

ONE STORY, MANY VOICES: PROBLEMS OF UNITY IN THE SHORT-STORY CYCLE

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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of  
for the degree  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Department of English in the College of Arts and Sciences  
Indiana University  
April 2011

Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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February 25, 2011

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For JAMES AND MICHELLE SMITH,  
for everything.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It's rare to have the opportunity to tell people what you think of them—what you really think of them. I am reminded of a scene from *30 Rock* when Kenneth the page is fired; he drunkenly staggers onto the scene of a wedding. He grabs the microphone. Everyone in the room braces for the worst as Kenneth announces, “You people you are my best friends, and I hope you get everything you want in life. So kiss my face! I'll see you all in heaven!” He flashes a thumbs up, throws the microphone down, and walks away. Reaching the end of something, he realizes how wonderful it's been. I know how he feels. I have had the best mentors, colleagues, friends, and family.

Whatever strengths this project has and insight it offers are owed to my insightful and supportive committee. It has been my great fortune to take classes with each of them and have my work shaped by them from the very first days of my graduate education.

As both a teacher and director, George has been generous and challenging. He kept, always, the whole project in mind as he read. He has an incredible talent for being able to conceptualize the big picture even as he zooms in on a single sentence. Both in his responses and in his writing, he taught me the merits of clear and compelling prose. I now endeavor to practice and refine my own. He offered encouragement when it was most needed; at the same time, he found a way to tell me when a chapter was incoherent or an argument faulty. My project has deeply benefitted from that balance.

It was with Purnima in my very first semester that I first encountered questions about the intersections of nation and literature. This early encounter has been formative to my thinking. I was then—and am now—awed by her intellect and sense of purpose. She has been my most resistant reader, and for that I thank her. The push past the formal impulse is, in large part, due to her. She challenged me to think about not only history and theory in regards to the cycle but also the conditions of its production and reception.

I had the great pleasure to not only take a class with Margo but also teach one with her. In both settings, she inspired me with her genuine excitement for ideas and growth. I am indebted to her for many things—for her class on the Black Arts Movement, which asked questions about identity and art that shape this project, her support in both coursework and writing, and showing me how to be both rigorous and encouraging. She left Indiana part of the way through this process; I am indebted to her that she remained on my committee.

I met Vivian when I first visited Indiana and was considering attending. She struck me immediately as an engaged scholar and consummate advocate for students and their work. This has been affirmed by the many workshops she has assembled, her clear thinking and professionalism, and her teaching and research. I had the tremendous good fortune to participate in *Variations on Blackness*, organized by Vivian and Matthew Guterl. In this workshop, Vivian and Matt evinced a model of scholarship and collaboration that inspires me and shapes the kind of faculty member I want to be. The workshop had the very measurable effect of leading to my first publication, which is a credit to Vivian. I am likewise deeply indebted to her on this

project—she has shaped my framing, choice of texts, argumentation, and countless other elements.

All of my readers gave me extensive and thoughtful feedback; there is not a measurement adequate to quantify what this has meant and how it has benefited my work. Even before that, an army of English teachers and professors made this all possible; I thank all of them. My work has been supported by the Booth Tarkington Dissertation Award and by the English Department at Indiana University. Thank you especially to Bev Hankins. She makes the department work, and she does it with unrivaled savvy and ability.

My project has also benefitted from those fellow graduate students who read these chapters in draft and enhanced them with their thoughts and questions: I thank especially Erin Pryor Ackerman, John Casey, Brian Mornar, and Laura Passin. I also want to thank my dear and lovely friends for making graduate school fun. I am inspired every day by the collective intellect, wit, and ambition of my Bloomington friends: Erin, Amy Despres, Elin Grimes, Christian Lander, Annika Mann, Tracey Metivier, Andy Oler, Rebecca Peters-Golden, Anita and Amber Schaad, Maura Smyth, Sarah Withers, and Jeff Wuslich. May this be only the beginning. I have also been supported by a large circle of old friends who know who they are. My new colleagues, Michelle Gardner-Morkert, Connie Kammrath, Lila Kurth, Andy Pederson, David Rogner, and Gary Wenzel offered enthusiasm and served as sounding boards in the last stages of this process.

My largest debt of gratitude goes to my family. To Matt, Katie, Kiersten, Patrick, and Aaron, I thank you for offering unmitigated joy and love. Those last three weren't even born when I started this journey, and now they are walking, talking people. To my sister and best friend, Julie, I thank you for being a more generous listener than I deserve, a firebrand, and my fiercest supporter. To share Bloomington with you my first year and your last was a pure delight. To share everything with you is my great honor. To my extended Smith and Craig families, I owe you so much in the way of love and enthusiasm. And especially to Edwin and Betty Smith, I am thankful for the years of work, dedication, and humor you put into me and my siblings. You are my inspiration.

Andy Craig has transformed my life. He makes me—even when I don't want to—acknowledge how special it is to be pursuing this project and this dream. He adds to my life immeasurably, and he inspires me every day with his words and actions. He read and gave me his thoughts on every part of this dissertation and listened to me talk interminably about it over these last years.

Finally, my most precious thanks go to those two individuals to whom this is dedicated—James and Michelle Smith, my parents. Their unwavering love and support have made this, and every accomplishment I have ever had, possible. I am nothing without you. “You people are my best friends, and I hope you get everything you want in life.”



Jennifer J. Smith

ONE STORY, MANY VOICES: PROBLEMS OF UNITY IN THE SHORT-STORY CYCLE

Tracing the genre from its nineteenth-century antecedents to its present-day incarnations, my dissertation argues that the rise of the short-story cycle constitutes one of the most influential and generative developments in US literary history. Although usually divided among disparate genres and periods, short-story cycles by Caroline Matilda Kirkland, Sarah Orne Jewett, and other so-called regionalists, modernists such as Sherwood Anderson and William Faulkner, postmodernists such as Louise Erdrich and Julia Alvarez, and writers whose works fall outside of these categorizations such as Jhumpa Lahiri in fact constitute a long, expansive history which includes the most influential writers and texts in American literature. The recurrence of stylistic conventions demonstrates a generic compulsion that erodes the ground upon which rigid periodization is built. The consistency of theme, structure, and style among cycles from disparate periods illuminates the extent to which one period's concerns persist and get reinvented in another: short-story cycles are realist in description, modernist in their fragmentation, and postmodernist in their experimentation with the reader/text relationship.

The short-story cycle has been central to US literary production precisely because the form troubles expectations of unity and re-imagines narrative, like human identity itself, as contingent. As such seemingly firm supports of selfhood as place, time, group memory, ethnicity, and family progressively destabilize, they also become the fraught devices through which fictional narrative remakes its engagement with expectations of formal unity. Using these motifs as linking devices that provisionally work but cannot ultimately hold, American authors have repeatedly

rejuvenated fictional narrative in general. The history exposes the frequency with which writers turn to the form at critical junctures in their careers: as they begin writing, come to a crossroads in their aesthetics, seek a form that liberates them to proliferate points of view, investigate the breadth and depth of a locality, or break free from the shackles of novelistic temporality.

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## *Introduction*

The rise of the short-story cycle since the mid-nineteenth century constitutes one of the most generative and influential developments in US literary history. The short-story cycle—also often called the short story sequence, novel in stories, and composite novel—is, at its most basic, a collection of stories that are simultaneously interrelated and autonomous.<sup>1</sup> The tension between the stories' independence and interconnection makes it an ideal genre for engaging the concurrent but often competing impulses that animate the literary works and critical narratives of US cultural production: expansiveness and particularity, coherence and fragmentation, tradition and novelty, recurrence and uniqueness, and individuality and community. The cycle uncannily acts out these central tensions of modern American experience and articulates the sense that the identities that arise from them, whether personal, ethnic, or national, resist stasis.

The problems of unity, to which my dissertation title refers, connote the genre's uncertainty about narrative and formal harmony and the ways in which the genre points to its own lack of perfect coherence in the elements of place, character, and time that link the stories together. The repetition of these linking techniques appears to fuse the stories into a harmonious whole; however, that unity collapses in those moments when individual stories fail to cohere, gaps persist between stories, and the stories and cycle lack closure. Short-story cycles construct moments of provisional coherence within single stories that the other stories extend, complicate, subvert, or ignore entirely. *One Story, Many Voices: Problems of Unity in the Short-Story Cycle* argues for the centrality of the genre to modern literary production, because it so comprehensively troubles expectations of unity and re-imagines narrative, like human identity

itself, as recursive and contingent. As such seemingly stable supports of selfhood as place, time, group memory, ethnicity, and family become progressively destabilized, they also become the fraught devices through which fictional narrative remakes its engagement with expectations of formal unity. Using these motifs as linking devices that only provisionally work but cannot ultimately hold, American authors have continually rejuvenated fictional narrative in general.

Practitioners of the cycle include writers as diverse as Caroline Matilda Kirkland, Sarah Orne Jewett, Sherwood Anderson, William Faulkner, John Steinbeck, Ray Bradbury, Louise Erdrich, Julia Alvarez, Amy Tan, and Jhumpa Lahiri, among many others. Tracing the genre from its nineteenth-century antecedents to its present-day incarnations exposes the frequency with which writers turn to the form at critical junctures in their careers: as they begin writing, come to a crossroads in their aesthetics, seek a form that liberates them to proliferate points of view, investigate the breadth and depth of a locality, or break free from the shackles of novelistic temporality. The preponderance of the genre—and its pivotal role—across different movements from regionalism and realism to modernism and postmodernism signals the continuity of the crises of coherence and legibility between these different periods. Although its antecedents extend to some of the earliest narratives across the globe, the modern iteration of the short-story cycle proliferated from the mid nineteenth century perhaps because it tackles the logic of progress and rationality, so central to modernity, directly in its form.

Although it is an imperfect term and there are many variants, “short-story cycle” has become the primary and best descriptor for the genre, because of its emphasis on the short story and the volumes’ recursive properties. However, these volumes are not cyclical in the sense that they always begin and end in the same ways or that they go through symmetrical stages. Short-story cycles are dissimilar from song cycles or sonnet cycles, characterized so often by an

organic relationship to time that results in symmetrical repetition. Rather, short-story cycles engage recursive, or cyclical, elements. A more accurate metaphor might be that of the helix, as the stories circle without exact repetition. The linking structures serve as axes around which the stories curve. As a form that draws attention to the imperfect cyclicity of the stories, the genre abjures linearity in favor of episodic, non-chronological narratives. The cycle's structure disorients, creating a kind of vertigo offset by sharp moments of insight. That the insight from one story may or may not affect other stories is typical of the genre; the cycle does not, ultimately, conclude that narrative—and, by extension, life—gains clarity and coherence. Rather, short-story cycles wade in murkier waters and are immersed in inconsistency. The cyclical form allows one moment or one story to show the sheer celebration of some facet of modernization and others to lament what it has cost. What is perhaps most revelatory in these texts is the way that the cyclical form does not require progression and in some cases even resists it. The resistance to progress and narrative resolution is itself the greatest parallel to the texts' treatment of modernity: in their narrative form, cyclical texts deny the logic of progress. Short-story cycles do not lead to a single grand conclusion but instead often turn back into themselves.

The genre's intrinsic lack of closure and open-endedness aligns it with the corruption of what Stuart Hall calls "the aura of the unique and singular work of art forever" (49), ushered in by modernity. In their integration of autonomous and previously published stories, the cycle represents a challenge to the very idea of singularity: is the volume singular or is the story?

According to Hall,

once you destroy the aura of the singular work of art because it can be reiterated, you enter into a new era which cannot be approached in the same way, using the traditional theoretical concepts. You are going to have to operate your analysis of meaning without

the solace of closure: more on the basis of the semantic raids [Walter] Benjamin proposed—to find the fragments, to decipher their assembly and see how you can make a surgical cut into them, assembling and reassembling the means and instruments of cultural production. It is this that inaugurates the modern era. (49)

This project operates without “the solace of closure” in that it does not attempt to prove the closure and harmony of the cycle, nor does it adhere to a strict linear history of the form. Instead, it pieces together from fragments an account of the genre’s centrality to American fiction.

#### Theories of Genre and Genres of Theory

The short-story cycle’s history over the last century and a half proves an interesting study in generic development. Its history overlaps with that of the short story, which is itself a modern revision of an older form just as the cycle seems to be. As a distilled narrative of intensified language and treatment of a moment, the short story retains these properties within a cycle. However, these distilled narratives multiply and contend with each other in a cycle. Cycles produce some of the most taught and anthologized short stories of American literature, such as Faulkner’s “The Bear” and Tan’s “A Pair of Tickets.” The stories’ inclusion in the cycle, however, necessitates revisions—often to the short stories as texts but also to reader’s expectations of them as part of a cycle. More often than not, readers and reviewers mistake these works as novels and entirely dismiss the short stories as independent narratives. These misunderstandings result because the short-story cycle is paradoxical. It is simultaneously an extension of pre-modern narrative forms, an amalgam of pre-existing genres, and an entirely new

thing unto itself. Given the plenitude of short-story cycles and their distinct characteristics, it is best to distinguish the short-story cycle as its own genre that wrestles with some of the burdens of other genres. The short-story cycle is a grouping of independent but interrelated short stories written in prose; shared geographical settings, recurring characters or character types, consistent structural devices, or connected thematic concerns (or any combination of these elements) render what might otherwise be deemed simply a collection a short-story cycle. Therefore, while the cycle is rightly termed a hybrid, it also constitutes a distinct genre. In its resistance to easy definition, the short-story cycle becomes a genre about genre.

The short-story cycle resembles ancient story cycles and yet is strikingly modern as it employs conventions that emerged around the mid-nineteenth century. This amalgam of old and new creates a distinct genre. Tzvetan Todorov asserts that “A new genre is always the transformation of an earlier one, or of several: by inversion, by displacement, by combination... There has never been a literature without genres; it is a system in constant transformation, and historically speaking the question of origins cannot be separated from the terrain of the genres” (15). The short-story cycle inverts, displaces, and combines elements of the short story, the short story collection, the novel, and the earlier versions of the story cycle. Transforming those elements into new conventions, the cycle resists the isolation implicit to the short story, the lack of recurrence in the collection, the emphasis on progression and development in the novel, and the multiple authors and origins of story cycles. There are, of course, exceptions to these generalities, but the pervasiveness of these qualities among short-story cycles suggests a unique generic compulsion. These qualities often serve as evidence that cycles are inferior works, but this conclusion is reached only by measuring them against false generic expectations. Todorov argues that “The fact that a work ‘disobeys’ its genre does not mean that the genre does not



exist... We might go even further and observe that norm becomes visible – comes into existence – owing only to its transgressions” (14). The short-story cycle form is transgressive precisely in its desire to upset generic conventions and to unsettle expectations of closure, development, revelation, and explanation. It revels in open-endedness and obfuscation.

The short-story cycle’s origins in multiple generic traditions parallel its ideological investments. It attempts to bring together multiple, often competing, narratives into conditional coherence but not total cohesion. As a genre in-between, the cycle comports with Brian Massumi’s notion of deriving meaning from in-between states during processes of change, which “would mean realigning with a logic of relation. For the in-between, as such, is not middling being but rather the being *of* the middle—the being of a relation. A positioned being, central, middling, or marginal, is a *term* of a relation.” Such a reevaluation of processes of change, in the case of genre, would allow us to see its properties as more than “negation, rupture, deviation, or subversion” (Massumi 70). The short-story cycle, as an in-between but distinctive genre, produces meaning on its own terms even as it derives from other generic modes. Part of that abstracted meaning necessarily comes from the genre’s ideological investments. Franco Moretti writes that genres are “morphological arrangements that last in time, but always only for some time. Janus-like creatures, with one face turned to history, and the other to form” (*Graphs* 14). That the short-story cycle emerged and proliferated over the last century and a half necessitates asking: why this mode at this moment? Like the realist novel in the nineteenth century and the sonnet among Elizabethan coteries, the form reflects the historical conditions that produced it. If, as Fredric Jameson argues, “genre is essentially a socio-symbolic message, or in other terms... form is immanently and intrinsically an ideology in its own right” (*Political Unconscious* 99), what values and ideas do short-story cycles communicate, replicate, or

counter? One answer is that the genre's disjointed unity corresponds with its exploration of the nature of identity in relation to place, family, and time. These issues arise especially in this period, suggesting that the ideological range represented by the cycle is similar to other forms of fiction and poetry, which, according to Raymond Williams, can be categorized as dominant, residual, and emergent (*Marxism and Literature* 121-127). From the mid-nineteenth century, the cycle has become increasingly pervasive but not dominant. What we might perceive as an epochal shift toward the cycle reflects the emergence of narrative representation that responds to the destabilization of community, kinship, and temporality.

Despite the many prominent practitioners of the genre and the form's centrality to the fictional treatment of major conflicts of modernity, the short-story cycle remains on the periphery of the critical terrain of modern American literature. Since the 1970s, several scholars have written histories and analyses of the genre; however, their work—and the centrality of the form—have yet to be integrated into the larger critical landscape. Critical accounts predominantly center on issues of generic definition and individual readings of texts, particularly Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), which both critics and authors often cite as the first and most influential cycle. Forrest L. Ingram's *Representative Short Story Cycles of the Twentieth Century* (1971) was the first large-scale study and remains foundational in the field. His work focuses on the ways in which cycles “may have been COMPOSED as a continuous whole, or ARRANGED into a series, or COMPLETED to form a set” (17). As his distinctions suggest, Ingram concentrates on the stories' production and authorial intention as he analyzes James Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914), Anderson's *Winesburg*, Kafka's *Ein Hungerkünstler* (1924), Steinbeck's *The Pastures of Heaven* (1932), Faulkner's *The Unvanquished* (1938), and Albert Camus's *L'Exil et le royaume* (1957) in separate sections.

I mention Ingram's specific choice of texts to highlight that his study, which remains a frequently cited model for later works, treats modernist texts mostly in isolation. This model of analysis, defining the formal elements of the cycle through a series of case studies, continues to be the primary paradigm for studies of the genre. Susan Garland Mann's *The Short Story Cycle: A Genre Companion and Reference Guide* (1989) likewise provides a series of case studies, many of which concern the same texts analyzed by Ingram. However, her work departs from his model in its emphasis on the development of the genre and in its shift away from authorial intention to the text itself and the reader's reception of it. Garland Mann almost exclusively analyzes cycles from the US tradition.<sup>2</sup> Although they treat multiple traditions, a propensity toward treating US cycles continues in Maggie Dunn and Ann Morris's *The Composite Novel: The Short Story Cycle in Transition* (1995). As the title indicates, Dunn and Morris contend that the term "composite novel" more comprehensively describes the form insofar as the composite novel, in their definition, can include those volumes not exclusively written in prose. Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923) perhaps best and most foundationally represents their notion of the composite novel. Although it is more inclusive, the term composite novel disregards the centrality of the short story and recursive structures and themes to the form.

The persistence of the link between nation and form recurs in Rolf Lundén's *The United Stories of America: Studies in the Short Story Composite* (1999). Lundén argues that the form resonates with "the conjunction of centripetal and centrifugal forces forced in American society and the American 'character'" (108). His claim of the resonance of the form with the formation of the nation from disparate, discrete states has its foundation in nineteenth-century regional fiction, an idea that I explore in the first chapter of this study. The correlation between the cultural pervasiveness of pluralism and the genre's form and content inspire the first part of my

dissertation's title: *One Story, Many Voices*. Drawing from the catchphrase of pluralism, *E pluribus unum*, or "out of many, one," the title acknowledges the ways in which many stories contribute to larger narratives in the cycle and the recurrence of narratives of inclusion and exclusion—and of cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic pluralism—within cycles. The short-story cycle is not unique to the US context—far from it—but within this tradition short-story cycles regularly depict and comment on the creation of identity from disparate experiences.<sup>3</sup> American national identity, marked by a history and context of settlers from diverse origins, is one part of the drama of identity that these cycles enact.

Not only is the cycle not unique to a single place, it also not unique to the period from mid-nineteenth century to the present. Rather, the particular formation and adoption of the short-story cycle generates a modern revision on a very old form. Story cycles date back to the earliest written narratives, and their origins span the globe: Homer's *Odyssey*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Boccaccio's *Decameron* (and many other Italian story cycles from the period), Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, the *Panchatantra*, the *A Thousand and One Nights*, Malory's *Morte d' Arthur*, and the Icelandic sagas, which were originally independent but interconnected oral tales.<sup>4</sup> In addition to these very early cycles, nineteenth-century volumes by Émile Zola, Honoré de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, Mary Russell Mitford, and Ivan Turgenev, among many others, shape the development of the short-story cycle globally.

Ultimately, my project diverges from the path set forth by previous scholarship in three significant directions. First, I privilege a comparative approach that brings the texts out of isolation and into relationship with each other. This comparative approach allows me to track the genre over its history and to illuminate the genre's trajectory, which, like the form itself, is cyclical and recursive rather than linear and singular. Second, taking a long view of the genre's

history reveals the recurrence of stylistic conventions, which demonstrate a generic compulsion that erodes the ground upon which rigid periodization is built. The consistency of theme, structure, and style among cycles from disparate periods illuminates the extent to which one period's concerns persist and get reinvented in another: short-story cycles are realist in description, modernist in their fragmentation, and postmodernist in their experimentation with the relationship between reader and text. One final divergence is that I focus on the use, development, and collapse of linking devices within cycles as they relate to the process of constructing identities. Common settings, recurring characters—often from the same family—and experimentations with temporality serve to connect the stories within a cycle. However, the use of recurring elements does not result in unity. Previous scholarship has been itself all too unified in its emphasis on searching for harmony within a cycle. *One Story, Many Voices* is equally invested in the stories' gaps, inconsistencies, and incongruities. The tension between unity and disjunction, I argue, makes the cycle such a pervasive and generative genre. Its disjointed unity suits it to the exploration of the nature of identity. The short-story cycle constructs provisional identities in which multiple experiences are brought into conditional coherence without letting those identities ossify.

### Ethnicity and the Cycle

As scholars attempt to define, name, categorize, and understand the short-story cycle, one idea recurs that moves beyond form: a correlation exists between ethnicity and the cycle. Narratives depicting ethnic experiences are prominent within the genre; James Nagel and Rocío G. Davis have most fully attended to this correlation. In *The Contemporary American Short-*

*Story Cycle: The Ethnic Resonance of Genre* (2004), Nagel argues that the form lends itself to describing multicultural experience because the structure of interrelated stories is more universal than that of the European novel: “The short-story cycle in modern American fiction is patently multicultural, deriving, perhaps, both from ethnic cross-fertilization within the literary community and from a shared legacy reaching back to ancient oral tradition” (4-5). As he analyzes cycles from disparate ethnic traditions on a case-by-case basis, he asserts that there is an overarching “resonance” between the genre’s structure and ethnic experiences. Davis also treats the link between the form and ethnic literatures, contending that the genre,

which hovers between the novel and the short story, is thus a particularly apt medium with which to enact the enigma of ethnicity... The ethnic short story cycle may be considered the formal materialization of the trope of doubleness as the between-world condition is presented via a form that itself vacillates between two genres. (7)

Davis’s formulation of “the enigma of ethnicity” is provocative because it suggests that ethnicity represents a puzzle that must be solved—and the conclusion is that the cycle lends itself well to the task. Building on the connections between ethnicity and the cycle these scholars note, *One Story, Many Voices* argues that the cycle’s exploration of provisionality, contingency, and flux render it ideal for depicting the construction and contradictions of not only ethnic but also national, communal, and personal identities.

Ethnicity refers, in part, to a field of common references or linguistic and cultural practices, and cycles engage communal identities and experiences in their form. Most characterizations of ethnicity draw on Max Weber’s definition: “‘ethnic groups’ [are] those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities

of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for group formation; furthermore it does not matter whether an objective blood relationship exists” (*Economy* 389). This definition corresponds to two crucial ways that short-story cycles conceive of ethnicity. The first is that ethnicity is always about and defined by the group; the very form of the cycle highlights the primacy of group experience and identity, even as it dramatizes the effects this has on the individual. By displacing the central protagonist, these texts achieve a brand of collective experience and history largely unavailable in the novel and impossible in the story. Secondly, ethnicity does not hinge in these stories on “an objective blood relationship.” It is, rather, a product of experiences, relationships, and choices. Short-story cycles depict the myriad ways communities imagine and perform ethnicity. One potential pitfall of this model is that ethnicity becomes so nebulous and subjective that neither the characters nor the reader can pin it down, and it ends up meaning nothing. Because ethnicity is understood to be subjective and group-based, the form of the short-story cycle is able to address the ambiguity of ethnic belonging.

In these ways, the form’s treatment of ethnicity as being in motion and based on relations corresponds to Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s argument that race is perpetually shifting in response to its social construction by material, cultural, political, and economic forces. Omi and Winant’s “theory of *racial formation* emphasizes the social nature of race, the absence of any essential racial characteristics, the historical flexibility of racial meanings and categories, the conflictual character of race at both the ‘micro-’ and ‘macro-social’ levels, and the irreducible political aspects of racial dynamics” (4). Although race carries no essential aspects, they describe how its assigned aspects shape the very fabric of the US national tapestry. Omi and Winant describe the development of race as a tool and explanation for the subordination of

minority groups and insist on the extent to which it shapes their contemporary moment.

Showing the long historical trajectory of these processes, their work focuses ultimately on the 1960s to the 1980s, a period in which the ethnic American cycle flourished.<sup>5</sup> Short-story cycles engage ethnicity as a category constructed at the micro- and macro-levels with real consequences on the lives of the characters. Examining the long history of the cycle shows that ethnicity is a marker distinguishing groups at distinct moments. Similarly, the meaning of ethnic American literature shifts over time.

As Omi and Winant show, it is impossible to stabilize and fix meaning when it comes to race and ethnicity. These texts illuminate the extent to which ethnicity figures differently in relation to authorial identity, economic conditions, social milieu, and historical and political contexts. The very term “ethnic” shifts in response to these factors. For instance, Gertrude Stein’s *Three Lives* (1909), not always read as a cycle, treats ethnic American experiences.<sup>6</sup> The first and last stories depict German American immigrant experiences as contextualized by the characters’ gender roles and the conditions of domestic labor, while the middle story treats the experience of an African American woman in similarly gendered terms. However, reading “Melanctha” alongside the other stories exposes the marked differences between the cycle’s depictions of ethnic and racialized experiences. In yet a much different way, conflicts over the precarious place of the indigenous nation within the United States condition the representation of Ojibwe identities and experiences in Erdrich’s *Love Medicine* (1984). Alvarez’s depiction of Dominican identity and experience has a great deal in common with Erdrich’s treatment but differs sharply with Junot Díaz’s depiction of Dominican life in the United States. Contrast emerges as an essential characteristic of ethnicity; Werner Sollors maintains that ethnicity “refers not to a thing-in-itself but to a relationship: ethnicity is based on contrast.” Its meanings derive



from “antitheses” or “negativity” (“Ethnicity” 288). If difference determines the meaning and use of ethnicity, how can we account for all of these differences and still find some kind of connection between them? And, how do such different representations become understood as ethnic?

One possibility is to take a cue from the cycles themselves: cycles generate meaning without insisting on perfect clarity—so too must our critical narratives of ethnicity. Cycles draw attention to borders and boundaries and the ways in which these are violated. They experiment with the borders of a story in that themes and characters, for example, from one story correspond with and comment on themes and characters in another story. Just as likely, that theme and character do not correspond or comment on another story. The extent to which any single story is integrated into the whole varies within cycles. Thus, short-story cycles tease out the distinction between the autonomous story and its contribution to a larger volume. Occasionally, other works by the same author, as I explore in my reading of Faulkner’s work in chapter four, challenge the autonomy of the individual volume. Thus, the cycle seems an ideal form for working out experiences and identities that are similarly changing in response to borders and boundaries, whether personal or collective.

In his classic study of ethnic formations, Fredrik Barth asserts that it is the boundary rather than any essential characteristic that constitutes ethnicity. This boundary is flexible and dynamic:

most of the cultural matter that at any time is associated with a human population is *not* constrained by this boundary; it can vary, be learnt, and change without any critical relation to the boundary maintenance of the ethnic group. So when one traces the history of an ethnic group through time, one is *not* simultaneously, in

the same sense, tracing the history of ‘a culture’: the elements of the present culture of that ethnic group have not sprung from the particular set that constituted the group’s culture at a previous time, whereas the group has a continual organizational existence with boundaries (criteria of membership) that despite modifications have marked off a continuing unit. (Barth 38)

As it appears and functions in both the literature and critical narratives in the United States, ethnicity exposes where such boundaries appear, why they do, and what might be ascertained by comparing them. This study engages a comparative approach to “reveal the extent to which various ethnic literatures that are now often studied in isolation share a repertoire of available literary language” (Sollors, “Ethnicity” 303). One piece, used repeatedly, in that repertoire is the short-story cycle.

A formal analysis of the short-story cycle, with an eye to how it reflects on the creation and deployment of identity—particularly ethnic identities—exposes the continuous presence of such formations from its very beginning. Previous studies have tended to focus either on modernist cycles or on contemporary ethnic cycles, producing a false dichotomy that marginalizes the production and representation of ethnicity in modernist cycles, ignores cycles that pre-date and fall between these markers, and implies that contemporary short-story cycles matter only inasmuch as they treat ethnicity. Putting these cycles in conversation and breaking the binary attends to the ways in which the earlier texts grapple with conceptions of ethnicity and the later cycles bring issues of form, aesthetics, and style to the fore. Thus, this study attempts to realize Sollors’s suspicion that “Formal analyses might illustrate the compatibility of ethnic and ethnocentric sentiment and modern forms, thus helping to dispel the misconceptions that ethnic consciousness and modernism form an antithesis or that modernism weakens ethnicity; such

studies could also delineate the multivocal polyethnic elements within given texts” in opposition to “absorbing works wholesale to the ethnic group that an author ‘belongs’ to” (“Ethnicity” 303). A comparative approach through the lens of formal analysis combats the tendency to treat short-story cycles in isolation, according only to ethnic kind, and without regard for the ways in which modernism and ethnicity are mutually constitutive in the texts.

One such common element, noted by both Nagel and Davis, is the genre’s affinity to oral storytelling. In relation to individual cycles, the case is often made for the volumes’ indebtedness to authors’ ethnic backgrounds and the storytelling traditions of that group. Critics regard this affinity as evidence of its ancestry from early story cycles, originally oral tales collected and assembled, and from oral storytelling practices. To give just two examples, a wealth of criticism exists on the influence of oral narrative practices of the Ojibwe people on Erdrich’s work, as do readings of the formal similarities of the structure of Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) and mah jong and the conversations the game engenders. Such responses illuminate the particular influence of oral traditions on individual authors’ works, but they also tend to collapse the significance and forms of oral traditions to justify a linear development with the contemporary cycle as its telos. Moreover, such readings imply a claim to ethnic particularity that the sheer pervasiveness of the genre denies. Although often cited as the particular province of contemporary ethnic cycles, oral forms also occur in modernist cycles.<sup>7</sup> Bringing together contemporary and earlier cycles illustrates significant continuities with respect to oral storytelling. As writers, particularly those following an American tradition of modernism, attempt to re-create an American vernacular in print, the short-story cycle lends itself to shorter stories that could be repeated and to making speech a primary means of constructing characterization. Many of these cycles reproduce the intonation, slang, and word choice of the

situation they describe. Thus, the vignettes and individual stories are like the print descendants of oral forms of storytelling. Moreover, that they are collected and interrelated creates a cyclical quality, which privileges repetition and resonance.

These qualities maintain a connection to oral storytelling even as they also fulfill the expectations of the publishing industry and the reading public. Short-story cycles blend the demands of oral traditions and contemporary print culture. In this, they seem to be a rejoinder to Benjamin's anxiety about modern storytelling: "For storytelling is always the art of repeating stories, and this art is lost when the stories are no longer retained" (91). Because short-story cycles consist of multiple stories and often a controlled set of themes and characters, the stories, although independent, assume a texture like the sediment left behind eroded rocks. This layering, of one story onto another, distinguishes the short-story cycle from the independent short story, about which Benjamin was also skeptical. Of the short story's limitations, Benjamin writes, "We have witnessed the evolution of the 'short story,' which has removed itself from oral tradition and no longer permits the slow piling one on top of the other of thin, transparent layers which constitutes the most appropriate picture of the way in which the perfect narrative is revealed through the layers of a variety of retellings" (93). In his view, stories suffer because they do not get passed down from one generation to the next with the retellings enhancing and complicating the stories. Short-story cycles as a whole resonate with this idea—that stories are weak with only one telling; cycles repeatedly tell and retell the same or similar stories. The points of view may shift and temporal settings vary, but story cycles are centrally concerned with narrating similarity with a difference—whether it is narrating lives in a small town in *Winesburg*, exploring the lives of an interconnected family in Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (1991), or describing the shared experience of travel and colonization in Bradbury's *The*

*Martian Chronicles* (1950). Short-story cycles produce the thin, transparent layers of retellings as they dramatize the individual's experience of collective events.

## A New Paradigm

In its exploration of gaps, inconsistencies, and incongruities, this study engages formalism without the trappings of new criticism's expectations of unity. The expectation of formal unity has led these cycles to be ignored, and when discussed, to be apologized for or molded to some conception of a unified work. Analyzing the elements that connect the stories within a cycle, my project exposes the extent to which the lack of unity replicates and critiques larger discourses of community, kinship, and temporality. Each chapter compares original source materials—including letters, manuscript drafts, and previously published versions of individual stories—to the published cycles as a way of uncovering authors' attempts at cohesion. The first chapter, "Locating the Modernist Short-Story Cycle," investigates the genre's most ubiquitous linking technique: a shared geography or setting. The emergence and continued popularity of a common setting as a linking technique is coeval with ongoing anxieties about modernization. Early short-story cycles, which stem from nineteenth-century village sketch narratives, incorporate towns, distanced from cultural centers, into the national imaginary. Even after the frontier closes, later cycles by Anderson and Steinbeck continue to introduce places marginalized by economic conditions: from a rural Midwest landscape to an industrial fishing district in California. These cycles depend upon the construction of a restricted geographic terrain to contain and ground the narratives; in other words, they stake out a "limited locality" to encompass the stories. Through their pronounced interest in place, these cycles question the

extent to which geographic proximity produces communal affiliation, which is often imagined as an antidote to the poisons of industrialization. The non-teleological form of Anderson's and Steinbeck's cycles resists the logic of progress and hones in on a key conflict in the conceptualization of not just modernity but also ethnicity: the formation of self and its struggle with communal affiliation.

Turning from geographic community to a more specific and intimate form of affiliation, the second chapter, "Tracing New Genealogies: Kinship and the Contemporary Cycle," draws a genealogy of short-story cycles linked by characters from the same family. Cycles by Tan, Alvarez, and Lahiri address whether kinship and ethnicity are constructed as mutually constitutive in contemporary cycles. These cycles depict the development of "chosen kinship," based on shared formative experiences. They model non-filial and intragenerational kinship; this model opposes the critical consensus on kinship and ethnicity in these cycles, which prioritizes how familial narratives dramatize ethnic identification through intergenerational conflict and commitments to biological kinship. In opposition to the rather bleak view of community offered by cycles linked by locality, cycles linked by families imagine the possibility of connection, if not always within the confines of traditional kin relationships.

Short-story cycles organized around families consider generational shifts, recurring patterns of behavior, and futurity—issues elaborated on in the third chapter, "'Beyond Our Brains to Fathom': Writing Time in Metaphors," in which I discuss the use of time as a linking technique in Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* and Erdrich's *Love Medicine*. These cycles, although radically different in subject matter and style, represent the dominant modes of using time to unify cycles. Both cycles identify their stories by date; however, Bradbury's stories move in a linear progression while Erdrich's structure relies on a non-linear temporality. These

cycles depict the conflict between a universalized temporality and those that the narratives construct as particularly ethnic. Cycles linked by temporal markers reflect an attempt to understand time through metaphors, particularly those that compare time to a line or a circle. Ultimately, these cycles favor neither rigid linear progression nor open cyclicity; rather, they negotiate both notions of time and favor the inclusion of other metaphors, drawing on the senses, nature, and popular culture, for grasping the elusiveness of time. This chapter concludes by arguing that the revisions Bradbury and Erdrich made to updated editions of the cycles signal a conscious acknowledgment of the temporality of production. The acts of revising previously published stories for inclusion in a cycle and expanding or abridging earlier editions suggest the openness of the text. Their revisions also connect these cycles with their larger bodies of work.

The interrelations between an author's collected works serve as the basis for the final chapter, "Unbound, Illegitimate, and Inconsistent: Place, Family, and Time in Faulkner," in which I analyze how Faulkner employs the linking techniques of limited localities, intersecting families, and temporal shifts throughout his career. Composed of autonomous and interconnected pieces, his fiction operates like a short-story cycle. Genealogical connections among the families of Yoknapatawpha County, which is the setting for much of his fiction, link his fiction. Experimentations with temporality both connect and divide his works. All of these elements are particularly urgent and explicit in his short-story cycles, and this chapter offers an extended analysis of their inner workings in *Go Down, Moses* (1942). The absence of textual harmony in Faulkner requires a new mode of interpretation modeled on the short-story cycle—one that privileges openness and cyclicity over closure and teleology. His works expose unity as a false artistic and national ideal and instead embrace the conflict and openness that these volumes engender. Placing Faulkner at the end of the study methodologically mirrors the lack of

teleology evident in the history of the genre itself. Its history is analogous to its form: recursive, open, and fragmented. When critics insist too strongly on unity, the history of the genre falls apart, and the cycles—and tradition—remain marginalized.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Gerald Kennedy advocates for “short story sequences,” while Maggie Dunn and Ann Morris lobby for “composite novel.” Often, the volumes will include the subtitle “a novel in stories.” Forrest Ingram’s foundational study employs the term “short story cycle” or “short-story cycle” as do studies by Susan Garland Mann, James Nagel, Rocío Davis, and Mark Whalan.

<sup>2</sup> Robert M. Luscher has also been instrumental in bringing attention to the reader’s experience of the cycle in his article on defining the genre, “Toward a Poetics of the Short Story Cycle.” Focusing on the composite and sequential aspects of the genre, *Modern American Short Story Sequences: Composite Fictions and Fictive Communities* (1995), edited by Kennedy, offers a series of case studies in the vein of Ingram’s model.

<sup>3</sup> It is notable that this argument crops up in other traditions wherein multiple place groupings join to form a larger identity. In *The One and the Many: English Canadian Short Story Cycles* (2001), Gerald Lynch asserts that Canadian cycles treat national notions of making one from many in a way that parallels the provinces contributing to the nation. Similarly, Julie Barak argues that the cycle mirrors the creation of Caribbean identity from many distinct national and cultural identities, which reflects the geography of the archipelago (161). What these claims have in common is a sense that modern national and geographically-constructed identities hinge on visions of pluralism.

<sup>4</sup> I am indebted to Ingram, Nagel, and Lundén, among others, for their discussions of the history of story cycles.

<sup>5</sup> Omi and Winant emphasize the distinctions between race and ethnicity, as the collapse between the two led to the perpetuation of racist policies by what they term “ethnicity theory” (4-5). By ethnicity theory, they mean arguments, popular in the period, which maintained that race would eventually not matter as a political reality just as ethnicity supposedly no longer mattered to once-marginalized European immigrant groups.

<sup>6</sup> In *Ethnic Modernism*, Werner Sollors claims a primary place for Stein: “There may be no better beginning for the story of ethnic modernism in American prose literature than the ending of Gertrude Stein’s ‘Melanctha: Each One as She May’” (17). Stein’s detached, fragmented life stories of Melanctha, Anna, and Lena become Sollors’s starting point for his discussion of ethnic Modernism.

<sup>7</sup> Stein’s “Melanctha” stands out as an early modernist example of colloquial phrasing and oral storytelling figuring in a story cycle.



## Locating the Modernist Short-Story Cycle

During the summer of 1938, Sherwood Anderson began work on a new novel, but he was unhappy with the result. In a letter to his friend Roger Sergel he attributes the problem to form: “I was seeking a form that would bring me a feeling of looseness and ease. In the meantime I wrote some pretty good short stories. Suddenly I decided to go back to the *Winesburg* form. That is really a novel. It is a form in which I feel at ease. I invented it. It was mine” (220). According to Anderson, when *Winesburg, Ohio* appeared in 1919 it was a wholly new form, a series of loosely interconnected but independent short stories. In the 1942 edition of his *Memoirs*, Anderson links his formal innovation to an idea of US nationhood: “I have even sometimes thought that the novel form does not fit an American writer, that it is a form which had been brought in. What I wanted is a new looseness; and in *Winesburg* I had made my own form” (289). Anderson’s reputation as a pioneer grew in proportion to his influence on other modernists, including most famously Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, and John Steinbeck, who would all go on to work in the genre, the short-story cycle. Linking the form to the United States bolstered his sense that creating a national literature was paramount to the artistic projects of his time and circle; this sentiment repeats throughout his essays, memoirs, and letters. It is a nice story.

His claims to utter originality are, however, a bit false. He certainly made innovations to the form, maximizing its expressionist possibilities and engaging an appreciation for local places and quotidian events that would inspire Faulkner and the rest. Yet, *Winesburg* follows a long tradition of volumes that had exactly the kind of “new looseness” Anderson claims for his volume. The particular device of using a common setting for a series of prose tales, as in

*Winesburg*, dates to at least the mid-nineteenth century in the United States, Europe, and Russia. Scholarship on Anderson, the modernist writers he influenced, and modernism more generally has tended to take Anderson too much at his word and not connected his influential cycle to an already robust and dynamic literary form.

In contrast with other studies that cite *Winesburg* as the origin text for the short-story cycle, Anderson's cycle serves as one stopping point in this chapter; *Winesburg* emerged out of a long-standing tradition of volumes linked by, what I term, limited localities. The emphasis on locality—and the attendant concerns locality invokes—continues to the present. Integrating the genre's regionalist and modernist iterations extends recent critical discussions that trouble once ossified period distinctions. Critical discussions of regionalist cycles routinely center on the volumes' connections to nation-building and their deployment of nostalgia. Conversely, discussions of modernist cycles focus on the genre's reflection of modernity and its influence on formal experimentation with the novel. Bringing together regionalist and modernist short-story cycles exposes the extent to which the very different critical arguments they engender overlap. Exposing that experimentation with form as a response to modernity is present in the earliest cycles and extends to the present, the long history of short-story cycles linked by locality also reveals that preoccupation with the nation persists into modernism and beyond, as Anderson's comments intimate. In other words, while the critical discussions have been illuminating, they tend to divide these issues in ways that the literature itself does not.

Both regionalist and modernist cycles of locality deploy a self-conscious sentimentality, or what I call critical nostalgia, to signal and respond to the issues of nation and formal experimentation that pervade the genre. Critical nostalgia refers to the deployment of a kind of wistful simplification that is undercut within the stories themselves. This mode of critical

nostalgia, initiated in the earliest cycles, proves transferable and pliable. Cycles linked by limited locality deploy nostalgia as a sincere mode of expression, an evocation in defense of a certain locality, or a mode of expression ripe for satire and subversion. Often, and increasingly by the turn of the twentieth century, they engage these different uses of nostalgia simultaneously. The simultaneously sincere and satiric mode of nostalgia persists in modernism.

Although the short-story cycle based on limited locality spans from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, this paper will delineate the cycle's distinct stages through modernism. The first stage is akin to the sketch volume, wherein sketches and stories combine to create a composite view of a place. Claims of verisimilitude and paratextual materials distinguish this stage of the cycle, spanning from the mid- to late-nineteenth century. A greater emphasis on fiction and invention mark the second stage, which reached its peak in the last decade of the nineteenth and first decade of the twentieth centuries. These volumes are more highly integrated and privilege short stories over sketches. The third stage includes the modernist blockbusters that we have come to associate with the cycle. These highly self-conscious texts provoke significant critical debate over unity, fragmentation, and wholeness. Progressing chronologically reveals ultimately that what these cycles share is greater than their differences. Namely, the persistent and pervasive concern with locality generates a long tradition for the cycle. In eschewing *Winesburg* as origin or destination, Anderson's cycle serves as critical turning point in the tradition; *Winesburg* engages the tropes and sentiments of its regional forbearers and simultaneously establishes a new paradigm for the genre, which persists to the present. Anderson's cycle revises locality as an organizing principle in that it moves away from formal integration toward disjunction. Its disjointed unity upsets expectations of narrative harmony in the volume and communal coherence in the place it represents. In addition to *Winesburg*,

Caroline Matilda Kirkland's *A New Home, Who'll Follow? or, Glimpses of Western Life* (1839), Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896), and John Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* (1945) are representative of short-story cycles linked by locality in their respective times.

My own term for this organizing principle, limited locality, refers to the ways in which such short-story cycles depend upon the construction of a restricted geographic terrain to contain and ground the narratives within; in other words, they stake out a limited locality to encompass the stories. They are limited because they take as their focus a bounded geography and because the texts emphasize descriptions of particular, selected features of that geography. Of course, short-story cycles are not linked exclusively by setting. In *Winesburg*, for instance, recurring characters, a shared temporal setting, and the central figure of George Willard further integrate the stories. Such devices are typical and prominent throughout the genre. Tracing this dominant linking device reveals how crises of place and of communities—be they local, regional, or national—permeate the literature, and ultimately shape and dictate the very terms of modernism and its forms.

### Mapping Genre and Period

The short-story cycle inspired and shaped the new narrative techniques that characterize much of modernism. In addition to *Winesburg*, the sheer abundance of cycles in US modernism testifies to the influence of limited locality. The three narratives of Gertrude Stein's *Three Lives* are all set in Bridgeport. Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County serves as the setting for several of his short-story cycles, including *The Unvanquished* (1938) and *Go Down, Moses*, as well as many of his works that straddle the line between novel and cycle, such as *As I Lay Dying* (1930).

