensori-emotional values, sometimes called judgments of sentiment—or aesthetics—a story: Assessing the densities of a story helps to identify points of convergence and divergence among the stories as well as the language variety. Even though many black writers utilize southern dialects and urban speech patterns in their fiction, text-mining allows me to isolate variations. In other words, word density allows me to make some determination of stylistic differences and thereby expand my discussion of the varieties of African American Vernacular English use by these writers.

While the use of text mining software alleviates the challenge of manually compiling and organizing publication data of select stories in eighty six anthologies in the twentieth and twenty first centuries, it does not eliminate the need for more focused attention to stylistic trends within the anthologies that this method only begins to address. The study focuses on editors' tendencies, by accident or design, to emphasize the importance of the overall South and New York City in short fiction.

The length of the short stories also presents another limitation of text-mining software. The software approximates language usage based on the length of the overall story. Since short stories have different lengths, the individual linguistic density of each writer is limited to the specific story being analyzed. In other words, Wright may have a deeper linguistic sophistication if all of his writings were analyzed, but my conclusions in this study are based on a small body of his work: that his language density ranks under 180 may or may not be an accurate assessment in comparison to his complete canon of short stories. In sum, the stories examined in this study do not provide an expansive view of the vast landscape of African American short fiction. Text-mining only identifies the frequency of a limited group stories by each writer.

What these digital tools can do is to approximate language usage in the sample. Identifying the rhetorical and linguistic trends and shifts offers an important perspective of the overall history, one that contrasts to close readings that can only provide a singular view. The benefit of Voyant becomes apparent when pairing findings with thematic literary and cultural lenses. The user must identify the scholarly and social significance of language patterns and its relation to broader areas of interest in African American literature such as migration, gender, or geography.

Anthologies constitute one of the most important ways to examine the significance of geography in short fiction and, to consider what order editors give to the production of African American literature. Between 1960 and 2013, Chesnutt's "The Wife of His Youth," appeared in 14 anthologies. Hurston's "Sweat" appeared in 14 anthologies during that time, Wright's "Almos' A Man" appeared 8 times, and Ellison's "Battle Royal" appeared 9 times. The 1960s are important to the datasets because of the tremendous increase in the publication of African American anthologies. A second surge in anthology production occurred during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Whatever the case, the involvement of anthology editors in the widespread, long-term circulation of short stories by black writers reified the boundaries of African American literary periods and ensured what writers and literary were deemed the most important.

Black Short Stories and Anthology Circulation

Literary critics generally comment on the thematic content of a specific story and its contributions to the larger field of African American literature; however, the circulation of African American short stories through various print media receives less scholarly attention.⁵ Leon Jackson's, "The Talking Book and the Talking Book Historian: African American Cultures of Print—The State of the Discipline" speaks to these limitations that neglect the publication process that influences the work's reception.⁶ This happens, according to Jackson because "Scholars of slave culture and print culture have rarely shared agendas, nor have, more broadly, African American social, cultural, and literary historians and those within the community of

⁵ Jackson gives various examples ranging from Nat Turner's specialized techniques for making paper; William Wells Brown, William Cooper Nell, and William Stanley Braithwaite's occupations as printers; Frederick Douglass's obsessions with typography, and Charles Chesnutt and Pauline Hopkins work as stenographers; he also mentions Toni Morrison's work as an editor for Random House ("The Talking Book and the Talking Book Historian," 2010, 252-3).

⁶ Bill Mullen discusses "the unique role of black newspapers, magazines, and publishing houses in creating a mass and working-class black readership." The context and mediums through which a text enters the public sphere is significant to who reads it and its reception ("Breaking the Signifying Chain," 2001, 156).

book historians” (252). His examination of African American “cultures of print” clarifies the necessity of considering the works’ contexts. Editors of anthologies participate in constructing impressions of black writing by selecting and promoting writings by authors and thus suggesting what counts as the writers’ most representative works.⁷

Modern-day students are more likely to encounter short stories by Hurston, Wright, Ralph Ellison, Baldwin, Bambara, and Edward P. Jones as opposed to their novels.⁸ The students at the “more than 1,275 colleges and universities worldwide,” that use the *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, for example, are likely to view the Harlem Renaissance as taking place between 1919- 1940. *Black Voices: An Anthology of African American Literature* presents Baldwin primarily as an autobiographical writer even though other anthologies present him as a novelist. *The Heath Anthology of American Literature* indicates that Richard Wright belongs to the “Modern Period (1910- 1945)” while *The Norton Anthology* presents Wright as a part of the “Realism, Naturalism, Modernism, 1940–1960.”

These classification systems into which specific stories fall can influence readers’ perceptions of the genres that writers prefer, notable themes they engage, geographic locations, time periods they use, as well as overall similarities and differences among them. The increased production of African American literature anthologies in particular helped to establish what black writers we know and the identities we give them. Writers collectively plotted black characters in various geographic locations and thus confirmed the presence of African Americans

⁷ James Nagel’s scholarship suggests that there is an inherent need to study the publication histories of short stories, similar to Jackson. Nagel writes, “Because the constituent stories of cycles often appear individually in magazines before being anthologized, they pose special interpretive problems for scholars...For this and other reasons, the analysis of publication history is particularly important in the study of the genre” (*The Contemporary American Short-story Cycle*, 2001, 14).

⁸ Short stories deviate from the novel form by lacking an exposition. Instead, short stories begin in the middle of the story’s action, making the audience dependent on the narrator to better understand the characterization of actors and location (Ingram, Forrest, *Representative Short Story Cycles of the Twentieth Century: Studies in a Literary Genre*, 12).

in distinct locales, but especially in the South and New York City.⁹ The writers also highlighted the extent to which settings shaped experience. From Mr. Ryder in Charles Chesnutt's "The Wife of His Youth" (1899), the unnamed protagonist in Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues" (1957), and Reena in Paule Marhsall's "Reena" (1983) to the unnamed protagonist in Edward P. Jones's "All Aunt Hagar's Children," (2003), and more recent stories, the protagonists all face situations dictated by the social settings of particular locations or movements.¹⁰

John K. Young's *Black Writers, White Publishers* discusses racial perceptions that become manifest through publishers' strategic and deliberate marketing and framing practices. Young sees the interplay of race and publishing history as "mainstream publishers produce images of blackness that perpetuate an implicit black-white divide between authors and readers, with publishers as a gateway in this interaction" (6). Publishers emphasize specific themes through their selections of specific authors as representative of all of black artistic culture. Similarly, recurring short stories in African American and American literature anthologies actually stem from what editors deem as the most crucial aspects of black artistic culture and not necessarily what individual writers see as the most prominent features of their work. The editors of anthologies reinforce the status of canonical works as they organize the thematic and historical content.

A focus on the cultural and social contexts helps to explain the over-representation of critically acclaimed novelists. Editing, Jerome McGann argues, is more an "act of translation

⁹ Several anthologized short stories take place in the South or New York City. The South is often times described generally and physical descriptions of the environment are vague. Stories that take place in urban centers like New York are often identified by street names and recognizable landmarks.

¹⁰ James Nagel argues in *The Contemporary Short-Story Cycle* that "On the social level, there is the effort to create a community of tellers and listeners who share a nucleus of concerns and values inherent in the tales of the culture through short stories" (255). "American" short stories, according to Nagel, "often involve the process of immigration, acculturation, language acquisition, identity formation, and the complexities of formulating a sense of self that incorporates the old world and the new world" (15).

than of reproduction. When we edit, we change, and even good editing...necessarily involves fundamental departures from 'authorial intention,' however that term is interpreted" (53).

Theorists such as McGann, George Bornstein, Gerard Genette, and others have shown that deciphering linguistic and bibliographic codes of literary texts can illuminate the ways in which material production influences a writer's work. These factors better explain the association of particular writers with particular historical periods, which of their stories are the most popular, and when these writers rose to prominence.

Social Geographies and the Importance of the South and New York City

As noted, the South and New York City are the central locales in the landscape of African American short fiction, where the most widely anthologized short stories are set. Southern black short fiction includes multiple areas across the region, providing readers with snapshots of Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Georgia, and unidentified towns in apparently hostile southern environments. On the other hand, in New York City-based stories, Harlem is the most popular setting. Fiction by Walter Mosely, Octavia Butler, Chester Himes, and Percival Everett go beyond these locations with stories set in the West, mid-West, other East Coast cities, as well as imaginary geographies. While their work is anthologized, their short fiction appears less frequently than the Big Seven.

Common locations in their fictive representations reveal the shape geography gives to each protagonist's experiences and to the overall plot of a story. For instance, both Hurston's and Wright's stories take place in the South; but, Hurston's focus on folk culture in Florida and the interactions between black characters exclusively contrasts sharply with Wright's emphasis upon black-and-white interactions in rural Mississippi to show the urgency and threat of white violence. For Baldwin, Rudolf Fisher, and Bambara, on the other hand, New York City as the

setting of choice shows protagonists keenly aware of their surroundings, especially the influence of race on location. Attention to geography in short stories also reveals place-specific dimensions of history, race, and culture.

Hurston's two most frequently anthologized stories "Spunk" (1925) and "Sweat" (1926) showcase some of her key settings, including a small town in Florida, conversations on the front porch, and intra-racial conflicts. The black characters face conflicts with one another ranging from adulterous affairs and murder to abusive relationships. These all-black towns operate by moral and religious codes that exist outside of the purview of mainstream white culture. Hurston's use of the "front porch" became a hallmark of her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and has significance for writers such as Ralph Ellison, Alice Walker, and Ernest Gaines, whose works take place in the South.¹¹

"Big Boy Leaves Home" (1936), one of Richard Wright's most frequently anthologized short stories, portrays the rural South as a racially volatile place for African Americans. To avoid the revenge from whites that follows the incident, Big Boy, with the support and encouragement of the community, must leave his southern home on a train bound for Chicago. Wright emphasizes immediate action in order to preserve the life of Big Boy and to underscore the rapid speed of violence and injustice when black-white conflicts occur in the South. Overall, Wright's short fiction presents interracial conflicts and depicts the challenges that shape and restrict the lives of southern black people.¹² The recurring appearances of "Big Boy Leaves

¹¹ Trudier Harris's *The Power of the Porch: The Storyteller's Craft in Zora Neale Hurston, Gloria Naylor, and Randall Kenan* explores the significance of Southern literature and its "told," rather than "written," qualities. Harris's work focuses on southern black writers who utilize "The power of the porch" in their writings.

¹² Robin Lucy characterizes Wright's short fiction as being "being defined by geographical location, class, and gender—as southern and rural, poor, and most often male—and that this construct underwrote a discourse of black difference and, therefore, of racial identity" ("Flying Home," 2007, 258).

Home” in anthologies confirmed the South as a place of tense and violent interracial conflicts for generations of readers.

The short fiction of Baldwin, Bambara, as well as Henry Dumas, and Ann Petry depicts black life in cities. In Dumas’s “Will the Circle Be Unbroken” (1966) and Bambara’s “The Lesson” (1972) New York City symbolizes black majority culture in urban environments. Stories set in popular Northeastern and Mid-western urban settings became prominent geographic settings for black fiction during the Civil Rights and Black Arts Movement eras. The use of predominately black neighborhoods and cultural landmarks in short stories alerts readers to the differences in geography in a given metropolis. Short stories during this period mirror the national climate during the Civil Rights and Black power movements. My project takes into account those cityscapes as they become prominent geographic locations through anthology classifications.

Chapter Overview

Chapter one of my dissertation, “The Transmission of African American Short Stories, 1887- 2014,” examines the circulation of short stories in magazines and anthologies from the initial appearance of Chesnut’s first short story “The Goophered Grapevine” in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1887 through the publication of stories in the newest edition of *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (2014). The chapter provides one of the first looks at the contribution of anthologies to book history that covers a one hundred fifteen-year period.

Chapter two, “The South as Place in African American Literature: A Digital Excavation,” considers the relationship between production and circulation and the persistence of regionalism as a literary and field-shaping phenomenon. In this chapter, “new southern studies” becomes a framework for discussing similarities and differences among stories that bear the designation

“southern.” Text-mining software helps quantify these differences across historical periods, and in relationship to gender and narrative strategies as each writer seeks to render the South in distinctive ways.

Chapter three, “New York State of Mind: Text-Mining Urban Environments,” examines prevailing assumptions about African American literature, through the works Rudolph Fisher, James Baldwin, Toni Cade Bambara, and Henry Dumas. Fisher, Baldwin, Bambara, and Dumas—as my study will demonstrate—serve as vital connectors to a wide range of writers using New York City as a primary setting to focus on images of struggling black men, the impact of the urban environment, the importance of music, and the lives of black girls. Text-mining software permits me to quantify and specify language use for giving specific impressions about New York City and its importance to black literary history.

The final chapter, “Edward P. Jones and Literary Geo-tagging,” documents Jones’s consistent focus on Washington D.C. as a setting in his stories. The chapter sheds new light on the development of short fiction in the contemporary era as I use literary geo-tagging to map Jones’s extensive reliance upon specific streets, landmarks, and neighborhoods.

Although many writers concentrate on general locales, Edward P. Jones provides elaborate and detailed treatments of African American neighborhoods in Washington, D.C. Despite the long history and dense population of African Americans living in or near the nation’s capital, Washington, D.C., specifically black D.C., figures less prominently in literary studies. Jones’s short fiction offers readers a distinct sense of D.C.’s cultural geography as his characters move through a spatially marked community. A close look at Jones’s stories shows an author who creates a canvas for organizing his narratives within a high visual black urban landscape. Jones departs from other canonical authors in his use of a central urban geographic location.

Chapter 1: The Transmission of African American Short Stories, 1887- 2014

Introduction

When Zora Neale Hurston published “Spunk” in 1925, the short story won second place in the *Opportunity* literary contest. The same year, editor Alain Locke published Hurston’s short story “Spunk” in the landmark African American literary anthology *The New Negro*.¹³ Decades later, “Spunk” began to appear in anthologies on a regular basis, even though the focus on Hurston’s work in the scholarly and popular discourse, which includes a television movie produced by Oprah Winfrey and starring Halle Berry, indicates that Hurston is best known for her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), not her short fiction. In college literature courses that utilize anthologies, however, students are more likely to encounter Hurston’s short stories as opposed to her novel. Accordingly, the involvement of anthology editors in the widespread, long-term circulation of short stories by black writers deserves more serious attention—especially if we are to understand student encounters with African American literature.

Charles Chesnutt, Zora Neale Hurston, and Richard Wright became the three most widely reprinted black short story writers whose fiction first appeared prior to World War II. The three writers’ early career advantages assist in explaining why editors became interested in their works. Interactions with influential publishers and literary agents and inclusion in national periodicals greatly raised their visibility. During a pronounced increase of African American anthologies in the 1970s, editors could easily identify short fiction by Chesnutt, Hurston, and Wright for inclusion. The circulation of their short fiction has shaped their legacies and ideas

¹³ In the *Concise Oxford Companion to African American Literature*, Richard Long notes the publication history of Hurston’s “Spunk” (209-212).

about African American folk culture, African American Vernacular English, and characterizations of southern, rural black people.¹⁴

James Baldwin, Toni Cade Bambara, and Alice Walker, on the other hand, became the most widely anthologized short story writers after 1950. This group of writers also benefitted from early career advantages. Their positioning in New York City was integral to their professional opportunities and success. In addition, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s enhanced Baldwin's visibility, and Black Feminist movements of the 1970s expanded the reception and circulation of works by Bambara and Walker. The increased production of anthologies and heightened interest in black literature notably facilitated the rise of this new generation of black short story writers and in the case of Baldwin and Bambara, contributed to a growing body of black fiction set in New York City.

As I demonstrate in the final section of this chapter, the presentation of distinct literary periods by anthologists gives a sense of historical frames and presumed order to the production and presentation of African American literature. The presentation of those categories also results in groupings or cohorts of black writers. Hurston, Langston Hughes, Rudolph Fisher, and Nella Larsen, for example, are often presented as a cohort of Harlem Renaissance writers. Shifts in periodizing have meant shifts in perceptions of cohorts as well. The defining roles of literary periods and supposed cohorts indicate the necessity of studying how anthologies shape perceptions of black writers and African American literature. Moreover, the recurring stories also indicate the significance of the South and New York City for anthology editors.

¹⁴ Short stories by Chesnut, Hurston, and Wright have all been included in at least 30 anthologies over the past 50 years. See table 1.1

Table 1.1—The Circulation of African American Short Stories

•Short stories by Chesnutt, Hurston, Wright, Baldwin, Bambara, and Walker have all been included in at least 30 anthologies over the past 50 years.

•Short stories by Chesnutt, Hurston, Wright, Baldwin, Bambara, and Walker have been included in at least 6 anthologies during the 1970s alone.

•Short stories by Chesnutt, Hurston, Wright, Baldwin, Bambara, and Walker have been included in at least 9 anthologies during the 1990s alone.

•Short stories by Chesnutt, Hurston, Wright, Baldwin, Bambara, and Walker have been included in at least 7 anthologies during the 2000 alone.

❖ Note: The 1970s, 1990s, and the first decade of the 21st century were important moments for the circulation of short stories.

Section 1: Short Story Biographies of Charles Chesnutt, Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Wright

The August 1887 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* included Charles Chesnutt’s “The Goophered Grapevine,” marking the first time the magazine included a short story by an African American. Chesnutt was not the only black writer publishing short stories; various publications by Frances Harper and Mary Weston Fordham, Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois proceeded Chesnutt’s early short stories.¹⁵ Nonetheless, over the last 50 years, whenever readers

¹⁵ France Harper’s “Two Offers,” considered the first published short story by an African American, appeared in the *Anglo African Magazine* in 1859. Frederick Douglass’s novella, *The Heroic Slave*, was published in 1852 by John P. Jewett and Company and was Douglass’ first and only published work of fiction. Mary Weston Fordham published

picked up a general literature anthology, they would likely encounter one of Chesnut's short stories as opposed to stories by other writers of his generation. Chesnut benefited from high levels of advocacy and institutional support that had eluded the vast majority of writers. Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Wright were the only other black writers who began publishing prior to World War II whose *short stories* circulated in anthologies as regularly as Chesnut's works. Not surprisingly, Hurston and Wright were also the recipients of high levels of sponsorship and institutional support. If we are to fully understand how *short stories* by Chesnut, Hurston, and Wright became so integral to literature anthologies over a long period of time, it is essential that we examine how distinct advantages early on in their careers, appearances and reviews in prominent publications, and the representative nature of short fiction influenced routine editorial decisions about authors and stories.

Over time, the repeated appearances of Chesnut, Hurston, and Wright in anthologies and the high volume of scholarly writing on their works raised their visibility and made them anchoring figures in the field of African American literature. In addition, thematic issues related to folk culture, migration patterns of the region's residents, and rhetorical language features contributed to more focused studies on African American southern fiction and the significance of the social aspects of the black South. The publication prominence of Chesnut, Hurston, and Wright is the result of multiple advantages – like close relationships with influential benefactors and publishers and national recognition through well-known periodicals – that have accrued over long periods of time. Anthology editors tend to use prior collections as guides for their own collections, and they pay attention to scholarly discourses regarding black writing in order to

a book of poetry, *Magnolia Leaves*, on religion and spirituality in 1897 with an introduction by Booker T. Washington. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois gained a considerable amount commercial success beginning around the turn of the 20th century from writing essays and books on race and racism in America.

identify key writers and short stories to include.¹⁶ Literary scholars and social historians collectively helped establish Chesnutt, Hurston, and Wright as integral figures in anthologies containing black short fiction.¹⁷ Moreover, as a result of inclusion in anthologies, short stories by Chesnutt, Hurston, and Wright circulate more frequently than their novels in African American and American literature survey courses and made issues related to social geographies more central to the study of black fiction. Chesnutt's short stories, for instance, have appeared in more than 20 anthologies over the last 80 years.¹⁸ Editors of anthologies facilitated the continual circulation of Chesnutt, Hurston, and Wright above all other black writers who began publishing short fiction before 1940.¹⁹

In retrospect, *The Negro Caravan: Writings by American Negroes* (1941) edited by Sterling Brown, Arthur P. Davis, and Ulysses Lee was an important moment in the presentation of an African American literary tradition. Kenneth Kinnamon describes the value of the *Negro Caravan* by noting that, "No single work has had greater influence in establishing the canon of African American literature" (22). The "influence in establishing the canon" meant the *Negro Caravan* became a point of reference for anthology editors during the 1960s and 1970s. Editors likely used the *Negro Caravan* as a resource when identifying notable writers since the publication is noted for being most distinct for its "superior literary intelligence and a closer knowledge of the field" (Kinnamon 22). With relatively few anthologies of black writing

¹⁶ *The New Negro* (1925) edited by Alain Locke and *The Negro Caravan* (1941) edited by Sterling Brown serve as foundational collections for later anthologies. Although the stories by select writers may change, the core group of writers that anchor texts have virtually remained the same. See Appendix II.

¹⁷ The 1970s, 1990s, and the first decade of the 21st century were important moments for the circulation of short stories. These two decades helped to solidify the presence of Chesnutt's, Hurston's, and Wright's short fiction in anthologies. See Figure 1.2

¹⁸ See Figure 1.2

¹⁹ Even though other writers such as W.E.B. DuBois and Langston Hughes wrote short stories during their literary careers, rarely will anthologists present short fiction by these men and other writers who began publishing before 1940. Chesnutt, Rudolph Fisher, Hurston, and Wright represent a core group of writers who editors routinely present as short story writers in collections.

published prior to 1940, *The Negro Caravan* preserved a select group of writers, including Phillis Wheatley, Claude McKay, Paul Laurence Dunbar, James Weldon Johnson, Jean Toomer, and Anne Spencer, whose works had appeared in notable periodicals and magazines between the late 1890s and late 1930s. These writers' use of African American Vernacular English and folk culture—or a combination of rhetorical features associated with the South—also solidified ideas about geography as having a bearing on the critical interpretation of black fiction. By presenting short fiction by Chesnutt, Hurston, and Wright in *The Negro Caravan*, the editors were early contributors to a now longstanding practice of including those writers' stories in anthologies. Chesnutt, Hurston, and Wright each have appeared in more than 20 anthologies over the last several decades. The appearances of those three writers in so many of the same anthologies can be traced back to *The Negro Caravan*.

Chesnutt's initial aspirations in the field of law indirectly led to his early successes as a short story writer. After passing the Ohio Legal Bar Exam, Chesnutt opened a profitable court stenography business in Cleveland, Ohio, which in turn facilitated his meeting judge Albion W. Tourgee, publisher Walter Hines Page, and writer George Washington Cable. These men were instrumental to Chesnutt, offering advice on how he might best cultivate his literary talents and present black culture to majority white readers.²⁰ Page, who Chesnutt corresponded with often, later became an associate editor at Houghton Mifflin.²¹ Page lobbied to get Chesnutt's work published in major national journals and by publisher Houghton, Mifflin and Company.

²⁰ Biographer Frances Kelley describes how Chesnutt's interactions with an influential group of men as a stenographer facilitated his interactions with publishers which helped him to secure later publishing contracts (*An American Crusade: The Life of Charles Waddell Chesnutt*, 1978).

²¹ William Andrews notes that Walter Hines Page of Houghton Mifflin encouraged Chesnutt to establish a national reputation before publishing a novel. Page would later serve as an advocate for Chesnutt's work and facilitated the publication of his novels (Andrews, William. *The Literary Career of Charles W. Chesnutt*, 1980).

Chesnutt's early short stories appeared in the periodicals *The Cleveland Voice*, *Family Fiction: the Great International Weekly Story Paper*, *Puck*, *Tid-Bits*, the *New Haven Registers*, and *Two Tales*, all of which had relatively small readerships. Biographer Frances Keller outlines Chesnutt's early publishing career explaining that the author published his first short story in 1885, five additional stories in 1886, thirteen in 1887, and six in 1888 (117-8). While gaining modest attention in these regional publications, Chesnutt understood, that "if a writer is unknown, he cannot command pay, and if he cannot command pay, he cannot become known" (117). Chesnutt began to actively seek publishing venues that had a distinguished national reputation in hopes of securing more funding to become a full-time writer.

In 1887, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, accepted Chesnutt's short story "The Goophered Grapevine" for publication. After receiving positive reviews from readers and editors alike, the following April, Aldrich accepted Chesnutt's second story "Po'Sandy."²² As Keller noted, "At last the door was open; the younger writer could get consideration from an important publisher" (118). Chesnutt's appearances in *The Atlantic Monthly* raised his visibility. In addition, Chesnutt's presentation of the thematic trope of conjure tales and black southern dialect in his stories helped him gain popularity among majority white reading audiences during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century similar to the commercially successful poet Paul Laurence Dunbar and author of the *Uncle Remus* series Joel Chandler Harris.²³ Thus, decades later, when editors sought turn of the 20th century short fiction to include in anthologies, they often selected works by Chesnutt, whose successful career had

²² Frances Keller notes that Chesnutt's work was so well-received that editors at *The Atlantic Monthly* contacted him to submit another short story to publish as a follow-up to "The Goophered Grapevine" (*An American Crusade: The Life of Charles Waddell Chesnutt*, 1978).

²³ In 1896, William Deans Howells, of the *Atlantic Monthly*, praised Paul Laurence Dunbar's second book of poetry, *Majors and Minors* (1896). Howells literary review helped Dunbar gain considerable attention particularly

made him noteworthy. Editors included Chesnutt's "The Goophered Grapevine" in over 13 anthologies since its initial publication in 1887.²⁴

Similar to Chesnutt, Hurston secured considerable early assistance from advocates and publishers, whose support gave her the time and resources to produce artistic compositions and to earn prestigious awards. Hurston's interactions with Howard University professors Alain Locke and Georgia Douglass Johnson expanded her social and professional connections and proved beneficial to her later career as a writer and anthropologist.²⁵ Biographer Robert Hemenway explains, "Even though she had published very little, it was in the right place. At Howard she had seen her fiction in the student magazine; now, her work appeared in one of the two major journals addressed to the black community" (24). December 1924, marked a significant moment in Hurston's professional career as Charles Johnson, editor of *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* published her short story "Drenched in Light." Johnson would later take Hurston under his wing as a protégé and introduce her to elite circles in New York City during the Harlem Renaissance, and those elite circles in turn provided opportunities for Hurston to gain funding to conduct research across the South and Caribbean, to be published in reputable periodicals, and to be included in anthologies.

for his use of black vernacular English. Even though Dunbar wrote in Standard English Dialect as well, his poems written in Black English Dialect helped catapult him to national attention.

²⁴ See table 1.2

²⁵ Between 1920 and 1924, through Locke and G. Johnson, Hurston would meet Bruce Nugent, Jean Toomer, W.E.B. DuBois, Maria Bonner, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Jessie Fauset, and Angelina Grimke (Hemenway, Robert. *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography*, 1980) .

