

DISCRETE PARTS, UNIFIED TEXTS:
THE SHORT STORY CYCLE IN AMERICA

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English
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Abstract

Discrete Parts, Unified Texts: The Short Story Cycle in America

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This dissertation examines how American authors adapted and expanded the short story cycle to create a genre uniquely suited to meet their changing needs. Neither a miscellaneous short story collection nor a traditionally unified novel, the story cycle can express both the plight of an individual and the fate of a community through its very structure. Despite the different thematic and structural choices made by these authors, the texts examined here indicate a struggle to define and understand the always-changing world in which their characters live.

I begin by exploring the development of the genre beginning with pre-cursors by Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Sarah Orne Jewett and Charles W. Chesnutt. These early examples use narrative frames, repeated characters and single locations in their examinations of the historical, political and cultural perspectives that define the times in which their authors lived. These texts convey an optimism that is soon overwhelmed by confusion and loss in an increasingly fractured twentieth-century society.

By recognizing the isolated nature of the individual in the modern world, the story cycle also suits the purposes of authors such as Willa Cather, Henry James, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor and Raymond Carver. In these texts repeated metaphors, collective protagonists and varied settings are used to extend the

scope of the genre beyond just one person in one location. These authors recognize the cycle's ability to integrate disparate narrative threads into a unified whole while still highlighting the discontinuity inherent in the text.

By re-imagining the literary traditions of the past, Maxine Hong Kingston and Louise Erdrich re-capture some of the optimism displayed by the earliest American writers. An individual's or community's search for self takes center stage once again as these authors combine ancient oral traditions with nineteenth- and twentieth-century techniques. For them, the story cycle offers an opportunity to gather and unify more than just stories; their texts demonstrate how genre can help gather and unify cultures as well.

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Introduction

In his *Graham's Magazine* review of *Twice-Told Tales*, Edgar Allan Poe defined the short story as a work whose author must first have “conceived with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents—he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect” (*Essays and Reviews*, 572). Since that time critics have been fascinated by this genre and the single, preconceived effect it attempts to create. The short story often highlights a single character reacting to a specific situation, a narrowness that enables it to be complete despite its brevity. Ian Reid takes this definition one step further and claims that stories “frequently focus on one or two individuals who are seen as separated from their fellow-men in some way, at odds with the social norms, beyond the pale” (27). This sense of separation from society is reflected in literary magazines, the story’s most common presentation to the reading public. Beginning in the nineteenth century, stories have primarily been read amidst a wide range of miscellaneous pieces, from news briefs to recipes, and this physical isolation is reflected in the state of the story’s characters.

Judith Leibowitz differentiates the story by contending that “the novel’s task is elaboration, whereas the short story’s is limitation” (44). What would happen if the individual’s plight as depicted in a short story were combined with other stories to create a community of sorts, an elaboration? What would we call it? Both “short story sequence” and “composite novel” have been used to describe such a work but “short story cycle” best fits the genre I will discuss here. The cyclical motion and return to the beginning implied by the word “cycle” is instrumental to the function of these texts. Because this sort of text requires the reader to “construct a network of associations that

binds the stories together and lends them cumulative thematic impact” (Luscher, 149), its true purpose can only become apparent on a second or third reading. Since each story’s significance within the larger framework of the cycle shifts with each subsequent story, one must approach it cyclically by first reading the text through to the end and then starting over at the beginning in order to fully understand its meaning. It is important for the words “short story” to be used as well, since it is the combination of generic elements, and the prominence of the short story within that combination, that allows these texts to accomplish tasks that a traditional novel or short story collection could not on its own. The novel’s conclusiveness requires a depth and finality not suited to the fractured existence of the twentieth century, while the short story’s specificity makes it difficult for it to express larger, more inclusive themes. The story cycle resolves this dilemma by incorporating the relevant aspects of each genre into a unique text.

The ancestry of this genre can be traced back to Homer’s *Odyssey*, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, and Malory’s *Morte D’Arthur*. While also composed of separate text-pieces presented together, these collections lack both internal linking and firm structural unity. As Forrest Ingram notes, the cycle is “a book of short stories so linked to each other by their author that the reader’s successive experience on various levels of the pattern of the whole significantly modifies his experience of each of its component parts” (19). While story collections or miscellanies permit rearrangement of these component parts, the text-pieces of a short story cycle require a particular sequence in order for the larger text to achieve its desired effect. Authors place the stories carefully in order to create a rhythm for the reader, juxtaposing particular text-pieces to create a particular effect and using the contrast to

help convey their point. Moving any of the stories within the text would therefore disrupt the invisible links that tie them together. The closing story, in particular, tends to sum up the themes that have been elucidated throughout the cycle just as the opening story introduces them. The order cannot be changed without changing the impression the text makes on the reader. Though these and other early texts look forward to the short story cycle, their sporadic appearance over the centuries implies a genre that is not yet fully developed. A sustained interest in the cycle first becomes apparent in the nineteenth century and the form is elaborated on by twentieth-century authors. Its unusual generic makeup allows the short story cycle to accomplish unique goals, and while the story cycle is an international phenomenon, I have chosen to discuss twelve texts by American authors in this dissertation.

I begin by examining four nineteenth-century pre-cursors to the story cycle—two from before the Civil War and two from after. America's booming magazine market allowed the short story to thrive, but despite its popularity, authors often measured success by the number of bound books to their names rather than the number of magazine publications. The story cycle helped resolve this dilemma by allowing authors to adapt and combine their shorter works to create longer texts. Washington Irving's *The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Legends of the Province-House*, are clearly concerned with creating an American literary legacy. The cycle's unique structure allows both authors to simultaneously acknowledge Britain as America's influential predecessor and express the recent colonies' intention to establish themselves as a nation. As the individual stories describe his various tours through England, Geoffrey Crayon becomes a stand-in for Irving as well as the reader, and it is only when

we look at the stories together that many of the time's political anxieties are revealed. Similarly, Hawthorne uses his narrator to hold the four Province-House tales together. While each story elucidates a different point regarding America's role in the War of Independence, the frame created by the series of storytellers (and by the house itself) imbues the text with larger meaning.

I will then examine the works of Sarah Orne Jewett and Charles W. Chesnutt, writers who belonged to a generation struggling to re-define America in the aftermath of the Civil War. Both turned to the immensely popular local-color tradition of their day and each used the story cycle to express the marginalized populations to which they belonged. In *Deephaven* and *The Conjure Woman* we watch as representatives of America's reading public—white, educated, upper class—come in contact with the sea widows and fishermen of rural Maine and the former slaves and free blacks of the deep South. Jewett's isolated women resemble the war widows common at the time, and the effect of bringing these discrete stories together as a cycle reflects an effort to bring Deephaven's seemingly forsaken population into communication with the rest of the world. Chesnutt's text depicts the local devastation caused by the war—devastation that affected the economy, the land and the people. Each of Uncle Julius's tales provides a peek into life in the antebellum south while the frame continues to remind us of just how thoroughly that life was destroyed. The cycle is therefore able to indict racism and the institution of slavery while it mourns the important ties members of the black community managed to form amidst the tragedy.

In Chapter Two I will look at more advanced examples of the short story cycle, a form which developed more fully in the twentieth century. By the time Willa Cather and

Henry James published their story cycles, the commodification of literature that had begun with antebellum magazine culture had solidified into a world where literary agents, editors and publishers had as much, if not more, power than the authors themselves. In response to this shift, both *The Troll Garden* and *The Finer Grain* portray the dire effects of this new focus on the financial, rather than creative, possibilities of art. Cather uses the text-pieces here to explore the effects different art forms have on different characters and then juxtaposes them within the cycle to depict the simultaneously nourishing and destructive power of art. James's characters also suffer as a result of art's lure, a suffering exacerbated by society's increasingly sharp focus on money over the manners and mores of the past. His text-pieces can be read alone as a depiction of a main consciousness facing a devastating disappointment, but brought together in the cycle, James implies that unless the world changes, we will all face similar disappointments.

Chapter Three will focus on the cycle's particular usefulness in reflecting the aftermath of war—a time when incoherence is the disjunction combined with a desire for unity is the dominant mode. Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner use the fragmented cycle to depict the fragmented societies created in the wake of two of America's most devastating events, World War I and the Civil War, respectively. *In Our Time* and *Go Down, Moses* both feature a collective protagonist, a device that allows the author to present various aspects of a family, community or generation through a series of characters that can be seen as a single over-arching psyche. To borrow Hemingway's image, the story cycle is used here to create an up-close picture of a particular person or family through its stories and then a pulled-back panorama of an entire community or generation in the unarticulated threads that tie the stories together. Hemingway's use of

Nick Adams as both a specific character and a representation of all the characters in the text illustrates the fact that the cycle genre is crucial to his message here. For Faulkner, too, the use of the cycle forces readers to make connections between the stories and to look at each story differently in light of those that follow. This works to expand the doomed fate of the McCaslins until it implicates the entire South.

Chapter Four will examine another phase of the genre's development and explore how Flannery O'Connor and Raymond Carver use recurrent patterns and imagery which link seemingly unrelated stories to create cycles that focus on the growing sense of isolation suffered by Americans, even when not dealing with the immediate effects of a tragic war. Society's growing godlessness and the disintegration of the family have exacerbated the separation and desperation of the characters they portray in *Everything That Rises Must Converge* and *Cathedral*. O'Connor's text-pieces build upon one another to bring her characters—and the reader—closer to the desired moment of epiphanic grace, a moment that leads to violence again and again. Taken together, these moments demonstrate humanity's need for salvation and the fact that, for most, salvation comes only with death. Carver's reiteration of the same basic story—an isolated individual failing to connect with those closest to him/her—convincingly demonstrates late twentieth-century society's dilemma as he see it. The cycle's separation into discrete stories mimics the separation of the cycle's characters while the unity implied by the genre offers the same hope that is found in some of the more optimistic text-pieces, like the title story which closes the text.

Finally, Chapter Five will explore how the works of Maxine Hong Kingston and Louise Erdrich, authors who hail from culturally diverse communities within American

society, represent a shift in the purpose of the short story cycle. In *The Woman Warrior* and *Love Medicine* the fragmentation and inherent lack of cohesion of the genre represent hope and promise, not devastation and loss. Based on the oral traditions on which they were raised, each author infuses the cycle with elements of an earlier heritage, one which inherently favors disparate pieces over a unified whole. Kingston's text uses her five interlocking text-pieces to express the various influences that, when brought together, will make up her narrator's identity. These include her family's history in China and her own experiences as a first-generation American. These elements must be looked at together despite their inherent discreteness, making the story cycle an especially appropriate choice for Kingston. Erdrich's text uses the cycle in a similar way, though her text develops the identity of an entire community of Chippewa Indians by first exploring the lives of various residents of the reservation. As the tribal stories are told and re-told, with a different interpretation or focus each time, the larger picture becomes crucial to understanding the truth about this community. By finding ways to claim the cultural histories that have made them who they are, the characters in these texts are able to regain what has been lost to them.

As I examine how each text expresses through genre the concerns of the time in which it was written I will also address the role the American literary marketplace plays in the development of this form. I will look at the publication history of each text (the parts as well as the whole) and the state of the profession at the time it was written to explore the financial and aesthetic considerations that shaped each author's choices. In most cases, the text-pieces that make up the story cycle were published separately before and/or after publication of the whole text, often as revisions of the original. These

authors were aware of the need to produce a saleable commodity and all struggled in different ways with the profession of authorship. They published primarily in the mass-market magazines of their day and were forced to shorten, simplify, or otherwise adjust their styles to satisfy popular tastes.

Questions of authorial intention will also be considered, as will the three classifications within the genre proposed by Ingram. The *composed* cycle is the most unified and is defined as a text that was planned as such from its inception. A cycle that was conceived of as a whole only after it was begun is considered a less-unified *completed* cycle. The least unified is the *arranged* cycle, or a cycle put together after the stories that comprise it have been written (17-18). *Completed* and *arranged* cycles usually require the author to add to, delete from or otherwise revise the text-pieces so that they will make sense within the new larger scheme to which they belong, whereas *composed* cycles tend to exist in fewer extant versions. Despite the different origins these categories imply, all still describe something different from and greater than a typical story collection. Each text-piece first creates its own space before being combined with others like it to create a larger, more coherent space to which they all contribute. The short story's limitation is therefore combined with the novel's elaboration without losing the integrity of either genre. As we will see, the texts discussed here accomplish objectives neither a short story nor a novel could accomplish alone.

Chapter One

America's First Story Cycles: Nineteenth Century Pre-Cursors

The first internationally renowned American writer, Washington Irving is often credited with establishing the short story form in this country. His most acclaimed and remembered works were released in America as a series of seven pamphlets beginning in May 1819 and appeared at irregular intervals through September 1820. Despite their seemingly haphazard presentation, there was a plan to present the sketches (later to be published as *The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*) as part of a larger work, making the text a pre-cursor of the arranged short story cycle. Its composition and publication offer valuable insight into the genre that would become one of America's most representative forms. Irving has indicated that in putting the elements of *The Sketch-Book* together, genre was a particular concern; he had resisted (and would continue to resist) writing a novel or other long prose piece and hoped instead to give greater credence to and expand the possibilities of the shorter literary work. He was also aware of the scorn with which American writers were viewed at the time and hoped to change attitudes on both sides of the Atlantic by producing writing that would be admired by all. As best suited the author, that writing would not take the form of a novel. As Irving wrote to his friend Henry Brevoort on December 11, 1824, "I have preferred adopting the mode of sketches and short tales rather than long works, because I choose to take a line of writing peculiar to myself, rather than fall into the manner or school of any other writer" (Neider, xxvii). Irving recognized the craft required of shorter works and chose to hone his existing talent rather than attempt a longer form. This is a choice many of the authors discussed in this dissertation also made.

When read as a unit, it is clear that the sketches, essays, and stories that make up *The Sketch-Book* work together in a way that miscellaneous parts randomly thrown together would not. Irving's creation of the text's narrator, Geoffrey Crayon, indicates a desire for unity and cohesion. As Irving wrote in his Preface to the Revised Edition: "The following papers, with two exceptions, were written in England, and formed but part of an intended series for which I had made notes and memorandums...however, circumstances compelled me to send them piecemeal to the United States, where they were published from time to time in portions or numbers" (Manning, 5). The circumstances were apparently financial, as can be gathered from Irving's note to his brother Ebenezer: "This letter is accompanied by a small parcel containing some manuscript for publication...A large edition should be struck off...and the price must be pretty high...large editions make good profits. I want to receive the profits from it as soon as possible as my purse is slender" (Myers, *Worlds of Washington Irving*, 43). He was not sure the manuscript would be well-received, but it was clear that Irving had other works on hand should his first attempt prove popular: "I shall be anxious to hear of the success of this first re-appearance on the literary stage. Should it be successful, I trust I shall be able henceforth to keep up an occasional fire." (Ibid). This interest in not just the publication but the financial details of that publication indicates Irving's concern regarding his reduced circumstances. Despite his apparent desire to collect the text-pieces into one larger text at the time, his decision to publish the sketches as pamphlets can be understood in this context.

As it turned out, the pamphlets were well-received, and despite their piecemeal presentation these literary sketches do indeed create a greater narrative whole when

combined, just as several sheets of drawn sketches might together provide a greater sense of one large picture. William Hedges calls the original American publication of *The Sketch-Book* "a cross between a book and a periodical. The make-up of later installments was not fully determined until earlier ones had come out. But... a sense of coherence emerges in patterns of imagery functioning in relation to the central figure of Crayon" (129). By making Crayon the focus and center of each text-piece (including the Knickerbocker stories), Irving uses his protagonist to bring together the individual parts of his text. As Susan Manning writes in her introduction to the text, "its sketches are populated throughout by verbal embodiments of the voice and moods of Crayon, echoes and reflections which help to establish an extraordinary cohesiveness of tone over the disparate moods and genres gestured at in the work" (xxv). The aging traveler is also a reflection of Irving himself, and taken together his adventures reveal a great deal about the author's state of mind at the time they were written.

Critics have argued that *The Sketch-Book* represents Irving's own struggle against loneliness and depression; a result of the many losses he suffered in the decade or so before it was first published. These begin with the death of his fiancée in 1809, his mother's death in 1817, and the failure of the family business in 1818.¹ This apparent search for a means by which to express his own grief would explain the many literary modes that are easily recognizable in *The Sketch-Book*, including the essay style, German gothic, satire and allegory. Of course, Irving also wanted his American audience to appreciate the writing as literary; this meant using British traditions that would be both familiar and recognizable as such. Like the authors Crayon encounters in the reading

¹ Rubin-Dorsky, *Adrift*, 37

room of the British Museum in "The Art of Book-Making," Irving in this text tries on garments borrowed from those who came before him. In praising *The Sketch-Book* in the *Edinburgh Review* of August 1820, Francis Jeffrey expresses surprise that it is "the work of an American, entirely bred and trained in that country...written throughout with the greatest care and accuracy, and worked up to great purity and beauty of diction, on the model of the most elegant and polished of our native writers" (Reichart, xiii). Irving was clearly correct in his view that an American had to co-opt the traditions that were valued at the time in order to be taken seriously as a writer. Given the dire international reputation assigned to American writers at the time, his desire to borrow from his English ancestors makes sense.

Surface similarities between the various sketches and essays of *The Sketch-Book* become immediately apparent. For example, each text-piece opens with an epigraph taken from the works of a well-known British author, an effort to link his work to that of the accepted canon of the time. Just as borrowing the literary modes of predecessors gives the American Crayon authenticity, borrowing the actual words of these revered authors provides the narrator with a long and illustrious heritage of which he can be proud. Thematically, too, the text-pieces are linked, for every time Crayon delves into the secrets of British society in search of meaning, he ends up face to face with the reality of the mundane. By putting these exploits into the words of Crayon, Irving can distance himself from his protagonist while at the same time satisfying his own desire for knowledge and information. He can tour with Crayon and record his alter ego's impressions, and then step back to view more objectively what Crayon has seen. This

frame creates one of the strongest internal links between the sketches, despite their publication as separate entities.

Despite this intended cohesion, Irving chose to call his work *The Sketch-Book* with its implied apologies and shortcomings apparent in the very title. As Rubin-Dorsky writes, “the word ‘sketch’ implies a preliminary study or a representation of a work of art intended for elaboration; and while a sketch may have line, shading, and color, it connotes hastiness and incompleteness” (*Adrift*, 55). The project seemed designed specifically to lack the uniformity of a novel, to suggest rather than spell out its meaning. The word sketch also takes advantage of the contemporary interest in travel sketching, indicating Irving's desire to be both popular and successful by catering to the reading public's desires. While Irving played into the implications of his choice of genre, he counteracted the incompleteness of the form by balancing the word “sketch” with the word “book” in the title. A book works as both a literal and figurative means of holding the sketches together; it physically and metaphorically connects and ties them to one another. These are not loose sheets of paper that can be re-arranged, they are the fixed pages of a book, one following the other in a specific order

The cohesiveness of the text is complicated by the fact that there are several existing editions of *The Sketch-Book*. According to Irving's journals, he had begun to make notes for some of the sketches as early as 1810 (when he alluded to what would become “Rural Funerals”) and as late as 1818 (when he made further notes on “Rural Funerals” and referred to elements of “A Country Church” and “The Boar's Head Tavern”).² As the pamphlets appeared in America, British periodicals began publishing

² Reichart and Schlissel, 27, 255, 29

pieces of *The Sketch-Book* without the author's permission or supervision (and, naturally, without offering royalties), leading Irving to publish an English edition of what had been originally conceived of as a text for American audiences. For the 1820 two-volume edition published in England, Irving added "Traits of Indian Character" and "Philip of Pokanoket," the only text-pieces written in America, and "L'Envoy," the short piece that closes the text. The two Indian tales first appeared in the 1814 volume of the *Analectic Magazine* (which Irving edited from 1813 to 1815) and while many thought they were used as mere filler for the later publication, they succeed in conveying the larger thematic goal of the text; to resolve the dilemma of national identity suffered by both Irving and his persona. Just as the British are shown to do in sketches like "Westminster Abbey," "Christmas Eve" and "Christmas Day," among others, the Native Americans portrayed by Crayon attempt to recognize and preserve their cultural heritage.

The "Author's Revised Edition" (ARE) of *The Sketch-Book* was published in 1848, and includes a total of 35 separate text-pieces, including several which were entirely new to the collection (such as the "Preface to the Revised Edition," the postscript to "Rip Van Winkle," and "Notes Concerning Westminster Abbey"). Two of these, "A Sunday in London" and "London Antiques," were apparently written at the same time as the other *Sketch-Book* pieces but had not been included in earlier editions. Irving's final revisions and corrections, made two years before his death, are included in the ARE, making it the one edition that reflects the author's choices regarding order and placement. These numerous sets of changes indicate that the collection's unity was still incomplete as Irving struggled to refine and reorganize his earlier work in the final years of his life.

While *The Sketch-Book* primarily represents Crayon's personality as it is defined by his wanderings, these wanderings also allow the reader to recognize Crayon's position as a man caught between nations. His journey *from* home is intended in part to help him *return* home—spiritually, if not literally. He is constantly searching his new surroundings for bits of useful information to pass on to those he has left behind. As Rubin-Dorsky notes, "*The Sketch Book* is structured in terms of problem/solution, and...the solution to America's crisis of identity can be found through the English and through the Indians" (*Adrift*, 98). The journey therefore does more than teach Crayon, it can help teach those in America as well. Through Irving's visions and sketches of England, as told by Crayon, readers can learn how America, too, can become a successful society.

Though the pamphlets were not illustrated, drawings were subsequently made for many of the sketches, particularly the five Christmas pieces ("Christmas," "The Stage Coach," "Christmas Eve," "Christmas Day," and "The Christmas Dinner") which were often republished as a separate group. *The Sketch-Book's* most famous components, and the only text-pieces read with any regularity today, are the short stories "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," and modern readers are for the most part unaware of the context within which they were first published. Like the other elements of the whole, the two stories (cited as the first of their genre to be written by an American) enact a conflict between the old world and the new, tradition and innovation, belonging and rootlessness. Rip Van Winkle and Ichabod Crane share a crisis of identity, a crisis that Geoffrey Crayon—and by extension, Washington Irving—can be said to share as well. Van Winkle loses his house, his wife, even his own name (which his

grandson usurps) before finding his place in a society he at first does not understand. Crane chooses to remain detached from those around him, preferring bodily nourishment over emotional companionship, specters over friends or lovers. Rip's displacement is mirrored in Ichabod's homelessness which is further amplified by Crayon's (a pun on Crane, perhaps) wanderings into the dark recesses of British tradition as represented by the homes, abbeys, and museums he visits.

That the short stories are ostensibly passed to Crayon through Diedrich Knickerbocker has been called inconsistent by some, but this choice can be explained in several ways. First, Irving was hoping to earn money with this publication and since he published *A History of New York* in 1809 and co-wrote *Salmagundi* in 1811 to much fanfare as Knickerbocker, he might have hoped to cash in on the success of his earlier alter ego. To mention that name in the context of Crayon's travels also adds a layer of authenticity to both personae. And while Knickerbocker's tone was satiric rather than sentimental, the tales he tells mesh wonderfully with those Crayon presents to his readers here. Despite the sometimes anomalous nature of the individual pieces, they help Irving achieve a cohesion in the larger text.

Crayon's concerns were also Irving's concerns, of course, and *The Sketch-Book* as a whole represents those concerns thematically in its individual parts while also reflecting them in its very form. While this text does not represent the short story cycle per se, it does function as one on this level. With a few exceptions (such as "The Inn Kitchen" which introduces "The Spectre Bridegroom," and "Postscript" which comments on "Rip Van Winkle") the text-pieces can be understood independently. Yet only when read together do they highlight Irving's questions about nationality and heritage, his feelings

of displacement and confusion regarding identity, and his anxieties regarding his decision to pursue a literary career. These are issues which will be addressed again in the story cycles analyzed in chapters to come, an indication that the genre is particularly well-suited to resolving, or at least highlighting, these sorts of questions.

For Nathaniel Hawthorne these same questions of national identity are gathered around the single most influential political event to date—the American Revolution. In writing and combining the four stories that make up *The Legends of the Province-House*, Hawthorne provides insight into his feelings about the conflict through which America gained independence. Ostensibly about a contemporary's search for stories of America's glorious fight for freedom at Boston's Province-House, the frame created by Hawthorne implies a deeper, hidden meaning as well. The author was clearly ambivalent about the causes and consequences of the Revolution, and he used this particular construction to shed light on his ambivalence without having to reveal it directly. As Irving did before him in *The Sketch-Book*, Hawthorne used the frame to convey as much (if not more) about his perspective as the stories themselves. Despite his many and varied efforts, Hawthorne failed again and again to publish his planned collections of connected stories as individual texts. Swayed by his publishers, who were convinced readers would not respond to such works, attempts such as *Seven Tales of My Native Land*, *Provincial Tales* and *The Story Teller* were either rejected outright or consumed by larger projects. *The Legends of the Province-House* was fated to be incorporated into the 1842 edition of *Twice-Told Tales*, where they appeared back-to-back as a unit within the text. The four

stories have been published separately only as illustrated children's books and only under different titles—in 1897 as *Colonial Stories* and in 1906 as *In Colonial Days*.³

Critics have argued that the *Legends* can only be understood when viewed as historical texts⁴ and the narrative frame is crucial to any interpretation of meaning. Unique among Hawthorne's works, in these stories "there is no concentration on the moral travail of any single psyche within the fictive historical world...the 'Legends' make their way solely by a relentless exposure of illusion and delusion in American history" (Colacurcio, 391). To explore this history, we move from the narrator's present to the past to farther into the past and then back to the present as the *Legends* unfold. Hawthorne's attention to times gone by and his narrator's interest in the events that occurred in this particular house indicate the author's awareness of the importance of the past's influence on the present and the future. Hawthorne's point here is to call attention to certain moments in history so we can see them as they really were, not through faithful retelling of fact but via the artist's elaboration and interpretation. In addition, an art form and/or artist figure dominates each of the four legends, calling attention to Hawthorne's role as creator of these historical memories.

By introducing a number of narrators, the frame forces the reader to notice the process of storytelling, of passing down information, of understanding history. These stories pass through a series of narrators before they arrive on the printed page: the self-described "thorough-going Democrat" who is drawn to the pub by the "Old Province-House" sign; the tale-teller Bela Tiffany who regales the narrator and bar-owner Thomas

³ Smith, "Hawthorne's *Legends*," 31

⁴ Colacurcio, 390

Waite with stories of the building's past; and the unnamed "aged loyalist" whose tale concludes the series. Such an elaborate narrative frame was not mere dressing for Hawthorne. The thorough-going Democrat acts as a mask behind which the author hides, allowing him to explore politically unpopular ideas without becoming himself unpopular. This precaution was crucial in safeguarding Hawthorne's burgeoning career as a magazine writer at the time; he had just been given several commissions by John O'Sullivan of the *Democratic Review*, and the editor would hardly have appreciated the criticism of America's Puritan heritage embedded in this text. Ironically, the stories seem to have been written in response to O'Sullivan's solicitation for material for the newly created magazine in which they appeared.⁵ The *Democratic Review* published them not in chronological order, but in the same order in which they would appear in *Twice-Told Tales*; "Howe's Masquerade" in May 1838, "Edward Randolph's Portrait" in July 1838, "Lady Eleanor's Mantle" in December 1838 and "Old Esther Dudley" in January 1839, indicating that Hawthorne's vision for the collection was set from the beginning.

The order in which the stories are told to the narrator, and the chronology of that order, is important to the action of the stories and crucial to understanding Hawthorne's use of his frame. The first tale, "Howe's Masquerade," serves mostly to establish the setting for the three tales to come. It takes place in 1775, after the American Revolution but before the British government has been driven from the Province House. The ghostly stream of British officials leaving the building foreshadows their actual departure in the last of the stories, "Old Esther Dudley," which is set a few years later. For "Edward Randolph's Portrait" and "Lady Eleanore's Mantle" we move back in time and then back

⁵ Ibid, 628

again. As John McWilliams notes, “the first and fourth legends, which celebrate the loss and then the surrender of British power, thus enclose two tales in which the oppressions which justify revolutions are uncovered” (561). The frame suggests that the moments in 1770 and 1721 illustrated in the second and third stories are linked to the causes of the Revolution and are therefore important to understanding the events portrayed in the first and fourth stories. Of course, the Province House itself acts as a sort of frame through which the artist (the narrator and/or Hawthorne himself) reveals the past contained within it. The house, along with the four legends it produces, reveals to both the narrator and the reader that one’s perception of the past must be based not just on facts, but on a considered interpretation of those facts. Art can often indicate truths that history can not and these four legends feature various incarnations of art and artists as a way to reinforce the lessons contained within.

The art form in “Howe’s Masquerade” is the masquerade itself. As Howe and his guests watch the parade of historical figures march down the Province House stairs, they are allowed to literally see history (including their own as yet unfulfilled places within it). We learn from the ensuing legends that Howe’s effort to restore his country’s former glory in the colonies through this pageant is doomed by the fact that the house is already haunted by past mistakes. We are introduced here to the beginning of the end, and as the subsequent stories will reveal, ignoring the past can have fatal consequences. After the masquerade, Hawthorne takes the reader back to one of the crucial turning points that led to the British defeat in “Edward Randolph’s Portrait.” Viewed in this way, Hawthorne views Hutchinson’s decision to call in British troops as key to the eventual uprising of Americans even though Hutchinson is not portrayed unsympathetically. Though he

ignores the advice of his niece, Alice Vane, her warnings are more mystical than practical (she advises him based on a mysterious legend rather than political fact). Yet Hutchinson is incapable of learning the lesson Alice tries to teach, and his failure to understand her creates the history that is to come.

By next introducing us to Lady Eleanore and her mantle, the frame shows us that the smallpox outbreak of 1721 is linked to the Revolution in Hawthorne's eyes. While the story clearly blames British arrogance and pride for the epidemic that sweeps Boston that year, Hawthorne's portrayal of Jervase Helwyse suggests that Americans were at least somewhat to blame as well. If Helwyse represents the American ideals of the day (as he clearly does), then his submission to Lady Eleanore (who just as clearly represents British ideals) and the crowd's acceptance of that submission, implicates the colonists in the imbalance that will create the need for revolution. As Julian Smith writes, "Hawthorne is condemning her colonial admirers as much as he is condemning Lady Eleanore...reminding us that...many of the colonists continued to pay tribute to English traditions and authority (just as they pay tribute to Lady Eleanore)" (37), thus making the Revolution necessary to break the unhealthy ties between the two entities. This uncomfortable acknowledgement of culpability can, of course, go easily unnoticed within the larger context of the frame and its various narrators, making it easier—and safer—for Hawthorne to ponder the historical significance of the pox he has called pride. This message is conveyed through the text-piece's placement within the larger frame of the *Legends*.

Hawthorne adds a layer to the narrative frame with "Old Esther Dudley," a story told to Bela Tiffany and the narrator by the old loyalist "whose blood was warmed by the

good cheer" (223) of tale-telling and wine. This narrator is old enough to have known the protagonist of his tale, adding a sense of authenticity to his observations. Unlike the earlier stories between which there are long stretches of time (the first is told in summer, the second in January, the third the following spring or fall), this story immediately follows the account of Lady Eleanore, and "The effect of this sudden change in the timing between the tales, combined with the change in tellers, is to call attention to the dramatic and ironic tension between the last two stories" (Smith, "Hawthorne's *Legends*," 40). As the most fully drawn character, Esther Dudley is also the most sympathetic. She has a gift for storytelling and her role as an interpreter of the past links her to both the narrator and Hawthorne. While the second and third stories of the series depict the reasons behind England's defeat in America (a defeat that is foreshadowed in the first text-piece) this legend makes clear that the change does not occur without cost. There is pathos in Esther's story, and perhaps a warning as well. If, as Margaret Allen contends, Esther "embodies the artist as the repository of cultural traditions, passing a heritage on from generation to generation" (436), then her annihilation in the end means that Americans have failed to understand their past. And if the legends teach us nothing else, they illustrate the importance of understanding the historical events that helped shape the world in which we live.