The small Mississippi town of Morgana provides the setting for Eudora Welty's *The Golden Apples* (1947). Steinbeck returns again and again to Californian towns in his four short-story cycles: *Pastures of Heaven* (1932), *The Red Pony* (1933), *Tortilla Flat* (1935), and *Cannery Row*. In addition to these, there are also those works that employ some level of limited locality while bordering between the cycle and the short story collection or novel: Jean Toomer's *Cane*, Langston Hughes's *The Ways of White Folks* (1934), as well as most of the novels written by the authors listed above. Because a limited geography enables the stories to create an aggregated view of a place, the small town represents the most popular setting for modernist short-story cycles. Short-story cycles set in urban centers tend to focus on a single area, as in Waldo Frank's *City Block* (1922). Although such cycles are set in urban spaces, they stake out a similarly limited geography within the cities, and the characteristics common to village narratives remain.

While these texts vary widely in terms of style and subject, the common use of cyclical forms and of localities comports with questions common to all of them. The emphasis on place and shared experiences evoke questions about the possibilities for sympathy, solidarity, and community. The stories emphasize the promise of being on the inside in such localities even as they treat how much more keenly felt and dramatic exclusion can be in such tight settings. These questions are not unique to either regionalism or modernism but are indeed central to both. The sense of alienation that characterizes *Winesburg* and its modernist cohorts parallels the earliest cycles' depiction of the wrought struggle between the narrator and his or her community. Thus, short-story cycles of limited locality are essential to questions now taking hold in modernist studies.

In the last few decades, regionalist and modernist studies have excavated long-buried connections among authors, movements, and periods from disparate national traditions. With the

discovery of new archives, the challenge to Anglo-American primacy, and a greater emphasis on the ways literature moves across geopolitical divides, recent criticism has been especially keen to introduce new transnational and transhistorical paradigms. In “The New Modernist Studies,” Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz characterize the changes in modernist studies as moving in essentially three directions: spatially, vertically, and temporally. “Spatial broadening” refers to the ways scholars attend to the transaction “among, for example, Europe, Africa, the United States, and the Caribbean” (738). Vertical expansion describes scholarship that examines the interconnections between high and low culture, a division that was once central to our very understanding of modernism. Expanding the field temporally has meant that the new modernist studies uncovers the connections between the mid-nineteenth century and the “core period” of modernism from 1890-1945 (Mao and Walkowitz 738). Introducing new objects of study, challenging fixed terms, and breaking from the sometimes stifling and often arbitrary paradigms of national and period distinctions, the turns Mao and Walkowitz describe have been largely productive and necessary.

A recent special issue of *Modern Fiction Studies* on “Regional Modernism,” edited by Scott Herring, illustrates the kinds of spatial and temporal broadenings happening in the field. “Regional Modernism” represents a movement to redress a certain tendency “when scholars consider the role of regionalism in modern twentieth-century literatures” to “stereotypically relegate it to singular case studies” (Herring 3). This emphasis on singularity results from a general debasement of regionalism, often advocated by modernists. This brand of modernism “likes to think that it has uprooted itself from provincialism as a way of life and the provincial as a geographic entity when it leaves any pretty how town behind” (Herring 2-3). The preponderance of locality among modernist cycles makes clear that far from leaving the

province, these “any pretty how town[s]” are central to their modernist practices. Although some modernist texts position their innovation as a revolt from such places, they do so in the very terms and preoccupations of the earlier period. The genre of the short-story cycle supports Herring’s claim that “regionalism and modernism have always been compeers in terms of spatialization and in terms of periodization” (5). Recent scholarship by Kate McCullough, Hsuan L. Hsu, and Philip Joseph, among others, have also shown the ways in which modernity, particularly in relation to citizenship, literary production, and transnational capitalism, shapes regionalist writing.<sup>1</sup>

The moves to expand modernism temporally and spatially lead in an unexpected direction when applied to the short-story cycle. Unearthing these new fields has tended to kick dirt over an old—but, as the cycle suggests, still unsettled—field: the nation. From the genre’s earliest phases writers and reviewers alike questioned whether the diversity of the United States could be expressed in the novel, and Anderson’s comments suggest that this notion persisted among modernists.<sup>2</sup> The problems of coherence intrinsic to the short-story cycle—of being both singular and connected—comport with an anxiety of coherence that has been formative to US culture.<sup>3</sup> This anxiety of coherence may well explain why issues of ethnic, racial, and regional identities in conflict with the national are especially present in the form. The short-story cycle emerges as a central genre in understanding American literary nationalism, even as many of these same writers participated in and depicted international exchange.<sup>4</sup> Mark Morrison describes how national and international modernisms co-existed as “many American writers (modernist or not) were grappling with the ‘American-ness’ of their own writing” (12). Recovery projects of regionalist writers from the same period further expand the modern

temporally backward and spatially outward from New England, uncovering a substratum of modernism explicitly concerned with the nation.<sup>5</sup>

Moving the modern temporally backwards corresponds to a period when the nation was physically taking form. From the earliest volumes centered on locality in the 1830s to the publication of *Winesburg* in 1919, the United States underwent a massive transformation in its very shape and scope. The regions depicted in these cycles were often actually new to the nation's geography, and the localities they depicted were distanced from metropolitan centers. As Paul Giles shows, it was during this period that states such as Nebraska, the Dakotas, and California entered the union, geography became a compulsory course in school, and the United States began to be referred to as a singular rather than a plural noun (41-44). Under these conditions, Giles argues that the literature of this period "tends not only to be saturated in locality but also to understand that locality as a guarantee of its own authenticity and its patriotic allegiance" (45). The ubiquity of limited localities indicates the extent to which these narratives served to particularize and integrate locales.

The prevalence of place as the central linking device in such narratives is also linked to the belief that mere geographic proximity produces positive communal affiliation. In 1887, Ferdinand Tönnies articulated a vision of organic and authentic community, *gemeinschaft*, as opposed to artificial, industrial affiliation, *gesellschaft*. Characterized by "locality, which is based on a common habit," the logic of *gemeinschaft* maintains that "The proximity of dwellings, the communal fields, and even the mere contiguity of holdings necessitate many contacts of human beings and cause inurement to and intimate knowledge of one another" (42-43).<sup>6</sup> The village sketch narratives of the first period make this process and purpose explicit, forecasting the development and preoccupations of the short-story cycle.



## “The Emigrant’s Guide”: Cycles of the First Stage

Caroline Matilda Kirkland’s *A New Home, Who’ll Follow? or, Glimpses of Western Life* exemplifies the extent to which formal concerns intersect with anxieties of national and local integration in the cycle’s first stage. In 1837, the same year that Michigan attained statehood, Caroline Matilda Kirkland and her husband acquired eight hundred acres in Michigan and set out to establish a village. The village, Pinckney, became the basis for the fictional town of Montacute in Kirkland’s *A New Home*. This volume, composed of sketches and descriptive vignettes, introduced readers to the rigors and challenges of frontier life in the partially settled region.

In the preface, Kirkland announces that her original impulse was to adhere to life but that fiction intervened:

I claim for these straggling and cloudy crayon-sketches of life and manners in the remoter parts of Michigan, the merit of general truth of outline. Beyond this I venture not to aspire. I felt somewhat tempted to set forth my little book as being entirely, what it is very nearly—a veritable history; an unimpeachable transcript of reality; a rough picture, in detached parts, but pentagraphed from the life; a sort of ‘Emigrant’s Guide:’ . . . . But conscience prevailed, and I must honestly confess, that there be glosses, and colourings, and lights, if not shadows, for which the author is alone accountable. (1)

Kirkland maintains that the book still approximates a “veritable history,” indicating the extent to which she intends for *A New Home* to be read as a guidebook to the would-be traveler. That

most of her readers would never venture to Michigan is irrelevant, because the book, as the preface makes explicit, strives to introduce this place to the national imagination. Thus, she needs to impress upon her readers the truth of her descriptions.<sup>7</sup>

*A New Home* subscribes to the belief that sustained geographic proximity fosters a sense of community. The volume narrates the process by which this unsettled land becomes a community and, by extension, part of the nation. In Kirkland's Montacute "something new is born, a pluralistic, polyphonic culture that honors the original viewpoints and practices of each constituent group and may well represent the future of America itself" (Zagarell xxix). *A New Home* models an inclusive vision of the nation, made up of such communities; this model embraces the wanderlust of moving west while maintaining an elegiac mood for a disappearing landscape. Kirkland describes the dangers of traversing "Michigan mud-holes" and the beauties of the forest's "gosling-green suit of half-opened leaves" (5). Descriptions of such geographical features render these unfamiliar places legible. Thus, these texts function not only to depict the uniqueness of place, as Kirkland suggests in her preface, but also to help constitute the nation's image of itself through descriptions of the land's physical features.

The circumstances surrounding the Kirklands' founding of Pinckney and the composition of *A New Home* indicate the function of Kirkland's volume. In the first sketch, she describes "the remote and lonely regions" as being "beyond measure delicious to one 'long in populous cities pent'" (5). Quoting Milton, Kirkland attempts to persuade her reader that the Michigan landscape is worthy of the great English poets. She charges that "We must have a poet of our own" and speculates that "Shelley," "Charles Lamb," and "Bulwer" might be up to the task (6). These descriptions of the landscape and the call-to-pens essentially amount to a defense of this new territory's incorporation. *A New Home* is extraordinary in its explicit announcement of itself

as an “Emigrant’s Guide” and in the conditions of its production. The volume portends the fascination with community and nation that dominates nineteenth- and twentieth-century short-story cycles. Her allusions to quaintness and the tone of sentimental retrospection initiate a mode of nostalgia that celebrates the particularity of a place. This nostalgic particularity proves transferable.

A number of texts from the first period practice emplaced nostalgia and substantiate their seriousness through claims of realism. Volumes from this period include Augustus Baldwin Longstreet’s *Georgia Scenes* (1835) and Eliza Buckminster Lee’s *Sketches of a New England Village, in the Last Century* (1839), both of which followed in the wake of Washington Irving’s enormously popular *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1820). Like Kirkland, Longstreet emphasizes the truth of the volume’s narratives in the preface to the first edition:

They consist of nothing more than fanciful *combinations* of *real* incidents and characters; and throwing into those scenes, which would be otherwise dull and insipid, some personal incident or adventure of my own, real or imaginary, as it would best suit my purpose; usually *real*, but happening at different times and under different circumstances from those in which they are here represented....I have been importuned by persons from all quarters of the State to give them to the public in the present form. (iv-v)

In the description of his statesmen’s insistence that he make his work public, claims of verisimilitude lend credibility to the desire that Georgia become more central to the nation’s image of itself.

The insistence on veracity validates the general nostalgic depiction of these remote or vanishing locales. In a move similar to Longstreet and Kirkland, Lee too announces the truth of

her descriptions in a note that precedes the text: “They are substantially true. The little fiction that has been added is like the drop of honey on the rim of a cup to beguile an infant’s taste” (1). That these sketches take an epistolary form strengthens their veracity. However, the analogy of honey is an intriguing one, insinuating that the actual happenings savor of a bitterness that must be masked by fiction’s nectar.

The conflict between verisimilitude and invention is typical within these early volumes and serves to illustrate the sincerity of the stories. The outsider perspective of their narrators, often a figure who blurs the distinction between author and narrator, reinforces their emplaced sentimentalism through ostensible objectivity. This nostalgia connects to the cycles’ representation of unified, cooperative, and autonomous communities. Lee’s first letter is ripe with nostalgia and the sense that this place, and others like it, are fading from New England as “they seem to have passed in another and earlier world” and the old-fashioned houses and structures are vanishing (3). Claiming veracity and celebrating these localities supports a model of citizenship that these texts depict as diminishing in the United States. The volumes of the first stage explicitly announce a belief that geographically-based community presents an antidote to the poisons of industrialization and modernization.

### Emplaced Nostalgia as Dual Metaphor: The Second Stage

Volumes from the second and third stages in the cycle’s development continue to articulate the prominence of place through title, setting, and preoccupation.<sup>8</sup> These later cycles, though explicitly fictionalized and increasingly fragmented, maintain some sense of Kirkland’s ‘Emigrant Guide.’ Even as they continue to treat place-based community, cycles of the second

and third stage move increasingly toward disjunction, both in terms of their representation of communal affiliation and in their formal construction. In part, the context of US modernism accounts for the continued prominence of locality in these later stages. Susan Hegeman observes that a preoccupation with place denotes a particularly national form of US modernism. Given the geographic context of the cultural great divide, we may now turn to the ‘high’ culture of the period, and see how often its interesting producers addressed, in similarly geographic terms, the paradoxes and unevenness of America’s progress toward modernization. Willa Cather, W.E.B. Du Bois, William Faulkner, Zora Neale Hurston, William Carlos Williams, and many others may be said to have followed Pound’s injunction to ‘make it new’ *within* the context of what might be described as the provincial, and the geographically and culturally marginal.

(Hegeman 23)

Hegeman shows that focusing on locales that seem isolated from the processes of modernization actually amplifies those same processes. Of the authors Hegeman lists, the works that concern the aforementioned geographic locales tend to be in cyclical forms, if not short-story cycles exactly.<sup>9</sup>

Composed of a mix of prose, poetry, history, and drama, the cyclical texts to which Hegeman refers contain distinct parts, which, when taken together, constitute a whorl with place at the center. The mass of cyclical texts in US modernism indicates that something about the recursive form comports with what Hegeman describes as “the conflicts and paradoxes of America’s uneven modernity.” For Rita Barnard, Anderson’s cycle makes clear that “The ‘revolution’ of modernity, as Anderson calls it, was not the exclusive experience of urban sophisticates: it extended unevenly and inexorably across the nation” (40). For instance, the

loneliness, alienation, and miscommunication the characters experience in *Winesburg* are not simply the products of a specific communal life but of a greater national crisis.<sup>10</sup> Although earlier cycles celebrate the possibility of *gemeinschaft*, short-story cycles of the second and third stages increasingly treat geographically-based community not as an armistice to the conflicting forces of modernity but rather as another site of battle. Nostalgia becomes a weapon in that battle.

The language of nostalgia serves two purposes. First, it establishes a narrative mode that reacts to the very conditions of modernity, which, Susan Stanford Friedman argues, “involves a powerful vortex of historical conditions that coalesce to produce sharp ruptures from the past” (433). Stanford Friedman claims this rapid change produces “a gamut of sensations from displacement, despair, and nostalgia to exhilaration, hope, and embrace of the new — a range that depends in part on the configurations of power and the utopic versus dystopic directions of change” (434). The second purpose of nostalgia is to advance locality as simultaneously the site of, cause of, and solution for the ruptures that accompany modernity. This is a deeply nationalistic response to modernity, because nostalgia for localities in the United States filters these anxieties. Nostalgia represents the language in which these texts narrate national identity; the short-story cycle exposes that this narrative lacks a logical plot, a steady cast of knowable characters, and certainly a conclusion.

While early nineteenth-century sketch narratives expose this process more explicitly, the nostalgic introduction of bygone, frontier, or unknown localities continues as the sketch gives way to the rise of the short-story cycle of the second period. To varying degrees, these cycles anticipate the irony, skepticism, and disjunction that figure largely in *Winesburg* and later modernist texts. These later cycles focused more on fictionalized accounts; however, the

emphasis remained on portraying a particular place, such as Dunnet Landing in Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, the small New England town of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's *The People of Our Neighborhood* (1898), and the titular Wisconsin town of Zona Gale's *Friendship Village* (1908). The trope of the tourist or emigrant and the function of national incorporation remain heightened in these cycles. Produced in the context of "postwar reunion" following the Civil War, these volumes were apt vehicles for transporting a nostalgic sense of national cohesion because their settings gave "the appearance that local communities were disengaged from national politics" (Joseph 11). A desire for places untouched by national turmoil permeates these story cycles, as is the case with Stephen Crane's *Whilomville Stories*, which were published serially in *Harper's* in 1899 and posthumously as a book in 1901.<sup>11</sup> The title draws on the term "whilom," meaning "some time before or ago," evoking the nostalgic sense of place that resonates in the stories (Brown and Hernlund 116-117).<sup>12</sup> These and later cycles capture the feeling of places rapidly being lost to industrialization. While cycles of the second stage maintain what Raymond Williams calls the "fly-in-amber quality" of regionalism, they do so in highly self-conscious ways (61).

Cycles of the second stage maintain the connection between locality and community, but also increasingly expose the significance of the individual. For instance, in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, Dunnet Landing functions as a dual metaphor for loneliness and community, which are posited as two responses to the impending changes facing the cloistered locale. The specific geography of the place further correlates with the lives of town's citizens in that the narrator begins to view the citizens of Dunnet Landing "as human analogues to the pointed firs, possessing the will to flourish with the incoming tide and the strength to stand tall at its ebb" (Dunn and Morris 39). Much like Kirkland's emphasis on mud-holes, Jewett's emphasis on

specific features of the landscape introduce that distanced locale into the national imagination.

Just as cycles from the first stage begin, Jewett's cycle opens with an introduction of the place:

The houses made the most of their seaward view... the small-paned high windows in the peaks of their steep gables were like knowing eyes that watched the harbor and the far sea-line beyond, or looked northward all along the shore and its background of spruces and balsam firs. When one really knows a village like this and its surroundings, it is like becoming acquainted with a single person. (1-2)

The personification of the houses suggests the solidarity and perceptiveness of the community.

The specific geographical feature of the firs, in this passage and throughout the stories, resonates with the tenacity of the people. The sea, in its strength and brutality, symbolizes change. That the narrator likens Dunnet Landing to a person initiates a collapse between the individual and the place that the cycle as a whole dramatizes. This passage typifies how cycles of locality use place as an ever-shifting metaphor. On one level, the town represents a certain milieu's response(s) to change happening at a national and international level and, on another level, the particularities of the landscape get inscribed with meaning to reflect localized, individualized experience of that change. Dunnet Landing suggests how persistently, if not universally, the cycle represent localities as cloistered outposts, distanced from other places or marginalized by economic conditions.

However, these cycles also intimate that such nostalgic renderings often lend the cycles a false simplification that the content of the stories contradict. In his reading of Jewett's cycle, for instance, Hsu convincingly shows that *The Country of the Pointed Firs* sets forth a "theme of prior cosmopolitanism" in that the volume



represents Dunnet Landing at the point of transition between this older yet more cosmopolitan role and its new function as a vacation spot for tourists, like Jewett's narrator, who seek a quiet retreat from urban life. Ironically, the local colorist's nostalgia for a 'prelapsarian' and homogenous region that 'excludes historical change' leads her to discover the sea captain's own nostalgia for a historically prior period of cosmopolitan mobility. (39-40)

In her conversation with the sea captain, the narrator learns that Dunnet Landing was once more highly interconnected to international trade networks than it is at the time of her visit. The Captain's nostalgia centers on the halcyon days of wide and frequent travel. His nostalgia contrasts with readers' expectations for regional writing. Jewett's inclusion of the tale pokes holes in the narrator's (and often, the readers') desire to imagine Dunnet Landing as a quaint, isolated place only now being introduced to modern economic practices. Dunnet Landing is emblematic of localities that are generally represented as secluded outposts, distanced from other places or marginalized by economic conditions, but nonetheless entrenched in national and international networks. As this example from Jewett's 1896 cycle suggests, a brand of critical nostalgia saturates the cycles' treatment of the eponymous settings increasingly during this second stage.<sup>13</sup> By and large, the distinctions between the various stages of the cycle are matters of degree and emphasis. While all of the components, of limited locality and critical nostalgia, are present throughout, the ways in which the cycles prepare and present those elements distinguish one stage from another. Jewett's cycle makes especially clear how cycles just two decades before the modernist blockbusters initiate the stylistic experimentation of the later cycles even as they continue to borrow from the conventions of the earlier stage, such as

explicit claims to truth and romantic renderings of the geographical features. These features become less dominant in the third stage.

### Broken Towns, Fractured Narratives: The Third Stage

Critical nostalgia, a feature central to *Country* and other late-nineteenth-century cycles, recurs in modernist cycles. Anderson's cycle, set in the 1890s, evokes a generalized sense that the railroad and industrialization radically changed the small town. However, the elegiac tone is undercut by the recurring depiction of characters whose lives are marked by the same qualities, such as alienation, dislocation, and frustrated expression, usually associated with the later period. Critical nostalgia allows the texts to have it both ways: they appeal to a general sense that things were better once while also showing that they are always the same. The extent to which *Winesburg* departs from the earlier cycles is evident in its opening. Whereas nearly all of the cycles of the first and second stage begin with a description of the place and the project, *Winesburg* begins with a character sketch of one of the "grotesques" who populate the town. The man's hermetical life and his perception of George as embodying possibility initiate a sense of alienation and disjunction that the stories explore. The geography of *Winesburg* features within the stories in description and setting, but Anderson does not include the overt, self-conscious description modeled by Jewett and Kirkland. Although not wholly original in its emphasis on locality and nostalgia, *Winesburg* engages their possibilities and limitations to such a degree that it is undoubtedly a pivotal text in the genre's development. *Winesburg* employs critical nostalgia in multiple, often apparently contradictory, ways. Three of the most recurring

deployments of critical nostalgia circulate around George, the notion of progress, and, of course, the place itself.

The townspeople of Winesburg, as evidenced in the first story, transfer onto George a sentimental sense of possibility and lost opportunities. George becomes a figure infused with nostalgia for their youths. His former schoolteacher, Kate Swift, fixates on his potential: “Kate Swift’s mind was ablaze with thoughts of George Willard. In something he had written as a school boy she thought she had recognized the spark of genius and wanted to blow on the spark” (*Winesburg* 131). Kate is far from alone in this regard; his neighbors, parents, and peers all assign a kind of specialness to him that is tinged by nostalgia. The depiction of George in *Winesburg* suggests that communities rely on representative individuals for validation. The characters’ nostalgic rendering of George, particularly as an artist, subscribes to a certain treatment of character suspended in development.

To the extent that the development of George creates an arc, this cycle is akin to the *Bildungsroman* or—maybe more particularly—the *Künstlerroman*. Moretti theorizes that the development of the bildungsroman correlates with a need for a symbol of modernity; the practitioners of the genre and the public at large made “youth” the symbol of modernity and “mobility” and “interiority” its hallmark traits (*Way of the World* 3). Youth allows the culture to render modernity meaningful. In *Winesburg* we see a parallel: faced with the mutability of modernity, the town, perceived as outdated or marginal, relies on George to give meaning and stability to social conditions. And while *Winesburg* ultimately deviates from many of the conventions of the bildungsroman, George’s interiority and mobility remain paramount. In its emphasis on youth, *Winesburg* represents a significant departure from the earlier cycles, which focus largely, although not exclusively, on older travelers. Its focus on a character’s maturation

renders it unlike Jewett's or Kirkland's cycles and most of the volumes of the first and second stages. Although George is a native of the town, his sensibilities and position as a newspaper reporter maintain the distance that Kirkland's and Jewett's narrators enjoy. The narrators' positions as spectator-participator show the indebtedness to the earlier cycles for modernism's more general tendency to privilege an insider-outsider narrative voice. The cycle's emphasis on George's particular development also provide an organizing principle that influences later cycles, such as Faulkner's *The Unvanquished*, Steinbeck's *The Red Pony*, Hemingway's *in our time* (1923).

Although George figures as a central organizing figure in *Winesburg*, the cycle complicates his primacy through the emphasis on surrogate characters. The stories obscure the distinction between major and minor characters by having the latter function as protagonists in individual stories. For instance, Helen White, Enoch Robinson, and Seth Richmond function as surrogates for George in several stories, and often explicitly comment on why George has been singled out over them. The use of collective protagonists in cycles challenges the primacy of the central figure. By displacing the central protagonist, these texts achieve a degree of collective experience and history exclusively available to the locality. While George appears to be a powerful unifying force, Anderson displaces some of his centrality onto the populace, questioning the possibility for textual and symbolic unity through an individual.

The stories' critique of aggrandizing an individual challenges the overt nostalgia often aligned with George. The sheer multiplicity of such alternatives intimates that this aggrandizement is often arbitrary and violently minimizes the potential of other promising figures, many of whom are artists (for instance, Enoch paints). Making George carry the burden of the localities' dreams parallels the burden of making him the center of the story; the cycle

suggests the caprice inherent in both. While *Winesburg* ultimately devotes more textual attention to George's acts of writing, it nonetheless shows the tenacity and choices made by those that stay and continue, often writing or painting for no audience. One effect of making minor characters the equal of the protagonist is to offer multiple answers to the contradictory impulses of modern, industrialized, and capitalistic society: a glorification of the autonomy of self and the romanticization of communal obligation and spirit.<sup>14</sup>

Cycles indebted to the bildungsroman, such as *Winesburg*, are ostensibly teleological, given the origins of the bildungsroman in the context of Enlightenment principles of progress. The treatment of the idea of progress in *Winesburg* engages critical nostalgia to simultaneously enact and dismantle the logic of teleology. As a product of an earlier period, the form represents a nostalgic turn to a genre that sought to make sense of modernity's contradictions. *Winesburg* defies the particular expectation of teleology by simultaneously employing and revising the conventions of the bildungsroman, particularly the character's maturity by the volume's end. In George's departure, *Winesburg* implies maturity rather than depicting it. In Anderson's cycle, the exact nature of George's maturity remains vague. Unlike the traditional bildungsroman, marriage does not represent a viable solution for demonstrating a commitment to social responsibility. The stories present and reject many suitors for George, showing the inadequacy of this resolution. Rather than marking maturity and social commitment through an event, such as marriage, this cycle implies that maturity has taken place outside of the stories from the moments where the narrative voice most resembles George's retrospection. This extra-textual maturation represents a substantial "gap" within the stories and solidifies how intrinsic the events that happen between stories are. *Winesburg* represents a turning-point in the cycle because it sets forth a model followed by later modernist cycles, which increasingly gain meaning through

their open-endedness. Such cycles cement the characters' liberty by making them free of the last thing that binds them: the locality. The characters exorcise the idea of the place that still haunts them through physically leaving it and, more importantly, through returning to it in stories.

The act of returning to the locality through stories mimics the inherent teleology of nostalgia. The premise of nostalgia is the idea that there exists a point in the past that is pure or superior to the present. Nostalgia reverses the direction of progress but fundamentally subscribes to its sequential logic. The stories' setting in the 1890s and the retrospective tone that slips into the narratives model this nostalgia, as do many characters' sense of a pure or superior past moment that is now tainted. When the narrative voice breaks on occasion, the retrospective tone hints that even the present of the stories has passed. For instance, in "The Untold Lie" a self-conscious narrator intercedes into the story of two farm hands: "But this is not the story of Windpeter Winters nor yet of his son Hal who worked on the Wills farm with Ray Pearson. It is Ray's story. It will, however, be necessary to talk a little of young Hal so that you will get into the spirit of it" (*Winesburg* 166). The metafictional statements about the appropriate focus for the story and the use of the second person indicate that the narrator is communicating about an earlier moment. Reading this story backwards, one might assume this narrative voice to be George's, who is referred to briefly in the third-person in "The Untold Lie." Here and elsewhere, the narrator is most identified with George but remains unnamed and his position to the narrative voice remains deliberately ambiguous.

*Winesburg* enacts nostalgia as a way of replicating and then undercutting the expectation of a narrative teleology that culminates in formal unity. As much as the locality, the focus on George, and the recurring characters link the stories, the cycle does not ultimately generate absolute coherence. The narrative gaps, the divisions between the stories, the placement of

seemingly paired stories apart from one another, and the jarring juxtaposition of dissimilar stories all serve to break up any sense of perfect unity and represent the most significant distinction of the cycle's third stage. This disjunction emphasizes the notion that misunderstanding and distance are inherent to human relations. The representation of this attitude as longstanding—and not the exclusive product of a later modernist moment—critiques the idea that there exists a pure past to which return is desirable.

Disjunction, as an enactment of critical nostalgia, is central even to the explicitly paired stories “The Strength of God” and “The Teacher,” which focus on neighbors Curtis Hartman and Kate Swift respectively. The characters' stories take place feet apart on the same night and are sequenced together in the text. The extent to which they overlap appears to be proof of affiliation in *Winesburg*; however, disruption exists even in this highly integrated pair of stories. The characters remain oblivious to the others' struggles and desires, and the very division of the tale into two stories “signals an important separation of consciousness” to the extent that “Between them there is no compassion, no communication, no sense of community” (Kennedy 199). In these stories, connection is available exclusively—and only to a limited degree—to George.

However, hubris and a stylistic rupture undercut even George's affiliation. As Kate Swift sets out on an “unpremeditated walk,” the narrator reflects, “It was as though the man and the boy, by thinking of her, had driven her forth into the wintry streets” (*Winesburg* 128). Whalan shows that George's writerly imagination interrupts the narrative voice here, attributing Kate's action to some internal conflict:

[T]he fantasy of being able to write one's own life story, and write other people in and out of it at will, is momentarily indulged in during a moment where the

imperative of wish fulfillment seems to override the literary codes of realism. However, this generic rupture with realism also serves as a reminder of the textuality of the story and thus the inherent fluidity and instability of its signification. (54)

Cycles in the first and second stage indulge in the kind of “fantasy of being able to write one’s life story” that Whalan describes. However, the “imperative of wish fulfillment” marks this moment in *Winesburg* as different in degree from the earlier cycles, particularly Kirkland’s, which purports to represent things as they are without attributing motivations to characters whose interiority the stories do not represent. George’s fantasy that he wills Kate from her house by the sheer force of his imagination ironically mirrors how Kate and others write stories onto George. Whalan explains that the generic instability within and among these stories undercuts the possibility of textual and communal unity. In *Winesburg*, the lack of formal unity links to its treatment of geographically-engendered community.

Its experimentation with what remains unspoken between characters distinguishes *Winesburg* from the earlier stages, establishing a shifted emphasis on alienation and disjunction within short-story cycles of the later periods. For instance, the stories are replete with moments and relationships that lack connection. Scenes of failed communication and missed moments together create a composite view of life in the town, but the stories themselves lack such comparisons and cross-references. For example, “Mother,” “Paper Pills,” and “Death” constitute a divided trilogy, depicting the trajectory of Elizabeth Willard’s life. Given this composite view, pride and regret, intimated in the earlier stories, eventually lead Elizabeth to remain silent with her son in the final scene of “Death,” causing her money, kept secret from her husband and her son, to remain buried in the house after her death. This burial comports with Elizabeth’s many



buried desires and with the cycle's treatment of a generalized inability to communicate. For instance, George tells his mother, "I suppose I can't make you understand, but, oh, I wish I could" (30). Touched by her son's attempt at disclosure, Elizabeth "wanted to cry out with joy because of the words that had come from the lips of her son, but the expression of joy had become impossible to her" (30). Anderson depicts the almost, but never fully, realized use of language in his emphasis on the characters "wishing" and "crying" but never actually "saying." The image of words on the verge of spilling out recurs in the book, and each occurrence layers onto previous moments of buried expression constituting a cyclicity of words unspoken. Treated as discrete moments, these admissions would seem simply anomalous personal inadequacies. In their repetition, *Winesburg* constructs a metanarrative about the very problems of narration. The cycle's use of passive voice and muted verbs reflects the impossibility of communication between the characters and their lack of agency.

The recursive quality of the cycle of locality enables connections without necessitating unity between all the stories and even amid a divided trilogy such as this one. However, the autonomy of the individual stories in the Elizabeth Willard sequence and their separation within the text represents the disjunctive quality of the cycle. While "Death" is separate, closed, and autonomous as a single story, alongside "Mother" and "Paper Pills" it is integrated, opened, and interconnected. In such scenes of closure and openness, the genre "is an open work consisting of closed stories. Having finished one of the stories, the reader's sense is often one of closure; having read the whole composite, his or her final impression is one of openness" (Lundén 60). On a larger level, the trilogy of stories set Elizabeth's experience alongside so many others in the town, and her individual experience resonates with previous stories.<sup>15</sup> Despite these parallel moments and insights, the stories do not indicate that the characters share—or, are aware of—

their common experiences. Subsequent stories extinguish these illuminated moments. Margot Kelley claims that a hallmark of the genre is the extent to which “Important events occur off-stage” and that “this inversion between what is emphasized and what is implied [requires] a refocusing of our attention” (298). Major events often occur through implication; the specifics remain ambiguous despite their ramifications being felt in the stories. For example, in “Nobody Knows,” an asterisk marks the major event in the story, George’s conquest of Louise Trunnion, about whom George has heard “whispered tales” (40). Louise represents one of the many possible women for George; that the stories present so many options for him, paying particular attention to Helen White, Kate Swift, and Louise Trunnion, implies that this is not a workable solution to George’s maturation. As he longs “to talk to some man,” the unstated events help establish George’s attitudes toward women, sex, respectability, and even communication (41). The scene resonates with his future encounters with women, as in his misreading of Kate Swift. While George takes heart in the fact that “Nobody knows” (41), the phrase acquires ironic meaning. The mention of gossip and “whispered tales” implies that, of course, people will know, as they already seemed to have known; the story depicts the power and ubiquity of gossip, the evidence for which is the fact that George listens to such hearsay. In this scene and throughout, the cycle portrays the pitfalls of conjecture. George’s misreading of this and other situations registers the impossibility of omniscience, even for a character granted special access to the lives around him.

The fissures and gaps among the characters and stories suggest that short-story cycles ostensibly linked by community often rewrite the very notion of the term itself. Anderson’s depiction of Winesburg’s geography as ambiguous reinforces the stories’ skepticism about the town generating a sense of *gemeinschaft*. Specific locations, such as Winney’s Dry Goods Store,

recur but are not universally or consistently featured. The stories list street names, but their proximity to one another remains unclear. In the case of Winesburg, “Anderson’s Ohio village remains indistinct. In fact, the town map included in the 1960 edition of *Winesburg* reveals that only eight specific locations are identified” (Dunn and Morris 53). On the map itself, the illustrators completed the landscape with anonymous houses, churches, storefronts, and streets, mitigating the appearance of cycle’s intentional ambiguity. The uncertainty of the geographical markers within Winesburg is so extreme that Garland Mann argues that “one is never able to visualize the town’s geography” despite the mapmaker’s intention to stabilize the town’s dimensions (52). The resistance to easily recognizable, legible mapping reflects a concern with disrupting any sense of geographically-based *gemeinschaft*. While cycles of the third stage do so much to name the place and invest it with meaning, they simultaneously obscure the actual sites and streets they depict. Specific locations in these towns recur in individual stories but are not universally featured, such as Winney’s Dry Goods Store in *Winesburg* or The Palace Flophouse in *Cannery Row*. The stories list street names but their proximity to other streets remains ambiguous. The geography of the place remains important in the third stage—in the vein of Kirkland’s desire to describe “mud-holes”—but the emphasis shifts to a more deliberately tenuous sense of locality.

The opening paragraph of the third chapter of *Cannery Row* explicitly meshes particularity and ambiguity in terms of physical space. This later modernist cycle shows the influence of *Winesburg* and also evinces vestiges of the earlier stages. Set in Monterey, California, during the Great Depression, *Cannery Row* narrates, through episodic tales, the attempts of a group of men to throw a party for Doc, a character based on Steinbeck’s own

friend, the marine biologist Edward F. Ricketts.<sup>16</sup> The narrator's description of places within Cannery Row corresponds to many of the conventions of the "Emigrant's Guide":

Lee Chong's is to the right of the vacant lot (although why it is called vacant when it is piled high with old boilers, with rusting pipes, with great square timbers, and stacks of five-gallon cans, no one can say). Up in back of the vacant lot is the railroad track and the Palace Flophouse. But on the left-hand boundary of the lot is the stern and stately whore house of Dora Flood. (16)

The specificity of this physical description explicitly places limits around the locality, and most of the action in the stories occurs within this bounded geography. Although this level of specificity seems to align with an impulse to integrate the space into a larger imaginary through description, the parenthetical admission that the place's name does not fit its function undercuts this integration. The fact that the directional descriptors (right and left hand) assume an unknowable point of view further destabilizes the apparent legibility of the place. Moreover, later ambiguities in the locations of these markers undermine the ostensible certainty of this early passage; therefore, this passage's purpose is to present the appearance of place while the cycle as a whole undermines that certainty. The fractured stories within the volume mirror a space broken and piled with junk.

This tension between the autonomy of the story and its interdependence on the larger volume aligns *Cannery Row* with the tradition of short-story cycles linked by limited locality. It does not fit all of the conventional features of other short-story cycles—Steinbeck did not publish the individual stories separately (although this was hardly a universal trend for cycles of this stage) nor is every story autonomous (nor is this a universal feature). Rather than individually named stories, the volume consists of chapters. Some of the chapters are, however,

autonomous stories. Apart from a brief mention of “watch[ing] the feet of Mack and the boys as they crossed the lot to the Palace Flophouse” (202), Chapter 31 contains no further references to the other stories as it narrates a gopher’s construction of a beautiful home for himself in Cannery Row. It bears no connection to the overarching story of Doc’s party. When the gopher fails to attract a mate, he moves to more dangerous, less fertile ground. The vignette stands on its own as a fable commenting on the loneliness of solitude, which is a theme that recurs in relation to Doc and other characters. Although the larger narrative of the party of Doc—and its many episodic installments—serves as a connecting thread, the stories within can be read separately and there are many tales such as the gopher’s that stand almost entirely apart from that larger narrative.

In its interdependent chapters, the volume’s structure is less cohesive than Steinbeck’s more novelistic works, although these too bear the imprint of the cycle’s experimentation with proliferating points of view. Placing *Cannery Row* alongside his more conventional short-story cycles—*Pastures of Heaven*, *The Red Pony*, and *Tortilla Flat*—reveals a certain recurring preoccupation with California towns in his short-story cycles. Steinbeck’s cycles employ the convention of limited locality and critical nostalgia; *Cannery Row*, in particular, follows the model initiated by Anderson in that the cycle extends the concurrent deployment of and aversion to teleology. At the same time, the conventions of the earlier periods recur in this cycle, published in 1945, the year that often serves as shorthand for the end of modernism. As in *Winesburg*, critical nostalgia becomes the mode in which Steinbeck treats the promise of locality. The cycle similarly deploys critical nostalgia in relation to the ostensible protagonist, the locality, and the very idea of progress. Although the space is part of the nation, many of the features of integrating a marginalized space into the national imaginary persist. *Cannery Row* is

a fishing district in economic decline; the people that populate it—thieves, call girls, and the shopkeepers who sell to them—exist on the margins of respectability. The temporal setting enacts nostalgia for a period just past in much the same way as the temporal setting of the 1890s does for *Winesburg*.

Like its predecessors, *Cannery Row* treats the tension between the individual and the community. Doc serves as the central figure of esteem and a featured character in many of the stories. The townspeople routinely extol his virtues. Mack champions the party on his behalf. Worrying that they are throwing it for themselves, Mack considers, “And Doc’s too nice a fella to do that to. Doc is the nicest fella I ever knew” (83). The populace of Cannery Row repeats these sentiments in word and action throughout the stories. Almost halfway through the volume, the authorial voice notes that “In spite of his friendliness and his friends Doc was a lonely and set-apart man. Mack probably noticed it more than anybody. In a group, Doc seemed always alone” (104). The sense of loneliness amid the town—and amid people who watch, respect, and care for him—resonates with Anderson’s depiction of George as both a part of and apart from Winesburg. Just as Kate Swift or Enoch Robinson do, Mack functions as a dual protagonist in that he voices and directs the action of many of the stories in the party sequence. Narratives from the points of view of the gopher, little boys, the women of the local establishment, and others compound the number of narrators within the stories. The use of collective protagonists in these cycles causes the peripheral characters to constitute a group that challenges the singular primacy of the central group even as the central protagonist continues to embody “the essence of” the locality.<sup>17</sup> Thus, residents of the Row uphold Doc as representing the best of them, but the stories suggest that there are multiple possibilities for who best represents the place. Despite their problematizing of representative individuals such figures remain prominent throughout

modernist short-story cycles. The cycles explicitly and repeatedly return to the idea that these individuals represent the best of the locality. The prominence of these individuals contradicts other forces at work in the cycle, namely that cycles ostensibly center on groups. Sollors notes the recurrence in American culture of an individual serving as a metaphor for ethnic and regional identity. Of this metaphor, he asks, “how can individuality be constructed as a representation and metaphor of group identity?” (*Beyond Ethnicity* 194). In the case of the short-story cycle of limited locality, the question is moot, because the form revels in these contradictions. The openness of the form resists any final resolution about the tension between the individual and the group.

*Cannery Row* likewise dramatizes the desire to and difficulty of narrating a place, a theme present from the subgenre’s inception but one that receives increasing attention as its modernist iteration develops. In the preface, Steinbeck highlights the multiple levels of entrance into the locality and, by extension, the text:

Cannery Row in Monterey in California is a poem, a stink, a grating noise, a quality of light, a tone, a habit, a nostalgia, a dream. Cannery Row is the gathered and scattered, tin and iron and rust and splintered wood, chipped pavement and weedy lots and junk heaps, sardine canneries of corrugated iron, honky tonks, restaurants and whore houses, and little crowded groceries, and laboratories and flophouses. Its inhabitants are, as the man once said, 'whores, pimps, gamblers and sons of bitches,' by which he meant Everybody. Had the man looked through another peephole he might have said, 'Saints and angels and martyrs and holy men,' and he would have meant the same thing. (1)

This passage shows how the place exceeds stories and defies logic; Cannery Row simultaneously represents an idea and the very material objects of the place. In so much as it is “a quality of light” or “a dream,” Cannery Row represents the intangible. Simultaneously, its “chipped pavement” and dilapidated buildings signal a material world falling apart. That its residents can be both saints and sinners, depending on the moment one catches them, emphasizes the liminal locality of Cannery Row and connects this volume to a realist tradition.<sup>18</sup> This preface is akin to the prefatory materials of cycles of the first stage; however, instead of explaining the purpose for telling the stories that follow and claiming verisimilitude, it toys with the conventions of nostalgia. This passage calls Cannery Row “a nostalgia,” but that nostalgia is replete with the “grating noise” and “stink” of the place so that any wistful sentimentality is immediately pushed aside in favor of clear-eyed pronouncements of the place’s complexity, for its sinners are also saints. The opening’s emphasis on interpretation of place renders the construction of the locality and the construction of the story inseparable.<sup>19</sup> Although it comes to a different end, the means by which the preface establishes the stories follows the conventions of the first stage. Moreover, the self-conscious deployment of critical nostalgia evident in the passage is most akin to the changes of the second stage.

At the end of the preface, the narrative voice explicitly questions how things, such as the idiosyncrasies of Cannery Row, can “be set down alive” (3). To answer this question, the conclusion digresses into a discussion of a species of flat worm that are “so delicate that they are almost impossible to capture whole” (3). Instead of capturing them, the worms must crawl onto the knife blade on their own; only then can they be bottled. The use of the second person in this passage invites an implied reader into the text, as if she is the person looking through the “peephole” on the book’s construction. This inclusivity is reminiscent of the earlier prefaces that



justified their cycles to readers. The narrator closes this section by describing the voluntary surrender of the flat worm to the knife: “And perhaps that might be the way to write this book—to open the page and to let the stories crawl in by themselves” (3). This extended digression into the surrender of flat worms uses the physical world to describe and expose the difficulty of narration. It implies that the characters that populate the limited locality resemble the flat worm.

The preface to *Cannery Row* announces the openness so central to the cycle, and Steinbeck’s own relationship to the text serves to dramatize his general shift toward a more open form. He had worked in the short-story cycle before, but following the success of *Grapes of Wrath* and his work as a journalist in World War II, Steinbeck wanted to work on projects that offered a reprieve from the pain of war and the particular demands of the novel. In his letters, Steinbeck indicates that after publishing *Grapes of Wrath* in 1939, he wished to leave the novel behind: “I’ve worked the novel—I know it as far as I can take it. I never did think much of it—a clumsy vehicle at best” (*A Life in Letters* [SLL] 194). When he was writing *Cannery Row*, Steinbeck had just finished a tour of journalism on World War II, which he describes as having had a “profoundly nauseating effect” (SLL 273); in a letter from July 4, 1944, he describes *Cannery Row* as “kind of fun book that never mentions the war and it is a relief to work on” (SLL 270). In a letter from September 27, 1944, Steinbeck explains the structure of *Cannery Row*: “It’s written on four levels and people can take what they can receive out of it. One thing—it never mentions the war—not once” (SLL 273). Previous to writing *Cannery Row*, Steinbeck embarked on a specimen-collecting trip with Ed Ricketts; this trip shaped *Cannery Row* and Steinbeck’s views on the burdens of narrative.

Steinbeck’s conceptualization of thinking shifted in response to his work in marine biology. Namely, he began to see life as being about processes more than endings and closure.

In *The Log from the Sea of Cortez* (1951), the narrative account of the trip taken by Steinbeck and Ricketts in 1940, Steinbeck explains this philosophy:

They [non-teleological ideas] consider events as outgrowths and expressions rather than results...Non-teleological thinking concerns itself primarily not with what should be, or could be, or might be, but rather with what actually 'is'—attempting at most to answer the already sufficiently difficult questions *what* or *how*, instead of *why*" (135).<sup>20</sup>

Non-teleological thinking, which he also terms "a relational thing" (150), considers phenomena in terms other than simple cause and effect (141).<sup>21</sup> The open form of the short-story cycle embodies non-teleological thinking by giving the impression that what we see in a volume like *Cannery Row* signifies a microcosm of the lives in Monterey, in California, in the United States, and in the world, as the opening line suggests. Although the passage implies a hierarchy of size, this cycle acknowledges them as equals rather than as only parts leading to the bigger whole. Non-teleological thinking undermines the linear notion of cause and effect and invites multiple experiences and explanations into meaning-making. The volume's use of second-person, physical descriptions, integration of interchapters or vignettes, and self-conscious descriptions of the difficulties of aestheticizing a location and its people replicate Steinbeck's notions of non-teleological thinking.