Figure 1.2 Frequently Anthologized Short Stories by Charles Chesnutt

“The Wife of His Youth”

1935: *Readings from Negro Authors*.
1950: *American Literature by Negro Authors*.
1970: *On Being Black: Writings by Afro-Americans from Frederick Douglass to the Present*
1971: *Cavalcade: Negro American writing from 1760 to the Present*
1971: *Blackamerican Literature, 1760-Present*.
1971: *Gift of the Spirit: Readings in Black Literature for Teachers*.
1972: *Black Writers of America : a Comprehensive Anthology*
1993: *African American Literature: An Anthology of Nonfiction, Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*
1995: *Brotherman : the Odyssey of Black Men in America*
1996: *Norton Anthology of African American Literature—1st Edition*
2003: *Norton Anthology of African American Literature- 2nd Edition*
2006: *The Heath Anthology of American Literature, Fifth Edition*
2013: *The Heath Anthology of American Literature, 7th Edition*
2014: *Norton Anthology of African American Literature-3rd Edition*

“The Goophered Grapevine”

1968: *Dark Symphony*
1970: *Black Identity: A Thematic Reader*.
1971: *Cavalcade : Negro American writing from 1760 to the Present*
1972: *Black Writers of America : a Comprehensive Anthology*
1992: *Calling the Wind: Twentieth Century African-American Short Stories*
1996: *Norton Anthology of African American Literature—1st Edition*
2000: *Dark Matter: a Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora*
2000: *The Prentice Hall anthology of African American literature*
2003: *Norton Anthology of African American Literature- 2nd Edition*
2006: *The Bedford Anthology of American Literature, Volume Two: 1865 to Present*
2006: *The Heath Anthology of American Literature, Fifth Edition*
2013: *The Heath Anthology of American Literature, 7th Edition*
2014: *Norton Anthology of African American Literature-3rd Edition*

“The Passing of Grandison”

1996: *Norton Anthology of African American Literature—1st Edition*
2003: *Norton Anthology of African American Literature- 2nd Edition*
2006: *The Bedford Anthology of American Literature, Volume Two: 1865 to Present*
2006: *The Heath Anthology of American Literature, Fifth Edition*
2013: *The Heath Anthology of American Literature, 7th Edition*

“Po’ Sandy”

1970: *A Native Son Reader*
1993: *Crossing the Danger Water : Three Hundred years of African-American Writing*
2000: *The Prentice Hall anthology of African American literature*

Hurston's close association with Johnson helped her gain access to distinguished editors, notable publishers, influential writers, and financial donors. After Johnson's encouragement that she submit to the *Opportunity* literature contest, Hurston attended the Banquet on May 1, 1925, where she won second place for her short story "Black Death." More important than her winning the award, the after-party that she attended that night proved important; she met author and Barnard College founding trustee Annie Nathan Meyer, novelist Fannie Hurst, and author and 'man-about-town' Carl Van Vechten." Deborah Plant notes "Charles Johnson's award ceremonies were designed to bring about such happy consequences" (Plant 34). In short, Johnson facilitated Hurston's interactions with financially prosperous and influential aristocrats, publishers, and donors, who would play vital roles in getting Hurston published in significant venues. These invitations to parties and other social functions typically go undocumented in anthology biographical sketches. However, Hurston's social interactions guaranteed her a place in the emerging literary community in Harlem during the 1920s.

The circulation of Hurston's stories about black people in the rural South coincided with prominent conversations and debates concerning African American identity and folk traditions during the 1920s.²⁶ Hurston's successes as a published author, as well as her expressive personality, raised her chances of attracting financial donors. In 1927, while taking classes at Columbia, Hurston met Charlotte Osgood Mason, who was also offering financial support for Alain Locke and Langston Hughes. Mason sponsored Hurston from 1927 until 1931, effectively serving as Hurston's "patron" and "employer" (Kaplan 775). Mason's financial support enabled

²⁶In the preface to *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922), James Weldon Johnson credits spirituals and folklore as two significant creations by African Americans that influence artistic culture in America. Similarly, in the *New Negro: An Interpretation* (1925), Alain Locke attest to the value African American folk traditions and its enhancement of American literature. Both Johnson and Locke believed that the language practices and social beliefs embedded in the folk traditions actually combated negative stereotypes of black people by revealing a range of social concerns and intellectual depth when used in literature.

Hurston to take trips throughout the South as she conducted anthropological research and collected folktales which would later be published as *Mules and Men* (1935) and *Every Tongue Got to Confess: Negro Folk-tales from the Gulf States* (2001). Hurston would later receive the prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship in 1937 to conduct research in Haiti. These advantages facilitated the progress and success of Hurston as a writer.

In March 1975, Alice Walker published “In Search of Zora Neale Hurston” in *Ms. Magazine*, thus promoting Hurston and her career at a time when general readers and scholars were growing more attentive to women writers.²⁷ Robert Hemenway’s *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography* (1977), which became a *New York Times* “Best Books” pick in 1978, contributed to the growing interest in Hurston. The following year, Harper and Row reissued *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, which sold nearly 75,000 copies in less than a month.²⁸ The renewed attention that Hurston received during the 1970s for her novel encouraged editors to include Hurston’s short fiction in anthologies and collected works.²⁹ Moreover, the themes of Hurston’s short stories and focus on black women female protagonists coincided with works by Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Toni Cade Bambara, and Walker, all of who were growing in commercial success during the 1980s and onward. As an indication of the growing linkages between Hurston, Bambara, and Walker, stories by the three black women writers appeared in over five anthologies over the last decade.

²⁷ The newfound interest in fiction by black women prompted publishing houses to reprint texts by black women during the Harlem Renaissance. In 1970, Harper & Row reprinted *Mules and Men* and in 1971, Lippincott came out with second editions of *Dust Tracks on a Road* and *Jonah’s Gourd Vine*. Walker’s work helped to culminate the significance of Hurston and positioned her as a major figure for black feminists during the 1970s.

²⁸ Hazel Carby notes in “The Politics of Fiction, Anthropology, and the Folk: Zora Neale Hurston” how Harper & Row capitalized on the renewed interest in Hurston by reissuing her now bestseller, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (*Bloom’s Interpretations - Zora Neale Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God*, 24).

²⁹ See Figure 1.3

Figure 1.3 Frequently Anthologized Short Stories by Zora Neale Hurston

“Spunk”

1925: *The New Negro*
1970: *From the Roots: Short Stories by Black Americans*
1996: *Harlem’s Glory : Black Women Writing : 1900-1950*
2001: *Double-take : a revisionist Harlem Renaissance anthology*
2006: *The Bedford Anthology of American Literature, Volume Two: 1865 to Present*

“The Gilded Six-Bits”

1966: *American Negro Stories*
1967: *The Best Short Stories by Black Writers: the Classic Anthology from 1899-1967*
1971: *Cavalcade : Negro American writing from 1760 to the Present*
1972: *Black Writers of America : a Comprehensive Anthology*
1992: *Calling the Wind: Twentieth Century African-American Short Stories*
1995: *Revolutionary Tales: African American Women’s Short Stories, From the First Story to the Present*
1996: *Norton Anthology of African American Literature—1st Edition*
2003: *Norton Anthology of African American Literature- 2nd Edition*
2006: *The Heath Anthology of American Literature, Fifth Edition*
2011: *The story and its writer : an introduction to short fiction*
2013: *The Heath Anthology of American Literature, 7th Edition*

“Sweat”

1969: *Black American Literature: Fiction*
1976: *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance*
1992: *The Oxford Book of American Short Stories*
1993: *African American Literature: An Anthology of Nonfiction, Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*
1993: *Crossing the Danger Water : Three Hundred years of African-American Writing*
1993: *African American literature : an Anthology of Nonfiction, Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*
1996: *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance*
1996: *Norton Anthology of African American Literature—1st Edition*
2001: *Double-take : a revisionist Harlem Renaissance anthology*
2003: *Norton Anthology of African American Literature- 2nd Edition*
2005: *The art of the short story*
2006: *The Heath Anthology of American Literature, Fifth Edition*
2011: *The story and its writer : an introduction to short fiction*
2013: *The Heath Anthology of American Literature, 7th Edition*

While anthologists selected Hurston’s “Sweat” and “The Gilded Six-Bits,” which were published prior to her most well-known novel, those same anthologists routinely chose Wright’s “Almos’ a Man” and “Bright and Morning Star,” which were published in the 1940 reissue of *Uncle Tom’s Children* following the positive reception of *Native Son*. Dozens of positive reviews in prominent venues accompanied Wright’s 1940 debut novel thus, elevating his overall

significance to American literary culture.³⁰ During the 1970s, editors routinely included short stories published after the release of *Native Son*, prompting scholars such as James R. Giles, Neil Graves, and Jay Delmar to draw parallels between Wright's frequently anthologized short stories and his famed novel.³¹ Wright's collection of short stories, *Eight Men* (1961), released shortly after his death in 1960, chronicled the experiences of eight different black men grappling with institutional racism, extreme poverty, and white violence in Southern and Northern environments, similar to the theme of *Native Son*. Stories like "Big Boy Leaves Home" and "Bright and Morning Star" depicted the horrors associated with violent anti-black racism in the South. Even though his first collection of short stories proved crucial to starting his literary career, anthology editors apparently favored those works published after 1940. For example, editors included Wright's "Long Black Song" (1938) in only four anthologies, while selecting "Almos' A Man" (1961) in eight.

Similar to Chesnutt and Hurston publishing in prominent publications, Wright's appearance in *The New Masses*, *Daily Worker*, and *Left Front* periodicals and *New Caravan* as well as his literary Communist Party connections and work with the WPA Writers' Project guidebook to the city, *New York Panorama* (1938) assisted in elevating his national visibility. Wright's Communist Party ties proved beneficial for him when one of his acquaintances in New York, Mary Folsom, introduced him to her employer, Paul Reynolds, Jr., the founder of the successful Paul Reynolds Literary Agency, which represented clients such as Paul Laurence

³⁰ Kenneth Kinnamon's *A Richard Wright Bibliography: Fifty Years of Criticism and Commentary, 1933-1982* identifies particular reviews that appeared over the span of his writing career. The particular reviews collected by Kinnamon appeared in newspapers, magazines, and scholarly journals.

³¹ During the 1970s, James R. Giles's "Richard Wright's Successful Failure: A New Look at *Uncle Tom's Children*" (1973), Jay Delmar's "Tragic Patterns in Richard Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children*" (1976), and Neil Graves's "Richard Wright's Unheard Melodies: The Songs of *Uncle Tom's Children*" (1979) published articles that draw parallels between Wright's first collection of short stories and *Native Son*. Wright's consistent use of a black male protagonist confronting structural racism is the driving thematic focus behind both his short stories and novel.

Dunbar, F. Scott, Fitzgerald, George Bernard Shaw, and Willa Cather (Wallach 70). In 1938, Wright released *Uncle Tom's Children* to generally favorable reviews. Eleanor Roosevelt, writing a review in the *New York World Telegram*, would bring *Uncle Tom's Children* "to the attention of many Americans who might not otherwise keep abreast of the latest literary news" (Wallach 69). With the help of Reynolds's literary agency and the positive reviews that his collection of short stories received, Wright began to gain prestige.

Reynolds capitalized on the national media attention of *Uncle Tom's Children* and submitted a draft of *Native Son* to Ed Aswell, an editor at Harper and Brothers in October 1938. Wright's gritty short story collection also earned him a coveted Guggenheim Fellowship in 1939, allowing him to resign from the Federal Writer's Project as "He would manage the remarkable feat of supporting himself and later his family from the proceeds of his writing" (Wallach 76). Before the release of *Native Son*, Aswell informed Wright that the Book-of-the-Month Club was considering making the novel one of its selections. In 1940, the Club included 500,000 members, and nearly half of that membership purchased monthly selections. The Book-of-the-Month Club ensured that *Native Son* would exceed sales of 200,000 copies within the first three weeks of publication (Wallach 77). Reynolds capitalized on Wright's initial exposure by getting his work published in prominent literary venues as Aswell helped to expand Wright's reading audiences.

The success of *Native Son* gave Wright widespread visibility over the next two decades of his life, and undoubtedly contributed to his receiving the Spingarn Medal in 1941 as well as transforming *Native Son* into a feature film and Broadway play. Wright benefitted commercially because of his ability to cover a broad region and offer a perspective on racists interactions in the deep South as well as similar manifestations "up South" in his novel *Native Son* set in Chicago

and short story “The Man Who Lived Underground” set in New York. The reception of his debut novel immediately secured Wright’s literary significance and prompted editors to begin to include new and previous works by him in anthologies. In 1940, Wright’s publisher Harper and Brothers reissued his short story collection *Uncle Tom’s Children* with a new stories “Bright and Morning Star” as well as Wright’s essay “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow” as the book’s introduction. Without his first collection of short stories and an experienced literary agent, Wright may not have had enough cultural capital to sustain himself as a novelist and acquire acclaim as the author of *Native Son* and later *Black Boy* (1945). Wright’s international success and prominence made him a favored selection of 1970s anthologists. Indeed, editors selected his stories for inclusion in more than 22 anthologies published since 1966.

The 1960s and 1970s proved to be a crucial decade for shaping impressions of African American short fiction and making Chesnutt, Hurston, and Wright mainstays in anthologies. Between 1960–1976, at least 24 anthologies were published that featured short fiction by black writers. Notably, Hurston’s and Wright’s short fiction was always set in Southern environments and characterized by African American Vernacular English and cultural idioms. Similarly, Chesnutt’s stories may not have always been set in the South, but featured southern characters who often made migrations north. The frequency of these publications helped to solidify the South as a prominent geographic setting for black short fiction and research in cultural studies. Interactions with influential publishers and sponsors early on in their careers explains how the writers became highly accomplished. Their accomplishments, in turn, heightened the chances that in the 1960s and 1970s anthologies would include short fiction by those three writers. By continually selecting stories by Chesnutt, Hurston, and Wright, those editors of the 1960s and

1970s solidified their prominence in literature anthologies and thereby confirmed their significance to African American and American fiction.

Section 2: Short Story Biographies of James Baldwin, Toni Cade Bambara, and Alice Walker

James Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues" first appeared in *Partisan Review* in 1957. The following year, his story was included in the *Best American Short Stories of 1958*.³² Baldwin's inclusion in the collection represents the beginning of a long tradition of including this particular short story in anthologies and collected works. For instance, since 1963, Baldwin's short stories have appeared in more than 15 anthologies, and "Sonny's Blues" has been included in over 10 anthologies since 1958 alone. Since its initial appearance, the story has come to define much of Baldwin's reputation across numerous anthologies. Beginning around the mid-1970s, Baldwin's story as well as stories by Toni Cade Bambara and Alice Walker began to appear more frequently in anthologies as the three writers became increasingly more well-known. The commercial success of anthologies during the 1970s cemented Baldwin's, Bambara's, and Walker's literary significance by routinely reprinting their short fiction and thereby creating a new periodization for contemporary writers.

Baldwin's interactions with prominent writers and editors at major publishing houses provided him with access to a world of financial donors and sponsors to help facilitate his career. After meeting Richard Wright in 1945 and having him read a portion of what Baldwin thought would be his first novel, *In My Father's House*, Wright introduced him to his publisher Ed

³²Out of all the most frequently reprinted short stories in this study, Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues" is the only one to have been included in the *Best American Short Stories* that also serves as the writer's most famous piece of short fiction that circulates.

Aswell at Harper and Brothers.³³ Wright and Aswell advocated on Baldwin's behalf, and in November 1945, Baldwin received a Eugene F. Saxton fellowship of \$500. Editors at Harper Brothers would later decline to publish the novel (Leeming 49-50). Even still, the award facilitated Baldwin's interactions with influential writers and editors, such as Sol Levitas of *The New Leader*, Randall Jarrell of *The Nation*, Elliot Cohen and Robert Warshow of *Commentary*, and Phillip Rahv of *Partisan Review*. David Leeming explains that Levitas even suggested Baldwin write "a book review per week as a useful discipline, and in fact, Baldwin wrote many reviews for *The New Leader*" (50). These early interactions ensured that Baldwin's reviews and essays received a national audience; moreover, he was building vital experience and confidence as a professional writer.

In 1952, Baldwin began negotiations with editors at Knopf publishing for changes to the draft of his novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain*.³⁴ William Cole, the publicity director at Knopf, was particularly supportive and helped negotiate a \$250 advance on Baldwin's behalf and another \$750 when the manuscript was fully edited. (Leeming 81). The success of *Go Tell It on the Mountain* markedly raised Baldwin's visibility and led magazines such as *Harper's Magazine*, *Partisan Review*, and *The New Leader* to seek him out to offer him additional publishing opportunities.³⁵ Over the next decade, Baldwin's literary significance rose as he published additional novels and essays and became an active participant in Civil Rights Movement organizations such as The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). As Baldwin's reputation grew as a writer and social

³³ Baldwin would later revise *In My Father's House* into a three act play titled *The Amen Corner* which was published in 1954.

³⁴ In *James Baldwin: A Biography*, David Lemming notes, in detail, the publication process of Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (Leeming, 80).

³⁵ In 1955, Beacon Press reissued the essays Baldwin wrote for these publications in the collection *Notes of a Native Son*.

analyst on race relations in America, Beacon Press would publish his collection of essays, *Notes of A Native Son* in 1955 further raising his national visibility as a writer.

In 1965, Baldwin released *Going to Meet the Man*, an 8-piece short story collection, which included the reprint of “Sonny’s Blues.” During the mid-1960s to early 1970s, anthologies started to frequently include Baldwin.³⁶ In the mid-1960s, Baldwin’s stories “Going to Meet the Man,” “The Outing,” and “This Morning, This Evening, So Soon” were included in anthologies. Over time, however, “Sonny’s Blues,” along with select essays by Baldwin, became the preferred choice of editors. As James Nagel noted in Baldwin’s biographical sketch of *The Anthology of the American Short Story* (2008), “Sonny’s Blues” is Baldwin’s “most famous” short story that addresses a theme of “the complexity of racial identity and the ways in which it impinges upon artistic expression” (747). Apparently, at least 11 other editors agreed. Baldwin’s narrative, about the strained relationship and reconciliation of two brothers set in New York City with the growing jazz scene as a backdrop, is one of the most anthologized short stories by a black writer who first came to prominence after 1950.

³⁶ Figure 1.4

Figure 1.4 Frequently Anthologized Short Stories by James Baldwin	
	“The Morning, this Evening, so Soon.”
1967:	<i>The Best Short Stories by Black Writers: the Classic Anthology from 1899-1967</i>
	“The Outing”
1970:	<i>A Native Son Reader</i>
	“The Man Child”
1969:	<i>Black American Literature: Fiction</i>
	“Going to Meet the Man”
1971:	<i>Cavalcade : Negro American writing from 1760 to the Present</i>
	“Sonny’s Blues”
1972:	<i>Black Writers of America : a Comprehensive Anthology</i>
1993:	<i>African American Literature: An Anthology of Nonfiction, Fiction, Poetry, and Drama</i>
1996:	<i>Norton Anthology of African American Literature—1st Edition</i>
2003:	<i>Norton Anthology of African American Literature- 2nd Edition</i>
2005:	<i>The art of the short story</i>
2006:	<i>The Norton anthology of short fiction</i>
2006:	<i>The Heath Anthology of American Literature, Fifth Edition</i>
2011:	<i>The story and its writer : an introduction to short fiction</i>
2012:	<i>Fiction 100 : an anthology of short fiction</i>
2013:	<i>The Heath Anthology of American Literature, 7th Edition</i>
2013:	<i>The Oxford book of American short stories</i>

Like Baldwin though more than a decade younger, Toni Cade Bambara was another New Yorker who became one of the most widely anthologized “new” black writers. While Bambara’s literary successes also depended on making connections with editors and publishers, Bambara’s rise coincided with, or more accurately was fueled by, the interest in black women’s writing associated with Black feminist movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s.³⁷ In the introduction to *The Black Woman* (1970), Bambara, the editor writes, “I don’t know that literature enlightens us too much. The ‘experts’ are still men, Black or white. And the images of the woman are still derived from their needs, their fantasies, their second-hand knowledge, their agreement with the

³⁷ In 1969, Mary Ann Weathers published “An Argument for Black Women’s Liberation as a Revolutionary Force,” in the radical feminist publication *No More Fun and Games: A Journal of Female Liberation*. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw an increased interest in black women’s literature as a result of the growing presence of black women in the feminists movements of the decade. In the late 1960s, Toni Morrison became an editor at Random House in New York City and edited texts by writers such as Toni Cade Bambara, Angela Davis, and Gayl Jones. In 1970, Morrison published her first novel *The Bluest Eye*. That same year, Toni Cade Bambara edited an anthology of writing by black women titled *The Black Woman*. These developments helped to spur publishers interest in black women’s literature.

other ‘experts’” (3-4). Bambara’s collection included poetry, short stories, and essays by Nikki Giovanni, Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, and Paule Marshall, among others. While Bambara critiques the lack of African American women writers, she still sees evidence that publishers will have to soon start taking black women writers and readers more seriously. “Throughout the country in recent years, Black women have been forming,” writes Bambara, “women’s workshops on the campuses, women’s caucuses within existing organizations, Afro-American women’s magazines” (4). The emphasis on rediscovering and promoting new African American women writers during the late 1960s prompted scholars and editors to advocate for the inclusion of more black women in anthologies.³⁸

Figure 1.5 Frequently Anthologized Short Stories by Toni Cade Bambara
<p style="text-align: center;">“Gorilla My Love”</p> <p>1971: <i>Cavalcade : Negro American writing from 1760 to the Present</i> 1995: <i>Revolutionary Tales: African American Women’s Short Stories, From the First Story to the Present</i> 1999: <i>The Art of the Story: an International Anthology of Contemporary Short Stories</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">“My Man Bovanne”</p> <p>1975: <i>Black Eyed Susans: Classic Stories by and about Black Women</i> 1990: <i>Breaking Ice: An Anthology of Contemporary African-American Fiction</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">“The Lesson”</p> <p>1992: <i>Calling the Wind: Twentieth Century African-American Short Stories</i> 1995: <i>Children of the Night: The Best Short Stories by Black Writers, 1967 to the Present</i> 2000: <i>The Prentice Hall anthology of African American literature</i> 2005: <i>The Prentice Hall anthology of African American women’s literature</i> 2006: <i>The Heath Anthology of American Literature, Fifth Edition</i> 2011: <i>The story and its writer : an introduction to short fiction</i> 2012: <i>Fiction 100 : an anthology of short fiction</i> 2013: <i>The Heath Anthology of American Literature, 7th Edition</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">“Raymond’s Run”</p> <p>1993: <i>America Street : a Multicultural Anthology of Stories</i> 1996: <i>Norton Anthology of African American Literature—1st Edition</i> 1999: <i>The Scribner Anthology of Contemporary Short Fiction: Fifty North American Stories since 1970</i> 2000: <i>Almost Touching the Skies : Women’s Coming of Age Stories</i> 2003: <i>Norton Anthology of African American Literature- 2nd Edition</i></p>

³⁸ See Figure 1.5

Bambara's literary successes and prominence in anthologies since the 1970s are the results of her coming-of-age experiences in New York City. Actually, by virtue of living in New York and being active during the Black Arts Movement, Bambara was able to interact with prominent literary editors and up-and-coming writers. In a 1982 interview with Kay Bonnetti, Bambara explains, "I grew up in New York. I grew up with people who were interested in books. They eventually went into publishing and became copy editors, or editors, or journalists, or something. And since I was right there—I couldn't miss" (Lewis 28). Bambara's early professional experiences as a writer occurred in New York City, and the city also served as the setting for what became her most widely anthologized stories, "Gorilla, My Love," "Raymond's Run" and "The Lesson."³⁹

In addition to her interactions with editors and publishers, Bambara benefited from publishing in nationally known periodicals. Actually, Bambara began publishing in the 1950s while in college; however, during the 1960s, her writings began to gain wider notice. In 1964, her story "Mississippi Ham Rider" appeared in the *Massachusetts Review* and in 1966 her story "The Hammer Man" appeared in *Negro Digest*. "Since that time," said Bambara, "the publishing has been fairly steady" (Lewis 56). Her publishing activities definitely became more pronounced. She served as the book reviewer for the *Liberator*, a New York City-based magazine from 1966 until 1972, edited two anthologies *The Black Woman: An Anthology* (1970) and *Tales and Stories for Black Folks* (1971), and released two collections of short stories, *Gorilla, My Love* (1972) and *War of the Walls 1976, My Love* (1972). Bambara's many efforts as a writer and editor heightened the chances that her work would come to the attention of editors preparing anthologies.

³⁹ See Figure 1.5

Bambara believed that she had “been very lucky in terms of major publishing ventures.” She explains, “I’ve gotten a lot of stories in school readers, put out by major publishing houses, and the books have been taken very quickly. I’ve gotten contracts on those very quickly without too much sweat and jumping up and down foaming at the mouth” (Lewis 56). Although Bambara published over 28 short stories between 1955 – 1977, anthologists primarily reprinted just three of her stories, “Gorilla, My Love,” “Raymond’s Run,” and “The Lesson.” With the growing demand of stories by and about black women during the 1970s, editors would find Bambara’s two stories featuring black girl protagonists particularly useful for filling a void in their collections. A young girl Hazel, the lead character in “Gorilla, My Love,” provides a unique perspective among the primarily adult male protagonists in the majority of anthologized short fiction characters that readers encounter in Arthur Davis’s and Saunders Redding’s *Cavalcade : Negro American writing from 1760 to the present* (1971) and Quandra Prettyman Stadler’s *Out of our Lives: A Selection of Contemporary Black Fiction* (1975).

The continual decision among editors to include “Gorilla, My Love,” “Raymond’s Run,” and “The Lesson” meant that Bambara’s black girl protagonists earned places in the growing publishing history of anthologies featuring short stories by black writers. Bambara saw her fiction as helping to “illuminate the struggles that women must confront to exist as people in their own right, apart from the men in their lives” (Bambara, *The Black Woman*, ii). For editors, Bambara’s stories primarily illustrated experiences of young black girls coming of age in urban environments during and after the Civil Rights Era in American history. Unlike stories anthologized by Baldwin, Paule Marshall, Ernest Gaines, and Walker, Bambara’s most frequently reprinted short stories departed from the perspectives of adults and instead offered the ostensible worldviews of black children in New York City.

Bambara's importance as a fiction writer coincided with the growing importance and routine inclusion of Alice Walker's short stories in African American and American literature anthologies. Just as Hurston and Wright moved from the South to New York and benefitted from interactions with the efforts of influential editors and literary agents, Walker profited from the largess of supporters. After a brief stint at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, Walker enrolled in Sarah Lawrence College in Yonkers, New York, in 1964. While at Sarah Lawrence, professor Marial Rukeyser took an interest in Walker and introduced her to literary agent Monica McCall, who boasted of clients such as journalist Pete Hamill and novelist Graham Green. Rukeyser, impressed by Walker's talents as a poet, "was certain that McCall could usher into literary mainstream the student she had lauded, in her final faculty evaluation as 'one of the best with whom I have ever worked'" (White 158). Rukeyser's insistence that McCall help Walker negotiate a deal with a major publisher substantially increased the likelihood that Walker gained an important publishing opportunity and came to the attention of readerships, including editors who would anthologize her works.