Once again Hawthorne uses both the content of this story and its placement within the larger frame to serve his thematic intentions. Smith sums up the importance of Hawthorne's narrative frame by pointing out that, "Hawthorne gives us the basic conflict between colonial and loyalist factions in the first story, develops the reasons for that conflict in the next two stories, and shows us the outcome in the last" ("Hawthorne's

Legends,” 32). This layered frame also works to question the truth of the stories recounted by various tellers, as well as the reliability of the outside narrator. Even the use of the word “legends” in the title indicates something about the narrator’s relationship to fact and fiction. The Democrat explicitly calls his own integrity into question when he admits to taking poetic license in the retelling of the last of the legends. Because the old Loyalist’s tale is told with emotion (and under the influence of wine), it

required more revision to render it fit for the public eye, than those of the series which have preceded it; nor should it be concealed, that the sentiment and tone of the affair may have undergone some slight, or perchance more than slight metamorphosis, in its transmission to the reader through the medium of the thorough-going democrat.

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That history can be editorialized is apparent here, and that our interpretation of history is influenced by art is equally clear. This allows us to better appreciate Hawthorne’s own predicament in creating this work, as he balances the ideals of his publishers with his own efforts to write a multi-layered exploration of the most important political event in American history to date. The narrator protects Hawthorne from the Tory label while allowing him to present Tory views and values with sympathy and understanding.

The frame imbues the individual text-pieces with over-arching meaning but it also points out “the dubious validity of our knowledge of the past” (Allen, 434). Because of this unreliability, “Hawthorne suggests that the artist may be the better historian, for it is only he who can imaginatively recreate the past....not the factual knowledge alone, but moral knowledge vitalized by the imagination” (Ibid, 435). Old Esther Dudley functions as this type of historian, as does Hawthorne himself. Our narrator is at first clearly unsuited for the task, but as he continues to visit the Province House he learns what it means to tell a tale through the process of hearing these stories. The narrator grows more

sophisticated as the legends progress, and by the end he seems aware of the need for freedom in telling history. By the fourth tale, he is therefore able to adjust historical fact to meet his artistic needs as a storyteller, allowing him to both elaborate on the last of the legends and to admit to that elaboration. He is no longer merely hearing the stories of the past, he (like Hawthorne) is participating in the creation of those stories.

Despite not being published as intended, these stories work effectively as a unit because of the several detectable patterns that link them. One, as mentioned above, is the use of the first and last story to indicate the results of the American Revolution while the third and fourth indicate the causes. Another is more linear, and acknowledges that the first three stories support the American side of the conflict and are told from the point of the view of the satisfied winners. The placement of the last of the legends allows Hawthorne to "surround the funeral of British rule in the American colonies with a certain aura of tragedy and loss" (Becker, 40) without causing his patriotism to be called into question. The old age of both the Tory narrator and Esther Dudley is specified in their appellation—an indication of their lack of power—yet both are passionate storytellers who help re-create the world of the past for their listeners. Esther is praised for her ability to draw children into her tales and the Old Tory manages to enthrall the narrator, Bela Tiffany and, by extension, the reader. Like Hawthorne and the artist figures we have met in the preceding stories, their power is their ability to convey history convincingly and imaginatively. In writing and presenting the legends in this way, Hawthorne is commenting on the unreliability of narrators, on the precariousness of historical fact, and on the act of writing (and re-writing) history. Hawthorne's feelings about America's role in the Revolution come through subtly in the text but one indication

is John Hancock's complete disregard for the importance of storytelling in the last legend. In his effort to start something new, Hancock urges the inhabitants of the Province House to forget the past—a dangerous mistake made by both Howe and Hutchinson. When read as the unit they were meant to be, the legends persuade us of the importance of this lesson.

When Sarah Orne Jewett began writing for literary magazines, with America still reeling from the devastation of the Civil War, she left history and politics behind for the charm of local-color fiction. Her writing style was not immediately adaptable to the contemporary marketplace, which favored conventionally plotted stories over the character studies she created, and while she attempted to adjust accordingly, Jewett and her editor, William Dean Howells, soon realized that her best work was more descriptive. Howells' savvy advice helped shape Jewett's early career and he was ultimately responsible for gathering her stories together to create *Deephaven*. Jewett began writing the sketches of New England life that make up the text without a larger scheme in mind. Like Irving, she favored shorter works, acknowledging that "I don't believe I could write a long story...[it] would have no plot. I should have to fill it out with descriptions of characters and meditations. It seems to me I can furnish the theatre, and show you the actors, and the scenery, and the audience, but there never is any play!" (Matthiessen, *Sarah Orne Jewett*, 45). By encouraging her strengths as a writer and agreeing to publish her works, Howells helped Jewett achieve a literary status that would otherwise have been impossible.

Despite her avoidance of narrative elements, Jewett knew how popular local-color fiction was in the 1870's and she used this popularity to her advantage. Her first

appearance in Howells's *Atlantic Monthly* was in September 1873 with "The Shore House," a story later expanded for *Deephaven* and separated into "Kate Lancaster's Plan" and "The Brandon House and the Lighthouse." In September 1875, the *Atlantic* published the stories that would become "Deephaven Society" and "The Captains" together as "Deephaven Chronicles." A year after that, in the September 1876 number, the *Atlantic* published "Deephaven Excursions," (later seen in *Deephaven* as "Danny," "The Circus at Denby" and "Last Days of Deephaven.") Jewett's unusual magazine stories helped change the taste of America's reading public and this encouraged Howells to publish the sketches together as a text. In doing this he gave Jewett a legitimacy in the literary marketplace previously not available to sketch-writers.

Jewett wrote nearly forty stories during her first ten years in publishing, stories that were eventually collected into two books aside from *Deephaven—Play Days* (1878) and *Old Friends and New* (1879). After encouraging her to gather her stories of two well-to-do city girls visiting a small coastal town in Maine, Howells reviewed *Deephaven* in the June 1877 number of the *Atlantic Monthly*. He stressed Jewett's prominence as a short story writer and noted that her popular sketches "are now collected into a pretty little book called *Deephaven*" (Nagel, *Critical Essays*, 25). While the pretty little book included many previously written stories, Jewett had revised and edited them substantially in an effort to prepare them for publication as a unit. They were conceived of and written as individual short stories but the contents of *Deephaven* are therefore linked in more than just a superficial manner. Because of her lack of planning, Jewett's creation is not as unified a text as the two examples already discussed here, but it offers a glimpse into the developing short story cycle as a means by which to make a larger text

out of existing elements. Even without some of the more implicit connections between stories found in *The Sketch-Book* and *The Legends of the Province-House*, a pattern is apparent. The opening story sets up the journey the main characters will take, the middle stories elaborate on their experiences in Deephaven, and the last story depicts their departure and elucidates the ways in which they have been changed by their visit.

Despite the way it came together, Jewett's intentions in writing the stories that make up *Deephaven* is clear, as can be seen by the way she substantially altered the contents in preparation for the book's release. She had been unhappy with Howells's changes to "Deephaven Excursions" at the time of its magazine publication, and while she was too shy to ask him to return her original manuscript, she rewrote as much of it as she could remember when she revised the sketches for the book.⁶ She also added three stories ("The Circus at Denby," "Cunner-Fishing" and "Last Days at Deephaven"), as well as ruminations on Persephone (based on her readings of Walter Pater) and a passage meant to counter what Jewett perceived as an over-abundance of fishermen and old sea captains in the original.⁷ Jewett spent months reworking the previously published stories in an effort to make the sketches work together. The first three stories were tightened to create several shorter text-pieces and extraneous characters and situations were removed to help clarify the resulting narrative and highlight those anecdotes which helped effect a change in how Kate and Helen viewed the world around them. As already noted, there is a progression in the book as the young women from Boston prepare for their trip, arrive in Deephaven, observe the local customs, meet the local characters (first the women in

⁶ Blanchard, 101

⁷ Ibid, 86

town, then the fishermen who live by the sea), visit the surrounding areas and return home, their lives enriched. That they are meant to learn and grow from their experiences implies a *Bildungsroman*, though the brief period of their sojourn in Deephaven (just one summer) belies that classification. Despite this, Jewett accomplishes her goal here; she uses the trip to Deephaven as a means by which the characters learn about themselves and the world around them, things they never would have understood had they remained in the wealthy urban environment from which they came. They are able to recognize the beauty of nature and the precariousness of the simple lifestyle enjoyed by the people of Deephaven and are never bored in this small seaside village. In fact, they are constantly amazed by the fascinating characters they meet and stories they hear and are drawn to this quiet, desolate place in a very powerful way.

Jewett made it clear that she had a specific vision in mind for this text, a vision linked to her role as a writer of local-color fiction. As Blanchard notes, “her purpose in writing *Deephaven* was (at the time) to morally educate her readers, and (retrospectively) to mediate between country and city people and to draw attention to an eroding cultural heritage” (102). The two girls are often seen as two parts of one larger personality—presumably Jewett’s—that would explain their closeness and the way in which they grow more like-minded as the text progresses, an interpretation that also supports the text’s classification as a short story cycle in the making. As the record of a girl’s moral and intellectual growth, each piece of the text is necessary as a representation of a specific stage in her development. At the same time, each story must work together with those around it to reveal the full scope of that development. Though she did not

plan to use these stories this way when she wrote them, Jewett understood that they could effectively portray this maturation.

Each of the text's stories is filtered through the ears and pen of Helen, the narrator who interprets as she writes. That Jewett re-creates the act of producing a text within this text indicates that, like Irving and Hawthorne before her, she views this character as a stand-in for herself. Because the earliest of these sketches were written when Jewett was twenty or twenty-one-years-old, much has obviously changed for her by the time the volume was published when she was twenty-eight. In this sense, she herself has undergone the process of growth she describes in the text. Jewett's vision had become clearer during those years and her talent continued to develop. More importantly, she was able to let go of her inclination to combine a personal desire with her literary goals. It was clear that her early portrayal of Kate was meant as a tribute to her own personal attachment to Kate Birckhead, an attachment that inspired the closeness of her two main characters. Despite this and the text's most unifying factor, its setting, *Deephaven* has a looseness that can be explained by the fact that its elements were created over the course of a decade. The text's geographic location works almost as a character in its own right, providing the girls with real-life lessons about surviving in a beautiful but often dangerous locale. Deephaven's inhabitants can be seen as examples of the tough, honest, salt-of-the-earth residents of many of America's rural areas; a marked contrast to the comfortable life in Boston represented at the very beginning and very end of the text. The place itself, which lends its name to the volume, is crucial to understanding the overall theme Jewett hoped to convey.

The process of bringing *Deephaven* together helped Jewett master the form that would one day represent her greatest literary achievement, *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, and her work here is crucial in making that achievement possible. In preparing the 1877 edition of *Deephaven*, Jewett had moved closer to the tradition of what would become the short story cycle. Her text re-creates the cycle of the year, opening in summer and ending in the winter when news from Deephaven intrudes on the girls back home. The stories are ordered so that the aristocratic lifestyle the girls are accustomed to is constantly being contrasted with the rural lives of Deephaven's residents, a juxtaposition that illuminates the struggle the main characters go through as they adjust to life in this new place. Beyond its thematic success, *Deephaven's* publication proved that there was indeed a market for the sort of writing that would soon dominate the literary marketplace.

Deephaven's popularity no doubt made it easier for other writers of local-color fiction, such as Charles W. Chesnutt, to publish their work. Marginalized by his race (though often thought to be white, Chesnutt identified himself as black), he used his fiction to create a space for himself, and others like him, in American culture. Like Jewett, Chesnutt's career began with a series of successful magazine stories that were eventually developed into book form. Also like Jewett, it was through the help and guidance of a magazine editor that Chesnutt's first (and, later the same year, his second) book came to be. It took Chesnutt almost twenty years to achieve his goal of publishing a full-length text, and even then he had to settle for a grouping of his stories rather than the novel he hoped would be his entrance into the world of letters. He had moved his family to Ohio to be nearer the publishing houses of the north, but he did not attempt a literary

career outright. He turned down at least two editorial jobs—one as assistant to George Washington Cable, the other as associate editor with Albion Tourgée to a new journal called the *National Citizen*—choosing financial security while still writing in his spare time. Given the market for stories about people who lived in far-away and little-known places, Chesnutt understood that his own experiences growing up in North Carolina could prove to be a commodity. The world he once inhabited—its people, stories and language—would make perfect fodder for national literary magazines in search of just such exotic material. And though his first grouping consisted of the “dialect” stories he considered to be his least important, he was grateful to be able to adapt them to address the plight of former slaves and free blacks as his later “color line” stories did. While their subject matter was less dear to Chesnutt’s heart, the fact that they were written in the local-color tradition helped establish a name for him in the literary world. The stories gathered to create *The Conjure Woman* were some of his earliest, including “The Goophered Grapevine” which marked his first appearance in a major magazine when it ran in the *Atlantic Monthly* in August 1887. A year later the *Atlantic* published another conjure story, “Po’ Sandy,” and in 1889 two more of these stories (“The Conjuror’s Revenge” and “Dave’s Neckliss”) appeared in *The Overland Monthly* and the *Atlantic Monthly*, respectively.

Chesnutt understood the need to create works that white readers (and editors) would accept and his first conjure stories were successful in that area. But as soon as he established his name in print, he abandoned the local-color genre that had served him well to focus on what he felt was more serious work. He viewed “Dave’s Neckliss” as a movement away from the form he felt was no longer satisfying his personal literary

goals. The success of his early stories was no accident, as Chesnutt chose this form in a concerted effort to emulate the financial and popular success of writers such as Joel Chandler Harris and Albion Tourgée, contemporaries who were doing well with their local-color dialect fiction about poor southern blacks living before the Civil War. In keeping with his desire to correct America's perceptions and treatment of blacks through his writing, Chesnutt's stories "observed the conventions of a popular genre only to manipulate and parody them" (Andrews, 261). He wrote his early conjure stories with the idea that he could quietly change the views of racist white America by drawing them gently into the world of Uncle Julius, a former slave with indelible ties to the plantation on which he was raised. Julius, like Uncle Remus before him, was a non-threatening figure whose wisdom was hidden deeply within what seems on the surface to be frivolous memories. But his indictment of slavery and the treatment of blacks both before and after the Civil War are clear to the careful reader. In 1891, Chesnutt felt ready to publish his first full-length book and he asked Houghton Mifflin to consider producing a compilation of several "color line" stories along with a few Julius stories. Their response, "a writer must have acquired a good deal of vogue through magazine publishing before the issue of a collection of his stories in book form is advisable" (Ibid, 30) made clear that Chesnutt had not yet achieved the reputation necessary to pursue such an endeavor. Recognizing the importance of playing along with the literary requirements of the day, Chesnutt wrote to his friend Cable: "I shall write as every man must do, to please editors, to please the public, and who knows but that perhaps at some future day, I may be best able to please others by pleasing myself?" (Ibid, 29). Chesnutt continued to produce short stories while nurturing his dream of authoring a book. In 1897, he once again approached his

publishers with that project in mind. He had published a few more "color line" stories by then and *Atlantic* editor, Walter Hines Page, agreed that a book might be made of a carefully chosen selection of Chesnutt's short works. Page reviewed twenty-two of Chesnutt's published and unpublished texts to see "whether by selecting judiciously from them a selection can be made which seems likely to make a book of sufficient unity to put upon the market" (Ibid, 31). Among these, a third or so consisted of dialect stories told through Uncle Julius's perspective, including three early conjure stories and four later stories that were less supernatural. Houghton Mifflin thought the collection too "miscellaneous" and when Page asked for more conjure stories to round out the volume, Chesnutt quickly reincarnated Uncle Julius and the popular dialect stories he had earlier deigned to write. Despite his decision to write a different kind of story, his publishers clearly felt that their readership would most welcome dialect fiction. Chesnutt was happy enough to oblige and six new conjure stories landed on Page's desk within six weeks. Despite the financial risks involved in producing a volume whose contents had already been published, some over ten years earlier, the publisher agreed to release the collection

As we can see from its genesis, *The Conjure Woman* most closely resembles an arranged story cycle (one that has been put together after the stories that make it up have been written). As was the case with *Deephaven*, the text's editors played a large role in choosing and organizing the text-pieces. But what makes this text a more convincing example of the short story cycle even than *Deephaven* is the way its frame contributes to the book's larger moral and literary purpose. In revising the stories and putting them together, Chesnutt adds a layer of depth and meaning that is crucial to making the text work together as a whole. The final volume includes three early stories ("The Goophered

Grapevine,” “Po’ Sandy,” and “The Conjuror’s Revenge”), one recent story (“Hot-Foot Hannibal” published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1899) and four of the six stories written specifically for the volume at Page’s request. Despite the years over which the stories were produced, the book holds together in its effort to elaborate on themes close to its author’s heart. Chesnutt and Page worked together to link the stories and to create an order and flow that would justify their publication in book form. While Chesnutt wrote Page with specific instructions for the order of certain text-pieces, he gave a great deal of control to the editor and the compilation of the book was a collaborative effort.⁸ In his 1931 essay, “Post-Bellum, Pre-Harlem,” Chesnutt acknowledges the team effort: “After some omissions and additions, all at the advice of Mr. Page, the book was accepted” (Wonham, 104). His lack of control makes his involvement different from that of Irving or Hawthorne who were more active in determining how their respective works would be presented to the public, but despite this there is a definite pattern to the text that points to themes Chesnutt considered to be important. Chesnutt’s acceptance of his editor’s contributions might have been a nod to his practical side, since he clearly understood the power of the literary establishment at the time and he was no doubt guided by his failed efforts to publish a book.

In fact, the joint venture may have helped link the stories. When asked to supplement his stock of conjure stories, Chesnutt wrote Page that “In writing them, I have followed in general the lines of the conjure stories you have read already, and I imagine the tales in this batch are similar enough and yet unlike enough, to make a book” (McElrath and Leitz, 105). There are several common threads that link the stories,

⁸ Duncan, 77

including a single setting, a cast of recurring characters, a concern with economic matters and the condemnation of slavery, all revealed via various transformations, both literal and figurative. But it is mostly through the interactions between Julius, John and Annie in the frame that we see the significance of reading these stories together in this way. Wonham agrees that *The Conjure Woman* is “written around a central framework...the tales...are connected with each other in such a way as to give them more than the superficial unity which the framework supplies” (117). Julius’ stories have a profound effect on John and Annie, and the way in which the mulatto storyteller changes the attitudes of his white listeners in the text is a model for how Chesnutt himself hoped to change his white readership.

Like Jewett, Chesnutt revised the already-written stories for his book’s publication. He cut the now-repetitive introductory material out of the framing narrative of each and expanded that part of the first story, “The Goophered Grapevine,” so that it could introduce all the stories to come. He also changed Julius from “a venerable-looking colored man” to a “venerable-looking colored man...[who] was not entirely black” indicating the shift that had occurred in Chesnutt’s interests between 1887 (when the story was first published) and 1898 when he edited the book. The fate of the mulatto was now a primary concern of Chesnutt’s, and this was his way of inserting that concern into his earlier work. The development of the three main characters is key to the importance of the frame tale in this cycle. Julius is repeatedly summoned to divert the white couple with stories of the region’s history and folklore. As they learn the customs of the southern plantation, John and Annie adapt to their new surroundings and become more like the people around them; John shakes his Northern businessman persona and

manages to relax a bit while Annie is distracted from her illness enough to take a serious interest in the stories Julius tells them. But it is in their responses to the stories that we see the full capabilities of Chesnutt's frame. As a stand-in for Chesnutt's white reader, John fails miserably to understand the main import of the stories he hears. Annie, whose main function in the text is to listen, represents a better way to interpret Julius's tales. Their differing responses reflect their imaginative and emotional capabilities and their dissimilar outlooks on life. In contrasting the way the South is viewed by the imaginative Julius and the literal-minded John, these local-color stories do more than just "conjure" up a new and foreign world. Annie is less skeptical than her husband, and therefore better able to understand and appreciate the art that Julius—and Chesnutt—has created. Julius and John share a deep interest in economic matters, though they have different means through which they hope to achieve financial success. Julius's power comes through story-telling (as does Chesnutt's), and despite the fact of John's actual power in the situation, Julius manipulates him to get what he wants.

That Chesnutt expends so much energy on the shifting perspectives of these characters indicates the importance of Julius's influence on them, and, by extension, on those members of his white readership sensitive enough to read the stories correctly. As Andrews notes, "This expansion of the thematic relevance and characterization possibilities of the frame story, giving it a narrative interest rivaling that of Julius's tales themselves, makes *The Conjure Woman* an unusually tight-knit group of regional stories" (40). By manipulating his reader in a similar fashion, Chesnutt hoped his conjure stories, and the frame in which they are here contained, would teach Americans to re-evaluate their attitudes towards blacks and mulattoes and clear the way for a truly more equal

society. The book is not a novel, as Chesnutt himself has stated, but the unity provided by the single setting, repeated characters and elaborate frame makes it an example of the short story cycle in the making.

Despite their varied origins these four texts, *The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon*, *The Legends of the Province-House*, *Deephaven* and *The Conjure Woman*, are all examples of texts that are structurally more fixed than a typical short story collection without yet approaching the unity of a novel. In the coming pages, I will highlight more developed and more sophisticated examples of the short story cycle. These nineteenth-century texts are still pre-cursors to what in the twentieth century becomes an established literary form in its own right.

Chapter Two

Defining the Artist: *The Troll Garden* and *The Finer Grain*

By the beginning of the twentieth century, when Willa Cather published *The Troll Garden* (1905) and Henry James released *The Finer Grain* (1910), the goals of American authors had shifted and their use of genre shifted to meet their needs. The short story cycle, something of an anomaly in the novel-driven Victorian age, seems better suited to express the pre-modernist notions apparent in these two texts. Cather and James do not rely on the connecting features utilized by Irving, Hawthorne, Jewett and Chesnut, namely an explicit framing device, a single narrator and/or a common setting. Instead, the text-pieces here are linked by theme, sensibility and style. Though *The Troll Garden* is an early effort of Cather's and *The Finer Grain* is James's last publication, both respond to changes occurring in society by examining the shifting role of art and the artist. Like their predecessors, both look to the title and the organization of the text to elucidate their major themes.

As a means by which to examine and critique American society, the short story cycle afforded Cather and James a unique opportunity not available in the form of the novel—the ability to, within one text, explore different characters in different settings as they respond to the same cultural questions. Each resolution to the problem, found in each text-piece, is important, as is the comparison of these conclusions found in the text as a whole. Cather and James are therefore able to address the issues which concerned them—the hypocrisy of the artist, the expansion of urban centers and the growing sense of isolation this disintegration of communities caused—in a form which itself reflects these concerns. The short story cycle is a good physical representation of the disjointed

communities both Cather and James write about. It allows characters to appear for one story and then disappear, never to be heard from again; a close approximation of what seemed to be happening in the world around them. Even the skyscraper James so detested is alluded to in the process of building story upon story in the cycle, as opposed to the more chronological movement of chapters in a novel. Architecture as metaphor was important to James (as it was to Cather) and since he blamed the skyscraper for some of the problems elucidated in this text it is fitting for him to have used a form which represents one of the sources of his discomfort. As in earlier examples of the genre, the reader must first decide each story's meaning and then compare and contrast that to the meaning of the other stories in order to see the patterns created in the text. Hence it is the reader who does the work toward unifying the disparate threads inserted by the author, the reader who tries to make sense of this new and unwieldy genre just as the characters portrayed within try to make sense of the new and unwieldy society in which they must learn to live.

As was the case for Jewett and Chesnutt, Willa Cather's *The Troll Garden* came about by the efforts of her publisher. S.S. McClure chose seven of Cather's stories, "A Death in the Desert" (published in *Scribner's* in January 1903), "A Wagner Matinee" (*Everybody's Magazine*, February 1904), "The Sculptor's Funeral" (*McClure's*, January 1905), "Paul's Case" (also *McClure's*, May 1905) and three previously unpublished stories ("Flavia and Her Artists," "The Garden Lodge" and "The Marriage of Phaedra") and gathered them to make up the collection. It is likely that Cather sent most of these stories to McClure in April, 1903 prior to their first meeting,⁹ after which the publisher

⁹ Rosowski, 250.

assured the young writer that he would bring her work to the reading public. He did indeed help place the stories in various magazines while making arrangements to bring out *The Troll Garden*. Surely McClure saw, as so many critics have since, that the thematic concerns they share connect these stories to one another. Together they demonstrate Cather's acknowledgment of the artist's vital role in society as well as her awareness of the potential destructiveness of that role. She often used her own experiences as a writer, along with those of some of her musician and artist friends, to explore this dichotomy in her work. That the stories are set in bustling cities and desolate prairies, suffocating interior spaces and the threatening great outdoors, helps elucidate this dichotomy through setting.¹⁰ To express both her awe and fear of the power of art, Cather offers in each story a different take on the artist's place in society.

But *The Troll Garden's* cohesiveness goes beyond theme. In putting together a book of these individual stories, Cather utilizes the text's organization to both complicate and clarify her ideas. By contrasting different kinds of artists facing different kinds of challenges, she leads her reader to view her characters and their fates in very particular ways. This allows her to explore and expand on her main theme throughout the book, as each successive story builds on the ones that came before and those that will follow. Each artist struggles to both define his/her place in society and to determine his/her worth as an artist. The book's title, organization and epigraphs help delineate Cather's aims in bringing these stories together in one volume. The title refers to the epigraphs, the first of which, from Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market," warns of the dangers of succumbing to that which most tempts us—in this case art itself, whether it be painting, music or

¹⁰ Ibid, 23

writing. It reads, "We must not look at Goblin men,/We must not buy their fruits;/Who knows upon what soil they fed/Their hungry thirsty roots?" The second epigraph, "A fairy palace, with a fairy garden;...../Inside the trolls dwell,.....working at their/magic forces, making and making always things/rare and strange," is from Charles Kingsley's *The Roman and the Teuton*, and it alludes to the fantastical nature of art, the beauty and uniqueness of that which the trolls create. This conflict between fear and attraction is what guides the characters and the reader as the text progresses. Cather explicates this struggle through gender, almost always focusing on the women who are first tempted and then destroyed by art. The world Cather introduces us to in the epigraphs is the same world in which she places both her characters and the reader during the course of the text.

Much as Henry James illuminates different angles of the same prism in *The Finer Grain*, the problems Cather has her artists face are handled differently in each text-piece. Some characters are themselves artists, some merely long to join the world of art, and some are forced to suffer or even die because their art is taken away. For a woman who made writing the center of her life, Cather portrays a great deal of ambivalence about art here. Though there is at least one artist in each text-piece, the main consciousness through which each story is told is an outsider or hanger-on, hoping to be let into the garden where magic is made. In order, we are presented with an art world pretender concerned only with appearances, the student of a deceased artist who was appreciated by all save those closest to him, a woman torn between her desire for both creativity and security, an opera singer whose life is sacrificed for the sake of a lauded composer, a widow who defies her late husband's plans for his last masterpiece, and a boy whose art worship leads him to take his own life. These thematic links create an internal unity to

the text. As O'Brien notes, "Although Cather did not write these seven stories knowing that they would appear together, *The Troll Garden* was not a random collection...the stories explore the contradictions and contrasts between aesthetic and commercial values, pure and corrupted art, East and West, civilization and primitivism" (271). Cather also takes us on a geographical journey, from a country estate to a frontier settlement to a large city, showing us wealth and poverty, comfort and coldness. Despite the different locales her message in each story is the same: love art but beware the consequences. These links argue for *The Troll Garden*'s cohesion as a text without the need for an external apparatus like a frame or a single narrator and setting.

Organization is also an important factor in understanding why this text works as a short story cycle. As Meyering writes, "The two epigraphs Cather chose for *The Troll Garden* help explain not only the placement of the stories within the collection, but also the ways in which the stories are bound together thematically" (61). They demonstrate the draw of the fairy palace and the price paid for succumbing to the goblin men, and the cycle allows these two distinct threads to be illuminated at the same time. As Stouck notes, "Each story, like a prism, exhibits the nature of art in a different light. The full complexity of the book's theme, however, emerges through the qualifications that one story imposes on the others" (176). The ordering of the stories leads the reader to reflect on each artistic predicament in light of the one that came before, much as Chesnut's stories indicate a progression in the relationship between the narrator and the narrator's internal listeners in *The Conjure Woman*. By placing the trolls in both the city and the country, the civilized east and the undeveloped west, Cather demonstrates the universality of her theme. In the first, third, and fifth stories, the artist exists in a world of

wealth and privilege, while the second, fourth, and sixth stories focus on the poor rural areas from which the artist has tried to escape. The seventh story presents an effort to join the two settings as Paul attempts to enter the sophisticated world of the art patron. That tragedy befalls both rich and poor shows that money, education and refinement cannot protect those who venture into the fairy garden. By the end of the text it is clear that what nourishes can also starve, what creates can also kill. The last story, "Paul's Case," acts as a sort of coda to the book and it "brilliantly synthesizes the themes, images, and metaphors of *The Troll Garden*, referring back to the other stories and to the epigraphs from Kingsley and Rossetti" (O'Brien, 282). While this pattern can be readily discerned, neither trolls nor goblins can be easily, or even fully, categorized. Certainly Cather's epigraph from "Goblin Market" "illuminates the collection's submerged psychological and aesthetic concerns, which revolve around erotic and romantic temptation, the creative process, and the woman writer's experience of literary influence" (Ibid, 273) and these concerns, as expressed through the world of art and artists, help tie these seemingly separate stories together.

In each story we meet a female character who longs to be near art despite the fact that she cannot understand or create it. Flavia Hamilton thinks she is a member of the art world, but even her small contribution—playing hostess to the "real" artists—is not valued in the context of the first text-piece, "Flavia and Her Artists." She chooses her guests based on popular success and social acceptance, not intellectual achievement or creative accomplishment. The artists realize their benefactor is a fool, but they accept her hospitality and then betray her (one goes so far as to ridicule Flavia in print). The fact that Flavia's businessman husband, who is derided by his wife for his practical spirit and

lack of creativity, sacrifices himself to protect her from humiliation indicates that there are no clear “heroes” here. Artists are both worshipped and denigrated, admired and insulted. Flavia too is denigrated; she may be right to desire closeness to art, but her desire is shallow and her motives questionable. Though these characters are shown in a sophisticated urban environment, they are portrayed as petty and small-minded people. Not only does an inclination towards the arts not protect one from life’s hypocrisies, it verily invites them over for dinner.

Mrs. Merrick, the mother of the title character in “The Sculptor’s Funeral,” is a source of art in that she created the man whose talent has been internationally recognized. Yet she is hideously drawn by Steavens, the artist’s student, who cannot understand how a refined sensibility such as Merrick’s could have been born from this rough, raw woman. Her plainness (in both appearance and manner), her meanness (in her dealings with the maid), and her inability to control her emotions (in her constant wailing and weeping) horrifies Steavens who imagined a loftier source for the sculptor’s talent. Like the men around her, Mrs. Merrick does not understand the true nature of her son’s accomplishment and is unable to appreciate the importance of his talent. Unlike the men around her, however, she at least seems to feel *something*; her over-the-top expressions of emotion are embarrassing but they indicate that her loss is deeper than theirs. It becomes clear now why Merrick had to leave his hometown; to become the sculptor of the story’s title, he needed to live in a city that could appreciate his gifts or his talent would have been crushed by the pettiness of the frontier. As Steavens (a stand-in for the reader) discovers, high art can come from even the lowest parentage, but it must be nurtured in order to survive.