Steinbeck's theories on the import and form of non-teleological narrative articulate an attitude toward narrative that finds expression in the third stage, particularly in the final stories of locality-based cycles. His theories avoid the teleology popular in narrative, such as marriage, death, and self-realization, just as Anderson does in *Winesburg*. Indeed, these events find little place within short-story cycles. Cycles most commonly end with characters still in process; self-realization is not actualized and completed but hinted at, and the endings remain open. *Cannery*

*Row* ends with an act of recitation by Doc, a specimen collector and distributor. He awakes as the sun rises on Cannery Row and reads from “Black Marigolds” translated by E. Powys Mathers. Closing the book, he recites the last stanza as he stands over a sink of dishes. This connection between landscape and text is fleeting and fragile, resonating with the preface’s statements on writing. In effect, he writes a text onto the landscape as he considers early morning in Cannery Row, which “quiet and sunny” promises a beginning, not an ending (205). That the cycles end with the act or insinuation of writing symbolizes the ongoing nature of the storytelling, because writing, within these texts, is an activity that does not end. The stories are divided and arranged, but they hint at the idea that those divisions and arrangements are somewhat arbitrary, and that the work of writing continues.

The recurrence of writing in the final stories of these cycles confirms the openness of them, as the text posits the characters as beginning a life of writing and points to what will happen, rather than a final act. *Winesburg* especially represents an artist on the verge of his career, which takes him out of his locality. The need to take leave of the locality creates tension for these writer figures, and, read backwardly, the stories are an expression of the tension between what that locality provides and what it limits. In the final scenes, the locality becomes a setting; for George it is “a background on which to paint the dreams of his manhood” (204). That so many of these figures are all also writers—from Kirkland’s surrogate narrator to Jewett’s unnamed narrator to the characters of George and, to some degree, Doc—suggests that the form reflects the authors’ conceptions about the very act of writing.

As an ongoing process of observing, noting, and revising, writing resists conventional ideas of progress. A resistance to the logic of progress is inherent in the very structure of the cycle: “the short stories each have epiphanic moments, and the action of the larger narrative

follows a 'rising sawtooth' pattern, creating a sense of development that is not shaped by teleology or traditional notions of progress" (Kelley 299). The "epiphanic moments" that occur within stories are brought back down in subsequent stories as characters continue to struggle with unfulfilled desires. These unsustained epiphanies signal that even the final moments of the cycles are exactly that: momentary. The cyclicity of the stories ensures that these final moments get read back into the stories themselves. Thus, even the act of leave-taking is non-teleological and recursive as the characters return to the localities in the act of writing and remembering. The books themselves are a testament to this, as narrative voice breaks on occasion, hinting that a future writerly figure presides over the stories. In cycles of the third stage, the metafictional statements about the appropriate focus for the story and the use of the second person comment on the storytelling process.

#### Convention and Innovation: Beyond the Modernist Cycle

Short-story cycles linked by a common setting express a deep ambivalence about the possibility of locality forging a sense of community or *gemeinschaft*. This ambivalence may have a real-world counterpart. Robert D. Putnam examines the perception of a decreased involvement in communal activities, citing evidence that Americans feel that civic involvement has decreased sharply, even though this has not necessarily been the case.<sup>22</sup> More important than the actuality of decreased civic involvement is the alienation citizens feel from others in their locality; while the respondents to the survey cited by Putnam felt that this distance was particular to the post-World War II generation, the cycles considered here suggest that this anxiety about loss of community began much earlier, perhaps even from the earliest settlement. After all,

establishing something, such as a neighborhood, a town, or a nation, necessitates knowing that it is impermanent. This notion of lost community accounts for the pervasiveness of nostalgia in the genre. Even if doing so is futile, the sheer attempt to disentangle the web of lives and map these places is a nostalgic gesture, as it pays homage to localities such as Montacute, Dunnet Landing, Winesburg, and Cannery Row. Taking the short-story cycle as the object of study reveals its particular brand of modernism as engaged with locality and nostalgia.

As an “expressive dimension of modernity,” the short-story cycle requires us to read outward from modernism to create what Stanford Friedman calls “plural periods of modernism.” The genre’s particular preoccupations extend its modernism to an earlier moment, when the introduction of the modern onto the frontier upset a desire to believe that change is meaningful and progressive. The stories within a cycle are open-ended, return back on each other, evade concrete meaning, and do not present a resolved, complete protagonist. Thus, the very form of the short-story cycle thwarts any sense of progress. The short-story cycle’s persistent and increasingly complicated ambivalence about unity and fragmentation, the challenge it presents to teleological thinking, its entrenched rendering of the individual, and the cycle’s constant struggle with textual and communal coherence make the genre vital to a fuller understanding of modernism as a literary, cultural, and historical set of movements.

Bringing together the cycle’s regionalist and modernist iterations testifies to the perforations of periodization, which provokes the question: where does modernism end? It certainly does not end with *Cannery Row*, itself a text that complicates rigid period distinctions. Subsequent to modernism’s height and the heyday of the blockbuster cycles, limited locality remains a vital force in short-story cycles. Cycles linked by setting after World War II demonstrate a comparable modernist play with form and constitute a possible fourth stage. The

influence of earlier cycles—most notably the influence of *Winesburg*—gave rise to, among many others, Ray Bradbury’s *The Martian Chronicles*, the eponymous *Trailerpark* (1981) by Russell Banks, Cathy Day’s *The Circus in Winter* (2004), and Rebecca Barry’s *Later, At the Bar* (2007). In all of these works, the treatment of a certain economic underbelly that is particular to these localities persists. The depiction of such spaces extends this tradition of cycles grounded in locality. *Winesburg* cast modernity in terms of a mode of literary expression invested in both realism and the newest avant-garde practices, generating a watershed moment in an already robust tradition of literature. The short-story cycles by Bradbury, Banks, Day, and Barry continue to test the limits of experimentation as they engage with the conventions of science fiction, myth, and postmodernism. Even as they do so, modernist tendencies persist as the volumes’ increased self-consciousness throws into stark relief the simultaneous ubiquity of realism in these later cycles.

Similar tensions between modernist and postmodernist impulses emerge among other locality-based cycles, including Gloria Naylor’s *The Women of Brewster Place* (1983), Erdrich’s *Love Medicine*, and Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street* (1984).<sup>23</sup> Identifying major trends in postwar fiction, Mark McGurl identifies these and other volumes as part of “high cultural pluralism,” which “describes a body of fiction that joins the high literary values of modernism with a fascination with the experience of cultural difference and the authenticity of the ethnic voice” (32). Within the cycles of “high cultural pluralism,” place as metaphor continues to signify the milieu or group and the individual. For instance, *Mango Street* becomes synonymous with a particular group identity: it is “a metaphor of heritage, cultural values, and historical ethnic traditions” (Nagel 124). The neighborhood as an entity represents a symbolic and physical link to Chicana pasts and experiences as neighbors share stories, lead similar lives,

and speak the same languages, both in actual spoken language and in the sense of what they value. The final vignette, “Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes,” which is typical in its self-conscious mode of critical nostalgia, reveals the extent to which Mango Street has not emerged naturally as a metaphor for her past but has been selected. Although Esperanza names other Chicago city streets where her family has lived, she says that “what I remember most is Mango Street, the red house, the house I belong but do not belong to.”<sup>24</sup> As Esperanza grapples with her conflicted connection to the past, a sense of critical nostalgia permeates the scene. She describes how Mango Street haunts her, compelling her to write down her stories so “the ghost does not ache so much”; “Mango says goodbye” only after she has written the stories (110). The anthropomorphism of the street as a talking being that goes by its first name reflects the extent to which the distinction between the tenor and the vehicle has collapsed as the past talks through place. Mango Street, as a limited locality, is a metaphor for a milieu turning to its cultural past as a response to change. The connections between this 1984 cycle and the modernist tradition exceed even limited locality and critical nostalgia. Esperanza resembles the insider-outsider figure of the central character in regionalist and modernist short-story cycles; her act of leaving mirrors the earlier volumes’ conclusions; and, her position as writer marks her maturation as ongoing. That she returns to Mango in stories actualizes the lack of teleology that modernist cycles celebrate.

Cisneros’s cycle is representative of a still-robust tradition of cycles linked by a common setting, questions the possibilities for *gemeinschaft* from such environs. As such, they represent a possible fourth stage in the development of the modernist short-story cycle; this stage extends the conventions and practices of modernist cycles well past the traditional temporal boundaries of modernism. If, as Stanford Friedman suggests, modernism “involves a powerful vortex of

historical conditions that coalesce to produce sharp ruptures from the past,” both the cycles explicitly indebted to Anderson, such as those by Bradbury, Banks, Day, and Barry, and those that extend the conventions of limited locality, such as those McGurl claims to be part of “high cultural pluralism,” engage modernist practices. Questions of periodization recur in the next chapter, which turns from geographic community to a more specific and intimate form of affiliation: kinship.

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the interconnections between regional and modernist literature, see Kate McCullough’s *Regions of Identity: The Construction of America in Women’s Fiction, 1885-1914*, Hsuan L. Hsu, “Literature and Regional Production,” and Philip Joseph’s *American Literary Regionalism in a Global Age*.

<sup>2</sup> Book reviews and popular essays of the nineteenth century often debated the suitability of the novel to the United States. As a tastemaker, William Dean Howells’s comments are illustrative: “In most American novels, vivid and graphic as the best of them are, the people are segregated if not sequestered, and the scene is sparsely populated.... we excel in small pieces with three or four figures, or in studies of rustic communities, where there is propinquity if not society” (253). He continues: “I am not sure that the Americans have not brought the short story nearer perfection in the all-round sense that almost any other people.” He attributes this refinement to a national temperament of “hurry and impatience” and a robust magazine industry (254).

<sup>3</sup> That there is an international dimension to the short-story cycle cannot be denied. James Joyce’s *Dubliners*, first published in 1914, typifies the conventions of a cycle set in a single location. This volume, along with volumes by Gustave Flaubert, Honoré de Balzac, and Ivan Turgenev, among others, influenced US cycles.

<sup>4</sup> The very notion of a national literature has become so contested that Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell make a case for the continued use of the national category. See “Introduction: Planet and America, Set and Subset.”

<sup>5</sup> For more on such recovery projects, see Judith Fetterly and Marjorie Pryce’s introduction in *American Women Regionalists* and John Duvall’s “Regionalism in American Modernism.”

<sup>6</sup> For a more complete history of the use of community, see Jessica Berman’s “Cosmopolitan Communities.”

<sup>7</sup> Kirkland acknowledges that her work is indebted to Mary Russell Mitford, whose chronicles of life in a small English hamlet, *Our Village* (1832), “suggested the form of my rude attempt” (2). This self-effacement reveals not just the popularity of an international sketch tradition but also the extent to which this American author saw herself in conversation with it. For Kirkland, this reliance on an English model did not detract from the American-ness of her volume.

<sup>8</sup> For more complete listings, see Dunn and Morris (30-46, 159-182) and Garland Mann (187-208).



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<sup>9</sup> For instance, Cather's *My Ántonia* (1918), although more highly integrated than an archetypal short-story cycle, consists of a framed narrative and five stories that create a composite view of the Nebraska frontier. In blending of essay, history, anthropology, and story, Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) descends from the sketch tradition. Likewise, Hurston's *Eatonville Anthology* (1926) consists of anecdotes and character descriptions of the small Florida town. Williams's poetic cycle, *Paterson*, stands as one of the most prominent locality-based modernist texts.

<sup>10</sup> Masters' and Williams' work also address these same problems. Collectively, they expose nostalgia for the small town as false and instead insist on the small town as representative of larger, national concerns. Contemporary reviewers also saw a connection between small-town narratives and cyclicity; many saw *Winesburg* as a direct response to Masters in that Anderson's volume is also interested in the confessions of secret sins and frustrations and presents a record of buried lives. See, for instance, Heywood Broun's review of May 31, 1919 in the *New York Tribune*, as well as an anonymous reviewer's comments in the July 19, 1919 edition of the *New York Evening Post*.

<sup>11</sup> The serialization of stories often suggests the economic conditions under which many were produced. The publication of the Whilomville tales helped to alleviate Crane's financial crisis and medical expenses. Similarly, following her parents' deaths, Freeman's stories appeared in *Harper's* and initiated her financial autonomy. The stories in *The People of Our Neighborhood* first appeared in *The Ladies Home Journal* between December of 1895 and December of 1897.

<sup>12</sup> For more on the meaning of the title, see Ellen A. Brown and Patricia Hernlund's "The Source for the Title of Stephen Crane's *Whilomville Stories*."

<sup>13</sup> Set in the Upper Midwest, Hamlin Garland's *Main-Travelled Roads* (1891) is perhaps the most obvious example of this critical mode.

<sup>14</sup> For more on the dueling pulls of individual and communal obligation, see Robert D. Putnam's *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (24).

<sup>15</sup> For instance, Elizabeth's death comports with a revelation had by another character, in a story in which Elizabeth does not appear. Despite a deep desire to be loved, Alice Hindman, a clerk in the Dry Goods Store, realizes at the end of "Adventure" that she and "many people must live and die alone, even in Winesburg" (92). Elizabeth's death fulfills this revelation.

<sup>16</sup> Steinbeck dedicates the volume to Ed Ricketts, "*who knows why or should.*" Brian Railsback, Robert DeMott, and Hiroshi Kaname all claim that Doc is modeled on Ricketts. Kaname argues that *Cannery Row* "consists of fragmented affairs and episodically depicts not a few events which have no close relationship with each other. But the novel also arranges episodes to create a story. Steinbeck approves of 'continuity in discontinuity'" (102).

<sup>17</sup> Rocío G. Davis agrees, adding the term "evolving prototype" to describe different but similar characters that mature over the course of a cycle (6).

<sup>18</sup> Railsback aligns Steinbeck's construction of Cannery Row with his general tendency: "As with so many Steinbeckian locales it is not the simple nostalgic regional place we once imagined it to be, but a rich, inflected, interstitial site" (296).

<sup>19</sup> Louise Owens envisions that the volume's form parallels the place, surmising that, "The introductory portrait of Cannery Row insures that from the beginning we view the Row as a 'whole,' an organism with multiple interrelated parts" (179).

<sup>20</sup> Steinbeck's comments on the *Sea of Cortez: A Leisurely Journal of Research and Travel* (1941), which includes the log and catalogues their biological finds, mirrors his comments on

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*Cannery Row*. On July 4, 1941 Steinbeck wrote that “This book is very carefully planned and designed... but I don’t think its plan will be immediately apparent. And again there are four levels of statement in it and I think very few will follow it to the fourth. I even think it is a new kind of writing” (*SLL* 232). He identifies four levels in both texts; these levels suggest that the lack of teleology results not just from cyclicality but also from layering.

<sup>21</sup> Brian Railsback contends that not knowing the “why” is perhaps the very purpose of Steinbeck’s non-teleological work: “He [Steinbeck] stands before the frightening, infinite, paradoxical—indeed chaotic—universe and informs us that seeing these things is quite enough. For Steinbeck, the quest is not to understand the whole but rather to see, to embrace as much as possible” (278).

<sup>22</sup> Putnam cites a 1987 survey of baby boomers in which “Fully 77 percent said that the nation was worse off because of ‘less involvement in community activities’” (25). In a 1992 survey, respondents from the US workforce said that “‘the breakdown of community’ and ‘selfishness’ were ‘serious’ or ‘extremely serious’ problems in America” (25).

<sup>23</sup> For an overview of reviewers’ reactions to Cisneros’s genre experimentation, see Sonia Saldívar-Hull (84-85). To maintain the tales’ “mestiza power” Saldívar-Hull borrows from Cisneros’s own descriptor, *historia*, to label these vignettes.

<sup>24</sup> Esperanza’s conflicted response results not only from the place but also to a particular class and gender consciousness. For more on these considerations, see Geoffery Sanborn’s “Keeping Her Distance: Cisneros, Dickinson, and the Politics of Private Enjoyment” and Sonia Saldívar-Hull, chapter 4.

## Tracing New Genealogies: Kinship and the Contemporary Cycle

The first chapter traces the rise of the genre of the short-story cycle and the earliest and the most ubiquitous linking device: limited localities. While this device persists among contemporary cycles, another linking structure has become increasingly prevalent among contemporary cycles: the family. Cycles linked by familial structures are similar to those linked by locality in that they share concerns over affiliation, be it personal, communal, regional, or national, and over the construction of identity in relation to these affiliations. Critics note a flourishing of the short-story cycle, particularly from the 1970s onward.<sup>1</sup> In quality and quantity, the period enjoys perhaps the greatest concentration of highly innovative and successful cycles since the period from 1890-1945.<sup>2</sup> Within this resurgence, family occupies a central place in the structuring and linking of cycles. Indeed, cycles linked by family in this period proliferate, including Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts* (1975), Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* (1982), Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine* (1984), Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* (1985), Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (1991), Christina García's *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992), and Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008). Engaging issues of identity and belonging simultaneous to a spiked interest in ethnicity and gender among academics and readers alike, these volumes have enjoyed a high degree of popular and critical attention. The number of awards given to them, the extent to which these texts are taught, and the fact that several of these cycles were adapted into television productions and films testify to their widespread appeal.<sup>3</sup>

The proliferation of such volumes and the critical attention they generate reveal a preponderance of cycles that engage kinship as a central narrative concern and a dominant structural device; moreover, ethnic American women writers appear to dominate this subset of the cycle. Although the form is far from exclusive to women writers, issues of family preoccupy cycles written by women in the period. Cycles linked by family depend upon multiple perspectives as characters develop, which opposes the dominance of a single interiority. Karen Weekes argues that gender identity finds an outlet in the generic form: “Just as the short story cycle is greater than the sum of its parts, these protagonists’ lives are richer than is reflected in any of the tales taken individually....The structure of these cycles replicates the complex structure of women’s identities: it reflects attempts to connect these fragments in a meaningful way” (3). Weekes’s assertion that the form replicates the production of identity from fragments resonates with the genre’s general preoccupations with the ongoing and contentious process of identity-making. The cycle’s form allows for multiple points of view and defers closure, which aligns with its skepticism about the possibility of coherent wholeness, be it of a narrative or of a self. Weekes notes a heightened correlation of gender and genre at this moment; however, the connection between genre and the treatment of identity formation repeatedly emerges during moments of embattled identity-making, reaching greater frequency at certain historical moments. For instance, the exploration of communal identity appeared with great frequency among regionalist and modernist cycles at a time when the nation was taking shape.

In the case of cycles linked by family from the 1970s to the present, women writers explore kinship and identity. Of cycles appearing in the 1980s, Kelley asserts that “75 percent of the current writers [of the genre] are women, often women who live in positions of double marginality as members of visible minorities” (296). Kelley attributes this preponderance to the

form's conduciveness to the particular narrative needs of this group of writers. Tamara Sylvia Wagner argues that these cycles were part of a larger literary explosion in the last decades of the twentieth century that brought "gender problematics to the fore. Almost routinely couched in either culture or generational conflicts (usually both), they let familial issues assume center stage" (160). Gender, cultural and generational conflict, and familial dynamics produce a template for working out and representing each of the other categories. Sarika Chandra maintains that the extent to which teachers and scholars teach and write about these volumes has "produced a canon of immigrant/ethnic literatures with a heavy concentration of women writers, in part because women writers and their female protagonists allow for simultaneous conversations about race and gender" (835). Beyond the practical advantages of treating these big identity categories in relation to a single text, the texts are also widely taught and discussed because they offer complicated, often ambivalent, responses to the interconnections among gender, ethnicity, family, and identity. They challenge the supposition that any one of these elements defines a character, text, or author, and yet the reception of these cycles—and to some extent the volumes themselves—replicate what McCullough has called the "gendered production of the ethnic," which refers to the ways in which writing exposes identity as a process that is both "individually chosen" and "culturally determined" and ultimately "enacted through the gender or sexuality" of its female characters (251). This concentration of and on ethnic women characters within the short-story cycle, as well as the volumes' critical reception, indicates that these volumes apply and subvert the template of gender, ethnicity, and family that has so preoccupied our critical discussion of identity in the last few decades.

This chapter explores the production and reception of three cycles linked by family written by ethnic American women writers: Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, Alvarez's *How the García*

*Girls Lost Their Accents*, and Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth*. Treating as they do Chinese and Chinese American, Dominican and Dominican American, and Bengali and Bengali American families, respectively, these volumes would seem to be worlds apart, but in their treatment of the triangulated relationship among kinship, gender, and ethnicity they are more like neighbors with good fences. These cycles exist on the margins of the genre; whereas Tan's and Alvarez's volumes straddle the border between cycle and novel, Lahiri's volume exists somewhere between collection and cycle. The volume's final three stories, entitled "Hema and Kaushik," constitute a cycle-within-a-collection. Looking at cycles on the margins of the genre exposes the extent to which the narrative techniques of one form blur into those of another; in the case of cycles linked by family, the preoccupation with family as a fragmented and ongoing process gets reflected in the genre's fragmented but interconnected design. The advantage of taking the genre of the short-story cycle as the point of reference when discussing these texts and this notion of the "gendered production of the ethnic" is that genre allows a way out of talking about the texts exclusively in terms of their content or subject matter, which can be limiting.<sup>4</sup> What is striking about these three cycles, and family cycles generally, is the high degree of commonality among cycles treating different cultural and ethnic experiences.

These cycles not only represent the experience of being a "visible minority" in the United States, but they also explore the extent to which the families' national identities hinge on migrations, particularly the experience of those who move back and forth across spaces relatively easily. This representation of migration reflects the historical moment and particular circumstances of the families; the stories reflect a period of ease and accessibility of air travel, reduced political tensions in the countries from which the families come, and the families' relatively affluent class status. In their treatment of travel and citizenship, these cycles show in

very practical terms the perforation of national boundaries. In so doing, and in their treatment of family, these cycles imagine modes of belonging that belie a single national identity. The female characters negotiate gender and sexual roles in plural environments, treating identity as multiple, contingent, and provisional. As they treat the triangulated production of family, gender, and ethnicity, these cycles also reimagine the very meaning of kinship, depicting it as akin to ethnicity in that they are both “in part individually chosen and in part culturally determined” (McCullough 251). Kinship—and by extension gender and ethnic identities—derive not only from biological relationships but also from shared formative experiences that the characters choose to value. Short-story cycles linked by family challenge the notion that identity is singular, intrinsic, or fixed.

#### Production and Reception: On the Margins of Genre

*The Joy Luck Club*, *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, and *Unaccustomed Earth* all straddle generic boundaries; however, reading them in the context of the long tradition of the short-story cycle exposes the extent to which form follows family in these cycles. The volumes’ forms comment on what the stories communicate about family, gender, and ethnicity. If genre exists on a continuum, these volumes tend toward either novel or collection but are best situated in terms of the cycle. For instance, Tan’s and Alvarez’s are situated closer to the novel than the collection.<sup>5</sup> While the divide between novel and cycle has been a central concern to scholarship on the short-story cycle, Lahiri’s text blurs the divide between cycle and collection. Little criticism exists on Lahiri’s very recent volume; however, it was widely reviewed and a few noted the unorthodox integration of the volume’s final three stories. *Unaccustomed Earth* is a

compelling example of a volume that blends elements of the cycle with the collection.<sup>6</sup>

Examining cycles on the margins of the genre, rather than only examining archetypal cycles, reveals the broad influence and form of the contemporary cycle.

Critics often read these three volumes—and all cycles linked by family—exclusively in terms of autobiography or in terms of connection to narrative practices specific to the authors' ethnic identities. Indeed, there is a high degree of correlation between fiction and autobiography in all three volumes. Discussion of the cycles focuses on the extent to which Tan's recounting of a mother, Suyuan Woo, who leaves two children behind in China aligns with Tan's own mother's experiences or the extent to which the Garcías' experiences match with the Alvarez's. A strong autobiographical strain also runs through Lahiri's work, as she draws on familiar experiences of Bengali families living along the east coast of the United States. In "A Note on the Loosely Autobiographical," Alvarez confirms that she draws on autobiography in her fiction, but warns that the linkages can be deceiving: "Memory is a composite of what we remember and what we are reminded to remember" (166).<sup>7</sup> Criticism on these volumes also routinely addresses the connections between autobiography and ethnic identity, explaining the volumes' form as a product of a particular ethnic identity. For instance, they examine the extent to which mah jong, as indicative of cultural identity, influenced the form of *The Joy Luck Club* (Nagel 190). Although many readers focus on the correlation of the cycle with ethnically-marked forms, still others focus on the extent to which these cycles fail to accurately reflect ethnic sources or identities. Marc Singer argues that that Tan's invocation of history and Chinese identity derives as much from "occidental cliché" as from actual history (324). Frank Chin's invective against Tan and Kingston as representative Asian American writers also serves as a useful counterpoint against the impulse to read these texts as derived from or representative of narrative forms



specific to the author's ethnic background.<sup>8</sup> Although these two ways of reading come to different conclusions, they originate from the same impulse and develop their conclusions from the same logic: these cycles fail or succeed in rendering ethnic American experiences in content and form. What is missing from these compelling analyses is the ways in which the volumes' cyclical form recurs across autobiographical and ethnic distinctions.

One explanation is that these authors draw inspiration from one another and the short-story cycle allows for the combination of multiple cultural influences. An example of this arises in an interview Tan gave shortly after the release of *The Joy Luck Club*. Dorothy Wang, the interviewer, relates,

[Tan] cites Bible stories, told by her late father, a Baptist minister, and 'tons of fairy tales, both Grimm and Chinese,' as influences. But in 1985 she read the novel that changed her life: Louise Erdrich's 'Love Medicine,' a set of interwoven stories told by different generations of a Native American family. Captivated by Erdrich's images and voice, Tan began writing stories.

All of the influences Tan cites are short narrative forms, and the particular identification with Erdrich suggests a formal model that blends those elements with a focus on family. As Tan's interview suggests, the short-story cycle is so prominent among ethnic American writers of the period because it invites tensions between reality and fiction and among multiple ethnic identities. This avoidance of definite answers extends from the genre's investment in the tension between the independence of the stories and their interconnectedness; this opposition creates gaps, which are hallmarks of the tradition of the short-story cycle from which these volumes draw.

The tension between the individual production of the stories and their revisions for inclusion in the cycle mirrors the conflicting pulls of autonomy and unity inherent in the genre of the short-story cycle. Among critics of the short-story cycle, Nagel attends most fully to the relationship between original publication and revision, arguing that “the analysis of publication history is particularly important in the study of the genre” for what it reveals about the attempts at coherence and disjunction made in the process (14). That individual stories so often appear independently and in altered forms suggests the extent to which the individual stories can stand alone. For instance, of the fifteen stories in Alvarez’s cycle, eight had been previously published, in slightly altered versions, in literary magazines and edited story collections from 1982 through their inclusion in the volume. Alvarez’s cycle narrates, in reverse chronological order, the migration of the García family from the Dominican Republic to the United States. The stories follow the transition of the four daughters from privileged descendants of Europeans in the Dominican Republic to political exiles to first lower and then later middle-class Americans.<sup>9</sup> The cycle divides the fifteen interconnected stories into three sections of five stories based on years, giving the volume a temporal symmetry, albeit inverted.<sup>10</sup> Alvarez made changes to the previous versions to make the stories’ details consistent in the cycle; these revisions range from changed character names to adjusted time frames to redefined relationships.<sup>11</sup> Among these changes perhaps the most telling indicator of Alvarez’s vision of how to read the volume is the shift from the past tense to the present in the opening story, “Antojos,” originally published in briefer form in *Caribbean Writer* in 1990. This revision signals that the stories that follow be read in the context of, perhaps even as an explanation for, the narrative present of the first story. The shift from past to present orients a certain way of reading the stories as simultaneously autonomous and interdependent, as each story relates an independent narrative that helps make

sense of the preceding stories. In this cycle, names appear with each story, suggesting the narrative voice of the story itself; for the most part, a single name accompanies each story. However, three stories include multiple narrators. None of these three stories, “The Four Girls,” “A Regular Revolution,” and “The Blood of the Conquistadores,” were previously published. One of these stories appears in each of the three sections; the combination of narrative voices serves to bring together the stories within a section. The recurrence of such stories and their symmetrical placement generates a higher level of integration for the volume as a whole. Their centrality to generating coherence within the cycle accounts for the fact that these stories were not previously published; they do not enjoy the same level of autonomy as other stories in the volume. This pattern of inclusion and separation is emblematic of how the process of production mirrors the incongruities intrinsic to the genre.

The production of *The Joy Luck Club* similarly evinces the simultaneous independence of the stories and their integration into the final cycle. Tan’s cycle, like Alvarez’s, designates a correspondence between a single character’s narrative voice and individual stories by assigning a name to each story. Collectively, the stories narrate the relationships among four mothers and daughters whose lives are interconnected; at the heart of these relationships are missing or broken kinship bonds both within and between generations. The long separation from daughters and sisters that Suyuan Woo and Jing-Mei Woo experience actualizes these missing bonds. Tan famously secured a book contract with Putnam on the basis of three stories and an outline for the book, originally conceived to have five parts (Nagel 189). The three original stories, among others, appeared in slightly different versions from their ultimate form in complete cycle. For instance, the first story Tan wrote and published, “Rules of the Game,” was published initially in *FM Five* in 1986 and then later in *Seventeen*. In its various incarnations, Tan revised words,

paragraphs, and descriptions as to the source of the name of one of the daughters, Waverly, and the story of her discovering a talent for chess.<sup>12</sup> Additions in terms of content integrate the story into the cycle. “Rules of the Game” resonates especially with “The Red Candle,” which follows her mother Lindo Jong’s chess-like maneuvers to extricate herself from the trappings of an arranged marriage. An increased emphasis on chess in “Rules of the Game,” which follows “The Red Candle,” highlights how the two women maneuver through danger similarly. That revisions made these stories highly interconnected but not entirely harmonious models how production influences—but does not determine—form. However, Tan’s experiences show how general trends in the market work against recognition of the genre. The interactions between Tan and Putnam testify to the publishing industry’s aversion to the short-story cycle. Although Tan conceived of *The Joy Luck Club* as something closer to a collection of stories than to a novel, her publisher, Putnam, pushed for the volume to be treated as a novel. Eventually, Tan and Putnam compromised and the book was described as a “first work of fiction” on the cover (Somogyi and Stanton 191). The ambiguity of this descriptor denotes a pervasive lack of recognition for the cycle.

The descriptor “work of fiction” might more accurately be applied to Lahiri’s *Unaccustomed Earth*. This volume, divided into two parts, cannot be considered a cycle; yet the final three stories, which constitute the second part, can. Examining a text that is not paradigmatic of the form illuminates the extent to which the form influences further genre crossings. *Unaccustomed Earth* relies on recurring images, motifs, and situations to integrate individual pieces into a larger whole. “Part Two: Hema and Kaushik” represents a kind of mini-short-story cycle that stands alone from but still resonates with the whole of *Unaccustomed Earth*.<sup>13</sup> Three linked stories, which follow the characters’ lives from childhood acquaintances

in the northeastern United States to adulthoods spent around the world, constitute the second part. The entire book features pairings and couplings, some of which are romantic while others are filial. The final three stories investigate such pairings in extended depth, as they focus on the relationship between the eponymous characters over the course of their lives. Although the characters are not biologically related, the stories relate formative events that lead to shared kinship bonds. There are long chronological breaks between the stories. As is the case with Alvarez and Tan, the publication history of these stories reveals something of genre and of intentionality. Four of the eight stories in *Unaccustomed Earth* were first published in *The New Yorker*. Of the three stories that make up the cyclical second section, two appeared previously. “Once in a Lifetime” was published on May 8, 2006, and “Year’s End” appeared in the winter fiction issue for December 24 and 31, 2007. Only “Going Ashore,” the final story, is wholly new to the volume. Like the three stories of Alvarez’s cycle, “Going Ashore” blends several narrative voices.

As in a traditional cycle, the stories in “Hema and Kaushik” achieve more depth and significance when read together, and yet they can be read independently of the others. Between their original appearance and their inclusion in *Unaccustomed Earth*, Lahiri made the most significant revisions to “Year’s End.” Most of the revisions concentrated on making the story consistent with the narrative mode of “Once in a Lifetime.” The first story, “Once in a Lifetime,” tells the story of Kaushik’s family coming to stay with Hema’s when they return to the United States from India. The narrative style is deeply personal and engages the second person to give the impression that Hema is explaining to Kaushik what those days were like for her. The second person is in the originally published version of “Once in a Lifetime,” but it is missing from the original “Year’s End,” a story in which Hema is otherwise totally absent.

When “Year’s End” was integrated into the trilogy, Lahiri revised it to include second person asides to correspond to the confessional mode of the “Once in a Lifetime.” In these asides, Kaushik references their shared past, an element missing from *The New Yorker* version, as in the following passage: “I had hated every day I spent under your parents’ roof, but now I thought back to that time with nostalgia. Though we didn’t belong there, it was the last place that felt like a home” (291). The inclusion of the second person in “Year’s End” intimates that Hema is really the only person in Kaushik’s life who might understand his confused and cruel actions in “Year’s End.” The second person ushers not only Hema and Kaushik but also readers into their confidences. The confessional mode of these stories links the narratives together, and yet it also gestures toward how much is and has been left unspoken. The point of view, the long chronological breaks between the stories, and the harsh break of the final section from the first jar any sense of unity among the stories.

Precisely because of this expectation of wholeness and unity these volumes trouble critics and reviewers alike; immediate reception of these volumes demonstrates this confusion, often resulting in divergent descriptions of the texts. Although reviewers and scholars often treat *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* as a novel, a few note its variation on the form. For instance, Ilan Stavans suggests in his *Commonweal* review that the volume consists “of fifteen self-contained chapters collected in three symmetrical parts, more than a novel the volume ought to be read as a collection of interrelated stories. Each segment reads as an independent unit” (23). In addition to “story,” Lucía M. Suárez calls the narrative a series of even smaller units: vignettes. Although she calls it a novel, Cecilia Rodríguez Milanés notes “the separate but interrelated stories that make up the chapters” (39). Similarly, Bill Oliver describes the volume as composed of “interrelated stories” and “episodic” (211). Julie Barak characterizes the effect

of the multiple, spiraling narratives as a gyre.<sup>14</sup> Despite the fact that several reviews note the form's divergence from novelistic conventions, none seem to treat it as part of the short-story cycle tradition (Nagel 154).

Likewise, Tan's cycle tends to be regarded as a novel, with some mention of the rather unconventional structure for a novel. Yem Siu Fong claims, somewhat paradoxically, that "The novel is a unique blend of eight personal stories" (122). Nancy Willard similarly observes that the volume draws from "interwoven stories in the different women's voices" but goes on to call it a novel (252). Also calling it a novel, Amer Hussein places the volume in a longer tradition: "*The Joy Luck Club* is structured in the Faulknerian mode so familiar through over-usage, of overlapping subjective monologues delivered by a variety of narrators" (300). Hussein disparages a mode he finds overdone and, in this case, not very well done. In his review, Hussein offers the clearest insight among reviewers into the tradition from which *The Joy Luck Club* springs. His review represents an anomaly, but the overwhelming evidence suggests that the genre continues to be misread. When cycles are read as novels, they regularly receive criticism about their lack of harmony, progression, or evenness; the contributions and significance of individual stories get ignored entirely; and the ways in which disjunction creates meaning in the cycles are marginalized. Generic confusion is less significant with Lahiri's volume, as it is largely a story collection, although Liesl Schillinger notes the differences between the "self-contained" stories of the first part and the "grouped" stories of the second. Sawhney simply notes that the final three stories are "linked." The lack of language to describe the genre mirrors the general lack of understanding of the short-story cycle.

As Hussein's comments make clear, much is at stake in defining and situating these texts; yet, to look at them solely in terms of either autobiography or ethnicity is a disservice to the texts

and the critical discussions they engender. These volumes imaginatively draw from and re-envision the genre of the short-story cycle, which is why examining their production and reception is so vital. The revisions an author makes to the work simultaneously point to the ways in which the final texts balance the independence of individual stories' against their collective interdependence. For instance, the stories in "Hema and Kaushik" certainly stand alone, but they gain further significance when viewed against one another and the final story, wherein Hema and Kaushik meet in Rome over twenty years after the first story takes place. The revisions Lahiri made to the stories in "Hema and Kaushik" indicate the importance of voice and point-of-view to the trio. Against "Going Ashore," the first two stories read like snippets of a conversation had during their affair in Rome rather than isolated moments in two people's lives. The final story, told in the third person until the very end when it returns to Hema's first-person voice, ends with Kaushik's death and the beginning of Hema's new life as she marries and becomes pregnant. In this final moment, Lahiri gestures to the multiple meanings people have to one another, suggesting that these meanings are often elided by formalities of kinship such as marriage. The shift to the first person reveals just how much Kaushik meant to Hema, even if they never share a formalized kinship. The changes in point of view register the changes in the characters' lives and relationship and generate greater coherence among the stories; these same shifts in point of view also mimic the gaps inherent in the relationships and narratives. The disjunction in perspectives, the section breaks, and the very division of the stories intimate that things have been left out and glossed over. This balance between bringing together and pulling apart makes the short-story cycle an apt mode for expressing the ways in which identity can be conditionally constructed. Examining volumes on the margins such as these indicates that the genre's techniques pervade and shape contemporary literature.



## Together but Divided: Form, Family, and History

Short-story cycles linked by family borrow their structural organization and thematic content from the organization and conflict of the family. Familial cycles typically include stories narrated from the perspectives of individual members. Together, these multiple narrative points of view construct a collage-like portrait of the family. This collective portrait both draws from and counteracts the picture produced by any individual story. Individual stories often feature the narrative voice of a single member of the family, as in Jing-Mei Woo's dominant narrative voice in the opening story of *The Joy Luck Club* or Yolanda's narration of the opening story of *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*. These cycles routinely employ an ostensibly central figure whose experiences and narrative are deeply shaped by his/her family. For instance, the frequency of their narration and the centrality of their conflicts often position Jing-Mei and Yolanda as protagonists of their respective cycles. Although they are central characters, many other points of view and narratives emerge that undermine the assumption of the traditional and total protagonist. That other stories focus and are told from other narrative points of view creates a multiplicity of protagonists. The cycle's structure bends from one character's voice to another's, and often brings multiple voices together, as in the final story of Tan's cycle, "The Blood of the Conquistadores" in Alvarez's cycle, and "Going Ashore" in Lahiri's sequence.<sup>15</sup> In this trio, Hema and Kaushik function as dual protagonists. The alternating voices of the stories parallel collective experiences that are experienced individually.

Although the multiple, competing voices of the cycle initially appear to comment on the ways in which the family overpowers the individual, thus inciting a critique of kinship, the

multiplicity of voices ultimately paves the way toward kinship. The characters' recognition of the simultaneity of experience becomes the basis for kinship among and between generations. Cycles linked by family focus on events or situations fundamental to kin relations: marriages, infidelities, parent-child dynamics, deaths, and sibling relationships. The conjunction of family as principle of organization and as major theme comments on the construction and meaning of kinship in contemporary literature, which often revises and reimagines what the family means in the context of migration and gender conflict.

Just as short-story cycles of locality address the belief that geographic proximity can engender community, short-story cycles linked by family address the possibilities and limitations of forming and sustaining kinship. When a short-story cycle positions family as a linking device and primary thematic concern, the cycle mimics and meditates on the historical processes influencing ideas of kinship and identity. More specifically, short-story cycles linked by family directly confront the assumption that family and kinship are natural, universal, and perpetually consistent. That kinship and family seem interchangeable results from a belief that family exists outside the bounds of history and individual experience; by entrenching these families in the larger historical context, cycles linked by family challenge any universalized sense of family. This universality results, according to Anne McClintock, from two pervasive conceptions of family: as metaphor and as institution. As metaphor, the family serves as an analogue for an understanding of history as hierarchical and deriving from a single source. New events or movements shoot off like a new branch on a family tree. Family as a metaphor for history collapses various, often contradictory, conceptions of history into a "global genesis narrative." At the same time, as an institution family "was figured as existing, naturally, beyond the commodity market, beyond politics and beyond history proper. The family thus became both the

antithesis of history and history's organizing figure" (McClintock 44). By taking a limited family circle as the point of reference and positioning that family in relation to historical events, these short-story cycles work to particularize and complicate universalized notions of family. Family as an organizational device and primary thematic concern announces the cycles' investment in addressing and correcting these pervasive conceptions of family. Cycles distinguish between the family as metaphor, institution, practical reality, and the emotional center of identity.

Short-story cycles connected by recurring characters from the same family connect the creation of kinship to the historical context of their narratives. On one level, historical specificity works as backdrop in the individual cycles and as a basis for the particular make-up of these families. In *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, the reason for the family's migration is to escape the dictatorial rule of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina. The girls' father, Carlos García, fears for his and the family's safety because of his involvement with a resistance anti-Trujillo group. Likewise, in *The Joy Luck Club*, Suyuan Woo flees her family home in China because of the Japanese invasion of Kweilin, and a few years later she moves to California with her second husband, Canning Woo.<sup>16</sup> The cycles illustrate how historical forces can shape a family. The families' departures both divide the principal families from some of their immediate and extended families and also create closer kinship among the immediate and newly created families that structure the cycle. The memory of these events is always present, but it rises to the surface on certain occasions, as when Carlos sees a black Volkswagen, the car Trujillo's men drove, or when Suyuan and Jing-Mei fight during the latter's teenage years. The stories show that the memory of the events emerges cyclically and that such memories are the basis of kinship. When memory of these events is lacking, as it is for Jing-Mei and the youngest

García, Sophia, the awareness of this lack serves as the basis of kinship; depending upon another's memories brings these characters closer to their families. The events which made emigration necessary pave the way for new models of kinship in their new homes. In *The Joy Luck Club* and "Hema and Kaushik," the absence of biological family requires and fosters the creation of new family models in which families, who often share ethnic backgrounds, produce kinship ties.

These cycles are set in and reflect on a period of dramatic changes to family and immigration law in the United States. Although the stories span many decades, the bulk of the second-generations' childhoods and the parents' original migration takes place from the 1950s through the 1970s. This period saw widespread changes to immigration laws and trends, which contributed and responded to changing attitudes toward the family. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, or the Hart-Celler Act, repealed the national origin quotas of the Immigration Act of 1924. This Act struck down the quotas regarding ethnicity. The reforms doubled the cap on yearly immigration to 290,000 and made the number of visas available to every country equal. In the new legislation, family reunification became the most determining factor in gaining entry; family criteria represented four of the seven distinctions given to preferred applicants.<sup>17</sup> Changes to immigration law reflect a belief that separation from the family is inhumane. Although the changes to legislation often replicated the discrimination of earlier eras and tended to homogenize family, these laws also ultimately reveal the premium put on family in the legal and cultural imaginary. In their representations of separated families, Tan, Alvarez, and Lahiri all address the pain caused by familial separation.

Although these cycles do not directly reference legislative changes to immigration law, they embed the effects of these changes in the very narrative conflict of the stories. For instance,

although they emigrate slightly earlier, the Garcías' situation mirrors a larger migration from the Dominican Republic to the United States. According to Suárez, in the wake of Trujillo's assassination in 1961, the military invasion of the Dominican Republic triggered spikes in migration: "Between 1961 and 1965, 35,372 Dominicans were legally admitted to the United States. During the 1966-70 post-invasion period, the number of legally admitted Dominicans increased to 58,744. In effect, the Dominican Republic (with a total population of less than 5 million people) has one of the highest rates of legal migration to the United States" (123). Although their migration preceded the influx after Trujillo's death, the Garcías' experience resonates with common experiences of migration from the Dominican Republic. However, the Garcías enjoy certain privileges because of their connections and means, such as the ability to send the girls to private schools when attacked with racial slurs and violence.

"Hema and Kaushik" also treats the ways in which class affects the experience of migration and immigration laws shape the characters' lives. In "Once in a Lifetime," the first story in "Hema and Kaushik," the narrator notes that Kaushik's parents left India in 1962, "before the laws welcoming foreign students changed" (224). Hema explains, "While my father and the other men were still taking exams, your father already had a PhD, and he drove a car, a silver Saab with bucket seats, to his job at an engineering firm in Andover" (224). Rather than being a central anxiety, legal issues primarily serve to contrast the relative comfort his family enjoys to Hema's own. Lahiri foregrounds class differences between the families. Whereas their class differences would have made them strangers in Calcutta, the loneliness of Cambridge brings first their mothers and then the families together (225). The mothers initially meet and become friends when Kaushik's mother recognizes the familiar signs of pregnancy in Hema's mother. The shared experience of motherhood unites them and bolsters the sense that, "Those

differences were irrelevant in Cambridge, where they were both equally alone” (226). This meeting highlights how kinship forms under such circumstances, making possible the sisterly connection between the two women and laying the foundation for the principal characters’ affiliation later in the cycle. Because Kaushik’s family returns to India and then again to New England, living in several cities, migration is not a permanent, insuperable barrier as it might have been in earlier periods or for those with less affluence. Similarly, the García girls return every summer to the island, and the cycle shows the ability of the extended family to travel. In *The Joy Luck Club*, the characters have less regular access to travel to China, although the cycle does end with Jing-Mei and Canning visiting their extended families, including Suyuan’s daughters. Although migration does not imply permanence in these cycles, it does represent a powerful, often long-lasting, experience that forges new familial relations. The changes to immigration law and practice serve as historical backdrop for the families’ new formations and movements, just as changes to domestic policy and cultural attitudes about the family also greatly affect their lives once in the United States.