Walker's active role in Civil Rights activism, including her attendance at the March on Washington in 1963 and her efforts registering black voters in Mississippi and Georgia served as a basis for her writings.⁴⁰ Her 1967 essay, "The Civil Rights Movement: What Good Was It?" won first place in the annual essay contest of *The American Scholar*. The periodical's editor, Hiram Haydn, was also an editor at Harcourt Brace & World (which became Harcourt Brace Jovanovich); consequently, McCall eventually convinced the publisher to accept Walker's debut volume of poetry *Once* (1968). Two years later, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich published Walker's

⁴⁰ During the Civil Rights Movement, Walker published *Meridian* which focuses on a student who becomes active in the Movement. The novel drew on real life experiences from Walker's life and the experiences of people she knew. Walker's activism helped inspire the novel.

first novel *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*. The positive receptions that her publications received contributed to her growing national reputation.

In 1971, Walker ended her professional relationship with agent McCall and began working with Wendy Weil. Recommended to Walker by June Jordan and Julius Lester, Weil negotiated the placement of Walker's short story "Roselily" in the August 1972 issue of *Ms. Magazine* (White 229).⁴¹ More notably, in 1975, *Ms.* published Walker's "In Search of Zora Neale Hurston," an essay that assisted in making a new generation of readers aware of Hurston's importance. Coincidentally, in 1967, Langston Hughes had included Hurston's "The Gilded Six-Bits" and Walker's "To Hell with Dying" in *The Best Short Stories by Negro Writers*. Over the decades, editors have continuously linked Walker with literary foremother, Hurston. Walker's biographical sketch in *Call & Response: The Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition* (1998) notes that "During the 1970s, Walker also was involved in the process of recentering Zora Neale Hurston in the literary world" (1794). Similarly, in the *Norton Anthology of Short Fiction* (2006), Walker's biographical sketch mentions how her article in *Ms.* magazine "revived interest in the work of Zora Neale Hurston" (1512). Anthologists have actively advanced the linkage between Hurston and Walker, suggesting a sense of continuity, if not artistic lineage, among the writers.

Even though editors tend to include excerpts from her novels, selections of poetry, and various essays, Walker's short stories appearing in more than 20 anthologies since the 1970s, distinguish her as one of the most frequently anthologized short fiction writers. Walker's "To Hell with Dying" generally appeared in anthologies from the mid-1970s until 1986. In the last

⁴¹ The short story would later be the opening piece in her first collection of short stories, *In Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Women* (1973) which contained her frequently reprinted short story, "Everyday Use."

twenty years, “Everyday Use,” the story of intergenerational conflicts between a mother and her two daughters, has been her most frequently reprinted short story.⁴² Unlike other black women short story writers such as Bambara and Paule Marshall, Walker concentrates on black women in rural Southern settings, not the urban North. Editors’ routine selection of Walker’s “Everyday Use,” particularly over the last 20 years, solidifies her reputation as a Southern writer.

Figure 1.6 Frequently Anthologized Short Stories by Alice Walker
<p style="text-align: center;">“Everyday Use”</p> <p>1975: <i>Black Eyed Susans: Classic Stories by and about Black Women.</i> 1996: <i>Norton Anthology of African American Literature—1st Edition</i> 2003: <i>Norton Anthology of African American Literature- 2nd Edition</i> 2005: <i>The art of the short story</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">“To Hell with Dying”</p> <p>1967: <i>The Best Short Stories by Black Writers: the Classic Anthology from 1899-1967</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">“Exchange Value”</p> <p>1971: <i>Cavalcade : Negro American writing from 1760 to the Present</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">“Women”</p> <p>1993: <i>African American Literature: An Anthology of Nonfiction, Fiction, Poetry, and Drama</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">“Nineteen fifty-five”</p> <p>1999: <i>The Scribner Anthology of Contemporary Short Fiction: Fifty North American Stories since 1970</i></p>

The same editors who solidified places for Chesnutt, Hurston, and Wright in the developing canonical history of African American literature also created spaces for Baldwin, Bambara, and Walker. The rapid growth of anthology publishing during the 1960s and 1970s meant that the writers would come together during a common historical moment. Chesnutt, Hurston, and Wright almost never appeared in the same anthology during their lifetimes. The notable exception was their appearance in *The Negro Caravan*. Baldwin, Bambara, and Walker, on the other hand, regularly appeared in the same collections during their lifetimes. The likelihood that their stories would appear together in the same collections was a direct result of the increased production of anthologies fiction published during the 1970s. In addition, Bambara and Walker were among the group of artists included in anthologies such as Pat Crutchfield

⁴² See Figure 1.6

Exum's *Keeping the Faith: Writings by Contemporary Black American Women* (1974) and Quandra Prettyman Stadler's *Out of Our Lives: a Selection of Contemporary Black Fiction* (1975) featuring black women writers.

I recognize that stories by Ralph Ellison circulate widely as well. The first chapter of his novel, "Battle Royal" originally appeared as a short story in 1947. The chapter has appeared as a standalone short story in at least, 9 anthologies since the 1990s alone. For Ellison though, editors routinely include excerpts for his novel *Invisible Man* (1952) or select essays in anthologies in collections. Even though Ellison appears frequently in anthologies, the number of times his short stories are included pales in comparison to the other writers mentioned in this study.

In addition, Langston Hughes and Ann Petry also appear occasionally in anthologies as short story writers even though publishing a substantial amount of short fiction during their lifetimes. Editors tend to present Hughes as a poet only selecting his short stories on rare occasions. Similarly, editors prefer sections of Petry's novel *The Street* for inclusion in anthologies. However, for the moment, an examination of Baldwin creates opportunities for thinking about how anthology editors, overtime, guaranteed that stories set in New York City would become integral to the study of African American literature. In addition, for Bambara and Walker, these two writers offer possibilities to examine black women writers who rose to prominence in the 1970s as a result of social movements and increase in anthology publications during the decade.

Arthur Davis and Saunders Redding's *Cavalcade: Negro American Writing from 1760 to the Present* (1971) serves as a point of reference for later anthologies in terms of its chronological set up and variety of black literary texts—essays, speeches, poetry and short

stories from slavery to then contemporary era. *Cavalcade* was one of the first anthologies to include Chesnutt, Hurston, Wright, Baldwin, Bambara, and Walker. Davis and Redding's anthology signaled the practice of including short fiction by this select group of writers in comprehensive collections. Over the last four decades, in the publishing history of the African American short story writers, including Chesnutt, Hurston, Wright, Baldwin, Bambara, and Walker, along with Ralph Ellison in collections became a fairly standard practice.

Section 3: Anthology Periodization and Circulation

According to Arthur P. Davis and Saunders Redding, *Cavalcade* (1971) “comprehends the entire two hundred years of Negro American literature.” They note that, “There have been several collections of Negro American writing in recent years, but an anthology of writings by any national, cultural, time-contained, or ethnic group should serve a pedagogical function for students” (xvii). Davis and Redding were articulating the functional role of anthologies in classrooms during a time of unprecedented growth of black enrollment in colleges and universities.⁴³ The organization of *Cavalcade*, along with *Black Writers of America: A Comprehensive Anthology* (1972) edited by Richard Barksdale and Kenneth Kinnamon and *Afro-American Writing: Anthology of Prose and Poetry* (1972) edited by Richard A. Long and Eugenia W. Collier, among other anthologies, emphasized a chronological approach to the presentation of African American literature. Such an approach prompted students to view short fiction by black writers along a linear historical continuum. The setup of comprehensive anthologies also reified the boundaries of African American literary periods and ensured what writers and literary works became frequently reprinted.

⁴³ Thomas Brock notes in “Young Adults and Higher Education: Barriers and Breakthroughs to Success” how the mid-to-late 1960s marked a turning point in higher education for African Americans with the passage of the Civil Rights Movement and changes in federal policy, most notably the Higher Education Act of 1965. The increase in access and funding opportunities encouraged more black students to enroll in college (111).

The late 1960s ushered in the production of anthologies dedicated to black literature, a large number of which included short fiction. The division of literary periods in anthologies ultimately situated black writers within important historical eras. Davis and Redding, Barksdale and Kinnamon, and Long and Collier, among other editors, organized anthologies to highlight five general periods—“Slavery and Emancipation Era,” “Reconstruction,” “Harlem Renaissance,” “Protest and Integration,” and “Contemporary period.”⁴⁴ Stories by Chesnutt, Sutton E. Griggs, and Paul Laurence Dunbar routinely appeared in the “Reconstruction Era” section. Short stories by Hurston, Rudolph Fisher, Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, and James Weldon Johnson appeared in the “Harlem Renaissance” section. Stories by Wright, Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Margaret Walker, and Ann Petry, appeared in the “Protest and Integration Era,” and stories by Bambara, Paule Marshall, Ishmael Reed, and Walker appeared in the “Contemporary Period.” By the late 1990s, conceptions of “contemporary” had shifted. The first edition of *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (1997) referred to literature produced from 1960 – 1970 as “The Black Arts Movement,” and the “New Contemporary” period was labeled “Literature Since 1975.” The different designations for the literary periods solidified places for writers within distinct micro-histories.

Anthology classifications facilitated the categories and periods where writers were situated temporally. Short fiction presented in the same historical sections presumably possessed common literary qualities, different and distinct from stories in other sections. Hurston and Fisher apparently shared a kinship as “Harlem Renaissance” writers, while Wright and Ellison were aligned as “Protest and Integration” writers. Of course, the designations “protest literature”

⁴⁴ The periodization headings are approximations of recurring literary periods that are used across the various anthologies.

and “integration literature” have since fallen out of favor, and in *The Norton*, for instance, Wright, Ellison, Lorraine Hansberry, Chester Himes, and Margaret Walker appear in the “Realism, Naturalism, Modernism 1940- 1960” section. The positioning of writers together in a common literary period suggests interrelated stylistic and thematic features of their works. Moreover, designating literary periods creates cohorts of writers whose short stories are commonly associated with significant moments in American history.

In biographical sketches and section introductions, editors emphasized the historical significance of contributors, often noting how writers made cultural and racial breakthroughs. In the introduction to *Cavalcade*'s “Accommodation and Protest: 1865 – 1910” section, Davis and Redding explain that Chesnut was “the first Negro novelist of imposing stature,” and the writer’s “special theme was the Negro of mixed blood, the ‘tragic mulatto’: he was the first black author to deal in depth with the problem of the ‘color line’ within the Negro race, and the first to make imaginative capital of racism’s consequences to the white man” (122). For Davis and Redding, Chesnut’s racial firsts were important, and those achievements likely contributed to the basis for his inclusion. Just as notable, the focus on Chesnut’s inclination to address problems of “the color line” gave a reason for reprinting “The Wife of His Youth,” a story that focuses on class prejudices among black people during the Reconstruction Era. Paul Laurence Dunbar, W.E.B. Du Bois, and William Stanley Braithwaite also appeared in the “Accommodation and Protest: 1865 – 1910;” however, only Chesnut’s short fiction became widely anthologized.

Immediately following the Reconstruction Era, many anthology editors identified the “New Negro Renaissance” or more commonly, the “Harlem Renaissance” as the next major literary period. Editors were not always in agreement on starting and ending dates for that era,

nor the overall label. For instance, *Cavalcade* designated the “New Negro Renaissance and Beyond” as taking place between 1910- 1954; *Black Writers of America* designated “Renaissance and Radicalism: 1915 – 1945;” and *Afro-American Writing* designated this period taking place between World War I and World War II (1914 -1945). Many anthologies presented the “Harlem Renaissance” era spanning over three decades. As a result, in these anthologies, Hurston and Wright appeared in the same historical period. By the late 1990s and early 21st century, they appeared in separate sections. In *The Norton*, Hurston remained in the “Harlem Renaissance, 1919-1940,” while Wright appeared in the “Realism, Naturalism, Modernism, 1940-1960.” In the *Prentice Hall Anthology of African American Literature*, Hurston also appeared in “Harlem Renaissance” while Wright appeared in “The Protest Movement.” Whereas Hurston and Wright appeared in common sections three decades ago, which suggested that they were contemporaries, the eventual shifts in the designations of historical eras created more distance between the writers, a process that coincides with their reputed differing perspectives.⁴⁵

In some respects, Hurston’s most frequently anthologized stories “Spunk” (1925) and “Sweat” (1926) are unlikely representatives of the New Negro Movement, since both stories are set in Florida, not Harlem. Similarly, excerpts from James Weldon Johnson’s *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912) and Jean Toomer’s *Cane* (1923) all utilize Southern geographic settings rather than New York City where the most notable social activities of the Harlem Renaissance commonly took place. Of course, the “outburst of literary energy” that fueled the New Negro Movement, Barksdale and Kinnamon note, was made possible by the Great

⁴⁵ Harold Bloom’s *Richard Wright: Bloom’s Modern Critical Views* (1985), William J. Maxwell’s *New Negro, Old Left* (1999), and Mark Christian Thompson’s *Black Fascisms: African American Literature and Culture Between the Wars* (2007) note the disagreement between Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Wright over artistic differences during the 1930s. Specifically, these writers point to Wright’s review, “Between Laughter and Tears” (1937), of Hurston’s novel, and Hurston’s critique, “Stories of Conflict” (1938), of Wright’s *Uncle Tom’s Children* as the culmination of their artistic differences.

Migration, where large numbers of Southern black people made their way North (468). On the other hand, excerpts from Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929) and Rudolph Fisher's short story "City of Refuge" (1925) are set New York City. In fact, King Solomon Gillis, the protagonist of Fisher's story, moves to Harlem from North Carolina in order to escape being lynched after accidentally killing a white man. While the designation "Harlem Renaissance" prompts readers to consider a famous place in New York City, editors' selections for that section reflect multiple geographic settings.

Scholars and historians eventually linked the end or decline of the Harlem Renaissance with the Great Depression. Sharon A. Jones writes, "Most critics concur that the Harlem Renaissance ended with the stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression of the 1930s" as artists lost support from wealthy patrons (163). Nonetheless, *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (1997) and *The Prentice Hall Anthology of African American Literature* (2000) designate the era ending in 1940 while *Call & Response: Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition* (1998) has the era concluding in 1945. The absence of short stories included in anthologies that were initially published between 1930 – 1940 reflects the lack of awareness and scholarship concerning short fiction during that decade, although recent work by Lawrence Jackson. Stacy I. Morgan among others are now contributing to our understanding of this neglected period.⁴⁶ Interestingly, Hurston and Wright contribute to filling the void of late 1930s short fiction by black writers. Excerpts from Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* sometimes appear in anthologies, and Wright's "Long Black Song" and "Big Boy

⁴⁶ Anne Meis Knupfer's *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women's Activism* (2006) and Stacy I. Morgan's *Rethinking Social Realism, African American Art and Literature, 1930–1953* (2004) address the lack of scholarship on writers immediately following the Harlem Renaissance. Their work highlights the artistic movements that preceded the publication of Richard Wright's *Native Son*. These movements helped to shape black literature during the literary period that is often times overlooked.

Leaves Home” first published in 1938 and 1940, respectively, appear as well. However, editors usually select Hurston’s stories that appeared prior to her masterpiece, while in more recent years they have frequently published short fiction by Wright that appeared after the publication of *Native Son* (1940), such as “Bright and Morning Star” and “The Man Who Lives Underground.”

In the introduction to *The Norton’s* “Realism, Naturalism, and Modernism: 1940- 1960” section, Deborah McDowell and Hortense Spillers explain that although “literary historians are fond of subdividing and punctuating artistic periods with references to war,” the publication of Wright’s *Native Son* prompted a change (1356). According to McDowell and Spillers, Wright’s novel “almost single-handedly birthed and shaped a radically new agenda and established for African American writing a new center of gravity, one pitched toward the gritty realities of urban living for black Americans” (1358). For the editors of *The Norton* that meant utilizing the publication date of *Native Son* as the start of a historical/literary period. No other publication in *The Norton* or any other anthology for that matter carries the distinction of serving as a place marker for a literary era.

Comprehensive anthologies of the 1970s presented a Harlem Renaissance era that sometimes exceeded 44 years. However, by the time *The Norton* appeared in the late 1990s, scholars and editors had apparently decided to limit previous time frames of the New Negro Movement and present the 1940s and 1950s as a separate literary period, “Realism, Naturalism, Modernism 1940- 1960,” including short fiction by Wright, Ellison, Ann Petry, and Baldwin. Even though modern-day readers likely take the idea that Wright and Baldwin were contemporaries for granted, *Cavalcade* (1971) and *Black Writers of America* (1972) presented them as belonging to different eras. The presentation of the Harlem Renaissance as separate from “Realism, Naturalism, Modernism” also ensured a periodic separation between Hurston and

Wright, a process that further highlights their perceived ideological differences. The expansive body of scholarship produced about literary art and activity taking place between the release of *Native Son* and the appearance of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959) secures the plausibility of 1940 – 1960 as a discrete literary period.⁴⁷ In addition to Wright's novel and Hansberry's play, the most well-known literary work produced during the time period was *Invisible Man* (1952).

Over the decades, Ellison became a mainstay in anthologies. While *On Being Black: Writings by Afro-Americans from Frederick Douglass to the Present* (1970) and *Forgotten Pages of American Literature* (1970) include his essays, *The Best Short Stories by Black Writers: The Classic Anthology from 1899-1967* (1967), *Dark Symphony* (1968), and *The Oxford book of American Short Stories* (1992) include his short fiction. Excerpts from *Invisible Man* appear in more than 14 anthologies between 1970 and 2014. *Invisible Man* “moves from slavery (the Grandfather) to Reconstruction and accommodationism,” note the editors of *Call and Response* “to the migration North” (1276). Editors especially prefer to include “Battle Royal,” which was originally published as a short story in 1947. “Founded on the genre of autobiography, with distinct overtones of the classic slave narrative and the rags-to-riches saga so dear to Americans,” Arnold Rampersad explains, “the chapter sits on the bedrock of literary realism” (217). “Battle Royal” was one of the few widely circulating, first-person narratives initially

⁴⁷ Lawrence Jackson's *The Indignant Generation: A Narrative History of African American Writers and Critics, 1934-1960* (2010) documents the neglected literary period immediately following the Harlem Renaissance that spans up until the Civil Rights Movement. Jackson pays attention to the political and social climate which facilitated the rise and circulation of works by writers such as Richard Wright, Gwendolyn Brooks, James Baldwin, Lorraine Hansberry, and Ralph Ellison. In addition, Jackson pays attention to those artistic movements occurring in New York, Chicago, and Washington and details how African American literary criticism began to grow during this period as well.

published prior to 1950.⁴⁸ This short story, which was in fact a novel chapter, largely defines Ellison's presence in African American and American literature anthologies.

Frank Taylor, Ellison's editor at Random House, prompted interest in *Invisible Man* by promoting excerpts of the book as a short story years before the novel's release. Unbeknownst to Ellison, Taylor offered the first chapter of the novel to *Horizon* magazine's editor, Cyril Connolly, for a special issue on art in America to be published in 1947. The story was so well received that John Hersey of '47: *The Magazine of the Year* purchased the rights to publish the composition, and the following year, the story appeared in '48: *The Magazine of the Year*. Rampersad notes that those printings gave Ellison's work "a far bigger American readership" than the initial appearance in the British periodical in *Horizon*, and in fact, the publication of "Battle Royal" in '48 "appeared to overshadow an essay by Albert Einstein and poems by Stephen Spender" (Rampersad 217). The pre-publication circulation of Ellison's story raised anticipation for his debut novel.

Even though Ellison published over 15 short stories during his lifetime, "Battle Royal" remains by far his most frequently anthologized composition. Editors for *Call & Response*, *Prentice Hall anthology of African American Literature*, and *The Norton* among others, note the links between Ellison's writings and black music, pointing out that he draws on "the blues, jazz, and the tragicomedy of everyday life" for thematic inspiration (Norton 1536). "Battle Royal" can be interpreted as a literary representation of a bluesman, as the unnamed protagonist gives his

⁴⁸ African American writers generally used the third person narrative mode. During the 1940s, when black writers started to rely less on vernacular usage in their character dialogues, there was a rise in the first person narrative style. One reason that writers generally preferred the third person narrative mode is to help guide the narrative and serve as an emissary between the reader and characters who spoke in heavy dialect. As writers began using more standard English dialect in their dialogues, writers did not rely as heavily on the narrator to clarify language and character dialogues for the reader. See Figure 1.3.

firsthand account of tragic-comic existence as a young black man in a white-controlled society.⁴⁹ The protagonist of the story was invited to deliver his graduation speech “at a gathering of the town’s leading white citizens;” however, before he can present his speech, he is forced to compete in a degrading boxing tournament against a group of black boys for the amusement of white men (1117). Ellison’s story exposes how a town’s leading white men demean black boys and suppress African American interests in social equality. “Battle Royal” holds special distinction as a widely reprinted excerpt from one of the most critically acclaimed novels by an African American. Ellison is the rare black novelist whose signature short story is from his most known book. Alongside Baldwin, Ellison also anchors the core group of short story writers regularly reprinted in anthologies who immediately precede the Black Arts Era section in collections.

As anthologies of the Black Arts era increasingly published poetry concentrating on black music, several editors reprinted Amiri Baraka’s “The Screamers” (1967), a story where a large crowd of people are so moved by music that they take to the streets in a riot-like fashion after being inspired by musical performer Lynne Hope and his band. Whereas editors often presented Baraka’s poetry, the inclusion of his short fiction in *American Negro Stories* (1966), *Brotherman: the Odyssey of Black Men in America* (1995), *Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora* (2000), and *The Jazz Fiction Anthology* (2009), highlights his contributions as a short story writer with interests in the political implications of black music and literary art. The focus on music as a consequential force in “The Screamers”

⁴⁹ Scholars have noted the significance of the blues tradition as it relates to African American literature. Specifically, Robert O’Meally’s “Checking Our Balances: Ellison on Armstrong’s Humor” (2003) and John Hilgart’s “‘Leaving All the Time:’ Signifying Departure in the Early Blues” (2002) specifically address how Ralph Ellison’s unnamed protagonist extends the bluesman tradition in *Invisible Man*.

coincides with Henry Dumas's "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" (1966), which illustrates the galvanizing power of black music as three white patrons are killed in a jazz club after listening to a performance by famed saxophonist Probe. The outcome of the story suggests that some creative output is exclusively for black people. Dumas was tragically murdered in 1968 by a New York City Transit policeman, and editors ensured that his artistic spirit would live on during the Black Arts era by including his poems and short fiction in *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing* (1968), *Black Out Loud: An Anthology of Modern Poems by Black Americans* (1970), *Brothers and Sisters: Modern Stories by Black Americans* (1970), and *Understanding the New Black Poetry: Black Speech and Black Music as Poetic References* (1973) among other collections. Unfortunately, over the last three decades, anthologies rarely included short fiction by Baraka and Dumas, so their identities as short story writers were less evident to many readers.

Paule Marshall's "Reena" (1962), Ernest Gaines's "The Sky is Gray" (1963), Alice Walker's "Everyday Use" (1973), and Toni Cade Bambara's "Raymond's Run" (1972) each appeared in at least 4 anthologies published between the late 1960s through the late 1970s, during a time when there was an increased production of collections featuring black literary texts. Those stories by Marshall, Gaines, Walker, and Bambara were repeatedly reprinted in anthologies over the last three decades as well, each appearing in at least 10 collections published between 1980 – 2014. Notably, no other black-authored short stories initially published after 1960 have appeared in so many anthologies. New generations of short story writers, including Charles Johnson, Walter Mosley, Octavia Butler, and then more recently Edwidge Danticat and Edward P. Jones, have emerged and published compelling and award-winning works. However, editors have not chosen individual stories by those writers for

inclusion in multiple anthologies. Of course, the process of making an individual short story stand out as a writer's representative literary work takes time.

So far, scholars and editors of African American literature have not yet condensed the parameters of the current contemporary era. The *Prentice Hall anthology of African American Literature* (1999) includes literature from 1970 through the present; *Call & Response* designated 1960 through the present; and *The Wiley Blackwell Anthology of African American Literature* (2014) comprised 1975 - present. The first edition of *The Norton* (1996) presented "Literature Since 1970" while the second and third editions in 2003 and 2014 presented "Literature Since 1975." Comprehensive African American literature anthologies will eventually offer more precise labels and time periods for the last 40 years of artistic production. If editors follow previous models, then many future anthologies will continue to privilege a chronological approach. However, there are alternative approaches. Given longstanding interests among writers, for instance, editors could reasonably arrange anthologies concentrating on region, starting with the South.

Chapter 2—The South as Place in African American Literature: A Digital Excavation

Introduction

In their 1992 anthology *Black Southern Voices*, John Oliver Killens and Jerry W. Ward, Jr., sought to represent “the history and creativity of a people who were and are cocreators of the South as a literary and figurative realm” (5). The anthology included selections by James Weldon Johnson, Jean Toomer, Margaret Walker, and others, but the most widely known writers in the anthology were Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Wright. By the time *Black Southern Voices* appeared, Hurston and Wright had become mainstays in collections; their short stories, set in the South, appeared in more than 10 anthologies prior to 1992. Even though Hurston’s and Wright’s novels largely define their literary legacies, students enrolled in literature survey courses are more likely to encounter the writers’ short stories. The arrangement, by Killens and Ward and other anthologists, of literary works by Hurston, Wright, and other prominent writers under the category “southern black literature” promoted a regional focus for African American literature.

Over the last 40 years, scholars and anthologists have worked to expand the parameters of Southern literature, by highlighting the contributions of black writers. Historically, the scholarly discourse on Southern literature excluded black writers and instead concentrated on William Faulkner, Tennessee Williams, Margaret Mitchell, Flannery O’Connor, Caroline Gordon, and others.⁵⁰ Scholars of African American literature sought to shift the discourse. In

⁵⁰ For the most part, African American writers were not usually considered to be a part of the southern literary tradition which promoted artists such as William Faulkner, Katherine Anne Porter, Caroline Gordon, Allen Tate, Thomas Wolfe, Robert Penn Warren, and Tennessee Williams. After the Second World War and strides made by the Civil Rights Movement, southern literature began to grow and encompass more black writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, Sterling Brown, and Richard Wright. In 1985, black scholars began to organize conferences focusing on black writers’ contributions to southern literature. In 1985, Maryemma Graham organized the “Mississippi’s Native Son: International Symposium on Richard Wright” at the University of Mississippi. In 1988, Thadious Davis published “Expanding the Limits: The Intersection of Race and Region” in the *Southern Literary Journal*. Also, in 1992, John Oliver Killens and Jerry Ward, Jr., edited the anthology *Black Southern Voices*. These select events contributed to raising the visibility of black writers in conversations regarding southern literature.

his 1971 essay, “Richard Wright in a Moment of Truth,” Blyden Jackson argues that Wright’s identity as a southerner is of “utmost importance in understanding the growth and peculiarities of his artistic imagination” (3). Social geography plays a significant role in Wright’s identity as a Southerner. Wright’s “growth and peculiarities” undoubtedly stem from his experiences growing up in a Mississippi—a geographic location which resonates with ideas of poverty, terror, and racism in the historical imaginations of many Americans. Similarly, other black writers’ personal memories or impressions of the South create expansive parameters for understanding the social dimensions of geography. The criticism on African American literature in recent decades reveals how the real life systematic disenfranchisement of a black people in the South, over long periods of time, has resulted in a distinct authorial attitudes that define a character’s physical environment and social interactions.