Caroline Noble was raised in a family of men like Merrick, men who spent afternoons admiring the clouds while allowing the calf to wander away. But we learn in “The Garden Lodge” that Caroline’s father and brother were less successful than Merrick, failing to carve names for themselves as artists, failing to provide financially for those who depended on them, and, in the case of her brother, failing even to create his art in a productive way. Caroline’s poverty-stricken childhood drives her to willfully discard whatever artistic temperament she inherited. Her decision to opt instead for a practical, stable, art-free life is put to the test when the opera singer D’Esquerre pays a visit to her married home. Suddenly the music she once created seems to beg for an outlet. The lodge of the title becomes a symbol of the artist she has repressed within her and the stormy night she spends there indicates her struggle to choose between the excitement of the art world and the security of her comfortable life. That she chooses to demolish the lodge indicates a loss for art, but given the trauma of her early experiences with artists it is a sacrifice the reader might, too, be willing to make.

In “A Death in the Desert” Katharine Gaylord devotes herself to an artist whose talent is unquestioned; in fact, we are told that Adriance Hilgarde’s Paris debut is sure to be a huge success. That Cather timed Katharine’s death to coincide with the concert is representative of the relationship she has created between her characters; Katharine must suffer so that Adriance may succeed. Despite his proven success as a composer, he, like Cather’s other artists, proves to be unworthy of Katharine’s affections. As a singer, Katharine creates her art with her breath, and it is this very breath that is taken from her as a result of her misguided devotion to Adriance. Cather demonstrates his failure by contrasting him with Everett Hilgarde, who looks like his famous sibling but whose heart

is capable of a human understanding his brother lacks. It is he who attends to Katharine on her deathbed, allowing her in her final moments to believe that Adriance is with her. Once again, the artist is made to appear petty and self-involved. Adriance's shining success causes destruction while the less successful (and perhaps less talented) Everett offers comfort and compassion.

Lady Ellen Treffinger does not seem to understand (or care about) the greatness of her husband's last, unfinished painting, "The Marriage of Phaedra." Like Caroline Noble, she refuses to subjugate herself to the male artist. By selling his final masterpiece to an unsavory art dealer, she indicates her lack of interest in her husband's wishes and in the work itself. The Treffinger scholar tries to see and even steal the painting in his effort to preserve the dead artist's vision, but the widow triumphs here and uses the painting to secure her own financial future instead. Like Phaedra, for whom the painting (and the story) is named, she rejects the accepted patriarchal discourse. As McFarland points out, "Lady Ellen's refusal happily to open her home to male artists who repel her, as does Flavia, and her refusal to lie down and die, as does poor Katharine Gaylord, undercuts the patriarchal authority of the artist in the same way as did Phaedra's 'unnatural' and unfaithful desires" (7). Treffinger's art "engulfs those who are closest to him" (Ibid, 5) just as Caroline Noble and Katharine Gaylord are engulfed by the artists in their lives. It is too late for Katharine, but Lady Treffinger's willful separation from the art world has saved her from the poisonous fruit mentioned in "Goblin Market" just as it has saved Caroline Noble. As we will see, "The Marriage of Phaedra" and "The Garden Lodge" are two of the few text-pieces in which the women are able to resist the pull of the male artist enough to save themselves from destruction.

By the time we meet Georgiana Carpenter at the beginning of "A Wagner Matinee," she has already spent thirty long years without the music she taught as a young woman in Boston. During her first fifteen years on the frontier, she lacked the opportunity even to hear music until her husband bought her the pianola her nephew Clark remembers playing as a child. Arriving in her native city after three decades, she is dazed and dusty and seems barely aware of her surroundings. She fails at first to even recognize Clark, who describes her state as "semi-somnambulant," and her main concern is a calf back on the farm, not the city she has not seen in half a lifetime. Weakened by years of creative and cultural deprivation, Clark fears the matinee will be wasted on her. But despite the devastating effects of frontier life Georgiana has not yet lost her ability to respond to music. The concert affects her deeply and we, with Clark, witness the change that comes over her. She suddenly seems not only aware of her surroundings but able to somehow transcend them. The tragedy of the text-piece lies in the knowledge that with the joy of this awakening comes an awareness of its brevity. We know that Georgiana will soon be back on the desolate farm. Her final words (which Cather felt compelled to soften with each revision of the story), indicate the tragedy of loving and living with art and then losing it. Georgiana is destroyed not by art itself but by its absence in her life and she represents a poignant warning to the Caroline Nobles of the text. To care deeply and yet be denied art is perhaps a fate worse than that of Flavia and Lady Treffinger who fail to appreciate what they cannot understand.

Finally, the protagonist of "Paul's Case" is shown to be completely enthralled by his romanticized view of the arts but he focuses on the trappings of that world without any consideration or awareness of art itself. He has tasted the forbidden fruit offered by

the goblins and pays the ultimate price for the insatiable hunger that taste creates. A young boy, Paul is completely feminized by Cather and his role becomes similar to that of the female characters we have been introduced to so far. Compared to the men in these stories (as exemplified by strong, stable Arthur Hamilton in "Flavia and Her Artists," and gruff, red-faced Jim Laird in "The Sculptor's Funeral") Paul's lack of interest in the usual male concerns of employment and procreation differentiate him. He rejects his father's honest, hard-working life on Cordelia Street, stealing money to gain entrance into the world of luxury hotels and hothouse flowers, fine clothing and fine dining in New York City. He is defined by his desire and emotion, and it is his powerlessness in the face of his father's poverty which leads to his crime and, ultimately, to his death. "Paul's Case" is different from its companion stories in that there is no reference to a specific artist, but Paul's suicide makes a fitting end to a text which explores the consuming and destructive nature of the desire created by art.

As we have seen, it is the women who are consumed while the male artists of *The Troll Garden*, where we see them, benefit from the sacrifices these women make. Cather seems to be warning her female readers that the troll garden is a particularly dangerous place for them. As O'Brien points out, "While women's identities are diffused and their energies drained in service to male creators, the godlike artists in *The Troll Garden* stories profit from women's devotion, finding in them muses as well as audiences" (277). This depiction can perhaps be explained by Cather's own feelings about the creative process at the time these stories were written. She believed that "to create, the woman must sacrifice marriage; to marry, she must sacrifice art. The dedication, autonomy, and self-expression required of the artist were...inconsistent with the roles of wife and

mother, which demanded selfless, time-consuming, draining devotion to others” (Ibid, 169). Cather understood what one needed to sacrifice for one’s art; her stories reflect her belief that a woman could not have both creative work and marriage. As Meyering notes, “Cather believed a devotion to art required the artist—especially the woman artist—to forego emotional attachments. The work is all-demanding, and the woman artist seduced by love or romance would soon cease to be an artist” (xiv). Cather’s own failure to carve a literary name for herself at this early stage of her career seems to have contributed to the scarcity of successful female artists in *The Troll Garden*.

She was likely also affected by the real life struggles of the women around her, a theory supported by the fact that many of her characters were based on women she knew. The title character of “Flavia and Her Artists” shares a remarkable resemblance to the mother of Cather’s friend Dorothy Canfield Fisher, who was also named Flavia.¹¹ Carol Hamilton, of “The Garden Lodge,” may be modeled on her Pittsburgh friend Ethel Litchfield, who gave up her music career for marriage.¹² Aunt Georgiana, of “A Wagner Matinee,” is so clearly based on Cather’s own aunt, Frances Cather, that family and friends were horrified at the depiction.¹³ Cather’s own experiences can be detected as well, as O’Brien notes, “The emotional and sexual power of her attachments to women threatened her own independence, so Cather understood the conflict heterosexual women experienced between art and love” (169). Unlike her mentor Sarah Orne Jewett, who was

¹¹ Meyering, 102

¹² Ibid, 108

¹³ Ibid, 261

allowed to enjoy her “Boston marriage” with Annie Fields, Cather was made to feel that her connection to Louise Pound was detrimental to her work. Their intimacy was no longer considered natural and this restriction on her emotional and artistic life seems to be reflected in her writing.¹⁴ The stories that make up *The Troll Garden*, like others Cather wrote in the late 1890s and early 1900s, “are filled with the imagery of enclosure, signifying silence, repression, and death. Because they [her female characters] like her, were aspiring to be artists, Cather could not envision them achieving the self-expression she had not yet attained for herself” (Ibid, 270). Her changes to the last sentences of “A Wagner Matinee” show that Cather was able to soften her depiction of such women after having achieved literary success later in her career. In the meantime, however, the failure of these women is key to the unity of this text.

The male talents in these stories fare better than the women, but they are never given center stage. When we meet M. Roux in “Flavia and Her Artists” he is shown to be mean-spirited and hypocritical, accepting Flavia’s hospitality while publicly insulting her. Harvey Merrick and Hugh Treffinger are already dead when the action of “The Sculptor’s Funeral” and “The Marriage of Phaedra” begin, and the stories focus on the questionable legacy each leaves—the cold, unenlightened town which literally swallows Merrick after his death and the painting whose fate Treffinger is unable to secure from the grave. Only Laird seems to understand the dead sculptor but his efforts to explain Merrick’s importance fall on deaf ears. And while Treffinger’s servant, James, attempts to fulfill his master’s wishes, he is thwarted by the determination of Lady Treffinger, one of the few women in the text to resist the lure of art and take care of herself over others.

¹⁴ O’Brien, 133

Neither of these male artists triumphs in the end but each at least has the chance to practice his art, to be recognized for his work during his lifetime, and to leave an important legacy after his death. "The Garden Lodge" and "A Death in the Desert" deal with the fleeting presence and ultimate absence of a successful male artist in depicting the emptiness both D'Esquerre and Adriance Hilgarde create in the lives of those around them. The former causes the breakdown of one of his most ardent admirers while the latter achieves his success at least partially at the expense of his loving muse.

In "A Wagner Matinee" and "Paul's Case" the focus is on a main character whose life is destroyed either by art itself or its lack. For Georgiana, the music-free frontier is a cruel prison that has sucked her very life-blood dry. Wagner's music revives her briefly only to lead the way for her eventual return to silence and artistic death. Paul believes that his appreciation for art differentiates him from those around him, but he makes no effort to create art or to be where real art is being created. He belongs neither to his practical working-class neighborhood nor to the flamboyant world of performers he admires. He is drawn to but does not enter the world of creativity and the limbo he has created for himself can be resolved only in suicide. Some critics see Paul as an innocent devoured and destroyed by the goblins Rossetti warns about while others compare him to the narrator of "A Wagner Matinee," arguing that Clark was saved by a love for music inspired by his aunt, a love Paul fails to develop. He has also been compared to Flavia of the cycle's first story, "Flavia and Her Artists," since both seem more concerned with money and status than with art.¹⁵ However we view Paul, his story, like those which precede it, is about an insatiable hunger which tortures, and ultimately kills, its victim

¹⁵ Ibid, 187

This insatiable hunger is a notion that recurs throughout the text-pieces which make up *The Troll Garden*. As we have seen, female characters are especially made to suffer under the power of their male counterparts, but as she revised some of these stories for subsequent publication, Cather toned down some of the harsher statements made in the earlier versions published here. Three stories (“Flavia and Her Artists,” “The Garden Lodge” and “The Marriage of Phaedra”) had not been published before the 1910 release of *The Troll Garden* and were not reprinted in Cather’s lifetime, therefore, only one version of each exists. But the other four stories were published first in separate magazines, then revised for *The Troll Garden* and then further revised for the 1920 publication of *Youth and the Bright Medusa*. All but one was reworked yet again for inclusion in Cather’s collected writings *The Novels and Stories of Willa Cather*. Thus, there are four existing versions of “The Sculptor’s Funeral,” “A Wagner Matinee,” and “Paul’s Case” and three existing versions of “A Death in the Desert.” Though a change in tone is apparent between *The Troll Garden* stories and those of *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, it is “less of a change in theme or situation than a shift in emphasis... The earlier stories vent outrage and bitterness: the later ones express courage, assurance and forgiveness” (Giannone, *Music*, 100). This is best exemplified by Cather’s deletion of Georgiana’s lament at the end of “A Wagner Matinee.” What began as “She burst into tears and sobbed pleadingly, “I don’t want to go, Clark, I don’t want to go” (101) in *The Troll Garden* becomes “She turned to me with a sad little smile. ‘I don’t want to go, Clark. I suppose we must’” (O’Brien, 282) in *Novels and Stories*. When *The Troll Garden* was first released, residents of her childhood home of Red Cloud reacted negatively to Cather’s harsh depiction of their way of life, a response Cather regretted.

After many years away from the desolate landscape, it might have easier for Cather to view Red Cloud with more fondness later in life. Certainly her success as a writer enabled her to look back more sympathetically on the place from which she hailed.

In *The Troll Garden* we are encouraged to compare the conclusion of each text-piece by its proximity to and interaction against the others. By looking at the opening text-pieces, "Flavia and Her Artists" and "The Sculptor's Funeral," we see that Cather has set up a framework of contrast between stories that will hold throughout the text. As Arnold notes, "It was surely not by accident that Cather chose to juxtapose Flavia and her perfidious artists against the sculptor, damning them by the integrity of his example" (48). In "Flavia and Her Artists," successful writers, painters, and musicians are shown to be boorish and hard-hearted. We then meet an artist who is elevated beyond the meanness of his upbringing by the purity of his talent in "A Sculptor's Funeral." Both stories feature a level-headed non-artist (Arthur Hamilton, Flavia's husband, in the former, and Jim Laird, Merrick's lawyer friend, in the latter) who represents a balance between the true artist (like the sculptor) and those who aspire to be associated with them (often for the wrong reasons).

The two stories present a geographical contrast as well, shifting from the East where art flourishes and is appreciated, to a Western frontier town where art is stifled and often destroyed. As Giannone writes,

dualism unifies *The Troll Garden*. The seven stories systematically assay the status of art by disclosing it in two contrary conditions, one of civility (urban culture) where art is warmly, perhaps too warmly, welcomed and the other of barbarism (the primitive frontier) where art is not welcomed at all.

Music, 33, 36

Each text-piece explores both the challenges and rewards of learning to live with your art, regardless of the setting. As the rest of the collection shows, there is no ideal locale for the artist; both city and country can be devastating.

This geographical movement, which is replicated throughout, looks ahead to Henry James's organization of *The Finer Grain*. Cather was greatly influenced by James, a fact which the author acknowledges, and this influence is particularly clear in the stories that make up *The Troll Garden*. James's themes alone did not captivate Cather's imagination; she seems to have observed his use of genre as well. As E.K. Brown notes, "Willa Cather was under the spell of Henry James at this time and quite possibly was struck by the manner in which he always arranged his short-story collections thematically" (114). Not only did Cather choose to focus on a theme very close to James's heart (the place of art and the artist in the modern world) but she creates characters and situations easily recognizable as having descended from the James canon. The text-pieces considered to be weakest are those which are also the most derivative. In fact, as Meyering notes, "There is nearly universal agreement among critics that ["Flavia and Her Artists"] should be grouped with "A Death in the Desert," "The Garden Lodge," and "The Marriage of Phaedra" in that all are Jamesian" (104). Perhaps aware of this dynamic, Cather revised and republished the other *Troll Garden* stories later in her career, but refused to re-release these during her lifetime.

For a woman writer struggling to define her identity in the face of rigid gender definitions, James's influence was not without consequence. Cather's reaction against the force of the male precursor is clear in her work. While she is not yet able to throw off the mantle of influence here, she is clearly aware of it and seems to have used her stories

as a means towards freeing herself of it. As O'Brien notes of *The Troll Garden's* dead or absent males:

This telling and recurrent absence has two opposed meanings: Cather wanted to convey the power of artistic influence, but she also wanted to dispense with the male artists who were absorbing her imagination. We can see this double purpose in the fact that the stories also portray gifted women whose creative power is suppressed or dissipated by social and psychological forces.

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Even while imitating James, Cather knew that in order to become a true artist she would need to develop a style and focus of her own. She does best in those stories set in her native middle west, a place whose language and spirit she conveys in "A Sculptor's Funeral" and "A Wagner Matinee" (which, while set in Boston, evokes the hardship of life in Red Cloud). Having struggled with issues of identity since childhood, Cather (who for a time dressed in men's clothing and called herself William) understood what it was like to feel disconnected from society. She struggled to find a way to express the art she felt the need to create, a struggle made more complicated by her sex.

Of course James was not her only influence, as her story titles indicate. "A Death in the Desert" comes from the Robert Browning poem of the same name, and both "The Marriage of Phaedra" and "A Wagner Matinee" refer to the artistic successes of male predecessors. The Kingsley epigraph is another male source of inspiration, though her decision to remove it from *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, along with the omission of her most Jamesian stories, perhaps indicates that she had developed a more established sense of her own position as an artist by then. As McFarland notes, "When Willa Cather wrote the stories of *The Troll Garden*, she still believed that serious art was the province of men. In story after story in that work, Cather posits a dichotomy between men and women, artists and non-artists... Those women who could be artists themselves invariably

have their talents belittled, stifled or suppressed” (3-4). Examples of this include “Jimmy” Broadwood in “Flavia and her Artists,” Caroline Noble in “The Garden Lodge,” Aunt Georgiana in “A Wagner Matinee” and Katharine Gaylord in “A Death in the Desert.”” Creating these characters perhaps helped Cather work through an identity crisis brought on by her efforts to become a respected author, an endeavor in which she felt male dominance overcame the woman’s effort every time.¹⁶ Taken together these stories demonstrate that while art can be a painful presence, its absence can cause destruction as well. Cather’s characters negotiate this contradiction as they attempt to incorporate art into their lives without allowing it to overcome them. That there are serious consequences indicates a shift in sensibility from a romantic celebration of art to a more modernist wariness. Cather’s subsequent works continue to explore this theme and help elucidate the growing malaise felt by writers in America. The insecurity, confusion and isolation that exemplified early twentieth-century writing are all apparent here. By using the short story cycle, Cather replicates the ruptures at the forefront of her text in the text’s very form.

As is the case with Cather, concern for the “moral opacity of material possessions” is a driving force in the works of Henry James as well, from *The Portrait of a Lady* to *The Spoils of Poynton*. But in *The Finer Grain*, James rejects his typical generic choice—the novel—and tackles the issue via the short story cycle, indicating a new attention to form as a means by which to express content. His characters struggle to find their place in the world and while not all are artists all are shown to possess what can

¹⁶ Ibid, 169-170

be described as an artistic temperament, what James calls a finer grain of sensibility. James was entering a new phase of his long career when he wrote the stories that make up this text. Having just spent two years writing prefaces and revising earlier works for the New York Edition, he complained of a lack of creative work. These stories were not included in that grand text, possibly because they were not finished, but more likely because they represent a shift in James's work—a shift to what has been called his “fourth period” which begins with the author’s visit to America in 1904-05 and ends abruptly with World War I and his death in 1916.¹⁷ While “The modern short story... [was] only beginning to find its form at the time James produced his stories” (Dewey, 6), he had been practicing with the genre throughout his long career. When he compared the process of writing a story to that of writing a novel, James noted that the former involves “the labour of a patient weaver, spinning from finer threads, producing a tighter weave” (Ibid). And James did weave patiently, creating in his shorter works some of his most memorable characters. But *The Finer Grain* represents a shift for James in his short story writing career; he experiments with the genre and for the first time places several shorter works together to create a short story cycle. This change can be attributed to his growing disgust with life in America and his horror at the materialism and industrialism that had taken over his beloved New York City. The disconnectedness he felt there mimics the isolation which was to become the focus of modernist texts, and this shift in sensibility seems to have drawn James to the short story cycle. As we have seen, the cycle displays the not-quite cohesion of independent but linked text-pieces, a disjointedness James himself seemed to be struggling with at the time.

¹⁷ Blackmur, 97

The stories of *The Finer Grain* were published in various magazines between March 1909 and April 1910. They were then republished, in a different order, as *The Finer Grain* in October 1910. Just as Cather does with *The Troll Garden*, James reworks the same set of themes in each of the five stories. While he also focuses on the world of art and artists, James's text is more broadly about loss in all its many forms, including "loss of fortune, of friends and loved ones, of youth, of signs and values of the past, even of dreams and illusions" (Lyons, 202). Each story represents a variation on this theme, an exploration of how loss affects men and women in the modern era. This loss is replicated in the form of the short story cycle which can so easily introduce and then abandon a set of characters from one text-piece to the next. James extends Cather's pre-modernist tendencies in the way he treats this major theme, since "attendant on these losses are feelings of disillusionment, loneliness, personal failure, even despair" (Ibid). The book features a "formal, recurrent pattern of reversal...each tale executes a phenomenal reversal in the inter-personal relationships between hero and "grain"-women" (Hocks, 10), and this reversal is often quite devastating. Because the short story traditionally focuses on one character who is often physically and/or emotionally detached from society, it is well-suited to the portrayals of isolated individuals in these text-pieces. Had these been chapters in a novel, for example, James would have been required to provide more description, more access to the setting, and perspectives other than that of the main consciousness. These elements would have gotten in the way here and James seems to have understood that writing a novel (whose characters and settings must all be connected) would have diluted the sense of disconnectedness he hoped to

achieve. In the story cycle, each individual text-piece can maintain its distinctiveness even as it works together with the others to create a larger picture of society's ills.

While each story's central consciousness (to use James's term) finds a sort of equilibrium at the end, each is also changed in a negative way by his experience. Again and again James depicts a man facing a moral dilemma, and again and again the man fails to negotiate his way through it, a result perhaps indicative of James's own moral disillusionment at the time. Only in the first story can the central consciousness be said to have triumphed, and even that win comes with a significant loss attached to it. As we read the stories in order, the text moves from an expression of artistic integrity over romantic attraction, to a man duped by a young woman's trickery, to a lack of understanding so devastating as to precipitate a suicide, to a retreat into the past, to a salvation possible only at the hand of one's tormentor. In each successive story James highlights the loss felt by the focal consciousness—loss of romantic illusions in both "The Velvet Glove" and "Mora Montravers," loss of property and life in "A Round of Visits," loss of old-world values and a marriage opportunity in "Crapy Cornelia," and loss of livelihood and family in "The Bench of Desolation." Money, too, is often lost and while it is recovered manifold at the end of this last story, we can not say the same for the main character's self-respect. Though these text-pieces feature different characters living in different locations experiencing different circumstances, the thematic links create unity amidst the disunity of the text. James fractures his work while simultaneously cobbling it together in a way he had never before attempted in a collection of this sort.

James had published several short story collections before *The Finer Grain* but this text can be differentiated from his earlier works by various unifying elements. The

book's title, for instance, does not refer to any of the stories within the collection; rather, like Cather's *The Troll Garden*, it is meant to serve as an overriding statement regarding the text as a whole. James had written other collections with titles devised explicitly for them, but as Hocks recounts, "Until 1895, Henry James's numerous collections of tales were simply and routinely miscellanies with titles taken from the stories in them; thereafter all his volumes beginning with *Terminations* (1895) and *Embarrassments* (1896) have titles newly devised" (5-6). So what makes *The Finer Grain* more than a miscellany? Like Cather, James does not create a framing device or use a single narrator or setting. Again like Cather, James uses the text's organization to create meaning. The fact that the stories are placed in a particular order within the book indicates a shift away from the mode of his earlier short story collections, even those whose titles were devised explicitly for them. Hocks considers *The Finer Grain* to be the first "short story sequence proper" (6) because of the history of its creation, James's own writings about the text and its use of structure to create meaning. We learn of the text's evolution in a diary entry written by James's secretary, Theodora Bosanquet: "the sheaf of tales collected in *The Finer Grain*...were all written in response to a single request for a short story for *Harper's Monthly Magazine*" (Ibid). Though the stories were published in a number of different magazines over the course of a year, this statement indicates that they were written at the same time and were clearly linked in James's mind as he wrote them. That they were all meant to respond to a single assignment suggests that James found each to be by itself inadequate to the task, that the completion of one story begged for the commencement of another until, by putting the five stories together, the topic was finally satisfied. This makes it difficult to classify this short story sequence using Ingram's

terms, since the text seems to be both arranged and completed, but it nevertheless confirms that the stories are indelibly linked. Despite their separate publication dates, each was clearly produced as part of a larger group and in pursuit of a common goal. Martin and Ober note that the first and last stories “are complementary: in their opposite ways they point to the same conclusion and moral” (“The Shaping Spirit,” 341) and the same can be said of all the stories that make up the text. They have been gathered in an effort to elaborate on a single theme, and each story reflects the disillusionment James wrote about in *The American Scene*, a disillusionment brought on by the destruction of life as he knew it in America. He found New York to be bereft of its familiar landmarks, manners and morals and he traced this loss to society’s growing concern for money. The crassness of this desire leads to corruption and we see this corruption reproduced in each of these text-pieces.

The unity of the text is confirmed by another factor that distinguishes this collection, the explanatory statement James prepared for his publishers. The full preface reads as follows:

The Finer Grain consists of a series of Tales representing in each case a central figure (by which Mr. Henry James is apt to mean a central and a lively *consciousness*) involved in one of those greater or less tangles of circumstance of which the measure and from which the issue is in the vivacity and the active play of the victim’s or the victor’s sensibility. Each situation is thereby more particularly a moral drama, an experience of the special soul and intelligence presented (the sentient, perceptive, reflective part of the protagonist, in short), but with high emphasis clearly intended on its wearing for the hero or the heroine the quality of the agitating, the challenging personal *adventure*. In point of fact, indeed, it happens in each case to be the hero who exhibits this finer grain of accessibility to suspense or curiosity, to mystification or attraction – in other words, to moving experience; it is by his connection with its interest in the “grain” woman that his predicament, with its difficult solution, is incurred. And the series of illustrations of how such predicaments *may* spring up, and even be really characteristic, considerably ranges: from

Paris to London and New York, and then back again, to ambiguous yet at the same time unmistakable English, and ultra-English, ground.

Edel and Powers, 577

A much-simplified version of this was printed on the book jacket upon publication:

The Finer Grain consists of a series of five stories, the central figure in each is involved, as Mr. James loves his characters to be, in one of the tangles in highly civilized existence. By the 'finer grain' the author means, in his own phrase, 'a peculiar accessibility to surprise, to curiosity, to mystification or attraction—in other words, to moving experience.' It is needless to add that the book exhibits the most delicate comedy throughout.

Tintner, *Metamorphoses*, 355-56

As is indicated in these statements, each tale presents "a moral drama" involving the "sentient, perceptive, reflective part of the protagonist." Having laid out this grand scheme—a sensitive consciousness dragged into a moral dilemma by a "grain" woman—James goes on to identify each story as one of a "series of illustrations of how such predicaments may spring up, and even be really characteristic" in locales "from Paris to London and New York, and then back again, to ambiguous yet at the same time unmistakable English, and ultra-English, ground." While the published note is significantly shorter than James's original, "both versions indicate that *The Finer Grain* as a title had been chosen very carefully by James to indicate the predominant characteristic of the heroes in each of his tales" (Ibid, 356).

Order is important to the text's unity as well. The geographical movement alluded to in James's statement makes sense only when looking at the stories in the order in which they appear in *The Finer Grain*, not the order in which they were originally published. The fifth and last story James wrote, "A Round of Visits," is placed third in the text, and the fourth story written, "The Bench of Desolation," closes the volume.

That James reordered the stories indicates his desire to contrast certain tales to create a specific effect, just as Cather's placement of her stories within *The Troll Garden* works to highlight her major themes. As the stories progress, we find that the central consciousness becomes weaker, seems less able to understand the world around him and finally is shown to be thoroughly incapable of controlling his own fate. As Tintner notes, "The finer-grained man gradually fails to hold his own against 'the grain woman' and ends up exhausted and in her power" (Ibid, 360). The book moves from the moral triumph of John Berridge in the first text-piece to the humiliated Herbert Dodd in the last, a progression indicating James's negativity at the end of his career. This negativity may have been brought on by his brother's illness, his on-stage failure and his disappointment over the changes he witnessed during his 1904-5 visit to New York.¹⁸ James could have had many reasons for shuffling the stories in this way, and critics have conjectured on what those reasons might be. The book's overall rhythm must have concerned James—he had just written the Prefaces, after all, proving that "Formal questions of this sort mattered deeply" to him (Hocks, 10)—and he perhaps wanted to break up his two most devastating indictments of twentieth-century life (in "The Bench of Desolation" and "A Round of Visits") by inserting a lighter tale, "Crapy Cornelia," between them. A more likely explanation is that while each of the five stories focuses on the conflict between the "hero" and the "grain woman," only one—"A Round of Visits"—centers primarily on an encounter between two men, an encounter prefigured by earlier James stories such as "The Beast in the Jungle" and "The Jolly Corner" where the protagonist attempts but never quite manages to confront his alter ego. That this story is given a

¹⁸ Lyons, 202

central position by James indicates his awareness of its uniqueness relative to the stories that surround it.¹⁹

Like *The Troll Garden*, the stories of *The Finer Grain* share an interest in art and the life of the artist. But where Cather focuses on her characters' struggles to live with the light created by their imagination, James's characters seem rather to suffer from the darkness of no imagination. The only "hero" who can be called successful in this text is the protagonist of the first story, "The Velvet Glove" (originally called "The Top of the Tree"). A writer at risk of being artistically compromised by his own success, John Berridge enjoys the accolades his recent play has elicited from his fellow party guests. He allows himself to be first figuratively and then literally whisked away by the beautiful, mysterious Princess, a woman who writes romance novels under the pen name Amy Evans. Berridge completely mistakes the young woman's intentions and is lured briefly into an elaborate fantasy before she finally makes her motives clear. She does not desire him as a romantic companion, she merely wants him to write a blurb for the jacket of her new book so she can use his literary status to advance her own career. The lack of understanding goes both ways here and the Princess also operates under mistaken assumptions. This disconnect between characters who share a very intimate setting, in this case her car as it drives through the streets of Paris, is repeated again and again in the stories that follow. Despite their physical closeness, there is no emotional or intellectual closeness and each remains isolated in his/her own world. The chasm only widens as they talk, and Berridge comments that he is struck by the "exquisite intimacy of her manner of setting him down on the other side of an abyss" (30). Despite the dashing of

¹⁹ Hocks, 9

his romantic hopes, his refusal of her request is painted as a victory. The artist has triumphed over the crass American woman who sees writing as a commodity to be exploited for financial gain rather than an art to be nurtured and respected for its own beauty.

Sidney Traffle of "Mora Montravers" is also deluded by a young woman, but his moment of realization comes too late for him to be considered the victor in this tale. Though the story appears second in this volume, it was written and published last, in the *English Review* of August-September 1909. It is placed here to provide a vivid contrast to "The Velvet Glove" as it shows what happens when crass commercialism wins out over art. Mora uses her beauty and sophistication to manipulate her aunt, her uncle and the unfortunately named Walter Puddick. Art leads her to Puddick and her visits to his studio for painting lessons lead to her scandalous departure from the home of her guardians. We last see her in a house of art, the museum where Traffle finds her admiring one of his favorite paintings, but it soon becomes clear that she is there for an illicit assignation and that the art itself is beside the point. This seems to be her greatest sin and her disregard for the art and the sacredness of the museum confirms her moral downfall. Until this moment Traffle has admired her, has in fact been portrayed as "a deluded romantic, charmed by his niece's scandalous behavior and willing to persist—despite revelations to the contrary and the disapproval of his own wife—in a preposterous faith in Mora's integrity" (Dewey, 8). Traffle tries to live vicariously through his niece, regretting the art he himself no longer creates and feeling stifled by the smallness of his wife's sense of propriety. His eyes are opened though as he finally sees how his efforts on Mora's behalf have merely allowed her to get what she wants, the

money for Puddick and freedom for herself. The alienation between Traffle and Mora mirrors the lack of understanding between Berridge and the Princess, a dynamic to be found between each grain man and woman in the stories to follow. Their connection is based in part on the fact that Traffle and Mora are aspiring or potential artists, but her obliviousness to the art in the museum causes the veil to finally be lifted, and he recognizes her deviousness at last.