Family law similarly underwent significant revisions in this period, reflecting shifts in attitudes about the role of the federal government in the personal lives of its citizens. The Supreme Court lifted bans on interracial marriage when they ruled them unconstitutional in the 1967 case *Loving v. Virginia*. Access to birth control increased, and abortion became legalized again. Fathers gained some power to sue for parental rights, and the courts introduced no-fault divorces. Glendon’s study *The Transformation of Family Law* tracks the sea changes in family law in the decades following their passage. She characterizes these changes as a “progressive withdrawal of official regulation of marriage formation, dissolution, and the conduct of family life, on the one hand, and by increased regulation of the economic and child-related

consequences of formal or informal cohabitation on the other” (2). What had been covert practices, such as consensual divorce, were now legally sanctioned. Lawrence M. Friedman characterizes the changing marriage laws as responses to shifts in ideology: “In the age of individualism and the sexual revolution, in the age of the enthronement of choice, people felt there was no point saving marriages that no longer satisfied either husband or wife or both” (73). The law acknowledged the widely-held belief that the happiness of the individual trumps the virtue of maintaining the family at any cost. Friedman notes that this view of marriage is a “peculiarly modern conception of marriage” in that marriage is now viewed as an “individual matter, a personal matter. It is a reflex of what has been called expressive individualism” (77). Expressive individualism maintains that every individual is unique and has the potential to fully realize his/her total self. The family, once defined by obligations and controls, represents now another site for this expressive individualism.

Within these cycles, intergenerational conflict registers the personal consequences of the sea changes to family law. Expressive individualism figures largely in the personalities and choices of the second generation in these cycles. Divorce features among the second generation, and the first struggles to understand why. In Alvarez’s cycle, Yolanda divorces her husband, and Sofia marries her husband against the wishes of her family. Three of the four daughters experience divorce, while one remains unmarried in *The Joy Luck Club*. In “Hema and Kaushik,” the main characters experience a number of relationships, many involving cohabitation, before Hema agrees to be set up by her parents and marry. The repetition of divorce both within and across cycles indicates that family cycles draw from these changes in their representation of family and kinship. The frequency of divorce signals the extent to which kinship ties break and then formalized family ties sever. Certainly, patterns emerge signaling an

increase in expressive individualism among the second generation. However, the cycles complicate the impulse to create oppositions between the generations in terms of family. Although they also prize individual expression and contentment, the parents manifest this desire differently. In *The Joy Luck Club*, Ying-Ying St. Claire has an abortion when she becomes pregnant by her abusive and cruel first husband. Ying-Ying, Lindo Jong, and An-Mei's mother all find ways out of unhappy marriages in China, either through manipulation, suicide, or separation. Thus, expressive individualism figures into their marriage choices, but not in such a formalized way as it does in their daughters' relationships.

The ambiguity between the sanctioned expression of personal choice and the practices of the family serves as the basis of conflict in Alvarez's "A Regular Revolution." In this story, the parents send the girls to all-female private school after a classmate introduces Sandra to tampons, which their parents see as a harbinger of promiscuity. At school, the girls become acquainted with hair removal cream, smoking, and a copy of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (1973). All of these incidents trouble the parents because each seems connected to a burgeoning sexuality and freedom they hope to control. These "constant skirmishes" erupt into a "regular revolution" when Sofia is discovered with marijuana (111). Their mother Laura is perplexed and feels ambushed by a new, unknown danger: "And here she'd been, worried sick about protecting our virginity since we'd hit puberty in this land of wild and loose Americans" (114). Laura blames her daughters' experimentations on Americans and in response exiles Sofia to the island. There Sofia adopts the manners and behaviors of her cousins but in an exaggerated form. When her sisters notice that her island boyfriend is "quite the tyrant, a mini Papi and Mami rolled into one" who instructs her not to wear pants, talk to other men, leave the house, or do anything without



his permission, the sisters raise their own revolution, exposing Sofia and her boyfriend's sexual activity (120).

The lack of choice offends the sisters so they expose Sofia's greatest sin, in their parents' eyes, to save her from a life without choice. Somewhat paradoxically, by exposing her they choose for her. They see this betrayal as serving the greater good of liberating Sofia. The responses to the outcome of Sofia's exile play out in miniature the conflict over personal choice that drives the stories in this cycle. The girls see personal choice, in terms of sex, school, and friends, as the most important motivator in life, while Laura wishes to protect them from the dangers of choice. However, the stories do not create such an easy mother/daughter split. Laura enacts her choice by not telling their father Carlos about Sofia's transgression, and the girls speculate that she "had her own little revolution brewing" (116). The formalization of such practices and the ways in which the generations respond differently to similar situations reflects the effects of these changes. Moreover, these experiences in relation to choice generate increased kinship ties among various members of the family: the girls band together to deliver Sofia from danger, Sofia connects with her cousins, and the girls learn more about their mother. At the same time, their responses to the politics of personal choice drive a wedge into their familial connections: Sofia resents the girls' intervention and the girls alienate themselves from their cousins. In these short-story cycles, the formalization of personal choice in law and practice simultaneously strengthens and weakens familial ties.

As the women's experiences in *The Joy Luck Club* and "A Regular Revolution" make clear, another historical factor proves meaningful to kinship in these cycles: the changing role of women as members of the family in the second half of the twentieth century. The cycles are partly responding to a number of prominent studies that emerged in the 1970s on gender and

family, including *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, but also Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born* (1976), Dorothy Dinnerstein's *The Mermaid and the Minotaur* (1976), Nancy Friday's *My Mother/My Self* (1977), and Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) (Bostrom 5-6).

Within second-wave feminism, there was a surge of interest in interrogating maternal relationships, and these works take direct aim at the naturalness of maternal feeling and responsibility. This surge correlates with an increased prevalence of mother-daughter narratives, which account for a large proportion of the cycles by Kingston, Tan, and Kincaid. Although the cycles do not refer to all of these texts or changes directly, they reference them obliquely in the formation of new kinds of kinship in connection with changing gender identities.

Following the cultural upheaval of changes to immigration and family law and second-wave feminism, story cycles by women draw their narrative conflict not only from intergenerational conflict over changing gender roles but also from the multiple responses and conflicts that arise among the generation that followed these upheavals. Although these cycles appeared largely from the 1980s to the present, they represent earlier historical moments, so that the cycles track continuity and transformation across many decades. Not only do the characters live through and experience these changing gender roles, they also receive and suffer from the after effects. From greater career choices, to greater disparity in marriage and parenting, to higher rates of divorce, anorexia, and increased anxieties over achievement, the second generation models the range of responses to these shifts. This contrasts with the older generation of women who remain in their marriages and work mostly in the home. Despite the initial appearance of exclusion from the new attitudes, the women in the older generation do create new meanings for themselves. Perhaps the clearest example of this is Laura García, who invents clever home devices, such as the rolling suitcase, and who stays with her husband but struggles

with her daughters' divorces, unorthodox career paths, and mental breakdowns while remaining supportive and caring. She balances the unfamiliar attitudes and problems of her daughters with her sense of responsibility; her inventive streak signals that just as she creates new technologies for the home, she invents new relationships in the home. As Laura's narrative suggests, these cycles centrally depict women from both generations struggling and negotiating their roles as mothers, daughters, and sisters. Through exploration of these negotiations, family cycles reimagine the meaning of kinship in the context of historical changes. Although they invoke family as structure and symbol, they destabilize expectations of universality. Moreover, they distinguish between family and kinship, depicting both as changeable and not entirely synonymous.

Cycles linked by family theorize on the ways in which family both generates and denies kinship. They show that although family and kinship share a basis, they do not always co-exist. While family refers to a set of concrete relationships, kinship denotes a range of associations that connect two or more individuals. Kinship conveys a sense of affinity and common bonds. It suggests a biological relationship compounded by experience. Kinship then is flexible enough to be particular to a set of relations, such as a father and son, as well as a larger web of affinities, such as extended families and, in the case of these cycles, ethnic groups. Almost simultaneous to the legislative measures on the family and immigration, several key studies on kinship emerged. In 1969, Claude Lévi-Strauss's opus on kinship, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, was translated into and published in English from the revised 1967 French edition. Originally published in 1949, Lévi-Strauss's anthropological study on the structures that determine kinship advance the idea that kinship is not based solely, or even primarily, on descent but on the act of joining two families through marriage. This model of kinship diverges from the idea that kinship

follows a vertical model in favor of a horizontal model. Lévi-Strauss's findings advance a relatively novel understanding of kinship: kinship stems from affinity rather than only consanguinity. The splash the work made in anthropology rippled through structuralist approaches to kinship for decades. For instance, published in 1968, David M. Schneider's *American Kinship: A Cultural Account* remains a foundational study and reflects changes to the conception of kinship in the United States. Schneider advocates for the importance of symbolic kinship, contending that cultural and social forces are more influential in shaping kinship than biological ties. He argues that kinship functions as a system of symbols.<sup>18</sup> Those interviewed by Schneider consistently describe their familial relations in terms of ethnic identification. However, the uniformity of symbols, such as those involving the mother and food, lead him to conclude that there exists a single American kinship system around which variance occurs. The findings and conclusions of Lévi-Strauss and Schneider understand kinship as an act of consent that gains meaning through its symbolic power. The confluence of legislative and judicial acts concerning family and the concurrent fascination with kinship in anthropology indicate a significant cultural interest in defining and understanding the family in this moment. These short-story cycles draw from this interest as they invoke and explore the implications of kinship as symbol and as choice. That they take the family as structural model and thematic concern announces the invocation and exploration of these contemporary ideas of kinship. In their narratives and structure, short-story cycles linked by family treat the triangulated production of gender, ethnicity, and family for the characters.

The title of this section, "Together but Divided: Form, Family, and History," refers to the affinities and fissures of kinship within these cycles and their forms. The cycles' structures mirror the kinship they portray. In their loose coherence, the structures of the cycles reflect the

organization of the family unit, brought together by circumstances, common bonds, and shared experiences. Some stories illuminate the extent to which commonality and understanding exist among characters. For instance, the stories in *The Joy Luck Club* concerning Ying-Ying and her daughter Lena create a long narrative, subordinate to the cycle as a whole, which illustrates the high degree of shared characteristics among the two women—including a certain level of stubbornness, an appreciation of prettiness, a lack of self, repressive marriages, and a desire to not have children—and the affinity that results from these commonalities. Ying-Ying has been pregnant three times, but it is only with Lena that she wants her child. Reflecting the kinship of their protagonists, a high degree of correspondence emerges among the stories, with the final two “Rice Husband” and “Waiting Between the Trees” set on the same day. The relative continuity among their experiences and narratives mimics their affinity, as suggested by the repetition of water and wood imagery.

And yet, gaps emerge in their kinship. In “Waiting Between the Trees,” Ying-Ying describes the simultaneous affinities and fissures in their relationship: “She and I have shared the same body. There is a part of her that is part of mine. But when she was born, she sprang from me like a slippery fish, and has been swimming away ever since. All her life, I have watched her as though from another shore” (274). Viewing each other from opposite shores emblemizes the construction of kinship in these cycles. The four St. Clair stories create a subordinate narrative within the larger cycle, and the separation of the stories from each other mirrors the distance in the relationship and the disjunction inherent to the cycle. However, connections emerge even within this disjunction. Ying-Ying’s characterization of watching each other from foreign shores resonates with other mother-daughter relationships in the cycle, and even with the relationships among the daughters. Although “Waiting Between the Trees” and “Rice Husband”

take place on the same day, the shared event between them—the collapse of a pretty but poorly constructed end table—portends the affinities and gaps of the cycle as a whole. In its frailty, the end table resembles both of their marriages, so it is a symbol that resonates across many stories. However, in the first story, Lena only hears the crash of the table from the guest bedroom, not knowing that her mother has broken it to provoke her daughter into actively getting rid of the worthless things in her life, including her marriage. Gaps abound in the communication between the mother and daughter, within the marriage, and between the stories, and yet a desire to bridge the shores remains present. The St. Claire stories exemplify how short-story cycles linked by the family comment on kinship in their very form.

Cycles require that one read between the stories, connecting events, images, and relationships that may never be explicitly linked; cycles also require that one interpret the significance of disjunction and gaps within cycles. Within cycles linked by family, gaps and disjunction signify breaches in kinship. In the example above, Ying-Ying and Lena reach a provisional identification with each other that the gaps between their stories and their lack of mutual understanding undermine. Temporal gaps perhaps most comprehensively crack the narrative unity of the stories. Shifts within and among stories destabilize unity within a section and within the cycle. In “Hema and Kaushik,” white space and significant paragraph breaks signal gaps in time, as in the opening story “Once in a Lifetime,” wherein years pass between the first and second sections and time seems to sever the earlier kinship ties. Lahiri emphasizes the relationship between temporality and kinship in two of the stories’ titles: “Once in a Lifetime” and “Year’s End.”

Temporal markers more markedly separate, in reverse chronological order, the three sections of Alvarez’s cycle: 1989-1972, 1970-1960, 1960-1956. The chronological inversion

upsets the expectation of cause and effect; moreover, the gap in years between the first and second sections reflects that what is presented is selected and not all-inclusive. This gap starkly illustrates that total fluidity cannot be assumed. Lovelady asserts that the “gaps and loops” of the volume’s temporal disjunction reflect “the fractures and messy overlaps in their narrators’ attempts to make sense of the crossing between childhood and adulthood and between one country and another, either their own or someone else’s” (20). The stories move further and further into the past but are not comprehensive. Time is at the mercy of memory in these family cycles to the extent that by the end of the cycle, as she recounts how she caused the separation of a mother cat from its kitten, Yolanda breaks voice and asks, “You understand I am collapsing all time now so that it fits in the hollow of my story?” (289). As William Luis notes, right before and after this moment, time moves forward quickly and the perspective shifts dramatically from the little girl Yolanda to the narrator of 1989, signaling another temporal crack within this story (847-848). That the story violates the cycle’s own rules of time and the narrative voice breaks into the second person when describing the violation of the cat’s family self-consciously signal the mutual gaps in kinship and narrative.

Generic disjunction, such as Yolanda’s reversal of voice and time, reinforces disjunction within the family. Although familial relationships link the stories, genre often serves to disrupt the harmony among the stories. Vignettes, short stories, myth, and realism combine in *The Joy Luck Club*. The vignettes, which begin each of the cycle’s four sections, also separate them and draw attention away from the correlation between the narrators through the ambiguity of the vignettes’ narrators. That each works at a different register—but all draw from myth—simultaneously constructs and dismantles the cycle’s architecture. These vignettes create a frame for the cycle and each section; however, as frame, the vignettes also suggest their division

from the main style of the cycle. In *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, differences in tone and style generate disjunction among the stories. For example, “Snow” starkly contrasts with the other stories in the cycle in its form. More like a vignette than a story, “Snow” fittingly narrates a moment of provisional kinship between Yolanda and her teacher, Sister Zoe, who has taken special care with Yolanda, teaching and comforting her as she transitions to school in New York. Sister Zoe comforts Yolanda when she mistakes snow for signs of a nuclear bomb. Her mistake and the description of learning about the Cuban Missile Crisis in her elementary school historically situate the scene, which illuminates a moment of formative kinship. The generic disruption of this story gestures to the new mode of kinship being established in this cycle, one based on choice and experience.

### The Production of Chosen Kinship

These cycles imagine that kinship can be created and chosen. While biology and circumstance may determine the conditions that shape kinship, these cycles also establish that experience and preference play a role. “Snow” portrays a small moment of chosen, experiential kinship in Yolanda’s life. This vignette contributes to a larger pattern of generating kinship from experience in the cycle. “A Regular Revolution,” for instance, describes how the García family’s resolution to remain in New York bolsters feelings of kinship especially among the girls. The girls’ father resigns himself to the idea that “It is no hope for the Island” and pledges “I will become *un dominican-york*” (107). His revision of what it means to be both a Dominican and a New Yorker finds expression in this pledge. Carlos’s announcement incites a unified response from the girls:



You can believe we sisters wailed and paled, whining to go home. We didn't feel we had the best the United States had to offer. We only had second-hand stuff, rental houses in one red-neck Catholic neighborhood after another, clothes at Round Robin, a black and white TV afflicted with wavy lines. Cooped up in those little suburban houses, the rules were as strict as for Island girls, but there was no island to make up the difference. (107)

This moment, when the family realizes they will never permanently return to the island, dramatizes the conflicts that threaten the family: the girls' lack of choice; the loss of wealth and specialness; the loss of extended family and space that the Dominican Republic offers; the feeling of isolation and hopelessness to improve the island under Trujillo's regime; and the sense of being torn from one's home, not yet at home in the new one. The girls' wailing and whining contrasts with Carlos's straightforward, unemotional statement that he can choose to become "*un dominican-york*." The scene presages the continued pull of both places throughout the cycle and the distance between the girls and their parents. The narrative voice in this passage reveals something else too: in this formative moment, the girls have banded together. The plural "we" and the shared emotional response reflect kinship among the girls. That the sisters collectively narrate the story, as designated by the assignation of "Carla, Sandi, Yoyo, Fifi" before the story, further underpins the shared response. In the context of exile, the scene portends the volume's treatment of the fissures and fusions within the family. The kinship among the sisters, in particular, arises from consanguinity but is made real by shared formative experiences.

The depiction of the García family dramatizes how the loss of home and family serves as a catalyst for the creation of new or strengthened kinship ties. In these cycles, the loss of family from migration or death is a formative experience that initiates new modes of kinship for the

characters. Although critical discussions of these cycles emphasize the significance of intergenerational relationships, short-story cycles linked by family are replete with moments of intragenerational kinship based on shared formative experiences. In Alvarez's cycle, for instance, those moments when the García girls stand up for one another solidify their kinship in ways that biology alone cannot. These cycles develop a pattern of kinship that opposes a purely biological or inherited definition. They embrace the idea that kinship can be produced from experiences. Formative kinship enables modes of connection that have important implications for relationships based on shared experiences such as the family, community, and nation. These short-story cycles suggest that multiple forms of kinship coexist; formative kinship does not devalue all biological kinship nor does it destroy the basis for the nuclear family. These cycles represent kinship as ongoing, participatory, and chosen.

While the permanence of the Garcías' migration provokes both the loss of extended family and the gained bonds of kinship among the girls, migration is only one formative experience that both denies and enables kinship in cycles linked by family. The death of a family member also recurs in these cycles as a formative experience that fosters new kinds of kinship. At the symbolic level, in a cycle explicitly linked by family, the death of a family member signals an ultimate gap in the family's structure. That gap mirrors the disjunction between the stories discussed in the previous section. In the case of *The Joy Luck Club*, the death of Suyuan Woo functions as a felt absence in the stories. Not only has Jing-Mei lost her mother at the outset of the cycle, but An-Mei, Lindo, and Ying-Ying have all also lost a woman who has been like—perhaps even more than—a sister to them. The loss of their families from migration spurs them to create a surrogate family of women, and the cycle intimates that the bonds of this kinship circle are unbreakable, even by death. The initial shared grief over their

lost families and lives in China provokes a sense of kinship among the women, reinforced by the raising of children, shared experiences at the mah jong table, and the camaraderie they enjoy. Not only do the mothers choose each other as family, but this choice also renders them aunts to one another's daughters and causes, for better or worse, sibling relationships to develop among their daughters.

The very content and organization of the cycle reflects the extent to which Suyuan's death creates a felt absence in the text. Both the opening and concluding sections of the cycle contain a narrative by each member of the older generation, except for Suyuan. In her mother's absence, Jing-Mei narrates the story. The content of these stories, "The Joy Luck Club" and "A Pair of Tickets," narrates the connections between the women, integrating the more autonomous short stories of the other narrators and sections. Just as Suyuan's death generates greater kinship among the women because of their shared grief, her absence generates greater connection between the stories in the cycle. This is not to say that the cycle valorizes death; rather, it treats the ways in which loss connects people. This idea recurs in other stories in the cycle in Ying-Ying's closeness to Lena because of her other lost children and in Jing-Mei's reunion with her long lost sisters.

The final story, "A Pair of Tickets," crystallizes in both form and content how loss creates and supports kinship. The story actually contains two stories. The first, which centers on Jing-Mei and Canning's visit to Shenzhen and Shanghai, frames the full story, alluded to throughout the cycle, of how Suyuan came to abandon her twin daughters on the roadside. The double stories, narrated by Jing-Mei and Canning, mirror Suyuan's absence; these are Suyuan's stories told and experienced by others. In the telling and hearing, however, Jing-Mei becomes closer to her father and her mother. Hearing of her mother's loss second-hand brings Jing-Mei

closer to her parents because her grief allows her to better understand theirs. In a cycle dominated by the kinship among women, Canning's first-person narration is vital, because it signals his significance to both Suyuan and Jing-Mei. His centrality to this story mitigates the exclusivity of kinship to women, although the gendered production of kinship remains prominent. He represents the necessary intermediary in bringing the women together, as evidenced in how he navigates the complicated relationships among the women in the joy luck club, strategically deferring to them in matters of communication with Suyuan's lost daughters. That the sisters have been essentially lost to one another—and have all lost their mother—adds poignancy to their reunion. Jing-Mei reflects on the meaning of loss and leaving as she departs from her father's family and prepares to meet her sisters:

And now at the airport, after shaking hands with everybody, waving good-bye, I think about all the different ways we leave people in this world. Cheerily waving good-bye to some at airports, knowing we'll never see each other again. Leaving others on the side of the road, hoping we will. Finding my mother in my father's story and saying good-bye before I have a chance to know her better. (330)

As she ruminates on farewells, Jing-Mei expresses a vision of kinship and connection that depends as much upon departures as it does on togetherness. The scene, set in the liminal space of an airport, articulates the tensions inherent in being close with someone. Kinship is the knowledge of being both apart from and a part of another. Transcendent moments such as this are momentary, although they recur in memory. The ability to capture and release these transcendent moments makes the cycle an apt form for expressing the contingency of connection.

The final images of "A Pair of Tickets" evoke the conditional form kinship often takes. As she approaches her sisters, Jing-Mei sees their mother. Although she sees the same short hair

and “the back of her hand presses hard against her mouth,” she explains, “And I know it’s not my mother, yet it is the same look she had when I was five and had disappeared all afternoon, for such a long time, that she was convinced I was dead” (331). Memory is cyclical in this scene; the act of reunion brings up a moment when she was lost from her mother. Now, in the context of reunion and her mother’s death, Jing-Mei understands her mother’s feelings in the moment she thought her daughter dead. As the sisters embrace, Canning takes a photo: “The flash of the Polaroid goes off and my father hands me the snapshot. My sisters and I watch quietly together, eager to see what develops” (331). The Polaroid is an appropriate object for such a moment, because it captures the moment and reproduces it immediately. The object mirrors the ephemeral nature of this meeting. As they watch the picture develop, Jing-Mei relates that “together we look like our mother. Her same eyes, her same mouth, open in surprise to see, at last, her long-cherished wish” (332). In death, their mother brings together her daughters; she gets her long-cherished wish, the meaning of her name (322-323). The Polaroid, the confusion, and the clarity in this scene all indicate that the formative experience of shared loss forges this moment of heightened kinship. It is ultimately a moment; the larger logic of the short-story cycle implies that, though this memory will recur like the one from Jing-Mei’s childhood, this level of transcendence cannot be maintained. Death recurs frequently, starkly dramatizing the contingency and production of kinship and connection.

For this reason, Lahiri’s longest treatment of the ways in which kinship is chosen, ongoing, and participatory, a theme in the first section as well, takes the form of cyclical stories. In “Hema and Kaushik,” Lahiri isolates the long process by which formative experiences of loss bring the title characters into a transient kinship. Known to each other since Hema was born, they form this kinship over the course of their lives. They share memories and events, but that is

true of many people in their lives who do not mean as much to them. Their relationship suggests that kinship forms from the residual sense of one's life and through a series of ongoing choices. In the opening story, "Once in a Lifetime," when Kaushik's family returns to the United States, the now teenage Kaushik leads Hema through a snow-filled field to a family burial plot in the woods behind her house. Death has lived close to her, but she was unaware. Realizing that Kaushik is digging the snow away from a tombstone, she explains, "You uncovered a row of them, flat on the ground. I began to help you, unburying the dead, using my mittened hands at first, then my whole arm. They belong to people named Simonds, a family of six. 'They're all here together,' you said. 'Mother, father, four children.'" (249). The last Simonds buried is Emma in 1923; the likeness to her own name and lapsed time unsettle Hema. That the family maintained some kinship in death bothers Kaushik. Looking at the uncovered family's plot, Kaushik confesses, "It makes me wish we weren't Hindu, so that my mother could be buried somewhere. But she made us promise we'll scatter her ashes into the Atlantic" (249). His mother is dying of breast cancer, and they return to New England deliberately to distance themselves from well-meaning but intrusive extended family. Death has been living even closer to her than Hema could have imagined. During this time, his family stays with hers but the families remain disconnected. The separation of his mother from her body and her body from him denies, in his mind, what little comfort there might have been in their separation from death. Hema breaks into tears and then hysterics, but his admission sparks feelings of mutual understanding and caring that neither understands until much later. Their lives course forward and yet the death of his mother and Kaushik's confession touch and connect them. The story, on its own, isolates a formative moment; when read across the story, this moment participates in a larger narrative about the kinship Hema and Kaushik come to share.

Kaushik's mother's death is the formative experience that initiates their kinship, but it develops through a series of choices and action. The stories allude to many other individuals who might have become significant to either character but do not. In the second story, "Year's End," Kaushik is drawn to his stepsisters, Rupa and Piu, from his father's second marriage; they too have lost a parent, which reminds him of his childhood. For a time, he acts like a brother to them—taking them for doughnuts, introducing them to places in their new home, and joking with them. In the end, though, when he finds them with pictures of his mother, he severs these ties by shocking and hurting the girls. He hurts them in the most stinging way, as he yells, "Well, you've seen it for yourselves, how beautiful my mother was. How much prettier and more sophisticated than yours. Your mother is nothing in comparison. Just a servant to wash my father's clothes and cook his meals. That's the only reason she's here, the only reason both of you are here" (287). In this scene, the absence left by death causes him to say things that "harmed and terrified them" (289). Although he is hurt, the stepsisters represent a kinship tie that Kaushik does not elect, and he never repairs the relationships. Leaving his father's house, he drives north up the Atlantic and buries his mother's pictures, giving her the resting place that he longed for in "Once in a Lifetime."

Read independently this moment would not signal the connection between death and kinship as it does when read in connection with other stories in the cycle. Kaushik tells Hema the story in "Year's End," because he knows that she is the only person who will understand why he has done these things. A new passage, not included in *The New Yorker* version, reveals the extent of his feelings of kinship with Hema:

You would have been in college by then, on Christmas vacation as I was. But I remembered you not much older than Rupa, and I remembered a day after a

snowstorm, when something I'd said caused you, like Rupa and Piu, to cry. I had hated every day I spent under your parents' roof, but now I thought back to that time with nostalgia. Though we didn't belong there, it was the last place that had felt like a home. In pretending that my mother wasn't sick and being around people who didn't know, a small part of me was able to believe that it was true, that she would go on living just as your mother had. (291)

The conflation of Rupa and Hema and his home with hers reflects how formative and aligned these experiences are. He cannot recover the kinship lost with Rupa and Piu, but he can communicate the significance of that day in the snow-filled field with Hema. Telling Hema about how cruelly he treated little girls brings them closer. That he felt most at home at her house is significant not only for what it says about the way his father moved on but also about his nomadic career and life, which fully comes out only in the final story. "Year's End," a bridge story, comments on the cyclicity of memory and the construction of kinships; in it, Kaushik acknowledges the ways in which death both brings him closer to and drives him away from kinship.

The full cyclicity of "Hema and Kaushik" and its implications for kinship do not emerge until the final story, "Going Ashore." The story recounts how both Hema and Kaushik have had many people with whom they could have formed kin ties—cousins, friends, lovers—but the residue of the events in "Once in a Lifetime" connects her to him in uniquely profound ways. The story recounts three weeks spent in Rome and the deep connection they enjoy during this time, before Hema travels to India to marry. Rome is significant because Kaushik moved here for a woman and visited with his mother and father before their return to New England, and because Hema has been here with Julian, her longtime, married lover. Thus, the city signifies the



range of relationships both have enjoyed. Although they have had other, longer relationships, it is not until they meet again as adults that they really experience attachment. When they meet in Rome, something compels them to one another. A nearly forgotten memory—the earlier scene from “Once in a Lifetime”—triggers a connection. As they begin to undress,

Hema remembered that it was Kaushik’s mother who had first paid her that compliment [of being beautiful], in a fitting room shopping for bras, and she told this to Kaushik. It was the first mention, between them, of his mother, and yet it did not cause them to grow awkward. If anything it bound them closer together, and Hema knew, without having to be told, that she was the first person he’d ever slept with who’d known his mother, who was able to remember as he did. (313)

This ability to remember his mother, and the intimacy it engenders, suggests that having shared this seminal moment allows them a level of access to another that they long avoided. Reading this moment alongside Kaushik’s confession and memory in “Year’s End” and the original scene in “Once in a Lifetime” reveals how Lahiri represents memories coming to the surface at crucial moments to build kinship. Formative moments of loss—and the recurring memory of them—are means by which the characters generate kinship.

The cycle ends with another loss, which clears space for the construction of new affinities. Kaushik asks Hema not to go to India and not to marry, but instead to go with him, “but he had not asked her to marry him, and she knew it was not a fair trade” (323). Shortly after they separate, Kaushik dies off the coast of Thailand during the tsunami of 2004; he is the same age as his mother was at her death in the opening story. His watery burial realizes his earlier dream of being buried alongside his mother. His death also cements and reflects Hema’s continued sense of kinship. When a small obituary runs, Hema confesses, “By then I needed no

proof of your absence from the world; I felt it as plainly and implacably as the cells that were gathering and shaping themselves in my body” (333). Hema experiences the loss and creation of new kinship bodily, as she is expecting a child. His absence registers on her body just as the new, chosen kinship she feels toward her child does. The loss is raw, but she sees its productive potential. Having refused to follow him and give up her impending marriage, Hema knows that Kaushik has left nothing behind save her memories of him.

That Hema marries and has a child with Navin, her husband, confirms the stories’ sense of kinship: based on formative experience, kinship may build on biology and circumstance, but it requires choice. The stories reference the creation of kinship from experience and choice earlier in the story in relation to her marriage to Navin. When her parents return to Calcutta, the loss of her parents inspires Hema to create new kinship ties: “It was her inability, ultimately, to approach middle age without a husband, without children, with her parents living now on the other side of the world... it was her unwillingness to abide that life indefinitely that led her to Navin” (298). The narrator asserts that this is a bold move to choose kinship. Hema’s desire to marry Navin corresponds with one of Lévi-Strauss’s assertion that choice in marriage contributes more to kinship more than genealogy. She expects that over time experience will compound choice and they will love each other, and, in fact, this has already begun. Hema and Navin’s nascent relationship shows that choice generates affinity. Earlier in “Going Ashore,” the narrator explains that as long as they like and choose each other, they will certainly get married, and “Hema found this certainty, an attitude to love she had scorned in the past, liberating, with the power to seduce her” (298). The ending of the story and Kaushik’s death somewhat paradoxically affirm the optimism of the cycle. The stories express a view of kinship as a relation over which one has control. Hema’s marriage to Navin holds the promise of becoming

and producing kinship. Her pregnancy is a very literal sign of the way in which loss can engender kinship. The ability of Hema and Kaushik to connect and have meaning to each other outside of formalized kinship reflects the cycle's many ideas of what family means.

“Hema and Kaushik” explicitly treats an idea of kinship latent in contemporary short-story cycles. “Hema and Kaushik” pushes intragenerational kinship to the surface. The trilogy depicts kinship as based upon shared formative experience and as something acted upon and chosen. Although biology and even random circumstance shape the conditions of kinship, “Hema and Kaushik” suggests that one chooses to form and build kinship ties. In this emphasis on choice, kinship bears the imprint of the debates on what constitutes a family. Lahiri's cycle exemplifies how short-story cycles linked by family depict the way loss—be it from migration or death—creates new models of kinship. The final three stories depict two people electing one another as kin based on shared formative experiences rather than biological or traditional familial ties. In these narratives, the second generations of the families struggle with broken kin ties. At the same time, they imagine kinship as, at times, non-filial and always based on more than the formal ties between people. Although not exclusively so, intragenerational relationships most often register these new forms of kinship.

This model of kinship as based on experience stands in contrast to a long-standing critical consensus on how familial narratives dramatize ethnic identification as producing conflict across generations. While critical and popular responses to these cycles recognize that anxieties about ethnic identity sometimes surface in intergenerational conflict, they overemphasize this connection. Critical responses tend to focus exclusively on the extent to which generational conflict drives many short-story cycles linked by family relationships. For instance, readings of Tan's cycle largely concentrate on intergenerational conflict, undoubtedly a major theme,

because of the volume's structure of alternating stories of mothers and daughters. Such readings focus on identity construction occurring through a process of generational conflict. The structure of the cycle would seem to confirm that the cycle primarily concerns the conflict between generations. Wagner identifies "the pairing of past and present, domestic and exotic, and the central mother – daughter conflicts that cut across various generations" (155-156) as such popular plot devices in Asian American texts that they have become clichés of what she terms the "subgenre of the domestic, 'female,' and multi-plot Asian American novel" (159). There is a tendency within all of ethnic American studies—and readings of these cycles, in particular—for generational conflict to overly determine interpretation. This chapter takes this subgenre and turns the critical discussion on its head by teasing out their representations of intragenerational relationships and by focusing on affinities as much as conflict.

The impulse toward generational conflict in the texts themselves and in critical responses results in part from a desire to stabilize the family. Sollors argues that generational rhetoric, "even rhetoric that seemingly expresses sheer despair at the degeneracy of the coming generation, powerfully cements heterogeneous newcomers into a pseudo-family... generational counting—even if enacted despairingly—gives these atomized units a semblance of cohesion" (*Beyond Ethnicity* 223). Generational rhetoric reinforces the family as a cohesive and organic unit. Because generational conflict appears to be universal, reading these cycles exclusively in terms of intergenerational conflict empties the literature of historical and textual specificity. Generational readings function to universalize ethnic literatures and incorporate them into the logic of the nuclear family. While many read *The Joy Luck Club*, in particular, as presenting generational models of culture, Lisa Lowe argues that

interpreting Asian American culture exclusively in terms of the master narrative of generational conflict and filial relation essentializes Asian American culture, obscuring the particularities and incommensurabilities of class, gender, and national diversities among Asians. The reduction of the cultural politics of racialized ethnic groups, like Asian Americans, to first-generation/second-generation struggles displaces social differences into a privatized familial opposition. (63)

Instead of privileging the vertical, hierarchical model of family, Lowe looks to horizontal affiliations to show diversity within a generation. In this model, practices contribute to the production of identity, which is ongoing. Examining intragenerational relationships exposes the extent to which these cycles respond to the individual, the family, and the production of kinship. Although the emphasis on filial relationships persists in these cycles, the cycles overtly counter the impulse toward intergenerational conflict through their emphasis on the varied productions of kinship within generations. Ultimately, their representation of kinship as chosen and biological imagines new modes of connection that do not ignore the particularities of class, gender, and national diversities.

#### Tracing a Genealogy of the Contemporary Family Cycle

Because they announce the centrality of filial connection in their themes, structures, and titles, cycles linked by family cannot entirely escape the reductionist readings that Lowe fears, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. By facing the stereotypes head on, these cycles expose the perforations and weaknesses in such narratives. From these, they gesture toward the power of

choice and experience in the generation of kinship. Imagining kinship as flexible and contingent on circumstance and preference allows these cycles to envision new modes of connection. The extent to which they confront stereotypes is evident in the inclusion of actual genealogical trees within the paratextual materials. In *The Joy Luck Club*, the “tree” is pared down to a two-column list of the mother-daughter relationships, with the overarching title “The Joy Luck Club,” which names this unconventional family. Even in this simple listing, Tan suggests that kinship proves to be both biological and chosen. In *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, the family tree sprawls across two pages. What and how Alvarez labels the various branches of the tree reveals how the cycle revises the meaning of kinship within the stories. On one level, such trees orient the reader and stabilize the stories, which initially seem disconnected. On another, the tree serves to cement the relationships between characters and to determine origins. Although these genealogical trees perform these functions, trees that preface cycles often also become part of the play with kinship enacted within the stories. The inclusion of trees is also often ironic. Short-story cycles linked by family are centrally concerned with what a list or tree cannot capture; the stories make ambiguous the relationships that the trees initially appear to firmly establish.

The use of genealogical trees in fiction, and in short-story cycles in particular, both subscribes to and subverts typical uses of genealogical trees.<sup>19</sup> The most significant revisions these trees make are to place the emphasis on the women in the family and to disrupt what McClintock calls the “trope of the organic family” by pointing attention to how stylized the tree is (45). First, they place women and children at the center of family life, challenging the “natural” hierarchy suggested by the tree itself and disrupting the expectation that a patriarch sits atop the tree. In Alvarez’s cycle, the star at the top of the tree is not a patriarch or even a couple but is instead “The Conquistadores.” The tree depends on the girls’ understanding of their

family history, and Alvarez plays with the symbolism of the tree to show which ideas of family, ancestry, and respectability the girls have internalized. In a cycle treating the “gendered production of the ethnic,” this label ironically comments on the extent to which the family internalizes the racism of upper-crust Dominican society, as the tree shows the girls’ maternal family, “the de la Torre Family” as the direct and sole descendants of the Conquistadores. It also suggests that Alvarez is upsetting gender hierarchies in a milieu in which machismo is rampant and a constant source of tension. The name of the family appears in bold, as do The Conquistadores, the girls’ parents, and the girls themselves. The tree relegates everyone else to normal type and thus lesser importance. A dashed line and question marks link their paternal family, the Garcías, to The Conquistadores, making them a renegade branch of the tree. The use of the girls’ language and humor from the stories proves the tree’s connection to the stories. For instance, maternal cousins are represented only as “The hair-and-nails cousins.” These cousins espouse the family’s traditional notions of femininity and domesticity, and the García girls name them this in order to distance themselves. Generations of maternal ancestors are omitted from the tree, save one “great-great-grandfather who married a Swedish girl,” who stands as the only link between the “de la Torre Family” and the girls’ own Papito and Mamita.

Although the tree seems to sprawl, such vacancies show how history and attitudes privilege certain relatives over others. Many relatives go unnamed and are lumped together: “The hair-and-nails cousins,” “33 other known Garcías,” “an American” who married and divorced Tía Isa, and an unnamed uncle who married Tía Mímí “finally.” The phrase “known Garcías” acknowledges the many illegitimate García children, while the missing relatives and questionable links indicate a shadowy past best forgotten. On the other hand, the tree assigns some relatives multiple names, with the third daughter receiving four: “Yolanda, Yo, Yoyo, or,

in the States, Joe.” Affection, as much as disdain, is evident in the tree. All of the detail in Alvarez’s tree points to the extremely constructed nature of family. The de la Torre family, in particular, prizes its ancestry but overlooks much. With the tree, Alvarez pokes fun at the notion of being able to name and place boundaries around a family. As a symbol of consanguineous and marital relationships, this genealogical tree replicates the multiple expressions of kinship in the cycle.

Although this particular vision of kinship as both fixed and pliable proliferates among cycles of the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries, it extends from a longer tradition of cycles and novels that draw on the family unit in their structure. More specifically, these cycles draw from modernist texts that employ a family of voices competing for authorial legitimacy. Kennedy notes that short-story cycles linked by family, or what he calls “‘genealogical’ novels,” unfurl “as separate yet intertwined short narratives about different family members” (x). He cites Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*, Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*, and John Dos Passos’s trilogy *U.S.A.* as examples. These texts repudiate “the organizing authority of the omniscient narrator, asserting instead a variety of voices or perspectives reflective of the radical subjectivity of modern experience” (Kennedy x). I would add to Kennedy’s list Eudora Welty’s *The Golden Apples* (1949), which circulates around a group of families in Morgana. Welty includes a list of the “Main Families in Morgana, Mississippi” before the stories commence, which is strikingly similar to Tan’s list. Welty’s depiction of the family is prescient of kinship in the contemporary cycle: “Welty begins with the affirmation that of course love is possible; family is the bedrock fact that defines most people’s lives, whether they are in it or out. But she goes profoundly further to face the reality that the very fact that we can and do love is precisely the cause of most of our everyday problems” (Polk 137). The duality of family is a theme that recurs throughout



Welty, Faulkner, Woolf, and Dos Passos. Seeing an affinity between Alvarez's cycle and Cather's *My Ántonia*, Stephanie Lovelady focuses on the volumes' experimentation with alternating voices, but I also see a similarity in Cather's exploration of extrabiological kinship based on formative experience, loss, and choice. In form and content, these modernist volumes are akin to the contemporary cycle.

Perhaps the most radical example of the family as context for the exploration of multiple voices is Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930), wherein a family member narrates each chapter of the larger story of the burial of the mother, Addie Bundren. *As I Lay Dying* provides a model for the blurred line between genealogical novel and cycle. Kennedy argues that this form has become so ubiquitous that the novel has been "veering toward the story sequence as a decentered mode of narrative representation" (x). Cycles and novels linked by family proliferate precisely because they challenge the authority of individual experience. With its assignation of names to chapters and its construction of essentially a family tree in its structure, the form of *As I Lay Dying* seems a direct influence on many of these cycles. Most significantly, Faulkner's volume and the cycles it influenced participate in a dialogue about the institution of the family and its relationship to the individual.

In so doing, these cycles and their modernist forerunners descend from even earlier cycles, largely by and about women, which link otherwise loosely connected stories by their interest in family. Fetterly and Pryce, McCullough, D.K. Meisenheimer, and Cindy Weinstein argue that many women writers working in the form from around the turn of the last century such as Jewett, Alice Dunbar Nelson, Sui Sin Far, and Zitkala-Sä initiated a line of formal and thematic descent that has as its heirs the modernist and contemporary cycles linked by family. The frequency with which these earlier writers work in short narrative forms akin to the cycle

reveals a degree of resonance between the form and kinship. McCullough's reading of Sui Sin Far's *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (1912), a precursor to the short-story cycle, is instructive of the ways in which these writers shaped the familial cycle. In *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, "a gender-shaped sense of cultural identity reworks the locations and relations of center and margins, locating the borderlands as simultaneously marginal and central to American life" (277). In the vein of *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, these cycles bring gender, ethnicity, and family into conversation to reimagine what the nation means by way of the family.

An emphasis on women and family becomes the code by which these cycles address issues of inclusion and exclusion. Kinship represents a more immediate mode of connection than geographically-based communities. And, as is true for these earlier cycles, the community, the nation, and the family are provisional and fluid. The cycle's form comments on the ways in which kinship and identity can be pinned down for a transcendent moment but then get undermined, extended, and revised. Like their forerunners, contemporary short-story cycles linked by family simultaneously treat the immense pull of consanguinity, critique its implicit and often explicit paternalism, and generate new models of family based on choice and experience (Weinstein 9). The filial short-story cycle undermines the dominance with which blood determines kinship and instead privileges choice in determining one's familial allegiances.

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the proliferation of the genre in recent decades, see the introductions of Davis's *Transcultural Reinventions: Asian American and Asian Canadian Short-story Cycles*, Kennedy's *Modern American Short Story Sequences: Composite Fictions and Fictive Communities*, and Nagel's *The Ethnic Resonance of Genre*.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted, however, that cycles about families were also present in the mid-century, but critics seem less invested in their production and reception. Notable exceptions of filial cycles in this period by men include Erskine Caldwell's *Georgia Boy* (1943), Evan S. Connell's *Mrs. Bridge* (1959) and *Mr. Bridge* (1969), and John Updike's *Too Far to Go: The Maples Stories* (1979).

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<sup>3</sup> Among the many honors garnered, this group has racked up a considerable amount of National Book Awards. Winning books include those by Kingston, Naylor, and Erdrich, and the cycles by Tan and García were nominated. All of these books are widely taught. Naylor's cycle was adapted into a miniseries and television show, and Tan's cycle made into a popular movie. In addition to winning the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award, Lahiri's volume had the distinction of landing atop bestsellers lists upon its release, which is very rare for a book of short stories.

<sup>4</sup> McCullough argues that defining ethnic works only by their subject matter "employs a rhetoric that establishes writing about an Othered American community as a form of (ethnic or racial) regionalism, depoliticized, fixed, exoticized, and outside the privileged categories of American fiction" (McCullough 239).

<sup>5</sup> Scholarship on Alvarez's cycle is emblematic of this assumption of the volumes' novelistic categorization. Scholars Chandra, Stephanie Lovelady, and Lucía M. Suárez, among others, all treat the volume as a novel, although it should be noted that form is not these critics' primacy concern. Reviewer Juan Bruce-Novoa likewise deems the cycle a novel.

<sup>6</sup> Examples of this include Junot Díaz's *Drown* (1996), in which the first two stories are more highly integrated than the rest of the collection, and Amy Bloom's *A Blind Man Can See How Much I Love You* (2000), which includes a series of stories titled and concerning Lionel and Julia. This series falls in the middle of the volume, but is otherwise similar in formal terms to Lahiri's.

<sup>7</sup> In "A Note on the Loosely Autobiographical," Alvarez calls the book a novel, although she does not dwell on the point.

<sup>8</sup> Chin accuses both authors of misrepresenting and exploiting Chinese narratives and ethnic stereotypes to appeal to white audiences. Leslie Marmon Silko made similar charges against Erdrich as have others against many of these family saga cycles. Hirsh Sawhney accuses Lahiri of having too narrow a worldview and spoon-feeding white audiences a taste of cultural difference. These charges are, I believe, not entirely inaccurate. At issue in my chapter, however, is how and why the cycle is so prominent among writers and scholars at this time and how they use the form to address family, gender, and ethnicity.