This scholarship also points to the thematic and artistic similarities of how black writers utilize folk culture or rhetorical strategies as a means of identifying specific geographic spaces. To account for the word usage in southern black short stories, I will use text-mining software to pinpoint specific linguistic characteristics that are most prevalent among writers. Specific features such as African American Vernacular English and descriptions of geographic locations are two prominent features that comprise southern literature. However, identifying the frequency of word usage of commonly anthologized short stories highlights recurring and contrasting linguistic features in the works of prominent writers. Text-mining software will also allow for a new and potentially useful technological approach to analyzing black literary texts.

In addition to Jackson, William Andrews, Thadious Davis, Jerry W. Ward, Jr., Maryemma Graham, Trudier Harris, and Houston Baker among others expanded conventional definitions of southern literature and positioned black writers more firmly on Southern literary

terrain.⁵¹ In her widely cited 1988 article “Expanding the Limits: The Intersection of Race and Region,” Thadious M. Davis wrote, “What I see occurring nowadays is an expansion of the definition of Southern culture based upon an insistence that race and region are inextricable in defining a Southern self, society, or culture” (5). Trudier Harris goes even a step further in her book *The Scary Mason-Dixon Line: African American Writers and the South* (2009) by explaining how black writers, regardless of where they are born, “align a crucial portion of their identities with the site on American territory, that is, the American South” (1). As a result, Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Ernest Gaines, and Alice Walker fictional renderings of this region largely shaped the contours of black southern literature due to those writers’ presumed significance to black culture and frequent inclusion in anthologies and collected works over the last two decades. Although those writers are often presented as novelists, focusing on their short fiction clarifies how black writers delineate regional or location-specific concerns and interests of African Americans. The short stories by this core group of writers demonstrate the extent of regional diversity within the larger context of the American South.

Examinations of southern black short fiction contribute to the emerging field of “new southern studies” – an evolving framework that encourages new interpretations of the American South by acknowledging the diversity of race, gender, and cultural ideologies. Historically, black writers have been excluded from discussions of southern literature, and at the same time, short

⁵¹ In 1974, Addison Gayle’s “Reclaiming the Southern Experience: The Black Aesthetic Ten Years Later” appeared in *Negro Digest*. In his essay, Gayle explains how much of the urban literary movement of the Black Arts Movement is indebted to earlier southern writers. His essay, which prompted the concerns of other scholars, helped to reposition many black writers squarely within the canon of southern literature. Over the next three decades scholars such as Houston A. Baker, Jr., Thadious Davis, Joanne Gabbin, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Maryemma Graham, Trudier Harris, Karla Holloway, bell hooks, Deborah McDowell, and Jerry W. Ward, Jr., would compliment Gayle’s sentiments by emphasizing the importance of southern black writers.

stories have largely been under examined in African American literary studies. My work advances new southern studies by explaining how short stories diversify and expand views of the South and southern literature. Moreover, my work explains how the frequent circulation of short fiction by Hurston, Wright, Ellison, Walker, and others helped to solidify impressions about the South and black literature.

Section 1: Text Mining and Southern Black Short Stories

Although literary criticism has flourished, Ted Underwood notes, rarely do we have an opportunity to make discoveries, document notable trends and shifts as well as quantify the frequency of language usage, narrative mode, and other issues over a long period of time even though the field has moved forward dialectally. Underwood finds text-mining software particularly useful, explaining that the “blurriness of literary categories is exactly why it’s helpful to use computers for distant reading” (“We Do Not Yet” ...”). Over the past decade, scholars of new southern studies have expanded the scholarship on what factors contribute to the symbolic geography of the South and its various representations across genres of literature. What we might now consider is utilizing digital tools to quantify the many data points that comprise southern black literature. Text-mining software and quantitative data offer an opportunity to pinpoint linguistic features, notable trends, and a variety of patterns in southern black short fiction.

Text-mining methods make it possible to quantify the percentages and thousands of words that comprise even 5 of the most anthologized stories. First, I will explain the extent to which African American Vernacular English, a defining characteristic of southern literature, contributes to language diversity and density in short fiction by Chesnut, Hurston, and Wright. Text-mining reveals the degrees and quantity of vernacular usage among the 31, 696 words that

comprise “The Goophered Grapevine,” “The Wife of His Youth,” “Sweat,” “Spunk,” “Almos’ a Man,” and “Big Boy Leaves Home.” The data analysis brings together a large number of well-known or frequently anthologized writers ranging from Chesnutt to Gaines in order to chart characteristics of southern short stories by black writers over an extended period of time.⁵²

Figure 2.1: Southern Short Story Tokens Count		
Tokens: The total number of word tokens in a document		
Author	Story	Tokens
Charles Chesnutt	“The Goophered Grapevine”	4,662
Charles Chesnutt	“The Wife of His Youth”	4,641
Zora Neale Hurston	“Sweat”	4,729
Zora Neale Hurston	“Spunk”	2,225
Zora Neale Hurston	“The Gilded Six-Bits”	4,642
Rudolph Fisher	“The City of Refuge”	5,418
Richard Wright	“Almos’ A Man”	4,419
Richard Wright	“Big Boy Leaves Home”	11,020

African American Vernacular English constitutes a crucial element of Chesnutt’s short fiction – a distinctive linguistic feature of his southern characters. Chesnutt’s “The Goophered Grapevine,” contains 4,662 words, and 1,100 of those words are unique – a fairly average occurrence of stories containing African American Vernacular English in their stories.⁵³ The lead character of Chesnutt’s first collection of short stories, *The Conjure Woman, and Other Conjure Tales* (1899), Uncle Julius, often uses words such as “en” (in), “ter” (to), “er” (or), “mars” (master), and “dat” (that). Text-mining reveals that Uncle Julius’s distinct language use, or his black vernacular, accounts for the nature of Chesnutt’s linguistic diversity. Indeed, 910 of the 1,100 unique words that appear in “The Goophered Grapevine” are uttered by Uncle Julius.

⁵² See figure 2.1

⁵³ In my dataset, stories containing over 3,000 words tend to have a minimum of 1,000 unique words. Chesnutt’s “The Wife of His Youth” contains 1,404 unique words; Hurston’s “Spunk” contains 773 unique words (word count 2,225) and “Sweat” contains 1,406 unique words; Wright’s “Big Boy Leaves Home” contains 1,935 unique words; Ellison’s “Battle Royal” contains 1,619 unique words.

Chesnutt presents the southern character's speaking style as a distinguishing cultural component of the story.

“The Goophered Grapevine” contains far more dialogues in vernacular than Chesnutt's stories published in *The Wife of His Youth and other Stories Along the Color Line* (1899). Chesnutt began presenting a more diverse set of words in his later writings. “The Wife of His Youth” contains 4,641 words and 1,401 unique words, which means that a higher percentage of unique words appear in that story than in “The Goophered Grapevine.” “The Wife of His Youth” uses over 302.5 different words in the story which also suggests a richer vocabulary when contrasted with the 244.1 language density of “The Goophered Grapevine.”⁵⁴ An excerpt from the poetry of 19th century poet Alfred Lord Tennyson, the language of the story's middle-class, African American protagonist—Mr. Ryder—the vernacular speech of a formerly enslaved black woman—Liza Jane—and the standard English of the narrator all account for the density of “The Wife of His Youth.” The language variants that Chesnutt chooses to employ in the story raises the possibility of introducing a multiplicity of words and phrases. The inclusion of African American characters who display different speaking styles increased the linguistic diversity of Chesnutt's writing. Text-mining software identifies the specific linguistic ratio of Chesnutt's short stories revealing how his language complexity evolved with his later works.

The value of a data driven approach to studying African American Vernacular English becomes more apparent when comparing the work of Hurston and Wright. Hurston and Wright both rely on African American Vernacular English as a defining feature of their short fiction. However, the variation between the writers in word density indicates the differences as to how

⁵⁴ Lexical density or word density constitutes the estimated measure of content per functional (grammatical) and lexical units (lexemes) in total. Language density formula = Number of tokens/number of types * 1000. In other words, the word density is a simple measurement of the documents word density—the higher the value, the richer the vocabulary.

the writers use language. On average, Hurston's most frequently anthologized short stories have a word density of 304.00. Wright's short stories, on the other hand, have an average word density of 207.00. Word densities gauge the level of linguistic variety in a given body of work. The higher the number indicates that a writer relies on a greater variety of words and combination of phrases and idioms. Text-mining software hones in on linguistic traits between Hurston's and Wright's usage of African American Vernacular English. Scholars, then, can distinguish converging and diverging artistic points based solely on linguistic patterns.

Text-mining software also reveals the extent to which character dialogues and narration styles contribute to a writer's linguistic range. While Wright's "Big Boy Leaves Home" has over 11,000 words, his story has a word density of 175.6 compared to Hurston's "Spunk," which contains 2,225 words with a density of 347.4. In "Big Boy Leaves Home," dialogues, on average, consist of about 8 - 12 words and include brief one-sentence responses between characters. The narrator of Wright's story, though, plays a pronounced role, conveying the inner sentiments of the characters and providing in-depth descriptions of the environment. By contrast, Hurston presents character dialogues that are consistently between 30-60 words where the protagonists and community onlookers provide commentary surrounding the action of the story. The point of view is limited third person; thus, the narrator provides a restricted outlook. The varying degrees of language density between Hurston's and Wright's stories do not suggest that one story is better than another; but instead, those varying degrees alert us to the alternative approaches of these two black southern writers.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ See Figure 2.2

Figure 2.2: Southern Short Story Word Density		
Density: A simple measurement of the documents word density—the higher the value, the richer the vocabulary.		
Formula: (Number of types)/ (Number of tokens) multiplied by 1000		
Author	Story	Density
Charles Chesnutt	“The Goophered Grapevine”	244.1
Charles Chesnutt	“The Wife of His Youth”	302.5
Zora Neale Hurston	“Sweat”	297.3
Zora Neale Hurston	“Spunk”	347.4
Zora Neale Hurston	“The Gilded Six-Bits”	268.4
Rudolph Fisher	“The City of Refuge”	314.7
Richard Wright	“Almos’ A Man”	238.1
Richard Wright	“Big Boy Leaves Home”	175.6

A quantitative text analysis of Hurston’s three most well-known short stories – “Spunk,” “Sweat,” and “The Gilded Six-Bits” – reveals the consequential linguistic outcomes of prominently casting southern black vernacular speakers in stories. Hurston relies heavily on her characters, not the narrator, to discuss the sequence of events in her stories and to describe the emotional responses of the protagonists. In comparison to several other well-known short stories, “Spunk” is relatively short.⁵⁶ Yet, Hurston’s story has a higher density than stories by Chesnutt, Ellison, and Alice Walker. The characters in “Spunk,” “Sweat,” and “The Gilded Six-Bits” employ a diverse set of phrases in their animated exchanges with each other, and even the communities of onlookers, who speak in the vernacular, contribute to the originality of words that appear in the stories. In “Sweat,” for example, a group of men gathered on a porch talking and generate 460 of the total 1406 unique words in the story. In other words, in just a brief, seemingly inconsequential moment from the story, a group of minor characters make a significant contribution to the language diversity of Hurston’s story.

⁵⁶ “Spunk” is relatively short, even for Hurston, as her short stories are typically from about 3,800- 5,000 words.

Jason Frydman, Matthew Heard, Ayesha K. Hardison highlighted Hurston's interest in concentrating on folk culture in her works. However, text-mining software highlights her facility with black vernacular speech by quantifying the extent to which she utilizes multiple characters to increase the number of unique words in a single story. A comprehensive accounting of how Hurston constructs multiple character dialogues in a single Florida community illuminates her capabilities of presenting a variety of distinct southern phrases. Hurston's use of vernacular language in short stories reveals her keen observations and understanding of the rich diversity of black southern language practices. Her training as an anthropologist allows her to enhance and showcase representations of black vernacular in short stories.

In addition to the prevalence and importance of vernacular words and phrasings to the nature of southern black short fiction, proper nouns, particularly character names, contribute to the linguistic patterns of the stories. The names "Ryder" and "Sam" are among the most frequently used unique words in "The Wife of His Youth," appearing over 17 times each. Two of the most recurring names in Hurston's "Sweat" are "Sykes" and "Delia" at 29 times. In Wright's "Big Boy Leaves Home," "Big Boy" appears 158 times; "Bobo" appears 91 times; "Buck" appears 38 times; and "Lester" appears 33 times.⁵⁷ The point of view of the story dictates the frequency of word usage. More so than first-person narratives, stories with third-person perspectives directly reference principle characters determining the regular occurrence of proper names. A relatively long, third-person narrator-driven short story like Wright's 11,000 word "Big Boy Leaves Home" contains a large number of proper nouns, and those names contribute to the overall unique words in the story. The names and nicknames that Wright uses

⁵⁷ In Wright's "Big Boy Leaves Home," Bobo, Buck, and Lester are killed early on in the story and as a result those names appear far less than the story's title protagonist, "Big Boy."

reflect the nature of his cultural knowledge and correspond to black southern and vernacular naming practices.

An extensive analysis of word usage in short stories also reveals a divergence between the presence of vernacular and similes. The higher volume of vernacular language present in canonical stories in my sample diminishes the likelihood that writers use “like” or “as” when making vivid comparisons between two ideas or objects. In short stories by Chesnutt, Hurston, and Wright, vernacular terms and phrases make up over 75% of the unique words in the stories; however, the word “like” is used under 20 times total for each writer and the word “as” is used under 40 times. For those writers, all of whom use vernacular to varying degrees, similes seem less integral to their stories.⁵⁸

Figure 2.3: Southern Short Story Word Types Count		
Types: The total number of word types in a document		
Author	Story	Types
Charles Chesnutt	“The Goophered Grapevine”	1,138
Charles Chesnutt	“The Wife of His Youth”	1,404
Zora Neale Hurston	“Sweat”	1,406
Zora Neale Hurston	“Spunk”	773
Zora Neale Hurston	“The Gilded Six-Bits”	1,246
Rudolph Fisher	“The City of Refuge”	1,705
Richard Wright	“Almos’ A Man”	1,052
Richard Wright	“Big Boy Leaves Home”	1,935

By contrast, Ellison and Walker, who rely less on vernacular language in their most known short stories, utilize a relatively larger number of similes. For instance, the word “like” is used in “Battle Royal” 30 times and “Everyday Use” 26 times, and the word “as” is used 22 times in “Everyday Use” and 73 times in “Battle Royal.” At one point, Walker’s narrator describes a “smiling, gray, sporty man *like* Johnny Carson,” and at another moment, the narrator announces that she “can kill and clean a hog as mercilessly as a man” (“Everyday Use” 1232,

⁵⁸ See Figure 2.3

1233). Ellison's unnamed protagonist describes the words of his valedictory address as being "bright as a flame," and he categorizes his experiences participating in the battle royal remarking, "My saliva became like hot bitter glue" as he "stumbled about like a baby or a drunken man" (1232). James Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues," Octavia Butler's "Bloodchild," Toni Cade Bambara's "Raymond's Run," and other short stories written primarily in Standard English and little to no vernacular rely heavily on comparisons using "like" and "as." A comprehensive account of the level of vernacular usage and rhetorical metaphors this group of black writers use highlights the linguistic convergences and divergences among a canonical group of short story writers over a nearly 70-year time frame and provides more access points for discussing differences among prominent black writers—especially esteemed figures such as Hurston and Wright.

Section 2: The Parameters of Southern Expression and Short Fiction by Zora Neale

Hurston, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Ernest Gaines, and Alice Walker

The critiques that Hurston and Wright offered of each others' works suggest the existence of competing, not merely complementary, approaches to representing black people.⁵⁹ In 1937, Wright critiqued *Their Eyes Were Watching God* noting that, "Miss Hurston can write, but her prose is cloaked in that facile sensuality that has dogged Negro expression since the days of Phillis Wheatley." He continues, "Her dialogue manages to catch the psychological movements

⁵⁹ I would argue that the intense conflict between Hurston and Wright derived more from both writers' desire to uncover the defining features of black expressive culture at a time when public interest in black life and culture was on the rise. Their personal differences aside, both Hurston and Wright explored different components of black life, which necessarily resulted in widely varying perspectives. Hurston's short story "Sweat" appeared in *Fire!!* in 1926, ten years before Wright's publication of "Big Boy Leaves Home," but there appears to have been no published reviews of Hurston's earlier work. Hurston's 1938 critique of Wright's collection of short stories appeared one year after his unfavorable review of her 1937 novel. The public airing of their fundamentally different perspectives took on the appearance of personal counter attacks. More likely, this reflects the intensely ideological nature of the 1930s and the debates over the role and function of art that were raging among America's public intellectuals and within the left movement more generally.

of the Negro folk-mind in their pure simplicity, but that's as far as it goes" (Wright, "Between Laughter and Tears"). In 1938, Hurston critiqued *Uncle Tom's Children* explaining, "Mr. Wright serves notice by his title that he speaks of people in revolt, and his stories are so grim that the Dismal Swamp of race hatred must be where they live. Not one act of understanding and sympathy comes to pass in the entire work" (Hurston, "Uncle Tom's Children"). Cheryl Higashida, Leigh Anne Duck, Jason Frydman, Brian Carr and Tova Cooper have offered useful examinations of Hurston's and Wright's reciprocal critiques.⁶⁰ What might be worth addressing, however, is that Hurston's upbringing in a relatively insular, all-black town in Florida sharply contrasted with Wright's experiences growing up amid dire, anti-black circumstances in Mississippi and Tennessee. These two writers serve as anchoring figures since their prominence in African American literature and culture results, as Thadious Davis notes, in "the recognition of the exclusion of a major aspect of self from the conception of identity and the determination to achieve redress by communal positionality within the landscape of the South" (26). No wonder Hurston's fiction focused on intra-racial, domestic quarrels while Wright's fiction revolved around white-black conflicts. In addition to Davis, over the last two decades, the publication of Houston Baker's *Turning South Again* and Trudier Harris's *Scary Mason-Dixon Line* provides added cultural and literary guidelines to engage the geographic and social significance of fictional narratives set in the South.

⁶⁰ Scholars have long documented the literary and personal feud between Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Wright in their scholarship. Wright critiqued Hurston for seemingly playing into a folk romanticism that was stereotypical and one that white reading audiences enjoyed. Hurston, on the other hand, critiqued Wright for his portrayals of the South linking his overwhelming use of violence to a hyper masculine narrative. Leigh Anne Duck's, "'Go there tuh know there:' Zora Neale Hurston and the Chronotope of the Folk American Literary History;" Jason Frydman's "Zora Neale Hurston, Biographical Criticism, and African Diasporic Vernacular Culture;" Cheryl Higashida's "Aunt Sue's Children: Re-viewing the Gender(ed) Politics of Richard Wright's Radicalism;" and Brian Carr's and Tova Cooper's "Zora Neale Hurston and Modernism at the Critical Limit" essays address the conflict between the two writers.

Hurston's "Sweat" takes place in a Florida town populated by African Americans. The protagonist of the story Delia Jones, a washwoman, supports her abusive husband, Sykes. In the end, Delia frees herself from the abuse of her husband by simply refusing to help him escape the fatal attack of a rattlesnake; Sykes had initially attempted to use the snake to kill his wife.⁶¹ Delia consciously refuses to assist her husband believing, "Oh well, whatever goes over the Devil's back, is got to come under his belly. Sometime or ruther, Sykes, like everybody else, is gointer reap his sowing" (Hurston, "Sweat"). Hurston's use of African American Vernacular English in a story set in Florida illustrates what might comprise southern black literature. Hurston's keen attention to language patterns corresponds to and showcases the colorful speech of rural southern black people.⁶²

Hurston's "Spunk," which also utilizes African American Vernacular English, apparently takes place in the same Florida town as "Sweat," for supporting characters Elijah Mosley, Joe Clarke, Dave Carter, Jim Merchant, and Walter Thomas appear in both stories. The story revolves around the confident Spunk Banks who steals the wife of the timid Joe Kanty. After Spunk is confronted by Joe, Spunk kills him in self-defense. Even though Spunk is tried and found not guilty, he still has to answer to a higher order. In the story's end, Spunk falls on a saw and his dying words suggest Joe came back from the dead to kill him: "It was Joe, 'Lige—the dirty sneak shoved me...he didn't dare come to mah face...but Ah'll git the son-of-a-wood louse

⁶¹ Diane Morgan's study of the mythology of snakes points to the Aesop fables as having a bearing on how American and African American folk culture view snakes. She recounts the tale of "The Farmer and the Freezing Viper" where after the farmer took compassion on a serpent and brought the snake into his house, the snake bit him and brought about his death. The moral of the story is "the greatest kindness will not bind the ungrateful." Morgan indicates "this cross cultural tale" paints snakes as sly and treacherous creatures in the cultural memory of diverse groups of people (*Snakes in Myth, Magic, and History*, 2008, 47).

⁶² Jason Frydman proposes that Hurston's short fiction was like that of a black preacher who "mediates back and forth between the King James Bible and the vernacular culture of black and white communities." Particularly, in "Sweat," Hurston fuses folklore and Judeo-Christian traditions to describe Delia's social position in the narrative and the options by which she may address her hardships ("Zora Neale Hurston, Biographical Criticism, and African Diasporic Vernacular Culture," 2009, 106).

soon's Ah get there an' make hell too hot for him...Ah felt him shove me...!" (31). Hurston's tall tale of social conflicts and supernatural events promote folklore as an important feature of southern black literature.⁶³ The autobiographical writings of Frederick Douglass, Uncle Remus tales, the early short stories of Charles Chesnutt, and W.E.B. DuBois all suggest, to varying degrees that superstitious beliefs were integral to narratives about the South, especially as far as black people and culture were concerned. Hurston's "Spunk" contributes to the practice of incorporating black folklore into representations of the South.⁶⁴

For Wright, the South represents the site of tense racial interactions. His protagonists' interactions with white people in southern environments are, among other things, matters of life and death as they often led to violent confrontations and black flight. "Big Boy Leaves Home" (1936), set in an unidentified southern town, focuses on a teenage boy who has to flee for his life after he kills a white man in self-defense. To avoid the revenge from white people that follows the incident, Big Boy, with the support and encouragement of the community, must leave his southern home on a train bound for Chicago. The threat of white violence makes flight or escape an important choice for black people in the story.⁶⁵ Placing Big Boy in a troubling, racially

⁶³ Folk traditions involving supernatural events have long been used by black writers across multiple genres. In Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, he mentions using a root to aid him in protection. While he seems to be somewhat dismissive of the superstitious tradition, he also credits the root for helping him. In addition, Charles Chesnutt's first collection of short stories *The Conjure Woman, and Other Conjure Tales*, emphasize the role that conjuring plays in a plantation tradition and folk life of African Americans.

⁶⁴ Trudier Harris argues that African American literature employs the use of folklore to emphasize a concern with the "effect of the past upon the present. With the individual's place in the larger community, and with questions of good and evil, right and wrong, that transcend traditional morality" (*Fiction and Folklore*, 1993, 14).

⁶⁵ Richard Wright uses "flight" as a recurring thematic trope throughout his writing. For instance, his novel *Native Son*'s second section is titled "Flight" as the story's protagonist Bigger Thomas tries to escape before detectives discovered he is responsible for the death of Mary Dalton. Similar to Bigger Thomas, Big Boy also chooses "flight" as a means of escaping punishment for a murder (*Native Son*, 1998).

charged and potentially fatal situation in the South allows Wright to dramatize the racial problems of the region.⁶⁶

Wright's "Bright and Morning Star" also depicts intense violence between black and white characters in a southern environment. After a local communist branch is infiltrated by the local Sheriff, the story's protagonist, Sue, is confronted and beaten by the Sheriff for refusing to tell the whereabouts of her son, Johnny-Boy, and name other members of the organization. Realizing that she may have compromised her fellow comrades by revealing information to her white fellow communist member Booker—who is also the Sheriff's informant—Sue commits herself to saving her son and comrades from danger. Sue goes off searching for her son who was being tortured by the Sheriff. Once Booker shows up, Sue shoots him provoking the Sheriff to first kill Johnny-Boy and then Sue. The dark and violent nature of Wright's story creates a sense of terror and suspense that lends insight into the perspectives of Black communist members living in the South. Moreover, Wright's illustrations of the physical and political suppression of black people in a southern town depict the inhumane ways white people used to promote the systematic disenfranchisement of black people.

Although Hurston concentrates on folk culture and Wright focuses on black-white conflicts, both writers share a common regional setting: the South. Despite the perceived ideological differences between Hurston and Wright, anthologies regularly include both writers' southern-based short fiction.⁶⁷ Regardless of their contrasting approaches, the presentation of

⁶⁶ Robin Lucy characterizes Wright's short fiction as being "defined by geographical location, class, and gender—as southern and rural, poor, and most often male—and that this construct underwrote a discourse of black difference and, therefore, of racial identity" ("Flying Home," 2007, 258).

⁶⁷ Wright was concerned to use literature as a weapon, a means of expressing the constant threats that impede upon the lives of black people, which he believed to be of little concern to Hurston. Instead, Hurston's main concern was to defend folk traditions and analyze the inner dynamics of African Americans communities and relationships, where the presence of whites is much less a factor. Even though the fierce opposition to the particular writing styles

Hurston and Wright as southern black writers derives from the repeated circulation of their short fiction.

Hurston’s “Sweat” and Wright’s “Almos’ a Man” appear in numerous anthologies over the last 47 years: Hurston’s “Sweat” in 14 anthologies and Wright’s “Almos’ a Man” in 8. Hurston’s and Wright’s short fiction constitute important cornerstones in southern black literature.⁶⁸

Figure 2.4: Southern Short Story Characteristics

Story	Author	Time Period	Duration of Action	Geographic Region	City or Rural	Socioeconomic Conditions	Levels of Violence
“Spunk”	Zora Neale Hurston	1900-1910s	1 Week	Unnamed Florida Town	Rural	Working Poor	Mild (Murder; mild description)
“Sweat”	Zora Neale Hurston	1900-1910s	1 Week	Unnamed Florida Town	Rural	Working Poor	Low-Mild (Death; mild description)
“Big Boy Leaves Home”	Richard Wright	1930s	1 Day	Unnamed Southern Town	Rural	Working Poor	High (Murder; Vivid description)
“Battle Royal”	Ralph Ellison	Early 1930s	1 Day	Unnamed Alabama Town	City	Lower Middle Class	High (Intense Boxing Match)
“The Sky is Gray”	Ernest J. Gaines	Late 1930s/Early 1940s	2-3 Days	Unnamed Louisiana Town (Near Bayonne)	Rural	Working Poor	Low
“Everyday Use”	Alice Walker	Early 1970s	1 Day	Unnamed Georgia Town	Rural	Working Poor	None

Similarly, anthologies routinely cast Ralph Ellison as a southern writer, despite the difference in his personal history and perspective in relation to Hurston and Wright. Ellison was born in Oklahoma and spent much of his life in New York City, although he went to college in the South, the organizing center of his novel and short story “Battle Royal.” In *Heroism and the Black Intellectual*, Jerry Gafio Watts explains, “When reading Ellison’s perceptions of the South, one must remember that he did not experience the South from the vantage point of a native black southerner.” According to Watts, “Ellison’s sense of possibility was decidedly that of a black

of each author stems from the different authorial vantage points on representations of black life, we need to pay attention to other factors in order to fully understand this argument.