The title of “A Round of Visits,” first published in the *English Review* of April-May 1910, “suggests the absurd circularity of human pursuits in James’s last tales, the inability of men and women to form any genuine bonds of love. Human relationships are themselves little more than visits, as characters inevitably return to the isolated condition in which they began” (Sicker, 173). This inability to create a bond with another human being, even in the most intimate of circumstances, is a running theme throughout the five *Finer Grain* stories. Like “Crapy Cornelia,” which follows it in the text (and was written the year before, in 1909), “A Round of Visits” “presents the self-exile returning to his native New York, which he finds harsh and unfamiliar, and where he finds the ties of old personal relationships very hard to pick up” (Purdy, 421). Mark Monteith longs to pour his troubles into a friendly ear but his efforts to unburden himself are thwarted at every turn. Having been swindled by his friend and cousin, Phil Bloodgood, he returns to New York and is, as James himself was, distraught at how his city has changed. After his disappointment with Mrs. Folliett and Mrs. Ash, who fail to express the appropriate amount of interest and concern, Monteith’s visit to Newton Winch promises at first to be a success. Winch seems genuinely interested in Monteith’s pain and the two commiserate until the truth of Winch’s situation becomes clear. Monteith himself opens

the door for the arriving police, there to arrest his friend for committing the same betrayal for which he himself needs comfort. Thinking he has finally found a sympathetic ear, he discovers that his unburdening has led to his listener's suicide. His reward for making a connection, however brief and tenuous it was, is the violent death of the man with whom he connects.

The central consciousness of "Crapy Cornelia," first published in *Harper's* in October 1909, is luckier than Monteith, but this story also focuses on the growing inadequacies of New York's social scene. A single gentleman just past middle age (as so many of James's main consciousnesses are) White-Mason finds himself about to propose to a woman he does not particularly like. We are meant to note the contrast between the new-fangled frills found in Mrs. Worthingham's apartment and Cornelia's mementos of a time past. While White-Mason seems content at the end, the friendship with Cornelia he settles for destroys his chances for a loving, romantic relationship with Mrs. Worthingham or any other woman, and he is effectively alienated from both of them. He and his old friend may enjoy reminiscing about the past, but their state at the end of the story guarantees that they will have no future. Their relationship allows them to remain static, and White-Mason, who is already plagued by indecision when we first meet him, is clearly going nowhere from here.

A similar stasis closes the fifth and final tale, "The Bench of Desolation." As Herbert Dodd and his enemy-turned-savior, Kate Cookham, sit together on the titular bench, movement seems beside the point. They do not even pretend to understand each other, preferring not to share the stories of their years apart. Kate gives no indication of revealing how she made the fortune she is now offering the man whose life she has

destroyed. Despite their physical proximity, there is no connection between them. In fact, “their togetherness at the end, is...at best a suture” (Hocks, 15) for the wounds created by living in the modern world. This desolation is made starker by its contrast to the hopefulness of the first text-piece, a hopefulness which clearly leads nowhere. The growing alienation caused by the industrialization of society is exemplified by the hotel culture of cities like New York. This alienation robs the individual of his/her ties to the community and leads to a diminishment in creativity. Rather than build on Berridge’s success, James depicts characters that sink deeper and deeper into their alienation. The unresolved ending of this and the earlier text-pieces reflects the lack of resolution James felt was available in modern life. Unlike the novel, which requires a sense of completion, the short story cycle allows James to highlight the isolation of each main consciousness without forcing him to elaborate on or even determine that character’s fate. The reader is therefore forced to decide what the future holds for Berridge and Monteith and Dodd, allowing the indeterminacy dictated by the genre to become part of the text’s thematic purpose. James’s focus on desolation, isolation and loss helps make a thematic argument for *The Finer Grain* as a modernist text. Because there is no solution to the problems raised by these stories, the text looks forward to the modernist perspective that will soon dominate twentieth-century literature. James wrote a great number of short stories during his career, but none are collected in quite this way. As becomes clear when reading *The Finer Grain*, the story cycle makes it possible for James to explore what were soon to become the prevailing literary concerns in a way a novel or typical short story collection could not. The story cycle can more comfortably accommodate both unity and disunity, fracturing and integration, and these dichotomies help James elucidate his meaning.

As these two texts demonstrate, Willa Cather and Henry James were among the first American authors to use the short story cycle proper as a means through which to express several variations on a single idea. In *The Troll Garden*, the text-pieces explore the dangerous role of art in society while *The Finer Grain* examines with increasing despair the sensitive man's response to devastating changes occurring in society. The story cycle provides both authors with a uniquely qualified space within which to present their material, a space not available elsewhere. While both are better remembers as authors of novels, both clearly felt that only this genre could best represent the themes they wanted to convey. Neither a collection of isolated short stories nor integrated novel, these texts represent a development in the short story cycle as it adapts to and reflects the changing social and cultural norms in early twentieth-century America.

Chapter Three

Early Modernist Manifestations: *In Our Time* and *Go Down, Moses*

The pre-modernist tendencies demonstrated in *The Troll Garden* and *The Finer Grain* are developed more fully in Ernest Hemingway's *In Our Time* (1925) and William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* (1940). Like the earlier cycles, these texts lack a framing device, common narrator and/or setting, but rather than attempt to elucidate a theme, such as the role of art in the world, they attempt instead to simultaneously provide both a general and a specific view of a particular time or place in history. They are clear representations of modernist concerns—a fractured society, isolated individuals, lack of faith in religion and government institutions and the loss of connection to nature and the land. For Hemingway, the time is immediately before and after World War I, a period of unimaginable devastation and loss in this country. His characters struggle to find meaning in a world which seems to have lost all sense and structure. Faulkner's world is the American South just before and after the Civil War where individuals attempt to make sense of society's changing mores, though the war itself is absent from his text. Instead he depicts the results of a war which greatly complicated the racially mixed-up south. Both story cycles can be categorized as more thoroughly modern than their predecessors, not only because of their themes but because of the meta-fiction they help create. Hemingway cut the eleven pages that made Nick Adams the author of the entire work, including those text-pieces in which he was a character, from "Big Two-Hearted River" but his intent in those pages still has implications. We will see, however, that Nick need not have written the text in order for it to succeed as a coherent whole. Though there is no explicit statement to this effect, *Go Down, Moses* is self-reflexive as

well, playing a role within the larger group of texts that make up Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County fiction. Despite these modernist tendencies, there is internal coherence in each text, coherence created through the use of the cycle's title, organization and thematic links.

In Our Time was produced out of a long process of bringing materials together and it exists in at least five different incarnations. The first was a series of six inter-chapters (which would eventually become Chapters I through V and Chapter IX of the 1925 text) published in the April 1923 Exiles number of *The Little Review*. Inspired by editor Bill Bird's comment that "If Ernest could get together a dozen more...the whole would make a respectable little volume" (Fleming, 445-456), Hemingway added twelve new inter-chapters and sent all eighteen to Three Mountain Press to be published as a pamphlet called *in our time*. For the first book version of *In Our Time*, published in 1925, fourteen stories were presented with sixteen shorter prose pieces interspersed between them. Despite its unusual structure, *In Our Time* follows the pattern of the *Bildungsroman* in presenting an initiation ritual of sorts. Nick's growth can be traced through the stories, which "can be grouped together in such a way as to suggest the formula represented in rites of passage: separation (stories from one to four), initiation (from four to thirteen), and return (the last story)" (Camati, 17). As we will see, Faulkner will engage the reader in a similar process with Isaac McCaslin in *Go Down, Moses*.

Despite Nick's prominence, *In Our Time* focuses on more than one character. Nick is representative of the many young men presented in the text, so much so that together they create a collective protagonist, a main character who varies from text-piece to text-piece but ultimately represents a single point of view. As Dunn and Morris note,

“Whether [Hemingway’s main characters] be named Nick Adams or Joe Butler or not named at all; they can be taken together as a generation that encounters irrationality and violence in a modern world” (66). These characters, all versions of one another, struggle with the violence of war, the disappointment of love and the responsibilities of adulthood. The short story cycle is a crucial element in Hemingway’s effort to create a character who is representative of an entire community, and he uses both the stories and the inter-chapters to illustrate the growth, or lack of growth, each character experiences. He uses setting (though varied), related imagery and organization to connect the disparate elements of the text into a unified whole. Other unifying factors include the use of recurrent images (such as childbirth, water and darkness), the internal structure of the stories (where two major patterns can be discerned: a movement from outdoor spaces to indoor ones (or vice versa) and a movement toward and then away from a particular place) and the arrangement of the text-pieces themselves.

Though the inter-chapters, which have also been called chapter headings, vignettes and miniatures, were written and published before the stories, the two elements are combined so that they “all hook up.”²⁰ The author famously wrote to Edmund Wilson that he had

finished the book of 14 stories with a chapter on *In Our Time* between each story—that is the way they were meant to go—to give the picture of the whole between examining it in details. Like looking with your eyes at something, say a passing coast line, and then looking at it with 15X binoculars. Or rather, maybe, looking at it and then going in and living in it—and then coming out and looking at it again.

Selected Letters, 128

²⁰ *Selected Letters*, 91

Hemingway's comment that "this is the way they were meant to go" implies that he had planned to use his fragments for this purpose all along, making this a composed cycle. Once combined with the stories, the inter-chapters help Hemingway achieve his goal "to give the picture of the whole between examining it in details." Putting these two different kinds of prose together creates a sense of movement back and forth in space that helps tie the disparate pieces of the text together. The structure of each story and inter-chapter is by itself unified and the combination of elements is carefully structured as well. The organization and dividing elements of the text were important to Hemingway, as we see by his complaint to Maxwell Perkins, who was putting together the compilation, *The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories* in 1938: "I don't like the *In Our Time* there all by its-self with only numbers and not marked as chapters. They need the breaking apart that separate pages and the heading of chapters give. That would be the only possible way to have it published as one thing" (Ibid, 469). He also objected to the fact that the inter-chapters were no longer italicized, claiming that "to get the effect I wanted with them (and it was a strange effect, and they made it), I had them set in italics. They need those italics" (Ibid, 470). Clearly, Hemingway had specific goals in putting the text together as he did. Though he would become famous as a novel-writer, the short story cycle seems better suited to the task at hand in this text. His subsequent novels deal with similar themes of disillusionment and isolation but they do not convey the jarring effects of war in the same way. This text can therefore be seen as a blueprint of sorts for the rest of Hemingway's career with the important difference of genre to set it apart.

Hemingway's experimentation with structure, his decision to first create a main consciousness and then fracture it so that it represents the voices of many, made the short story cycle an appropriate choice. Of course the text's genre continues to be the subject of debate. As Burhans writes,

In Our Time is neither anthology nor novel but a new form, a literary hybrid, with something of the variety of the anthology combined with something of the unity of the novel. Moreover, in its view of the world and of man's efforts to live in it with meaning and order, in its conscious and intricate structure, in its ironic and symbolic method, and in its lean, intensified style, Hemingway's first book reflects the central intelligence and esthetic concerns which dominated his life and writing from beginning to end.

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Though the text's form changed over time, Hemingway kept the title, from the *Book of Common Prayer* ("Give peace in our time, O Lord"), throughout the long, complicated revision process. In using the same name under which the inter-chapters were published (without the stories) "Hemingway subtly implies that [the vignettes] are not subordinate introductions to the stories but the essential context in which the stories must be read and understood" (Ibid, 89). By the time the text was published as a book, two of the original inter-chapters had been expanded into stories ("A Very Short Story" and "The Revolutionist"), the last inter-chapter was given a title ("L'Envoi") and the order of the inter-chapters was changed. For the second American edition, brought out by Scribner's in 1930, an introduction by Edmund Wilson and an "Introduction by the Author" were added. Hemingway's introduction was re-named "On the Quai at Smyrna" when the text next appeared, lacking some of its original headings and italicization, as part of *The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories* in 1939.

The inter-chapters were themselves based on a series of "I have seen" sentences which Hemingway called "Paris 1922," and while nine of the inter-chapters are about

war, six about bullfighting and two about crime, they are not organized by these categories when placed amongst the stories. The fact that they also do not appear in the order in which they were written indicates Hemingway's purposeful placement of them within the text. Instead, they begin with war (clearly the text's major theme) and then move to the violence of the bullfight. From there they look at crime in America before returning to scenes of war. As Burhans notes, "the pattern is definite and balanced; moreover it suggests a unifying theme. By surrounding bullfighting with war and crime, Hemingway places violence and death on which man imposes order and meaning at the center of a world of chaotic disorder and violence" (90). This chaos is somewhat combated by the very order and organization required by such an undertaking and, as was the case for Faulkner in the preparation of *Go Down, Moses*, Hemingway made various changes and adjustments to the elements of the text when he decided to gather these pieces together to form a short story cycle. In a letter to Edmund O'Brien Hemingway wrote

One of the chapters...comes in between each story. That was what I originally wrote them for, chapter headings. All the stories have a certain unity...and in between each one comes bang! the *In Our Time*. I've tried to do it so you get the close up very quietly but absolutely solid and the real thing but very close and then through it all between every story the rhythm of the...chapters.

Fleming, 451

Part of Hemingway's uniqueness here is his use of both traditional short stories and inter-chapters in creating this story cycle.

Hemingway's goal in writing *In Our Time* is often described as a desire to create a sense of confusion which reflects that which the text's characters feel. While this story cycle is carefully ordered, "it seems altogether likely that the intention was to give an impression of disorder" (Halliday, 29). Once again, the connections between the

disparate elements of the text are not made for us, we must make them ourselves. This reliance on the reader to make sense of what is on some level nonsensical is reflected in both the thematic content and the structural organization of *In Our Time*. But even disorganization must be represented through an organized effort, and Hemingway seems to have understood the importance of using these text-pieces to build a coherent (if also incoherent) whole. The stories and inter-chapters work together to create the desired effect by allowing Hemingway to present the general horror of the world in the inter-chapters and then use the stories to move into specific situations.

While the inter-chapters focus on war, bullfighting and crime, the stories can be grouped by a different set of topics. After completing "Out of Season" in 1924, Hemingway wrote a series of heavily autobiographical stories about the movement from innocence to experience of a character eventually to be named Nick Adams. These include "Indian Camp," "The End of Something," "The Three-Day Blow" and "Big Two-Hearted River," all stories included in *In Our Time*. Doubtless inspired by Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (published in 1919), among other texts, Hemingway used elements of the *Bildungsroman* as the basis for this cycle. Beginning with this framework, the arrangement of the text-pieces reflects Hemingway's developing craft as a short story writer. Grebstein has written about Hemingway's use of antithesis and opposition,²¹ principles that are reflected in the individual stories as well as in the combination of those stories with the inter-chapters in *In Our Time*. This structural design is equally apparent in the text as a whole. The text opens and closes with inter-chapters on war, which are immediately followed or preceded by stories about Nick

²¹ 3-4

Adams. Even the text-pieces that do not feature Nick feature a character so like him that together they represent a central consciousness for the text. Hemingway is therefore able to extend Nick's experiences by applying them to others of his generation, making it clear that what happens to him happens to them and vice versa. This identification of one character with many helps create the collective protagonist so important to this cycle. Because of this identification, each story is no longer about an individual character or situation and therefore takes on greater significance. The structure makes reading the whole text a necessary step towards understanding the individual text-pieces since we must first learn the fate of the entire generation before we can know the fate of any particular member of it. As is the case with Cather's *The Troll Garden* and James's *The Finer Grain*, Hemingway sets his stories in various geographical locations, reinforcing the notion that the social and cultural realities of "our time" exist regardless of who or where you are.

This connection between characters (some repeated, some not) is one of the unifying elements of the text, but beyond use of characterization other patterns are easily discernible. As Strychacz notes, "the first five stories, interspersed with vignettes about war, form a relatively homogenous section that...move[s] chronologically through Nick's boyhood and early manhood in the years before the war" (60). After his wounding in Chapter VI, the focus shifts to the effect war has on Nick and young men like him, as seen in "A Very Short Story" and "Soldier's Home." The next grouping of stories, which includes "The Doctor and The Doctor's Wife," "Cat in the Rain," "Out of Season," and "Cross-Country Snow," focuses on the failure to communicate, seemingly endemic to the time, and its ability to destroy relationships. The directionless American expatriate in

Europe makes several appearances as well, and becomes representative of the collective protagonists' feeling of displacement. This displacement is immediately apparent in the text's 1930 edition that opens with "On the Quai at Smyrna," a piece filled with frantic, frightening images of refugees escaping the horrors of war. This is clearly part of the text-piece's purpose as it introduces "a pattern of movement, flight and desertion" (Slabey, 46) that will be repeated throughout the text. The prevailing emotions here are fear and loss, emotions that will be elaborated on again and again as we continue to read. The close relationship between birth and death—one of the major themes of the cycle—is introduced as well. The Greeks bundled together on the pier resemble the log-jam we see later in "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," and the narrator's deception of the Turkish officer and his reference to the horror of the mules left to drown as "pleasant" indicates both the lack of communication and the ironic detachment that will be prevalent throughout the text. That this episode is followed by "Chapter I," told by a kitchen corporal whose entire battery is drunk, shows how nonsensical the tragedy of war can be and the lengths young soldiers will go to in order to manage the enormity of their pain. Hemingway therefore uses this first "chapter" not to organize but to throw the reader into the same sort of confusion his characters face.

"Indian Camp," our first introduction to Nick Adams, was written early in 1924 and it does for the stories what "On the Quai at Smyrna" does for the inter-chapters. It "set the tone and established the themes for all that followed...Played in different keys, almost every story is a variation on some thematic element of 'Indian Camp' until we are alone with Nick isolated by his own choice on Big Two-Hearted River, trying to recover his poise" (Reynolds, *Hemingway's In Our Time*, 47). These themes include the father-

son relationship, the violence of childbirth, the pain of failed relationships and Nick's growing awareness of his own mortality. That bringing a baby to life can also cause death is clear here, but young Nick seems not yet to have understood what this means in terms of his own life and death; he still has faith in his father and is convinced as they row home that "he would never die" (19). The stories and inter-chapters to come show how Nick grows out of this naïve sense of security into the real world of pain and disillusionment.

This process begins in "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," where we see another side of the cold but ultimately heroic father introduced in "Indian Camp." Here the Indians come to him, but his role is no longer that of savior. The doctor is shown to be on shaky moral ground, rationalizing his theft and his use of Indian labor to help him. Language becomes an issue as Dick Boulton speaks to his son Eddy in Ojibway and we learn that Billy speaks no English. When his manhood is questioned by the burly, fight-prone Indian, the doctor retreats to his home where he cleans his shotgun, emptying and reloading its shells before walking outside to avoid his wife's questions. More than merely a domestic affair, this conflict between white doctor and Indian laborer "does not merely happen to resemble the standoff between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Allies but may actually help explain it. The story describes the complex dynamic of humiliation and aggression emerging out of a history of territories annexed and dispossessed" (Strychacz, 71). This link between two thoroughly unrelated stories occurs through their proximity within the text. Hemingway also foreshadows a major theme of *In Our Time* by presenting us with a medical doctor who is married to a Christian Scientist. This clear disconnect between the man of science and the wife who rejects the

very principles on which his life's work is based sets the standard for the disconnects to come. The lack of understanding between men and women is highlighted again and again in stories such as "A Very Short Story," "Out of Season" and "Cat in the Rain."

Before witnessing the end of Nick's first serious love affair in "The End of Something," we learn of Mons and the Germans who are casually "potted" as they climb a wall. The detachment with which these killings are described is a detachment shared by all the narrators encountered in this text. The same detachment is used in describing the failed relationship in the story that follows, though Nick has not yet experienced the horrors alluded to in Chapter III. He does, however, know the pain of growing older, of having romantic expectations that are not met and of being forced to face the responsibilities of adulthood. Ending the relationship will save him from entering the adult world for the moment, but we see from the inter-chapters that this delay is only temporary. Nick struggles with this conflict in "The Three-Day Blow" where we see that he is unhappy about the break-up but also relieved to be drinking and hunting with his friend, Bill. The friends talk about sports and books and the storm brewing outside, a storm which foreshadows the change which is about to take place in Nick's world. These two stories are separated by Chapter IV, in which soldiers had created "the perfect barricade" between themselves and the advancing enemy. Rather than fear the fight, the narrator tells us that he and his fellow soldiers were "frightfully put out when we heard they pulled back," again indicating an innocence regarding the true horror of war. Like Nick in the story, they are spared the truth about this part of life because, like Nick, they are not yet men.

The shooting of the six cabinet ministers represented in Chapter V, an incident Hemingway wrote about as a journalist, precedes "The Battler," the story which finally introduces Nick to the adult world. The image of the wall against which the men are executed will be repeated in the next inter-chapter in which Nick himself becomes a victim of war. "The Battler" was included in the text only after censorship concerns forced Hemingway to remove "Up In Michigan" from the original *In Our Time* lineup. Though he had another Nick Adams story on hand—"The Undefeated"—Hemingway chose instead to finish this new story about the adolescent Nick's movement into manhood, an indication that Hemingway was adhering to an overall design for the text. In the scheme of Nick's education it serves as a gateway—he is literally and figuratively moving away from home in this story, and he encounters for the first time certain unsettling elements of adulthood, like violence, fear and loss. Its placement is important because rather than merely insert it where "Up In Michigan" had been, Hemingway moved the next three stories forward and placed "The Battler" fifth without moving any of the inter-chapters.²² He could have re-inserted "Up In Michigan" in the 1939 version of the text but he chose not to, indicating that he was content with the substitution. While Linda Wagner argues that the earlier story "would have been a helpful inclusion, for it presents the set of ground rules for the romantic love Hemingway studies in much of his fiction" (129), "The Battler" clearly fulfills an important role in the text at large, indicating a shift in the life of Nick Adams that the sexual awakening in "Up In Michigan" does not.

²² Reynolds, "Hemingway's *In Our Time*," 44

This shift is completed in Chapter VI when we learn that Nick has been shot in battle, an event that allows him to achieve a new sense of understanding about the world and his place within it. This is the pivotal moment in the text, the moment when Nick finally reaches some sort of maturity, and it “connects at last the previously disjunct time sequences of Nick’s adolescence and of the war vignettes” (Strychacz, 71). It is followed by “A Very Short Story” where the failure of love is highlighted, a focus which connects the story to both the text-pieces about war and those which portray failed romances. Loss of religious faith, a possible cause of this generation’s problems, is added to the mix as we are led from the unnamed soldier’s desperate prayer in Chapter VII to Krebs’s inability to pray in “Soldier’s Home,” a story in which the failure of family to repair the damage done by the war becomes the main focus.

While Chapter VIII takes place in America, the shooting of the Hungarians seems as casual as the potting of the Germans, a connection which makes indifference and prejudice as biting at home as they are at war. This incident was also based on a newspaper report, though it is not clear if Hemingway himself wrote it. He certainly would have known about the events described and recognized how a lack of understanding between people from different backgrounds allows for callous violence, even at home. Doyle does not worry about killing the thieves because he is convinced that they are Italian. Of course, he is wrong (we are told that they are Hungarians in the first sentence) but he has no interest in getting close enough to them to be able to tell the difference. This sort of urban combat is immediately contrasted with a different kind of killing—killing done not in the name of war or crime but in the name of sport—in the first of the matador pieces. Each text-piece in the bullfighting unit helps illustrate a part

of the sport's deeply ingrained tradition, a tradition in which violence always wins. These six inter-chapters come between a series of domestic stories and juxtaposes the gruesomeness of the bullring with the hollow emptiness of marriage. "Mr. and Mrs. Elliott" satirizes outright the institution of marriage as the new groom spends his honeymoon drinking himself to sleep every night while his bride retires to bed with her female confidante. Strychacz calls it a "savagely and often hilarious attack on American mores, marriage, and writers" (75) and it provides an important counterpoint to "The Revolution," which precedes it. As Burhans notes, "the hard-earned idealism of the young revolutionist contrasts directly with the childish romanticism of "Mr. and Mrs. Elliott" (97). The failure of institutions is exhibited here and in the stories that follow, as the Nick-like characters search for ways in which to integrate themselves into what they think is a normal life. That these couples are together as a way to avoid the consequences of being alone in such a world seems clear, and this realization makes their failure to find solace in one another that much more emblematic of the times.

"Cat in the Rain" is a less humorous look at the failure of marriage to heal the wounds of modern disillusionment. Like "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," it "follows the symmetrical three-part design...with two inside scenes framing an outdoor scene" (Grebstein, 13), a pattern seen also in "The Three-Day Blow" and "Cross-Country Snow." Though nothing much happens here, the story powerfully conveys the sense of loss and confusion found in the text-pieces about war. The wife is clearly unhappy and the husband is clearly detached, a set-up repeated again in the following story. Written in April 1923, "Out of Season" reiterates the disconnection between man and wife which has been demonstrated again and again in the text. Together with the other text-pieces, it

“presents a world of thorough disorientation. Spiritual deadness, anomie, aimless wandering, conflict between genders and cultures, and miscommunication” (Strychacz, 55). Language is again an issue, as it is in the story which follows; because they cannot speak Italian, the American couple can only communicate with each other. Their failure to do even that indicates how isolated they both are in the marriage.

These same issues are brought to bear in “Cross-Country Snow,” an elegy to the loss of freedom caused by the impending birth of Nick’s first child. His days of carefree fun, as represented by skiing and drinking with George, are coming to an end and both men lament the responsibilities they feel they must accept. Nick’s evening with Bill in “The End of Something” is echoed here, though in that case it was the romantic relationship that ended and the freedom that had been restored. Here the reverse occurs; he will move back to America despite his desire to stay in Europe. Disappointment characterizes “My Old Man” as well, though the main character here is a young boy, closer to the Nick Adams of earlier stories. Often thought to be the weakest story of the text, thematically it reiterates the disillusionment experienced by Nick, Krebs and other, often unnamed, narrators. Once again, a father is shown to let his son down.

The career of Nick Adams comes to a close in “Big Two-Hearted River,” a two-part story that subtly integrates the pattern of movement found throughout the text. Though the action takes place entirely outside, there is a symbolic indoor scene exemplified by the campfire and the tent. This moment occurs just as the story divides; part 1 dramatizes the movement towards something and part 2 the movement away. Inserted in between is an inter-chapter about Sam Cardinella, a prisoner who loses control of everything, even his body, as his execution approaches. This depiction of fear is

jarring amidst Nick's trout fishing, and it once again demonstrates Hemingway's use of contrast in the text. The hanging is likely the exact sort of scene Nick is trying to forget as he tries to empty his mind through physical exertion. This intrusion indicates that despite Nick's best efforts, the horrors of war cannot be forgotten, a statement reiterated by the burned-out landscape through which he travels.

The inter-chapters of *In Our Time* work with each other and the stories amongst which they are placed to create meaning and unity in the text. Hemingway needed the short story cycle to make sense of the unusual elements he brought together here work beautifully to convey the fear, isolation and doubt experienced by this particular generation at this particular time in history. As Burhans writes, "the stories explore and develop in a variety of characters and events the two themes working centrally in the vignettes: the problem of recognizing and accepting the world and the human condition as they really are; and the consequent problem of trying to live with meaning and value in such a world" (94). This is what makes the otherwise unrelated short stories work together with the inter-chapters to create a collective protagonist whose point of view incorporates the voices of an entire generation. A novel on such a subject would need to present some sort of solution and a collection of short stories would lack the necessary connectedness; a short story cycle allows Hemingway to explore the topic thoroughly while illustrating his inability to explain it fully.

For Faulkner, too, the short story cycle offered a unique opportunity to express the coherence of a larger society while still underscoring the fragmentation caused by the social and political upheavals of the times. As Joanne Creighton wrote of *Go Down, Moses*, "he [Faulkner] was attempting to find a form flexible enough to accommodate

both the expansive panoramic across-the-generations look at a host of characters and incidents and an intensive examination of the moral consciousness of one individual, Isaac McCaslin” (86). This study was meant to cover more than just old Ike; through him and his family Faulkner attempts to understand the entire South. Faulkner was experimenting with form when he began writing the stories that make up *Go Down, Moses*, and he seems to have realized that only the short story cycle, with its mixed elements of both the novel and the short story collection, would allow such diverse needs to be met simultaneously. “His over-all method of composition was of a kind that could be called ‘blending’” (Tick, 68) and the works published just before *Go Down, Moses* (*The Unvanquished* in 1938, *The Wild Palms* in 1939 and *The Hamlet* in 1940) can certainly be defined as blended works. But in creating this text Faulkner realized that mere blending would not be enough; here his unique structure is that of the short story cycle.

By May 1942, when the first American edition of *Go Down, Moses* was published, Faulkner had experimented a great deal with genre. His desire to recreate the financial success of *The Unvanquished* was well-documented and perhaps contributed to this “rather audacious attempt at collage, [in which] Faulkner brought together stories from markedly dissimilar origins” (Creighton, 16). He revised and reworked the elements of this collage to create a unified whole, and while the book was initially called *Go Down, Moses and Other Stories*, correspondence indicates that this title, which implies a short story collection, was not of Faulkner’s choosing.²³ Subsequent American editions omitted the last three words (the original title has been retained in the English

²³ Millgate, 203

edition) at his request. In interviews, Faulkner insisted on calling the book a novel, a fact that points to the text's unity. As Hochberg notes, "Themes are developed and counterpointed through the body of the work, and the implication of certain dilemmas raised early in the volume are picked up and worked out in later stories" (58). However, this unity alone does not prove novel-ship. The fact remains that eight of the ten stories incorporated into the text had been or were about to be published as discrete short stories and were capable of standing alone. This, along with Faulkner's painstaking (though not always comprehensive) revisions, indicates that these are more than just chapters in a novel. At the same time, they are clearly meant to be read together as a unit, since each story, as it exists in *Go Down, Moses*, suffers when read in isolation.

As is the case with most of Faulkner's works, these text-pieces build upon each other in unusual ways. Creighton insists that Faulkner "was attempting to create a new synthetic form...in which the stories are autonomous units governed by their own principles while they are at the same time integral parts of a larger whole" (86). Not only do the text-pieces of *Go Down, Moses* work together to create a larger, more coherent whole within the book itself, but *Go Down, Moses* works together with Faulkner's other works to create a larger, more coherent oeuvre. This can be said of *In Our Time*'s relationship to Hemingway's later works as well, as we see him rework and reiterate the text's major themes and issues again and again.²⁴ This effort to create an umbrella world within which these texts can exist indicates a shift away from the unity of individual texts apparent in earlier cycles studied here.

²⁴ As we will see in chapter five, this tradition is continued in the works of Maxine Hong Kingston and Louise Erdrich.

When Faulkner wrote stories for the American magazine market, demand—and competition—was high. Though he often disparaged his shorter works, complaining they took away from the more serious task of novel-writing, he regularly reworked and reused characters, situations, even entire scenes from his stories for his longer works. He seems to have viewed his entire oeuvre as source material for future texts and he borrows liberally from himself throughout his career. This creates a cohesiveness that is amplified by the fact that, for this text, the stories were “written over a relatively short span of time, with almost no other short story activity intervening” (Skei, 94). (This resembles the process of James in writing *The Finer Grain* and, as we will see, Carver in writing *Cathedral*.) In creating this text Faulkner revisited several already written stories and changed them to fit his goals in putting this volume together. As Skei acknowledges, “He revised numerous stories and superimposed a design or structure upon them, which he had not planned from the beginning” (110). This makes *Go Down, Moses* a completed short story cycle, one which was conceived after the writing had begun.

As is the case in the larger scope of Faulkner’s works, *Go Down, Moses* relies on the interdependence of its own parts.