<sup>9</sup> In "Travel and Family in Julia Alvarez's Canon," Vivian Nun Halloran argues that the privileged class position of the García family—and many of Alvarez's characters—differentiate their experiences from the majority of Dominicans who were not granted access to travel under Trujillo's regime.

<sup>10</sup> Alvarez's follow-up *¡Yo!* (1997) compounds these questions of genre, as it continues the stories of the García family, with a particular emphasis on the title character described through others' voices.

<sup>11</sup> For more on Alvarez's revisions, see Nagel's chapter, "Temporal Inversion and Incremental Insight: Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*."

<sup>12</sup> For more on Tan's revisions, see Nagel's chapter, "Generational Identity and Form: Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*."

<sup>13</sup> A comparable cyclicity is present in Lahiri's debut *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999). Despite the absence of a common locale, recurring set of characters, and unifying narrative strategy, Noelle Brada-Williams categorizes it as a short-story cycle. She argues that the ostensible collection "reveals the intricate use of pattern and motif to bind the stories together, including the recurring themes of barriers to and opportunities for human communication; community,

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including marital, extra-marital, and parent-child relationships; and the dichotomy of care and neglect” (451).

<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, Barak argues that the form is analogous to the Caribbean: “The stories of each of the García girls and Alvarez’s own stories repeat each other, as the islands in the archipelago repeat themselves—the same, yet different, divided, yet searching for ways to connect in order to articulate their similarity. The repetition makes the reader familiar with new stories before she reads them; it draws her into the spiral of the narrative” (161). Although the outcome is different, this statement repeats much of the logic of criticism of the genre in US literature.

<sup>15</sup> In the stories by Tan and Alvarez, the voices brought together are those of the characters. In the latter, Lahiri brings together a third-person voice, with insight into both Hema and Kaushik, and Hema’s first-person viewpoint.

<sup>16</sup> Although these events serve as historical backdrops and the catalysts for migration, Nagel and Singer point out that the chronology between historical fact and narrative do not always align. These inaccuracies are, I think, purposeful, as they comment on the ways in which memory distorts perceptions of the past.

<sup>17</sup> The remaining criteria favored professionals, artists, and scientists of exceptional ability, as well as skilled labor in underserved fields and refugees. These changes were fueled by Civil Rights certainly, but decolonization and fear over Communist countries drawing talented individuals also inspired them. For more on immigration law reform, see Lawrence M. Friedman’s *Private Lives: Families, Individuals, and the Law* and Mary Ann Glendon’s *The Transformation of Family Law: State, Law, and Family in the United States and Western Europe*.

<sup>18</sup> Christopher Peterson critiques an assumption behind Schneider’s study, namely that there exists only an arbitrary relation between signified and signifier. In other words, symbolic kinship is treated as independent of “how American say, think, and do kinship” (30). Thus formulated, “American kinship is a purely symbolic system that need not correspond to any given ‘reality’” (30). Peterson argues that seeing systems such as kinship as purely symbolic ignores lived experiences.

<sup>19</sup> Schneider compares American genealogies to the squat, wide structure of a Christmas tree. They generally extend three or four generations back with perhaps a few notable or known relatives beyond that (much like a star atop the tree), giving them a shortened pyramid look. These trees privilege consanguinity as the organizing principle of clans, and they arrange a family into neat, definable, and hierarchical relationships.

## “Beyond Our Brains to Fathom”: Writing Time in Metaphors

In Louise Erdrich’s *Love Medicine* (1984), Lulu Lamartine reflects that time is just one of many “ploys for cutting nature down to size” because the truth of experience is “beyond our brains to fathom” (282). In short-story cycles, time represents one of the dominant tactics for cutting narrative down to size. Time is a principal thematic preoccupation and a principle of organization. Despite the explicit announcement of time as vital to the genre and the genre’s embattled yet productive relationship to time, there is an almost total lack of critical work on time and the short-story cycle. This lacuna contrasts with the large body of work on time and other narrative forms. The relationship between time and the novel, in particular, receives significant critical attention. Scholars ask: how do novelists depict time? To what extent do novels register cultural attitudes toward time? How do novels reflect changes in the ways we measure, perceive, and mark time? Do novels cause us to think about time differently? Or, is it the other way around—do differences in the way we think about time influence the novel? This chapter endeavors to ask and answer these same questions of time and the short-story cycle.

The short-story cycle is ideal for rendering the divisions made between past, present, and future, and the idea of progress implicit in those divisions. In short-story cycles, the tension between the unique and the universal, understood through the metaphors of the line and cycle, shapes how we write, read, and live time. That the short-story emerged simultaneous to what James Wood calls the “new and unique project in literature”—of portraying multiple temporalities and the passage of time—intimates the important place the short-story cycle has in literary history (87). Novelists translated the cycle’s techniques for evoking multiple, individual times and simultaneous public history; these borrowings blur generic distinctions. Thus, writers

as diverse as Gustave Flaubert, William Faulkner, Ray Bradbury, Maxine Hong Kingston, Paule Marshall, Erdrich, and Amy Tan work in and poach from both genres. Ultimately, however, the novel necessitates a conclusion, while the cycle revels in the anti-ending, the ellipsis, the new beginning; consequently, the short-story cycle is better than the novel for portraying perpetual temporality. This perpetual temporality connects with the genre's treatment of identity as largely a product of process. Cycles model a temporal flexibility in that they dismiss unities of time in favor of exploring the way time expands, contracts, and shifts in relation to one's perspective. Questioning the meaning attached to any single moment, cycles linked by temporal markers bring characters' linguistic, cultural, familial, and ethnic identities into moments of coherence that simultaneously resist totalizing. Short-story cycles' deployment of temporal metaphors shows how subjective and objective times coexist and how such metaphors bridge the perceived divide between personal and public times. Cycles linked by temporal markers dramatize how time, as process, flux, and progression, constructs provisional personal and communal identities.

Among short-story cycles that employ time as a major linking device, they generally do so in one of three ways that, when considered together, constitute a continuum. On one end, there are cycles that sequence their stories chronologically. On the opposite end, there are cycles that eschew linear chronology in favor an explicitly disjointed temporality. The stories in such cycles move back and forth across time, favoring cyclicity over linearity. Somewhere between these two poles are those volumes that portray a period of time. These cycles use a common temporal setting to illustrate the milieu of the period in which the stories are set. The sequence of the stories themselves is subordinate to the overall depiction of the era.<sup>1</sup> Although cycles connected by time generally fall into one of these three models, they all grapple with the same

questions of time: what is the structure of time? What is the relationship between narrative and time? And, where does the present begin and end?

To answer these questions, I will examine two texts that represent the extremes of this continuum. First, I look at Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* (1950), which follows a linear chronology and describes the exploration, conquest, and repopulation of Mars by humans. Next, I turn to Erdrich's *Love Medicine*, in which the stories jump back and forth across time to narrate the lives of interconnected families in the western United States. These cycles, although radically different in subject matter and style, represent the dominant modes of using time to make cycles cohere. Bradbury's cycle invokes a confluence of historical forces—time as value-laden, work as a calling, and travel as necessitating standardized time—and contextualizes them in relation to anxieties about the space race. Erdrich's cycle invokes broader, oppositional conceptions of time—as recursive and arbitrary and as causal and meaningful—to depict time as implicated in an entire system of measurement that made possible the destruction, exploitation, and forced removal of the Chippewa people. These cycles treat time in relation to space exploration and the reservation; in doing so, they meditate on the ways in which particular kinds of (supra)national spaces force competing conceptions of temporality to co-exist. They dramatize the apparent inseparability of these competing conceptions, casting their conflict in largely gendered terms. Both volumes understand the United States to be preoccupied with imperialist impulses without any significant self-reflection on the ways in which the nation's actions in the present and future recreate the past. Even as they critique such projects, they also point to the irreversibility of this course, the complicated connections between time and narrative that arise from such projects, and the tenacity with which individuals encounter these systems.

Short-story cycles experiment with the standardization of time, using the calendar, years, or the hours of a day as organizational markers. Individual stories often integrate flashbacks or even take the form of a flashback. These flashes of the past reveal added layers of meaning to the main action of the story or to the cycle as a whole. Cycles construct parallel or paired stories wherein events repeat but take place in different periods or happen in sequence. Such paired stories generate a high degree of interdependence within the cycle. Regularly depicting the same or similar events from various perspectives or as happening to different people represents the extent to which one situation or condition resonates with others and replicates the multiplicity of individual temporalities. Authors can also use time to the opposite effect: stories set in the same year or even day often narrate radically different events or points of view. These juxtapositions and pairings insinuate that linked temporal settings recognize the multiple possibilities of interpretation and experience. The recurrence of the same or similar events and situations confirms a structure and sense of immanence and intimates that there exists an undercurrent of the universality of experience and narrative. However, short-story cycles are not entirely without direction. Some episodes are distinct—the recurrence of events or situations in a later story does not erase important differences between the episodes. Some stories are given more causal power than others, so that the cycle moves in a direction. However, that direction may not always be straightforward. Cycles both grant and deny the notion that any story or any moment in history is ever specific and unique. Its disjointed but interconnected structure, with its emphasis on interstitial time, reflects the experience of time at a crossroads, whether between two or more languages, cultures, or spaces. Ultimately, cycles favor neither rigid linear progression nor open cyclicity; rather, they negotiate both notions of time.



In the absence of a more comprehensive methodology of time and the cycle, critical discussions of the novel and temporality provide a useful starting point. Benedict Anderson famously argues that print culture paved the way for citizens to imagine that they were part of a larger community. Anderson argues that the act of reading, and the multitude of lives evidenced in newspapers and novels, contributes to the emergence of nationalism. The novel numbers among a slew of sea changes that affected how individuals conceive of themselves as connected to others despite vast differences, creating a “sense of parallelism or simultaneity.” Anderson argues that “Between 1500 and 1800 an accumulation of technological innovations in the fields of ship building, navigation, horology and cartography, mediated through print-capitalism” made possible a “new synchronic novelty,” in which “substantial groups of people were in a position to think of themselves as living lives parallel to those of other substantial groups of people—if never meeting, yet certainly proceeding along the same trajectory” (188). He argues that the rise of simultaneity was particularly effective and pervasive in the Americas (188-189). Timothy Brennan echoes Anderson’s argument: “It was the *novel* that historically accompanied the rise of nations by objectifying the ‘one, yet many’ of national life, and by mimicking the structure of the nation, a clearly bordered jumble of languages and styles” (49). Because the novel imagines many people living simultaneously, the genre is at once evidence of, a precondition for, and analogous to the nation. The act of many people reading the same text generates a sense of the present as a shared experience. Not only could readers imagine others reading the same text at the same time, but the texts themselves show multiple characters or figures operating in a single temporality.

Subsequent critical work often challenges the method and scope of Anderson’s claims but maintains the emphasis on time and the novel. Jonathon Culler points out that the novels

Anderson cites did not achieve national and international attention to the same degree that novels in the historical, sensationalist, and sentimentalist subgenres did (35).<sup>2</sup> Culler argues that when we break the novel down into its subgenres, the analyses become more comprehensive and rich but less general about “the novelistic organization of time that was alleged to be the condition of possibility of imagining the nation. The more detailed the critical accounts of novels and their possible effects the less powerful and encompassing the general theory of the novel” (25). Examining international reading audiences and uncovering different conceptions of time in subgenres and related genres, such as the short-story cycle, complicates Anderson’s thesis.<sup>3</sup> The short-story cycle’s development is contemporaneous with a novelistic skepticism of omniscience and a move toward multiple narrative viewpoints, a transition that Wood aligns with a shift in the way novels treat temporality. In the nineteenth century, “the rise of significantly insignificant detail” became requisite to “evok[ing] the passage of time” (87). The short-story cycle renders the “significantly insignificant” the absolute core of a story as it shifts from one character to another and one moment to the next.

One productive model for extending a discussion of temporality and the short-story cycle derives from Wai Chee Dimock’s suggestion that literary analysis adopt a model of time borrowed from geology: deep time.<sup>4</sup> By radically expanding the breadth of time, the discovery of deep time initiated a revolution in thinking about religious interpretation and humanity’s significance. According to Stephen Jay Gould, the discovery of deep time expands the limits of time; what was once treated as distinct and separate becomes close and linked when viewed from the perspective of deep time. The span of geological time makes human history so inconsequential that people struggle with how to recast the narrative of human existence. They have done so primarily through metaphor; the arrow and cycle have become the two dominant

metaphors for making sense of time. These two views of time represent an opposition that organizes and reconciles conflicting notions of temporality. According to the logic of “time’s arrow,” “history is an irreversible sequence of unrepeatable events. Each moment occupies its own distinct position in a temporal series, and all moments, considered in proper sequence, tell a story of linked events moving in a direction” (Gould 10-11). “Time’s cycle,” in contrast, represents an understanding of time wherein “events have no meaning as distinct episodes with causal impacts upon a contingent history. Fundamental states are immanent in time, always present and never changing. Apparent motions are parts of repeating cycles, and differences of the past will be realities of the future. Time has no direction” (11). Short-story cycles directly adapt these metaphors to express a tension between the uniqueness and immanence of history and time.

Dimock argues that the nation-state is a conception of space and time that often obfuscates the way literature—and genre in particular—is made across vast geographic and temporal distances. Dimock contends that taking a long-view approach to literature exposes the many temporal and geographic levels on which a text operates:

Deep time, understood as temporal length added to spatial width of the planet, gives us a set of coordinates at once extended and embedded, as fine-grained as it is long-lasting, operating both above and below the plane of the nation. The subnational and the transnational come together here in a loop, intertwined in a way that speaks as much to local circumstances as it does to global circuits. (23)

Pairing ostensibly dissimilar texts, this chapter makes a move in this direction. Influenced as they are by several generic traditions and depicting disparate experiences of ethnic, linguistic,

and cultural identities, the *Chronicles* and *Love Medicine* also contribute to a long history of the short-story cycle.

A common thread in Erdrich's and Bradbury's cycles is the treatment of time in relation to two or more cultures. In *Love Medicine*, Chippewa ideas of time conflict with the pressures of standardization and measurement of mainstream uses in the United States. In the *Chronicles*, Bradbury represents the Martians' cultural conception of time as being at odds with human conceptions. The Martians' situation facing extinction mirrors the threats enacted in exploration of the New World. Either by name or in narrative description, Bradbury marks certain characters as ethnic, including the Martians; ethnic human characters sympathize with the plight of the Martians even as they participate in the exploration and settlement of Mars. Erdrich homes in on the experiences of Chippewa and white characters whose lives are intertwined on the reservation, a space that exists both within and on the margins of the United States. The limited localities of the narratives offer their own conceptions of simultaneity with borders reaching beyond the locality proper; the stories concern characters who leave the locality but are deeply affected by it. The cycles' multiple cultural constructs of temporality engage with time in ways that resonate with Gloria Anzaldúa's "Borderland," which "is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition" (25). Such Borderlands develop "wherever two or more cultures edge each other" (19). Borderlands are physical, linguistic, and cultural, but they also have a temporal dimension in that the "state of transition" initiates its own time based on the movement from one way of perceiving reality to another. In this creation of a transitional temporality, the cycles are also akin to Mary Louise Pratt's idea of the "contact zone," which "refer[s] to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power,

such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (34). Such contact zones foster asymmetrical relations and conceptions of historical time, while Borderlands conceive of historical time as serpentine. Both *Love Medicine* and the *Chronicles* enact the conditions of the Borderland and contact zone insofar as they depict cultures meeting, clashing, and coexisting, and they do so in the manner described by Anzaldúa and Pratt: spatially, linguistically, and temporally. In both cycles, a blending of persons and elements represents the pull of multiple temporalities, during which characters theorize how they negotiate time through sensory perception.

#### From Railroads to Rocket Ships: Progress and Time in *The Martian Chronicles*

Bradbury’s *Chronicles* adapt one of the most linear of forms of narrative: the diary.<sup>5</sup> Each story, identified by the month and date of its happening, documents the exploration, invasion, and conquest of the fourth planet by the United States. Narrated in the third-person past tense, the *Chronicles* feature important episodes in human history on Mars that appear to move toward a final end-point. Noting the journal-like nature of the volume, Walter J. Mucher contends that “His narrative represents the temporality of Martianness... it represents the space in which Martianness may be made attainable” (172). Thus, the stories actively record a development of Martian consciousness based on temporality. Some of the entries consist of full stories; others are mere sketches. There are gaps in time between the stories, and the duration of these gaps varies widely. Most often, months pass between episodes; however, sometimes a series of stories will take place on the same day or occasionally years will pass between stories.

Despite the uneven passage of time, the stories always progress chronologically forward and are almost all uniformly identified by month and year.<sup>6</sup>

In its form and content, Bradbury's cycle is reminiscent of the journals kept by explorers as they traveled and mapped the New World.<sup>7</sup> Bradbury collapses the entire history of New World exploration and colonization into twenty-seven years. As they show the progression of human life on Mars, the sequence of the stories is largely teleological. The narrative structure appears to indicate that each entry or story moves the narrative toward a final culmination of Martianness.<sup>8</sup> The *Chronicles* thus engage the relationship of time to technology and standardization to record a project of exploration. The so-called discovery and subsequent exploration and settlement of Mars replicate a linear narrative of progress. The *Chronicles* document what seems to be an entirely unique event, which is one step in the larger narrative of space travel. However, an undercurrent of skepticism about linear, segmented time recurs throughout the *Chronicles*. The stories often imply—and sometimes explicitly describe—skepticism about the possibility of forging a single Martian identity and their right to claim a monolithic Martian identity. While the cycle follows a chronological order, the multiple narrative voices and the cyclicity of the narrative events, both within the cycle and larger historical patterns, undermine this chronology. The standardization of time, and the ability to measure, know, and record history by it is somewhat dubious in the *Chronicles*. The volume's many attempts to understand time through metaphor reveal the intensity of this skepticism.

In keeping with its standardized chronology, the *Chronicles* extends the scope of how time and technology co-create each other. Bradbury's treatment of time contributes to short-story cycles' general treatment of time as a product and producer of modernity. Its particular deployment of time responds to the development of standardized, measured time, which was

initiated and intensified under early capitalism. According to E.P. Thompson, during the stages of “nascent industrial capitalism,” the idea of time underwent radical transformation (80). The spread of industrialized labor required a rigorous measuring and regulation of time. Thompson characterizes this shift as moving from a “task-oriented” sense of time wherein “‘natural’ work-rhythms” determine the course and scope of labor to a sense of time as a commodity wherein labor is measured by time (60).<sup>9</sup> In the earlier model, social life and work intermingle, whereas social life and work are distinct under industrial capitalism. Emerging modes of manufacturing required a “greater synchronization of labour and a greater exactitude in time-routines,” and the power of these changes to people’s work lives translated into their leisure and personal time (Thompson 80). Under this system, time acquired monetary power.

In the context of the United States, Max Weber connects this intensified insistence on the value of time to a Protestant ethos of work and belief in every individual having a calling or purpose. Although the initial religious connotations of these ideas have faded, he argues that Protestant beliefs in the brevity of life and necessity of purpose inspired Western nations—and the United States in particular—to view time as having intrinsic value. Weber lists a number of Ben Franklin’s maxims that center on the notion that “time is money” as evidence for a particular national attitude toward time and work (*Protestant* 48-51).<sup>10</sup> Time, work, money, and virtue became so interdependent in the United States that Weber concludes that the “Waste of time is thus the first and in principle the deadliest of sins. The span of human life is infinitely short and precious to make sure of one’s own election. Loss of time through sociability, idle talk, luxury ... is worthy of absolute moral condemnation” (*Protestant* 157-158). The logic of individual perfectibility drew from religious belief to transform the way people lived; its power and legacy endure in postmodernist texts, which are otherwise marked by an intense skepticism of progress

and the power of work in general. Andreas Huyssen argues that a belief in progress produces a persistent narrative of time's demarcations: "modern societies have put even more weight on thinking the secular future as dynamic and superior to the past. In such thinking the future has been radically temporalized, and the move from the past to the future has been linked to notions of progress and perfectibility in social and human affairs that characterize the age of modernity" (8). Even as they depict the enduring influence of such conceptions of time, the very structure of short-story cycles challenges the insuperability of the divisions between past, present, and future and the teleology that Huyssen describes. However, the notion that one has a vocational calling persists, and many of the characters in Bradbury's cycle express a belief that they were chosen and destined to settle Mars. They treat the exploration of space in almost the exact same terms as Franklin's maxims and Weber's observations. The entire project of Martian exploration originates from the promise of future perfectibility and progress, which Huyssen describes as a formulation of time grounded in modernity.

Bradbury's cycle adheres to the division and regulation of time initiated under nascent capitalism and extended during industrialization. As industrialization spread across geographic regions, industries, countries, and citizens began to clamor for more standardized time. Railroads were instrumental in these changes; where once a passenger might wait a whole afternoon for a train, efforts to standardize time sought to guarantee that trains arrived at and departed on specific times. More than the lone, sad passenger waiting on the train, the money lost to inefficient travel compelled railroad companies to unite. The reliance on varied local times hindered consistent, reliable transportation, and most industrialized companies adopted standard local times in the 1880s and 1890s. In 1884, an international conference on time, called the International Meridian Conference, convened in Washington, D.C. at which the participants



“divided the world into twenty-four time zones, established Greenwich as the zero meridian, and set the exact length of a day,” thus standardizing time at regional, national, and international levels (Doane 5). The cycle’s adherence to standardized time connects to expansion and movement: namely, the development of technologies to expand humanity’s presence in space. In place of the railroads, space travel becomes the impetus for the proliferation of standardized time. Compounding this industrial impulse to explore and expand is the urgency with which the United States wishes to claim and settle Mars for themselves in this cycle. The US military does not wish to waste a moment of time in their quest to find a new home and new resources for its citizens, who face many external threats.

In expanding the actual space wherein humans operate, Bradbury magnifies the reach of standardized time.<sup>11</sup> The every-man astronauts of the Martian spaceships must learn to better account for time in their travels. It takes the travelers one month to travel from Earth to Mars. On the first expeditions, the men—and they are all men initially—have little control or knowledge over where they land. By the fourth expedition, the men are able to select the place and time of their landing. Despite this necessary adaptation, the men are incapable of acclimating to a different sense of time on Mars, revealing the extent to which they hold fast to time’s Earthly standardization. Although days, months, and years no longer mean what they did on Earth because of Mars’s different rotation, they measure everything in Earth days, months, and years, from the time they work on projects to the time they spend traveling through space. Their adherence depicts time as a human invention that can continue when the natural environment no longer defines its measurement. It also intimates the extent to which the characters have internalized time’s measurements and standardization; the artificiality of time becomes a constant for the travelers. This reliance on temporal markings exposes the travelers’

desire to find earth-like objects and places on Mars; both signal their desire for familiarity in the foreign environment. The cycle's diary-like structure, with the assignment of a date to each story, reflects the depth of the astronauts' insistence on Earthly standardization. Because the stories depict, for the most part, characters that adhere to the logic of exploration and the connected demands of imperialism and capitalism, the humans mostly maintain and even extend many established attitudes toward time.<sup>12</sup>

### Imagining the Future of Time

Bradbury's *Chronicles* represent most of the explorers and settlers as adhering to objectified, standardized time; however, the stories repeatedly zoom in on individual characters who challenge the primacy of such an understanding of time. Bradbury's most explicit statements on a different relationship to experiencing time appear in "Night Meeting." Set in August of 2002 in the midst of human settlement on Mars, the main action of the story concerns the meeting of a Martian and human on a deserted highway. The man, Tomás Gomez, believes that Martians have become extinct from an epidemic of chicken pox that swept the planet after the third expedition; this meeting understandably unsettles him. Tomás Gomez is one of a few characters in the cycle whose name marks him as potentially ethnic; another such character is a man named Cherokee. Bradbury paints these characters as sympathetic to the conditions of Martian extinction, which resonates with the effect of small pox on Native Americans. However, these two characters remain complicit in the act of colonization.

In Tomás Gomez's story, a conflict arises over the question of time on the red planet. Bradbury foreshadows the story's later discussion of time in an encounter Tomás has with an old

man, who explains to him, “If you can’t take Mars for what she is, you might as well go back to Earth. Everything’s crazy up here, the soil, the air, the canals, the natives (I never saw any yet, but I hear they’re around), the clocks. Even my clocks act funny. Even *time* is crazy up here” (103). Many of the settlers try to remake Mars in Earth’s image, evidenced in the purpose of Tomás’s traveling, which is to christen “Green City” off of the “Illinois Highway.” The man advocates letting Mars remain what it is. In doing so, he expresses a belief in the continued existence of Martians and an observation about the difference in time on this planet. Time represents the absolute limit of what they cannot recreate and reminds them of the superficiality of their control over the landscape. Their renaming of the towns and their adherence to Earthly time prove to be futile attempts to control Mars.

Tomás’s own observations on time reveal a sense of temporality for which linearity cannot account. Just as the old man describes, time works differently on Mars. As he drives alone, Tomás begins to perceive time as sensory:

There was a smell of Time in the air tonight. He smiled and turned the fancy in his mind. There was a thought. What did Time smell like? Like dust and clocks and people. And if you wondered what Time sounded like it sounded like water running in a dark cave and voices crying and dirt dropping upon hollow box lids, and rain. And, going further, what did Time *look* like? Time looked like snow dropping silently into a black room or it looked like a silent film in an ancient theater, one hundred billion faces falling like those New Year balloons, down and down into nothing. That was how Time smelled and looked and sounded. And tonight—Tomás shoved a hand into the wind outside the truck—tonight you could almost *touch* Time. (103-104)

A linear sense of time depends upon an objective understanding of time, in which time can be measured, used, wasted, and controlled, but this scene proposes that it is also subjective. The scene represents that how we experience time determines what it is, rather than it having some quality outside of our experience. Tomás perceives time as sensory; a sense that he can smell it introduces a series of questions about how we sense time. Even as Tomás seeks to understand time through his senses, he can do so only through analogy to Earthly objects. Time smells like the objects used to measure it, which are actual and tangible. After this analogy, however, the comparisons shift to the emptiness within tangible objects: the sounds of things falling in hollow places, the images of silent film and dark rooms, and air-filled balloons falling into nothing. In these analogies, time is the absent thing in an object. In the final statement, time gains spatial dimensions when Tomás reaches out to touch “Time,” naming the hills through which he drives “Time.” The capitalization of “Time” throughout the story assigns it the designation usually reserved for proper nouns, so it gains the distinction of Mars, Earth, and other place names. This designation extends to other terms of time such as “Past” and “Future.” This scene asks whether it is possible to know what time is through our bodily experience of it.

While the above passage offers a tentative answer to what time is through sensory perception and metaphors, Tomás’s subsequent meeting with a Martian further destabilizes time and space, by challenging the belief that our bodies are dependable and by interrogating what is past, what is present, and what will be the future. When the Martian, who identifies himself as Muhe Ca, reaches out to take a cup of coffee offered by Tomás, the narrator explains, “Their hands met and—like mist—fell through each other” (105). In this scene, sight gives an impression that touch denies, calling into question the reliability of any sense. They can see through each other, and yet each feels his own physicality:

Tomás felt of his own body and, feeling the warmth, was reassured. *I am real,* he thought.

The Martian touched his own nose and lips. ‘I have flesh,’ he said, half aloud. ‘*I am alive.*’ (106)

The continued reliance on tactility and the sensory organs proves insufficient when they try to confirm their knowledge through sense. The emphasis on the italicized “*I*” reflects a desire to control their individual sense of what they know. The body loses its materiality, and this loss initiates a loss of control over time. Each is heading to places the other cannot see, and this leads them to question who is in the present and who is from the past.

Not knowing if either or both of them are actually in the present becomes the catalyst for questioning whether we can know or measure time. When Tomás tries to orient the stranger, he explains that it is 2002. Muhe Ca asks what that means to him, and Tomás concedes that it means nothing at all. Muhe Ca explains, “‘It is as if I told you that it is the year 4462853 S.E.C. It is nothing and more than nothing! Where is the clock to show us where the stars stand?’” (109). Efforts to measure time become meaningless in the Martian environment. They must find a compromise that both grants their bodies some knowledge and accounts for their coexistence. Thus, Muhe Ca offers an explanation: “My heart beats, my stomach hungers, my mouth thirsts. No, no, not dead, not alive, either of us. More alive than anything else. Caught between is more like it” (109). The state between alive and dead and past and future opens up the possibility of their coexistence without stripping them of all of their knowledge. Within this logic, there is an undercurrent of accepting the unknowable. The Martian argues, “What does it matter who is Past or Future, if we are both alive, for what follows will follow, tomorrow or in ten thousand years. How do you know that these temples are not the temples of your own civilization one

hundred centuries from now, tumbled and broken? You do not know. Then don't ask" (110).

This scene establishes the power that linear time has on Tomás only to dismantle that belief through his sensory perception. Bradbury implies that the senses provide the best knowledge of time while also asking whether we can trust them.

The Martian's final statement indicates that consciousness of time determines its meaning. Even if it turns out to be false, the belief in its reality makes it real enough. The Martian, marked as a kind of ethnic other, teaches Tomás, simultaneously marked as ethnic and representative of the humans in power, about the pitfalls of insisting on Earthly measures of time. He advocates for a kind of transitional time, resonant with the borderland they both inhabit. This lesson does not, however, get communicated to the other humans on Mars, and this story's revelations are isolated from the rest of the cycle. The scene indicts the general attitude while allowing for some flexibility and sympathy from Tomás. It shatters the insistence, present in several of the other stories, that Martians are now extinct. Their mutual positions as solitary, perceptive, and accepting generates solidarity between them. This solidarity, alongside the sheer presence of the Martian, destabilizes any sense of who is in power and has control. That Tomás is one of the few characters marked as ethnic suggests that there are points of connection among ethnic Americans and Martians, particularly in terms of experiencing temporality.<sup>13</sup>

The "Night Meeting" between this particular human and Martian confirms a sense of simultaneous reality for them, despite their sense that they may not share the same temporality. Muhe Ca and Tomás identify themselves as simultaneous yet not within the same temporality, which seems to contradict the very basis upon which simultaneity depends. However, when the Martian recommends that they accept that they are both present, the story depicts a simultaneity that expands to include past and present and depends on individual consciousness. Whether they

are meeting each other during the peak or in the aftermath of their civilizations becomes a meaningless distinction, because they share a present experience. Their sense of sharing an event and allowing their individual consciousness to perceive its temporality extends the sense of simultaneity that emerged out of technology and travel. The events, technology, and communication that shape their sense of simultaneity determine the conditions of their meeting and the conclusions they reach about time.

### The Generic Production of Simultaneity

Short-story cycles linked by temporal concerns—and the *Chronicles* in particular—explore simultaneity in all of its contradictions. Simultaneity invites the individual to participate in public time while also expanding the individual’s sense of a personal, subjective time. It is, according to Andrew Hoskins, most simply understood as “events at a distance witnessed in real-time by a global audience” (111). Critics cite ships’ hearing the SOS signals from the *Titanic* and an international public reading about it the next day as an exemplary and shocking instance of early simultaneity.<sup>14</sup> The project of nation-building (or, in this volume, of planet-building), marked by a vested interest in expanding the nation’s space through colonialism, enabled the emergence of simultaneity. The ability to travel to Mars, to colonize it and survive there, and to communicate between Martian towns and Earth opens up simultaneity even further. In this volume, world-wide simultaneity has expanded to interplanetary simultaneity. In Bradbury’s world, technology allows humans to travel not only across oceans but across the whole of the solar system, and it enables them to communicate across the blackness of space. According to Lauren Kogen, simultaneity also refers to “the notion that we are experiencing multiple

temporalities at once” (45). In other words, one experiences competing temporalities; the most significant of these being public and private time. When one experiences “world-wide simultaneity there grows the need to distinguish one’s ‘own’ time from that which connects people with others” (Nowotny 18-19). Simultaneity encourages “the temporal objectivization and legitimation of the individual consciousness” and fosters the proliferation of a subjective, personal time for “thinking, feeling, knowing, communicating individuals” (Nowotny 28). As technology and communication open up an even greater scope of simultaneity, the stories represent individuals seeking an individual consciousness of time, just as Muhe Ca and Tomás do. Indeed, the very division of the stories and the predominance of non-recurring characters point to the proliferation of individual experiences of time.

In addition to the gaps among the stories and the relative lack of recurring characters, Bradbury’s tendency toward openness, evidenced in the stories’ punctuation, represents an expansion of time. Although the cycle dates and sequences the stories chronologically, the inclusion of ellipses disrupts the consistent forward flow of time. Ellipses recur throughout the *Chronicles*, generally signaling an extension or blending of time. Bradbury employs ellipses to indicate that a piece of dialogue or a song continues, as when a “voice-clock” chimes “Time, time, time, time... ever so gently,” or when a sequence of events continues, as when a native Martian fantasizes that “there would be a thunderclap, a boll of smoke, a silence, footsteps on the path, a rap on the crystalline door, and her running to answer. ...” (24). In these cases, ellipses indicate some action that persists and blends into another. Here, time loses its ability to separate one thing from another. Ellipses, as a recurring feature in the cycle, point to events, dialogue, and mood that bleed from one moment to the next.



The most striking use of ellipses occurs at the end of stories. Of the twenty-six stories in the original edition, eleven end in ellipses, including the final story of the volume. Many of the concluding ellipses appear in those stories that might also be termed sketches, suggesting perhaps the stories' status as interim placeholders. However, several of the more substantial and fully developed stories also include ellipses at their conclusion. In both the sketches and longer stories, these ellipses extend the present by suspending the conclusion of the stories and the volume as a whole. They indicate that one story, although marked as happening at a discrete time, leads into and informs the others. What then of the final story, which has no subsequent narrative? The story concludes, "The Martians stared back up at them for a long, long silent time from the rippling water. ..." (222). The Martians in this sentence refer to the final humans to escape Earth in 2026. The native Martians appear to be gone; the humans who look into the water are now the only Martians. The end punctuation of this closing sentence indicates a finality that the ellipsis denies. According to Mucher, "leaving the ending suspended by an ellipsis" refers to the way that "The future follows a text to its 'conclusion,' temporally, since it recycles itself" (185). In this reading, the ellipsis at the end cycles back to the events that led to this inevitability. Throughout the *Chronicles* and particularly in the conclusion, ellipses perforate the rigid distinctions of time upon which the structure of the cycle and most of the characters' beliefs depend. The cycle's repetitious use of ellipses questions the linear chronology of the stories and implies that it is possible for history to return onto itself so that events that seem disconnected and disparate are actually interconnected and simultaneous. Naming themselves Martians ironically replicates the removal of natives from the landscape in other acts of colonization. The openness of the end punctuation resonates with the Martian's comment to Tomás that his ruined society could be contemporaneous with human settlement on

Mars. The use of ellipses, coupled with the Martian's comments, destabilizes the reliability of "Martian" experience.

In the last third of the cycle, the near-destruction of the Earth becomes the final and ultimate act of simultaneity. Like the sinking of the *Titanic*, the fate of Earth, complete with its own SOS signals, becomes the tragedy around which people share a sense of time. A three-story sequence narrates the events leading up to and following the beginning of nuclear war on Earth. Set on the same day in November 2005, "The Luggage Store," "The Off Season," and "The Watchers" constitute a sequence of highly integrated stories narrating that nuclear destruction. Their integration opposes the long gaps and autonomy of many other stories in the cycle.<sup>15</sup> The form of "The Luggage Store" and "The Watchers" replicates the sketch form of many of the stories in the cycle; thus, these stories are both separate from and connected to the rest of the stories in the *Chronicles*.<sup>16</sup> As the last title, "The Watchers," indicates, the stories portray individuals who watch Earth's destruction from Mars. The independence of the stories' actions and their shared temporal setting actualize the idea of simultaneity: the possibility and recognition that multiple events happen at once and that people experience the same event concurrently. The stories themselves concern different characters and Martian settings. The act of watching Earth's destruction apart yet together represents a supreme moment of simultaneity. At the same time, the multiple points of view of the trilogy reflect the limited truth of any single narrative.

The three stories move chronologically through the events of that night, until they reach the final moment of shared spectatorship. The first story begins, appropriately enough, with a communication from Earth to Mars about impending nuclear war: "It was a very remote thing, when the luggage-store proprietor heard the news on the night radio, received all the way from

Earth on a light-sound beam. The proprietor felt how remote it was” (164). Just as radio and the discovery of light and sound waves made the conditions for simultaneity possible, they are now communicating this important news to other planets. These technologies make Earth seem both immediate and inconceivably distant. The proprietor of the luggage store and a priest discuss the news, and the latter expresses his incredulity, “It’s so far away it’s unbelievable. It’s not here. You can’t touch it. You can’t even see it. All you see is a green light. Two billion people living on that light? Unbelievable! War? We don’t hear the explosions” (164). “The Luggage Store” depicts the night before the outbreak of war, and the characters remain incapable of fathoming what that will mean for either planet.

Whereas the priest and proprietor only hear news of the impending war, the characters in the next story see the explosions. As Sam Parkhill builds a hot-dog stand meant for the thousands of settlers destined for Mars, war breaks out on Earth. Sam and his wife look up, and

Earth changed in the black sky.

It caught fire.

Part of it seemed to come apart in a million pieces, as if a gigantic jigsaw had exploded. It burned with an unholy dripping glare for a minute, three times normal size, then dwindled. (177)

The scope of the devastation seems just as impossible in this story as the reality of Earth seemed in “The Luggage Store.” The narrator endeavors to make sense of it by describing it as a puzzle exploding. And yet, for all of their disbelief, Sam Parkhill, the owner of the luggage store, and the priest all know that Earth remains home to many of the would-be and current settlers. “The Off Season” continues the Martian experience of Earth’s destruction, which reaches its conclusion in “The Watchers.”

“The Watchers” is a near-manifestation of simultaneity in story form. Told in the third-person plural, the story narrates how an unnamed “they” came out of their Martian homes to watch the destruction of Earth. Whatever different times it may have been in these disparate Martian towns, in watching this event they come to inhabit the same temporality: “They all came out and looked at the sky that night. They left their suppers or their washing up or their dressing for the show and they came out upon their now-not-quite-as-new porches and watched the green star of Earth there. It was a move without conscious effort; they all did it, to help them understand the news they had heard on the radio” (179). Continuing to insist on an Earthly measure of the day, the people watch from nine in the evening until midnight when the Earth finishes burning, and even then they continue watching. At two in the morning, a message comes across in Morse-code flashes of light, presumably because other means of communication have been blacked out. The message reads:

    AUSTRALIAN CONTINENT ATOMIZED IN PREMATURE EXPLOSION OF  
    ATOMIC STOCKPILE. LOS ANGELES, LONDON BOMBED. WAR. COME  
    HOME. COME HOME. COME HOME. (180)

The sentence structure and appearance on the page replicate the look of a telegraphed message. The use of an obsolete technology implies the sheer devastation of Earth’s infrastructure and resonates with the communication of personal and national tragedy via telegram during the World Wars. With this replication, Bradbury transfers the connotation, of a recent but irreversible loss, of those wartime messages in this unfamiliar and unnerving setting. “The Watchers” enacts global simultaneity on Mars of an event happening across a vast distance of space. The anonymity of the speakers and actors in the story enhances the effect of sharing an

experience with those unknown to us. They read the event together as it is happening, distinguishing this as an act of simultaneity of unparalleled scope.

And yet, the contradictions of simultaneity and this particular kind of temporality persist. The watchers feel both close to and very distant from Earth. Although they all watch together, each is also alone with the magnitude of what s/he witnesses. The story ends by returning to the scene of “The Luggage Store,” where the proprietor has anticipated a demand for suitcases. He suspects correctly, “By dawn the luggage was gone from his shelves” and with it most of the people who came to Mars looking for a way out of Earth’s problems (180). This final story in the trilogy heightens the importance of measured time, referring throughout to the hours, and emphasizes the ability of long-distance technology to communicate an event. However, all of that is merely backdrop for Bradbury’s final statement on time: witnessing loss clarifies the extent to which we are undeniably bound to one another and also desperately alone.

The loose structure of the cycle allows individual stories to explore each historical parallel and creates the effect of a metanarrative on historical repetition. Bradbury layers multiple, expansive historical moments onto the stories. Even the ending of the cycle, with its image of human-Martians looking at their reflections in the water, forecasts that life will continue on Mars. However, it will do so as something simultaneously repetitive and unique. The cycle’s structure, based as it is on measured, linear time, mirrors the cycle’s statements on the complicity of time with structures of power. However, recurrence within the stories and isolated bodily experiences of time challenge time’s hegemonic tendencies. Thus, the *Chronicles* depicts the nature of time by engaging the most powerful and polar metaphorical conceptions of it. The cycle derives its structure from calendric time and a highly linear form, the diary, and a conventionally linear narrative, exploration. In so doing, however, the cycle

unhinges the very assumptions we make of time, of genre, and of story to explore how cyclicity creeps into even the ideas we perceive to be the most linear, chronological, and teleological.

While the stories themselves eventually point to a more open and cyclical sense of time, the *Chronicles* begins from an assumption of linear and standardized temporality. In contrast, Erdrich's *Love Medicine*, which tells the stories of interconnected Chippewa families over a fifty-one year span, abjures linear time in favor of a disjointed temporality from the outset. Whereas Bradbury embeds his skepticism of linear time in isolated scenes, Erdrich's characters openly and frequently express skepticism about standardized time. In "The Good Tears," for instance, Lulu Lamartine voices a distrust of all measurements, including time: "All through my life I never did believe in human measurement. Numbers, time, inches, feet. All are just ploys for cutting nature down to size. I know the grand scheme of the world is beyond our brains to fathom, so I don't try, just let it in" (282). Lulu's attitude of letting life in without the trappings of measurements articulates an assumption that shapes the cycle's structure: time, like all of life, does not happen in a straightforward, easily divisible way. Within *Love Medicine*, time cannot be measured or contained. The characters repeatedly malign measurements and regulatory practices, including everything from the census to meal times to the distinctions between the past, present, and future.<sup>17</sup> As Lulu's disclosure makes clear, time is implicated in an entire system of measurement, which enabled the destruction and exploitation of Native Americans.

This repeated skepticism does not, however, mean that either the characters or the stories escape linear notions of time. Instead, the stories depict the characters butting up against it, adapting to it, and even sometimes adopting it. In these ways, the *Chronicles* and *Love Medicine* are not so far apart as they might initially appear to be. Linked as they both are by a temporal structure, they reveal a sense of history that blends linearity and cyclicity. The generic concern

with autonomous yet interconnected stories, coupled with time as a linking device, enables the cycles to engage simultaneity as indefinitely expanding. Whereas the *Chronicles* focus on public history, *Love Medicine* centers on the ways that personal histories multiply; as a result, it explores a sustained development of individualized time, which is an essential aspect of simultaneity in that it depends upon a personalized experience of time being brought into coherence with others' temporalities.<sup>18</sup> Like the *Chronicles*, *Love Medicine* approaches questions of time through metaphors implicitly in the structure and explicitly in the text. The volume explores the possibilities for personalized time, simultaneity, and historical return through the metaphor of the cycle. The cycle is just one of many metaphors Erdrich deploys to investigate how we understand time and how time shapes narrative. For the characters, time is alternately a circle, a tangled knot, a river, and a pinball machine; as the characters struggle to grasp time, it becomes all and none of these things.

#### The Gendered Production of Time in *Love Medicine*

In so far as *Love Medicine* and the *Chronicles* treat the competing forces of linear and cyclical time, they are ideological mirrors of one another, despite their quite different deployment of time as a linking device. Gender becomes the lens through which the cycles treat these conceptions of temporality. Julia Kristeva argues that there are essentially “two temporal dimensions,” which are “the time of linear history, or *cursive time*” and “*monumental time*” (14). Kristeva outlines how the latter draws from feminized subjectivity as it corresponds to “cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature and imposes a temporality” which then aligns with, and possibly causes, monumental time through

its eternal recurrence (16). According to Kristeva, feminized temporality “becomes a problem with respect to a certain conception of time: time as project, teleology, linear and prospective unfolding; time as departure, progression, and arrival—in other words, the time of history” (17). Linear temporality is coded as masculine. Cycles linked by temporality both replicate and subvert these gendered constructions of time. The temporality of the *Chronicles* is largely masculinized. Its narrative of historical progression concerns men almost exclusively. At the same time, the immanence of public history, the repetition of phenomena, and the volume’s commentary on that repetition signal that monumental time invades this teleological narrative. In contrast, *Love Medicine* is feminized. Its narratives of personal and familial recurrence largely concern women. However, it does not concern only that period of time between puberty and menopause, a phase that Kristeva’s model assumes. Time’s undeniable progression—the forward movement of the stories themselves and the tension that results—displays that cyclical or monumental time exists alongside cursive or linear time.

The tension between cursive and monumental time surfaces in the very structure and organization of *Love Medicine*. Each story lists the year of its major action; the designation of years divides the stories into separate units, while the consistency of the organizational principle highlights their interconnectedness. The year assigned to each story identifies when the main events of the story take place, locating the story in the larger chronology of the cycle. The first story is set in 1981, whereas the following story jumps back to 1934. Subsequent stories then move chronologically forward, until the last third of the cycle which picks up where the first story began. The final story takes place in 1985. Erdrich’s inclusion of years and the development of a relatively linear chronology adhere to the conception of time as an arrow. Although the stories in *Love Medicine* rely on temporal markers to link the stories, the stories



also connect through a common geography and recurring interconnected families. The overlapping of temporality and kinship as structuring devices generates a sense of generational time that is both progressive and cyclical in that personal histories recur across generations even as the creation of generations corresponds to a “linear and prospective unfolding” (Kristeva 17).