⁶⁸ See Figure 2.4

raised outside the Deep South” (86). Still, in the biographical sketch for *The Literature of the American South: A Norton Anthology*, editors William Andrews, Minrose Gwin, and Trudier Harris assign Ellison the status as a “literary relative” to Richard Wright and describe “Ellison’s ability to present ambiguity and ambivalence, combined with approval and disdain. . . for one of the most engaging and provocative portraits in American literature of black life on southern soil” (699). In his biography of Ellison, Rampersad notes that the first section of *Invisible Man* “is its finest,” while the chapters based on the protagonist’s time in New York “is scarcely less brilliant” (235). That Rampersad considers the southern section of the novel to be superior to the northern section confirms the importance of the South in the black literary and cultural imagination. The frequent inclusion of “Battle Royal” in anthologies only adds to value scholars and writers give to the South as place.

In “Battle Royal,” the unnamed black male protagonist gives a speech to the leading white men citizens in an unnamed Alabama town, after having recently graduated high school. When he arrives, he finds that he must first engage in a boxing match with 9 other black males for the amusement of the white men. After the young men witness a naked white lady with an American flag, the spectators invite the protagonist and the others to compete for golden coins. Without any warning, the protagonist feels “a hot, violent force [that] tore through my body, shaking me like a wet rat. The rug was electrified,” much to the pleasure of the powerful white men (1561). When he received permission to deliver his prepared speech, the men seemed uninterested until the protagonist accidentally says “social equality” – an idea that apparently threatened to unsettle the racial hierarchy that whites in the society preferred (1563). “Battle

Royal” serves as an *exposé concerning the* extent to which Southern white men exert social and physical control over the young black men and compel them to humiliate themselves.⁶⁹

Canonical southern short fiction by white and black writers depicts various instances of violence in creative and yet realistic ways. According to David Rachels, “The prevalence of fistfights in southern literature reflects the violence of southern culture, which has been variously attributed to the effects of temperature, poverty, and slavery” (453). Paul Laurence Dunbar’s “The Lynching of Jube Benson,” Faulkner’s “That Evening Sun,” Tennessee Williams’s “Desire and the Black Masseur,” Flannery O’Connor’s “Revelation,” and Gayl Jones’s “White Rat” suggest the diverse ways that writers characterize those troubling, physical conflicts in their short fiction. Similarly, physical confrontations and bodily harm are central to the action in Hurston’s “Sweat,” Wright’s “Big Boy Leaves Home” and Ellison’s “Battle Royal.” Hurston’s “Sweat” uses violence to illustrate the intense marital discord between Delia and Sykes. In “Big Boy Leaves Home,” Wright presents an implicit black-white divide that reveals the lengths a black boy will go to protect himself even if it means taking up arms against an enraged white man. In Ellison’s “Battle Royal,” white men can orchestrate a situation where black boys do harm to other black boys, painfully humiliating themselves for the promise of money. All three stories depict variations of violent acts and in the process extend the ideas of southern literature as well as the South as the place for complex negotiations with physical confrontation.

Ernest Gaines’s widely anthologized “The Sky is Gray” includes an act of violence, but the more notable feature of the short story involves generous cooperation between a black family and white couple. Gaines’s story depicts a coming-of-age experience of a young black boy,

⁶⁹ W.E.B. DuBois coined the phrase “double-consciousness,” which refers to the “sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.” The “twoness” of being both an American and an African American also comes forward in the language aspect and author’s use of AAVE and Standard English dialect (*Souls of Black Folk*, 1999, 214).

James, in rural Louisiana. Going to get his tooth pulled at a dentist's office, James travels with his mother from their rural home to Bayonne—a fictive town that appears in multiple works by Gaines. While waiting in the dentist's office, James overhears a conversation between a preacher and a college student where the student remarks, "You believe in God because a man told you to believe in God...A white man told you to believe in God. And why? To keep you ignorant so he can keep his feet on your neck." Feeling disrespected by the college student, the "Preacher just hauls back and hit him in the face. The boy falls back 'gainst the wall, but he straightens up and looks right back at that preacher" (2332-3). The preacher felt the college student insulted his intelligence and religious beliefs in addition to embarrassing him in a waiting room full of people. The slap represented an opportunity for the preacher to regain social control while also displaying he was more powerful and had an upper hand over the student. Gaines uses an instance of violence to highlight intra-racial generational divides over beliefs. Unlike Wright and Ellison, Gaines is not directly critiquing white supremacy. Like Hurston, Gaines showcases interactions among black people; however, the central conflict for Gaines relates to opposing points of view.

Despite the many narratives highlighting the conflicts between southern black and white people, Gaines presents a touching interracial scene devoid of the typical contentiousness associated with the South. In "The Sky is Gray," James and his mother encounter an elderly white woman shopowner who seems to take pity on them wondering around in the cold who offers them food and shelter as they wait for the office to reopen. James' mother informs the woman, "We don't take no handout," as the shop owner quickly responds, "I'm not handing out anything." They agree to have James move the garbage bins since her husband is sick, but not before the white lady reminds James and his mother, "Not unless you eat... I'm old, but I have

my pride, too, you know” (2342). As James moves the canisters, he thinks to himself. “I’m sure the can’s empty. I’m sure she could’ve carried it herself” (2343). The endearing interaction between James and the elder white woman reveals that not all black short story writers chose to present unsettling relationships between black and white southerners. The interracial cooperation that takes place in “The Sky is Gray” is unusual given the prevalence of racism among frequently anthologized stories.⁷⁰

Minrose C. Gwin and Trudier Harris note that Gaines has “almost singlehandedly ensconced Louisiana ... in the imaginations of American readers” since his fiction “has given readers insights into the incredible diversity within the difference that usually defines southern territory” (885). William R. Nash, Maria R. Bloshteyn, Terrence Tucker are among several scholars who point out that Gaines’s importance in defining the South as place lies in his ability to capture the diversity of opinions and social outlooks in his case of Louisiana characters.⁷¹ John Lang notes, “Like Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha County, Gaines’s rural St. Raphael Parish, with its principal town of Bayonne, gives his fiction a unifying setting and reinforces his characteristic social realism” (307). Perhaps, even more notable, “The Sky is Gray” as well as Gaines’s novels *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (1971) and *A Lesson Before Dying* (1993), all set in Louisiana, have been adapted to films.⁷² The release of these films helped to raise the visibility of Gaines as a fiction writer and thereby lifted the significance of Louisiana among general

⁷⁰ Often times, stories by black writers usually deal with interracial conflicts. Richard Wright’s body of short stories usually deal with black people defending themselves against the racist advances of white people. Similarly, Ralph Ellison’s “Battle Royal” highlights the effects of institutional racism as the white men orchestrate for a group of black boys to fight one another.

⁷¹ Ernest Gaines larger body of work usually uses Louisiana as a setting. He reveals a number of social, economic, and political concerns through the characters. Even though most of Gaines’s central characters in his stories are black, he also uses white characters to reveal the diversity of his hometown.

⁷² The movie based on *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* was one of the first made-for-tv movies to deal with the social and psychological depths of African American characters. The film, released three years before the ground-breaking television miniseries *Roots*, gained a large viewership during its premiere.

audiences. The continued circulation of “The Sky is Gray” over the last 51 years has contributed to the presence of Louisiana on the landscape of southern black short fiction.

Similar to Hurston and Gaines, the widespread circulation of Walker’s “Everyday Use” contributes to the growing body of southern black rural short fiction. Like Hurston, Walker also concentrates on intra-racial tensions among African Americans. Set in a rural region presumably in the South, the protagonist, “Mama,” of “Everyday Use” must resolve a dispute between her daughters—Maggie and Dee (Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo). During a visit home, Dee takes possession of family heirlooms even though her mother already promised them to the younger Maggie. Dee, who has become empowered if not arrogant in her college education, scoffs at the idea that Maggie might use a quilt for “everyday use” as opposed to displaying the object as an art piece. Walker highlights a growing divide among black women and families as their educational opportunities increase and their outlooks diverge. Walker’s personal experiences leaving her rural home first to attend Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, and then to Sarah Lawrence in New York likely gave her insight into the familial tensions that might emerge as a young black woman from an impoverished background transforms as her education expands. The story sympathizes with the point of view Mama and Maggie share, suggesting that place, the rural folk values, matter.

According to Thadious Davis, scholars typically overlook Walker’s “fictional examination of racial and regional identity, along with gender identity, and her portrayal of a contemporary need to reinstate a black southern experience into cultural and historical contexts despite the reality of pain that a truthful reinstatement necessarily bears” (41-2). Actually, scholars have demonstrated an awareness of Walker’s explorations of gender; however, considerations of Walker as a southern black short story writer are less evident in the scholarly

discourse even as anthologies regularly include “Everyday Use.” Walker’s story is one of the few widely read short stories to only include black women characters. That those black women are southern testifies to Walker’s interest in the convergence of race, gender, and region. Walker is, as biographical sketches regularly note, one of our most prominent writers; consequently, she is a prominent writer who continually situates her characters in rural southern settings.

Section 3: New Southern Studies and African American Short Stories

In 2001, scholars Houston Baker and Dana Nelson proposed the idea of a “new southern studies” as a way of reconfiguring “our familiar notions of Good (or desperately bad) Old Southern White Men telling stories on the porch, protecting white women, and being friends to the Negro” (232). Over the past decade, Angie Maxwell, Zandria F. Robinson, Jon Smith, Riché Richardson, Deborah Barker, Kathryn McKee, and others have contributed to the scholarly conversations under the label New Southern Studies. Similar to the driving premise of Houston Baker’s *Turning South Again*, the trauma of historical memories, the lived experiences in southern environments, and the stories of family members or close acquaintances all contribute to the social dimensions of fictional representations of the South. Baker and others concentrate on the intersections of race, regional identity, gender, objectification of the body, and socio-economic conditions, and they established a loosely related paradigm for examining and theorizing the South in contemporary scholarly discourses.⁷³ Scholars associated with new southern studies have typically concentrated on novels, film, and music, but the developing conversations have not yet devoted substantial attention to short fiction by black writers.

⁷³ The University of Georgia Press, capitalizing off of the renewed interest of the South in scholarly debates produced a series on New Southern Studies. In this series, a notable publications that dealt with the intersections of region and literature helped to place black writers at the forefront of Southern literature. Publications such as Riché Richardson’s *Black Masculinity and the U.S. South: From Uncle Tom to Gangsta*, Keith Cartwright’s *Sacral Grooves, Limbo Gateways :Travels in Deep Southern Time, Circum-Caribbean Space, Afro-creole Authority*, Arthur Remillard’s *Southern Civil Religions: Imagining the Good Society in the Post-Reconstruction Era*, and Leigh Anne Duck’s *The Nation’s Region: Southern Modernism, Segregation, and U.S. Nationalism* all appeared in the series.

Charting the nature and implications of southern short fiction enhances our understanding of how New Southern Studies creates alternative paradigms for analyzing short stories, and conversely, how short stories by black writers extend the parameters of new southern studies.

The use of African American Vernacular English distinguishes the South from other geographic regions, and the appearance of that distinctive language in short fiction reveals how language and narrative styles—over an extended period of time—are a key point of reference. African American Vernacular English varies across the country and appears in a variety of literary settings; however, short stories that take place in or feature characters from the South are more likely to showcase black vernacular speech than stories set in other areas. Despite their different backgrounds, Chesnutt, Rudolph Fisher, Hurston, Wright, Ellison, Walker, and Edward P. Jones all display black vernacular language in their short fiction. The speakers in Hurston’s “Sweat,” “Spunk,” and “The Gilded Six-Bits” all use Black Vernacular English to enhance the character dialogue of the rural Florida setting. Fisher’s “City of Refuge” (1925) is set in New York City, yet the vernacular speech of the protagonist King Solomon Gillis serves to highlight his North Carolina origins. Similarly, the southern-born characters in Jones’s “All Aunt Hagar’s Children” (2003), set in the Washington D.C., are identifiable by their vernacular speech patterns as well. African American Vernacular English is as one artistic strategy writers use to confirm the realism of their work and their solidarity with the South as a region in the broadest possible way.⁷⁴

Southern black short fiction is set in multiple areas across the region providing readers with snapshots of Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Georgia, and unidentified towns in apparent hostile southern environments. William Melvin Kelley’s “A Visit to Grandmother” is set in

⁷⁴ See figure 2.5

Tennessee; Zora Neale Hurston’s “Drenched in Light” is set in Florida; Gayl Jones’s “Jevata” is set in Kentucky; and Percival Everett’s “The Appropriation of Cultures,” is set in South Carolina. The South is not a single fixed location, but rather an expansive territory with many possible settings. Jessica Adams’s *Wounds of Returning: Race, Memory, and Property on the Postslavery Plantation* on the commodification of black bodies from period to the present-day and Jay Watson’s *Reading for the Body* on how author’s representations of the human body shapes cultural and political ideas about the South address the idea of diverse southern landscapes in fiction. The many settings and locales in southern black short fiction reveal that African American writers have collectively depicted aspects of the South’s regional diversity. Overall, southern black short fiction unsettles the notion of the South as a monolithic location.

Figure 2.5: Southern Short Story Conventions

Story	Author	Narrative Perspective	Narrator Speaks in AAVE	Characters Speak in AAVE	Structure/Set Up
“Spunk”	Zora Neale Hurston	Third Person	No	Yes	4 Sections
“Sweat”	Zora Neale Hurston	Third Person	No	Yes	2 Sections
“Big Boy Leaves Home”	Richard Wright	Third Person	Yes	Yes	5 Sections
“Battle Royal”	Ralph Ellison	First Person	No	No	1 Continuous Narrative
“The Sky is Gray”	Ernest J. Gaines	First Person	Yes	Yes	13 Sections
“Everyday Use”	Alice Walker	First Person	Yes	Yes	5 Sections

Southern black short fiction also reveals writers’ various perspectives. Wright and Ellison reveal the tense racial negotiations that characterize their perspectives of the South, while Hurston and Walker emphasize the interactions among black characters in rural environments. For Gaines, rural Louisiana contains intra-racial conflict and interracial harmony. Percival Everett imagines a region where black people re-appropriate racist symbols such as the

confederate flag in a rural South Carolina environment, and Gayl Jones presents narratives that deal with the mental and emotional terrain of modern day black folk culture in Kentucky. Madhu Dubey, who has produced work on geography and the post-modern American South, has explained that “it is no accident that a resurgent regionalism celebrating the distinct folk culture of the South has emerged precisely as the South is becoming a fully industrialized and urban region” (354). The diverse perspectives that emerge among black writers concentrating on the south correspond to the economic growth and people’s ability to view the South as a cultured region and folk culture as a sophisticated art form.

Ironically, while the South is the site of much of Black literature, New York City is arguably the single most important city in the production of this literature. Hurston, Wright, Ellison, and Walker, wrote their most frequently anthologized short stories, while living in New York City. New York City, as the center of commercial publishing, helped raise the visibility of those writers whose work would become hallmarks of southern literature. Many southern-born black writers seemed to have been shaped by their departures from their home region, while securing professional opportunities in New York. While delivering a lecture at Yale on November 2, 1983, James Baldwin described the significance of geography as it relates to Wright’s life adding, “I was not born in Mississippi; I was born in New York. And I did not leave Mississippi to go to ... endure all that. I was much too young to realize what I was looking at really. But, that’s a journey. To go from Mississippi to Chicago to New York...”⁷⁵ Wright as well as Hurston, James Weldon Johnson, Arna Bontemps, and Alice Dunbar Nelson migrated from their southern home environments to New York City at various times between 1901 and 1925. New York City became so central to black writing that the Harlem Renaissance, linking place and content, would become a permanent period in American literary history. Writers who traveled to or were already living in New York City found the influence of the influx of southern blacks difficult to ignore.

⁷⁵ Baldwin, James. “James Baldwin on Richard Wright,” Yale University. 2 November 1983.

Even as the Harlem Renaissance subsided, New York still remained a central location for African American artistic production and as a prime destination for southern-born writers as Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Alice Walker, Sonia Sanchez, and Maya Angelou at key points in their careers.⁷⁶

Figure 2.6: Southern Short Stories—Publication Information

Story	Author	Publication	Year
“Spunk”	Zora Neale Hurston	<i>The New Negro</i>	1925
“Sweat”	Zora Neale Hurston	<i>Fire!!</i>	1926
“Big Boy Leaves Home”	Richard Wright	<i>The New Caravan</i>	1936
“Bright and Morning Star”	Richard Wright	<i>Uncle Tom's Children</i> (1940 Reissue)	1940
“Battle Royal”	Ralph Ellison	<i>Horizon</i>	October 1947
“The Man Who Was Almost a Man”	Richard Wright	<i>Eight Men</i>	1961
“The Sky is Gray”	Ernest J. Gaines	<i>Negro Digest</i>	August 1963
“Everyday Use”	Alice Walker	<i>In Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Women</i>	1973

During the mid to late 1960s, the increased visibility of African American literary and cultural activities, often associated with the Black Arts Movement, highlighted New York City as a central location for black artistic production. Although James Smethurst, in his book *The Black Arts Movement*, demonstrates that the movement was truly a national movement with significant events taking place across the country. Many narratives nonetheless privilege New York City.⁷⁷ The privileging of New York City and the Northeast led several southern writers and organizers to re-assert the importance of the South. Long before the emergence of New Southern Studies, groups of scholars, including Addison Gayle, Blyden Jackson, Houston Baker,

⁷⁶ See Figure 2.6

⁷⁷ James Smethurst’s study of the *Black Arts Movement* explained how New York City was the cultural outpost for the literary period; however, the Cold War climate, decolonization, and after effects of the Civil Rights Movement helped the movement gain momentum nationwide. In addition to Smethurst’s work, Howard Rambsy, II, Amy Abugo Ongir, Lisa Gail Collins, Margo Natalie Crawford, and Cheryl Clarke have also done work on the Black Arts Movement.

William L. Andrews, Margaret Walker, Trudier Harris, Thadious Davis, made the case during the 1970s that the South had been relegated to literary obscurity because of the emphasis on urban social and artistic movements. In his 1974 essay, “Reclaiming the Southern Experience,” Gayle reminded readers that the South was changing, and instead of people living “complacently with fear and oppression,” he was witnessing a “Black South where Black Nationalism is closer to achieving actuality than anywhere else in America” (22). Houston Baker echoed Gayle’s comments about the shifting southern landscape in *Long Black Song* who wrote, “Southern Negroes have drawn upon all these lores, and added materials from their own environment and experience to produce a highly diversified and culturally independent folk tradition” (20, *Long Black Song*). The push to redefine what constitutes southern literature and show thematic evolutions among writers anticipated New Southern Studies and its interrogation of how conceptions of the South were informed in response to urban literary movements.

Alice Walker’s 1975 essay “In Search of Zora Neale Hurston” along with Robert Hemenway’s *New York Times* bestselling *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography* prompted sustained interest in the author of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Coming at the height of the feminist movement, Walker’s essay and the subsequent studies on Hurston gave Hurston several cultural and ideological affiliations that led to her complete revival. In her essay, Walker takes the time to describe Hurston’s all-black hometown: “Eatonville has lived for such a long time in my imagination that I can hardly believe it will be found existing in its own right” (396).

Walker’s interest in Hurston’s hometown led other scholars and critics to pay more attention to Florida which sometimes falls outside of the purview of general conceptions of the American South. Walker and Robert Hemenway had provided enough information for Eatonville to gain increased significance as one of the most well-known towns in African American literary

discourse. In 1989, the inaugural Zora Neale Hurston Festival took place, becoming an annual event that brought further attention to the town, , and by 1990, Eatonville was home to the Zora Neale Hurston Museum of Fine Arts.

New Southern Studies provides new paradigms for engaging the fiction of Hurston, Wright, and other major southern authors who consequently produced short fiction. Their stories, which showcase black vernacular speech and collectively cover a variety of southern settings, provides more nuanced interpretations of what thematic factors constitute southern literature. In addition, Chesnutt, Fisher, Alice Childress, and Jones present southern-born characters in non-southern environments in their stories, thus pushing the boundaries of southern literature in ways that are compatible with New Southern Studies. Finally, commentary and scholarship produced during the 1970s on southern black writers and at least one of their hometowns served as a precursor for the renewed explorations of the South that Baker and Nelson called for in 2001. The conversations concerning race, racism, and gender raised by scholars associated with new southern studies illuminate our analyses of southern black short fiction. At the same time, the varied illustrations of specific regions in the South and the multiple renderings of various historical periods in stories by black writers offer useful possibilities for new southern studies.

Conclusion

The comparison of Hurston's and Wright's fiction long rested on their conflict. An examination of how these figures use language, however, helps to add more specificity as to how they rhetorically differ from one another. Moreover, scholars and readers gain insight into how the authorial choices these two writers made contribute to their unique storytelling abilities and also how their work created literary periods based on themes and historical content. Even though Hurston and Wright represent only two southern writers, anthologists tend to align contemporary

figures ranging from Ellison to Gaines to Walker with them in order to reaffirm the broad boundaries and thematic groupings in African American literature. Given the importance of comparative work—especially the evolving study on southern literature as evidenced by the scholarship by Baker, Harris, and Davis—text mining allows us to notably develop a sense of the fine or specific differences among southern black short story writers. That is, only with text mining can we get a clear sense of the diverse language density of southern writers and writers from other locales.

Text mining software helps us to account in more precise ways issues concerning the language utilized by black short story writers. Text mining software facilitates in pinpointing the language practices of southern black writers in a way that was not possible before. This process allows scholars to really document and specify the dimensions of language use by writers. Charting the technical issues regarding language enhances thematic analysis of black short stories and helps to unsettle the broad category of southern literature and highlight differences between fictional renderings of Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia. Text-mining software helps to create tables that outline the frequency of recurring trends and shifts in presentation. These findings become especially important when analyzing works by southern writers—Hurston and Wright, whose competing interests helped to create these broad parameters for studying African American literature.

Chapter 3 New York State of Mind: Text-Mining Urban Environments

Introduction

In *Writing New York: A Literary Anthology*, editor Phillip Lopate explains, “Almost every major American author, if not a New Yorker, at least went through a New York phase... and countless distinguished visitors left a literary record of their sojourns” (XVII). Lopate’s remarks seem especially relevant when considering place as a crucial factors in shaping the thematic and publication history of African American literature. On the one hand, Zora Neale Hurston’s interactions with Charles Johnson and Richard Wright’s relationship with Paul Reynolds, Jr., led to important publication opportunities. Even though the support of numerous people was important, living in New York—at a particular historical period—gave them access to literary agents, editors, publishers, a cohort of black literary and visual artists, and sizable of black people concentrated in a central, well-known location. At the same time, stories that have been frequently anthologized over the past 30 years such as Rudolph Fisher’s “City of Refuge,” James Baldwin’s “Sonny’s Blues,” Henry Dumas’s “Will the Circle Be Unbroken,” Toni Cade Bambara’s “The Lesson,” and Paule Marshall’s “Paule,” have helped solidify the presence of New York City within the landscape of black literature. Many writers have used New York City as a setting; however, the recurrence of Fisher’s, Baldwin’s, and Bambara’s stories have made them the stories that students read in survey courses, just as it has made New York a subject of investigation and reference in scholarly discussions of the literature. Unlike the previous chapter on Southern literature, my attention to short stories set in New York City contains several opportunities. Even though there is a considerable amount of attention and scholarship placed on the Harlem Renaissance and Black Arts Movement, very few studies exist that seek to define the broad parameters and characteristics that generally describe urban short fiction. This project

broadens the scope of short fiction by using digital tools to better account for how authorial and editorial choices help to shape the larger thematic history of black short fiction set in New York.

My examinations of the most frequently anthologized short stories that are set in New York spanning over 89 years identify characteristics that are most commonly associated with black short stories set in urban environments. For instance, thematic characteristics such as the various traits of neighborhoods and environments in New York ranging from the music and vibrant jazz scenes in Fisher's "City of Refuge" and Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues" to economic and social segregation in Bambara's "The Lesson" and Danticat's "Seven" characterize black urban fiction. In addition, I will focus on how writers make use of specific street names and landmarks in their writing to give a sense of realism to their stories. Text-mining software will again assist me in paying attention to character movements in particular stories and its significance to the action of the story and overall plot. My use of text-mining software in my investigation of the New York short stories will help me to hone in on those specific words and linguistic characteristics that appear across different historical periods. The technology will facilitate my ability to quantify and analyze over 26,000 words in short stories by Fisher, Baldwin, and Bambara and reveal similarities over an 89 year literary history.

While the Harlem Renaissance and Black Arts Movement serve as important moments in New York's black literary history, the city has also been home to a number of major writers. W.E.B. DuBois, Rudolph Fisher, Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Henry Dumas, Toni Morrison, Toni Cade Bambara, and others have resided in New York City during notable points in their careers. No other specific location has so many prominent black writers in a single place. The presence of black major writers in a single geographic location contributed to the immense cultural explosion of literature during the

Harlem Renaissance, Black Arts Movement, and other select moments in history. New York as a central location for artists facilitated Wallace Thurman, Zora Neale Hurston, Aaron Douglas, John P. Davis, Richard Bruce Nugent, Gwendolyn Bennett, Lewis Grandison Alexander, Countee Cullen, and Langston Hughes collaborating on *Fire!!* in 1926. Baraka's and Larry Neal's edited collection *Black Fire*, which contained over 180 selections from 75 cultural and political leaders during the 1960s, was also published in New York as a direct result of the Black Arts Movement. New York, as a site of cultural production for black art, makes the location especially important in discussions and scholarship of African American literature.

Howard Ramsby, II, notes, "The operation of the Black Arts School in Harlem was relatively brief; however, the spirit of activism and explosiveness expressed by those black artists 'swinging down Lenox Avenue' typified the vitality and outlook of African American writers and organizers across the country during the time period." Ramsby contends that writers sought "to become active on multiple fronts in the processes of artistic production" (1).⁷⁸ Other scholars such as James Smethurst, Lisa Gail Collins, Margo Crawford, Amy Abugo Ongiri, and David Robson shed light on how artists during the movement expanded the reading demographic of African American literature and the mediums through which people gained access to their writings. Even though national events related to the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power Movement across the country contributed to the Black Arts Era, New York City was the home to many writers, activists, and publishing institutions. The assassination of Malcolm X encouraged Amiri Baraka to move uptown and found the Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School (BARTS).

⁷⁸ Howard Ramsby notes during the Black Arts Movement, "Highlighting the connections between musical and literary forms was especially important for black poets, many of whom preferred to align themselves and their work with African American sonic traditions as opposed to what they perceived as the more restricting conventions of white or Eurocentric literary traditions." The impetus for the Black Arts Movement stemmed from black artists' beliefs that African American culture must be defined and validated by what black writers saw as important to the larger literary and cultural tradition. (*The Black Arts Enterprise*, 2011, 4).