Meaning in [Faulkner’s] fiction is always contingent upon how much the reader knows; and how much he knows depends, sometimes, on how much he brings to the work. Because many of Faulkner’s characters recur from work to work, their very introduction in a novel or a story evokes—to the well-versed reader of Faulkner—history, personality, and associations that may not be explicitly developed in that particular work.

Creighton, 12

Two of the major issues that run through *Go Down, Moses* are black-white relations and man’s connection to the disappearing wilderness, themes that can be discerned in his other works as well. But here Faulkner uses the text’s structure to help elucidate these

themes. By presenting the stories in a particular order Faulkner begins by presenting an overview of the South's problems as he perceives them. These problems stem in large part from the troubled relationship between blacks and whites and between people and the land. The next set of stories focuses on Isaac McCaslin as a representation of these problems, a white man struggling to do right by his family's former slaves and by the land he feels unworthy of inheriting. Finally, we see the failed results of these efforts as black-white relations remain fraught with prejudice and pain and the majestic wilderness is destroyed. As Hochberg notes, Faulkner uses the structure of the cycle to help convey his meaning.

The three strands are complementary, amplifying and reinforcing one another in a way which permits Faulkner to portray both the historical tragedy of the South and the individual struggles of characters caught in, but not entirely determined by that tragedy. In *Go Down, Moses*, then, Faulkner uses the volume of related stories as an organic form, different from both the novel and the individual short story.

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The text's focus on the genealogy of the McCaslin family—and the effects of its unveiling to Isaac McCaslin—shows Faulkner's interest in the legacy of slavery, the effects of miscegenation and the changing face of racism; it forces readers to acknowledge what has and has not been accomplished since the time of the Civil War. Though much of the old way of life described in the earlier text-pieces has been destroyed, Ike and his fellow hunters replicate the ritual hunt every year in a desperate attempt to cling to some vestige of the past. The destruction of the McCaslin family parallels the destruction of the natural landscape and of the Southern way of life. This disintegration is carefully rendered in the very construction of the text as each story conveys destruction by tearing down what has come before.

Though the main focus is on the relationship between the black and white branches of the McCaslin family, even those stories which seem to look elsewhere fit into the grander pattern created by the text. In fact, “the themes which make a unified book of *Go Down, Moses* are (most of them) established in the story with which that collection begins” (Bradford, 28). This first story, “Was,” is set before the text’s ostensible main character is born, yet it plays a key role in setting up many of the situations to come. Reminiscent of Hemingway’s italicized inter-chapters, part 1 of “Was” is a fragment lacking capitalization and punctuation at the end of its paragraphs, yet it provides an important link to the text that follows by introducing Isaac McCaslin, the character who becomes the moral center of the book. Part 1 does not appear in Faulkner’s typescript version of the story,²⁵ indicating that it was added specifically to integrate the first story into the larger whole of the text. The typescript of “Was” is different in other important ways as well; told from the first-person perspective of a boy named Bayard (probably the same Bayard who appears in *The Unvanquished*), there is no indication that Tomey’s Turl, the runaway slave who creates the action of the story, has any white, let alone white McCaslin, blood in the earlier version. In fact, the blackness of his arms is highlighted in the original, a detail which in the *Go Down, Moses* version is changed to “Tomey’s Turl’s arms that were supposed to be black but were not quite white” (28) just before the book’s typescript was sent to the printer.²⁶ Before the revision (and before Faulkner’s decision to make him the center of the tragic McCaslin family secret), Tomey’s Turl is portrayed as a slave whose incompetence makes him worthless. By the time he put the

²⁵ Creighton, 87-88

²⁶ Early, 73

elements of *Go Down, Moses* together, Faulkner had decided to make the McCaslin family's mixed racial heritage (and the tragic relationship from which the black members are descended) a key focus of the book. The revision is told in the third person and Bayard is replaced by McCaslin (Cass) Edmonds, the cousin/father-figure of the soon-to-be central character Isaac McCaslin. These changes "underscore the potential importance of a genealogy as the transmitter of the past to the present" (Creighton, 89), a theme which becomes a key to understanding the text as the complex relationships between characters become clearer with each subsequent story.

"Was" is made up of hunts—white men hunting their slave, dogs hunting a fox, an "old maid" hunting a husband—and these hunts are recreated in subsequent text-pieces as men hunt for gold, for freedom from grief, for an ancient bear, for a cop-killer. It is the slave Turl's desire for Tennie that drives the action of the story and Faulkner contrasts this with the lack of desire demonstrated by bachelors like Buck and Buddy McCaslin, Hubert Beauchamp, Roth Edmonds, and his father, Zack Edmonds, who chooses not to remarry after his wife dies in childbirth. Faulkner contrasts the white men with images of Lucas Beauchamp, who maintains the fire on his hearth with Molly for decades, and Rider, who is unable to cope with the loss of Mannie. As in "Was," the black men of the text are consistently better able to manage their relationships with women, even when those relationships cause grief and pain. As Thornton notes, "The muted courtship of Buck and Sophonsiba (consummated only in some later, undescribed episode, serves partly as a foil to the Tomey's Turl-Tennie relationship" (84-85) and the description of Ike as "uncle to half a county and father to no one" on the first page of the text highlights the passionless state of his marriage. This is especially apparent in the

second story, "The Fire and the Hearth," which highlights the importance and intimacy of the relationship Ike's counterpart, Lucas, has with both his wife and his land.

"The Fire and the Hearth" is made up of three existing stories which were changed significantly when re-imagined for the final text. Two had been published previously ("A Point of Law" and "Gold Is Not Always") and one exists only in typescript form (first called "Apotheosis," then "An Absolution" and finally, "The Fire and the Hearth").²⁷ "A Point of Law" exists in two extant versions; an unpublished typescript and the story published by *Collier's* in June 1940. "Gold Is Not Always," which highlights Lucas's search for gold and his swindling of a slick city salesman, appeared in the November 1940 number of the *Atlantic*. The significant changes made with each revision indicate Faulkner's sense that the stories were unable to fulfill the role he needed them to fulfill in the grand scheme of *Go Down, Moses*. Only after reading the entire text does the fire which gives the final story its title gain significance as a representation of the connection Lucas and Molly share with their land, their home and each other. This image will become a major unifying element for "Pantaloons in Black," which, lacking any McCaslin characters, has been criticized for not fitting neatly into the larger text. Another important image in "The Fire and the Hearth" is that of the bed, which will become significant (in the form of a cot) in both "Pantaloons in Black" and "Go Down, Moses." Here there are two important flashback scenes which occur in or over a bed, one between Lucas and Zack and the other between Roth and Henry. Thornton argues that these two scenes best exemplify the use of what he calls "latent juxtaposition," a technique that helps create unity in *Go Down, Moses*. He defines this as

²⁷ Creighton, 98

a juxtaposition that is not immediate (in Faulkner's work, the two moments being juxtaposed may occur hundreds of pages apart); that is subtle and unobtrusive (readers may at first miss its significance); and that requires the active participation of the reader.²⁸ Similarly, Creighton writes that "Faulkner frequently introduces an important character or scene and holds it in suspension while he circuitously depicts the past that informs the present" (88). It is in part this technique that makes *Go Down, Moses* a coherent text, for "Only with the completion of the entire volume is the fragmentary reference to Ike's heritage, marriage and dispossession fully clarified" (Ibid). As was the case with Nick Adams in *In Our Time*, even those stories in which Ike is not featured (or even mentioned) play an important part in allowing the reader to understand his family, his history and his decision.

Most of the changes made to create "The Fire and the Hearth" have to do with characterization rather than plot. The white landlord, Roth, is made a member of the McCaslin family, as is Lucas, the main black character. To highlight the resulting conflict between blood, land and race, Faulkner adds episodes from the South's pre-Civil War days, making us re-think the light-hearted treatment of slavery in the first text-piece. These episodes also prepare us for the revelations to come as the McCaslin family history is revealed. In reworking the major elements of these stories to fit the scheme Faulkner had created for *Go Down, Moses*, Lucas emerges as a richly developed central character rather than the humorous stereotype of the earlier works. The dynamic between Lucas and his white landlord, Roth Edmonds, takes on added significance because of the history we are given in "Was" and elsewhere in the text. The family's ledgers, which do not

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seem particularly important in early versions of the story, prove to be vital to understanding the motivations and actions of Ike McCaslin. Molly, too, is further developed, blossoming from Lucas's silent wife in the typescript version of "An Absolution" to a character in her own right.²⁹ In "The Fire and the Hearth" her role as Roth's primary caregiver and her relationship with Roth's father, Zack, become extraordinarily important to understanding the tension between Lucas and Roth. Faulkner's revisions make the final product (three-tiered though it may be) structurally quite different from the three original stories. He uses the spatial arrangement to highlight Lucas's character in the first section and Roth's in the third. In fact, the two chapters of the text-piece illuminate the conflict that arises out of one of the book's major themes: the relationship between black and white members of the McCaslin family. Made up as it was of various existing stories, "The Fire and the Hearth" replicates the structure of the text as a whole.

The third text-piece, "Pantaloon in Black," is the one on which the genre question of *Go Down, Moses* often falls. The book is called "either a collection of stories or a novel, depending on the success one has in integrating 'Pantaloon in Black' into it" (Limon, 422). Here is where the appellation "short story cycle" becomes truly useful because it allows us to understand that while Rider's story does not fit neatly into the McCaslin saga, it is still an important element in understanding the family's origins and the world it helped produce. According to Daniel Singal, this story not only belongs in the larger text, but it was the "catalyst for Faulkner's initial conception of *Go Down, Moses*. Once he had written it in March 1940 he suddenly saw where he wanted to go

²⁹ Creighton, 98

with the rest of the project...[it] was paradoxically to be the book's thematic centerpiece, which explains why it alone took its place in *Go Down, Moses* without any substantial revision" (266). Originally published in *Harper's* in 1940, the two changes Faulkner did make to "Pantaloon in Black" help integrate it into the larger text. The McCaslin family is alluded to by the introduction of Roth Edmonds as Rider's landlord. A metaphorical link is made through Rider's lighting of a fire in the hearth on his wedding night, a direct acknowledgement of Lucas's similar act. Creighton notes that "by such tangential links, Faulkner is deliberately inviting the reader to draw parallels and to look for interrelationships" (115) and we soon see how Rider is a reflection of characters such as Tomey's Turl in "Was," Lucas Beauchamp in "The Fire and the Hearth," and Samuel Worsham Beauchamp in "Go Down, Moses." The bitterness of Rider's grief forces readers to consider more seriously the regular visits Tomey's Turl pays to Tennie, a relationship that is seen merely as the humorous catalyst to other events in "Was."

The structure of the cycle makes this contrast possible as we are allowed to view these unrelated couples living at different historical moments as representatives of a single concept. As Thornton points out, "our realization of the depth and power of the love of Rider and Mannie forces us into an almost embarrassed reconsideration of the previous relationships among Negro couples" (84). The two black couples are then contrasted against the white sheriff and his wife who are given the last words in the story. Their lack of insight into Rider's emotions is meant to mimic that of the reader, until this contrast provides us with the benefit of deeper knowledge. Despite the comparison, Rider is unlike Lucas in that he does not own his land. Because it does not belong to him he cannot belong to it, and the loss of his one connection to anything outside of

himself—his wife—means that he, too, is lost. As Hochberg writes, “Love of land and family exist together for Lucas, the one sustaining him as the other falters. Rider does not have the love of land when death denies him his family” (60). Rider’s job at the lumber mill merely accentuates the fact that he does not work the land as a farmer as Lucas does. Instead, he is part of the process which depletes the land—a process which will become important in “Delta Autumn.” This alienation from nature helps explain the desperation he feels when his wife dies.

“Pantaloons in Black” succeeds also in changing the tone of the text, which until now has been laced with humorous incidents and light-hearted anecdotes about slavery. There is nothing funny in Rider’s pitiable state, and the thorough lack of understanding demonstrated by the sheriff and his wife only compounds the sense of despair created by the story. It is placed between “The Fire and the Hearth” and “The Old People” “to give Faulkner’s reader a sense of the difficulty of being black in a society dominated by whites, reinforcing passages Faulkner interpolated into the early stories portraying life on the tamed land” (Early, 11). The major question about this story remains: Why is Rider not a member of the McCaslin family? Faulkner changed the names of other characters to fit into the McCaslin genealogy (in “Was” and “Delta Autumn,” for example), why not here too? John Limon argues that “Rider is...importantly not a Beauchamp, because Beauchamps are descended, like Ike McCaslin and the Edmondses, from Lucius McCaslin, and so Beauchamps and Edmondses usually manage to understand each other” (429). This makes Rider even more isolated than the isolated Beauchamps, since they at least have a family history, however tragic, to call their own. Also, as a McCaslin descendant Rider would have had a share in the inheritance and therefore some claim or

connection to the land. For the purposes of this text-piece, he must lack these things. As Millgate writes, "Faulkner's refusal to make Rider a McCaslin has the effect not of isolating the episode in which Rider is the major character but actually of expanding, beyond the limits of the single McCaslin family, the whole scope and relevance of the book" (204). By severing Rider from the Beauchamps Faulkner has opened up his rather narrow focus on the McCaslin descendants, making them representative of the South as a whole.

The text's focus shifts again with "The Old People;" so far the text-pieces have highlighted black-white relations in the south but the next three stories explore the traditions attached to the hunt. The feel of the text changes as well, as

The elevated tone and language with which "The Old People" is told contrast sharply with the relatively straightforward telling of the first three stories. Again, Faulkner is taking full advantage of the short story composite form. Each story conforms to its own formal requirements and does not need to be consistent with the tone, style, point of view, and time of the other stories.

Creighton, 116

"The Old People" exists in three versions: a seventeen page unpublished typescript, a revision which appeared in *Harper's* magazine and the further revised story we see in *Go Down, Moses*. Like "Was" and "Delta Autumn," this story was initially written about different characters in a different context. The first protagonist was likely Quentin Compson and the role of the mentor was filled by his father. An incidental character, the old Ike McCaslin is dropped from the *Harper's* version when Faulkner uses the name for the boy instead. The point of view is also changed from the first person to the third, helping to unify the text. This story establishes links to the hunting stories which follow, focusing on the black/white/Indian heritage of Sam Fathers, who was presumably all black in the original. Sam has white blood and is descended from an Indian chief yet he

is still subject to being sold as a slave, exemplifying how complicated the lives of racially mixed people were in the South. This story also takes racial conflict out of society proper and introduces it into the pristine wilderness for the first time. The revision replaces Jimbo with Tennie's Jim, reminding us of "Was" while at the same time preparing us for the revelations that are to come in "The Bear" (where we learn of Ike's repudiation) and "Delta Autumn" (where we meet Tennie's Jim's granddaughter).

If, as Creighton argues, *Go Down, Moses* is Isaac McCaslin's story writ large (in the same way that *In Our Time* belongs to Nick Adams), then "The Bear," with its revelations, must be the heart of the text. The last of the McCaslin stories to be composed, Faulkner combined two previously written stories (one, also called "The Bear," was published in the *Post*, the other, called "Lion," appeared in *Harper's*) with a great deal of new material, most notably the long and complicated part 4. The first story called "The Bear" is incorporated fully into parts 1 and 3 of the longer version, with some changes and additions. Faulkner held off publishing the earlier story until after *Go Down, Moses* was ready (he did the same with "Delta Autumn"), apparently wanting the longer version to appear first.³⁰ In revising the story, Faulkner highlighted the importance of the wilderness and mentions the boy's anxious desire to join the hunting party more than once, shifting the focus of the story so that "Ike's initiation, culminating with the sight of Old Ben, [becomes] the single uncluttered focus of part 1" (Creighton, 123). "Lion" was also changed for placement within the book, and parts 3 and 5 of the *Go Down, Moses* version of "The Bear" include much new material. For example, while the meeting between the dog and the bear occurs off-stage in the *Harper's* story, here it

³⁰ Early, 22

becomes the climactic moment which ends the lives of the bear, the dog, and Ike's mentor and father-figure, Sam Fathers.

Part 4 of "The Bear," completely new for this version of the story, has garnered a great deal of critical attention because of its complexity, its length (it is as long as the other four sections of "The Bear" put together) and its role in defining the genre of the text to which it belongs. Faulkner has said that it belongs only to the *Go Down, Moses* version of the story and that when one reads "The Bear" by itself one should skip over part 4 completely.³¹ Creighton argues that it, not "Pantaloon in Black" as Singal suggests, is the story that holds the text together:

without part 4, *Go Down, Moses* would be a collection of short stories loosely related by theme, character, and setting, but without a very meaningful shape. With it, the volume becomes a spatially ordered composite of what Ike McCaslin is and why, filling out both in particular and in general the sketchy portrait of Ike which prefaces the first story, "Was."

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In fact, no one story accomplishes this task. It is the interaction between all the elements of the text that allows Faulkner to achieve his larger goals. Part 4 is a crucial element in this process, since, like the genesis of "The Fire and the Hearth," it replicates the short story genre itself. We learn of Ike's guilty heritage as he does, by piecing it together from his family's ledger entries, and the act of reading the ledgers is reflected in the act of reading the text. Like Ike, we are forced to make connections between seemingly unrelated facts and events in order to create a coherent narrative whole. Of course, Ike also plays the role of author when he adds his own notes to the family ledger, showing that he "has come to share in his family's heritage more than he realizes" (Early, 49). The

³¹ Millgate, 202

knowledge gained through this act of reading—that old Lucius Carothers not only fathered a daughter by his slave, Eunice, but that he then fathered Turl by that same daughter, Tomasina—changes the way we view events presented in earlier parts of the text. We now realize that Tomey's Turl, the slave who is chased in "Was," is being chased by his own half-brothers, that Lucas Beauchamp and Isaac McCaslin share a grandfather and that it was Old McCaslin himself who provided Lucas with the money he has in the bank. As Creighton notes, "One can no longer avoid the serious undercurrents in the old times that are so scrupulously avoided in "Was." The cryptically recorded genealogy in the ledgers serves to pull the volume together" (130). This information will become important again in "Delta Autumn," when we realize the full tragedy of the unnamed woman's position and in "Go Down, Moses" when we learn the fate of the last black McCaslin descendant.

Ike's cousin, McCaslin Edmonds, was invented for part 4 and then inserted into "The Old People" as the mentor-figure upon revision. Part 4 also shares an important quality with part 1 of "Was" in that neither text-piece can stand alone. Both need their surroundings in order to make sense to the reader and both therefore act to unify all that is around them. Once "The Bear" was finished it was clear that many of the earlier text-pieces needed revision in order to accommodate newly revealed information. One example of this can be seen in the reworking of "The Old People" in which Faulkner changes the ethnic makeup of Sam Fathers to stress his mixed blood, a detail which introduces Ike McCaslin to racial issues at a much earlier age.

As optimistic as we may be for the future of Ike McCaslin at the end of "The Bear," "Delta Autumn" comes along to dampen our hope. (Interestingly, Faulkner at one

time intended to reverse the order of these two text-pieces, a decision which would have changed the overall tenor and meaning of the text.) The reality of Ike's long life is much more disappointing than the youthful repudiator could have imagined. The state of the land, the relationship between man and the disappearing wilderness and the future of black-white relations are all grimly represented in "Delta Autumn." Along with "The Fire and the Hearth," it is one of the most significantly reworked stories in *Go Down, Moses*. Written in 1940, it is also the first story featuring Ike McCaslin as a major figure. In the original, published in the May-June 1942 issue of *Story*, it is Don Boyd who has a child with his mixed-race mistress. Here he is replaced with Carothers "Roth" Edmonds who we first meet in "The Fire and the Hearth." The grandson of Carothers McCaslin, he has inherited the land that Ike repudiates in "The Bear." He is also shown to be guilty of the same crimes his progenitor, Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin, committed—miscegenation and incest—making the unnamed woman "a victim of the twentieth-century inheritor of McCaslin land and responsibility" (Early, 100). Ike's advice to the woman (to go north and marry a black man) shows just how little has changed since the land he refused to accept first came into his family's possession several generations earlier. Whatever hope there might be in Ike's suggestion is dashed once the fate of Samuel Worsham Beauchamp is illuminated in the final story. The progression from one text-piece to the next "urges a connection between the unnamed infant of the former story and the adult criminal of the latter, as if...Samuel's fate must fulfill the ignoble fate of the child brought into the old man's tent" (Millgate, 45). Going north is clearly no solution. In this version, Ike is made complicit in Roth's crime by

participating in the exchange of money rather than merely witnessing it, proof that his repudiation has failed to achieve its intended effect.

While it does not close the text itself, “Delta Autumn” does end our association with the text’s focal character, Isaac McCaslin. Now living in the wilderness that has so shaped his life, the woods are being torn down around him and it is clear that the end is soon to come. That this is the final word on old Uncle Ike indicates that despite his moral outrage, despite giving up the land that was left him, despite losing the wife who could have borne him a son, the sins of his ancestors have not yet been cleansed. He refuses to acknowledge the unnamed woman because of her race even though she is both a blood relative and the mother of the next generation of McCaslins. Like his ancestor and his progeny, Ike has succumbed to the same racism and prejudice that keeps Roth from acknowledging his own son.

“Delta Autumn” demonstrates the unfairness dealt to the unnamed woman but “Go Down, Moses,” first published in *Collier’s* in January 1941, concludes the text with yet another black victim of the McCaslin family’s curse. Like Cather’s “The Sculptor’s Funeral,” this story was inspired by the sight of a casket at a train station³² and it was revised only slightly for inclusion in *Go Down, Moses*. For some critics, the cooperation depicted between white and black community members represents a note of hopefulness on which the text ends, but the fact that they are banding together to bury a Beauchamp should cause the reader to think twice. The truth is that while Gavin Stevens helps Molly bring her grandson home, he is woefully incapable of understanding her grief. This same lack of understanding is illustrated in earlier text-pieces, particularly “Pantaloon in

³² Early, 14

Black,” where Rider’s isolation causes his death. There are other reminders of Rider here as well; in the description of the jail cells, in the prominence given to cots (Samuel calmly sits on one while Rider uses his to break free) and in the ultimate putting to death of both men by a white justice system. This story is “both conclusion and epilogue, in that while it rounds out the themes of the novel, it also looks to the time to come in a way that no other section of the book does” (Thornton, 110). The death of Samuel Beauchamp indicates the end of a story greater than his own, just as this story closes a text greater than itself. Aside from Roth’s unacknowledged child, we know of no other McCaslin descendants. Samuel’s fate reflects the possible fate of that baby, for we are given a glimpse of what lies ahead for the woman of “Delta Autumn” if she takes Ike’s advice and goes north. As Stanley Tick argues, “Go Down, Moses” is “the undeniable and essential context whose significance dictates our understanding of the entire novel. The negro descendants of Eunice continue to be doomed” (71), and while there is some consolation in the belated cooperation between whites and blacks shown here, it is a bitter one given the history that has been revealed in this text. It is especially telling that Ike McCaslin is nowhere to be seen here. As Creighton notes, he “does not appear in this projection into the modern Southern community, because he has absolved himself of communal responsibility. The heritage of guilt must be carried by others...No white McCaslin assists in the burial of their black brother” (147), a discouraging statement for Faulkner to make here given the family’s history and Ike’s youthful determination to make amends.

Just as Hemingway uses Nick Adams as the representative member of a generation shattered by the effects of war and isolation, Faulkner uses Isaac McCaslin

and the extended McCaslin family as a blueprint by which to map the South's efforts to overcome its history racism and the encroaching threat of industrialism. Both authors adapt and combine their shorter works to create texts which could better satisfy their thematic goals. The story cycle allows both to illustrate the disconnectedness experienced by these collective protagonists while at the same time demonstrating the links which make this disconnectedness common to all in their representative groups.

Chapter Four

Isolation and Redemption: *Everything That Rises Must Converge* and *Cathedral*

It may seem unlikely at first to compare the revelatory writing of devout Catholic Flannery O'Connor with the pessimistic godlessness of Raymond Carver's but in their respective works, *Everything That Rises Must Converge* (1965) and *Cathedral* (1981), both authors use the short story cycle to explore the damaging effects of isolation in contemporary American society. In these, their last short story collections, genre is used to help create the sense of chaotic disconnection which plagues the characters introduced within. There are no overlapping characters here as there are in *In Our Time* and *Go Down, Moses*. Instead, each author creates a collective protagonist by presenting the reader with a series of unique but ultimately similar characters that represents the fate of a generation or community of people. O'Connor hones in on her native South where race relations are still unstable and class conflict is rife. Her main characters are convinced of their own superiority and this sense of self-importance causes them to lose touch with the world around them and the spiritual enlightenment they all strive for. O'Connor's treatment of religion and religious belief ties the text together, as does her use of color and nature to signify moments of revelation. The controlling metaphor is one of blindness versus clarity of vision, and the difference between those who have obtained grace and those who have not can often be defined based on what they are able to see. With a few exceptions (like "The Enduring Chill," "Parker's Back" and "Revelation") the text-pieces end with the violent death of one or more of the main characters, victims O'Connor has elsewhere identified as being spiritually good. Throughout the text, O'Connor uses the changing appearance of nature to indicate the divine connections her

characters lack. As Susan Garland Mann notes, “sun imagery (setting or rising directly above a dark wood) heralds the possibility that a character may perceive spiritual realities within this world” (164). The stories which lack sun imagery, “The Comforts of Home” and “Judgment Day,” do so because they do not depict a moment of revelation. The text-pieces present a string of morally weak characters that face unrelentingly bleak situations, and they convey O'Connor's fears for American society at the time. Carver, too, seems afraid for society as he follows the wanderings of his characters from city to city in search of happiness and fulfillment. The lack of a stable setting is even clearer in *Cathedral*, where specific cities are sometimes mentioned but almost all of the stories occur in different places. In fact, this constantly shifting setting is one of the things that connects Carver's characters to one other as it works to both illustrate and explain the isolation they feel. As in Hemingway's work, what is shared here is more ethereal than a common hometown; these characters come from the same kind of place, even if they are constantly moving around. With a few exceptions (“The Compartment” and “A Small, Good Thing”) Carver's characters share a working-class background and financial desperation that colors the way they look at the world. Many of the main characters are interchangeable (some even seem to represent continuations of the lives of those who came before); they have dead-end jobs, are in dead-end relationships and have been lulled into lethargy by drinking too much booze and watching too much television. Carver illustrates the isolation of his characters throughout his career, but in *Cathedral* he acknowledges for the first time the possibility of integration with others. Here his characters recognize and attempt to rectify their isolation, a feat not possible in Carver's

earlier stories. This connects these characters both abstractly in the larger framework of the text and individually within each of the stories.

This effort to connect is the goal in both texts, though both sets of characters ultimately prove unsuccessful. For O'Connor, hope comes from faith in God and acceptance of grace, even if that grace is murderously violent. For Carver, only connections between people, tenuous as they may be, have the potential to overcome the desolation he famously portrayed throughout his career. Both texts present physical maladies as manifestations of the damage hiding within the hearts of the characters, and both use sudden, startling moments of upheaval to demonstrate the turbulent times they represent. Susanna Gilbert writes of *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, "One is left with the feeling that anywhere or anytime violence might break through the narrative's deceptive veneer of normalcy" (125) and the same could easily be said of *Cathedral*. Religious imagery abounds in both texts and O'Connor and Carver make use of James Joyce's notion of epiphany in their work. In O'Connor's work it is a literal epiphany—one sees the light and is saved. Carver's epiphanies are more allusive and tend not to change the situation of the character to any great degree. Reinforcing each text-piece's status as a short story, the transformation which occurs as a result of this moment of enlightenment helps project meaning onto the individual stories while it connects that story to those that surround it.

O'Connor's *Everything That Rises Must Converge* features narrators who cannot see the truth. They are self-involved and therefore unable to connect with others or with God. In each text-piece O'Connor creates a character that is somehow blinded—by racism, classism, or intellectual snobbery—and then leads him/her to an epiphany after

which he/she is enlightened. A far more sophisticated example of the story cycle than many of the nineteenth-century texts discussed here, doubles are used to help illuminate this enlightenment, giving a point of contrast within each story. Characters from different stories are doubled as well, creating connections between the text-pieces to form a more coherent whole. Julian is reflected in the little black boy on the bus in the title story, the May boys suffer by comparison to the far more successful Greenleaf twins in “Greenleaf,” Mary Fortune is a reflection of the grandfather who destroys her in “A View of the Woods,” and so on.

The text was published posthumously but evidence indicates that O’Connor chose the nine stories to be included and had some say in the order in which they were to appear. She spent the last months of her life preparing the stories for publication, and though some of her wishes were unknown at the time of her death, she clearly created an elaborate thematic structure here. Families are damaged, beliefs are questions and nature plays a part in effecting a spiritual awakening in almost every story. She had certainly indicated her desire to call the book *Everything That Rises Must Converge*—a phrase gleaned from the writings of Teilhard de Chardin—but later allowed that her agent could choose the title. Despite this, it is clear that she had her hand in the text’s development. As she wrote Thomas Stritch, “When I was worst off I signed a contract for a book of stories and told FS&G [Farrar, Strauss and Giroux] they could get it out themselves...As soon as I got better I repented of that rash act and I’ve now told them that I’ll have to rewrite some of the stories so the collection won’t be until Spring, & I have the work to do” (*Collected Works*, 1212). The work she did helped unify the text, allowing each story to relate to the ones which come before and after it. For example, her revision of

"A View of the Woods" expanded the vision Mr. Fortune has as he dies "so that the old man has more time to realize what he has done" (Ibid, 1013). This added space for understanding links the text-piece to the others; with each successive story, O'Connor provides more information regarding the moments of epiphany experienced by the characters, allowing them greater access to salvation.

Though the lives of these characters never intersect, the unity of the text makes sense given the contention that at least three of the stories ("The Enduring Chill," "Parker's Back" and "Judgment Day") were part of a novel O'Connor began to write at the end of her life.³³ To be called *Why Do The Heathen Rage?*, it did not reflect O'Connor's typical trajectory at the time. The story cycle allows her to follow a character as he/she approaches salvation and then end abruptly with a violent epiphany. Once grace has been achieved, "there is no longer any story" (Burns, 82) which explains, in part, why the short story cycle worked so well for her. Only when combined with other similarly structured stories does O'Connor effectively create a longer text. To expand any story beyond its apocalyptic moment, as she tried to do in this late novel, would defeat O'Connor's purpose—to depict divine grace as a sudden, violent, inexplicable event.³⁴

The themes that concerned O'Connor throughout her career are revealed in her first published story, "The Geranium," which she revised several times and eventually renamed "Judgment Day" for inclusion in this text. Her return to this early work reflects her almost obsessive reworking of the same ideas over and over again during her short

³³ Mann, 158

³⁴ Burns, 86

career, and some critics have suggested that her focus on “a paradigm story” (Coffey, 41) implies an effort to rid her body of the debilitating effects of lupus, the disease which killed her father and eventually took her life. Her work as a whole seems to “replicate...the dynamics of her disease—its omnipresent symptoms; sudden, surprising ferocity; and, most importantly, its grotesque drama of the self against the self” (Gilbert, 115). The shocking and savage events that her main characters are subjected to reflect the shocking and savage nature of her own illness as it ravaged her body. Like many of the characters she created, as an adult O’Connor was forced to be dependent on her mother and isolated from the world she longed to join. But her characters are isolated from more than just the world, they fail even to be close to those who should be closest to them, their parents, their children and God.