Even still, the cycle’s narrative gestures portend a more cyclical sense of time than the dates and sequence indicate. The displacement of the opening story from its original chronology frames the subsequent stories so that earlier events are read through the lens of the later event. Thus, Erdrich immediately disrupts expectations of cause and effect within the stories. The stories upset our expectations of causality by often moving from one storyline to an apparently unrelated one, only to return to the original plotline several stories later. Read together, the stories offer multiple causes, interpretations, and consequences for any single action or relationship. They remind us of the limited truth of any individual point of view. Erdrich further undermines the linearity of the stories by not assigning a year to one of them, “The Island,” which is the fourth story in the cycle. The events of the story place it roughly between the stories that surround it, although the story itself—especially one of its central character—disavows measured time altogether. The inclusion of an undated story, alongside the repeated blending of the past, present, and future by multiple narrators, who are themselves temporally and spatially distanced, all contribute to the cycle’s non-linear temporality.

Even though the stories assign a year to the action, that year does not always reflect the content of the narratives. The narrators jump back and forth across time, shifting tenses and scenes, sometimes within a single paragraph. Erdrich often labels sections by their narrators, whether they are in first or third person, but she does not always do so. Sometimes she assigns numbers to each part of a story or includes page breaks but does not do so universally. The

inconsistency serves to destabilize expectations of a unified narrative voice. For instance, the opening story, “The World’s Greatest Fisherman,” originally published in 1982, is divided into four parts, the first of which is told from the third-person limited perspective of June Kashpaw. The latter three parts are told in the first-person by her niece Albertine Johnson, whose name appears above the second section. The first section of the story concerns a single night in 1981, and the rest of the story concerns events that happen a month later. However, time becomes slippery in Albertine’s sections as the past invades the present. She remembers long scenes from her childhood and recounts stories that pre-date her birth. These digressions reveal Albertine’s particular sense of time while also challenging the idea that the story happens in 1981. This incursion of the past into the present occurs throughout the stories.

Erdrich’s treatment of Albertine’s personalized time is but one example of the cycle’s engagement with characters’ individualized time. The use of names and time distinctions to organize and label the stories reflects the overlap between individual subjectivities and their rendering of temporality. Within industrialized societies, the solidifying of shared, standardized time also gave rise to the expression of individualized time; Erdrich’s stories dramatize these contemporaneous processes for the characters. The simultaneous development of regimented and idiosyncratic time results partly from the fact that the widespread use of watches developed simultaneously to the emergence of labor measured in time. As many have noted, the proliferation of watches and timepieces signaled that the body came to be affiliated with machines and with an individual ownership of time (Doane 4-5; Schechner 134; and McCready 165-166). Stephen Kern concedes that the “introduction of World Standard Time had an enormous impact on communication, industry, war, and the everyday life of the masses” but emphasizes that

the explorations of a plurality of private times were the more historically unique contributions of the period. The assault on a universal, unchanging, and irreversible public time was the metaphysical foundation of a broad cultural challenge to traditional notions about the nature of the world and man's place in it. The affirmation of private time radically interiorized the locus of experience. It eroded conventional views about the stability and objectivity of the material world and of the mind's ability to comprehend it. (314)

With the earliest story's main action is set in 1934, Erdrich's stories describe industrialization arriving to the reservation before, during, and after this marker. Consequently, the changes Kern describes as happening between 1880 and World War I are still taking place in *Love Medicine*. Personal time as a countercurrent to the flow of public time erodes the solidity of public time. Compounding these competing notions of temporality is the cycle's investment in Ojibwa understandings of temporality.

#### Simultaneity of the Personal: The Possibilities of Chippewa Temporality

In so far as Erdrich's cycle treats the exploration of simultaneous experiences and individualized temporalities, the volume engages the dynamic between reading and nation. To what extent *Love Medicine* generates a sense of Chippewa national identity through its production of concurrent narratives generates heat in the critical debates surrounding the volume and Erdrich as a Native American writer. There are three general camps of thought on the connection between *Love Medicine* and traditional Ojibwa beliefs and practices. The first camp identifies the fragmented form as a revision of native storytelling practices. In accordance with

those who read Ojibwa beliefs as determinative, Lydia A. Schultz and Deborah Weigel both attribute the non-linear structure of the cycle to a particularly Ojibwa sense of time. While Schultz relies on a generalized sense of Native American perceptions of time, Weigel references specific Ojibwa beliefs, particularly the cyclicity of parts of the day and year.<sup>19</sup> The second camp opposes readings that attribute the form to Native American influences and argues instead that the form is more highly indebted to modernist fragmentation and postmodern experimentation. David Treuer, for instance, denies the ethnic specificity of the cycle. Treuer lists some hallmarks of Ojibwa oral narratives at odds with the cycle's stories to argue that *Love Medicine* should not be interpreted through this lens (31-35).<sup>20</sup> More specifically, he cites several examples of the cycle's misuse of the Ojibwa, or Mitchif, language. Treuer argues that the cycle enacts not so much an extension of an ethnic culture but a desire for it, and he contends that the cycle shifts registers and employs naturalist and realist elements (Treuer 27).

A third camp credits both Native American storytelling and modernist and postmodernist literary traditions as influences on the construction of *Love Medicine*.<sup>21</sup> Erdrich publicly maintains the importance of these multiple influences. In interviews, Erdrich extols the virtue of her heritage: "To be mixed blood is a great gift for a writer. I have one foot on tribal lands and one foot in ordinary middle-class life" (Farry 11). Of being cast as a Native American writer, Erdrich says:

It's an academic distinction. It's made to attract people to courses where you can lump authors together. There's a mixture of people and characters in native fiction. I'm mixed. There's no other way I would have the artistic truth and veracity to write about all those characters. Labels make a good headline. I don't dislike it, but I find it tedious. (Spillman)

Erdrich's comments reflect the ongoing influence of the contact zone on the construction and naming of such identities. For her, fiction derives its energy from the influences and experiences of multiple, concurrent traditions. That the stories use the Anglicized Chippewa almost exclusively serves as one possible indicator of the stories' production and reflection of Ojibwa nationhood. Ultimately, the stories celebrate what remains while recognizing the irreversibility of how much has been lost in both cultural practice and Ojibwa sovereignty.<sup>22</sup>

Placing it firmly as either indebted to Ojibwa narrative or print culture practices distorts its statements on temporality as a product of the late twentieth century. While Erdrich's stories draw from oral Ojibwa traditions, they remain written texts. The stories exhibit, according to E. Shelley Reid,

how the use of multiple narrators helps alleviate the alienation of individual characters; how stories which are half-told, re-told, and left un-told suggest a common base of knowledge that ties characters together and helps individuals and communities adapt to changing times; and how achronological, non-linear narrative structures recall the security of a web of stories, all tied to one another in a representation of personal stability and cultural survival. (70)

The blending of these influences partly accounts for the extent to which the stories function according to and outside of calendric time; the years orient the reader but they are also unreliable markers. The unreliability of the dates represents a postmodern move to destabilize the sovereignty of the text. Non-linearity functions as one of many cyclical elements, including those that tie the individual to a community. The lack of a linear chronology resonates with the cycle's other web-like structures of kinship and locality. The chronology of *Love Medicine* carries metaphorical implications of indefinite, continuous return, a quality central to the genre.

Reading *Love Medicine* as a short-story cycle invites this multiplication of interpretation; it allows stories to be both autonomous and interconnected. The overall temporal structure of the volume creates a pattern while also allowing for anomalies to that pattern. These irregularities resist easy generalizations about how time works in the cycle and deny the possibility of making comprehensive statements on the relationships between ethnicity and gender in relation to temporality.

One such variance occurs in the story “The Island,” the only undated story in the cycle. “The Island” offers the most sustained treatment of characters upholding traditional Ojibwa customs. Thus, the story reveals Erdrich’s strongest exploration of the possibilities for an Ojibwa national identity based on maintaining indigenous practices. Bookended by stories set in 1934 and 1948, “The Island” takes place somewhere in that fourteen-year span, but the story fails to identify exactly when. The lack of exact dating resonates with the characters’ experiences within the story. The story, told in the first person by Lulu Lamartine, centers on a group of characters that exist outside of conventional time. The patriarch of the Kashpaw clan adopts Lulu against the will of his wife, Rushes Bear, after they have raised their children. From the outset, the relationships between these three deviate from the chronology of the rest of their lives. As she gets older and after experiencing rejection from the Kashpaw’s biological son, Nector, Lulu goes to live with her cousin Moses Pillager, a man who lives alone on an island and maintains many of the Chippewa practices of his ancestors. His very existence defies time, as his mother tricked death by not speaking his name aloud when an epidemic overtook the reservation during his childhood. He lives the remainder of his days nameless and in the shadow of life. The title of the story references the place of the island, the isolation of his existence, the alienation of Lulu’s upbringing, and a general sense of some place distinct and distanced.<sup>23</sup> Lulu

eventually gives birth to two sons by Moses, one of whom, Gerry, inherits his father's tenacity, becoming a trickster figure existing outside the confines of the judicial system, which seeks to control his life by claiming his time.

"The Island" portrays these characters as creating bonds of kinship precisely because they share a different relationship to time than the other characters. The patriarch explains to Lulu that he retains Rushes Bear's love because he has a different sense of time than the other men in her life: "No clocks. Those young boys who went to the bureau school, they run their life on white time. Now me, I go on Indian time. Stop in the middle for a bowl of soup. Go right back to it when I've got my strength. I've got nothing else to do, after all. I'm going to die soon" (71). He attributes their connection to a conception of time that is specifically Indian. That he resides on an island within the reservation, which is itself a kind of island within and distinct from the larger US and Ojibwa nations, compounds his idiosyncratic, culturally-inflected sense of time. The story hints that Lulu goes to Moses for this same reason, and her particular favoritism of Gerry is a testament to the way Moses lived an Indian sense of time. "The Island"—which lacks a date, spans several years, and features characters that maintain a different relationship to time than the other characters—destabilizes the chronology of the cycle as a whole. It invests the cycle with an explicit tension over linear, measured time that the volume then enacts. The story presents an idea of traditional Chippewa time, but Lulu and most of the other characters in the cycle cannot simply deny "white time," and the story becomes one part of a larger commentary on the way multiple conceptions of time operate in the characters' lives. In these ways, *Love Medicine* represents a product of the contact zone. Adopting and adapting both traditions, it creates a new temporality.

## Immanent Personal Histories in *Love Medicine*

While the sequence and dating of the stories do not always indicate connection, some of the stories within the cycle are dated simultaneously and relate connected events—in much the same way “The Luggage Store,” “The Off Season,” and “The Watchers” do in the *Chronicles*. There are two sets of such stories within *Love Medicine*; these sets constitute highly integrated trilogies within the larger cycle, because they narrate events that happen either simultaneously or in close chronological succession. The first trilogy is comprised of “Lulu’s Boys,” “The Plunge of the Brave,” and “Flesh and Blood,” all set in 1957. The second trilogy of stories includes the title story, “Resurrection,” and “The Good Tears” and describes events that take place between 1982 and 1983. Each trilogy treats the same series of events from different characters’ perspectives. Teaming the stories reveals the precarious, and very different, handle each character has on the events. As the stories are constantly undermining the narratives and complicating the points of view of other stories, they expose that the characters enjoy only partial access to the truth of any situation and that any sequence of events must be viewed with skepticism. When read together, these stories comment on the nature of history and on the construction of communal experience. Whereas the trilogy in the *Chronicles* depicts the simultaneity of an interplanetary public event, the trilogies in *Love Medicine* depict the simultaneity of localized personal events in the lives of three central characters: Lulu Lamartine, Nector Kashpaw, and Marie Lazarre.<sup>24</sup>

“Lulu’s Boys,” “The Plunge of the Brave,” and “Flesh and Blood” constitute the first trio of stories and depict the simultaneity of personal history. These stories relate the concurrent experiences of Lulu, Nector, and Marie nearly twenty years after Nector chose to marry Marie



over Lulu. Identified by the year 1957, these stories focus on the events leading up to Nector's decision to leave Marie for Lulu and the aftermath of that choice. These events appear to be somewhat isolated from the rest of the stories in the cycle, in that they take place nine years after the previous story and thirteen years before the next. However, the stories that precede and follow the 1957 stories inform the trilogy. The overlapping of these with earlier and later stories insinuates that the passage of time matters little. The designation of 1957 cannot contain the range of the narratives, as the stories switch temporal settings.

The multiplicity of narrative points of view exacerbates the temporal disjunctions within the stories and comments on the sometimes fractured quality of simultaneity. Although the first story concerns Lulu, it is told in the third person from the perspective of Beverly Lamartine, who has an affair with Lulu simultaneous to her affair with Nector. The narrative shifts between the present affair and the death of Bev's brother, a husband of Lulu's. The first story does not relate the fact that Nector and Lulu have begun an affair that spans the narrative present. We only discover this in "The Plunge of the Brave." Read backward, "Lulu's Boys" functions as a complicating backdrop to the relationships that link the stories. Breaks in the narrative and changes in tense distinguish Nector's first-person style in "The Plunge of the Brave." Nector's story is preoccupied with his affair and his indecision over whether to leave Marie. The final story, "Flesh and Blood," is told by the first-person narrator Marie and mostly extends a narrative initiated in an earlier story, "Saint Marie." Her style is more fluid than Nector's and follows the chronology of events as they happen. While the overarching event of these three stories is Nector's attempt to leave Marie, the first and last stories disrupt the centrality of this dilemma by focusing on the submerged lives of the women. The extents to which personal traumas and dilemmas recur in Lulu's and Marie's lives align with Kristeva's descriptions of

women's time. Destabilizing the centrality of Nector's narrative, the first and last stories represent that simultaneity does not make the same event equally important to all of the individuals involved. The temporal slippages, compounded by the differences in narrative style, generate a simultaneity that is fissured and only partly realized.

As much as Nector is torn between Marie and Lulu, the more powerful stimulus for the events that connect these stories is his personal crisis over time. Erdrich's depiction of Nector's misgivings on time articulates the unease of an entire era and class. Thoroughly entrenched in local and national government, Nector describes time as passing in a "flash," until one day it stopped. He was "sitting on the steps, wiring a pot of Marie's that had broken, when everything went still" (127). In this domestic scene, full of broken items and demanding children, Nector Kashpaw meditates on the passage of time:

In that stillness, I lifted my head and looked around.

What I saw was time passing, each minute collecting behind me before I had squeezed from it any life. It went so fast, is what I'm saying, that I myself sat still in the center of it. Time was rushing around me like water around a big wet rock. The only difference is, I was not so durable as stones. Very quickly I would be smoothed away. It was happening already. (127)

Time, imagined as a stream rushing past, exceeds Nector's control. The current shapes and erases him as rapids do rocks, except that his body registers the current of time much more quickly than stones do. The idea of himself as a rock quickly smoothed away registers his inability to direct the current and determine its flow. The year of his revelation is 1952, just on the cusp of his affair with Lulu. The section ends, "And here is where events loop around and tangle again" (128). Although he loves both women, Nector's decision to pursue Lulu and

possibly leave Marie signifies a much larger conflict about the pressures of living with multiple conceptions of temporality. Nector's loss of control contrasts sharply with the certainty of his father in "The Island." His desire to leave Marie for Lulu results from a desire to leave the life that has caused time to move beyond his control. Nector attempts to re-create this sublime moment many times; that he fails to do so implies the futility of trying to hold on to a moment.<sup>25</sup> Nector's meditation, in particular the metaphor of water, raises questions about the nature of time that this short-story cycle endeavors to grapple with, if not always answer. Is the stream Nector describes actual time or his recognition of it, and does the difference matter? Can the present expand indefinitely, as it does here for Nector so that it encompasses seventeen years? Or, is the present like the water rushing past in Nector's description: already gone just as one realizes it is there?

In both *Love Medicine* and the *Chronicles*, water appears as a metaphor for time. This recurrence extends a tradition that likens water and time, a comparison present in the work of William James. Nector's crisis enacts, to some degree, the very notion of consciousness as a stream that James describes:

When we take a rapid general view of the wonderful stream of our consciousness, what strikes us first is the different pace of its different portions. Our mental life, like a bird's life, seems to be made of an alternation of flights and perchings. The rhythm of language expresses this, where every thought is expressed in a sentence, and every sentence closed by a period. The resting-places are usually occupied by sensorial imaginations of some sort, whose peculiarity is that they can be held before the mind for an indefinite time, and contemplated without changing. (2-3)

In this scene, Nector is chasing the period; he is looking to perch for a moment, stop time, and examine his sensory perceptions. He desires to experience “sensorial imaginations” over a long duration at will.<sup>26</sup> In “Night Meeting,” Tomás’s long meditation on time as sensory actualizes the perchings that James describes. “Like water in a dark cave” resonates with Tomás’s sense that time continues regardless of anyone’s awareness of it. Although they write from radically different cultural perspectives, the recurring metaphor of water in Erdrich, Bradbury, and James illustrates a connection between time and consciousness, which can only be understood through metaphor.

The second trilogy of stories tentatively answers some of the questions that Nector’s meditation inspires. The title story and “Resurrection,” both designated by the year 1982, as well as “The Good Tears,” marked as 1983, confront the cyclical nature of personal histories. The stories focus on the end of Nector’s life and the reconciliation Lulu and Marie strike. “Love Medicine,” narrated by Lipsha Morrissey, the adopted (grand)son of Nector and Marie, depicts Nector, at the end of his life, finally gaining control over time. Suffering from dementia, probably brought on as a complication to diabetes, Nector reverses and collapses time by entering into a “second childhood.” Lipsha refuses to believe that Nector would reverse time “from eating too much Milky Way.” Instead, he believes it when Nector says, “I been chosen for it. I couldn’t say no”; Lipsha maintains that Nector “was called to second childhood like anybody else gets a call for the priesthood or the army or whatever... No, he put second childhood on himself” (232). The language resonates with Weber’s observations about the cultural power of the “calling” in the United States. That the notion of the calling emerges not in the context of Protestant US work ethos but in the context of leisure for a Chippewa man reflects the extent to which the idea of a calling saturates contemporary culture. Nector’s call to a second

childhood reverses the expectations of receiving a calling. Instead of perceiving time as intrinsically valuable or precious, he sinks into idle time and releases himself from the demands of work. In the context of his earlier crisis over time, it makes sense that Nector would claim this kind of control over time.

In choosing a second childhood, Nector expands the present to include whatever time he wants. It is as if he is damming the stream that coursed over and eroded him for so long. He collects, stops, and redirects that stream to where he wishes his consciousness to go. In one scene, he thinks that he and Lulu are still in the midst of their affair. This scene resonates with the earlier sense that his affair grew out of a desire to stop time. When he finally dies, Nector's life flashes before Lipsha (250). In this passage, the image of time transforms from an image in nature to an object of pop-culture: "Time was flashing back and forth like a pinball machine. Lights blinked and balls hopped and rubber bands chirped, until suddenly I realized the last ball had gone down the drain and there was nothing" (251). Although the image of the drain evokes water, Lipsha's metaphor draws from a very different source and reveals his personalized sense of time. Both metaphors imply that time is something that happens to us, not entirely within our control. Time places limits on how long we can play the game; either the last ball falls down the chute, or the water goes down the drain.

The story concludes that death might be the only constant in our personal histories and that death represents the supreme balance between the linear and cyclical. Lipsha reflects, "It struck me how strong and reliable grief was, and death. Until the end of time, death would be our rock" (253). The titles of the final two stories in the series, "Resurrection" and "The Good Tears," indicate that death also makes rebirth possible. "The Good Tears" ends with an image of the two women together. As Lulu recovers from eye surgery, Marie nurses her back to health:

We did not talk about Nector. He was already there. Too much might start the floodgates flowing and our moment would be lost. ... For the first time I saw exactly how another woman felt, and it gave me deep comfort, surprising. It gave me the knowledge that whatever happened the night before, and in the past, would finally be over once the bandages came off. (297)

The recognition that their lives have been shared but distant becomes the impetus for their reconciliation. By acknowledging how much their lives have looped around each other, becoming tangled again and again, they accept each other's friendship and move forward. Their reconciliation suggests that, although time moves circularly, there exists the possibility for movement beyond the inescapable recurrence that a circle implies. The understanding they arrive at ushers in a new period in their lives. As the bandages come off, Lulu describes how "The light was cloudy, but I could already see. She swayed down like a mountain, huge and blurred, the way a mother must look to her just-born child" (297). That birth and death coincide in this story points to the simultaneity of all of life; in death, they cycle back and are born again. This rebirth is not only a return; it is also a movement forward made possible by compassion. The negotiation of divergent perspectives, multiple metaphors, and competing temporalities renders *Love Medicine* a pliable, shifting product of the contact zone. Lulu's and Marie's personal simultaneity actualizes gendered monumental time.

#### Temporalities of Production and Revision

*Love Medicine* and *The Martian Chronicles* share similar narratives of production: the stories within each were often conceived and published in isolation from the rest of the volume.

Those original stories were revised and sequenced for integration into the cycle. Additional stories rounded out the larger volume, often serving to connect or complicate the previously published stories. Following the cycles' initial publication, they were hailed and read widely, but perhaps unfairly characterized according to genre or the identity of their authors. Each author released revised and expanded versions; Erdrich did so in 1993 and then again in 2009, and Bradbury did so in 1997.<sup>27</sup> The publication and republication of these short stories and short-story cycles raise questions about the temporality of production and revision: to what extent does historical context matter? Which editions are definitive? To what extent do these revisions reflect authorial intention? Most importantly for this study, how does the temporality of production connect to the volumes' representations of time? The revision and re-release of these pieces, as both individual short stories and volumes, position each volume as a short-story cycle. In the temporality of their production and revision, these volumes align with the open-endedness and non-teleology so intrinsic to the genre. The relation between the time of their original and revised publications further substantiates how a plurality of temporalities is a central convention of the short-story cycle.

Bradbury began writing the stories that would go into the *Chronicles* in 1947, and continued working on them through 1949, finishing in a blaze of work of that year. He had published many of the stories previous to their inclusion in the volume under different names and with different details. Separately conceived, the stories feature characters that, for the most part, do not recur, and there is no central figure to connect the stories. Three years before he started working on his Mars stories, Bradbury read Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*. In the introduction to the revised 1997 edition, he claims that reading Anderson's cycle was a turning point in his work:

It was Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* that set me free. Sometime in my twenty-fourth year, I was stunned by its dozen characters living their lives on half-lit porches and in sunless attics of that always autumn town. 'Oh, Lord,' I cried. 'If I could write a book half as fine as this, but set it on Mars, how incredible that would be!'

I scribbled down a list of possible sites and folks on that distant world, imagined titles, started and stopped a dozen tales, then filed it away and forgot about it. Or imagined that I had forgotten about it. (viii)

As in Anderson's book, a common setting links the stories.<sup>28</sup> Bradbury calls the form a "book-of-stories-pretending-to-be-a-novel" and lists his *Dandelion Wine* (1957) as following in the same tradition (x). Bradbury's comments about the process of writing the *Chronicles*, and the importance of Anderson's influence, establish how the stories work together. Bradbury admits that his stories diverge somewhat from the model offered in *Winesburg, Ohio*:

Will you find blood traces of Sherwood Anderson here? No. His stunning influence has long since dissolved into my ganglion. ... Anderson's grotesques were gargoyles off the town roofs; mine are mostly collie dogs, old maids lost in soda fountains, and a boy supersensitive to dead trolley cars, lost chums, and Civil War Colonels drowned in time or drunk on remembrance. The only gargoyles on Mars are Martians disguised as my Green Town relatives, hiding out until comeuppance. (x)<sup>29</sup>

Bradbury's comments are striking as he explains how he drew from Anderson's emphasis on a cast of characters turned beautifully grotesque by the conditions of their lives. More than that, though, these comments are striking for what he says about his composition process. Circling



around the stories for years, his composition process reveals how this place and its people kept surfacing in his consciousness. The act of returning to the stories portends something of the cycle's recursiveness. That Anderson's influence "dissolved into [his] ganglion" is suggestive of the way consciousness connects to time, a relationship that the stories explore.

Written and published in the initial years of the Cold War, the cycle directly addresses the time of its production. In this cycle, the Mars of the future becomes a repository for the anxieties of the mid-century. Namely, the destruction of Earth in a nuclear war signals the extent to which Bradbury is not so much a narrative of a distant future but a prophetic vision of a possibly all-too-close present. Cold War anxieties of the need to claim extranational space and the development—and precariousness—of nuclear arms saturate the stories. The cycle presupposes a US victory in the space race, as all of the missions and settlers are from the United States. By making Mars a metaphor for contemporary national anxieties, Bradbury explores the place of the United States in history while providing an allegorical warning for the present and future. This re-casting of the present is a convention of science fiction narratives that project the future, according to Jameson: "For the apparent realism, or representationality, of SF has concealed another, far more complex temporal structure; not to give us 'images' of the future—... —but rather to defamiliarize and restructure our experience of our own *present*, and to do so in specific ways distinct from all other forms of defamiliarization" (151). By setting these tales on Mars and in the future, Bradbury defamiliarizes contemporary anxieties about the space race, nuclear war, and the geographic limits of the nation. Bradbury's cycle also shows how the short-story cycle is compatible with science fiction, fantasy, myth, and other genres.<sup>30</sup>

When Bradbury rereleased the *Chronicles*, the time setting of the stories shifted. In the 1950 publication Bradbury set the stories between 1999 and 2026. In the 1997 edition, the

stories take place between 2030 and 2057. Partly, it must have seemed absurd to imagine in 1997 that the events would begin in 1999. Setting them only thirty-one years into the future would seem a bit ambitious, but it was not verisimilitude he was after: the shift in the cycle's timeline maintains that sense of temporal proximity to the present in a not-so-distant future. Although the threats of the Cold War had subsided, the substance of space travel and the ending remain the same in the cycle. One major change he did make was to omit "Way in the Middle of the Air," originally published as *Other Worlds*, from the revised edition. This story depicts a cast of African American characters who leave the racism of the southern United States for Mars. The story's overly stylized, even stereotypical, depiction of racism seems out of touch at the time of the cycle's rerelease. However, it does offer another view of Mars as a great promised land of possibility that subsequent stories undermine. In the 1997 edition, the story "The Wilderness" replaces "Way in the Middle of the Air." This story portrays two women, Leonora and Janice, on Earth the night before they are to depart for Mars. Janice wonders whether women felt the same way about the western United States a hundred years ago as she does about Mars:

Is this then how it was so long ago? On the rim of the precipice, on the edge of the cliff of stars. In their time the smell of buffalo, and in our time the smell of the Rocket. Is this then how it was?

And she decided, as sleep assumed the dreaming for her, that yes, yes indeed, very much so, irrevocably, this was as it had always been and would forever continue to be. (158-159)

Her thoughts reveal an immanence in history, a sense that everything is as it has always been, which resonates with other stories in the cycle. Yet, her plans to move to Mars indicate the total uniqueness of her experience. The objects of her adventure change, but their substance does not.

These short-story cycles derive their power from this contradiction. Her meditation solidifies the similarity between space exploration and colonization and earlier forms of imperial expansion in the New World.

The contradiction between the unique and the ubiquitous energizes the temporalities of production and revision of *Love Medicine* as well. When it was originally released, the phrase “a novel” was attached to the title, but this is notably absent from the 1993 and 2009 editions. Erdrich and Michael Dorris, her ex-husband and collaborator, describe how they worked together to link the stories. Citing the influence of Faulkner and Toni Morrison, among others, Erdrich describes eschewing conventional novelistic structure in favor of linked stories (Jones 4).<sup>31</sup> Her influences here are provocative as they also straddle the line between novel and cycle. Dorris comments that *Love Medicine* constitutes “a story cycle in the traditional sense” (Coltelli 22). The extent to which its temporalities bleed into each other could be construed as evidence of its novelistic tendencies; however, the collapsed temporalities of the production and revisions of *Love Medicine* actually substantiate the volume as a short-story cycle. Within the stories and in the structure, *Love Medicine* insists on the cyclicity of process and history, emphasizing that there is no overarching, single sense of time in the volume. The release and rerelease of expanded and revised editions challenge the primacy of the completed volume. Multiple editions create the effect of a palimpsest. The range of tones and even of genres of the individual stories is yet more indication of the independence of the stories; placing them together in a cycle levels the playing field but does not inspire total team play among them.

Of the fourteen stories in the 1984 edition, ten had appeared in other outlets, including *The Kenyon Review*, the *North American Review*, and *Ms*. The range of outlets reflect the stories’ range in style and subject, as in “Flesh and Blood,” which was published in *Ms*. The

story pairs two scenes in which Marie must contend with an authoritative nun from her past and her husband's desire to leave. For Marie, the institutions of the church and marriage present her only options, and this story meditates on the gendered limitations in her life. For its inclusion in the 1984 edition, Erdrich assigned a year and narrator and changed its title from "Love Medicine" (she would write a new title story more comprehensively aligned with the cycle's themes). Assigning years and narrators represent two of the major changes Erdrich made to the already published stories, thus establishing a consistent pattern and stabilizing, to some extent, the volume's events. Three of the four stories not published previously conclude the cycle; this, and the addition of a new title story, mirror Erdrich's and Dorris's claims about the importance of connecting the stories, often conceived independently of the others or a larger scheme, during revision.

The revised edition in 1993 generated conversation about genre and authorial intention; it also introduced yet another temporal dimension to the stories. Although the phrase "a novel" was dropped in favor of the more ambiguous distinction "New and Expanded," the insistence on its formal unity by reviewers and scholars alike continued. Of the four stories added to this edition, two were previously published. Erdrich also added a new section to an existing story, "The Beads," which depicts the development of respect and love between Rushes Bear and Marie over Marie's delivery of a child. One of many female bonds accrued over reproduction, their connection creates a bridge between the characters and the stories. Of the new stories, many radically alter the cycle's construction of temporality. For instance, "The Island," with its denial of concrete time, is new to this edition, as is "Resurrection," which completes the second trilogy of the cycle. This trilogy balances the highly integrated stories concerning Lulu, Nector, and Marie from earlier in the volume.

Perhaps responding to the debates over the relationship between ethnicity and literature, which dominated popular and critical responses, the revisions appear motivated by charges of privileging experimentation in form and style over an allegiance to Native American causes. The focus on issues of ethnicity in both the volume's immediate critical reception and interviews with Erdrich reflect that this volume appeared during a highly productive period of ethnic American writing and in the context of a public debate over multiculturalism. That much was made of her Ojibwa heritage and the cycle's representation of Native American experiences reflect the temporality of its production. Allan Chavkin argues that the revisions contribute to a more refined, explicit statement of the volume's "political ideology" in that the stories trace a more activist and optimistic impulse (215). This impulse includes a greater affirmation of American Indians and gestures more toward the historical circumstances of the period (Chavkin 217-218). To some extent, the changes were largely practical. They expanded the original text to connect more to the other volumes in Erdrich's tetralogy, which includes *The Beet Queen* (1986), *Tracks* (1988), and *The Bingo Palace* (1994). That the stories do not end with *Love Medicine*—or even any version of it—parallels the cycle's treatment of closure: "Erdrich's new version does what her characters' story versions do: it undermines definitiveness, instead emphasizing the fluidity of an infinite number of context- and narrator- dependent variations" (Reid 84). This notion of the indefinite connects to the issue of authorial intention. Bradbury's and Erdrich's comments on genre are useful for what they illustrate about their own conceptions of the volumes; however, they are even more useful for illustrating the lack of language for talking about the form and the pressure to call any such work a novel. Ultimately, their repeated revisions, from original publication to rereleased cycles, reveal that authorial intention is yet another temporality and not a definite, stable marker.

In the absence of an absolute understanding and experience of time, these cycles engage metaphors to make sense of it. Time is alternately a pinball, a stream, and the emptiness in an object. Time is simultaneously material and immaterial, contemporary and ancient. These stories depict the ways in which time simultaneously renders our connections real and reinforces our separation from one another. In these cycles, time flies, heals, and runs out. It can be wasted and made up. It is a test that something stands or fails to stand. Time can be stolen, borrowed, or lost. It is a force so infuriating and powerful that the characters constantly lament and harness it. These stories dramatize the expressions and idioms of time that abound; ultimately, time itself becomes a metaphor for the ineffable. Rendering temporality into metaphors is our best way to make sense of and gain a modicum of control over all that is “beyond our brains to fathom.”

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of a common temporality linking a set of stories include Ernest Hemingway’s *in our time*, James Baldwin’s *Going to Meet the Man* (1965), and Scott R. Sanders’s *Wilderness Plot: Tales About the Settlement of the American Land* (1983). The emphasis on a particular period connects the stories within these cycles, alongside other linking devices, such as recurring characters.

<sup>2</sup> Culler’s argument depends upon the popularity of the novels for substantiation. Although few short-story cycles are outrageous blockbusters in the same vein as the sensationalist and historical novels he describes, many cycles are widely read and taught.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Franco Moretti’s *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900*, in which he argues that different subgenres, and even individual novelists, envisioned distinct kinds of nations.

<sup>4</sup> Deep time refers to a sense of the world as very old, as opposed to a belief in the world being much younger, as in the creation story in Genesis. Deep time is synonymous with geological time. Michael Roberts traces the development of deep time from the eighteenth century when a number of European scientists used fossils to determine the order and ages of rock formations (188-189). From that time, Roberts maintains there has been a gradual but not always consistent movement toward uncovering the age of the Earth based on scientific evidence.

<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all references to *The Martian Chronicles* refer to the original 1950 edition.

<sup>6</sup> The exception to this is the sketch “The Naming of Names.” This story, which concerns the renaming of Martian towns, roads, and geography after Earthly people and places, is listed as happening between “2004-2005.” Unlike the other stories, which focus on specific incidents, “The Naming of Names” describes a process, which explains the variation in its dating.

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<sup>7</sup> In its organization and focus, the *Chronicles* are also similar to the village sketch narratives, particularly those in epistolary form, discussed in my first chapter. These volumes all track the settlement of villages and/or the construction of communities within a contained time span.

<sup>8</sup> Mucher attributes this constant thrust toward the ending to the fact that Bradbury wrote the last story, “The Million-Year Picnic,” first (180). In their structure and general storyline, the *Chronicles* subscribe to Anderson’s conception of the novel generating a sense of national identity.

<sup>9</sup> Although Thompson notes a widespread shift in the treatment of time, he continually points to the continued existence of the former and is careful not to claim a total break from it. He warns that using terms like “pre-industrial,” “the transition,” and “industrialization” can be problematic, because they take place at different times, under different conditions, and with different outcomes.

<sup>10</sup> Weber lists a number of these maxims, the most explicit being Franklin’s warning to “Remember, that *time* is money. He that can earn ten shillings a day by his labour, and goes abroad, or sits idle, one half of that day, though he spends but sixpence during his diversion or idleness, ought not to reckon that the only expense; he has really spent, or rather thrown away, five shillings besides” (48).

<sup>11</sup> In his treatment of how geological discoveries have influenced our sense of time, Grahame Clark suggests that “If the exploration of the solar system has greatly extended our perception of space, the study of the universe as a whole has also made us aware of hitherto unimaginable vistas of time” (132). For more on the way space travel has shaped how we conceive of temporality, see Clark’s “Extraterrestrial space and time” in *Space, Time, and Man: A Prehistorian’s View*.

<sup>12</sup> There is one important exception; the particular demands of space travel and military membership do not comport with the division between labor and leisure enacted by industrialization. In the *Chronicles*, work and leisure intermingle, which is a reversion to pre-Industrial modes.

<sup>13</sup> Bradbury also draws connection between ethnicity and Martianness in an earlier scene. When asked about who he would side with, if there were Martians, Cherokee says, “I’ve got some Cherokee blood in me. My grandfather told me lots of things about Oklahoma territory. If there’s a Martian around, I’m all for him” (81). In the end, however, he does not side with the Martians and is killed.

<sup>14</sup> Helga Nowotny and Stephen Kern both comment on the significant shock readers felt of becoming instantly aware of the sinking of the *Titanic* and reading the details in the next day’s newspapers (Nowotny 22-23; Kern 65-68).

<sup>15</sup> However, the protagonist of “The Off Season,” Sam Parkhill, does appear in an earlier story “—And the Moon Be Still as Bright” set in June 2001 and is referred to in “The Long Years” of April 2026.

<sup>16</sup> Another point of contact among these three stories and the rest of the cycle is the extent to which they fulfill the fears that Spender articulates in “—And the Moon Be Still as Bright.” Spender fears that humans will destroy Martian ruins without learning anything from them, that they will rename Martian places after Earthly places, and that Earth is headed toward an apocalyptic nuclear war. He estimates that the war is fifty years coming; it happens just four years later.

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<sup>17</sup> In the story “Scales,” for instance, the title refers to the scales used to weigh construction materials for a new highway. These scales represent a larger failure to account for the Native American presence in the state’s infrastructure (Ferguson 548).

<sup>18</sup> For instance, the destruction of Earth in the *Chronicles* focuses on the individuals’ experience of the moment in relation to the event. The distinctions between the subjective first-person narration in “The Luggage Store” and “The Off Season” contrast with the third-person plural narration in “The Watchers”; these distinctions exhibit the extent to which simultaneity depends upon subjective temporalities.

<sup>19</sup> Schultz attributes “This relational structuring, in which elements are of equal weight” to the way that “Native Americans see time as a cyclical part of a repeating pattern, rather than a linear or sequential graph” (82). The Ojibwa separate the day into three parts (sunrise, noon, and afternoon), and “Night also comprises three segments, including evening, midnight, and dawn, thus ending at the beginning” (Weigel 84-85). The presence of other Native American influences and features buttresses the claims made about its temporality. For more on this, see Victoria Brehm’s “The Metamorphosis of an Ojibwa Manido.”

<sup>20</sup> For instance, Ojibwa stories are not in first person, although Erdrich’s largely are. Secondly, Ojibwa stories exist largely “outside of time,” in that when the stories take place and their relation to each other are irrelevant (Treuer 33).

<sup>21</sup> Critics in this camp include Karen Castelluci Cox and E. Shelley Reid.

<sup>22</sup> One exception to this occurs in a passage describing the mass manufacturing of “traditional Ojibwa objects” (310). Because Erdrich uses Chippewa in the cycle, I have maintained the term.

<sup>23</sup> Moses Pillager represents a type that chooses to live outside of the contemporary moment. Ernst Bloch identifies this condition as “non-contemporaneity,” which he describes as “an economic-ideological remaining existence from earlier times” (2). Bloch argues that within every modern setting the non-contemporaneous persists. According to Hanns-Georg Brose, “non-contemporaneity” “refers to the fact that people are living together at the same time, but not in the same time. ... It refers particularly to different mentalities and time horizons of social classes, that may either stick to their traditions or are striving for a utopian idea” (17).

<sup>24</sup> In addition to these trilogies, other paired stories function in the same way to show how the characters’ lives intersect. Examples of these are “Saint Marie” and “Wild Geese,” as well as “The Tomahawk Factory” and “Lyman’s Luck.” A story less fully developed than the others, “Lyman’s Luck” functions like a coda to the one that precedes it; in this, it is similar to the sketches in the *Chronicles*.

<sup>25</sup> Nector describes, “Every so often I would try to stop time again by finding a still place and sitting there. But the moment I was getting the feel of quietness, leaning up a tree, parked in the truck, sitting with the cows, or just smoking on a rock, so many details of love and politics would flood over me” (136).

<sup>26</sup> Nector’s heightened senses are similar to Anzaldúa’s description of “*La facultad*,” which “is the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface. It is an instant ‘sensing,’ a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning. It is an acute awareness mediated by the part of the psyche that does not speak, that communicates in images and symbols which are the faces of feelings, that is, behind which feelings reside/hide” (61).



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<sup>27</sup> In this chapter, I cite from the original edition of the *Chronicles* and the 1993 edition of *Love Medicine*. Doing so results from the common critical practice and is no indication of the superiority or authenticity of the editions.

<sup>28</sup> Bradbury's stories map out a much larger "limited locality" than the short-story cycles discussed in chapter one, as they consider geography not on the scale of a small town but of a planet. Despite this difference in scale, the common geographical setting functions in much the same way to expose what is contained and excluded in a place that has definite limits. Some of the stories are set on Earth, but concern travel to Mars. These are the opening story, "Rocket Summer," "The Taxpayer," "Way in the Middle of the Air," as well as the story "The Wilderness," which appeared in the 1997 edition. In addition to these stories about preparations to travel to Mars, another story, "There Will Come Soft Rains," deals with life on Earth after nuclear war.

<sup>29</sup> Bradbury often fictionalizes his hometown of Waukegon, Illinois; in this cycle, it appears as Green Bluff, Illinois, in "The Third Expedition." Here, Bradbury refers to this story in which Martians disguise themselves as the dead loved ones of the astronauts to lull the men into a false sense of security before killing them.

<sup>30</sup> In his preface to the 1997 edition, Bradbury resists labeling the *Chronicles* as SF. He prefers myth of "self-separating fable" (xi). Volumes like cycles are often called "fix-ups" among SF readers in reference to the way writers tidy up and connect stories that were previously published.

<sup>31</sup> That the stories circulate around the event of a woman's death also insinuates her indebtedness to Faulkner, whose *As I Lay Dying* seems to provide such a model (Nagel 25).

## Unbound, Illegitimate, and Inconsistent: Place, Family, and Time in Faulkner

In 1945, Malcolm Cowley edited and introduced *The Portable Faulkner*, a compilation of William Faulkner's fiction. Appearing at a time when much of his work was out of print, this volume initiated a renewed interest in Faulkner, which culminated in his 1949 award of the Nobel Prize in literature. Cowley's introduction clamored for a re-examination of Faulkner's achievements:

All his books in the Yoknapatawpha cycle are part of the same living pattern. It is this pattern, and not the printed volumes in which part of it is recorded, that is Faulkner's real achievement. Its existence helps to explain one feature of his work: that each novel, each long or short story, seems to reveal more than it states explicitly and to have a subject bigger than itself. All the separate works are like blocks of marble from the same quarry: they show the veins and faults of the mother rock. (xv)

Cowley identifies the cyclicity of Faulkner's oeuvre as its most distinguishing feature and its highest accomplishment. In regard to specific texts, Cowley describes many as a "cycle of stories" (584) or alternatively as a "series of episodes resembling beads on a string" (xxv). The loose but not wholly unified quality that Cowley identifies in both the collected works and in individual volumes indicates a certain narrative cyclicity, derived from the "mother rock" of authorial vision. Cowley's portable edition attempted to promote Faulkner's reputation among general readers; appearing at the end of World War II, such portable editions anticipated a growing reading public and a desire for affordable anthologies for the legions attending college as the war drew to a close. Insofar as a particular vision of aesthetics informs his reading, the

claims to unity also appear to be directed toward a scholarly audience. As a public intellectual and respected editor and critic, Cowley was a tastemaker, and the release of the portable edition and the influence of his introduction shaped Faulkner studies for decades.<sup>1</sup>

As Cowley argues, cyclical elements connect Faulkner's fiction. His body of fiction constructs and relies on a commonality of locality, kinship, and temporal structures. As nearly every critic has noted, Yoknapatawpha County serves as the setting for much of Faulkner's work. Genealogical connections come to the fore in the interconnected Sartoris, Compson, McCaslin, Snopes, and Sutpen families. Experimentations with temporality are an obsession for Faulkner and structure both the volumes' connections and disunities. Those volumes that Cowley identifies as "resembling beads on a string" are what I term short-story cycles. Linked as they are by setting, interconnected families, and temporal structures, *The Unvanquished* (1938), *Go Down, Moses*, *Knight's Gambit* (1949), are all short-story cycles proper. Many others, such as *As I Lay Dying* and *The Wild Palms* (1939), test the generic boundaries of the short-story cycle, the novel, and the novella and borrow from the narrative techniques pioneered in the short-story cycle. His novels, in particular, deploy the narrative techniques forged in the cycle in ways that challenge the insuperability of any generic category.

The form of the short-story cycle, with its privileging of multiple, competing narratives and openness, is ideally suited to articulating the crises of history and identities that Faulkner dramatizes. The cycle is particularly essential to understanding Faulkner's treatment of race and identity in his collected works. Faulkner's achievements in the short-story cycle reach an apex in *Go Down, Moses*, which is his most sustained treatment of black-white relations. The stories in *Go Down, Moses* recount various events in the history of the McCaslin family from shortly after the US Civil War to the Second World War. The stories illustrate the ways in which the white

and black branches of the McCaslin, Beauchamps, and Edmonds family tree are entangled; however, the color line divides the family. *Go Down, Moses* explores both the sustained and heightened moments of interracial intimacies, which include every possible kinship relation. The crises of identities that the stories most sharply narrate tend toward the white McCaslin line grappling with their unacknowledged kinship with the black Beauchamp line. Although the stories collectively—and often individually—encompass a broad temporality, the stories also focus on moments or a series of moments. This interplay between breadth and specificity connects to the treatment of racial and ethnic identities. The genre of the short-story cycle allows for the depiction of what I term provisional identities. Provisional identities refer to the stories' and characters' construction of flexible, dynamic identities that emerge within a story or series of stories but which are neither rigidly defined nor fixed. Such constructions allow stories to assert a momentary, contingent sense of a character's sense of self without insisting too strongly that it remain so across the stories. Thus, the cycle offers an analog to the production of identity, particularly racial and ethnic identity, in that such identities do not depend upon rigid distinctions, essential characteristics, or defined origins.