Baraka's move positioned Harlem as central headquarters for the burgeoning artistic movement which further solidified the importance of New York as a significant geographic location in the production of contemporary black literature during the 1960s.⁷⁹ The literary works and publishing endeavors of Amiri Baraka, Haki Madhubuti, and Toni Cade Bambara helped to once again underscore New York City as a crucial location for the production of black writing.

Robert Lee explains, "The only fact about Harlem ... may be its intractability, its undiminished refusal to be accommodated by any single explanation." He continues, "That, one supposes and readily celebrates, accounts for why there have been so many Harlems on the mind—be they expressed in the novel or in any of the abundant other forms inspired by the enduring black First City of America" (124). Lee's descriptions signal the significance of Harlem in the historical and artistic imaginations of black people. New York City served as a destination for many black people during the Great Migration and also the location for many cultural movements. The emphasis on Harlem, over time, has contributed to that neighborhood's importance in African American literary and cultural history.

Section 1: Text-Mining and NYC Short Stories

The authorial choices and rhetorical strategies writers employ in writings about New York City influence widespread impressions of urban areas—especially Harlem. Text-mining software yields considerable information about short stories set in New York City by quantifying the movements of characters across actual locations in the city and by pinpointing distinguishing word and language choices associated with life in urban environments. In particular, text-mining

⁷⁹ Tony Bolden notes, in terms of defining black art and black aesthetics, "Part of the problem stemmed from the limited scope of the debates which prescribed a single aesthetic rather than a multitude of interrelated aesthetics that reflect and refract transposed African cultures in American in various geopolitical contexts." As a result, many problems "were regional problems of regional privilege as well as masculinism, which culminated in the marginalization of gender issues" (*Afro-Blue*, 2004, 22).

highlights how a high number of characters as well as actual locations increase the word density and distinct word usage in a city context in comparison to rural settings. The presence of several children, who play the dozens when interacting with each other in “The Lesson” and “Raymond’s Run,” contribute to the high level of language diversity in Bambara’s short fiction.⁸⁰ Baldwin’s use of specific street and neighborhood names contributes to the level of unique words in his stories. Besides thematic differences, the subtle linguistic characteristics of New York short stories are distinguishing factors that set these stories apart from stories that take place in other regions of the country.

The majority of stories set in New York City rely less on African American Vernacular English. In urban settings, African American Vernacular English usually distinguishes a southern character. Even though black characters tend to talk in Standard English Dialect, the number of characters in a given story can increase the linguistic variety of a story. Rudolph Fisher’s “City of Refuge” has a linguistic variety of 314.7 largely due to the diverse cast of characters ranging from a Southern migrant, New York City native, white police officers, and Italian grocery store owner. These characters have prominent dialogues in the story. Similarly, Bambara diversifies the speaking patterns of children from the same neighborhood in “The Lesson.” The linguistic variety of 290.4 evidences Bambara’s ability to develop distinct personalities and associate specific words and phrases with each individual character. She places those children in an environment that is unfamiliar, which leads them to further expand their language use. The high number of characters and linguistic variety in New York City stories differentiates the region from the South and other geographic settings in black short fiction.

⁸⁰ The presence of children in Bambara’s short fiction matters in terms of character and language diversity. Bambara pays attention to the development of her characters and uses specific words and phrases to compliment the individual personalities of children. In other words, having a high number of black characters, where an author pays attention to their personalities, typically leads to higher numbers of word diversity as in the case of Bambara.

Stories with higher numbers of characters tend to have higher word density. “The Lesson” contains a lexical density of 290.4. The story is narrated by Syliva, but also contains a substantial amount of dialogue from at least seven other characters. Baldwin’s “Sonny’s Blues,” however, has a word density of 138.4. Even though Baldwin’s story is roughly 14,000 words in comparison to Bambara’s “The Lesson,” which has 3,350 words, Baldwin primarily uses his narrator to relay the events of the story. As a result, the linguistic variety in the story is reduced since one character is the primary speaker and relies on the same words to characterize the story’s plot and environment.⁸¹

Figure 3.1: NYC Short Story Tokens Count		
Author	Story	Tokens
Rudolph Fisher	“The City of Refuge”	5,418
James Baldwin	“Sonny’s Blues”	13,657
Toni Cade Bambara	“Raymond’s Run”	3,725
Toni Cade Bambara	“The Lesson”	3,350

A slight correlation exists between the number of characters and word density in fiction in general. Take Bambara’s stories, for instance: “Raymond’s Run” has a word density of 261.5, and “The Lesson” has a density of 290.4. Even though the children in the story are from the same neighborhood, Bambara uses distinct words and phrases to characterize their personalities. Special attention to language among children, especially, reveals distinctions between black people by emphasizing different speech patterns even among those who live in close proximity. The more characters present in a story typically determines that there will be more language diversity—especially if a writer pays special attention to character development. Attention to these factors better explains how relatively brief narratives contain higher word diversity than much longer narratives.

⁸¹ See Figure 3.1

In addition to the number of characters increasing the word density, the use of African American Vernacular English also contributes to a high number of unique words. Among stories in this chapter, “City of Refuge,” which contains the highest word density, has a main character, King Solomon whose vernacular speech is quite evident. Fisher distinguishes King Solomon from other characters in the story by having him speak solely in African American Vernacular English while other characters and the narrator, however, primarily speak versions of Standard English. In the story’s opening, King Solomon asks for directions, “Wha’ dis hyeh at, please, suh?” and Uggam responds, “See that second corner? Turn to the left when you get there. Number forty-five’s about halfway down the block” (898). King Solomon stands out because of his southern speech and deep vernacular, which is represented through different punctuations, shifts in verb tense usage, and vernacular terminology. The language variations distinguish between a Southern transplant and his New York counterparts. Consequently, the linguistic diversity raises the amount of unique words and phrases used in a single story.⁸²

Figure 3.2: NYC Short Story Word Density

Author	Story	Density
Rudolph Fisher	“The City of Refuge”	314.7
James Baldwin	“Sonny’s Blues”	138.4
Toni Cade Bambara	“Raymond’s Run”	261.5
Toni Cade Bambara	“The Lesson”	290.4

Word usage, particularly the use of words associated with life in a city, is also prevalent. Words such as “street,” “sidewalk,” “subway,” “block,” “corner,” “walk,” “window,” and “park” appear at intervals in the stories set in New York, but not in southern stories. The experience of living in and moving around a city prompts writers to use a broad but distinct body of words

⁸² See Figure 3.2

associated with an urban space in New York City. In Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues" the words "street" and "avenue" are used to identify the exact route characters take as the narrator explains, "We hit 110th Street and started rolling up Lenox Avenue." "Window" is a key word in New York short stories as the narrator remarks how he "walked over to the window and looked down into the court-yard" (1222). In "City of Refuge," Fisher describes the close proximity of the apartments buildings noting that "A window lighted up opposite, revealing a woman in camisole and petticoat, arranging her hair" when King Solomon is getting settled in the boarding house (898). Characters sometimes look out of and into windows at people, signaling the density of the population in a common area as well as the close proximity of buildings.

Words such as "block" and "corner" are used to describe locales in neighborhoods in the city. In Bambara's "The Lesson," Miss Moore is described as "The only woman on the block with no first name" (98). In "City of Refuge," Fisher clarifies the directions for characters as Uggam notes, "Turn to the left when you get there. Number forty-five's about halfway down the block" (901). The word "corner" is used in "Raymond's Run" to describe a character's positioning, as Squeaky remarks, "I'm standing on the corner admiring the weather and about to take a stroll down Broadway so I can practice my breathing exercises" (35). In Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues," the word is used to describe positioning and distance: "The subway station was on the corner, just before us" (1255). The words provide details about neighborhoods and give characters a sense of placement and direction. Taken together, words such as "street," "avenue," "park," "corner," "sidewalk," "subway," and "block" highlight aspects about the topography of an urban space.

The text-mining results of southern stories in comparison to those in New York reveal that writers representing the North were less willing to use forms of Urban Vernacular Black

English. Accordingly, southern stories tend to have higher word density. When writers set stories in New York and utilize black vernacular, they often do so to highlight southern-born characters like Fisher’s King Solomon. Or, as Bambara reveals in “The Lesson,” vernacular is used to accentuate the speech patterns of children. Black characters in the city, at least those covered in my dataset, generally speak variations of Standard English. Thus, vernacular is used in northern-based stories to signal geographic differences of characters as is the case with King Solomon, and even Liza Jane from Chesnutt’s “The Wife of His Youth.” For Bambara, vernacular is linked to childhood as her characters in “The Lesson” rely on non-standard discourses.⁸³

Figure 3.3: NYC Short Story Word Types Count		
Author	Story	Types
Rudolph Fisher	“The City of Refuge”	1,705
James Baldwin	“Sonny’s Blues”	1,890
Toni Cade Bambara	“Raymond’s Run”	974
Toni Cade Bambara	“The Lesson”	973

In his popular book *Capital in the 21st Century* (2014), Thomas Piketty points out that some 19th-century novelists concentrated on economic inequality. He notes that Honoré de Balzac’s and Jane Austen’s novels resemble real life financial perils of the 21st century as the authors’ works demonstrate that “inequality guaranteed more inequality” (123). He claims that eventually, however, “money—at least in the form of specific amounts—virtually disappeared from literature.” Digital Humanities scholars Ted Underwood, Hoyt Long, and Richard Jean So utilize analytic software to counter Piketty’s assertions by noting that references to money actually “proliferate” well into the 20th century in literature. Underwood, Long, and So’s

⁸³ See Figure 3.3

research revealed that as the century progressed, novelists began to “talk more often about commodity prices, or the money that characters have in their pockets” (*SlateOnline*). They also find that Picketty was correct in his assumption that these novels began to pinpoint the severity of financial inequalities between the rich and the poor as the references to currency switched from inheritances to day-to-day finances.

References – quantified through text-mining – to money, prices, transactions, and other material possessions in “The Lesson” reveal that Bambara was well ahead of her time and quite appropriate for contemporary discussions of wealth inequality. The words “money,” “cents,” “price,” “dollars,” “store,” “buy,” “costs,” and “spend” each appear at least three times and more in “The Lesson.” Altogether, those words appear a total of 8 times. No other story in my dataset presents so many words directly related to money. The preponderance of terminology related to capital suggests Bambara’s concern with commodities, and, more broadly, socioeconomic issues. That she highlights wealth disparities in a story set in the financial capital of the world is especially telling about the troubling ironies of inequality. The quantification of Bambara’s usage of capital-related words provides a model for tracking such coverage throughout African American literature. Because of the lack of scholarship on defining features of short fiction set in New York City, quantitative assessments and text-mining software can enhance investigations of how scholars assess the features of urban short stories. The most frequently anthologized short stories by Bambara as well as Rudolph Fisher, James Baldwin, and Henry Dumas utilize music, city streets, corners, and physical landmarks to create impressions about the social dimensions of black characters living in New York City.

Section 2: Black Male Characters in NYC Short Stories by Rudolph Fisher, James Baldwin, and Henry Dumas

Over the last several decades, Rudolph Fisher and James Baldwin have been fixtures in literature anthologies. Fisher’s “City of Refuge” and Baldwin’s “Sonny’s Blues” have appeared in at least 9 different collections published between 1966 and 2014, making their stories among the most widely reprinted short fiction by black writers set in New York City. As a result, their stories have helped to create impressions about the cultural features that define black literature in New York City, and just as important, have given short narratives of black characters negotiating situations in the city. Similar to southern fiction, stories by black writers set in New York have recurring settings that offer glimpses into African American urban culture. The emphasis on black characters and neighborhoods contributes to mainstream literary interpretations of New York the city that highlights a number of themes, including new influences and forms of exploitation, the pressures that lead to drug addiction, migration patterns, music, musicians, and economic conditions as it relates to life in urban settings.⁸⁴

Figure 3.3: NYC Short Story Publication

Story	Author	Publication	Year
“The City of Refuge”	Rudolph Fisher	<i>Atlantic Monthly</i>	February 1925
“Sonny’s Blues”	James Baldwin	<i>Partisan Review</i>	1957
“Will The Circle Be Unbroken”	Henry Dumas	<i>Negro Digest</i>	1966
“The Screamers”	Amiri Baraka	<i>The Moderns: An Anthology of New Writing in America</i>	1967
“Raymond’s Run”	Toni Cade Bambara	<i>Tales and Short Stories of Black Folks</i>	1971
“The Lesson”	Toni Cade Bambara	<i>Gorilla My Love</i>	1972

Fisher’s “City of Refuge,” set in the 1920s, reveals social contradictions associated with Harlem and black people, including transplants from the South. In his story, Fisher presents

⁸⁴ See Figure 3.3

conflicting impressions of Harlem showcasing both positive and negative aspects of the city. He offers encouraging glimpses of black police officers early on in the story thereby confirming the social significance of African Americans in authoritative roles in Harlem. Upon arriving in Harlem, the story's protagonist King Solomon is mesmerized by the seemingly high achieving social position of black people commenting, "Done died an woke up in Heaven...Cullud policemans...even got cullud policemans" (1226). King Solomon seeing police officers is uncommon in his North Carolina home environment; so naturally, he has a sense of pride. Later on, however, King Solomon, a young man presumably in his early 20s, comes to realize that Harlem is not the land of plenty, which he initially thought it was.

Fisher also reveals that Harlem has black unsavory figures, such as manipulative drug dealers. Walking up from the subway station upon his arrival in Harlem, King Solomon runs into Mouse Uggam. Uggam appears friendly and offers King Solomon help finding his lodgings, but readers learn that he had ulterior motives as he comments, "Guess you're the shine I been waitin' for" behind King Solomon's back (1231). Uggam builds trust with King Solomon by helping him find employment, having King Solomon comment, "Mouse, you sho' is been a freidn to me" (1231). Playing on his naivety, Mouse enlists King Solomon to unknowingly peddle drugs out of his job at the corner store by having him believe that the men are coming in to receive special medicine Uggam has purchased in France.

The police began to monitor the local store that King Solomon works at and confronts his boss about the drug business that is operating in his store. His boss suspects King Solomon is guilty and promises to point him out to the undercover officers. Later that night in the nightclub as King Solomon is enjoying a musical performance with Uggam, he is confronted by the officers telling him, "You're wanted for dope-peddling. Will you come along without trouble?"

(1235). Not knowing what is going on, King Solomon sits confused as Uggam begins to deny association with King Solomon remarking to the officers, “We happened to be sittin’ here at the same table and got to talkin’. After a while I says I can’t seem to sleep nights, so he offers me sump’n he says’ll make me sleep, all right... That’s how I come to take it. Guess he’s got more in his pocket there now” (1235). A brawl ensues between King Solomon and the officers as he tries to proclaim his innocence. As he is fighting the policemen, he is transfixed at the sight of a black uniformed officer commenting to himself, “Even—got—cullud—policemans—” (1236). King Solomon, once leaving North Carolina to escape persecution for an accidental murder, comes to still face punishment in Harlem after being deceived and manipulated by Uggam. Fisher’s short story serves as a migration narrative of sorts about southerners transitioning to Harlem, New York during the Great Migration era.

Baldwin’s “Sonny’s Blues,” however, focuses on natives of Harlem, New York and provides a slightly more expansive view of the city with scenes taking place in Greenwich Village. “Sonny’s Blues” depicts a seemingly overprotective older brother as he worries about and tries to come to grips with his younger brother Sonny’s desire to be a musician. The unnamed narrator is driven by what seems to be a haunting reminder of his deceased mother insistence that he take care of his brother Sonny. He recounts his mother’s wish when she told him, “You may not be able to stop nothing from happening. But you got to let him know you’s *there*.” Baldwin emphasizes the jungle-like comparisons of the city by presenting New York as a place filled with poverty, drug addiction, and crime which seems to pray upon Sonny.

The unnamed narrator is searching for a way to reconnect with his brother after he has lost contact with him when Sonny is arrested and sentenced to jail for his involvement with a cocaine scandal. Once Sonny is released, his older brother attempts to reconcile their differences

based on “a pretty awful fight” (1741). Sonny and his brother both live in New York; however, many social influences, namely Sonny’s intense passion for music and interactions with drug users in the city, seem to drive them apart. The narrator is initially unmoved and eventually becomes frustrated by Sonny’s love for music and inability to get a more socially acceptable and financially secure job. Even though his connection to his brother is strained, the narrator’s constant memory of his late mother’s words encourages him to continue to search for a way to connect with Sonny.

Sonny invites his brother to attend a jazz club to hear him perform. At first, the narrator seems reluctant but agrees to attend, and in that moment he seems to have found a connection to his brother. Watching his brother perform, the narrator comments, “And the face I saw on Sonny I’d never seen before. Everything had been burned out of it, and, at the same time, things usually hidden were being burned in, by the fire and fury of the battle which was occurring in him up there” (1748). The narrator finally entered Sonny’s world and began to better understand the motivations of his brother through the music that he heard. By attending his concert, he was finally able to find a connection to his brother and actually be there for him in a way that he was never able to do in life and that had caused tension between the two brothers. Even though the city seemed to pull the two brothers apart, the vibrant jazz scene of New York was able to reconnect them or at least give the narrator more understanding into his brother’s life.

In both stories, jazz scenes serve as a vital backdrop testifying to the cultural significance of music in narratives about black men set in New York. The repeated circulation of these two stories makes music an important feature of African American stories set in New York. Of course, Fisher and Baldwin are in good company. Notable scenes with music in the city appear in poems by Langston Hughes and Jane Cortez and in novels by Toni Morrison and James

Weldon. Particularly, Fisher and Baldwin make music or jazz club scenes climatic in their stories. For them, the jazz scene, which flourished in New York City, served as a defining place for large numbers of black people. The music scene is a consequential landmark in short stories by prominent black writers.⁸⁵

Figure 3.4: New York City Short Story Characteristics

Story	Author	Time Period	Duration of Action	Geographic Region	City or Rural	Socioeconomic Conditions	Levels of Violence
“The City of Refuge”	Rudolph Fisher	1920s	2-3 Weeks	Harlem, New York	City	Working Poor	Mild
“Sonny’s Blues”	James Baldwin	1950s	1 Year	Harlem, New York	City	Working Poor	Low
“Will The Circle Be Unbroken”	Henry Dumas	1960s	1 Day	Harlem, New York	City	Working Poor	Low (music kills three white people)
“The Screamers”	Amiri Baraka	Late 1960s	1 Day	Newark, New Jersey	City	Working/Middle Class	None
“Raymond’s Run”	Toni Cade Bambara	1970s	2-4 Days	Harlem, New York	City	Working Poor	None
“The Lesson”	Toni Cade Bambara	1970s	1 Days	New York City	City	Working Poor	None

Henry Dumas extends the practice of making music significant to a narrative set in New York in his story “Will the Circle Be Unbroken?,” The story first appeared in *Negro Digest* in 1966 and since then has been included in over 5 anthologies since 1990. The story takes place in Harlem during the 1960s and happens over the course of a few hours. Probe Adams, a musician, never speaks in the story but serves as the focal point of the story. In the story, three white people—Jan, Ron, and Tasha—are trying to make their way into the club. The doorman has forbidden their entrance and informs the trio that it is for their own safety that they are not admitted to the club as he points to a sign that reads, “We cannot allow non-Brothers because of the danger involved with extensions” (Dumas 88).

⁸⁵ Figure 3.4

Ever persistence, Jan sees an Irish police officer walking down the street and enlists his help to attempt to get in the club. Jan suggests that the doorman is discriminating against them and not allowing them entrance based on their race. After earnest attempts to keep the group out, the doorman finally succumbs to the advances of the group and police officer. He allows the three white people to enter the club but not before telling the white officer, "Listen, officer, if these people go in, the responsibility is yours" with the white officer thinking to himself "he had never seen anything worthwhile from niggers in Harlem" (Dumas 88-9). Once in the club, the trio is satisfied that they have gained access to this all-black environment and mysterious music.

Probe begins to fall into a trance as he plays his rare saxophone for the audience. His instrument is one of "only three afro-horns in the world," which "were forged from a rare metal found only in Africa and South America" (Dumas 89). The music is characterized as black at its core as "Inside the center of gyrations is an atom stripped of time, black... They are building back the wall, crumbling under the disturbance" (Dumas 90). The music, and more specifically the sounds emanating from Probe's horn, knock the three white patrons into an unconscious state and ultimately kills them. The members of the audience learn that "It's true then. It's true" (Dumas 91). Apparently, the belief that the sound could be fatal to white people was confirmed by the death of the white patrons.

Dumas's "Will The Circle Be Unbroken?" attests to the tremendous qualities of black music in New York settings. In Dumas's story, as was the case in Fisher's "City of Refuge" and Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues," black music possesses a transformative power. Amiri Baraka in his essay "The Changing Same (R&B and New Black Music)" discusses how Dumas's story influenced his own story "The Screamers." Even though "The Screamers" takes place in Baraka's hometown of Newark, New Jersey, and not Harlem, the story highlights the idea of

black music as transfixing and revolutionary. Although not widely anthologized, Baraka's story uses black music in ways that correspond to the stories by Fisher, Baldwin, and Dumas.⁸⁶

Similarly, for those writers, Baraka views music—black music—as possessing transformative power.

Baraka's "The Screamers" (1967), is a pointed illustration of the strong presence of music in stories by prominent black writers set in the Northeast. The story opens as the unnamed protagonist in a Newark, New Jersey, club waits on famed musician Lynn Hope to perform.⁸⁷ During his time in the club, he ruminates over black people's predicament in American culture. The protagonist voices his frustrations with the restrictive nature of the art forms he has had to experience, explaining how, "They rivaled pure emotion with wind-up record players that pumped Jo Stafford into House Economics rooms." He continues, "And these carefully scrubbed children of my parents' friends fattened on their rhythms until they could join the Urban League or Household Finance and hound the poor for their honesty" (173). His conscious choice to reject public decorum and laws of Newark by taking to the streets in a riot-like fashion is his attempt to embrace black vernacular traditions—music and culture specifically. The experience at the club and the music in particular are the vehicle for the narrator's

⁸⁶ Henry Dumas's 1966 short story "Will The Circle Be Unbroken?" also attests to the transformative power and potential of jazz music. In the story, the sounds of music from the musician's "afro-horn" kill three white people who have forced their way into an all black club. Jazz music plays a significant role during this period when influencing the thematic work of writers of the Black Arts Movement as well as theorizing about black artistic and social culture (2003). Actually, Baraka references this particular short story in his essay "The Changing Same (R&B and New Black Music) and talks about how this story concentrates on the transformative power of music.

⁸⁷ Amiri Baraka has a long standing interest in black music and its larger connections to the psyche of black people. He explains, "Blues (Lyric) its song quality is, it seems, the deepest expression of memory. Experience re/feeling. It is the racial memory. It is the 'abstract' design of racial character that is evident, would be evident, in creation carrying the force of that racial memory" ("The Changing Same," 1991, 189).

transformation. The music in Dumas's story led to the deaths of white patrons; conversely, the music inspired a black patron to pursue revolutionary action in Baraka's narrative.⁸⁸

Houston Baker, Tony Bolden, Guthrie Ramsey, and Craig Werner have concentrated on the pivotal role of music in black literary art both in terms of structure and theme as well as the transformative social characteristics of the art form.⁸⁹ The connection of music with New York as a place has not been sufficiently highlighted. Short stories, however, bring attention to this in unique ways. The link between jazz scenes and New York settings in short fiction by Fisher, Baldwin, and Dumas showcase the convergence of music and location. The writers apparently require the New York City setting, or the nearby Newark in Baraka's case, in order to present a scene where large numbers of black people gather to take in the sights and sounds of jazz.⁹⁰

Section 3: NYC, Toni Cade Bambara, and Black Girls

In the introduction to *The Black Woman*, Toni Cade Bambara highlights her intention to “illuminate the struggles that women must confront to exist as people in their own right, apart from the men in their lives” (ii). Bambara was especially concerned about the limited attention that black fiction placed on the coming-of-age experiences of young black women, especially in the urban North.. Not surprisingly, her most popular stories take this as their focus Whereas most of the prominent African American short stories concentrate on men and women,

⁸⁸ In “The Development of the Black Revolutionary Artist,” James Stewart highlights how the black artists sought to create “our own conventions, a convention of procedural elements, a kind of stylization, a sort of insistency which leads inevitably to a certain kind of methodology—a methodology informed by the spirit (6). Certainly, Black Arts Writers Dumas and Baraka built their work on predecessors such as Fisher and Baldwin and sought to present more layered considerations of race.

⁸⁹ Houston A. Baker's *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory*, Tony Bolden's *Afro-Blue: Improvisations in African American Poetry and Culture*, Aldon Nielson's *Black Chant: Languages of African-American Postmodernism*, Craig Werner's *A Change Is Gonna Come Music, Race & the Soul of America*, and Guthrie Ramsey's *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop* all deal with the overlaps between literature and music. More specifically, these scholars think about music and literature as falling under the purview of black artistic expression and reveal overlaps in compositions of musicians and writers.

⁹⁰ Amiri Baraka believes that black music has revolutionary implications and that liberation is not solely physical. He writes, “But evolution is not merely physical: yet if you can understand what the physical alludes to, is reflexive of, then it will be understood that each process in ‘life’ is duplicated at all levels” (“The Changing Same,” 1991, 189).

Bambara’s stories concentrated on young black girls. Her stories “Raymond’s Run” and “The Lesson” appear in more than eight anthologies thereby providing an alternative to the mostly male-dominated narratives set in New York City. Bambara’s protagonists are young New York black girls who must navigate the urban terrain as concerns of wealth and poverty inform their larger education.

Figure 3.3: New York City Short Story Conventions

Story	Author	Narrative Perspective	Narrator Speaks in AAVE	Characters Speak in AAVE	Structure/Set Up
“The City of Refuge”	Rudolph Fisher	Third Person	No	Yes	6 Sections
“Sonny’s Blues”	James Baldwin	First Person	No	No	5 Sections
“Will The Circle Be Unbroken”	Henry Dumas	Third Person	No	No	1 Continuous Narrative
“The Screamers”	Amiri Baraka	First Person	No	No	1 Continuous Narrative
“Raymond’s Run”	Toni Cade Bambara	First Person	No	No	1 Continuous Narrative
“The Lesson”	Toni Cade Bambara	First Person	No	No	1 Continuous Narrative

Bambara’s “Raymond’s Run” first appeared in *Tales and Short Stories for Black Folks* in 1971. The story is set in the 1970s in the working class neighborhoods of Harlem with the majority of action taking place over a couple of days. The story follows the protagonist Squeaky, or, Hazel Elizabeth Deborah Parker, as she navigates the complicated social terrain of childhood in the city. Squeaky also faces challenges of taking care of her autistic older brother Raymond while also interacting with other young girls from her neighborhood. Most coming of age stories

by African American writers had been told from the point of view of black men, black women, and teenage black boys, but readers had rarely encountered fictive accounts by black girls.⁹¹

The story revolves around Squeaky's participation in a May Day in her Harlem neighborhood. She is determined to keep her title as the fastest runner. Her main rivals are other black girls, seeing only their desire to challenge her position as the fastest girl. After running the race and waiting on the results, Squeaky notices Raymond running alongside her with a polished form and technique, leading her to think: "I've got a roomful of ribbons and medals and awards. But what has Raymond got to call his own?" (32). Actually, Squeaky's thoughts may also mirror her ideas about her own relationships with her peers. She, like her brother Raymond, is somewhat isolated; she has no friend to call her own. After the announcer proclaims Squeaky the winner, she smiles sincerely at Gretchen, "Cause she's good no doubt about it" and thinking that "maybe she'd like to help me coach Raymond" (32).