This isolation takes many forms and throughout the text O’Connor presents her characters as inhabitants of a “spiritual bubble” (Andreas, 28). Though no character appears in more than one text-piece, the image of the bubble links the stories. Characters like Julian, Asbury, Thomas and Sheppard (of “Everything That Rises Must Converge,” “The Enduring Chill,” “The Comforts of Home” and “The Lame Shall Enter First,” respectively) live in intellectual bubbles of their own creation, while those like Mrs. May and Mrs. Turpin (of “Greenleaf” and “Revelation”) feel protected by their sense of themselves and their placement within society. For Mr. Fortune of “A View of the Woods” the bubble is progress. While the bubble is figurative, it effectively cuts O’Connor’s characters off from one another, creating a pattern of fractured families in which sons tend to be self-important intellectuals (failed writers Julian and Asbury and local historian Thomas) and mothers are self-sacrificing widows who fight considerable

obstacles to keep their families together. O'Connor repeats a movement towards salvation that involves violence and death, where the character who is saved is also the one who must die. For a religious believer as sick as O'Connor was, death was indeed the ultimate salvation, the cure to her ills. Those who do not die suffer in a world filled with physical and psychological illness, as represented by Asbury Fox's fever, Rufus Johnson's clubfoot and Sarah Grace's insanity.

Published in 1961 in *New World Writing*, the title of "Everything That Rises Must Converge" summarizes the action that will occur in all the stories to follow. Throughout the text, characters struggle to come together, to rise and converge in a place where all is equal under the eyes of God. The first of many struggling widows we meet, Julian's mother becomes a pattern for the women of "Greenleaf," "The Enduring Chill" and "The Comforts of Home." She overcompensates for the failures of her grown son by smothering him with kindness, creating a dangerous dynamic that leads to her death. The sons in these stories are able to become self-sufficient only after they have effectively killed their caretakers. "Thus in the scene in which Julian witnesses the assault of his mother, the effect of physical violence produces a spiritual equivalent—Julian is forced to take stock of his soul" (Maida, 553). As will be the case in the text-pieces to follow, sight becomes an important gauge of a character's moral sense and rightness. Julian thinks he sees his mother clearly but the bubble in which he has encased himself has distorted his vision, and his vision can only be corrected by his mother's death. He at first delights in the attack on his mother, hoping that it will teach her a lesson. "You needn't act as if the world had come to an end," he tells her, and "From now on you've got to live in a new world and face new realities for a change. Buck up," he said, "It

won't kill you” (499-500). But the attack does kill her and it is Julian who must face the realities of a new world. His own vision is restored only through his mother's literal loss of sight, and her inability to recognize him is replicated in the darkness which overcomes him as he realizes that she is gone. “A tide of darkness seemed to be sweeping her from him...One eye, large and staring, moved slightly to the left as it if had become unmoored. The other remained fixed on him, raked his face again, found nothing and closed” (500). O'Connor has prepared us for this moment of revelation by her use of color, an indication that a profound change is about to occur here and throughout the text. We are told that “The sky was a dying violet” (486) a color reflected in Julian's mother's eyes as they turn from sky-blue to a “bruised purple” upon realizing that she and black woman are wearing the same hat. O'Connor's vivid descriptions of the sky will become important again in “A View of the Woods,” “Revelation,” and “Greenleaf.”

“Greenleaf,” published in the summer 1956 issue of the *Kenyon Review* and republished as part of *The Best American Short Stories of 1957* before its inclusion here, presents a mother with two sons like Julian, grown men who depend on her and yet who delight in torturing her sensibilities at every turn. The sympathy we feel for Mrs. May is quickly tempered by her efforts to justify her feelings of superiority (she, too, “knows who she is”) and her views are markedly less palatable than those of Julian's mother, which seem at least to spring from innocence. The bull outside Mrs. May's window presents a threat to her cows, her hedges and, ultimately, her life, and as a symbol of nature, it provides the text-piece's dramatic resolution. O'Connor wrote that she was “very happy now writing a story in which I plan for the heroine, aged 63, to be gored by a bull. I am not convinced yet that this is purgation or whether I identify myself with her

or the bull” (981-82). But purgation does occur here, as evidenced by Mrs. May’s apparent acceptance of the bull as he charges her, an acceptance that allows her to be saved even as she dies. We are told that “She had the look of a person whose sight has been suddenly restored but who finds the light unbearable” (523); Mrs. May’s sight *has* been restored and her kinship with the beast is a kinship with God as well. In a clear foreshadowing of her demise, earlier in the story Mrs. May hears Mrs. Greenleaf shriek “Oh Jesus, stab me in the heart” (506) while praying in the woods. Jesus, in the form of the bull, stabs Mrs. May in the heart instead. Here, as in “Everything That Rises Must Converge,” O’Connor ends the story at the moment of death, depriving us of the reactions of the May boys. This pattern will be repeated again in “A View of the Woods,” “The Comforts of Home” and “The Lame Shall Enter First.” O’Connor acknowledged that had she kept Mrs. May alive at the end of the story, she might have written a novel about her though she clearly felt her to be most useful as a character in a short story cycle. Regarding her planned elaboration on Asbury Fox’s story in the ill-fated novel, O’Connor acknowledged the difficulty in having to write about life on earth after salvation. It was more fitting for her to limit her imagination to the achievement of grace, something difficult enough to fathom in the modern world in which she lived.

As in the first two text-pieces, “A View of the Woods” ends with a violent death. Here there are two victims, a nine-year-old girl and her elderly grandfather. Mr. Fortune’s heart attack is foreshadowed just as Julian’s mother’s stroke is in “Everything That Rises Must Converge” and his death, like hers, is precipitated by a family member’s actions. It is fitting that the final scene takes place in his own woods since Fortune is responsible for the imminent destruction of that property by selling his land to

developers. O'Connor often equates the land with that which is holy, and Faulkner's concern for America's diminishing wilderness is echoed here. Like Mrs. May, Fortune sees a vision of light and trees in his final moments, as "he looked helplessly along the bare trunks into the tops of the pines...[he] felt as if he were running as fast as he could with the ugly pines toward the lake" (546). Looking desperately for help, he sees only the yellow tractor of destruction, "gorging itself on clay" (Ibid) as he dies. O'Connor asserted that while Mary's father, Pitts, is a weak, despicable man, he at least can "realize the value of the woods, and the woods, if anything, are the Christ symbol" (Ibid, 1014-15). As in "Greenleaf," nature surpasses humanity in its ability to be good. The difference in this text-piece is that we see a father/father-figure and daughter, not a mother and son, and here the parent causes the harm, not the child. As Gilbert notes,

fathers, instead of protecting, often abandon or kill their children, usually dying in the process themselves. In over half of the stories in *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, fathers are absent or dead at the outset of the narrative. In "A View of the Woods" and "The Lame Shall Enter First," father figures are alive, but they destroy both their offspring and themselves in the course of the stories.

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O'Connor's mixed feelings about her own father, from whom she inherited her painful and ultimately deadly disease, is alluded to here. Unlike Mrs. May in "Greenleaf," Fortune is given time to reflect on his mistakes, indicating O'Connor's desire to teach the old man, and the reader, a lesson.

"The Enduring Chill" presents the character in this text whose situation is most like O'Connor's own. First published in the July 1958 issue of *Harper's Bazaar*, the story introduces Asbury Fox, a would-be writer who has left the literary world of New York to die in his mother's home. As it turns out, he is not actually dying and the knowledge that his disease is survivable is what allows for the self-awareness he needs in

order to be saved. The illness is real but it also reflects Asbury's warped psychological state, just as Rufus Johnson's club foot does in "The Lame Shall Enter First." Sounding just like Julian, he infantilizes the mother who cares for him and feels the need to teach her life lessons: "His mother, at age sixty, was going to be introduced to reality and he supposed that if the experience didn't kill her, it would assist her in the process of growing up" (547). His long letter to her, to be opened only after his death, is meant to "leave her with an enduring chill and perhaps in time lead her to see herself as she was" (555). As was the case with Julian, Asbury is the one who is left with a chill and who is forced to see himself and the world around him as it is. O'Connor takes this realization a step further here than she did in "A View of the Woods" since Asbury is allowed to live with his new awareness while Fortune must only die with it. Mrs. Fox does not die as a result of the experience, but Asbury is forced to grow up nonetheless. He may think he is free of his mother's influence, but his efforts to rebel against her (by becoming a writer, by writing a play about "Negroes," by drinking the unpasteurized milk which causes his illness) are what lead him to be completely dependent on her in the end. For the first time in the cycle, salvation comes without a violent epiphany here. As is the case for Julian and Mrs. May, his sight has been corrected by the end of the story. Asbury's acceptance of the terror he will suffer for the rest of his life makes it possible for him to accept the Holy Ghost. O'Connor uses the cycle to tell and re-tell the story of acceptance of grace, but she has written that the consequences of that grace—"the boy's effort to live with the Holy Ghost"—would require a larger scope. Though her death prevented her from expanding on Asbury's fate and exploring the challenges of living on earth with this

new knowledge, it would have been difficult to adapt this subject, so well-suited to the fractured story cycle, to a more completely unified genre such as the novel.

“The Comforts of Home,” first published in the autumn 1960 issue of the *Kenyon Review*, presents yet another domestic drama in which a man is completely reliant on his mother for food, shelter and, as the title indicates, comfort. Once again, violence and death occur when that comfort is threatened by the presence of an outsider. In this case, it is the “whore” Sarah Ham who destroys the family’s peace. Her moral corruption is demonstrated through her faulty vision, as Thomas notes, “There was something about the look of [her face] that suggested blindness but it was the blindness of those who don’t know that they cannot see” (581). Like the bull in “Greenleaf,” the girl here is depicted as an untamed natural force (a tornado), an image that will appear again in “Revelation” when the bruise over Ruby Turpin’s eye is described as “a miniature tornado cloud which might any moment sweep across the horizon of her brow” (651). The gun works as a literal and figurative representation of both violence and male sexual force and it, too, causes the destruction of the mother. This text-piece is unique in that, as O’Connor writes, “nobody is ‘redeemed’ ... To me, the old lady is the character whose position is right and the one who is right is usually the victim” (1146-47). This comment reveals a great deal about O’Connor’s goal in this text, and it forces us to re-examine the moral state of those who live and those who die in her stories. The overly indulgent mothers of Julian and the May boys, Sheppard’s grief-stricken son, even the vindictive old Mr. Fortune must now be seen as victims of the godlessness around them. As is fitting for a story without redemption, there is no sunlight here, no transformative vision, no moment of epiphany. We do not learn how Thomas, so dependent on his mother, deals with being

responsible for her death. Caught in the symbolically sexual act of planting the gun in Sarah's pocketbook—"It had a skin-like feel to his touch and as it opened, he caught an unmistakable odor of the girl. Wincing, he thrust in the gun and then drew back. His faced burned an ugly dull red" (592)—Thomas fires just as his mother throws herself in front of Sarah to protect her. While Sheriff Farebrother's assessment is clearly wrong, it seems quite likely that "the comforts of home" will be forever lost to Thomas. Despite this clear sexual undercurrent, O'Connor was unhappy with the "lewd" illustrations the *Kenyon Review* had chosen to accompany the story, a problem she faced throughout her career as her publisher attempted to sell her unusual books to the widest possible audience—both popular and academic. As Sarah Fodor notes, "High culture critics, authors, and New York papers provided the evaluation on the books' covers, but the pictures and blurbs sensationalize" (17). The moral distance between the content of her work and the marketing of it is once again clear in Signet's blurb for the 1983 publication of *Three by Flannery O'Connor*: "Everything That Rises Must Converge is a collection of compelling stories about eroding family relationships, individuals grappling with their sense of place in a changing society, race relations in the new South, and a powerful vision of death and divine revelation" (Ibid, 21). The vagueness of this paragraph and its assiduous avoidance of any mention of O'Connor's use of violence in exploring religious salvation—concepts sure to scare some readers away—indicates Signet's desire to dilute some of the more disturbing elements of the text.

"The Lame Shall Enter First" once again depicts a home invaded by an outsider. Rufus Johnson displaces young Norton in his father's mind just as clearly as Sarah Ham displaces Thomas. In this case, though, the son is too young to be independent, and

despite his name Sheppard does not care for his child. Instead he finds satisfaction in trying to save young Johnson, a club-footed delinquent who ultimately succeeds in destroying the family completely. As O'Connor explains, "The story is about a man who thought he was good and thought he was doing good when he wasn't...If Sheppard represents anything here, it is, as he realizes at the end of the story, the empty man who fills up his emptiness with good works" (*Collected Works*, 1174). In O'Connor's twisted universe, the characters who really *are* good, like Thomas' mother, are the ones who die, while those who think they are, like Sheppard, are spared. Despite his criminal activity and the role he plays in Norton's death, Johnson is shown to be a better person than Sheppard if for no other reason than that he believes in God. In fact, it is Johnson who allows Sheppard to see the error of his ways. As the police prepare to escort the boy to jail, the father defends himself by asserting that "I did more for him than I did for my own child" (630). He utters a variation of this same line four times within the next page of text and with each repetition Sheppard moves closer to the truth. Finally, "He heard his voice as if it were the voice of his accuser...The sentence echoed in his mind, each syllable like a dull blow. His mouth twisted and he closed his eyes against the revelation" (631-32). But unlike Ruby Turpin's revelation in the story that follows, this one comes too late. Thinking of his neglected son he decides that "He would make everything up to him. He would never let him suffer again...he would never fail him again" (632), but Norton has already hanged himself with the hopes of seeing his dead mother in heaven. As was the case with Mary Fortune, a young innocent must die to protect what he/she holds dearest. For Norton it is the belief that his mother has not disappeared forever, as his father insists, and that he will someday be with her again. By

once again creating a snapshot of this situation in a short story, O'Connor is able to cut the reader short just as the revelatory moment occurs. In doing this, she re-creates for the reader the impossibility of salvation on earth. By then combining the story with others like it in the story cycle, O'Connor argues for the universality of this predicament.

The last story of O'Connor's stories to be published by the *Sewanee Review*, "Revelation" is unique in that it features a married couple without children. The daughter here belongs to someone else, the well-dressed woman they meet in the doctor's waiting room, and while Mary Grace manages to control her animosity toward her own mother, she lashes out at Mrs. Turpin as a clear substitute. Though her views put her in the same category as Julian's mother and Mrs. May, Ruby Turpin is able to recognize a sign from God when one is presented to her, an act which literally and figuratively saves her. As in almost every other story in the text, "an implied epiphany is preceded or accompanied by an act of violence" (Chandler, 41) but here a thrown book does the damage, not a charging bull or a fired pistol. The attack is personal, like the pocketbook flung at Julian's mother in the opening story, but this victim is allowed to survive. Still in a daze from the shock of the impact, Mrs. Turpin sees that "the girl did know her, knew her in some intense and personal way, beyond time and place and condition. 'What have you got to say to me?' she asked hoarsely and held her breath, waiting, as for a revelation" (645-46). A revelation is just what she receives as the girl's response causes her to question her beliefs and re-think her prejudices. This leads to a vision in her pig parlor, a vision that replicates the scene at the doctor's office and demonstrates that all people—regardless of race or social class—can indeed be saved. O'Connor has once again signaled this revelatory sight by using color and the natural landscape. Like Mrs.

May and the bull, Mrs. Turpin is equated with the sun and the wood, identifications which put her on the side of nature and of salvation. Unafraid to question her Maker, she asks, "What do you send me a message like that for?" (652) and the landscape itself seems to answer her as "The color of everything, field and crimson sky, burned for a moment with a transparent intensity. The question carried over the pasture and across the highway and the cotton field and returned to her clearly like an answer from beyond the wood" (653). She is allowed to live once her vision is corrected, and while we do not learn how this new knowledge will change her life, she is the first character in the text that seems prepared to accept grace.

"Parker's Back" again features a married couple, though Sarah Ruth, who is pregnant with their first child, acts as a mother to the child-like Parker. O'Connor first mentions the story in December 1960 but she was unhappy with her work and did not complete it until a few months before her death in August 1964. Published posthumously in the April 1965 issue of *Esquire*, the main character claims not to believe in God and the story follows Parker on a journey toward salvation, a journey that begins and ends with the violent force of Sarah Ruth's blows. Upon their first meeting, "Without warning a terrible bristly claw slammed the side of his face and he fell backwards on the hood of the truck...Parker's vision was so blurred that for an instant he thought he had been attacked by some creature from above, a giant hawk-eyed angel wielding a hoary weapon" (656). Blurred vision once again becomes a metaphor for spiritual awakening, and Sarah Ruth works hard to clear Parker's sight. Nature plays a role in Parker's revelation as he suddenly sees an old tree "reaching out to grasp him. A ferocious thud propelled him into the air, and he heard himself yelling in an unbelievably loud voice,

'GOD ABOVE!'" (605). He then watches the purifying force of fire as the tractor he drives and the tree he crashes into burst into flame. Despite his claims of disbelief, this moment represents a step on the path towards enlightenment for Parker, and "Like the book hurled at Ruby Turpin, it induces a revelation" (Muller, *Nightmares and Visions*, 96). Only the utterance of his full name, the biblical Obadiah Elihue, will allow him to be saved, and as he finally whispers the words at the end of the story "all at once he felt the light pouring through him, turning his spider web soul into a perfect arabesque of colors, a garden of trees and birds and beasts" (673). Sarah Ruth responds once again with violence as she beats her husband with a broom handle in an effort to fully transform him into a believer. Parker is left "crying like a baby" under a pecan tree, reborn to a world in which he can be saved.

"Judgment Day" is the only text-piece included in *Everything That Rises Must Converge* that was not published separately during O'Connor's lifetime. It is a revision of her earliest published work, "The Geranium," which appeared in the summer 1946 issue of *Accent*. Initially a part of her University of Iowa Master's thesis, the story was rewritten and renamed "An Exile in the East" before O'Connor tailored it to fit this grouping of stories. Despite its many incarnations, O'Connor felt strongly that it belonged in the text. As a letter written in June 1964 explains: "I wrote Giroux and asked him to hold off the publication date of the stories until spring. In that way I thought I could probably manage another story. I've got one that I'm not satisfied with that I finished about the same time as *Revelation*" (1210). The caretaker role is reversed here and the daughter is responsible for her invalid father, a task she accepts out of duty, not love. In "The Geranium," the black neighbors are portrayed as passive; here the

husband's violent outbursts lead first to the old man's stroke and then to his death. Tanner's journey to the city and his subsequent efforts to find his way home are a reiteration of Parker's similar journey in the preceding story. Though Tanner is not saved as other characters are, "Judgment Day" "fittingly recapitulates a number of themes sounded in the earlier selections" (Wyatt, 85) except that here there is no vision, no epiphany, no realization that he is wrong in the way he looks at the world. That the text ends on this dismal note is indicative of O'Connor's pessimism during the last months of her life. In her worldview, those who suffer are right and those who cause the suffering—notably parents, children and neighbors—survive. The survivors fail to achieve salvation and are doomed to live unhappily in the desolate aftermath of the destruction they have created.

Individually the text-pieces represent various incarnations of a single theme; the lost have access to an epiphanic moment of truth that, if recognized, can save their spiritual selves, if not their corporeal beings. O'Connor uses twisted familial relationships and diseased bodies as metaphorical and physical representations of the warped souls of her characters. In bringing us closer to a true moment of revelation as the text progresses, O'Connor leads us to the edge of salvation before denying us access to it. Because she was never able to pursue a full-length treatment of either Asbury Fox or Mrs. May, we can not know how she imagined a character would handle the burden of being saved. Instead, we are left to imagine, as O'Connor herself must have, the challenge we will face in the next life.

As we have seen, O'Connor's "characters stand outside the circumference of American society's definition of acceptable women and men and children, and none want

to enter it” (Giannone, “Displacing Gender,” 74). Raymond Carver’s characters also have trouble negotiating the complex set of standards expected of those living and working in this country. Carver has acknowledged that he was influenced by O’Connor’s work—his stories can be seen as a nod to her use of the grotesque and there are formal similarities as well. As Barbara Lonquist notes, “The dramatic structure of Carver’s stories suggest that he has appropriated the method O’Connor uses to bring her characters to an epiphany” (144). Carver’s epiphanies are not literal religious experiences the way O’Connor’s are, in fact they often fail to produce the change of a true revelation. As Carver has said, “Almost all the characters...realize that compromise, giving in, plays a major role in their lives. Then one single moment of revelation disrupts the pattern of their daily lives. It’s a fleeting moment during which they don’t want to compromise anymore. Afterwards they realize that nothing ever really changes” (Tromp, 80). Carver plays with the transformative power of the epiphany by having his characters inch up to one and then question its long-term effects. Despite this failure to be saved by the moment of enlightenment, we notice a preponderance of spiritual symbols and motifs in *Cathedral*, beginning, of course, with the book’s title.

The stories in *Cathedral* affirm the importance of human interactions, some by demonstrating the devastation that isolation can cause, others by highlighting the positive effects of connections once they are made. The tragic sense that suffuses works like “Preservation,” “The Compartment” and “Careful” is contrasted with the optimism apparent in “A Small, Good Thing,” “Where I’m Calling From” and “Fever.” Taken together, this contrast makes the tragic stories seem more tragic and the hopeful ones more hopeful. Despite a number of lengthy text-pieces, the “minimalist” approach for

which Carver was known throughout his career is still dominant here. The difference is that in this text, “his vision becomes less grounded in despair. The fictional framework is enlarged and reinforced by traditional structure. Empty spaces fill with beginnings, middles, ends” (Campbell, 48). This structural change allows the reader to become more involved with these newly rounded characters, to become more invested in them and the fates that befall them. The cycle itself encourages this connection by asking the reader to interpret the collection both by its individual parts and by the sum of those parts. Because of this, the writing in *Cathedral* provides a level of emotional impact not seen in Carver’s earlier works.

Carver is often “credited with resuscitating the short story as an artistically and commercially legitimate form” (Ibid, ix), but his choice of genre was primarily a practical one. When he began to write, he was juggling the demands of a wife, two young children, frequent moves and a slew of low-wage jobs. He explains, “I wanted to be able to start something that I felt I had a reasonable chance of seeing through to a finish—which meant I needed to finish things in a hurry, a short period of time” (McCafferty and Gregory, 106-107). As he wrote in *Fires*,

To write a novel, it seemed to me, a writer should be living in a world that makes sense, a world that the writer can believe in, draw a bead on, and then write about accurately. A world that will, for a time anyway, stay fixed in one place. Along with this there has to be a belief in the essential *correctness* of that world. A belief that the known world has reasons for existing, and is worth writing about, is not likely to go up in smoke in the process. This wasn’t the case with the world I knew and was living in.

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Given his precarious position in the world and his sense of dislocation within it, it made no sense for Carver to attempt the expansiveness required by the novel. Poems and short stories both fulfilled his need for brevity but the short story cycle offered a unique way to

address his lack of faith in and connectedness to society while at the same time showing just how common a problem this disconnectedness was. The act of putting these stories together allows the lonely and isolated to achieve a community of sorts; they are joined together by the loneliness and isolation that defines them.

This is especially true of *Cathedral*, the first of Carver's collections to offer some sort of hope. Characters in this text do share connections with others, but these connections are tenuous at best. Despite rays of optimism, the ghosts of Carver's past life (filled with alcoholism, bankruptcy and despair) are still present here. As Kirk Nessel writes, "Most of the stories...are slightly fuller explorations, or re-explorations, of Carver's old familiar territory, reimmersions into tableaux where human proximity not only provides no real connection but also alienates, with disconnectedness and alienation coming hand-in-hand as by-products of insularity" ("Insularity," 127). While recognizing that *Cathedral* has a different quality than his earlier works—he has said that it "is unlike anything I have ever done before. All the stories in this book are fuller, more interesting, somehow. They are more generous. They're not quite so pared down" (Bonetti, 56)—Carver also acknowledges that "it would be inappropriate, and to a degree, impossible, to resolve things neatly for these people and situations I'm writing about" (McCafferty and Gregory, 110). But there are some resolutions here and the order and placement of the stories helps shape the reader's response to the experiences we encounter. As Randolph Runyon notes, Carver's "stories keep their individuality, their sullen separate existences, yet despite this they find ways to communicate, with each other and with us, if we have ears to hear" (9). As is the case with O'Connor's work, Carver's readers are required to participate fully in the act of creating meaning. In order

to see all that is there, we must uncover much of it ourselves, searching out the absences, the gaps, the spaces in between in order to fully understand the text. These spaces are part of the story being told, as J. Gerald Kennedy points out, “The gaps or breaks between these stories reflect...a pervasive sense of detachment and dissociation” (*Modern*, 205). Characters, situations and images are all repeated here: unhappy marriages, minimum-wage jobs, an inability to communicate, enclosed spaces, escape into alcoholism, the ubiquity of television, no sense of place, self-isolation. The patterns Carver creates with these repetitions help connect the stories so that together they are able to articulate what his characters cannot. Carver’s style is itself a reflection of the inarticulateness of his characters. As is the case with Hemingway’s work, their inability to communicate is apparent in the short, flat sentences with which their lives are described.

The optimistic title story may have been written first, but the text’s opener offers a dark look at human relationships. “Feathers” has some encouraging moments but Fran’s reluctance to join Bud and Olla for dinner seems justified as she and Jack are greeted by a shrieking peacock, a mold of Olla’s deformed teeth and the couple’s supremely fat (and equally ugly) baby. But something she experiences at dinner makes her want a baby of her own and there seems to be room for a happy future for Fran and Jack. Our high hopes are soon dashed, however, as we learn that Fran has gotten fat over the years, that she has cut the long hair her husband loved best about her and that the two no longer communicate, even with each other. As we soon find out, “‘Feathers’ teases the reader with the prospect of meaningful repair in the lives of Jack and Fran only to capitulate to the pervading despair of previous volumes” (Saltzman, 125). According to

Jack, the son who came as a result of their lovemaking that night has “a conniving streak in him. But I don’t talk about it. Not even with his mother. Especially her. She and I talk less and less as it is. Mostly it’s just TV” (26). This lack of communication seems to haunt Jack, as he remembers the night of the dinner as the special event that it was. They never went back to Bud and Olla’s house and the implication is that they have rarely visited anyone since. His fond memories of the evening seem to be linked not just to the connection he felt with Fran—“In the car, Fran sat close to me as we drove away. She kept her hand on my leg” (26)—but the connection he felt with Bud: “We drove home like that from *my friend’s* house” (Ibid, emphasis added). These are the last words of the story and it shows us what Jack values most about the evening. His hope was to develop a friendship with Bud, to move beyond just eating lunch together at the plant where they both work. But the friendship is thwarted by his wife’s isolationism. Fran’s initial response to the invitation was less than enthusiastic: “‘Why do we need other people?’ she seemed to be saying. We have each other.” (4-5). But they do need other people, as do we all, and her sudden desire to have a baby indicates that she knows she is denying herself (and her husband) something meaningful. Instead of finding a way to connect with others they are more alone at the end of the story than they are at the beginning. At the time Jack wishes that he would always remember that night and he does, but only because it was one of the few times he was allowed to move beyond himself and his lonely marriage.

Jack and Fran’s visit to Bud and Olla’s house offers a destroyed promise for a better future and the titular home in “Chef’s House” functions in the same way. The two couples are reflections of one another, one young and just beginning to become a family,

the other older with children already grown. For Wes, a recovering alcoholic, and his estranged wife, Edna, the chance to live in the home by the ocean is an opportunity to reconnect. Carver builds on the experience Jack and Fran have in the first text-piece and then exaggerates their failure in his presentation of Wes and Edna. “For both Jack and Wes, the house they visit—Jack and Fran for an evening, Wes and Edna for a summer cut short—is an almost magical place where they can see a vision of how life ought to be lived” (Runyon, 141). The visit can not last forever though, and after having glimpsed this idyllic life the desolation awaiting them in the real world seems that much more difficult to bear. It is clear that Wes will begin drinking again once they learn they must leave. Here, as elsewhere in Carver’s work, alcoholism is both a cause and a symptom of the desperate loneliness his characters experience. Food, which provides sustenance and life, is often rejected in place of liquor (a trade-off which will be repeated in “Vitamins” and “Where I’m Calling From” and rejected in “A Small, Good Thing”) and the almost-empty refrigerator described at the end of the story comes to represent the emptiness of Wes and Edna’s relationship at that point. Fishing had brought them together that summer but now even that would soon be gone. “We still had some fish in the icebox. There wasn’t much else. We’ll clean it up tonight, I thought, and that will be the end of it” (33); the end of their visit, the end of their hopes, the end of their marriage.

The emptied icebox is recreated in “Preservation” when Sandy comes home to a broken refrigerator filled with spoiling food. Her unemployed (and unnamed) husband, who has spent three months living on their sofa, fails to notice and his lack of awareness regarding the household carries over to his relationship with his wife. Despite their clearly detached state, there is hope for this couple as they team up to empty and clean

the failing fridge. This project has the potential to “preserve” both their groceries and their relationship but in the end they are equated with the rotting food instead. Sandy’s husband remains paralyzed and as she offers him the dinner she has hastily prepared, she “waited for him to say something, anything, but he didn’t” (46). They still cannot communicate and Sandy watches as her husband’s feet, standing in puddles of water from the defrosting food, leave the kitchen to find their way back to the sofa. He has become like the “preserved” man he studies in her book, “Mysteries of the Past,” a metaphor for the couple’s inability to create a future together.

This isolation is taken one step further in “The Compartment,” where Myers is both physically and psychologically estranged from those around him. As he sets off on a six-week tour of Europe, a trip that will culminate in a visit to the son he has not seen or spoken to in eight years, “It struck him that there was really no one, besides his secretary and a few business associates, that he felt it was necessary to tell he was going away” (50). This sense is reinforced by the scenery the train passes, “Now and then Myers saw a farmhouse and its outbuildings, everything surrounded by a wall. He thought this might be a good way to live—in an old house surrounded by a wall” (Ibid). What he seems not to realize is that he is already surrounded by a wall, one that threatens to isolate him forever. As Nessel notes, the story’s “title metaphor connotes the main characters’ predicament of self-containment without self-sufficiency” (“Insularity,” 131) and while his planned visit with his son provides a ray of hope, the meeting never takes place. Unlike most of Carver’s characters, Myers has money (he stays at a four star hotel and rides in a first class car) but his disconnectedness is as complete as those who struggle with unemployment and broken refrigerators they cannot afford to replace. His

loneliness is exacerbated by his inability to understand the language spoken by those around him, and he becomes violently angry when he cannot explain that the watch he bought for his son has been stolen. This inability to communicate is reflected in his realization that he has nothing to say to his son once he sees him. His emotional separation from others is physically enacted in the slew of railway cars scattered about on the maze-like tracks. The station is littered with railroad cars filled with passengers, strangers who pass each other without connecting, without interacting, without even speaking the same language. Myers wanders out of his compartment which is soon disconnected from the rest of his train. Completely alone, without even his luggage, he is left adrift and has no idea where the new compartment he enters will take him. The text-piece is itself like this railroad car, acting as a conduit between the “car” which precedes it (“Preservation”) and the one to follow (“A Small, Good Thing”) to create a set of linked cars that make up the entire text.³⁵ The chapters of a novel sometimes work this way too, but the story cycle allows Carver to derail a car here and there, to shift the focus of a text-piece to a different character in a different situation without losing the connections that keep the train together.