*Go Down, Moses* participates in this undermining or deferral of absolute identity by first showing how deeply imbricated black-white relations are in the McCaslin clan and then highlighting the multiple and varied responses to these intimacies by both the black and white characters at various stages in their lives. The treatment of black and white relations in this volume, marked by a crisis of interpretation, align with the cycle's statements on the very possibility of reading—be it a ledger, a narrative, or a person. The short-story cycle engages crises of interpretation in its very form, which makes it suitable for the volume's primary concern with interracial relationships that are hidden, disavowed, and erased from public and

private memory. In Faulkner's work, and especially in *Go Down, Moses*, there is, as Édouard Glissant puts it, "an upheaval of the unitary conceptions of being, a deferral of the absolutes of identity, and a vertigo of the word" (105). *Go Down, Moses* represents a fictional treatment of what Toni Morrison calls for in *Playing in the Dark*: "to examine the impact of notions of racial hierarchy, racial exclusion, and racial vulnerability and availability on nonblacks who held, resisted, explored, or altered those notions" (11). From the patriarch's unabashed exploitation of Tomasina and Eunice to his possible remorse and even love, to Buck and Buddy's homegrown abolitionism, to Ike's repudiation of the land, to generations of exploited labor and Roth's continued indifference, *Go Down, Moses* interrogates the possible identities carved out by the white McCaslins in response to interracial intimacy and their denials of it. In addition to these, it charts the responses from the descendants of the patriarch's relationship with Eunice: from Lucas's whiskey stills and attempts on Zack's life to Fonsiba Beauchamp's desire to flee the scene of it all. The form of the short-story cycle, containing both independent and interconnected stories, reflects the family history of the McCaslins, particularly in the tension between autonomy and belonging and in the construction of provisional identities.

As in much of Faulkner's fiction, black interiority is largely absent in *Go Down, Moses*. Many note that Faulkner's work lacks a "direct representation of the African-American angle of vision" (Duvall 257). Responses to this absence have varied from the defensive to the explanatory to the interrogative. Cleanth Brooks, for instance, remarks that while Faulkner never attempts black interiority, "he treats them sympathetically, and fully accords them their human dignity" (*First Encounters* 5). Ralph Ellison acknowledges Faulkner's use of black stereotypes, but argues that, more than any of his peers, he explores black humanity (86). He singles out the fourth section of "The Bear" as depicting a moral battle wherein "one voice (that of a Southern

abolitionist) seeks to define Negro humanity against the other's enumeration of those stereotypes which many Southerners believe to be the Negro's basic traits" (98). Glissant attributes the lack of omniscient black narrators to Faulkner's acknowledgement that "he will never understand either Blacks or Indians and that it would be hateful (and, in his view, ridiculous) to pose as an omniscient narrator or to try to penetrate these minds that are unfathomable to him" (68). Both Ellison and Glissant perceive an imperfect but, at the very least direct and sincere, treatment of black and interracial characters in Faulkner's fiction.

Because all of the stories are voiced in the third-person, the absence of any kind of black interiority in this cycle is less felt, in comparison to a volume such as *The Sound and The Fury*, which relies so much on first-person narration. In comparison to the famous statements on Dilsey's endurance in *The Sound and The Fury*, *Go Down, Moses* depicts a range of individual identities for the black characters. Although *Go Down, Moses* lacks any representation of black interiority, it does represent some of Faulkner's most developed and varied depictions of interracial identities. The range and depth of the characters extends Faulkner's longstanding treatment of interracial identities, from Joe Christmas to Charles Bon. Undercutting and shaping all of these representations is the fact that most of these characters are both black and white or, in the case of Sam Fathers, both black and Chickasaw. Faulkner's treatment of the denial of interracial intimacies resonates with the idea of the grotesque in Anderson's *Winesburg*: "It was his notion that the moment one of the people took one of the truth to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood" (9). *Go Down, Moses* depicts the effects of holding tight to the "truth" of racial purity on the characters. As Anderson describes, the characters embrace the truth of racial division so tightly it becomes a falsehood that renders them grotesque. The construction of

identities based on a rigid belief in the one-drop rule takes on tragic dimensions in *Go Down, Moses*. Even as he shows the ways in which the denial of interracial intimacies distorts the characters identities and lives, Faulkner depicts a range of effects. The very form of the short-story cycle enables the multiplication of points of view and responses. The proliferation of perspectives, the openness of the text, and even the instability of fact and story—as one story revises another—dramatize Faulkner’s varied statements on the significance of interracial identities and relationships. *Go Down, Moses* uncovers the narratives of community, kinship, and temporality that justify and maintain these grotesque distortions.

Gavin Stevens’ famous line that “The past is never dead. It’s not even past” distills something elemental about Faulkner’s fiction: collective and personal pasts define the truth of the present (*Requiem for a Nun* 92). These truths are always contingent, ephemeral, and multiple. This contingency makes the short-story cycle an important genre in Faulkner’s work and a vital model for understanding the intricacies of his fiction. The first section of this chapter establishes the place of the cycle in his body of work, considers the extent to which Faulkner revises an established tradition, and tracks his innovations to the form. Subsequent sections treat the depiction of limited locality, chosen kinship, multiple temporalities in *Go Down, Moses*. The cycle shows place, family, and time to be the products of fiction. Their fictive origins do not diminish their power; rather, fictions chart places, produce kinship, and mark time. The stories comment on the fictions necessary to the production of larger collectivities, whether that be of a locality, a nation, a race, kinship, or time.

Faulkner and the Short-Story Cycle

Cowley's characterization of Faulkner's cyclicity focuses only on what unites the disparate texts, citing as a fault any element—be it character, theme, structure, or voice—that does not cohere. Any lack of harmony is read as “an obvious weakness” (xxiv).<sup>2</sup> In his praise and indictment, Cowley established a standard for reading Faulkner that endured for nearly a half century: a standard that celebrated only what connects the texts and ignored or lamented what upsets that unity.<sup>3</sup> According to Mark Morrison, Cowley's collection put into motion a response by established and emerging critics and writers, such as Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks, among others, who were tied to both the Southern literary tradition and New Criticism. The emergence of New Critical readings of Faulkner coincided with the “postwar American hegemony emerging during the cold war [that] gave an ideological and strategic underpinning – and traction – to the new interpretations of Faulkner” (Morrison 28). Terry Eagleton asserts that American New Criticism, which “flourished from the 1930s to the 1950s,” “had its roots in the economically backward South—if the region of traditional blood and breeding.” During this period, “the South was in fact undergoing rapid industrialization, invaded by Northern capitalist monopolies”; at the same time, intellectuals and writers “could still discover in it an ‘aesthetic’ alternative to the sterile scientific rationalism of the industrial North” (Eagleton 41). *Go Down, Moses* actualizes this loss in its depiction of the ever receding Big Woods, which represent the untapped agricultural richness and mystery of the South and juxtapose the overly cultivated rationality of the North. Faulkner's engagement with symbols, deployment of nostalgia, and rendering of place are ripe for New Critical readings, and he was an ideal figure to centralize and make clear their critical practices.

Lawrence H. Schwartz argues that Faulkner ascended not least of all because the conditions of the post-War period necessitated a figure to typify the superiority of American



politics and aesthetics: “Like Jackson Pollock and the abstract expressionists, Faulkner became universalized as an emblem of the freedom of the individual under capitalism, as a chronicler of the plight of man in the modern world. Faulkner was seen to exemplify the same values that Western intellectuals saw in capitalism which made it morally superior to Communism” (4). These political and aesthetic aims, coupled with the proliferation of accessible and inexpensive paperbacks, led to Faulkner being held up as an exemplar of American literary modernism divorced from the political commitments often associated with naturalism and realism.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the historical and material conditions during the postwar period made Faulkner’s ascent in the United States possible, and accorded him a place equal to that which he held in France, Japan, and elsewhere. Alongside these conditions, his rise and continued primacy depended upon a vision of the unity within his fiction—the sense that the fiction drew from the “same living pattern” identified by Cowley.

A Linnaean impulse to legitimize every detail of Faulkner’s production became a dominant paradigm that continues to the present. For Cowley, the pattern could be divided into a series of cycles, each of which is defined by a class, a kinship group, or a racial or ethnic distinction (xiii).<sup>5</sup> Glissant is an entirely different kind of reader than Cowley. As a Caribbean intellectual and Francophone critic of Faulkner, he emphasizes Faulkner’s treatment of race, place, and transnational connections, whereas Cowley emphasizes the aesthetics of his collected works. His study of Faulkner is deeply personal, responsive, and does not strive to show unity in the way that Cowley’s does. Admitting that Faulkner’s fiction “does not allow for such methodological separations” and that “you could correctly put forth many other structures of divisions” (38), Glissant nonetheless offers a schematic to generate unity among Faulkner’s

work. His diagram relies on a combination of chronology and setting to create sub-cycles within the larger work. For instance, the second category on his chart depends upon a period of time:

BEGINNINGS. THE OLDEN DAYS: *Go Down, Moses*. (“The Bear.”) (“Big Woods.”) And the corresponding short stories (particularly those in *These Thirteen*.) (13)

That these two very dissimilar readers both observed and attempted to generalize about the cyclicity of Faulkner’s collected works is intriguing. Although Cowley and Glissant rightly observe the textual cyclicity, the texts defy such strict distinctions and summations and resist the plotting of such schematics. The qualities of the short-story cycle—interconnection without unity and openness without closure—recur throughout Faulkner’s fiction.

In the case of *Go Down, Moses*, Faulkner made conflicting statements on its generic category. Originally published as *Go Down, Moses and Other Stories* in 1942, when the stories were reissued in 1949 Faulkner wrote to Robert K. Haas that he would rather it be printed as *Go Down, Moses*. Stating that “Moses is indeed a novel,” he held that the suffixed phrase was unnecessary (*Selected Letters* 284). However, he did not see any purpose in adding chapter numbers or omitting the story titles. In this letter, he compares the titling and form to both *The Unvanquished* and *The Wild Palms*. These comparisons, which he had made even while writing the stories, and his insistence that the story titles and section divisions remain indicate something distinctive about these works.<sup>6</sup> Two years earlier, in an address at the University of Mississippi, he stated that the volume should be read as a collection of short stories (Evans 201).

Faulkner’s disparate statements on the generic form of *Go Down, Moses* and these other volumes reflect a lack of language adequate to describe them. The simultaneous pressure to capitalize on the higher earnings of individual stories placed in magazines and the desire to

publish novels, often assessed as being more serious, further influence Faulkner's statements. As it embodies the genre's sense of integrated stories that do not result in unity, short-story cycle is the most appropriate term to describe *Go Down, Moses*. Although doing so would seem to be evidence of authorial foresight—even genius—attempts to construct a single unifying narrative line, as Cowley and Glissant do, fall short. Whenever one attempts to situate a figure or theme as the connecting thread, the tapestry unravels. Attempts to prove the unity of *Go Down, Moses* focus on Isaac McCaslin, the theme of black-white relations, or the significance of the McCaslin clan.<sup>7</sup> Reading Ike as the unifying figure fails because he is absent in over half the stories. The treatment of black-white relations as the central unifying theme renders the wilderness and hunting stories anomalous. The McCaslins may seem to connect the stories, but “Pantaloon in Black” fails to adhere to the familial motif (Skei, *William Faulkner*, 242). All of these elements are connective tissues, but they do not result in unity. The disjunction inherent to the volume's form reflects the disjunction in the acts and characters described, including Ike's development and presence, the depiction of race, and the notion of kinship for the McCaslins.

Such contradictions and discrepancies have narrative power; they produce new insights about the characters, events, and even the interconnections among the texts.<sup>8</sup> Faulkner deeply distrusted and disavowed facts, and this belief informs his characterization of the gaps and inconsistencies in his fiction.<sup>9</sup> Because every act of interpretation and every statement is contingent, contradiction represents a possibility for creative production. Where Cowley and his critical heirs cite contradictions and uneven thematic elements as weaknesses, the author's own view, which is confirmed in the texts, celebrates how the contradictions and seemingly incongruous themes inform one another. Faulkner's composition process and revision practices further resist the critical tendency to read only unity and harmony in his canon, while still

pointing to its cyclicity. A story is never finished, never complete.<sup>10</sup> Composition is deeply imbricated with revision, and both gesture toward Faulkner's notion that consciousness is essentially temporal.

Revisions to the stories in *Go Down, Moses* confirm the general sense that the volumes are open and alive and part of a larger cycle of works. Faulkner's belief in the dynamic nature of his writing, described in the Compson Appendix, also shape the writing and revision of *Go Down, Moses*, particularly in terms of inconsistency and change. Originally published in outlets such as *Harper's*, *Colliers*, and *The Atlantic*, the stories varied in tone, character, and characterization from their later incarnations in the volume. For instance, although not published until the book's release, Bayard Sartoris served as the original narrator of an early version of "Was" rather than the third-person narration of Cass Edmonds. The jovial tone and emphasis on the impish child narrator of the original story resembles that of *The Unvanquished*, which also features a view of black-white relations but almost exclusively through the perspective of Bayard Sartoris. The change in narrators and the addition of the first section did not come until the inclusion of "Was" to the cycle. These four paragraphs introduce Isaac McCaslin and his repudiation of the McCaslin land. Although Ike does not appear again for nearly half the volume, this section operates like an overture. Just as an overture establishes major themes and melodies in a symphony or musical, this section establishes the major themes, characters, and events in the cycle. The opening identifies Ike as a major character and his repudiation as an important event. This section forecasts the slippage of time with its shifting verb tenses and initiates confusion over familial ties. Although it enhances the interconnections in the volume, this section disrupts the autonomy of "Was" as an individual story. Experimentation with genre recurs throughout *Go Down, Moses*. For instance, because of their length and potential

autonomy both “The Bear” and “The Fire and the Hearth” can stand alone as either long short stories or novellas. Although they have been excerpted and anthologized, they gain meaning and depth from their inclusion in the cycle. “The Bear” and “The Fire and the Hearth” stretch the limits of stories but are short stories nonetheless. This generic instability aligns with a narrative instability within the stories themselves.

Faulkner’s own sense of the stories’ interconnections changed as he wrote and revised them. For example, it was not until the composition of the title story that Faulkner began to conceive of the complex family entanglements that would shape his revisions for the stories’ inclusion in the cycle (Early 15). Although not originally conceived as such, many of the stories focus on the McCaslin family. This change is evident in the switch from Bayard Sartoris to Cass Edmonds in “Was,” and also in the switch from Quentin Compson as the young boy to Isaac and from Jimbo to Tennie’s Jim in “The Old People” (Skei, *Reading Faulkner’s* 20; Early 71-72). “The Fire and the Hearth” fleshes out the details of the Beauchamps’ connection to the white branch of the McCaslin family; these connections are missing from the original introduction of Lucas and Molly in an early version of the narrative, “Gold Is Not Always” (Early 7-9). Faulkner revised this previously published story and combined it with another published story, “A Point of Law,” and a previously unpublished story; together, these stories became the three chapters in “The Fire and the Hearth” (Skei, *Reading Faulkner’s* 19). In addition to the familial and formal elements added to the stories, Faulkner includes description and anecdotes (Skei, *William Faulkner* 236).

Although Faulkner incorporated new material to connect the stories, the additions do not result in unity between the stories or between this volume and his other works. Reading across his stories, novels, and cycles exposes what Faulkner terms “inconsistencies” that were not

always resolved in individual texts. In *Go Down, Moses*, these inconsistencies consist of discrepancies in the timeline of events, gaps in genealogy, and uneven characterization. This instability is significant because it demonstrates Faulkner's sense, evidenced in his letters, that the text is alive and that fiction may distort fact to get at truth. The discrepancies between stories generate tension in that one must suspend and negotiate the "facts" of one story against those of another. One example of this is the ancestry of Sam Fathers, of which multiple accounts are given in "The Old People," "Lion," "The Bear," "A Justice," and in the final, multiple versions of these stories in *Go Down, Moses* (Early 13).

In *Go Down, Moses* the conditions leading to the eventual marriage of Buck McCaslin to Sophonsiba Beauchamp, the parents of Isaac, remain a mystery. This absence is strongly felt as the opening story centers on Buck's close rescue from a marriage to Sophonsiba, a marriage unwanted by Buck but desired by her and her brother. Brooks describes having asked Faulkner about this very gap:

I asked Mr. Faulkner once how it came about that Uncle Buck and Miss Sophonsiba subsequently did get married and produce a child, Isaac McCaslin, in view of Uncle Buck's having been rescued from Miss Sophonsiba's clutches. Surely after this narrow escape Uncle Buck would have become even more wary, more gun-shy. Faulkner explained that he never got around to writing about how Uncle Buck was finally run to earth. (*First Encounters* 133)

We might dismiss this explanation as simply the product of authorial whim, and whim might account partially for this omission. However, this gap also illustrates an inability to definitively know one's origins. With the never-ending sentences and the interminable tangents, Faulkner's fiction lends itself to assumptions of comprehensiveness. The absence of description of such an

important kinship relation, one that would produce the last legitimate male McCaslin, signifies that all of the kin relations are uncertain and open to interpretation, which is a central theme and crisis in *Go Down, Moses*. The gap in this history of Ike's parentage resonates with so many others: Tomasina, Terrel, and James's granddaughter's son who appears in "Delta Autumn." Thus, such gaps and inconsistencies produce the textual sense of contingency.

The exploration of incongruence relates with—perhaps even results from—Faulkner's experimentation with point of view. Individual stories (or sections within a novel) often register the viewpoint of a single character, most clearly exemplified in *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*. A single character's perspective may butt up against his or her telling in a later story, as is the case with Quentin Compson in *Absalom, Absalom!*. Nearly every novel and short-story cycle treats the multiplicity of experience; in telling the causes and effects of any single event, multiple narrators offer their own points of view on the events. Although the novel is most often associated with an expanded interest in perspective, the short-story cycle's form enables a radical challenge to the very nature of the point of view. In *Knight's Gambit*, for instance, stories engage first- and third-person narrators, Gavin Stevens and his nephew Charlie, as well as detached, objective perspectives. Despite their different points of entry, all of the stories address the nature of Steven's deductive and interpretive practices and his relation to the residents of Yoknapatawpha. In addition to Faulkner's deployment of first, third, and communal points of view, there are also at least three distinctive narrative modes: the objective, the subjective, and the interior monologue (Glissant 67).

The stories in *Go Down, Moses* employ all three narrative modes. They also repeatedly juxtapose dominant and marginal points of view, as in the title story wherein the census taker precedes the dominant view of Stevens. Similarly, "Pantaloon in Black" contrasts with Rider's

emotional response to his wife's death to the cold telling and deafness of the husband and wife at the end of the story (Ferguson 102). The multiple versions of the same events and relationships serve as a fodder for a struggle for authority. These multiple narrative voices lobby so much for authority that David H. Evans claims that "Faulkner's richest works, like *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Go Down, Moses* are less like verbal mosaics than rhetorical battlefields, in which virtually every character is fiercely concerned to present a narrative that will displace its competitors, gain the assent of its audience, and become the authorized version" (19). Every voice attempts to author a version of his or her life story and that of the place, time, or family. The very interrogation of what we know, how we know it, and what that means energizes Faulkner's fiction and underpins his deployment of the linking devices.

Just as the multiple points of view vie for authority, repetition at the level of language, name, events, and imagery unsettle the nature of truth and reveal the cyclicity that so many identify. In the particular case of *Go Down, Moses*, repetition exposes truth as conditional, temporary, and constructed by the circumstances of the teller. For instance, in "The Bear," the third-person narrative voice repeats the line that "So he should have hated and feared Lion" (201; 204; 216). This line, the meaning and referent of which is deferred until the third section of the story, signals a progression forward in the action of the story while also revealing that the story is being told retrospectively. The slippages between past and past perfect in the story lend an air of the inevitable to the story, and the statement portends that Isaac subverts expectations, foreshadowing his subversion in the fourth section of "The Bear." Repetition at the level of naming similarly destabilizes any sense of progression or control over the action. Many of the descendants of the McCaslin patriarch, Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin, bear all or part of his name. This naming both reveals and obfuscates genealogy and characterization. In "Delta



Autumn,” the diminutive “Roth” parallels the weakness Isaac sees in the patriarch’s descendant. Although weaker in character, his actions parallel those of his namesake. The events of the past repeat, but they repeat with a difference. When Roth abandons his child by an unnamed woman, who is Lucius’s great-great-granddaughter by his own daughter Tomey, Roth effectively repeats the actions of the patriarch. Imagery too is recursive; images, such as the hearth, function as central images in one story, “The Fire and the Hearth,” a peripheral image in another, “Pantaloon in Black,” and an absent image in others, as in the title story. Repetition and proliferating perspectives effectively challenge the truth of the very structures which seem to link the narratives and give meaning to the characters’ lives: community, kinship, and time. The repetition also establishes the provisional nature of any given moment and of the momentary construction of any identity.

#### Hunting Story and Tracking Localities

*Go Down, Moses* sets the drama of the McCaslin clan on their family farm, its environs, and the surrounding county. That a common setting links the stories is testament to Anderson’s influence on Faulkner. Anderson and Faulkner met in 1925 through Eleanor Anderson. Faulkner stayed at the couple’s apartment in New Orleans and spent many of his afternoons with Anderson; Anderson had an instrumental role in publishing *Soldier’s Pay* (1926). In “Sherwood Anderson, 1925” Faulkner appreciates the simplicity of form and sympathy of tone in *Winesburg*. For him, the form fit the substance. “Had the book been done as a full-length novel,” he argues, the sympathy “would have been mawkish” (247). While Faulkner admired *Winesburg* and *The Triumph of the Egg*, he thought that Anderson sacrificed innovation and

imagination in other volumes to maintain a purity of style. Thus, although influenced by Anderson, particularly in matters of form, Faulkner hoped to avoid Anderson's fate as a "one- or two-book man" ("A Note on Sherwood Anderson, 1953" 6).

This combined admiration for, and trepidation of, Anderson accounts for the ways in which Faulkner drew inspiration from and revised the form of *Winesburg*. In "A Note on Sherwood Anderson, 1953," Faulkner articulated his indebtedness to Anderson:

I learned that to be a writer, one has first got to be what he is, what he was born; that to be an American and a writer one does not necessarily have to pay lip-service to any conventional American image such as his and Dreiser's own aching Indiana and Ohio or Iowa corn or Sandburg's stockyards or Mark Twain's frog. You had only to remember what you were. 'You have to have somewhere to start from: then you begin to learn' he told me, 'It don't [sic] matter where it was, just so you remember it and aint [sic] ashamed of it. Because one place to start from is just as important as any other place. You're a country boy; all you know is that little patch up there in Mississippi where you started from. But that's all right too.' (8)

Faulkner credits Anderson for encouraging him to write about Mississippi and allowing locality to permeate his writing. The advice Anderson gives Faulkner, as well as language within the essay, reveals an anxiety over the connection between region and nation.

This statement suggests the extent to which Anderson and Faulkner saw themselves as writing within and building a national literature. The desire to create or extend a national literature resonates with the conditions from which the short-story cycle emerged. In Faulkner's statement, the region contains within it the possibility of being both separate from and a

synecdoche for the nation. In parroting Anderson's colloquial language, Faulkner substantiates his choice of place and aligns himself with a tradition of writers whose interest in place defined their work without rendering them merely regional. The exactness of the speech seems somewhat dubious as a quarter century has passed, but it makes clear Faulkner's indebtedness to Anderson. Their conception of American literature "suggests a collection of centers that are simultaneously peripheries" (Hagood 19). Faulkner's construction and defense of a national literature emerges in another essay on Anderson, in which he bristles at the comparison of Anderson to Russian and French writers: "I can not [sic] understand our passion in America for giving our own productions some remote geographical significance" (253). As he defends Anderson against charges of being an "'American' Tolstoi," there is by extension a defense of himself against being read in anything other than local terms. The connections between Anderson and Faulkner reveal the extent to which the conventions of limited locality remain couched in attempts at national integration.<sup>11</sup>

In Yoknapatawpha County, Faulkner constructs the ultimate limited locality. A bound, geographic place becomes the basis for community in works that both support and undo the logic of *gemeinschaft*, which is the belief that geographic proximity necessarily fosters affiliation. "Faulkner's enduring success," according to Evans, "was to make the mechanics by which communities are imagined into the substance of his own creative oeuvre" (27). The explicit concern with the particular geography of the county not only heightens the processes by which community is made but also highlights how it is undermined. In *Go Down, Moses*, that locality is even more limited, as the action of the stories circulates on or around the McCaslin farm, located seventeen miles outside of the county seat, Jefferson. The stories recount a century of family histories on the place; on the surface, the McCaslin land serves as a heightened form of

limited locality, with the farm creating an autonomous population within the larger county.

While the farm grounds and connects the stories, the locality proves more porous than it initially appears to be.

The characters and actions repeatedly exceed the locality's bounds. In the title story, the opening is set in Chicago, where Molly and Lucas's grandson faces execution. According to Molly, getting kicked off the plantation initiates his ultimate end in Chicago. In her estimation, it is a quick jump from Jefferson to Chicago; the implications are that leaving the farm unleashes the course of events that take his life and that, for Molly, the distance from the McCaslin place to Jefferson is greater than the distance from Jefferson to Chicago. Other stories in the cycle confirm the porous nature of the micro-locality. The most significant example of the openness of the ostensibly limited locality is the hunting camp and grounds, which shift and recede over time. The hunting camp serves as the dominant setting in the trio of stories centered on Isaac McCaslin: "The Old People," "The Bear," and "Delta Autumn." The collective effect of these alternative settings unsettles the notion that the McCaslin place serves a coherent center to the stories. Although the farm setting serves to connect the stories, it does so only loosely.

In *Go Down, Moses*, setting is like a series of concentric circles that become entangled with one another. The inner circle is the McCaslin farm, which the county envelops. The South, in turn, circles Yoknapatawpha. In the estimation of many, the county is both within and representative of "the South." This notion of the South is then encircled by and embroiled with the nation. Glissant characterizes the idea of the South as powerful and exclusionary: "Into this fictional county Faulkner put his whole native land of Mississippi, and the entire South as well (one emphatically says 'the South,' with a capital 'S,' as though it represents an absolute, as though we other people of the south, to the south of this capitalized South, never existed)" (30).

The inclusion of an article and capitalization of “the South” suggest its symbolic power and exclusion of other kinds of southern localities. The county comes to stand for an entire geopolitical region, and gets treated as its own identity, akin to a regional ethnicity.

Readings of Faulkner that privilege the Southernness of his writing reflect an institutionalization of this framework, wherein Southern literature aligns with ethnic literature as being both part of and separate from a national literature. In Faulkner, this sense of regional ethnicity stems from the legacy of slavery. In *Go Down, Moses*, this sense relates particularly to the often-denied relationships among black and white Southerners and the cost of this denial. The prominence of Southern and ethnic American writers within the genre of the short-story cycle suggests a link between the genre and the tension of being both part of and separate from national literatures, an anxiety that registers in Faulkner’s comments on Anderson. The genre enables the construction of provisional identities—be they individual or collective, or a mixture thereof. Provisional identities operate not only on the level of personal identity but also inform the construction of spatial identities. Thus, it is possible in a cycle such as *Go Down, Moses* for one story to center on and seem to define the McCaslin plantation, another the county, another the whole of the South, and yet another the national and transnational networks that intersect with the South. These stories construct contingent spatial identities that get enhanced, undermined, and amended in other stories.

It is to these latter localities that recent Faulkner studies have become attuned, reappraising those works set outside of the county, assessing the role of imperialism in the texts, and highlighting the relationship between the US South and the global South. These readings explore how the setting of Yoknapatawpha connects to national and transnational networks.

These new directions trouble any notion of “the South” as the monolithic beast described by Glissant. The US South represents, according to Taylor Hagood, a

liminal space situated between and participating simultaneously in the cultures of the global North and the global South. These developments in thinking about southern U.S. spaces are important because they introduce a move toward precise thought about literary depictions of the often oversimplified phenomenon (always more imaginary than geographical) called ‘the South.’ Understanding southern space as fragmented demands reassessment and avoidance of the positing of large generic southern ‘themes,’ meant to offer easy explanations of southern experience. (8-9)

Hagood refers to the ways in which the US South, particularly the so-called Deep South, gets imagined in paradoxical terms; the South has properties and problems that mark it as distinctive and yet the term also universalizes experiences within the region. At various times in the critical history, the South has been deployed alternatively as a marginalizing and legitimating rubric and a narrow and expansive field. Noel Polk asserts that Faulkner’s place in Southern fiction tends to overly emphasize that Faulkner’s “literary strengths lie directly in their roots in the South” (7). What I find interesting is the extent to which locality, either stripped of or invested in divergent ideological trappings, persists as a central concern even in the critical conversation that expresses skepticism of its import. The textual deployment and problematizing of the legacy of locality account for the continued interest. In his short-story cycles and collected works, Faulkner subscribes to and subverts the conventions of limited locality.

In the case of *Go Down, Moses*, the stories present what appears to be a very contained locality: the plantation. The setting ostensibly invites a nostalgic rendering of a regionally

specific experience. The one-time plantation bears the generic qualities of such a depiction: the restored big house, the long family lineage, and sharecroppers and renters who are the descendants of former slaves. As I explored in the first chapter, regional literature often deploys what I term “critical nostalgia,” which simultaneously invokes and critiques sentimentality as a discursive mode. Faulkner’s comments on Anderson betray sentimentality for place as the starting point for artistry. And yet, *Go Down, Moses* undercuts this nostalgia and sentimentality in ways that complicate and criticize any romanticized sense of place. In this, the use of locality resonates with what we saw in the cycles connected by setting in the first chapter: what appears as nostalgia often masks criticism for romanticizing the past. The stories concerning the later McCaslin generations depict the characters’ invocation of sentimentality for the past. They extol the virtues of the untouched Big Woods and the productivity and success of the McCaslin patriarch, which depended on slave labor. The stories set in Buck and Buddy’s time undercut this wistful simplification by showing the ambivalence Buck and Buddy feel toward their father and by highlighting that industrialization was already well under way in the Big Woods. The very presence of Sam Fathers, as the solitary figure left of the Native Americans who once occupied the land, registers the falsity of this nostalgia. Most of all, by depicting the complicated, entangled web of relations among the McCaslins, the stories unmask the nostalgia that celebrates antebellum race dynamics. In contrast to what is often perceived as “Faulkner’s nostalgia,” Evans argues that “the past as it appears in his novels is almost invariably presented in the form of a process of ongoing degradation, its moral stability a dubious and delusive mirage” (12). *Go Down, Moses* engages this nostalgia in “Was,” the main action of which is the earliest in the cycle. Insofar as the McCaslin plantation functions as a common setting for the stories and the characters’ lives, it functions like the limited localities described in chapter one. That many are

required as slaves to stay on the plantation enforces the restricted geography ostensibly available to them. However, when Tomey's Turl runs away to the Beauchamp plantation, the story reveals that Tomey's Turl is able to usurp the boundaries of the plantation. His ability to navigate beyond his sanctioned geography critiques the nostalgia that later stories express as characters repeatedly lament the supposed loss of the clear divisions and control practiced under slavery.

Although this story has a playful tone and Terrel functions as a trickster in various scenes, the implications are quite seriously conflicted. Buck and Buddy are would-be abolitionists, slowly freeing their father's slaves, moving the slaves into the still unfinished house, and turning a blind eye to the slaves' nighttime roving. At the same time, they do not emancipate all of the slaves as they see themselves as necessary midwives to freedom.

Ambivalence permeates this era of the McCaslin saga. The actions of the McCaslin twins are in conflict with their beliefs; their "moral stability," as Evans phrases it, is idiosyncratic. The days of their father are often treated as halcyon, with later generations constantly establishing their ties to him, but his sons' reactions to his authority and legacy reveal skepticism for the merits of their father's primacy and aggrandizement. The past, although often evoked as such by the characters, hardly seems free of degradation.

One character who continuously struggles with the legacy of his grandfather, father, uncle, and the McCaslin past is Ike. In three of seven stories of the cycle, his development takes center stage and connects the narratives, which span over eighty years. As most critics view "The Bear" as the moral center of the book, Ike plays a key role in establishing the interconnections of the cycle and coming to any resolution for the volume. Ike's status in this cycle adheres to the status of the protagonist described in the first chapter, in which the protagonist exposes the contradictions inherent in the form. His central position lends coherence to the stories, but the



stories collectively also disrupt that narrow coherence. Ike's experiences highlight the conflict of the individual and community, but also show the arbitrary nature of selecting an individual to stand out from the community.

Ike is a classic example of a protagonist that could easily have been someone else; indeed, he could have been many other people. Although he is recognized as the *de facto* heir to the McCaslin property and prestige, by virtue of his being descended from Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin through white males, the stories present several alternative protagonists for the McCaslin family saga, either because they act as heirs to the property or spirit of the patriarch. The Edmonds line, which includes Cass, Zack, and Roth, all represent the practical heir, and Cass especially presents a possible heir as the boy narrator of "Was." The penultimate story suggests that the future of the line remains open and embodied in the unnamed son of Roth and James's granddaughter. However, it is Lucas that perhaps best represents the industrial and entrepreneurial spirit of their shared paternity, and he is at the center of the other long story in the volume, "The Fire and the Hearth." Although very different from "The Bear," the former story also treats accountability and self. Moreover, according to the logic of the superiority of male descent, Lucas represents as likely a candidate as Ike. Lucas highlights the contradictory logic of the color line and patriarchy for the McCaslins. His very presence disrupts the logic of a protagonist, or, in other words, a single heir to the narrative inheritance. Although many read Ike as the sole protagonist of the volume, the cycle actually deploys multiple protagonists. Peripheral protagonists such as Rider in "Pantaloons in Black" and Gavin Stevens in the title story further erode any foundation for reading as Ike as solely central.

In the structure of the cycle, Faulkner both engages and subverts the expectations of progression through his emphasis on repetition. The primacy that critics such as Brooks and

Cowley place on the sequence of stories depicting Ike reveals an impulse toward teleology. The trio of stories provides the most extended treatment of any character in the volume and align with the formal conventions of the bildungsroman. The activity that occupies his coming of age, hunting, parallels the teleology of Ike's development. However, acts of deferral mark the hunting experience, much like Ike's development. When resolution is achieved, either in the killing of the bear or the act of repudiating his inheritance, the end is unsatisfying. It is the ritual of hunting which is to be enjoyed and not the kill. Similarly, it is the conflict of Ike's position that is interesting, not the abdication of it. In all of these narrative events, the third-person narration engages a retrospective tone, much like the tone of *Winesburg*. This retrospective tone resonates throughout the volume but is heightened in "The Bear." Although hunting would seem to be an act predicated on surprise and a lack of foreknowledge, the story suggests otherwise:

So he should have hated and feared Lion. Yet he did not. It seemed to him that something, he didn't know what, was beginning; had already begun. It was like the last act on a set stage. It was the beginning of the end of something, he didn't know what except that he would not grieve. He would be humble and proud that he had been found worthy to be part of it too or even just to see it too. (216-217)

The retrospective tone and the sense that the end of the play is already determined undercut the apparent teleology of the hunt. With the ending predetermined, including Ike's response to it, the stories cut through the logic of causation and instead privilege recurrence. Recurrence matters here and throughout the Ike sequence because it gives some sense of the collapse of time, itself a major crisis in Faulkner's work and one to which I return later in this chapter. Although the Ike stories appear to build to his act of repudiation, that too is known to readers from the first page.

The sequence of stories centering on Ike highlight the parallels between the subject and form of the cycle. The tensions between the individual and the community and between action and deferral distinguish cycles linked by a common setting, such as *Go Down, Moses*. In “The Bear,” Faulkner depicts the struggle of a long hunt. The cycle, like the hunt, requires—even demands—patience. One must follow its markers, tracks, and then wait. Like Old Ben himself, the cycle requires long deferrals and demands that one puts in the time. In that they both begin with a lack, require interpretive skills and the ability to follow a path, and culminate in a scene of finality, the hunting scenes mirror the narrative form of *Go Down, Moses*.

#### The Gaps in the Ledger and McCaslin Kinship

The narrative form of *Go Down, Moses* parallels not only the hunt and locality but also kinship. The descendants of Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin all struggle with and for the legacy of their forefather. Although the myth of him is omnipresent in the stories, Lucius does not actually appear in any of them. Lucius figures as a lack in the text; all are searching for him, his heir, or his status as progenitor. The characters, in particular Ike, are hunting for some kind of meaning for the larger-than-life figure of their forefather. In this, they employ the same tracking and honing skills they use in hunting, whether it is for the bear or buried treasure. The absence of Lucius initiates a pattern of gaps in the McCaslin genealogy that make the exact familial relations uncertain, comports with the generic features of the cycle. As the trope of hunting suggests, deferral, insinuation, and interpretation mark the narratives of kinship in the cycle.

That all of the kin relations are uncertain and open to interpretation becomes a central thematic concern and crisis in *Go Down, Moses*. As we saw in chapter two, family trees often provide legitimacy to filial relationships; however, “in the case of the McCaslins, the diagram produces little gain in clarity. Rather than a clear line of descent, an orderly and hierarchical depiction of biological and social legitimacy, the McCaslin tree looks more like a tangled bush, or even a forest” (Evans 200-201). The McCaslin tree, although it begins from a single source, branches and breaks in unexpected ways, as he has children by three women, two of whom are slaves and one of whom is likely his daughter. The extent to which Lucius, Buck, or Buddy might have known that Tomasina was Lucius’s own daughter is yet another mystery. As the generations grow, they cross and create new branches that defy the legitimacy offered by such genealogies and complicate any clear notion of how descent works in this family. As stories reveal new lines of genealogy and fresh connections among existing lines, the stories intimate that kinship is unknowable.

In the context of this nebulous web of relations, Lucius’s white descendants become obsessed with the idea of his heir. His descendants assign the qualities of avarice, ambition, cunning, and strength to Lucius’s myth, and consequently feelings of weakness and anxiety plague them. “The Fire and the Hearth” identifies one possible heir: Lucas Beauchamp. Carothers “Roth” Edmonds goes head-to-head with Lucas and is bested. As he considers that Lucas is “Impervious to time,” Roth realizes that “the face which was not at all a replica even in caricature of his grandfather McCaslin’s but which had heired and now reproduced with absolute and shocking fidelity the old ancestor’s entire generation and thought” (114). Lucas possesses the qualities assigned to Lucius. In his maintenance of whiskey stills, his treasure hunting, and his children (he and his brother are the only heirs through the male line to reproduce), Lucas

embodies the production that his white relatives romanticize. Lucas's strength is evident even in his name. Whereas Roth takes the diminutive of the original name, Lucas changes his given name, Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin Beauchamp, to strip himself of the appearance that he is a lesser version of the original. Bearing the whole name of the man who is both his grandfather and great-grandfather does not interest Lucas, and he accordingly makes the name his own by collapsing it. As Roth ponders the differences between himself and Lucas, the narrative voice switches to an internal monologue voiced by Roth:

*He's more like old Carothers than all the rest of us put together, including old Carothers. He is both heir and prototype simultaneously of all the geography and climate and biology which sired old Carothers and all the rest of us and our kind, myriad, countless, faceless, even nameless now except himself who fathered himself, intact and complete, contemptuous, as old Carothers must have been, of all blood black white yellow or red, including his own. (114-115)*

This internal monologue by Roth emblemizes the extent to which his descendants romanticize Lucius as being a kind of first man. According to family lore, Lucius appears to come from nowhere and his wife remains unnamed, giving the impression that he alone sired the large clan.

This passage articulates a belief in the possibility of pure bloodlines, uncontaminated by biology, geography, or race. This belief energizes and poisons the McCaslins, Beauchamps, and, perhaps most acutely, the Edmondses. Lucas, descended from Lucius's own daughter, has a purity of blood that, for Roth, transcends his racial subordination. His status as heir apparent, although heavily substantiated by the standards set forth in the story, is ultimately only provisional, as subsequent stories offer alternatives and contradictory visions of kinship. Roth's

monologue makes clear the felt gap in the genealogy; in other words, Roth's statements express a notion that important kinship lines are missing. Gaps in the form reflect the gaps in genealogy.

Omissions, gaps, and exclusions figure significantly in *Go Down, Moses* in terms of both story and structure. Although the stories are largely autonomous, there are formal incongruities that disrupt their autonomy. These incongruities either enhance the interconnections among the stories or disrupt their coherence. For example, the overture-like opening of "Was," which does not fit the rest of the story, serves to connect it with the later Ike-centered sequence. The final story repeats the formal element of the first: it includes a short, separate section voiced from a different setting and perspective. "Pantaloons in Black" contains a similar element: a counter-reading of the story's events by the sheriff's deputy and his wife. This counter reading fails to accurately understand the motivations and implications of the character's actions, thus modeling structural and interpretive disjunction. Some stories have chapters, some have sections, some have both, and others have none. The anomalies and incongruities challenge the notion of structural unity, offering instead an imbalance between parts, which mirrors the McCaslin family tree, made up of figures with many descendants and others with none, unclear lines of descent and parentage, and missing names and relationships.

Temporal gaps parallel the narrative gaps in McCaslin kinship. Many questions remain unanswered: Where does James go? What happens to Ike's wife? How is it that Buck and Sophonsiba eventually marry? These questions indicate the gaps in plot; larger omissions emerge in terms of motivation, intention, and consequences: Does love exist between Lucius and Eunice or between Lucius and Tomasina? To what extent is Tomey's Turl playing puppet master in the opening story? What is the nature of Buck and Buddy's domestic scene? And, what truly motivates Ike's repudiation of his inheritance? Is it guilt over the past, a desire to start

fresh, or a disavowal of responsibility? Does his repudiation make any difference? On top of all of these questions are the myriad McCaslins who go unnamed and remain absent, including the clan matriarch and its youngest member. The cycle's structure relies on an open-endedness that reflects the lack of closure in the family lines. That so many of these questions go unanswered suggests that the stories' omissions replicate the fiction of kinship the McCaslins have created for themselves. They infuse their family history with grandeur, ignoring those elements that do not cohere within their accepted narrative. The white McCaslins especially omit any recognition of their biracial relatives and their ongoing interracial intimacies, as lovers, surrogate siblings, and parental figures.

The opening story "Was" establishes the importance of gaps in kinship in relation to race and the unacknowledged agency of African Americans in the fate of whites. "Was" illustrates how these narratives offer implied but not definitive answers to the questions listed. In particular, this story addresses but never explicitly answers how it is that Buck and Sophonsiba eventually marry and to what extent Tomey's Turl plays puppet master. As his conversation with Brooks indicates, Faulkner disavows having ever written the complete story of Buck and Sophonsiba's marriage, which Tomey's Turl attempts to orchestrate in this story. That Turl is Buck's brother and that this is never acknowledged by either man initiates the volume's ongoing concern with unacknowledged and distorted kinship ties. In this story, Turl arranges for the men to wager their slaves in a game of cards, ensuring that Tennie and Turl would be together no matter the outcome. Even before this, he runs away so frequently to her place that the men soon realize it would be less trouble just to buy one or the other. Turl makes it known that he has left to reinforce the trouble his frequent visits cause. In running away, he forces Buck to come to the Beauchamps. Knowing the rules of etiquette and Sophonsiba's desire for Buck, he masterfully

positions himself within the center of the action as politeness and family prolong Buck's visit. Over the course of the game, Turl serves as dealer, and the story strongly implies that he controls its outcome, so he does indeed play puppet master. Although Buck escapes this time, the plotting of Turl indicates that he is cleverer and will succeed in his goal, which the later stories show him having done, even if they do not give specifics as to how Buck and Sophonsiba end up getting married. Neither Buck nor Turl ever explicitly voices any suspicion that they are brothers. Turl moves the pieces around in an attempt to orchestrate his plan; these machinations seem to descend from their father, as other stories allude to Lucius's cunning. He plays on Buck's ambivalence toward slavery and marriage, two institutions that organize and threaten his way of life. "Was" does not reveal their possible biological kinship; only when read against the other stories does this dimension emerge. This deferral aligns with the characters' deferral of acknowledging these kin ties.

Problems of kinship and of narrative coalesce in the fourth section of "The Bear," wherein Ike reads the plantation ledgers that lead him to conclude that incest, death, and interracial intimacies laid the foundation for his family.<sup>12</sup> Although Faulkner had written versions of other sections, namely "The Bear" or "Lion," the fourth section of "The Bear" was an entirely new creation in 1941. Within the story, the fourth section appears chronologically out of order, as the subsequent and final section is set three years earlier. Faulkner later excluded the fourth section when including the piece in *The Big Woods* (1955), a collection of his so-called hunting stories, and Cowley suggested readers skip it if they wanted a coherent hunting story. The inclusion of this section in *Go Down, Moses* indicates how much meaning derives from incongruity.



The fourth section of “The Bear” returns the action of the story to the McCaslin farm and depicts the conversation in which Ike repudiates his inheritance and fights with Carothers McCaslin “Cass” Edmonds, who serves as a surrogate father and brother to Ike. It contains some of the cycle’s starkest statements on kinship. The ledgers expose that kinship powerfully conditions the characters’ perceptions of themselves and the world. They reflect that it is impossible to adequately record kinship. Perhaps most significantly, they reveal that kinship relies on a fictive moment and purity of origin and that subscribes to this narrative can be destructive. All of these statements on kinship emerge as Ike reads the plantation ledgers wherein he finds “evidence” of Lucius’s actions. Alternative genealogies crop up in other stories, but Ike, and many readers, perceives the ledgers as a definitive family history.<sup>13</sup> Of the plantation ledgers, Ike

realised that they probably contained a chronological and much more comprehensive though doubtless tedious record than he would ever get from any other source, not alone of his own flesh and blood but of all his people, not only the whites but the black one too, who were as much a part of his ancestry as his white progenitors, and of the land which they had all held and used in common and fed from and on and would continue to use in common without regard to color or titular ownership. (256)

The chronology of the ledgers contrasts with the oral histories told to Ike in the hunting camps and on the farm. This passage, in its references to chronology and comprehensiveness, signals Ike’s desire to know the entire history of his family and the land, which here appear entwined.<sup>14</sup>

Ike approaches the ledgers with the expectation of finality and resolution, and these expectations color his reading. The story excerpts and includes the ledger entries. They appear

as italicized entries inserted into the text, thus recreating the process of Ike's reading. For instance, one entry summarizes Eunice's life as, "*Eunice Bought by Father in New Orleans 1807 \$650. dollars. Marrid to Thucydus 1809 Drownd in Crick Cristmas Day 1832*" (255). Other entries describe Eunice's death. The first, ostensibly written in Buddy's hand, states, "*June 21th 1833 Drownd herself*" (256). Another entry, this time by Buck, counters, "*23 Jun 1833 Who in hell ever heard of a niger drownding him self*" (256). Finally, Buddy again writes, "*Aug 13th 1833 Drownd herself*" (256). These ledger entries, among others which describe money left to Tomasina's descendants, convince Ike of Lucius's relationships with first Eunice and then their daughter Tomasina.