Squeaky's ability to travel throughout her Harlem neighborhood alone contributes to the perception that she is independent and self-sufficient. Squeaky notes the specific routes she takes throughout the story as well as her comfort level remarking how she strolled, "down Broadway toward the ice man on 145th with not a care in the world," and she mentions her "high-prance down 34th Street" (45, 49). Squeaky never mentions traveling with other peers or adults, which further contributes to her independent nature. Her movements around the busy neighborhoods and streets is notable given that she is a third grader. Among the top circulating short stories by black writers, Squeaky is the only black girl who displays so much physical mobility. Overall, "Raymond's Run" creates an important opportunity to consider the uncommon occurrence, at

⁹¹ Similarly, in 1970, just one year prior to the publication of "Raymond's Run," Toni Morrison published her first novel *The Bluest Eye*, which focuses on the coming of age experiences of a young black girl and her yearning to be beautiful. Throughout the story, she wishes for blue eyes since she associates those physical features with beauty (*The Bluest Eye*, 1994).

least in short fiction, of a black girl exuding the confidence and ability to navigate city streets alone.

Bambara's "The Lesson," which first appeared in her collection of short stories *Gorilla My Love* (1972), also focuses on childhood experiences of black girls in New York City. The story is set in the early 1970s and revolves around Sylvia and her group of friends who are likely 8-10 years old. In the story, Miss Moore, a retired school teacher living in the neighborhood, attempts to educate Sylvia and her group of friends on socioeconomic and political ideas by visiting the famous toy store FAO Schwarz on 767 5th Avenue in New York City. In the opening of the story, the kids are a rowdy group who show Miss Moore little respect and have essentially no concern for the lessons she is trying to teach them. Sylvia comments, "So we are heading down the street and she's boring us silly about what things cost and what our parents make and how much goes for rent and how money ain't divided up right in the country" (89). Miss Moore takes the group of kids on a trip beyond their own neighborhood to Fifth Avenue, which seems a world away even though it is in the same city. Observing the customs of upper class people on Fifth Avenue walking around in fur coats in the summer, Sylvia surmises, "White folks crazy" (89). Miss Moore deliberately takes the children to FAO Schwarz where she has them discuss the different items and the prices in hopes that they will gain insight into how the toy store serves as an example of disproportionate wealth between people.

The children notice a boat that costs \$1000. Sylvia thinks, "Who are these people that spend that much for performing clowns and \$1000 for toy sailboats? What kinda work they do and how they live and how come we ain't in on it?" (94). Even though resistant to the teachings of Miss Moore, Sylvia begins to understand how wealth disparities lead to other social and political inadequacies for working class people. When Miss Moore directly looks at Sylvia and

asks “Anybody else learn anything today?” Sylvia does not respond, and walks away. In the story’s end, Sylvia seems to internalize the significance of the wealth disparities as she lags behind her friends in order to “think this day through” (38). Even though she does not directly express her thoughts to Miss Moore, Sylvia had participated in a notable educational experience where a visit to toy store served as the basis for building consciousness about wealth disparities.

New York City matters in Bambara’s depiction of the educational benefits of visiting a toy store. Only in the financial capital of the world can the “lesson” concerning such extreme wealth disparities be taught to black children after a visit to the oldest high-end toy store in America. The set up of New York City makes it possible for children to travel fairly easily from a low-income to wealthy section of the city. Unlike short fiction set in the South that often avoids naming specific places, Bambara’s utilizes actual locations like FAO Schwarz and Fifth Avenue that clarify the reality-based nature of the story. And more so than frequently anthologized stories set in New York City by other black writers, Bambara’s “The Lesson” deals with wealth disparities in an overt manner.

Bambara’s character Miss Moore stands out among various other characters in well-known African American short stories based on how she directly raises questions and instructs children to consider the implications of wealth disparities. None of the writers in my study seem to present characters that are so interested in highlighting socioeconomic inequalities. Miss Moore takes the children to different locales in the city to make them aware of the disparities between black and white people and just as important between low-income and wealthy people. Southern fiction makes readers aware that white characters command power and money, but rarely do readers gain a sense of the specifics such as people who can afford \$300 microscopes, \$480 paperweights, and \$1,195 toy sailboats (92). Miss Moore facilitates Sylvia’s and her peers’

awareness of socioeconomic issues, and in the process, Bambara's character anticipates concerns about the top 1% expressed by the Occupy Movement as well as extreme wealth inequality so prevalent in the discussions concerning Thomas Piketty's popular book *Capital in the 21st Century*. The scholarly discourse on African American literature regularly highlights the involvement of men characters in formal political conversations and activities.⁹² Thus, Bambara's presentation of a black woman character invested in raising consciousness about "race" and "class" and inequality is unique and significant for the overall body of African American literature.⁹³

Conclusion

Even though criticism of black literature in New York acknowledges that parallel movements in black artistic culture were happening in other cities such as Chicago, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC., they pointed out that New York or Harlem is thought of as a central, defining, high-profile locale for black culture beginning with the Great Migration onward. Scholarship tends to focus on the production history of the Harlem Renaissance and Black Arts Movement as well as those relationships between contemporary writers and financial backers; still, scholars tend to overlook how rhetorical strategies regarding navigation, economic distribution, and geographic boundaries largely define black short fiction set in New York City. The particular manner in which music scenes largely define the settings of stories with black

⁹² Black writers often times used Marxist philosophies in their fiction as a way to construct story plots, characterizations, and settings. For instance, Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, and Amiri Baraka expansive collection of poetry and short stories employed Marxist ideologies in their fiction as a means of critiquing white power structures as well as black activist groups.

⁹³ Sheena Iyengar's *The Art of Choosing* offers principles that scholars might consider in examining specific choices black writers make in representing African American life, including characterization, story setting, and language. She writes, "Choosing helps us create our lives." She continues, "We make choices and are in turn made by them. Science can assist us in becoming more skillful choosers, but at its core, choice remains an art" (268). A focus on the implications of writers' selections of geographic locations, social settings, and character traits as well as on the decisions that main characters in the stories shows us how the art and consequences of choosing informs short fiction by black writers.

men in New York requires becomes more apparent when using text-mining software. Writers' use of African American Vernacular English to communicate differences between southern born and New York born characters, as well as the tracking of specific words to describe the importance of character movements in a city setting versus a rural setting, contributes to overarching impressions of urban literature. Moreover, the presence of children, especially black girls in short stories set in New York, provides a basis for expanding thematic scholarship regarding short fiction.

In an interview for the National Visionary Leadership Project, Toni Morrison explains that her motivations for writing *The Bluest Eye* (1971) stemmed from the male dominated narratives that excluded young black girls. "I wanted to have a little, hurt black girl at the center of this story," said Morrison. The placement of a black girl at the center of a novel contributed to shifting the more popular approaches in African American literature.⁹⁴ Notably, Morrison served as the literary editor for Bambara as well as Gayl Jones while at Random House. Her work with black women is significant during the 1970s. Black women became more central figures in the publication of African American literature. In the late 1980s, essays such as Barbara Christian's "The Race for Theory" would help to position black women writers—and by extension black female characters—as integral to the study of black literature. Bambara contributes to shifting the conventional character paradigm in short fiction by showcasing the experiences of black girls. Furthermore, given the importance of New York in African American and American literature, Bambara's stories serve the important role of giving black girls a notable presence in the larger discourse. Scholars' attention to differences among male and

⁹⁴ African American novels often times focus on adult black men and women such as works ranging from James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, Hurston's *Their Eyes*, Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Toni Morrison's *Sula* and *Beloved*, Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*.

female characters, the significance of music, and other features revealed by text-mining software may spawn more academic interests in focusing solely on New York, similar to New Southern Studies, as a means of defining and better classifying aspects of black artistic expression.

Chapter 4: Edward P. Jones and Literary Geotagging

Introduction

The relatively new arrival of Edward P. Jones as a now well-known figure on the map of African American literary history is a testament to the notion that place and placement matters. Jones has gained more attention than any other African American short story writer over the last several years. Despite his first collection of short stories, *Lost in the City* (1992), receiving minimal coverage, after his Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *The Known World*, garnered national attention, Jones and his works received wider recognition. His novel was reviewed in *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *storySouth*, *Southern Literary Journal*, *MELUS*, *Southern Literary Journal*, *The Journal of African American History*, and *The Albatross*, and soon after, his short stories would gain greater notice. “I’m glad that *The New Yorker* has published four of the stories already,” said Jones in an interview with E. Ethelbert Miller in 2005, “That tells me that maybe I’m on the right path” (Miller 2006). More than indicating that he was on the right path, what *The New Yorker* offered Jones was a platform in one of the most well-established and prominent publishing venues in the country.

The nature and high visibility of Jones’s works create new opportunities for incorporating short stories in the broader scholarly discourse on African American literature. For the last few decades, scholars of African American literature have concentrated on a now familiar set of canonical texts, authors, and locations, but Edward P. Jones’s *New Yorker* short stories, focusing on predominately black neighborhoods in Washington, D.C., offer unique and enriching opportunities for analyzing, or more accurately, “geocoding” an African American author’s repeated treatments of a geographic region in a high profile publishing venue. I refer to the practice among writers of identifying specific or even fictive locations as “literary geotagging.” Despite the long history and dense population of African Americans living in or near the nation’s

capital, Washington, D.C., specifically predominately black quadrants, has a relatively small presence in the scholarship on African American literature.

Jones is hardly the first black writer to implement what might be referred to as literary geotagging. For instance, writers such as Rudolph Fisher, James Baldwin, and Edwidge Danticat have all referred to real world locations in their short stories. Fisher's "City of Refuge" refers to street intersections and locations in Harlem to discuss how the wide-eyed King Solomon Gillis is so enthralled by black people living in the New York environment. Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues," places the title character in Harlem neighborhoods as well as locations in the Village that complement Sonny's involvement with music scenes throughout the story. Danticat's "Seven" takes place in the Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, with the two main characters wandering through the city. Jones extends these practices by identifying, in a notably detailed way, location-specific information concerning D.C.

Jones's *New Yorker* short stories reference quadrants and streets in Washington and thus enacts a kind of geotagging or location identification process that instills a sense of realism in his works to explain how locale impacts characterizations, raced character interactions, and plot development. What we might refer to as Jones's "literary geotagging" in his short stories, whereby he highlights racial-spatial dimensions of the nation's capital in his stories, provides multiple renderings of Washington and thereby offering diverse representations of black men and their experiences in a select geographic region. Therefore, an analysis of Edward P. Jones's short stories published in *The New Yorker* between 2003 to 2011 serves as a crucial starting point for interrogating how Jones utilizes Washington as backdrop for five intercalated, yet dissimilar narratives about the experiences of black men in the nation's capital.¹¹ Jones's use of location-specific words contributes to how readers envision the city and his characters' various

environments by using recognizably black neighborhoods to assist in constructing his stories' plot as well as characterization. Therefore, digital tools such as text-mining software help to offer a thorough account of the ways that Jones frequently employs a set of phrases and keywords to describe black D.C. and makes references to specific streets and landmarks to provide readers with on-the-ground views.

Several canonical African American literary texts, including *Native Son* (1940), *Invisible Man* (1952), and *Song of Solomon* (1977), have concentrated on black protagonists in multiple geographic regions, particularly Chicago, New York City, the Midwest, and the South. Aside from novels, short stories have also been consistently plotted in specific geographic locations. Ranging from Hurston's and Wright's emphasis on the South to Baldwin's and Bambara's interest in New York City, social geographies inform impressions regarding race and history. Despite the long history and dense population of African Americans living in or near the nation's capital, Washington, D.C., specifically black D.C., has a relatively small presence in the scholarship on African American literature. Furthermore, hardly any scholarship seeks to illuminate how individual authors map geographic locations in series of literary works.

Section 1: Edward P. Jones and Text-Mining

Jones, who covers neighborhoods that are largely occupied by black people in the nation's capital and offers readers a distinct sense of Washington's cultural geography, should be assessed alongside other prominent black short stories writers to better understand where he departs from his literary colleagues in terms of style and representation of urban areas. Moreover, qualifying Jones's use of words to describe his setting clarifies the importance of his literary geotagging. As previously noted, Jones's five short stories in *The New Yorker* illustrate a diverse set of concerns and attitudes about people living in Washington D.C., but how does Jones

achieve his narrative objectives linguistically? Text mining can make the processes of quantifying specific words and phrases in Jones’s stories possible and can lead to detailed accounts of how an author uses language to describe a concentrated area of a city and narrate stories in those locales.⁹⁵

When placed in the context of several canonical short stories by black writers, including Zora Neale Hurston’s “Sweat,” Ralph Ellison’s “Battle Royal,” James Baldwin’s “Sonny’s Blues,” and Toni Cade Bambara’s “Raymond’s Run,” Jones’s use of a term like “street” seems notable. For instance, Jones in his *New Yorker* stories, Jones often pinpoints specific locations in Black D.C. The word “street” is mentioned in each story a minimum of 15 times. Of course, on occasion, the word is mentioned far more, appearing 42 times in “Bad Neighbors” and 32 times in “All Aunt Hagar’s Children.” In all of the instances in Jones’s stories where he uses the word street, he typically uses the word in conjunction with a specific location such as “F Street,” “Eighth Street,” and “Tenth Street.”

Figure 4.1: Edward P. Jones and Language Data

Story	Token Word	Word Types	Language Density
“A Rich Man”	8,566	1,599	186.7
“Adam Robinson”	11, 631	2,006	172.5
“All Aunt Hagar’s Children”	11, 610	1,849	159.3
“Bad Neighbors”	9,534	1,848	193.8
“Old Boys, Old Girls”	10, 323	1,822	176.5

In Hurston’s and Ellison’s short stories, locations and neighborhoods in towns are not identified or explained in great detail. For instance, in Hurston’s “Sweat,” the town where the

⁹⁵ See Figure 4.1

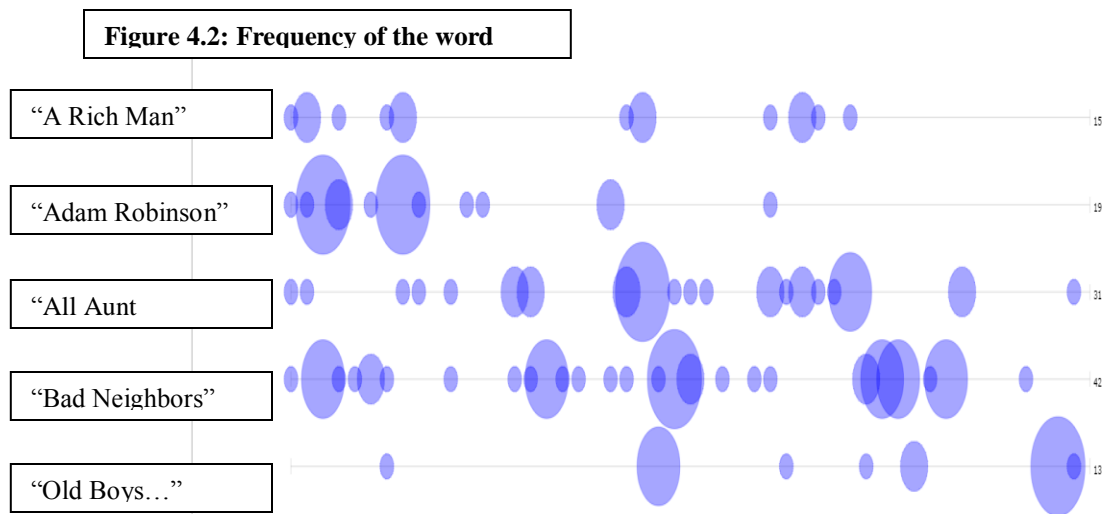
action of the story takes place is never identified; however, readers learn that the setting is a small Florida town that is “too far” from Orlando, which means a snake-bitten antagonist will not receive medical attention.⁹⁶ In Ellison’s “Battle Royal,” the setting is never identified beyond general descriptions as a southern town.⁹⁷ Additionally, neither Hurston nor Ellison ever use the word “street” in their short stories or identify specific roads, neighborhoods, or city-landmarks. By contrast, Jones utilizes over 311 words and phrases, including avenue, home, place, Southwest, Southeast, Northwest, Northeast, and street to highlight the particularity of D.C.

Looking at the use of “street” in Baldwin’s “Sonny Blues” and Bambara’s “Raymond’s Run,” both of which are set in New York City, may correspond more with Jones’s short stories than popular short stories set in rural environments by Hurston and Ellison. Baldwin uses the word “street” or “streets” 13 times in “Sonny’s Blues,” and Bambara uses “street” 3 times in “Raymond’s Run.” Even though Baldwin uses the word “street” throughout his story, he does not reference a specific street except once when he says “Lenox” in connection with the well-known avenue. Baldwin, instead, frequently makes a general reference to streets by writing “we walk these streets,” “the streets of our childhood,” and “searching those streets.” Bambara, on the other hand, uses the word “street” three times to make definite connections with spaces such as her mention of “34th Street” and “151st Street” and reference to the space of the sidewalks on “Broadway.” Even though Baldwin and Bambara note that their stories take place mostly in Harlem, their descriptions of the physical environments do not match the quantity of descriptions that Jones provides in describing D.C. in his work. Voyant, or any other text-mining software,

⁹⁶ We might conclude that the story is set in Eatonville, Florida, since a town co-founder, Joe Clarke, makes an appearance as a minor character in Hurston’s story. See. Valerie Boyd, *Wrapped in Rainbows: The Life of Zora Neale Hurston*. New York: Scribner, 2004. 20 - 22.

⁹⁷ After reading the entire novel, *Invisible Man*, readers learn that the “Battle Royal” took place in an Alabama town.

reveals the relative high frequency of returns on city and geographic related words such as “street,” “place,” “block,” and “corner” in Jones’s stories.⁹⁸



For Jones, the term “street” even varies depending on the narration style of the story such as in “Bad Neighbors” and “All Aunt Hagar’s Children.” In “All Aunt Hagar’s Children,” Jones uses a first-person perspective, and the unnamed protagonist specifies streets he navigates in D.C. explaining at one point that “I took the long way—down Fourth Street, then along New York Avenue to Sixth Street” (10). “Bad Neighbors,” presented from third-person limited perspective, uses the word “street” primarily to describe the “Eighth Street” neighborhood where the principal characters of the story live and their relationships to one another. “Even before the fracas with Terence Stagg,” the story opens, “people along both sides of the 1400 block of Eighth Street NW could see the Benningtons for what they really were” (73). Later, the narrator notes how Sharon came to think of the Bennington family explaining, “She knew very little about the family beyond what her parents and the rest of the Eighth Street neighbors were

⁹⁸ See Figure 4.2

saying, and nothing they said was at all positive” (73). The narrator in “Bad Neighbors” uses the word “street” and other related terms to primarily describe a single block, while on the other hand, the narrator in “All Aunt Hagar’s Children” utilizes the terms to present broader areas of geographic space in D.C.

Out of the 42 times “street” is used in “Bad Neighbors,” in nearly 33% of that usage (14 times), the word is used in conjunction with “Eighth” to highlight the location of events taking place in the story. The characters are identified by their specific home addresses as the “Bad Neighbors” or the Staggs living at “1406,” the Forsythe family living at 1408, the Palmers living at 1409, and the Thorntons living at 1414 Eighth Street. Even though other streets are mentioned throughout the story in relation to D.C. neighborhoods, Eighth Street is referenced most, and the street remains central to the overall narrative. The text-mining software alerts a reader-user to the frequency of a word like “street” in “Bad Neighbors,” but conventional reading or interpretive skills are required to understand exactly how terms are operating in the context of a given story.

In “All Aunt Hagar’s Children,” the protagonist refers to various locales and landmarks as he makes his way through the city. “Street” is mentioned 31 times, and in 24 of those mentions—that is, 78% of the times that “street” appears—the word is used to indicate an exact location. The protagonist travels to F, M, Sixth, Fourth, Third, and L streets, among a few, and in the process reveals his intimate knowledge of the city. In the case of “All Aunt Hagar’s Children,” Voyant clarifies the frequency of words like “street,” “home,” “neighbors,” and “neighborhood,” and then a closer look at the contexts of the usage confirms just how much Jones is relying on these words to chart the specifics of the city’s environment. The particulars that Jones gives to locations contribute to his overall body of writings that offer an extensive and fairly detailed account of settings in D.C.

In addition to paying attention to words that frequently appear well over 100 times in Jones's short stories, words that occur less frequently in his writing also provide insight into how geographic locations in D.C. are described and presented. Words such as "block" or "blocks" appear 10 times in all of the stories, and "corner" and "corners" are used about 20 times. Jones uses quadrants such as Northwest, Northeast, Southeast, and Southwest, with those terms appearing a minimum of five times in the five short stories all together. The uses of those words play a crucial part in describing city settings. For instance, the unnamed protagonist from "All Aunt Hagar's Children" describes his mother's move, explaining that "Her new apartment was half a block past North Capitol Street, her first venture into Northeast" (15). Words such as "block," "street," and "Northeast" all assist Jones in describing the context of the environments that his characters reside in and also helps to clarify their interactions with various neighborhoods and the people that inhabit those places.

Movement constitutes another key feature of Jones's works as his characters traverse the quadrants of the city. Throughout his five stories, modes of transportation – signaled by words such as words "walk," "drive," "cab," and "car" – are mentioned regularly. "Car" appears 32 times, and "cab" appears 10 times. In the beginning of "Adam Robinson," Noah, the story's protagonist, travels through the city to pick up his grandson, and the cityscape and streets are highlighted from his perspective riding in a cab. "After the cab turned off East Capitol onto Eighth Street," writes Jones, "Noah Robinson saw further evidence that trees were disappearing from Washington" (1). In "A Rich Man," Jones writes about the character Elaine's frustrations with her parents while driving explaining, "Then, in the car, heading out to Capitol Heights, where she was staying, 'Well, maybe not fuck my mother. She was good.' 'Just fuck your daddy then?' the girl in the back seat said. Elaine thought about it as they went down Rhode Island

Avenue, and just before they turned onto New Jersey Avenue she said, ‘Yes, just fuck my daddy. The fat fuck’” (6). “Walk” occurs 11 times, “walked” occurs 26 times, and “walking” occurs 10 times in Jones’s stories. In “Bad Neighbors,” the narrator notes a frequent visitor to the Bennington’s home who “always came walking up— never down—Eighth Street” (73). Similarly, in “All Aunt Hagar’s Children,” the unnamed protagonist explains, “I saw myself walking down M Street, strutting about New York Avenue, my pockets bulging with nuggets, big pockets, big as some boy’s pockets fat with candy—your Mary Janes, your Squirrel Nuts, your fireballs” (4). Voyant’s quantification of moderately used words, not only the most frequently employed ones, led me to concentrate on those terms associated with modes of transportation that contribute significantly to Jones’s ability to portray settings in D.C.

In comparison to several canonical short stories by black writers, including Zora Neale Hurston’s “Sweat,” Ralph Ellison’s “Battle Royal,” James Baldwin’s “Sonny’s Blues,” and Toni Cade Bambara’s “Raymond’s Run,” Jones’s inclination to map the city by identifying streets and landmarks in the city in such detail allow him to achieve new ground among prominent black writers known for presenting a sense of place in their works. Overall, Jones pinpoints a wide range of locations in his stories, presenting a view of Washington D.C. through storytelling that has been relatively uncommon in the canonical history of African American literature. Jones’s high frequency and usage of location-specific phrases reveals that he is distinguishing himself, in part, from other widely known black short story writers based on his devotion to detail-rich, geographically-precise narratives about a single city.

Section 2: Character Movement and Edward P. Jones’s Short Fiction

The 24-year-old narrator recently back from the Korean War, restless with his life in the city, and anxious to leave on a gold searching expedition in Alaska commenting, “I was a veteran

of Washington, D.C., and there was nothing else for me to discover.” (Jones “All Aunt,” 3). For the unnamed narrator, being a “veteran of Washington, D.C.” perhaps serves as subtle commentary on how race and economics will ultimately shape his future and have him traveling, living, and working along the same routes in which he grew up in as a young boy. Perhaps even, the narrator’s frustrations stem from his knowing that in order to fully escape his environment, he must in many ways leave the city since black people seem to be relegated to specific sections of the city where he is most familiar. The narrator comments on routes he takes as he navigates the city with intimate details and frequently mentions locations such as Dunbar High School, Kann’s Department Store, and Shiloh Baptist Church and thus demonstrates that he is apparently knowledgeable of Washington in general, but more so the city’s Northwest, majority black quadrant. Through detailed descriptions and references to landmarks, there is a symbiotic relationship where both the setting and protagonist are in turn made by one another.

The narrator’s knowledge of Washington, D.C., contributes to his communal worth as other characters in the story seem to revere him since he has had experiences in other parts of the city which give him special insight into relationships with people of different races and different social classes or credibility by association. For instance, a close family acquaintance Miss Agatha remarks to the unnamed narrator, “Maybe workin downtown mongst white folks grees with you” (Jones “All Aunt,” 2). The unnamed narrator’s knowledge of the “white world” through his employment as well provides him with more social authority in black communities, but even still, he does not possess the same respect in the majority white areas of Washington because of the raced infrastructure of the city. One could infer that the narrator’s uneasiness about remaining in the Northwest quadrant for the rest of his life and eagerness to venture to Alaska stems from the knowledge he acquired while working downtown and understanding the

geographic and social barriers of the city. Even though the narrator travels outside of his Northwest neighborhood downtown to F street for work and mentions venturing into other quadrants to visit friends or other family members, he still seems to be most familiar and comfortable with the Northwest district.

Jones utilizes a knowledgeable D.C.- based third person narrator in “Old Boys, Old Girls,” the story of Caesar Matthews that follows him during his seven year prison sentence in Lorton, near Lorton, Virginia, and reintegration into mainstream society upon his release. He takes a room at a boarding house and comes in contact with his once lover, Yvonne. Yvonne, now ravished by drugs, does not recognize Caesar. Caesar’s interactions with characters happen between two distinct locations in Northeast and Northwest Washington, D.C. The narrator recalls Caesar’s time with Yvonne, “with whom he had lived for an extraordinary time in Northeast” as well as the two murders he committed in the same quadrant before his prison sentence (6). Once he is released from prison, Caesar begins to reside in a boarding house “in the middle of the 900 block of N Street, Northwest” (9). He also takes a job at a restaurant called “Chowing Down” and spends many evenings sitting in Franklin Park at Fourteenth and K. His time is divided between his memories before prison in Northeast D.C. and his time after his release living and working in Northwest, representing two physical locations in the city as well as two periods in Caesar’s life.