Carver has written extensively on O’Connor’s influence on his writing³⁶ and this influence seems most apparent in “A Small, Good Thing,” a reworking of his earlier story, “The Bath.” Both versions make use of religious iconography, such as the ritual cleansing of baptism and the communion implied in the literal breaking of bread. The waking sleep alluded to in “Preservation”—as Sandy’s husband lies oblivious on the

³⁵ Runyon, 146

³⁶ Logsdon, 143-146

sofa—is literally recreated here in the form of Scotty’s coma. The doctor’s reluctance to call it what it is underscores the lack of awareness suffered by most of Carver’s characters. His revision for the later story allows us to see his more expansive side; the mere act of naming them in the new version adds dimension and humanity to the husband and wife who are at the center of the story. The details he adds serve to “decrease the distances that separate Carver’s characters from one another and Carver’s narrator from the story he relates” (Saltzman, 146). When Ann encounters Nelson’s family in the hospital, also wondering whether their son will live or die, she wants to reach out to them but does not know how. Their common emotion, in this case fear, does bring them together briefly, and it brings the Weiss’s together, too. Only after they pray together do we see that they can survive this tragedy. The narrator tells us that after this moment “For the first time, she felt they were together in it, this trouble... She hadn’t let Howard into it, though he was there and needed all along” (69). The stand-off with the baker helps extend that connection beyond the family unit and includes the lonely old man who no longer remembers how to be a part of the world. Again, it is shared emotion—in this case a sense of loneliness and loss—that makes some kind of union possible. Seen in this way, Scotty’s death has saved all three of them from their disconnected lives, bringing them together in the warm, bright, nourishing bakery.

Unlike the story which precedes it, “Vitamins” does not provide its characters with a moment of communion amidst tragedy. Though the back room at the after-hours bar resembles the back room of the bakery, the pattern is reversed. Connections are not made here, they are broken. The climactic encounter in each of these stories occurs after midnight on a star-filled night. While the threat of violence in a “A Small, Good Thing”

turns into a moment of empathy between the Weiss's and the baker, an evening that promises sexual closeness for the narrator and his wife's employee ends in a threat of violence. There are other parallels as well: both stories feature black characters, a rare occurrence in Carver's fiction (the family's race is highlighted in the revisions made to "The Bath"), Sheila's sudden collapse at the party echoes Scotty's coma and her disappearance the next morning reflects the boy's death. Sheila leaves for Portland and Donna claims she, too, will go, a rootlessness that contributes to the isolation Carver's characters feel. Even Patti and the narrator consider moving: "we got to talking how we'd be better off if we moved to Arizona, someplace like that" (96). But they would not be better off in Arizona, as we discover in the cycle's penultimate story, "The Bridle," where the family fails to achieve a better life out west. "Vitamins" ends with Patti's sleepwalking and her husband's drunken fumbings in the bathroom, a fitting demonstration of their clouded perceptions of the world.

This stage between sleep and wakefulness is replicated yet again in "Careful." When Lloyd sees his landlady lying on the floor, "She seemed to be asleep. Then it occurred to him she might be dead...[she] gave a little cough, brought her hand to her side, and went back to being quiet and still again" (111-112). This last part is eerily reminiscent of Scotty's dying breath in "A Small, Good Thing." While most of Carver's characters have trouble understanding each other, here there is a more literal inability to communicate; Lloyd's ear is stopped up with wax, making it physically difficult for him to hear. We soon discover that his physical condition has merely imitated his emotional one (as it often does for O'Connor's characters); he is isolated in his own world, unable to listen to anything but the television set which is always on, drowning out any

possibility of real communication. Like Myers of “The Compartment,” Lloyd cannot understand those around him—“She said something but he couldn’t make out the words. When she stopped talking, he didn’t ask her what it was she’d said. Whatever it was, he knew he didn’t want her to say it again” (118)—nor can he make himself understood. “‘What?’ she said. ‘Christ, I can’t hear you, either. Maybe this is catching’” (116). When his hearing is finally restored he reaches out to Inez but it is too late. He gets dressed as if prepared to do something with his day but like the husband in “Preservation” the lure of the television set proves too tempting and he never makes it off the couch.

Television is not featured as prominently in “Where I’m Calling From,” giving the characters space to sit and talk instead. The narrator’s conversations with J.P., who shares stories about his past, are therapeutic for both men. For the first time since “A Small, Good Thing” we meet characters who are able to understand one another. As he encourages J.P. to talk, the narrator acknowledges that he himself can barely swallow, let alone speak: “...my mouth dries up...I know something’s about to happen and I want to head it off. I want to hide from it, that’s what I want to do. Just close my eyes and let it pass. Let it take the next guy” (128). His avoidance of these connections, his wish for them to “take the next guy,” indicates just how closed off he is at this point in his life. Alcoholism is clearly a means for him to separate himself from those who are closest to him; when his girlfriend receives a troubling result on a medical test, he gets drunk. He does not call her, preferring not to know if something is wrong. But his interactions with J.P. and J.P.’s wife, Roxy, help move him in the right direction. Her good luck kiss is the first physical contact he seems to have had since his arrival at Frank Martin’s and it helps

make him able to call both his wife and his girlfriend. Like Myers, he does not know what he will say to the loved ones he has disappointed, but unlike Myers, he is willing at least to try.

We once again see the loneliness of the railways in "The Train," a continuation of John Cheever's "The Five-Forty Eight." In the Cheever story a secretary who has been seduced and then fired by her married boss takes her revenge. Here, Miss Dent waits patiently for the train that will take her back to the city, the gun still in her purse. We are told that "There was nothing in the waiting room that announced when trains arrived and departed" (148) indicating a lack of communication which is repeated in the conversation of her fellow travel companions. The woman mutters something Miss Dent does not catch and then uses a foreign language Miss Dent does not understand. Even the woman's companion fails to understand her, "You're going too fast for me," he says. "You'll have to slow down. You'll have to speak English. I can't follow you" (150). Summing up the feelings of many of Carver's characters, the older woman tells Miss Dent, "Don't know you and don't care to know you" (153). The passengers on the mostly empty train assume the odd threesome are together though the reader knows that they are each very much alone. The text-piece ends with a description of the brightly lit train punching a white line through the darkness of the night, a contrast reminiscent of the bright light pouring from the baker's back room in "A Small, Good Thing." In that case, however, a bond was being created. In "The Five-Forty Eight," isolation has only been reinforced.

"Fever," the last of the text-pieces written, once again shows that communication can provide salvation. Carlyle seems at first to resemble Carver's less hopeful characters;

he is detached from his emotional pain and unable to accept that his wife has left him. He is saved because he feels a great sense of responsibility toward the children who depend on him. As in "Careful," a physical ailment manifests itself as the expression of a character's psychological state. Carlyle's fever marks a new stage in his grief over his wife's departure, a stage in which he is ready to unburden himself of his feelings. Like the husband's apathy in "Preservation," Scotty's coma in "A Small, Good Thing," and Sheila's unconsciousness in "Vitamins," Carlyle's fever places him "in a state between sleeping and waking" (177). Mrs. Webster is the recipient of his unburdening and she gently invites him to share his story just as the narrator encourages J.P. in "Where I'm Calling From." "You just keeping talking, Mr. Carlyle. Sometimes it's good to talk about it. Sometimes it has to be talked about. Besides, I want to hear it. And you're going to feel better afterward" (185). He does feel better, in fact his headache disappears even as he speaks, as if the process itself is curative. And despite the fact that Mrs. Webster is moving to another state (as so many of Carver's characters do), her caring has already saved him. As he waves goodbye we learn that "he felt something come to an end. It had to do with Eileen and his life before this...he understood it was over, and he felt able to let her go" (186). He then "brought his arm down and turned to his children" (Ibid), leaving the reader with hope that, having faced, finally, his past he is prepared to handle his future.

"The Bridle" seems to continue the story of Patti and the narrator of "Vitamins" who talk wistfully about moving to Arizona as a way to improve their situation. We see here how useless that strategy can be. Mr. and Mrs. Holits barely interact with each other as they arrange for a place to live. He looks at her but "he may as well have been looking

at the wall. She won't give him back his look" (189). This complete separation between husband and wife reflects the isolation we have seen before in this text and is repeated in the dynamic between Marge and Harley. There are several moments that promise real communication between the two women, but their friendship fails to develop in time to save either one of them. The result of Holits' accident is the ultimate expression of this inability to know or be known by others. He gashes his head after a drunken pool dive and loses the ability to even recognize those around him. When Marge sees him a few days later, still bandaged, she waves at him but "he doesn't even nod. He acts like I'm a stranger. It's like he doesn't know me or doesn't want to know me" (206), a metaphor for the psychological situation suffered by most of Carver's characters in this text.

Marge's desire to be known becomes clear when she looks wistfully at the bills Holits uses to pay for the apartment and wonders where they have been and where they have yet to go. "They could go anyplace, and anything could happen because of them. I write my name in ink across Grant's broad old forehead... People will stop in the midst of their spending and wonder. Who's this Marge?" (192). While the freedom represented by the bills (and the people who carry them) offers hope and possibility, it also offers isolation. Marge has marked each bill with her name but she knows that no one will ever know her. They will forever wonder, "Who's this Marge?," suggesting that rootlessness is part of the problem, not a solution.

Despite the negative cast of stories like "The Bridle," the final story, "Cathedral," is perhaps the most hopeful in this cycle, and, as Logsdon notes, it serves "as a summarizing metaphor for all that has preceded it in the collection" (144). Here for the first time there is salvation without loss. No child must die and no marriage must be

destroyed in order for a connection to be made. When we meet them, the narrator and his wife share a fractured union, at best; he makes light of her poetry writing, her friendship with Robert, even her suicide attempt. Though the narrator has no friends, his wife and Robert are clearly connected. She repeats his name several times when he first arrives (the narrator is never named) and we are told that “My wife finally took her eyes off the blind man and looked at me. I had the feeling she didn’t like what she saw” (215).

Robert’s blindness makes the narrator uncomfortable but the older man’s lack of sight is what allows him, finally, to see. He is forced to connect both intellectually and physically as he first describes a cathedral to his guest and then draws one with him. It is no accident that they are brought together by a building meant to bring religion to humanity, despite the narrator’s assertion that “cathedrals don’t mean anything special to me. Nothing. Cathedrals. They’re just something to look at on late-night TV. That’s all they are” (226). As Robert and the narrator prepare to draw the cathedral, the spreading out of the paper repeats the imagery used in “A Small, Good Thing” when the baker clears space on his table to offer Mr. and Mrs. Weiss hot rolls and coffee. In that story, too, a sort of religious communion occurs as the characters find a way to move beyond their isolated selves. “Cathedral” was originally published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1981 and Carver made more than two hundred revisions to the story before it was published as part of the cycle which bears its name.³⁷ Many of the sentence fragments found in the original, representative as they were of the detached state of the characters, have been completed. This new cohesiveness is indicative of the author’s more optimistic outlook and contributes to the larger cohesiveness of the story cycle as a

³⁷ Mirarchi, 299

whole. Carver also played with the characterizations of the two men. Robert becomes more distant and authoritative and the narrator more ignorant in the revised version, making the conversion at the end both more surprising and more meaningful. The text-piece therefore becomes both more cynical and more hopeful, a contrast which effectively mirrors the effect of the text as a whole. Though *Cathedral* is certainly brighter than his earlier works, Carver is careful to temper his more optimistic stories with stories of despair. He produces “contrapuntal effects in the sequence, balancing a kind of pity against cruelty, compassion against indifference, kindness against malice” (Kennedy, *Modern*, 207), a sense of balance which may have come from Carver’s writing process. As was the case for James and Faulkner, Carver wrote these text-pieces all at once, with few intervening distractions. The twelve stories were completed in a rush of creativity that lasted about a year and a half—a quick turnaround considering that it took Carver approximately fifteen years to complete his first collection. The cohesiveness of the text can be attributed at least in part to Carver’s sustained effort here, an effort directed towards expressing a particular notion about loneliness and isolation in the late twentieth-century. Like James, Carver clearly felt the need to keep writing until he had satisfied his topic and it required an entire text to fulfill the task.

O’Connor and Carver take the disjunctive nature of the story cycle one step further and use the genre to meet their specific needs. Instead of using repeated characters or a common setting, they repeat images, motifs, and situations in an effort to express the disconnectedness of their characters while at the same time linking them together. O’Connor explored the godlessness of the world around her in *Everything That Rises Must Converge* while *Cathedral* reflects the isolated state of Carver’s characters.

Chapter Five

Post-Modernism and the Future of the Short Story Cycle:

The Woman Warrior and Love Medicine

In the hands of Maxine Hong Kingston and Louise Erdrich the short story cycle proves itself adept at yet another task—expressing the experiences of those who do not fit comfortably into American society because of their ethnicity. In both *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (1975) and *Love Medicine* (1984 and 1993) the form helps represent the marginalized experience. Unlike the more universally respected novel, the short story cycle exists outside the literary mainstream and therefore becomes particularly useful to marginalized authors wishing to depict marginalized characters. The cyclical nature alluded to in the name of the genre (so unlike the novel's linear form) is a reflection of the oral traditions of both Chinese American and Native American culture. It therefore makes sense for Kingston and Erdrich to be drawn to the form, even as each wishes to be associated with the more accepted novel. Genre classification is hotly contested for both texts; *The Woman Warrior* was called an autobiography when published and *Love Medicine* a novel, but both exhibit the key properties of the short story cycle as well. Both are made up of short stories which can be read alone but which take on greater meaning when read together in the order in which they are presented. As is the case with the story cycles already discussed, many of these text-pieces were first published and/or have since been anthologized separately. Like Hemingway, Faulkner, O'Connor and Carver, Kingston and Erdrich create a collective protagonist in these texts, one which represents both individual characters and a larger family or community at the same time. Kingston's narrator uses her family as a means

by which to understand herself, while Erdrich explores a community through a number of its members. Unlike the authors already discussed though, Kingston and Erdrich seem more comfortable with the inherently fragmented nature of their texts. For them, fragmentation is a natural part of storytelling and, indeed, of life. In traditions where the culture's stories have always been told by a number of different voices, each adding its own knowledge to the larger tale, the story cycle represents the norm, not an expression of detachment as it does for other American writers. The ancient oral tradition is an early representation of what will become the short story cycle, and the familiarity they feel with the form makes it easier for Kingston and Erdrich to adapt it in an optimistic way. For them, it provides a means by which to bring characters together rather than a way of demonstrating the distance between them.

Furthermore, *The Woman Warrior* and *Love Medicine* help expand the concept of the short story cycle by creating texts that are themselves text-pieces in an even larger unit which I will call a *novel cycle*. Kingston looks at her Chinese family's integration into American culture from both the male and female perspectives, but as she began to write she decided that the stories needed to be told separately. *The Woman Warrior* represents the female side while *China Men* represents the male perspective. Suzanne Juhasz refers to the two books as Kingston's "two-volume autobiography" (273), and read together they provide a vision of the world in which Kingston was raised that would have been impossible to tell in one text. Similarly, Erdrich expanded on the story she began to explore in *Love Medicine* by producing additional story cycles to help make sense of this community's world view. Not only did she add new material to *Love Medicine* in 1993, but she and her late husband and collaborator, Michael Dorris, planned

and wrote a tetralogy of texts around the community featured in the first book.³⁸ Taken together, these four books (*Love Medicine*, *Tracks*, *The Beet Queen* and *The Bingo Palace*) can also be seen as a large-scale cycle, one which replicates the generic format of each individual text. Like the stories which make up a story cycle, each novel in a novel cycle can be read alone, but like Kingston's two texts, Erdrich's four books are clearly meant to be read as all of one piece.

While it can act in similar ways to the autobiography and novel, the short story cycle is different in that it provides a forum for more than one character to express his/her viewpoint. Kingston's text has one narrator, but the girl "becomes" other characters through the act of narration. In *Love Medicine*, as in Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*, different text-pieces are narrated by distinct voices. The text is also like Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* in that it opens with the death of an important female character, an event which then brings the other characters together. (In interviews, Erdrich has acknowledged that Faulkner is a powerful influence on her writing.)³⁹ Both Kingston and Erdrich use the story cycle as a way in which to tell and re-tell, interpret and re-interpret the stories which make up who their characters are. Each text-piece illuminates another aspect of the main consciousness of the text, whether it is an individual character, set of characters or extended community. Taken together, Kingston's re-evaluation of the stories passed down to her (and those not passed down) in *The Woman Warrior* help create a cohesive picture of the narrator and her background. Similarly, Erdrich's characters must sort through the stories which define them in order to fully understand

³⁸ Chavkin, 89

³⁹ Ibid, 86

how they fit into their community and, beyond that, how their community fits into society at large. As Rocio Davis notes, “The narrative structure of short-story cycles mirrors this episodic and achronological method of oral narration. Many story cycles do not have a traditional linear plot, emerging rather as composites of persons or communities pieced together from the diverse elements yielded by the individual stories” (“Transcultural Reinventions,” 14). Because it is inherently fragmented in form yet still manages to bring disparate pieces together, the story cycle seems ideal for writers whose heritage highlights many characters, not just one as Euro-American novel tends to do. The lack of a traditional linear plot in *The Woman Warrior* and *Love Medicine* is in keeping with the threads of narrative often associated with the cultural backgrounds from which Kingston and Erdrich hail.

For Kingston, the narrator's struggle between her Chinese heritage and her American upbringing is the focus of her search for identity. Because of the way in which this struggle is presented, *The Woman Warrior* has been labeled a work of fiction and non-fiction, a memoir and autobiography, history and myth. This confusion is understandable; Kingston's publisher labeled the work an autobiography and the text certainly satisfies many of the demands of that genre. However the form creates expectations of linearity and literal truth that are not met by the text. I introduce the notion of *The Woman Warrior* as a short story cycle as a way to better understand both Kingston's inspiration (the talk-story she heard growing up) and her aspiration (an effort to understand where she fits into her cultural history). Certainly part of the genre debate stems from a desire to create a text that will sell on the literary marketplace. When asked whether *The Woman Warrior* more closely resembles fiction or non-fiction, Kingston

responded with “I guess I do think it’s closer to fiction, but whatever sells” (Brownmiller, 175). In the same interview, she concedes that the title, which she agrees is confusing, was not her first choice. Together, the five stories Kingston’s narrator shares with the reader help define her as she struggles to discover who she is and how she fits into the world in which she lives. She re-imagines the stories she has been told growing up and in constructing them to suit her needs she constructs her own identity. Her effort to assimilate the cultural history of China, which she has never visited, with that of America, to which she feels she does not belong, is what drives the narrative in each section. Like an autobiography, *The Woman Warrior* represents a search for identity, a means by which the narrator attempts to discover and understand her “self.” But unlike a traditional autobiography, this narrator tells a disjointed, convoluted tale, one filled with ghosts and magic and stories whose veracity is constantly questioned by both the reader and the narrator. As Karoline Krauss notes, “this autobiography does not gratify the reader’s desire for structural unity—there is no obvious temporal or causal pattern to organize the series of events into manageable shape” (148). By the end of an autobiography we expect to understand the facts of an author’s life, exactly what happened to shape him/her as an individual and when. We do not get that satisfaction here. Certainly we have a greater understanding of who the narrator is and where she comes from but we lack specifics such as chronology, physical description, even the narrator’s name. Kingston has undermined the genre’s form to better reflect her experience as a woman growing up between cultures. Each text-piece offers only a bit of insight into the identity of the narrator without fully explaining the connections and distinctions. We pick up the most basic bits of information—like how many siblings she

has—through context, not exposition. Still, there is an overriding sense of order in the text as the narrator moves from past to present, both towards and away from her mother in her effort to find her own place within the world.

Despite its official classification, Kingston's own comments support reading this text as a short story cycle. In an interview with Angeles Carabi she said, "When I started writing *The Woman Warrior* I didn't think I could write a long book, so I did the five interlocking pieces and each one was like a short story or an essay. I know the book has a very complex form but all there is is trying to take small parts and doing a mosaic with it" (Dunn and Morris, 56). Her narrator does not merely take small parts from her past and use them to create a mosaic, she adapts each story to suit her purposes. In each text-piece she both shares an existing legend and inserts herself into it. Kingston's narrator reinterprets the stories she has heard as a child in her effort to discover who she is. Even as she guesses at the motivations of her presumably non-fictional aunt in "No Name Woman," the narrator identifies herself with her forerunner. As she explains, "Unless I see her life branching into mine, she gives me no ancestral help" (8). In "White Tigers" she again makes this connection to her characters clear when she writes "I mustn't feel bad that I haven't done as well as the swordswoman did; after all, no bird called me, no wise people tutored me. I have no magic beads, no water gourd sight, no rabbit that will jump in the fire when I'm hungry" (49). Despite her failure to "storm China" and avenge her people, she later acknowledges that "The swordswoman and I are not so dissimilar. May my people understand the resemblance soon so that I can return to them" (53). When recounting her mother's experience at medical school in China (in "Shaman") the narrator informs us that Brave Orchid is "a practical woman" who could not "invent

stories and told only true ones" (66). At the same time, she acknowledges the other-worldliness of these stories when she admits that "To make my waking life American-normal...I push the deformed into my dreams, which are in Chinese, the language of impossible stories" (87). The importance of storytelling is made clear yet again in "At The Western Palace," when Brave Orchid explains to her children that "The difference between mad people and sane people...is that sane people have variety when they talk-story. Mad people have only one story that they talk over and over" (159). The narrator avoids displaying this sign of madness by making each story different from the ones around it. As is the case in *Love Medicine*, there is no one version of any story here and the narrator herself is unable to distinguish truth from fiction. Yet when read together a coherent story is revealed.

Despite her many sources, it is the narrator's version of each story which represents her attempt to write her own identity. The story cycle helps her accomplish this task since it allows her to fully explore the talk-story tradition which defines her ancestors. The five text-pieces which make up the whole demonstrate a back and forth between the narrator and her mother, as she presents first her mother's version of each incident and then her own interpretation of that version. As the text progresses, the narrator takes more responsibility for the stories she tells and while the first three are solidly her mother's, the last two are much more her own. We therefore witness the establishment of the narrator's consciousness, her awareness of who she is in relation to both her past and her present, as we read the text-pieces in the order in which they are presented. As Juhasz notes, "The text as a whole...can be seen as an alternation between the stories the mother tells and the stories the daughters tell. Each teller's stories, in turn,

alternate between true stories and stories that are not true” (177). This disparity between truth and fiction, between historical fact and mythical fantasy is key to both the narrator’s understanding of her past and her ability to create her own future. Though she complains to her mother that she can never tell which stories are true and which are not, the instability this creates makes it possible for her to adapt the stories and through these adaptations incorporate the different parts of her heritage into her world. Erdrich recreates this effect in *Love Medicine* by often telling the same story from different points of view and allowing the reader to collate the various testimonies to arrive at the truth. One effect of this process in both texts is an awareness that there is not one truth to be told. The reader understands that each character will have his/her own sense of what happened and why, and that each version is therefore true in its own way. Unlike the linear, coherent, chronological tale expected in a traditional autobiography, Kingston takes advantage of the genre here to present a more authentically Chinese text. Her use of a non-linear narrative featuring multiple voices is not just typically ethnic, it is typically female as well. As Joan Lidoff writes, “a story that highlights a single protagonist in the foreground, with other characters as background, gives way to structures that foreground more than one character at a time... Women writers often use collective protagonists, multiple points of view, multiple stories” (116). As has been shown, collective protagonists, multiple points of view and multiple stories help distinguish the short story cycle as a unique genre.

“No Name Woman” originally appeared, in slightly different form, in the January 1975 issue of *Viva* and remains heavily anthologized as a stand-alone story. We understand from the opening sentence that the narrator is rebelling against her history

even as she attempts to understand it. By first telling us that she has been warned never to repeat the story of her no-name aunt and then promptly repeating it to us we understand the power of language and the extent to which she is willing to go to define herself. The narrator is also a no name woman, a fact that identifies her even more directly with her forgotten aunt. The mother's hope in telling her daughter this secret is to prevent her from bringing shame to the family, but the narrator betrays first herself by participating in her aunt's shame and then her mother by telling of it. Opening the text with this story is a crucial step for the narrator towards separating herself from her mother and her mother's belief system. The fact that she could not confirm the story with her father—or with anyone else from the community—adds to the uncertainty. As we discover later on in the text, not all of her mother's stories are true. For example, references her mother makes to two children left in China are later denied, making the narrator's own position within her family unclear. The fact that the aunt still cannot be named, even in America where her story can finally be told, also creates doubt. Her inability to name herself shows that the narrator's creation process is not complete even at the end of the text.

The next text-piece, "White Tigers," works as a corrective to the sexist society which punishes the narrator's powerless aunt in "No Name Woman." The two stories both complement and contradict one another, demonstrating first the weakness of Chinese women and then their strength. Taken together they begin to fill in a more complete picture of what such a woman can be—neither completely helpless nor completely in control, but a combination of the two. First girls are told that they are worthless, the property of the men they marry, and then they are told that they are capable

of avenging the wrongs done to their families. This juxtaposition creates a dichotomy the narrator struggles with throughout the rest of the text as she decides which of her family's traditions to accept as her own and which to discard. In this text-piece the narrator realizes for the first time the power of her mother's talk-story, perhaps setting the stage for her own desire to share stories as an adult. The narrator realizes that her mother had chanted with her about Fa Mu Lan, the girl who defied all social and cultural taboos to disguise herself as a man and take her father's place in battle, and she soon becomes the mythic character about whom she writes. The identification here goes even further than it did in "No Name Woman," where the narrator merely conjectured about her aunt's indiscretion. Here she slips from the third person to the first as she describes Fa Mu Lan's adventures, literally becoming her for the purposes of the talk-story. This merging of characters is just one of several adjustments Kingston makes to the myth which is her source, and Chinese critics in particular have angrily noted her twisting of the "facts." But the process of taking disparate elements (in this case several discrete Chinese legends) and combining them to create something that is both different from and similar to replicates the short story cycle itself. Like the narrator, Kingston begins with the stories of her past and re-creates them to suit her own particular future.

In "Shaman" we learn a great deal more about our narrator's mother and her experiences in China as a woman whose husband had gone to America. Like the talk-stories which have come before, this one clearly combines elements of truth (her diploma and class photograph serve as proof) with elements of fantasy. Her mother's story must also be taken over, told and re-told by the narrator, in order for her to continue the process of discovering who she is both in relation to and isolation from the woman who is

her primary influence. As in the story of Fa Mu Lan, a woman once again has power over the world of mysteries and is able to survive, even thrive, without a husband or father. The photographs provide visual evidence of the difference between her mother's experience living in China (formal portraits) and her father's as he frolics with friends at Coney Island (snapshots). As the narrator notes, "There are no snapshots of my mother" (60) and the two small portraits which survive have black fingerprints covering her forehead, "as if someone had marked her" (Ibid). She questions her mother about the fingerprints but she is given a different answer each time, proof that the first response was unsatisfactory and that the question is still left unanswered. Even the Department of Health certificate features a photo in which her mother's face is obscured, and together with the other defaced pictures it acts as a physical reminder of her mother's inscrutability. Like the narrator, we are forced to interpret only that information which is given to us; any other questions are left unanswered. Brave Orchid's ability to manipulate others through storytelling is aptly demonstrated by her interactions with her fellow classmates, and we learn of her bravery and her unwillingness to give in. "My mother may have been afraid," the narrator writes, "but she would be a dragoness...She could make herself not weak. During danger she fanned out her dragon claws and riffled her red sequin scales and unfolded her coiling green stripes. Danger was a good time for showing off" (67). Her mother's transformation into a dragon is similar to the transformation experienced by the narrator in the first two text-pieces when she becomes first a surrogate for her lost aunt and then a stand-in for Fa Mu Lan. In recounting her mother's encounter with a ghost one night, the narrator writes, "I think my mother said that under the foot of the bed the students found a piece of wood dripping with blood"

(75). She does not just question the evidence (“I think there was a piece of wood”), she questions whether or not this is what she was told (“*I think my mother said* there was a piece of wood”). In admitting her own lack of immediate knowledge of either the story itself or the process of telling the story, the narrator is acknowledging both her mother’s poetic license in passing the story to her and her own in passing it to the reader.

Brave Orchid’s strength is contrasted with Moon Orchid’s weakness in “At the Western Palace,” a text-piece which tells the story of another of the narrator’s aunts. The narrator finds herself in the portraits of the women who came before her and she must look not just at the successes, like Fa Mu Lan and her mother, but also at the failures, like No Name Woman and Moon Orchid. When the two sisters confront Moon Orchid’s errant husband, he explains that he abandoned his wife because “It’s as if I turned into a different person. The new life around me was so complete; it pulled me away. You became people in a book I had read a long time ago” (154). By relegating his first wife to the realm of the fictional, he denies not only her place in the world but also the importance of talk-story. It is unlikely that either of the sisters would have shared the details of this disappointing encounter, and we learn at the beginning of the next text-piece that the narrator hears this story from her sister who had heard it from their brother. How, then, can we know what really transpired? We cannot, but regardless of whether or not the details are factually correct, the talk-story’s influence on the narrator is clear. “Brave Orchid’s daughters decided fiercely that they would never let men be unfaithful to them. All her children made up their minds to major in science or mathematics” (160). Moon Orchid’s helplessness is as powerful as Fa Mu Lan’s courage in helping the narrator and her sisters decide what kind of women they are determined to become.

In the final text-piece it becomes clear that the narrator has at last found her own voice. The metaphor of “A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe” implies that even a foreign song can find a home in new surroundings, a resolution to the problem presented by the text as a whole. For the narrator, that song is her own talk-story. Her effort to create the stories told in the first four sections of the text has allowed her to express both her Chinese heritage and her American influences just as Ts’ai Yen is able to play her barbarian song once back in her native land. But the success of this song was preceded by years of silence, both for the narrator and for the character she writes about. Precipitated perhaps by her mother’s insistence that she cut her tongue as a child, the narrator retreats into an almost total silence and hides behind the black paint she uses to cover all her school drawings. Her experience in Chinese school where “we chanted together, voices rising and falling, loud and soft, some boys shouting, everybody reading together, reciting together and not alone with one voice” (167) represents the process of putting these stories together for the text. The narrator is able to talk-story only after her voice has been joined by those of the women who told the stories before her—her no-name aunt, Fa Mu Lan, Brave Orchid, Moon Orchid and Ts’ai Yen. At the end of the text, the narrator still struggles to determine her place in the world, but she has moved quite far down the road toward independence and self-definition. Here when her grand uncle calls the sisters and female cousins maggots unworthy of food, the narrator barely reacts. Instead the girls disparage their elder in English, calling him and men like him “assholes” (191). In this sense they have moved beyond the expectations of the world their parents left behind. Having created their identities in the new world, they no longer judge themselves by the standards of the old country. The narrator has learned to rebel

against her heritage when necessary, as when she drops dishes and spills soup to sabotage her parents' efforts to find her a Chinese husband. But even at this stage she cannot tell which stories are real and which are made up: "Are there really flags in Chinatown signaling what stowaways have arrived in San Francisco Bay, their names, and which ships they came on?" she asks. "No, No, there aren't any flags like that. They're just talking-story. You're always believing talk-story" (183). This exchange might serve as a warning to readers of the text, many of whom insist on treating these text-pieces as factually correct rather than allusive. Like those her mother tells, the narrator's stories are based on truth but not tied to it. Her need to share her story is a key element in her establishment of her self as an individual, and while this process does resemble that of an autobiography, it is enacted here through the form of the short story cycle.

Despite the inspiration her mother provides, the narrator must get away from Brave Orchid in order to fully become herself. "I had to leave home in order to see the world logically," (204) she writes, but even after moving away she admits that "I continue to sort out what's just my childhood, just my imagination, just my family, just the village, just movies, just living" (205). We know she has come into her own when she begins Ts'ai Yen's tale by writing: "Here is a story my mother told me, not when I was young, but recently, when I told her I also talk story. The beginning is hers, the ending, mine" (206). She has both joined with and separated from her mother and her legacy of storytelling. What begins as a story about her grandmother's love of theater ends with the tale of a poetess kidnapped by barbarians. Disturbed by the haunting sounds of the music the barbarians played, Ts'ai Yen sings her own song to her children, a song "about China and her family there. Her words seemed to be Chinese, but the

barbarians understood their sadness and anger. Sometimes they thought they could catch barbarian phrases about forever wandering. Her children...eventually sang along when she left her tent to sit by the winter campfires, ringed by barbarians” (209). Here Ts’ai Yen represents both the mother and the daughter as they have been depicted throughout the text; the mother who has left her home and must live in a foreign land and the daughter who must learn to find her voice amongst strangers. Ts’ai Yen eventually brings her songs home with her and they are passed down to future generations.