The narrative includes Ike's statement on chronology and comprehensiveness, and the inclusion of the entries leads to an impression of verisimilitude; however, the story also gives us grounds to be suspicious of the resolution Ike reaches. Firstly, the ledgers do not appear chronologically. Some entries, such as the first included here, collapse large amounts of time into a single summation. Others list events after they happen, as in the debate between Buck and Buddy over the cause of death, an event that was not recorded until six months after the initial listing of Eunice's death. The obfuscation of chronology suggests that the ledgers are not as comprehensive or as legible as Ike initially makes them out to be. Moreover, the story only presents some of the notes from the ledgers; this selection mimics Ike's own reading practices. Although he claims to want omniscience, he selects from the information, omitting and disregarding what does not fit what he already believes to be there. The gaps in the ledgers reflect Ike's impulse to deliberately read for a predetermined meaning. Although there is evidence for his conclusions, the story's construction recreates the mania and purpose with which he reads the family chronicles. In this, Ike's reading in the fourth section of "The Bear"

parallels his attitudes toward the hunt in earlier sections. For Ike, the bear, the hunt, and the discoveries found in the ledgers exist outside of time, as if they were predestined to happen. The verb tense, both retrospective and present (as in “then he was twenty-one” [243]) and statements within the text itself (such as “It was like the last act on a set stage” [216]) indicate that Ike approaches both as inevitable and himself as a mere actor completing the scene. Rather than resolving the unanswered questions about the family’s genealogy, Ike’s reading of the ledgers display an ongoing uncertainty of kinship.

Ultimately, the evidence for Ike’s discovery is meager and spotty, based solely on selected entries from the ledgers and the bequest of money to Terrel’s children. Despite its limitations, generations of readers have reached the same conclusion Ike does (Evans 220-221). The truth of Ike’s discovery is less important than the process of interpretation he models.<sup>15</sup> The practice of making meaning from selections is itself a model for the kind of reading that *Go Down, Moses* requires. Although Ike desperately wants to uncover a conclusive history of his family and the land, the ledgers only give him hints, insinuations, and contradictions. That Ike seeks the answer by discerning a clear genealogical line dooms him to failure, as the stories indicate the twists and turns that the family lines take. Their form parallels to a degree the form of *Go Down, Moses* itself. The cycle hints at a unity that it simultaneously denies. Thus, the cycle requires that we maintain multiple contingent readings as we move through the stories. It asks that we suspend final judgment and allow for both connection and heterogeneity. Rita Barnard argues that the disjointed form and the interminable sentences of the fourth section serve as metatextual rejoinders to the slave owner’s ledger: “the eschewal of such accounting is precisely the point: the complex, but elusive construction of the cycle as a whole offers a fittingly open-ended way of narrating an ‘injustice’ that, in Faulkner’s severe but accurate

judgment, ‘can never be amortized’” (65). Ike’s frantic and idiosyncratic reading of the ledgers mirrors the kind of reading the cycle requires; his readings also reflect the manic effects of denying and then accepting his patriarch’s sordid history.

In summarizing Faulkner’s treatment of interracial intimacies, John N. Duvall concludes that “What destroys whites in all of these narratives is their failure to acknowledge their literal and symbolic kinship with African Americans” (256). In *Go Down, Moses*, the effects of this denial are extreme. Lucius’s white heirs struggle not only with the actual biological kinship but also with the reality of having shared land, parents, experiences, and children. In “The Fire and the Hearth,” this denial comes as a rite of passage for a young Roth: “Then one day the old curse of his fathers, the old haughty ancestral pride based not on any value but on an accident of geography, stemmed not from courage and honor but from wrong and shame, descended to him” (107). Roth kicks Henry out of his bed, initiating an irreversible denial of the brotherly affection he had for Henry and the parental love he receives from Molly. Faulkner depicts this distancing as deforming all those it touches, and the notion of pure blood becomes a grotesque absurdity to which some characters cling. “A family that insists upon pure blood, whatever that means,” Polk argues, “in effect insists on its own extinction, closing itself off through endogamy first (cousins and nieces and nephews) then through sibling incest, then twins of the opposite sex, as in Poe, then twins of the same sex, and finally the sterile isolation of masturbation” (72). In this summation, Polk captures the trajectory of the McCaslin fate: early generations are required to choose mates from the narrow local neighborhood, as is the case with Buck and Sophonsiba Beauchamp or the domestic partnership of siblings, as with Buck and Buddy, until finally procreation is an impossibility, as it is for Ike who is “uncle to half a county and a father to no one” (3). Even when Roth reproduces, his denial of his interracial mistress ensures that the line

ends with him. That James's granddaughter, who remains unnamed, does not tell Roth of their shared ancestor confirms that Roth's denial extends from "the old haughty ancestral pride," rather than guilt over incest.

For Ike, the appearance of this distant cousin instigates a crisis over kinship that distills his lifelong anxiety of kinship into a single encounter; this anxiety has, as its basis, an anxiety about interpretation. Her appearance in "Delta Autumn," the last story in the Ike-centered sequence, with her infant son confirms the twists and turns of the family lines. In the previous story, Ike has relinquished his rights and responsibilities to the land in favor of living in a small house, going on an annual hunt farther and farther into the big woods, and remaining childless. Many critics read Ike's repudiation as a noble acknowledgement of the sins of his grandfather. Conversely, Lucas, Ike's wife, and James's granddaughter read it as weakness, while still others read it as a selfish act of avoidance. The fact that Ike does little to acknowledge or alleviate the plight of his African American relatives confirms this latter interpretation and gives credence to the reading that Ike has not escaped the "old haughty ancestral pride," whatever his intentions might have been in relinquishing his inheritance. Ultimately, Ike's reading of the ledgers does not compensate for the unacknowledged kinship. One complicating possibility is that Ike takes offense not at his grandfather's sin, which is suggested by the fact that he does not so much as mention this to Cass in section four of "The Bear," but is instead offended by the generations that failed to see it, read this interpretation, and act in any way. In the absence of viable models, he chooses to renounce. Whatever his intentions at twenty-one, we know that by the time he is eighty, Ike panics in the face of continued interracial intimacy. As he talks with James's granddaughter, she begins to tell him who she is and that this means she is interracial, although he initially reads her as white.

Temporality, kinship, and locality coalesce in Ike's imagination, instigating a crisis of identity for himself, his idea of the big woods, and even of the nation. Ike's realization violates a faith in his own interpretive skills and upsets his worldview. Incredulity marks Ike's panic, registered in italics: "*Maybe in a thousand years or two thousand years in America*, he thought. *But not now! Not now!* He cried, not loud, in a voice of amazement, pity, and outrage: 'You're a nigger!'" (344). His panic extends from his kin circle to encompass the entire world, and he reads it as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy stemming from the destruction of the land: "*Chinese and African and Aryan and Jew, all breed and spawn together until no one has time to say which one is which nor cares*" (347). This scene is a final indication that Ike's interpretive practices are faulty and he knows it, causing a very grave crisis for his personal identity. The coupling upsets Ike because it invites "the possibility of a muddling of a genealogical lines that would inevitably be a confusion of narrative lines, a mixing and crossing that places all certainty of direction in doubt" (Evans 229). His response to James's granddaughter and his thoughts suggest that Ike feels as if time has betrayed him. His reaction is cut with ambivalence when he bequeaths General Compson's horn, his last rightful and emotional possession, to the infant, thus acknowledging some kinship by the transfer of property.

### The Ancient Temporalities of the Present

The discourse of time registers Ike's panic over the unreadable body. He has prepared himself for the eventuality of collapsed racial distinctions but projected this as occurring thousands of years into the future. When his worldview breaks down, he interprets it as a betrayal by time. He renders his anxiety over interracial intimacies as resulting in a lack of time

for interpretation. As racial distinctions cease to deter these intimacies, he worries that this will continue “*until no one has time to say which one is which nor cares*” (347). Time and interpretive practice intersect in “Delta Autumn” and all of the Ike-centered stories. His reading of the ledgers is nothing so much as an attempt to arrest and interpret the past in a desperate effort to determine the present and future. His spotty interpretation suggests that Ike lacks control over the relationship between interpretation and time; thus, “one can read ‘The Bear’ as a cautionary tale about reading the past, about using the past without agility, or without a keen sense of irony, without ‘sublimating the actual into the apocryphal,’ as Faulkner himself would put it” (Parini 168). Because Ike approaches the act of reading the ledgers as if he already knows what they contain, he lacks the ability to nuance the past and dooms himself to being dictated by the consequences of an apocryphal interpretation. Ike’s readings of both the ledgers and the body of James’s granddaughter indicate the power of the past over the present, a central theme of *Go Down, Moses* and of Faulkner’s canon. The language of temporality recurs in the cycle’s depictions of reading, particularly in scenes depicting interpretations of kinship and locality.

Just as locality and kinship create connections across the stories in *Go Down, Moses*, temporality also generates coherence among the narratives, both in terms of structure and theme. In his short-story cycles, Faulkner tends to sequence the stories in a roughly chronological order. The main action of the stories in *Go Down, Moses* follows a chronological progression. This temporal sequencing contrasts with Faulkner’s novelistic experimentation with temporality wherein he largely eschews chronology. Despite the apparent difference, his experimentations with temporality in the novel and short-story cycle are very similar. This similarity stems from the fact that Faulkner experiments with time within the stories rather than within the cycle’s general outline. For instance, section four of “The Bear” occurs three years after the final section

of the story. The opening of “Was” expresses events that would take another century to pass after the main action of the story. Past and future events invade the present within each story, just as they do in his novels and other short stories. Thus, his obsession with temporality shapes his cycles. Unlike the cycles discussed in the last chapter, Faulkner does not assign years to the stories in *Go Down, Moses*; rather, references and allusions to key dates, such as Isaac’s birth and Eunice’s death, or historical events, such as the Second World War, gesture toward a timeline without cementing it. This avoidance of a definite timeline evinces a Faulknerian conception of time. Faulkner’s short-story cycles, in particular *Go Down, Moses*, favor neither absolute rigid linear progression nor absolute open cyclicity. Rather, both notions of time determine the course of the narratives, the characters’ responses to events, and the multiple understandings of history espoused by the characters and the works themselves. The short-story cycle models the openness and connection without unity that define Faulkner’s sense of both temporality and narrative.

Thus, his work in the short-story cycle extends and further complicates our critical understanding of Faulkner’s conception of time. A year after the French translation of *The Sound and The Fury* appeared in 1938, Jean-Paul Sartre wrote that Faulkner’s disavowal of chronology represents a “metaphysics of time,” and the project of his fiction is to illuminate how “Man's misfortune lies in being time-bound”(43). Rather than chronology determining meaning in his characters’ lives, they are bound by past “emotional constellations” (45) where key dramatic events filter every other event. In *The Sound and the Fury*, Sartre identifies Caddy's pregnancy, Benjy's castration, and Quentin's suicide as three such events. In *Go Down, Moses*, Ike’s repudiation, Lucius’s incest, and Zack’s claim on Molly serve as similar “emotional constellations” for the characters. Thus, selected events from the past bleed into and dictate the



present. The Isaac-centered sequence dramatizes the extent to which the past invades the present for Ike from a young age. In “The Old People,” Sam Fathers, who seems to possess infinite knowledge but is ultimately mortal, would often sit with Ike beside a fire and tell stories of the old times: “And as he talked about those old times and those dead and vanished men of another race from either that the boy knew, gradually to the boy those old times would cease to be old times and would become part of the boy’s present, not only as if they had happened yesterday but as if they were still happening” (165). Ike’s desire to return to an idyllic past colors his reading of the ledgers. This nostalgia reveals a desire to know his father and grandfather; more than that, however, these early childhood scenes establish in Ike a desire to keep reliving an idealized ritualized past and thereby control time.

The past’s incursion into the present inspires the interminable sentences of Faulkner’s prose, particularly heightened in this passage and throughout *Go Down, Moses*. In “The Bear,” Faulkner writes an 1800-word sentence. Faulkner’s famously long sentences reflect the ongoing motion of time that is so central to his fiction. Cowley recounts what Faulkner told him of this feature in his writing: “‘My ambition,’ he said, ‘is to put everything into one sentence—not only the present but the whole past on which it depends and which keeps overtaking the present, second by second’” (663). The particular project of *Go Down, Moses* in terms of temporality is to establish an historical frame from which to view his entire canon. The characters’ obsessions focus “upon a time now lost once and for all—a time of unanimity, of invisible nature, and a time of origins, that is, before property, slavery, and profit, a time that hunters ritually try to revive at a certain season each year—and situates in a particular place (the big Woods, the land concession, Jefferson County)” (Glissant 46). *Go Down, Moses* exemplifies the temporality of consciousness that distinguishes Faulkner’s style. The cycle also stands as an important

amendment to it, as the cycle gives us a direct representation of one part of the past that so haunts his other works.<sup>16</sup> The short-story cycle, in its ability to balance cyclical and progressive understandings of history, is an ideal form for showing the paradoxical nature of the past.

The recursive structure of the cycle aligns with the characters' sense that time has a malleable property. In *Go Down, Moses*, time can expand and contract with stifling and liberating effects. When Sartre writes that man is "time-bound," he refers to the ways in which time exceeds man's control and dictates his consciousness. The stories in *Go Down, Moses* show this imprisoning sense of time to full effect. In its concluding statement, the opening story, "Was," sets the stage for time as flexible. Buck, who has been held captive overnight at the Beauchamp house, states, "It seems to me I've been away from home a whole damn month" (29). The story buttresses the notion of time as a prison sentence in that the Beauchamps hold him captive and try to trap him into marrying Sophonsiba, which he sees as another kind of imprisonment of long duration. This imprisonment juxtaposes Terrel's desire to marry Tennie, but they are kept apart by an interminable sentence of servitude and separation. Time takes on stifling properties in the context of marriage and enslavement in "Was." In contrast, in "Pantaloons in Black," the brief history of his marriage collapses into a single moment for Rider: "the dusk-filled single room where all those six months were now crammed and crowded into one instant, of time until there was no space left for air to breathe, crammed and crowded about the hearth, where the fire which was to have lasted to the end of them" (135-136). Time represents possibility in Rider's marriage, but that possibility is foreclosed by her premature death. Time takes on spatial qualities above the hearth. The hearth, in this story and in "The Fire and the Hearth," measures the intensity and duration or marital commitment. Thus, it is a recurring image that crystallizes and coalesces the cycle's concern with place, family, and time.

The image also connects “Pantaloons in Black,” a largely autonomous story, to the cycle as a whole. The hearth, which burns throughout Lucas and Molly’s long marriage, symbolizes the power of time and devotion. The fire in the hearth “was hot, not scorching, searing, but possessing a slow, deep solidity of heat, a condensation of the two years during which the fire had burned constantly above it, a condensation not of fire but of time, as though not the fire’s dying and not even water would cool it but only time would” (50-51). This passage figures time as the only thing powerful enough to cool fire, signaling the elemental sense of time in these stories.

Among the white McCaslins, the idea of time as elemental and powerful stems from their belief in race as ancient and their conflicted beliefs regarding racial purity. Roth believes his rejection of Henry and Molly is the result of an “old haughty ancestral pride” born of blood and some ancient truth rather than conditioned by his milieu, historical moment, and personal attitudes. Roth’s response to Lucas in “The Fire and the Hearth” bespeaks his belief in some essential, ancient truth to race distinctions, which he thinks he sees in Lucas: “Without changing the inflection of his voice and apparently without effort or even design Lucas became not Negro but nigger not secret so much as impenetrable, not servile and not effacing, but enveloping himself in an aura of timelessness and stupid impassivity almost like a smell” (58). Although the story complicates this characterization of Lucas, this passage typifies Roth’s general attitude of essentializing in response to that which perplexes him. The story confirms Roth’s sense that there is something timeless about Lucas. He seems younger than Edmonds and Mollie, who are both younger than himself, and everyone suspects that he will outlast them, just as he outlasted the previous McCaslin generations before Roth.

A vague sense of his own long-lost purity gives rise to Roth's response to Lucas, and this sense of whiteness as tainted deforms not just Roth but all of Lucius's white heirs. Through the repetition of their actions and beliefs across generations, Faulkner depicts a family doomed by their rigid faith in the honor of racial purity. Reading Lucas as impenetrable, the narrative voice in "The Fire and the Hearth" breaks to Roth's internal monologue, "*I am not only looking at a face older than mine and which has seen and winnowed more, but at a man most of whose blood was pure ten thousand years when my own anonymous beginning became mixed enough to produce me*" (69). Ike articulates a similar sense of his impurity and of the superiority of African Americans in his conversation with Cass. In discerning what motivated his grandfather to leave one thousand dollars to Tomasina's children and grandchildren, he explains, "He didn't want to. He had to. Because they will endure. They are better than we are. Stronger than we are" (281). Although Tomasina and her descendants, including Lucas, are both black and white, such a distinction does not matter to either Ike or Roth, because of that supreme belief in an essential, transmittable difference.

Although both credit African Americans as being stronger and more pure than themselves, their essentializing and actions are no less pernicious, especially to themselves, than their demonization of the black characters have been. When Roth denies his child, again only giving money instead of acknowledgment, he repeats Lucius's actions. The actions and attitudes of the past repeat one hundred years later, and the volume's structure reflects the cyclical nature of the action. The belief in the ancient longevity of this difference validates for Ike and Roth their decision to do nothing; in Ike's case, his grand act is actually to do nothing. The title of the cycle, with its allusion both to the slave spiritual and the biblical story of Moses's escape from slavery, evokes that duration and the sense of time implicit to the spiritual, the story of Moses,

and *Go Down, Moses*. Directions and lines pose a threat because their ends can be ambiguous. Moses had to go down into slavery to get back out and achieve eternal life.

From the multiple stories within this short-story cycle, it can be difficult, if not impossible, to identify the cycle's ultimate stance on the relationship between temporality and race. Faulkner's own statements in support of the "Go Slow" approach regarding desegregation further complicate this connection (Crawford 43-46). However, the treatment of the unequivocal deformation and sterility of the white McCaslins arbitrates the destruction their beliefs reek on the white half of the family. Whatever the unresolved and conflicted feelings of either the author or text, the cycle dramatizes the inherent relationship between time and ideologies of racial purity. Because any such purity can only go back so far, they must have a fictive point of origin; in the case of the McCaslins, this origin is Lucius. As his personal history shows, the so-called origin is always a corrupted and often arbitrary moment. Although they come to different conclusions, Ike's reading of the ledgers and the stories the family tells about themselves indicate the extent to which any such narrative must rely on much that has forgotten or omitted. All such narratives ultimately depend on a kind of narrative continuity that is "false."

*Go Down, Moses* denies any definitive judgment on the imbrications of temporality and racial identities. If anything, the only judgment we are left with is "Ambivalence," according to Glissant, who continues, "We knew conditions for Blacks were no better in Louisiana than in Mississippi. Under the spell of William Faulkner's works, though, we had conferred upon the latter an absolute weight of representation for the Deep South. But, in fact, Faulkner never claimed to expose, criticize, or improve conditions for Blacks in the United States" (9). Rather, *Go Down, Moses* captures and repeats the ways in which temporality shapes the characters' understanding of racial identity. Time becomes a metaphor for articulating the multiple

responses to the color line: time is a shield, a salve, an excuse, a possibility, and a cuckold. As such, temporality shows little regard for the conventional distinctions of the past, present, future. *Go Down, Moses* dramatizes the collapse of these distinctions. Its form reflects the ongoing construction of identity; whether that identity is geographic, familial, or racial, it is never static, definite, or stable but always dynamic, provisional, and inconsistent.

## Conclusions

Released in 1942, *Go Down, Moses* was published at a critical time in Faulkner's career. Not only was he struggling financially, he was also moving forward from the hyper-experimentation of his earlier fiction to the interest in the serial form and realism of the Snopes trilogy. *Go Down, Moses* dramatizes how the divide between these interests is not so wide. The 1940s were also transitional period for US modernism, and *Go Down, Moses* crystallizes the tensions for Faulkner's fiction and for modernist expression. With *Go Down, Moses*, and particularly "With the creation of Isaac McCaslin," Early argues, "Faulkner moves toward the central moral tradition of the realistic novel... in *Go Down, Moses* realism in characterization creates a moral intensity unique in Faulkner's work" (19). Realism's interest in the production of human behavior out of historical and material conditions is evident in Faulkner's treatment of Ike. That Faulkner blends realism in characterization with modernist formal experimentation undermines the fallacies of objective, discernable truth that Faulkner considers inherent in more conventionally realistic narrative. The style of this short-story cycle resonates with Raymond Williams's sense that the vocabulary and structures of realism persist and shape modernist expression. The anxiety over European influence that Faulkner articulates in his essays on

Anderson reflects the indebtedness of modernism to realist writers, from Europeans, such as Gogol, Flaubert, and Dickens, to American frontier humorists and realists, such as Longstreet and Twain (Cowley xxix). The short-story cycle is critical to understanding the ways in which realism endures in modernism; more than that, the short-story cycle represents a linchpin in understanding the continuity among realism, modernism, and postmodernism in American letters.

Faulkner's fiction models the ways in which the cycle is modernist but also pulls from realism and portends postmodernism. If we most often understand modernism to be an impulse to understand, test, stabilize, and challenge the legitimacy of the word, the short-story cycle is an essential component of this critical narrative. Stein's emphasis on gerunds, Hemingway's austere prose, Joyce's internal monologues, and Faulkner's interminable sentences all display an interest in the word as a sign and symbol. Although these modernists come to different ends, they begin from that same interest in the word. This interest in the possibilities and limitations of expression similarly shapes their work in the short-story cycle. The short-story articulates in form what these authors were after at the level of the word and the sentence: the construction and perforations possible in language. The modernist short-story cycle also intimates one of the defining moves of postmodern fiction "to hide or at least obscure the mechanism of narration" (Ferguson 86). Of the modernists working in the cycle, Faulkner is perhaps the most explicit example of this prescient postmodernism, and, not surprisingly, he has been read as postmodernist. The short-story cycle's maintenance of the multiple influences, concerns, and modes compels us to reassess its place in American literature.

This problematizing of textual unity within the short-story cycle revolutionized the novel, the short story, and American letters in the twentieth century. The absence of textual harmony in

the cycle initiated new, pervasive narrative techniques and interests. The cycle's privileging of openness and cyclicity over closure and teleology depicts the construction of contingent, provisional identities. Because a story represents only one moment in a sequence of moments, the construction of identity in the cycle is dynamic and resists static fixity. For these reasons, it has been an ideal form for portraying ethnic, racial, and regional identities, which so often treat the conflicts between autonomy and belonging.

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<sup>1</sup> See Lawrence H. Schwartz's *Creating Faulkner's Reputation: The Politics of Modern Literary Criticism* for a full account of the conditions and politics of Faulkner's reputation in these years, particularly the influence of Cowley's edition.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, he cites *Light in August* (1932) and *The Hamlet* (1940) as guilty of including incongruous thematic elements. He maintains that the treatment of Colonel Sutpen's design and the depiction of incest and miscegenation in *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) are incompatible. Of *The Sound and The Fury* (1929), he is skeptical whether the sections are sequenced in the best order.

<sup>3</sup> For more on this influence, see James Ferguson, "Introduction," *Faulkner's Short Fiction*.

<sup>4</sup> Although critics of this period downplay the influence and role of these movements on Faulkner's aesthetics, his short-story cycles demonstrate a commitment to the modes and language of earlier movements.

<sup>5</sup> Although he credits Faulkner with an originality of vision, Cowley also cites Honoré de Balzac's *La Comédie humaine*, consisting of nearly one hundred works divided by categories such as "Scenes of Provincial Life" and "Scenes of Parisian Life," as inspiration for Faulkner's fictive world (xiii). The geographic and class dimensions of Balzac's division and his collective vision bolster Cowley's comparison.

<sup>6</sup> For more comments on the form of *Go Down, Moses*, see his letter to Haas from April 28, 1940 (121-122) and also one to Bennett Cerf dated July 28, 1940 (135). See also a letter to the letter to Haas dated June 1, 1940 in which he also later terms *Go Down, Moses* "a connected book-length mss. from material written as short stories" (126).

<sup>7</sup> For example, Brooks suggests an alternative title for the volume: *The McCaslins (William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country 448)*. See also his comments on the *Go Down, Moses* as a novel in *First Encounters* (129).

<sup>8</sup> Contradiction is a quality Faulkner extols in a prefatory note to *The Mansion*, the third and final volume in the Snopes trilogy. Of the works, he claims, "there will be found discrepancies and contradictions in the thirty-four-year progress of this particular chronicle...contradictions and discrepancies due to the fact that the author has learned, he believes, more about the human heart and its dilemma than he knew thirty-four years ago" (331).

<sup>9</sup> This ambiguous relationship to facts recurs in Faulkner's letters when he describes his personal or family history. For instance, he and Cowley had been back and forth on the issue of



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biography in the introduction, with Cowley wanting to include reference to Faulkner's 1918 military service to account for a certain feeling of disenchantment after the war. In a letter to Cowley of February 18, 1946, Faulkner wrote, "to me it was false. Not factually, I dont [sic] care much for facts, am not interested in them, you cant [sic] stand a fact up, you've got to prop it up, and when you move to one side a little and look at it from that angle, it's not thick enough to cast a shadow in that direction" (*Selected Letters* 222).

<sup>10</sup> Most famously, perhaps, is the Compson Appendix that Faulkner wrote as an amendment to *The Sound and the Fury*. Begun as a brief synopsis to preface the Dilsey section for inclusion in *The Portable Faulkner*, it became an extensive genealogy of the Compson clan spanning from 1699 to 1945 (Cowley 664). Faulkner stated that any inconsistencies can be understood in light of the openness of the stories within *The Sound and The Fury*: "the inconsistencies in the appendix prove that to me the book is still alive after 15 years, and being still alive is still growing, changing; the appendix was done at the same heat as the book, even though 15 years later, and so it is the book itself which is inconsistent: not the appendix" (*Selected Letters* 222).

<sup>11</sup> Faulkner's statements not only bespeak a desire to build a national literature but a modernist one at that. These comments align with many who called for a recognition of the new modes then proliferating in regions of the United States, or what Herring calls "an inchoate theory of 'regional modernism'" (1).

<sup>12</sup> Sally Wolff recently found that Faulkner had access to and drew inspiration from similar actual ledgers kept by the McCarroll/Francisco family, who were family friends. He pulled and revised names, situations, and historical details for *Go Down, Moses*, as well as many of his other works, from these ledgers. Her initial findings were published in "William Faulkner and the Ledgers of History."

<sup>13</sup> Such alternative chronologies appear in "The Fire and the Hearth," which recounts the entangled family lines, focusing on James, Fonsiba, and Lucas (101-102). Another semi-comprehensive family history appears earlier in the story, which focuses more, although not exclusively, on the white McCaslin descendants (36-40).

<sup>14</sup> The McCaslin ledgers also come to represent the entire South in Ike's mind. Here, again, the locality and family become insuperable for Ike: "that chronicle which was a whole land in miniature, which multiplied and compounded was the entire South, twenty-three years after surrender and twenty-four from emancipation—that slow trickle of molasses and meal and meat, of shoes and straw hats and overalls, of plowlines and collars and heel-bolts and buckheads and clevises, which returned each fall as cotton—the threads frails as truth and impalpable as equators yet cable-strong to bind for life them who made the cotton to the land their sweat fell on" (280-281).

<sup>15</sup> For more on the nature of truth, especially in relation to the ledgers, see "A Great Story" in Evans (193-234).

<sup>16</sup> To an extent, this thick representation of the past also recurs in *The Unvanquished*, which depicts the period of and directly after the Civil War. Despite the fact that most see it as less serious than his major works, it represents another example of depictions of the past heightened in the form of the short-story cycle.

## Coda

### Curricula, Publishing, and Reception: Ongoing Challenges to the Cycle

The genre of the short-story cycle does not fit into existing rubrics in terms of curriculum design, literary studies, and the marketplace for fiction. As individual texts, short-story cycles often feature largely in curricula and may even reach large numbers of readers. However, the genre itself remains on the margins of readers' sensibilities and on the periphery of scholars' radars. That the genre's history spirals and shoots off into tangents contribute to its continued marginalization in literary studies and among readers. Its misattributions in marketing campaigns and in reception attest to this, as does the fact that there exist only a small number of studies dedicated to the genre, and these are all strikingly similar in their emphases. The tide is changing—as evidenced by a handful of recent articles and Whalan's *Race, Manhood, and Modernism in America: The Short Story Cycles of Sherwood Anderson and Jean Toomer* (2007), which takes seriously the significance of the genre for two major writers in relation to modernist and masculinity studies. However, it is a slow moving tide as the strength of educational and publishing institutions drown the genre and submerge it from view. Within high education, undergraduate curriculum design and Ph.D. literature programs marginalize the genre while M.F.A. programs valorize the cycle as a genre of choice, conditioning its visible but vexed status in the academy.

On one level, curriculum design often limits the possibility of studying the texts as cycles. While *Winesburg*, Hemingway's *in our time*, and Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* (1990)—just to name a few of the more frequently taught—might be included in survey and topics courses, the breadth of material covered or the particular lens of a course usually

necessitates cutting discussions of form. The latter two volumes, for instance, find their way onto syllabi about modernism or combat writing respectively, but form often becomes subordinate and perhaps rightly so. Course design necessarily requires choice and necessarily excludes some elements. However, discussion of the form would only enhance students' understanding; for example, the cyclical form is central to modernism as a movement, as I demonstrate in chapter one. Such period-based classes also mitigate the possibility of seeing connections at the level of technique, subject matter, and commonly held formal qualities across periods. Another defining characteristic of curriculum design that limits the short-story cycle's visibility is, somewhat paradoxically, the emphasis on genre in upper-level courses. Because studies of the novel dominate such courses in twentieth-century literature, there is often little room for other genres. Not only short-story cycles but also the short story, poetic forms, and the essay routinely fall victim to such designs. Such distinctions can disproportionately push some bodies of literature to the margins, as is the case with anthologizing this literature. Anthologies frequently and widely include selected stories from short-story cycles, but they do not include them in their entirety. The way we study literature minimizes exposure to the cycle.

The genre of the short-story cycle evinces the correlation between how often a text is read in the classroom and how much has been written about it. For instance, McGurl takes Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* as a case study in the relationship between teaching, scholarship, and reception. Arguing that its modernist attention to fragmentation and the accessibility of its narrator's voice render it ideal for the classroom, McGurl outlines the process by which this cycle went from the small press Arte Público Press to Vintage and from a text on the margins to near ubiquity in both criticism and the classroom. He cites Cisneros as an example of "high cultural pluralism," a trend in post-World War II fiction in which ethnic American

writers espouse the practices of modernist fiction (32). Undoubtedly, the popularity of this cycle stems as much from Cisneros's depiction of Chicano/a experiences as from form. Many of the short-story cycles considered here follow similar trajectories, due to their ability to fit into multiple rubrics, their tendency toward self-conscious construction and narration, and their investment in treating ethnic experiences. However, this prevalence has not translated into increased understanding of the genre. Rather, issues of form are treated as oddities rather than aspects of a robust tradition.

The history and reception of Cisneros's volume, which McGurl does not call a cycle, also make a compelling case study for the influence M.F.A. programs are having on contemporary literature. Cisneros, once a student at the Iowa Writers' Workshop, exemplifies the influence creative writing programs can have on contemporary fiction (338). McGurl contends that the institutionalization of creative writing at the undergraduate, graduate, and faculty levels has contributed to an explosion of literary talent. The reach of creative writing's influence is so vast that McGurl terms the post-war period "the Program Era." Although there is hardly a consensus on the usefulness or success of such programs, the sheer number of programs and the caliber of writers that emerge from them testify to the influence of the workshop on the market, the study of literature, the kinds of writing being produced, and its dissemination through publication. While such programs took off with the G.I. Bill and the flooding of government resources into higher education, the first programs appeared in the 1930s (McGurl 529). As of June 2009, according to Louis Menand, there were eight hundred and twenty-two programs that offered degrees in Creative Writing; thirty-seven of these offered the Ph.D. and 153 offered the M.F.A. (106).

The history of “The Program Era” and the history of the short-story cycle intersect in complex ways. While the cycle long predates the institutionalization of creative writing, there is no doubt that many cycles began in writing workshops. The workshop setting may indeed be an ideal forum for producing and honing the cycle. As Menand and McGurl note, among fiction writing workshops the short story is the preferred form due to the possibility to reasonably produce, workshop, and revise a story in a relatively short period of time. Simultaneously, the repetition of workshops across semesters may well induce or encourage writers to return to a character, setting, or theme as they move toward a collection, novel, or cycle.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to quantify how frequently or purely this is the case. What is clear is the number of writers of the short-story cycle who emerged from workshops and whose first books were collections or cycles: Flannery O’Connor, Banks, Cisneros, Denis Johnson, Barry, Day, Díaz, and Susan Minot, to name just a few. Still other practitioners of the genre teach in such programs. As McGurl notes, many writers follow a trajectory of producing a collection or cycle of short stories in workshop that precedes their “bigger,” meaning in both size and ambition, books (377).

These attitudes toward the short form and the belief that a writer’s trajectory culminates in the novel get exacerbated in the Program Era but long predate it. One reason short-story cycles have been so marginalized is the perception that they are apprentice works produced before an author reaches maturity. The cycle is belittled as not being as ambitious or resonant as a novel. One wonders whether this view has something to do with the proliferation of short stories and cycles by women and ethnic writers, as compared to the sprawling novels of contemporary writers such as Jonathan Safran Foer and Jonathan Franzen.<sup>2</sup> A few famous cases would seem to support this narrative. One example is the reception of Joyce. Although most of his works are widely read, taught, and considered in critical discussions, *Dubliners* is often

considered a foundation for his later work. In the US context, the same might be said for Hemingway's *in our time*, although its place in his fiction has recently been reconfigured. This narrative of the cycle as an apprentice work is inaccurate. As I discuss in chapter four, Faulkner's most nuanced cycle, *Go Down, Moses* appeared relatively late among his major works. *Winesburg* remains in the eyes of many Anderson's highest accomplishment, and his work in the novel is largely considered less influential and sophisticated. Among contemporary writers, cycles are often their breakout and most popular volumes, as is the case for Tan, Kingston, and Cisneros. Thus, the cycle can present problems for neat narratives of authorial development. Although these works are often career-making and there exists a romantic conception of the young phenom, there can also be a backlash against first works, especially those conceived of or begun in the classroom. The influence of the academy on the genre is one of ambivalence: literature departments unintentionally suppress the genre from view while creative writing programs promote it.

Compounding this attitude toward genres is the publishing industry, namely the extent to which houses currently favor the novel and malign short story collections. The fallout from this pervasive attitude is a misapprehension of the cycle as a genre. Cycles are consistently labeled "novels" on their covers; perhaps the most famous case of this, reviewed in chapter two, is Amy Tan's experience with Putnam. However, authors frequently concede such descriptors to publishers, sometimes settling on the innocuous label of "fiction" under the title, because novels sell better than collections. Although these attitudes and trends are now widespread, this has not always been the case. Nineteenth-century publishing practices privileged short fiction, and this helps account for the reemergence of the genre in that century. The rise of magazines and mass print culture generated a demand for prose that could be read in a single sitting.<sup>3</sup> Often, writers

collected their previously published shorter works into longer collections; these longer works, which included significant revision to create cohesion, also serve as precursors to and early examples of the modern short-story cycle, as I trace in chapter one. The promise of short stories as the cash crop for writers persisted into the early twentieth century. In chapter four, I describe how Faulkner's famous invectives against the larger sums earned for short works diminish the significance of short fiction in appraisals of his work.

While writers could once earn a decent sum for short fiction, such has mainly ceased to be the case. Melissa Bostrom argues that the heyday of short fiction was relatively short-lived: "The idea that short stories represented easy money prevailed for many years reaching its acme during the modernist era, when the number of commercial magazine outlets for stories—and their pay scales—reached their height" (3). Lynch characterizes the short story's relationship to the market in the twentieth century as "inversely paralle[l]" to the nineteenth century: whereas the form appeals to nineteenth-century authors because of its remunerative value, the form is "financially unrewarding" as magazines lose readers and less venues for publishing are available (12-13). Lynch argues that "publishers' delusions about what readers want" fuels the "inflated importance" of a pecking order that privileges novels (12). With the gradual decline in available outlets, writers have had to publish in a handful of prestigious periodicals and academic journals and often commit to a novel to even be considered for publication. While the short story no longer offers the same commercial opportunities as in the past, the stigma remains. Its proximity to advertisement and journalism, its frequent disparagement by the very writers who produce it, and its affiliation with young writers continue to contribute to the bias against short fiction generally.

Despite all of these obstacles, *One Story, Many Voices* lobbies on behalf of the short-story cycle. Some of the most canonical and revered works are short-story cycles but are not recognized as such. Born in the workshop, nurtured in the small and large magazines, and reaching maturity in finished cycles, much of the best contemporary writing is happening in the genre. As important as the cycle proper is its influence on other genres. The imprint of the cycle is especially evident on the novel. The contemporary novel's shifts in narration, temporal hemorrhages, proliferations of points of view, attention to surface and style, and ability to play with disjunction all derive, at least in part, from the short-story cycle. This project examines archetypal cycles and those on the margins under the belief that it is the rule and the transgression that make the case for a genre. The extent to which authors poach its techniques for other genres and the frequency with which novel, cycle, and story blur into each other ultimately testify to the ubiquity and influence of the cycle in US literary history.

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<sup>1</sup> Barry, for example, refers to the way in which one of her recurring characters kept creeping into her efforts in a writing workshop in graduate school ("Interview with the Author").

<sup>2</sup> Echoing Virginia Woolf's assertion that women write in shorter forms "so that they will not need long hours of steady and uninterrupted work. For interruptions there will always be" (Woolf 78), Bostrom argues that "shorter forms are better suited to women writers, who can constantly be interrupted in their domestic and childcare duties, and fiction requires less concentrated attention than either drama or poetry" (2).

<sup>3</sup> In his famous review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*, Edgar Allan Poe gives some indication of the advantages of what he calls "short prose narrative": "The ordinary novel is objectionable... As it cannot be read at one sitting, it deprives itself, of course, of the immense force derivable from *totality*."



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Zagarell, Sandra A. "Introduction." *A New Home— Who'll Follow? Or Glimpses Of Western*

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#### EDUCATION

- Ph.D. Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, Defended: February 25, 2011  
(English)  
Advanced to Candidacy with Distinction, May 2007
- M.A. Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, May 2005 (English)
- B.A. Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana, May 2003 (English and German),  
*magna cum laude*, Outstanding Graduating Senior in English and in  
German

#### DISSERTATION

- Dissertation: *One Story, Many Voices: Problems of Unity in the Short-Story Cycle*  
Committee: George Hutchinson (director), Purnima Bose, Margo Natalie Crawford,  
and Vivian Nun Halloran

*One Story, Many Voices* argues for the centrality of the short-story cycle to modern American literary production, because the genre so comprehensively troubles expectations of unity and re-imagines narrative, like human identity itself, as contingent. As such seemingly firm supports of selfhood as place, time, group memory, ethnicity, and family progressively destabilize, they also become the fraught devices through which fictional narrative remakes its engagement with expectations of formal unity. Using these motifs as linking devices that only provisionally work but cannot ultimately hold, American authors have continually rejuvenated fictional narrative in general. Practitioners of the cycle include writers as diverse as Caroline Matilda Kirkland, Sarah Orne Jewett, Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, John Steinbeck, Ray Bradbury, Sandra Cisneros, Louise Erdrich, Julia Alvarez, and Jhumpa Lahiri, among many others. The preponderance of the genre—and its pivotal role—across different movements from regionalism and realism to modernism and postmodernism signals the continuity of the crises of coherence and legibility between these different periods.

#### PUBLICATIONS

“Locating the Modernist Short-Story Cycle,” under review at *The Journal of the Short Story in English*.

“Latter-Day Winesburgs: Sherwood Anderson and the Contemporary Short-Story Cycle,”

accepted for a new collection of essays on Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*. Eds. Precious McKenzie Stearns and Michael J. Meyer. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

"Birthed and Buried: Matrilineal History in Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven*" in *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*, 9.1 (2009): 141-162.

#### FELLOWSHIPS & AWARDS

Booth Tarkington Dissertation Fellowship, Indiana University (Fall 2008)

Louise McNutt Fellowship, Indiana University (2007-2008)

Research Grant, Variations on Blackness seminar, Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies and Department of Comparative Literature (2005-2006)

#### ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS

"Together but Divided: Gender, Family, and the Short-Story Cycle," The Third Annual Joint Gender and Women Studies Mini Conference, Concordia University Chicago, River Forest, Illinois, March 2011

"Tracing New Genealogies: Kinship and the Contemporary Cycle," Ethnic Studies Workshop, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, February 2011

Brown Bag Lunch, "Beyond Recovery: The Future of Gender and Literary Studies," Women's and Gender Studies Group, Concordia University Chicago, River Forest, Illinois, January 2011

"Imagining the Future of Time in Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*," Alternate Lives, Alternate Futures in Science Fiction: Touching the Branes of the Multiverse, Midwest Modern Language Association, Chicago, Illinois, November 2010

"Illegible Truths and Legible Fictions in Faulkner's 'The Bear,'" "Fictionalizing" Experience or "Experiencing" Fiction: Exploring Artifice, Authorship, & Aesthetic in the Short Story, Midwest Modern Language Association, Chicago, Illinois, November 2010

"Textuality and Immigration in Ruth Ozeki's *My Year of Meats*," Contextuality and Immigration, at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, March 2007

"Fishing for the Narrative in Hemingway's 'Big Two-Hearted River,'" Life in the Story at Wright University, Dayton, Ohio, March 2007

Invited Lecture, "Prostitutes, Johns, and Pimps: Women and the Global Economy,"

Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, June 2005

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**Visiting Instructor**, Department of English, Concordia University Chicago, River Forest, Illinois

*Writing about Literature*, Fall 2010 and Spring 2011

Designed a course that surveys literature in English from Shakespeare to the present drawing from multiple traditions. Students learn to interpret literary texts using critical strategies and use writing as a tool to reflect on literature and its relation to their lives.

*English Composition*, Fall 2010 and Spring 2011

Developed a composition course which focuses on becoming familiar with the theory and practice of analytical modes of discourse through textual analysis. Fundamental to both course design and objectives is the notion that the writing task involves a *process* rather than only a product.

*Basic Writing*, Fall 2010

Lead a writing course, with the aid of two student supplemental instructors, for students whose standardized test scores did not qualify them for composition. Students learn to formulate theses, drafts and revise, and write for particular purposes and audiences.

**Associate Instructor** for Large Lecture Classes, Department of English, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana

*Generational Stories*, Professor Raymond Hedin, Spring 2008

Taught an introductory to literature course about generational narratives. Lectured on the “Lost Generation” and Ernest Hemingway’s *In Our Time* and how the volume’s form connects to its representation of World War I.

*Vertigo: identity shifting and the good life*, Professor Margo Crawford, Fall 2007

Assisted in teaching a course that introduced students to the study of identities and literature. Delivered a lecture on how travel initiates a disorientation of identity and language in Ama Ata Aidoo’s *Our Sister Killjoy or Reflections from a Black-Eyed Squint*.

*American Best Sellers, 1790- Present*, Professor Paul Gutjahr, Fall 2006

Led a discussion section of an introduction to best-selling American fiction from 1790 to the present.

**Independent Instructor**, Department of English, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana

*Elementary Composition*, Fall 2004 to Spring 2007

Conducted an introductory composition course, which fostered critical reading, analysis, and writing and focused on issues in contemporary pop culture.

*Elementary Composition for Basic Writers*, Fall 2006

Served as an independent instructor for a required composition course for at-risk students and undergraduates whose SAT scores did not qualify them for regular composition. Responsible for teaching a variety of essay genres, reading strategies, and rhetorical techniques.

**Writing Tutor**, Campus Writing Program, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, Fall 2003 to Spring 2008

Tutored students in all stages of the writing process. Facilitated undergraduate and graduate students, including non-native speakers, in becoming autonomous writers and introduced them to the expectations of academic writing.

#### RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

Modern and Contemporary American Literature and Culture; Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies; Comparative Literature; Cultural Studies; Composition and Rhetoric

#### PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Contributor to assessment for National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, Department of English, Concordia University Chicago, 2010-2011

Mentor to Incoming Graduate Students, Department of English, Indiana University, 2003-2006

Judge, *Indiana Review Fiction*, 2004

#### PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Modern Language Association

American Studies Association

Midwest Modern Language Association

#### LANGUAGES

Reading, Writing, and Speaking Proficiency in German

Reading Proficiency in Spanish

## REFERENCES

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