Caesar is confined to the Northwest district because of his inability or unwillingness to interact with other people upon his release from prison. The only time Caesar travels beyond his home or his place of employment is to visit his siblings just off Sixteenth Street, Northwest, “an area of well-to-do black people some called the Gold Coast” (14). In the story’s end, Jones’s attentiveness to location-specific information becomes especially prevalent. After Caesar

discovers Yvonne dead in her room from a possible overdose, he cleans her room in order to make her presentable to whoever finds her. His meticulous act of helping Yvonne can also be seen as his decision to re-enter or integrate himself with his larger D.C. environment. Near the story's end, the identification of locations and street names dramatically increases as he makes references to his immediate surroundings reconnecting to memories of his boyhood home on Tenth Street, convenience stores he remembers on Eleventh and Q Streets, Immaculate Conception Catholic Church on Eighth Street, a bank near Seventh Street, and general remarks about Ninth and N streets.

Jones's *New Yorker* stories place a special emphasis on black male characters navigating the urban landscape in Washington, D.C., primarily in the Northwest and Southeast quadrants. For instance, all five of Jones's short stories make reference to the characters either living in or passing through the Northwest quadrant of Washington. Streets ranging from Fifth to Eighth make appear frequently in the five short stories with additional references to New Jersey and New York Avenues as well as M Street and North Capital. Perhaps, even more notable, is Jones's emphasis on navigation through the city given the historical limitations placed on black people during that segregated period based on race and income. These markers throughout Jones's *New Yorker* stories provide intricate details about the environments where the characters within the narratives interact and reveal how despite the absence of city laws and ordinances barring black people from living and socializing in certain districts, a more pervasive economic and communal order dictates the movement of black people within Washington.

In "All Aunt Hagar's Children" and "Old Boys, Old Girls," Jones's use of literary geotagging reveals character traits as well as qualities of D.C.'s predominately black quadrants. The protagonists in "All Aunt Hagar's Children" and "Old Boys, Old Girls" reside in the

Northwest district of D.C. and travel along the same routes signaling a commonality between them, although the descriptions of how they interact with their environments varies. The unnamed narrator and Caesar are different in terms of characterization, professions, background, and economic status with the unnamed narrator seeming mild-mannered and accommodating, and Caesar appearing more distant and cold. The unnamed narrator possesses and displays in-depth knowledge about his neighborhood and local hangouts; Caesar, on the other hand, appears more reserved and content with only traveling between his home and job and on occasional instances, the park. The differences between these two characters highlight how Jones links the dispositions of characters with their mobility. Each character's knowledge of D.C. neighborhoods seems to reflect how he interacts with fellow citizens and navigates the city.

Section 3: Black Neighborhoods in Edward P. Jones's Short Fiction

The narrator plays a crucial role in Jones's short stories as this persona emphasizes select D.C. neighborhoods and demonstrates how the story's plot utilizes specific streets which dictates character interactions. In "Bad Neighbors," threats of violence in neighborhoods become central to the plot as the lead character Sharon is almost sexually assaulted by a group of college students near Thirty-sixth Street around the Georgetown University Hospital. Sharon seems accustomed to encountering the rowdy "Georgetown students, many with bogus identification cards that they used to buy drinks at the bars along Wisconsin Avenue and M Street" based on the narration and her sense of familiarity with the location (81). Her former neighbor, Derek, who she and other residents have had a strained relationship with in the past, saves Sharon from her attackers. After Derek saves her from the P Street attack, he drives her across Wisconsin Avenue, the P Street Bridge, Calvert and Woodley Street to drop her off at her condominium

near Connecticut Avenue safely. The detailed familiarity with the streets of D.C. and in-depth descriptions of the routes taken contributes to the relationship between the two characters.

Location seems to push Derek and Sharon away from one another as well as unite them. Derek was pitted against the other neighbors, including Sharon, because his family was seen as unsophisticated and crude and a threat to the other middle class Eighth Street residents. Sharon's family and "the good neighbors of Eighth Street decided that they would raise the money and buy the house and rent it to more agreeable people" essentially pushing Derek and his family out of the neighborhood (79). Ironically, Derek still comes to the aid of Sharon despite the resentment he and his family had for his former neighbors because the connection they both had to their Eighth Street, NW neighborhood. On his way taking Sharon home, police are racing by them, probably responding to the incident that just took place as Derek remarks, "They gone pull that one patrol car they have in Southeast and the only one they got in Northeast and bring em over here to join the dozens they keep in Georgetown" (82). His comments about the police indicate a disproportional representation of law enforcement in the Southeast district in contrast to Georgetown. Additionally, Derek's comments could draw on experiences that he and Sharon share based on race and their having lived in a predominately black neighborhood in Northwest. The range of emotions conjured up by location reveals how the D.C. neighborhoods in the context of this story can both repel and attract Derek and Sharon from one another.

In Jones's short stories, he does not explicitly identify every black neighborhood in the nation's capitol, but he provides enough location-specific information to clarify that he has a thorough knowledge of the city. Over the years, D.C.'s landscape has changed dramatically and,

in some cases, shifted neighborhood demographics.⁹⁹ Jones's stories tend to be set in the 1950s, 1960s or 1980s and offer insight into a geographic history of D.C. as he draws on his own knowledge of neighborhoods and landscapes, which have changed in recent years. References to streets, intersections, and landmarks provide an opportunity to approximate exactly where action happens within Jones's short stories. Jones connects his fictional narrative to actual locations in D.C. that are noted for historical significance or most readily associated with black people.

Several canonical African American literary texts, including *Native Son* (1940), *Invisible Man* (1952), and *Song of Solomon* (1977), have concentrated on black protagonists in multiple geographic regions, particularly Chicago, New York City, the Midwest, and the South. Aside from novels, short stories have also been consistently plotted in specific geographic locations. Ranging from Hurston's and Wright's emphasis on the South to Baldwin's and Bambara's interest in New York City, social geographies inform impressions regarding race and history. Despite the long history and dense population of African Americans living in or near the nation's capital, Washington D.C., specifically black D.C., has a relatively small presence in the scholarship on African American literature. Furthermore, hardly any scholarship seeks to illuminate how individual authors map geographic locations in series of literary works.

Since the more widely popular depictions of D.C. were limited to political life, Jones was motivated to offer alternative portrayals. In an interview with Dan Rivas, Jones explained, "I was in college and was shocked at the ignorance of my fellow students about life in D.C. They knew only that it was the seat of government." Commenting on his first collection of short stories, *Lost*

⁹⁹ In the *New York Times's* "A Population Changes, Uneasily," Sabrina Tavernise discusses how Washington's demographics shifted as the African American's lost their majority status in the city. She explains, Washington's black population slipped below 50 percent this year, possibly in February, about 51 years after it gained a majority, according to an estimate by William Frey, the senior demographer at the Brookings Institution.

in the City, Jones continues, “The stories, over two decades, came with my effort to set the record straight. D.C. is a place of neighbors where people do good and bad things to each other, just as they do in Dubuque and Seattle and Worcester.” Jones was interested in offering a perspective that reflected his coming of age experiences in the city, as he remarks, “We lived in a black world and had little to do with white people in the rest of D.C.” In his short stories, the daily lives of his characters and central plots of his narratives reflect interactions with other black people and as a result typically feature African American neighborhoods. Jones’s identification of streets and landmarks, or that is, his use of literary geotagging, helps him achieve the task of presenting views of D.C. beyond governmental and national politics.

Conclusion

Jones’s D.C. settings have been the topic of discussion among reviewers who have commented on the significance of the reoccurring cityscape across the majority of his short stories. Darryl Pinckney explains, “Washington isn’t described in Jones’s stories. It just is: a gathering of nostalgia-producing addresses, locations” (85). In Pinckney’s estimation, Jones descriptions of D.C. are not fleshed out, but instead draw on his coming-of-age experiences and recollections of city life. Perhaps, Pinckney is suggesting that Jones is so familiar with the D.C. neighborhoods that he does not feel obligated to go into great details explaining the significance of each intersection or cross-street in his stories. Jones’s constant references to street names, cultural figures, and landmarks draws on historical and social memories of D.C. for each character. These memories reveal how a select geographic location has the ability to conjure a range of emotions and thus become significant to the overall plot of each story.

John Harrison’s review of *All Aunt Hagar’s Children* takes note of the centrality of D.C. to Jones’s characters in his short stories. He writes, “All of the stories are set in or en route to

Washington, D.C., and Jones's heavy reference to the street plan of D.C. leads me to recommend having a map of the area handy. Each story traces a journey—planned or unplanned, taken or failed—and an obvious root/route symbolism runs throughout the collection.” In a footnote to his review, Harrison adds, “The only time I’ve been to Washington was for an 8th-grade field trip, and we decidedly did not visit the areas in question” (Harrison 2006). The locations identified in Jones's stories are not tourist destinations, but are instead everyday neighborhoods or routes taken by black people who are residents of D.C. The many references to street names outside of the purview of tourists give range and depth to our understanding of D.C. Jones's characters interact with the city in ways that display their immersion primarily in the Northwest and Southeast quadrants. Jones's use of literary geotagging throughout his stories results in providing impressions of D.C. that are geared towards social interactions of neighbors and community members.

Conclusion

My dissertation uses datasets compiled from publication and linguistic trends in frequently anthologized black short stories. The datasets allow me to account for the frequency of reprinting in 86 anthologies over the course of the 20th century and early 21st century. A data-driven approach to studying the history of short stories confirms the significance of anthologies in shaping impressions of black literature. My dataset also reveals the extent to which a “Big Seven” list of African American authors does truly exist, at least among editors. In the case of southern and New York City black short stories, text-mining software pinpoints specific linguistic characteristics that are most prevalent among writers such as their use of African American Vernacular English and references to distinct geographic locations, as with Edward P. Jones extensively geotagging Washington, D.C. Ultimately, I hope this project makes a unique contribution to the study of short fiction, an under-examined genre, by demonstrating the value of digital humanities, especially in advancing African American literary study.

While quantitative data helps to better classify short fiction, attention to thematic aspects of black short stories still remains a critical area that needs expansion in future studies on black writing. Text-mining software helps to locate and place language and place references on a geographic continuum. A more nuanced view of black writers’ use of language as they join or depart from their literary predecessors has profound implications for the field. Future research should focus on building datasets that helps account for variations in language usage, character development, and plot structure in short stories by region. Identifying these technical features can provide more specific explanations for certain developments in short stories and track anthology publication trends. Quantitative datasets and data analytic computations serve as the empirical proof for confirming or disproving long held beliefs of black writing as they apply to a specific sample.

My examination seeks to fill a notable void in the scholarly discourse on short stories by black writers, the significance of social geographies, and the circulation of short stories in anthologies. Digital research lays the groundwork for considering geography-- or place and space-- as a defining feature of African American literature in more concrete ways. For instance, Hurston's and Wright's contrasting views on the South suggest that geography in addition to gender, is one of the most enduring ideological divides in African American literary history. This study encourages scholars to identify specific geographic trends in larger datasets to corroborate my findings and to better explain differences and similarities in the characterization and plot development of fictional texts. The use of quantitative data in these future studies can help inform underrepresentation and overrepresentation in the critical scholarship and anthology production and recenter our focus on understudied areas. More precise evidence concerning the aesthetic value, style and meaning of literary texts can help to counter the revolving door practice for canonical and noncanonical figures in literary anthologies.

Appendix I: Anthologies by Decade

1920 - 1929

Title: *The New Negro: An Interpretation*

Publication Year: 1925

Publisher: Atheneum (New York)

Editor(s): Alain Locke

1930 - 1939

Title: *Readings from Negro Authors for Schools and Colleges, with a Bibliography of Negro Literature*

Publication Year: 1931

Publisher: Harcourt, Brace and Co. (New York)

Editor(s): Otelia Cromwell; Lorenzo Dow Turner; Eva Beatrice Dykes

1940 - 1949

Title: *The Negro Caravan: Writings by American Negroes*

Publication Year: 1941

Publisher: Citadel Press (New York)

Editor(s): Sterling Allen Brown; Arthur Paul Davis; Ulysses Lee;

1950 -1959

Title: *American Literature by Negro Authors*

Publication Year: 1950

Publisher: Macmillan (New York)

Editor(s): Herman Dreer

1960 - 1969

Title: *Soon, One Morning; New Writing by American Negroes, 1940-1962*

Publication Year: 1963

Publisher: Alfred A. Knopf (New York)

Editor(s): Herbert Hill

Title: *American Negro Short Stories*

Publication Year: 1966

Publisher: Hill and Wang (New York)

Editor(s): John Henry Clarke

Title: *The Best Short Stories by Black Writers: the Classic Anthology from 1899-1967*

Publication Year: 1967

Publisher: Little, Brown (Boston)

Editor(s): Langston Hughes; Gloria Naylor

Title: *Dark Symphony: Negro Literature in America*

Publication Year: 1968

Publisher: The Free Press (New York)

Editor(s): James A. Emanuel; Theodore L. Gross

Title: *Black Voices: An Anthology of Afro-American Literature*

Publication Year: 1968

Publisher: St. Martin's Press (New York)

Editor(s): Abraham Chapman

Title: *Black American Literature: Fiction*

Publication Year: 1969

Publisher: Ohio Merrill (Columbus)

Editor(s): Darwin T Turner

1970 - 1979

Title: *From the Roots; Short Stories by Black Americans*

Publication Year: 1970

Publisher: Dodd, Mead (New York)

Editor(s): Charles L James

Title: *On Being Black: Writings by Afro-Americans from Frederick Douglass to the Present*

Publication Year: 1970

Publisher: Fawcett Publications (Greenwich, Conn)

Editor(s): Charles T. Davis; Daniel Walden

Title: *The Black Experience; an Anthology of American Literature for the 1970s*

Publication Year: 1970

Publisher: Viking Press (New York)

Editor(s): Francis Edward Kearns

Title: *Forgotten pages of American Literature*
Publication Year: 1970
Publisher: Houghton Mifflin (Boston)
Editor(s): Gerald W. Haslam

Title: *Black Identity: A Thematic Reader*
Publication Year: 1970
Publisher: Holt, Rinehart and Winston (New York)
Editor(s): Francis Edward Kearns

Title: *What We Must See, Young Black Storytellers : An anthology*
Publication Year: 1971
Publisher: Dodd, Mead (New York)
Editor(s): Orde Coombs

Title: *Cavalcade; Negro American Writing from 1760 to the Present*
Publication Year: 1971
Publisher: Houghton Mifflin (Boston)
Editor(s): Arthur Paul Davis; J. Saunders Redding

Title: *Black Insights: Significant Literature by Black Americans—1760 to the Present*
Publication Year: 1971
Publisher: Ginn (Waltham, Mass)
Editor(s): Nick Aaron Ford

Title: *Black American Literature, 1760-Present*
Publication Year: 1971
Publisher: Glenco Press (Beverly Hills, CA)
Editor(s): Ruth Miller

Title: *Gift of the Spirit: Readings in Black Literature for Teachers*
Publication Year: 1971
Publisher: Holt, Rinehart and Winston (New York)
Editor(s): Karel Rose

Title: *I, too, Sing America; Black Voices in American Literature*
Publication Year: 1971
Publisher: Hayden Book Co (New York)
Editor(s): Barbara Dodds Stanford

Title: *Black Literature in America*
Publication Year: 1971
Publisher: McGraw-Hill Book Company (New York)
Editor(s): Houston A Baker

Title: *Black Writers of America; a Comprehensive Anthology*
Publication Year: 1972
Publisher: Macmillan (New York)
Editor(s): Richard K Barksdale; Keneth Kinnamon

Title: *New Black Voices: an Anthology of Contemporary Afro-American Literature*
Publication Year: 1972
Publisher: New American Library (New York)
Editor(s): Abraham Chapman

Title: *Keeping the Faith: Writings by Contemporary Black American Women*
Publication Year: 1974
Publisher: Fawcett Publications (Greenwich, Conn)
Editor(s): Pat Crutchfield Exum

Title: *Black-Eyed Susans: Classic Stories By and About Black Women*
Publication Year: 1975
Publisher: Anchor Books (Garden City, New York)
Editor(s): Mary Helen Washington

Title: *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance*
Publication Year: 1976
Publisher: Oxford University Press (New York)
Editor(s): Nathan Irvin Huggins

Title: *Women Working: An Anthology of Stories and Poems*
Publication Year: 1979
Publisher: Feminist Press (Old Westbury, New York)
Editor(s): Nancy Hoffman; Florence Howe; Elaine Hedges;

1980- 1989

Title: *Black Women Writers (1950-1980): a Critical Evaluation*
Publication Year: 1983
Publisher: Anchor Press/Doubleday (Garden City, New York)
Editor(s): Mari Evans

1990 – 1999

Title: *Breaking Ice: An Anthology of Contemporary African-American Fiction*

Publication Year: 1990

Publisher: Penguin Book (New York)

Editor(s): Terry McMillan

Title: *Black Southern Voices: An Anthology of Fiction, Poetry, Drama, Nonfiction, and Critical Essays*

Publication Year: 1992

Publisher: Meridian (New York)

Editor(s): John Oliver Killens; Jerry W. Ward, Jr.

Title: *In the Tradition: An Anthology of Young Black Writers*

Publication Year: 1992

Publisher: Harlem River Press (New York)

Editor(s): Kevin Powell; Ras Baraka

Title: *Calling the Wind: Twentieth Century African-American Short Stories*

Publication Year: 1992

Publisher: HarperPerennial (New York)

Editor(s): Clarence Major

Title: *The Sleeper Wakes: Harlem Renaissance Stories by Women*

Publication Year: 1993

Publisher: Rutgers University Press (New Brunswick, New Jersey)

Editor(s): Marcy Jane Knopf-Newman

Title: *America Street: a Multicultural Anthology of Stories*

Publication Year: 1993

Publisher: Persea Books (New York)

Editor(s): Anne Mazer

Title: *African American Literature: An Anthology of Nonfiction, Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*

Publication Year: 1993

Publisher: National Textbook Co. (Lincolnwood, Illinois)

Editor(s): Demetrice A Worley; Jesse Perry

Title: *Crossing the Danger Water: Three Hundred Years of African-American Writing*

Publication Year: 1993

Publisher: Anchor Books (New York)

Editor(s): Deirdre Mullane

Title: *The Woman That I Am: the Literature and Culture of Contemporary Women of Color*

Publication Year: 1993

Publisher: St. Martin Press (New York)

Editor(s): Soyini Madison

Title: *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader*

Publication Year: 1994

Publisher: Viking (New York)

Editor(s): David Levering Lewis

Title: *The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories*

Publication Year: 1994

Publisher: Random House (New York)

Editor(s): Tobias Wolff

Title: *Brotherman: the Odyssey of Black Men in America*

Publication Year: 1995

Publisher: One World (New York)

Editor(s): Herb Boyd; Robert L Allen; Tom Feelings;

Title: *Revolutionary Tales : African American Women's Short Stories, from the First Story to the Present*

Publication Year: 1995

Publisher: Laurel (New York)

Editor(s): Bill Mullen

Title: *Children of the Night: the Best Short Stories by Black writers, 1967 to the Present*

Publication Year: 1995

Publisher: Little, Brown, and Co. (Boston)

Editor(s): Gloria Naylor

Title: *The Best American Short Stories*

Publication Year: 1995

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Co. (Boston)

Editor(s): Jane Smiley; Katrina Kenison

Title: *African American Literature: a Brief Introduction and Anthology*

Publication Year: 1995

Publisher: HarperCollins (New York)

Editor(s): Al Young

Title: *Harlem's Glory : Black Women Writing : 1900-1950*
Publication Year: 1996
Publisher: Harvard University Press (Cambridge, Massachusetts)
Editor(s): Lorraine Elena Roses; Ruth Elizabeth Randolph

Title: *The Best American Short Stories*
Publication Year: 1996
Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Co. (Boston)
Editor(s): John Edgar Wideman; Katrina Kenison

Title: *Cornerstones: an Anthology of African American Literature*
Publication Year: 1996
Publisher: St. Martin's Press
Editor(s): Melvin Burke Donalson

Title: *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*
Publication Year: 1996
Publisher: W.W. Norton & Co. (New York)
Editor(s): Henry Louis Gates, Jr.; Nellie Y McKay

Title: *Call and Response: the Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition*
Publication Year: 1997
Publisher: Houghton Mifflin (Boston)
Editor(s): Patricia Liggins Hill, Bernard W. Bell, Trudier Harris, William J. Harris, R. Baxter Miller, and Sondra A. O'Neale

Title: *The Art of the Story: an International Anthology of Contemporary Short Stories*
Publication Year: 1999
Publisher: Viking Press (New York)
Editor(s): Daniel Halpern

Title: *The Scribner Anthology of Contemporary Short Fiction: 50 North American Short Stories Since 1970*
Publication Year: 1999
Publisher: Simon & Schuster (New York)
Editor(s): Lex Williford; Michael Martone

2000 – 2009

Title: *Gumbo: a Celebration of African American Writing*
Publication Year: 2000
Publisher: Harlem Moon Press (New York)

Editor(s): Marita Golden;E Lynn Harris

Title: *A Native Son Reader*

Publication Year: 2000

Publisher: Lippincott (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

Editor(s): Edward Margolies

Title: *Almost Touching the Skies: Women's Coming of Age Stories*

Publication Year: 2000

Publisher: Feminist Press (New York)

Editor(s): Florence Howe; Jean Casella

Title: *Dark matter: a Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora*

Publication Year: 2000

Publisher: Warner Books (New York)

Editor(s): Sheree R Thomas

Title: *The Prentice Hall anthology of African American Literature*

Publication Year: 2000

Publisher: Prentice Hall (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey)

Editor(s): Sharon Lynette Jones; Kevin Everod Quashie; Rochelle Smith

Title: *Giant Steps: the New Generation of African American Writers*

Publication Year: 2000

Publisher: Perennial (New York)

Editor(s): Kevin Young

Title: *The Best American Short Stories 2000*

Publication Year: 2000

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Co (Boston)

Editor(s): Katrina Kennison; E. L. Doctorow

Title: *Double-Take: a Revisionist Harlem Renaissance Anthology*

Publication Year: 2001

Publisher: Rutgers University Press (New Brunswick, New Jersey)

Editor(s): Venetria K Patton; Maureen Honey

Title: *The Best American Short Stories 2001*

Publication Year: 2001

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin (Boston)

Editor(s): Barbara Kingsolver; Katrina Kenison

Title: *The Best American Short Stories 2002*

Publication Year: 2002

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin (Boston)

Editor(s): Sue Miller; Katrina Kenison

Title: *The Best American Short Stories 2003*

Publication Year: 2003

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin (Boston)

Editor(s): Walter Mosley; Katrina Kenison;

Title: *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature—2nd Edition*

Publication Year: 2003

Publisher: W.W. Norton & Co (New York)

Editor(s): Henry Louis Gates, Jr.; Nellie Y McKay;

Title: *The Best American Short Stories 2004*

Publication Year: 2004

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin (Boston)

Editor(s): Lorrie Moore; Katrina Kenison

Title: *Shades of Black: Crime and Mystery Stories by African-American Authors*

Publication Year: 2004

Publisher: Berkley Prime Crime (2004)

Editor(s): Eleanor Taylor Bland

Title: *The Best American Short Stories 2005*

Publication Year: 2005

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin (Boston)

Editor(s): Michael Chabon; Katrina Kenison

Title: *The Prentice Hall Anthology of African American Women's Literature*

Publication Year: 2005

Publisher: Pearson Prentice Hall (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey)

Editor(s): Valerie Lee

Title: *The Art of the Short Story*

Publication Year: 2005

Publisher: Pearson Longman (New York)

Editor(s): Dana Gioia; R S Gwynn

Title: *The Bedford Anthology of American Literature, Volume Two: 1865 to Present*

Publication Year: 2006

Publisher: Bedford/St. Martin (Boston)

Editor(s): Susan Belasco; Linck Johnson

Title: *The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction*

Publication Year: 2006

Publisher: Norton (New York)

Editor(s): R V Cassill; Richard Bausch

Title: *Hokum: an Anthology of African-American Humor*
Publication Year: 2006
Publisher: Bloomsbury (New York)
Editor(s): Paul Beatty

Title: *The Heath Anthology of American Literature, Fifth Edition*
Publication Year: 2006
Publisher: D.C. Heath and Co. (Lexington, Massachusetts)
Editor(s): Paul Lauter

Title: *Anthology of the American Short Story*
Publication Year: 2007
Publisher: Houghton Mifflin (Boston)
Editor(s): James Nagel

Title: *Wastelands: Stories of the Apocalypse*
Publication Year: 2008
Publisher: Night Shade Books (San Francisco, California)
Editor(s): John Joseph Adams

Title: *The Ecco anthology of Contemporary American Short Fiction*
Publication Year: 2008
Publisher: HarperCollins (New York)
Editor(s): Joyce Carol Oates; Christopher R Beha

Title: *Black Noir: Mystery, Crime and Suspense Stories by African-American Writers*
Publication Year: 2009
Publisher: Pegasus Books (New York)
Editor(s): Otto Penzler

Title: *African American Literature: a Concise Anthology from Frederick Douglass to Toni Morrison*
Publication Year: 2009
Publisher: Prestwick House, Inc. (Deleware)
Editor(s): Magedah Shabo

Title: *Best African American Fiction 2009*
Publication Year: 2009
Publisher: Bantam Books (New York)
Editor(s): Gerald Lyn Early; E Lynn Harris

2010 – Present

Title: *Best African American Fiction 2010*

Publication Year: 2010

Publisher: One World/Ballantine Books (New York)

Editor(s): Gerald Lyn Early; Nikki Giovanni

Title: *The Story and Its Writer: an Introduction to Short Fiction*

Publication Year: 2011

Publisher: St. Martin's Press (New York)

Editor(s): Ann Charters

Title: *African-American Classics: Graphic Classics. Volume twenty-two*

Publication Year: 2011

Publisher: Eureka Publications (Mount Horeb, Wisconsin)

Editor(s): Tom aPomplun and Lance Took

Title: *The Best American Short Stories 2011*

Publication Year: 2011

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin (Boston)

Editor(s): Geraldine Brooks; Heidi Pitlor

Title: *Fiction 100: An Anthology of Short Fiction*

Publication Year: 2012

Publisher: Longman Pearson (New York)

Editor(s): James H Pickering

Title: *The Oxford Book of American Short Stories*

Publication Year: 2013

Publisher: Oxford University Press (New York)

Editor(s): Joyce Carol Oates

Title: *The Wiley Blackwell Anthology of African American Literature: 2 Volume Set*

Publication Year: 2014

Publisher: Wiley-Blackwell (Hoboken, New Jersey)

Editor(s): Gene Andrew Jarrett

Title: *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*

Publication Year: 2014

Publisher: W.W. Norton & Co. (New York)

Editor(s): Henry Louis Gates, Jr.; Valerie Smith;

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