Kingston ends the text-piece, and the text, by telling us that the song translated well; a wish perhaps that her own music find a space for itself both between and within the two cultures that made her who she is. Kingston has acknowledged her desire to create something new here: “My idea was to invent a new form for telling my stories and thoughts. I needed a form in which I could have real, true human beings who have very imaginative minds tells their lives and dreams” (Wong, “Autobiography,” 48). Like the song, which seems to have both Chinese and barbarian words in it, *The Woman Warrior* is a work patched together from various sources and the story cycle makes it possible for Kingston to reconcile her mother’s Chinese talk-story with her own American experiences.

This cultural collaboration occurs in Louise Erdrich’s work as well, as she too attempts to reconcile her diverse heritage through her writing. Of part German and part Chippewa descent, Erdrich also has issues of identity to resolve. As is the case with *The Woman Warrior*, *Love Medicine* is not often considered to be a short story cycle, especially since Erdrich and Dorris insisted on calling it a novel. However, their rationale in labeling it such can be used to justify classification as a short story cycle too.

Erdrich contends that “It’s a novel in that it all moves toward some sort of resolution” (Wong, “An Interview,” 47) a quality which certainly describes the cycle as well. In the same interview Dorris discusses the process of writing *Love Medicine*:

Some of them [the chapters] existed as short stories before, and then were adapted and incorporated. There were a couple of short stories and then the rest were written—three—really as part of the novel although with different perspectives. Then we went through the entire manuscript. We wove in all the changes and resolutions and threads to tie them all together. By the time readers get halfway through the book, it should be clear to them that this is not an unrelated, or even a related, set of short stories, but parts of a larger scheme.

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What he portrays here, a text made up of short stories that have been adapted and tied together by setting, character and/or theme, is a short story cycle. In an interview with Laura Coltelli, Dorris acknowledges that this text “is a story cycle in the traditional sense...the point of view is the community voice and the means of exchanging information is gossip, and so consequently there is no narrator; there is no single protagonist, but rather it is the entire community” (22). As was the case for other cycles discussed here, this text boasts a collective protagonist (the Chippewa community), a common setting (a reservation in North Dakota) and similar thematic concerns which connect the text-pieces. The use of repeated imagery, particularly that of water, also holds the text together. Unlike the desolation represented in the unknown and often unknowable characters in *Everything That Rises Must Converge* and *Cathedral*, the use of repeated characters and setting in both *The Woman Warrior* and *Love Medicine* helps to connect the text-pieces in a way that indicates a shift in the cycle’s purpose. Here the genre allows characters to communicate with and understand one another, rather than highlight the distance between them. It is not surprising that Erdrich, like Kingston,

gravitated towards this particular form. As Davis has noted, the modern short story cycle lends itself well to the purposes of the ethnic writer:

the two principal thematic constituents of the ethnic story cycle are the representation of identity and community, as separate entities, and the notion of an identity within a community...The shifting borders of identity, isolation, fragmentation, and indeterminacy find their formal expression in the isolated episodes that make up a cycle.

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These themes and this formal expression are apparent in Erdrich's text just as they are in Kingston's.

Seven of the text-pieces used here were published as short stories and several, such as "The Red Convertible," have since been anthologized. Erdrich revised her stories for the book's 1984 publication, and she revised the entire text in 1993 for the release of the "new and expanded edition." By then she and Dorris had begun to cobble together their novel cycle, one which would include *Love Medicine* and the three other story cycles mentioned, and some of the changes made to *Love Medicine* were made so that the text would better reflect this new, larger scheme. In addition to some minor changes made to the existing text-pieces, the 1993 edition includes four entirely new stories ("The Island," "Resurrection," "The Tomahawk Factory" and "Lyman's Luck") and an additional section to "The Beads." Erdrich has said that some of the smaller revisions were made for the express purpose of clarifying facts that readers had gotten wrong. For example, she told interviewers that Nector Kashpaw does not rape Marie Lazarre in "Wild Geese," as many reviewers assumed, and she changed the story to reveal that their initial encounter does not include sex.⁴⁰ Other revisions offer larger, more in-depth characterizations of those who had secondary roles in the original text. Lyman

⁴⁰ Chavkin and Chavkin, 234

Lamartine, to whom two of the four new text-pieces are dedicated, is an example of this. The revised text also highlights several political positions which are not present in the 1984 version. These include the importance of maintaining one's Native American culture, an effort to discredit existing stereotypes of Native Americans, a desire to highlight the role of women in the society, particularly the community's mothers, and a wish to leave the reader with a more hopeful view of the Native Americans' situation.⁴¹ The inclusion of words from the characters' Native American language indicates that preservation of the culture had become increasingly important to Erdrich. Whereas Hemingway used foreign languages to indicate a lack of communication between characters, here non-English words are native and therefore more authentic than English ones. They are portrayed as a source of comfort to characters like the older Marie, who as a girl had rejected her ancestry and wished to assimilate into the white world. When we first meet Marie she is running from her heritage, hoping that life at the convent will prove more fulfilling. By the last text-piece, she has become an Indian activist, fighting to preserve what is left of her people's history, language and customs. Kingston's narrator also turns to Chinese words as a means by which to get closer to her mother, and she struggle to understand and interpret the language of her ancestors.

Like *The Woman Warrior*, *Love Medicine* is an autobiography of sorts, though here an entire community struggles to define itself in the face of cultural confusion. Several characters, like Albertine and June, leave the reservation only to discover that where they really belong is back home. Others, like Lyman and Lipsha, discover the truth about their parentage during the course of the text. These acts of self-discovery

⁴¹ Chavkin, 94

occur as the stories which make up the text build upon one another; no one story reveals everything about any character. We must read the text-pieces all together to get the full picture. Of course, with the addition of the related texts written later, the story becomes enlarged. Like many story cycles, *Love Medicine* is brought together by its setting, its themes and its characters, particularly June Kashpaw, who dies in the text's opening sequence. Each of the stories to follow examines the lives of those she left behind—her family, her ex-husband, her lovers, her children. These characters are brought together by her loss and their struggle to deal with their grief.

“The World's Greatest Fishermen,” which opens the text, begins with June's efforts to return home. It is the morning before Easter, certainly a date with significance, and while “killing time” before her bus, she is beckoned into a bar by a man's gesture. Because she has lost her connection to her home and family, she joins him in his truck since, after all, “they weren't expecting her up home on the reservation” and “The bus ticket would stay good, maybe forever” (3). But June realizes that this estrangement will soon destroy her, “And then she knew that if she lay there any longer she would crack wide open, not in one place but in many pieces that he would crush by moving in his sleep” (6). She escapes into the night and suddenly decides to walk home. Her Native American upbringing allows her to understand the wind and maintain her sense of direction, even after the snow begins. June continues to walk despite the blizzard because she has finally understood that getting home is the only thing that can save her, even if she must die on the way. Her niece, Albertine Johnson, narrates the rest of the story and tells of her own experience coming home. Through her we meet many of the principle characters of the text, her mother Zelda, her aunt Aurelia, June's son King and

his wife Lynette, her great-uncle Eli and the others whose lives were and continue to be inextricably entwined with that of June Kashpaw.

As in Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*, Erdrich plays with chronology and the second text-piece, "Saint Marie," moves back in time from 1981 to 1934, when a teen-aged Marie Lazarre first approaches the convent she hopes will save her from her impoverished existence on the reservation. Her wish to be a saint is fulfilled after Sister Leopolda drives a fork through her palm and then tells the awe-struck nuns that Marie has been marked with the stigmata. The scars on Marie's hands will be mentioned throughout the text as a reminder of her strength of spirit and of this early life-changing encounter. There is no direct link to June here at first, though the connection will be made soon enough. As we continue to read we witness several formative moments in Marie's life and we come to understand how this young girl becomes the woman we meet in text-pieces like "Resurrection" and "The Good Tears." The events described later are illuminated by the knowledge of what has come before. Told by Nector Kashpaw, "Wild Geese" is set immediately after Marie's escape from the convent and, as we discover, the relationship between these two will become one of the major connecting threads in the larger text. The importance of the love triangle between Nector, Marie and Lulu Nanapush is made clear right from the start, as Nector is on his way to see Lulu when Marie barrels into him. The strength Marie shows here, both physical and emotional, will be reiterated again and again throughout the text, as will Nector's weakness. His indecision causes much grief for both Marie and Lulu and it is exemplified here in the story's final words, "Her hand grows thick and fevered, heavy in my own, and I don't want her, but I want her, and I cannot let go" (67). Again, June Kashpaw is not

mentioned here but we will later learn that Marie takes the abandoned girl in and raises her as her own. We also find out that Gordie Kashpaw, Nector and Marie's eldest son, will first marry June and then be destroyed by her loss.

One of the four text-pieces new to the 1993 edition, "The Island" is told by Lulu and offers a way of understanding her motivations. With nine children fathered by different, often married, men, Lulu is easy to dislike in the original *Love Medicine*. Erdrich had corrected this problem somewhat by highlighting Lulu's more admirable qualities in subsequent texts, but she takes the trouble to repair her reputation in this text as well. Lulu tells us that she "never grew from the curve of my mother's arms. I still wanted to anchor myself against her. But she had tore herself away from the run of my life like a riverbank. She had vanished, a great surrounding shore, leaving me to spill out alone" (68). That the loss of her mother emerges as the defining factor in her life serves several purposes in the text, explaining Lulu's compulsive need for physical closeness to others and her effort to regain through sex the comfort her mother denied her as a child, as it highlights the importance of motherhood, of having an established history which you can then pass on to your children. Neither Marie nor Lulu were given this history as girls and each handles this loss differently (Marie takes in unwanted children). Both learn to appreciate its importance by the end of the text. In addition, the story's placement between "Wild Geese," narrated by Nector, and "The Beads," narrated by Marie, calls attention to Lulu's lifelong position between the married couple. Through its description of the mystical Moses Pillager, it also introduces to the cycle an element of the Native American otherworldliness which will be elaborated on as the text progresses.

Marie's story is picked up in "The Beads" and we learn about her by learning about how June came to live with the Kashpaws. We are told right off the secret of Lipsha's birth (that he is June's son) a fact that everyone on the reservation, save Lipsha himself, seems to know. June's connection to the land is given context here, as we discover that she survived alone in the woods as a girl when her mother died. We also learn of Marie's estrangement from her own mother (whom she refers to as "the old drunk woman") and begin to understand how she compensates for that loss by mothering so many others. In the second section—new to the 1993 edition—we see how Nector's mother, Rushes Bear, fulfills the maternal role for Marie. The special bond she forms with her "old-time traditional"⁴² mother-in-law helps explain why the girl who once wanted to become a nun is now ready to accept her heritage, a transformation that is not adequately explained in the original version of the text. The act of childbirth brings the two women together and Marie's response to her native language is in part responsible for getting her through the pregnancy safely. Like the larger text to which it belongs, this text-piece tells of mothers and children, of family connections and fractures, and of the ties that bind one generation to the next.

In "Lulu's Boys," Lulu elaborates on her position between Marie and Nector and shares more details of her complicated love life. Though it is described here as an accident, we know that Henry Senior has committed suicide, an act which is replicated by the drowning of his namesake (but not his son) Henry Junior in "The Red Convertible" and alluded to in Nector's posing for the painting entitled "The Plunge of the Brave" in the story by the same name. We will later learn that Beverly's marriage to Lulu

⁴² Ibid, 101

precipitates the fire that destroys her home and becomes a crucial turning point in the relationship between Marie and Nector. Through Beverly we also learn about life off the reservation, and while he seems to have accomplished a great deal, he comes home because he is missing something, in this case, his son. We are told that “In the Twin Cities there were great relocation opportunities for Indians with a certain amount of natural stick-to-it-iveness and pride. That’s how Beverly saw it. He was darker than most, but his parents had always called themselves French or Black Irish and considered those who thought themselves as Indians quite backward” (109). This racial self-hatred explains Beverly’s reluctance to return to the reservation, but Lulu captivates him and he is lured into her web. We learn something about Lulu’s attractiveness to men here, her cat-like appeal which makes her irresistible.

This appeal is elaborated on in “The Plunge of the Brave,” narrated by Beverly’s rival for Lulu’s affections, Nector Kashpaw. Like Lyman Lamartine, Nector is one of the rare Indians who “got everything handed to me on a plate. It came from being a Kashpaw, I used to think. Our family was respected as the last hereditary leaders of this tribe. But Kashpaws died out around here, people forgot, and I still kept getting offers” (122). Nector's attribution of his success to ancestry is supported by his son Lyman’s natural gift for making money, an indication that these traits are indeed inherited. The text-piece is named after the painting for which he poses, a metaphor for white society’s opinion of Native Americans. In addition to jobs, Nector is offered “candy, sweet candy between the bedcovers” (125) and it this weakness for sweets which will haunt him for the rest of his life. He marries Marie after their encounter on convent hill but he continues to desire Lulu and their five-year affair produces Lyman whose fate is one of

the focal points of the text. The boy's vague understanding of his parentage and ultimate desire to learn the truth about his father reflects the search undertaken by all the members of his tribe.

"Flesh and Blood" returns Marie to the scene of her childhood escape, the convent and the aged nun who tortured her as a girl. After defeating her nemesis from the past (the old woman attacks her with an iron spoon) Marie returns home to battle her husband, who has left her, for her future. While she can relate to Henry Lamartine's decision to kill himself over Lulu, she decides that she will be stronger than he was: "I wouldn't park myself on the tracks for Nector" (162), she thinks, before deciding to peel potatoes. This most domestic task, symbolic of both physical nourishment and financial gain, calms her. She immerses herself in household tasks like putting the children to sleep and washing and waxing the floor because this helps her to re-connect with who she is, a mother, a helper, a provider: "I felt better as I recognized myself in the woman who kept her floor clean even when left by her husband" (164). When Marie accepts Nector's sheepish return she has symbolically saved him from the raging river he plunges into in the painting. Though her love has once again overcome his fear, they will both be tested again soon.

"A Bridge" follows Albertine Johnson as she makes her first attempt to escape the reservation. She is terrified by the bright lights of Fargo and cowers at the bus station with no sense of what to do. She is drawn to a man whose features seem familiar, "the blunt chin, big nose, harsh brow. He...could have been an Indian. He even could have been a Chippewa...partly because he could have been an Indian, she followed. It seemed to her that he had cleared a path of safety through the door into the street" (169). His

familiarity as both a soldier (like the father who abandoned her) and a possible Indian allows her to trust him and she soon discovers that he is Henry Lamartine Junior just back from Vietnam. Though they might not realize it, their families are inextricably linked; Lulu is his mother and Marie is her grandmother. They do know that in the other each is able to glimpse a bit of home, a comforting familiarity in this large, frightening city. The encounter is reminiscent of that between June and the oilman in the first text-piece; the two visit several bars on a dingy city street and their attempt at intimacy fails miserably. But Henry's desperate sense of loss and uncontrollable fear are apparent here, making Lyman's story of the good times the brother shared in the text-piece to follow that much more surprising. Henry's behavior here helps explain his behavior in "The Red Convertible," and the stories work together to make sense of Henry's life and tragic death. In bed with Albertine "he thought of diving off a riverbank, a bridge" (179) which is, of course, what he later does. It is not love that drives him to suicide, as was the case for Henry Senior, but the trauma he experienced in war. We watch as he tries to lose himself in drink, as so many other Native Americans on the reservation do, but no amount of liquor can rid him of the fear Albertine smells on him.

Henry Junior is left weeping at the end of this text-piece but his story is soon continued by his brother Lyman in "The Red Convertible." He finally returns home to the reservation but his stay there is not a happy one. Permanently damaged by his experience fighting the white man's war, Lyman tells us that "When he came home...Henry was very different, and I'll say this: the change was no good...he was quiet, so quiet, and never comfortable sitting still anywhere but always up and moving around...Henry was jumpy and mean" (186). The family knows that Henry needs help

but their mistrust of government institutions, like hospitals, becomes clear when Lulu refuses to take her son to the white doctor because she is afraid “they would keep him” (187). She cannot take him to see Moses Pillager either, because, as we learned in “The Island,” the two had once been lovers and he might take revenge on her through her son. Desperate for a way to bring his brother back to him, Lyman wrecks the car the two of them loved. Though the plan works for a time in the end Henry cannot be saved. Because we know some of his thoughts from “A Bridge,” it is perhaps less of a surprise to us when Henry suddenly runs to the river and leaps in. Devastated by his brother's loss, Lyman sends the car they shared into the river after him. Just as King's car represents June in “The World’s Greatest Fishermen” and “Crossing the Water,” this car represents Henry and Lyman is correct to return it to its rightful owner.

First published in *North American Review* in 1982, “Scales” introduces the legendary Gerry Nanapush, the Chippewa tribe’s local hero and trickster escape artist. First imprisoned for fighting a white cowboy, his story is one of captures and escapes: “He boasted that no steel or concrete shitbarn could hold a Chippewa, and he had eellike properties in spite of his enormous size” (199-200). He is the eldest son of Lulu Lamartine and, as we are to discover, he is Lipsha’s father. His many encounters with and escapes from the law exemplify the Native American who is still being hunted by white society. As Albertine notes, “it was difficult for Gerry, as an Indian, to retain the natural good humor of his ancestors in these modern circumstances” (202). We witness Gerry’s ability to wriggle into and out of small, tight spaces again in “Crossing the Water” when he confronts June’s sons; King, her legal heir, and the illegitimate Lipsha.

King’s spiral into alcoholism over his mother’s death is mirrored in Gordie’s

similar disintegration into grief in "Crown of Thorns." Despite the efforts of family members, like his mother Marie and his uncle Eli, Gordie is completely lost. Native American superstition becomes important when, in a drunken state, he shouts June's name and immediately regrets it. "He wanted to take it back as soon as he said it. Never, never, ever call the dead by their names, Grandma said. They might answer. Gordie knew this. Now he felt very uneasy" (217). Convinced that her ghost is coming after him, he lurches out into the night to escape her and, driving drunk, hits a deer he believes is June. When he bashes the doe between the eyes he becomes convinced that he has also killed his ex-wife. Like Gerry Nanapush, he is hunted by tribal police and orderlies who hear "him crying like a drowned person, howling in the open fields" (229). The water imagery that is so prevalent throughout the text is repeated here, connecting Gordie to the other characters making up the collective protagonist. June herself is drowned in a way, buried in snow; Nector is symbolically drowned in "The Plunge of the Brave;" and Henry Junior is literally drowned when he jumps into the raging river.

"Love Medicine" focuses the attention back to Lipsha Morrissey, June's unacknowledged son, and Marie and Nector, the couple whose love manages to survive despite so many obstacles. Marie has raised Lipsha just as she has raised June, and the boy's effort to take care of his grandparents shows his respect for both his personal and his tribal history. The question of his birth is raised throughout the text and it is only in the final text-piece, "Crossing the Water," that he learns the truth. In an effort to locate the special powers he feels he has inherited, he succeeds instead in killing Nector with the love medicine he makes. Though tragic, the death allows for the reconciliation between Marie and Lulu which occurs in "The Good Tears." Like Gordie in the preceding story,

Marie believes that a ghost visits her, but here the vision serves to calm her anxiety not add to her distress. She places her precious beads in Lipsha's hands, the beads which had been June's as a girl. He "almost cried when she did this. I don't really know why...except her hand was so strong, squeezing mine" (257). We see here that Lipsha is almost ready to accept the truth about his heritage, and as the text moves forward to its approaching end, he will discover the source of his many gifts.

"Resurrection" teaches the reader a great deal about the relationship between June and Gordie and provides the back-story for what is described earlier in "Crown of Thorns." We also learn of Marie's strength of character in dealing with her son's alcoholism. This new story, added for the 1993 edition, is placed following "Love Medicine" and "the juxtaposition of these two stories implicitly contrasts Gordie and Lipsha, both of whom have suffered because of June's neglect of them" (Chavkin, 104). It also contrasts Marie's sorrow over the loss of her beloved Nector with Gordie's response to June's death. These events give perspective to Lipsha's story, since he and Lyman, who is also given more space in the revised *Love Medicine*, represent the future of the tribe. For Lipsha, his ancestry is what saves him, both literally (the heart defect which will keep him out of the army) and metaphorically (since by learning who his parents are he discovers himself). Lyman on the other hand seems to reject his ancestry; as he tells us, his money-making skills are very un-Indian and his effort to exploit his heritage with the Tomahawk factory makes the tribe's activists call his loyalty into question. Gordie's fate represents yet another possible future for Native American men, as it "powerfully conveys the horrors of substance abuse on the reservation" (Ibid, 103) a

theme that was introduced through King in “The World’s Greatest Fishermen” and again through Henry Junior in “A Bridge.”

In narrating “The Good Tears” Lulu Lamartine confirms and elaborates on many of the stories we have already heard, including her union with Moses Pillager, her marriage to Henry Lamartine, and her ongoing desire for Nector Kashpaw. She describes Marie’s willingness to treat her rival in her old age, becoming a mother to yet another lost child. This sacrifice represents the tribe’s hope for the future, since only a sense of responsibility towards one another will allow them to survive. By tracing the story of the two women this far, Erdrich presents a full picture of this pivotal generation whose actions will help define the community’s future. Of course, the community’s future is just as firmly in the hands of the younger generation, and the activities of Lyman and Lipsha are as important as those of Marie and Lulu. Like his father, work and money come easily to Lyman, so it is fitting that he resurrects Nector’s ill-fated idea in “The Tomahawk Factory.” Along with “Lyman’s Luck,” this text-piece expands our knowledge of this character who, in the 1984 edition of the text, served merely as the teller of his brother’s story in “The Red Convertible.”

We have also moved away from stories of love and infidelity and are beginning to explore reservation politics, an element of the text that Erdrich highlighted in her revisions for the 1993 edition. This attention to the political is combined with the personal as the precarious truce formed between Marie and Lulu begins to disintegrate. Despite their bonding in “The Good Tears,” the old and painful wounds have clearly not been forgotten. Erdrich has said that the riot scene in this text-piece was culled from an early manuscript called “Tracks” (not the book eventually published under that name)

that she admits has been a source for much of her later work. In an interview she called it her “old junked car in the front yard, continually raided for parts” (Chavkin & Chavkin, 238), an allusion to the red convertible in the text-piece of that name and to the universally recognized signification of the junked car in poor, rural America. This acknowledgment of a common source also indicates the larger connection shared by these stories. “Lyman’s Luck” continues the story begun in “The Tomahawk Factory” and shows that in the aftermath of the disaster, Lyman has finally decided to use his money-making gift to benefit those on the reservation rather than to exploit them.

Dated 1984, “Crossing the Water” is both the last text-piece of the cycle and chronologically the latest story we are told. The first section, narrated by King’s young son, makes little sense at first. Having been removed from the reservation, his willful rejection of his first name (also King) in favor of his middle name (Howard) is indicative of his lack of connection to his history. In contrast, Lipsha is finally ready to locate his history. Confused at first by Lulu’s revelation about Gerry Nanapush, Lipsha soon realizes that he has known his father his whole life through the stories he has heard from members of the tribe. Just as the text-pieces that make up this book come together to form a grand picture of the community, the stories the community has shared have come together to form an image of the man who gave Lipsha life. He encounters his father face to face and is able to come to terms with his history by first winning the car bought with his mother’s insurance money and then using it to save Gerry from the police. Armed with his new knowledge about his past, he is able to complete what was meant to be the text’s first act, June’s homecoming. As the red convertible belongs to Henry Junior, the car bought with June’s insurance money is so closely associated with her that by driving

it back to the reservation Lipsha not only brings himself home, but he brings his mother home as well.

As is the case for Kingston, Erdrich's position as an ethnic writer makes the story cycle a particularly useful form for her. Lipsha's acceptance of his true self reflects the new understanding *The Woman Warrior's* narrator comes to at the end of that text. Both Kingston and Erdrich use the story cycle to trace the search for identity of both individual characters and the larger communities to which they belong. As Davis writes, the story cycle

is a hybrid, occupying an odd, indeterminate place within the field of narrative, resembling the novel in its totality, yet composed of distinct stories evoking different characters and problems. On the one hand, there is the patterned closure of the individual stories that enact personal dramas of identity and, on the other, the discovery of larger unifying strategies that bridge the gaps between the stories and construct a larger sphere of action through the creation of communities.

“Identity in Community,” 158

This placement between genres replicates the ethnic writer's placement between cultures and therefore proves helpful in the writer's effort to determine his/her place within the community/ies in which he/she lives. This redefinition of the character's self through the story cycle, a genre outside of the mainstream, can therefore act as a re-definition of the writer's self as well. Like Kingston, Erdrich blends two traditions in her text, the Native American oral tradition and the European-American literary one. Despite direct allusions to the trickster Nanabozho (through the character of Gerry Nanapush) and other supernatural Native American beliefs, Erdrich also relies on Christian myths as exemplified by June's death on Easter Sunday and the overt biblical allusions in many of the chapter titles (like “Saint Marie,” “Flesh and Blood,” “Crown of Thorns,” and “Resurrection”) and throughout the text itself.

Though *Love Medicine* has been compared to *Go Down, Moses* and *As I Lay Dying*, Erdrich's task here is different. Unlike its pre-modern American antecedents, a disjointed text is necessary for writers like Kingston and Erdrich whose native cultural traditions favor fragmentation over unity, community over the individual self. So while the episodic nature of the story cycle might seem confusing to readers expecting a novel, the form is well-suited to describing the communities of which Kingston and Erdrich write. In Erdrich's case, her "use of discontinuous and multiple narrative underscores, formally, the displacement and deracination that dominate her narrators' tales while at the same time forcing upon the reader his or her own sense of radical displacement and marginality" (Owens, 55). Because of this, it makes sense for these authors to have chosen the short story cycle, even if they do not fully accept the generic label. As King-Kok Cheung writes about Kingston, "minority writers must...choose to write either in the 'dominant' mode or in a mode that reflects their own multicultural legacies...Their common quest therefore is to seek ways to transplant their native dialects to their texts" (164). The novel represents the dominant mode and neither Kingston nor Erdrich seem to be fully committed to the sort of integration that the genre would require of them. Instead, they adapt certain characteristics of the novel into a form that makes more sense for them. The power of language and the importance of storytelling are key to both texts, which makes sense given the fact that the storytelling tradition is such a prominent feature of both the Chinese and Native American cultures. Neither autobiography (as applied to Kingston's work) nor novel (which is what Erdrich calls her text) fully describes the episodic, cyclical, incomplete narratives they have created. Only the short story cycle, whose "characteristic form is metaphoric, associative, non-linear, leaving all

the connections inexplicit or at most implicit” (Gurr quoted in Davis, 14), fully describes the end results here. For Kingston the composite nature of the cycle allows her to sidestep the expectations of a traditional autobiography, a form which demands a linear, chronological appraisal of one’s life. A novel, even a postmodern one, would put demands on Erdrich to depict a coherent, established community when the community she describes here is neither coherent nor established in any traditional way.

Though *The Woman Warrior* is told from the point of view of a primary narrator, the story cycle provides a picture of the larger community from which the narrator springs by illuminating facts about the lives of her mother, aunts and siblings. With its thirteen featured voices (plus an omniscient third-person narrator) *Love Medicine* also depicts a community through the interactions of key characters. These interactions force the reader to constantly re-evaluate what he/she has learned as new, sometimes false, information emerges. This process is likened to community gossip in Erdrich’s text and reinforces “the general process of multiethnic literature toward plurality, multiplicity, polyphony, and fragmentation as it tends to favor the multi-voiced text” (Davis, 17). These also elements help define postmodern texts and these cycles therefore succeed in expressing contemporary literary modes as well as ancient traditions. In their effort to re-create their multicultural legacies, it is especially appropriate for both Kingston and Erdrich to have adapted their oral tales into written form through the non-dominant form of the short story cycle.

Conclusion

In examining the twelve texts highlighted here, several patterns can be detected in the way American writers used the short story cycle to fit their specific needs. Those who wrote the earliest pre-cursors of the genre use narrative frames, repeated characters and single locations to look at both the particular and the general in their examinations of the historical, political and cultural perspectives which defined the times in which they lived. Authors of later examples cited here use repeated metaphors, collective protagonists and varied settings as a way of opening the scope of the genre beyond just one person in one location, indicating a sense of loss and hopelessness that helps define modernism. In the most recent story cycles, an individual's or community's search for self takes center stage once again as authors combine ancient oral traditions with nineteenth- and twentieth-century techniques. These texts all indicate a struggle to define and understand the always-changing world in which their characters live.

The story cycle is uniquely qualified to express this struggle; it can exploit the short story's attention to an individual character and combine it with the novel's more expansive look at society as a whole. These texts can therefore highlight isolated events and the collective ramifications of those events at the same time. Because meaning exists in the spaces between the text-pieces—those invisible threads which link them to one another—the cycle's structure demands that much of the interpretive work be done by the reader. Whether the frame is explicit or implied, there are gaps which must be filled in in order for the larger text's meaning to become clear. For writers whose goals were controversial, as was the case with Chesnut, meaning could be purposefully veiled so that only those who were sympathetic to his/her cause were likely to recognize them.

Others could read *The Conjure Woman* without recognizing Uncle Julius as anything more than an entertaining former slave who likes to tell stories. This required work supports the use of the word cycle in the genre's appellation (over, say, sequence), since the reader must first complete the text and then circle back to the beginning and read it again in order to fully understand its purpose.

Because of the short story's rich history in America, the story cycle has also provided these authors with a means by which to survive within the literary marketplace. The livelihood of many writers depended on sales of short stories to contemporary magazines, and the cycle allowed them to expand on their existing work in order to more fully express their vision. While some longed to be novelists, the cycle also provided a compromise of sorts; they could publish longer texts while still earning a living by writing the shorter works that were in demand. The increasingly commodified nature of literature in this country tipped publishing power away from the creators of texts, and this genre offered writers a unique opportunity to appeal to two distinct types of readers; those who read short stories in periodicals and those who were drawn to the seemingly more established realm of bound texts. Each of the authors discussed here was influenced by his/her desire to succeed and all were able to negotiate these demands in part through their use of the short story cycle.

For those authors writing in the nineteenth century, the preponderance of literary magazines and the constant demand for short pieces with which to fill them made the story a viable genre with which to launch a career. For Irving and Hawthorne this demand limited their ability to publish their works in the way they wanted them to be published. Financial constraints forced Irving to release the elements of his *Sketch Book*

piecemeal rather than as a coherent text as was his intention. Hawthorne, too, had to give up the planned composition of his *Legends of the Province-House* in deference to his editors' belief that what he wanted to publish would not sell. But the story cycle allowed them to at least approximate their original goals with these texts. The works of Jewett and Chesnutt were also affected by the literary marketplace. Jewett's sketches were unsuited for a longer, sustained work until her editor helped her frame them around the charming Maine village that gave *Deephaven* its title. Chesnutt's longed-for novel, when it was finally published, was not particularly successful, perhaps because readers at the time were not prepared for a full-length polemic against slavery. The more subtle lessons inserted into the interactions between the stories of *The Conjure Woman* were far more palatable.

This pattern continues to be apparent in the early twentieth century though Cather and James enjoyed greater freedom in the presentation of their texts. Though she began as a short story writer, Cather produced primarily novels during the course of her career. It was the success of her early Nebraska stories in *The Troll Garden*, however, which allowed her make the transition from cultural critic to local-colorist. James's readers also knew him best as a novelist, but he would continue to write and collect short stories throughout his long career. For him, the story cycle provided a vehicle through which to expose the strained social connections, loss of common values and vulgar focus on money matters he encountered when he visited New York after his long sojourn in Europe. While he wrote about these issues in other forms as well, only in *The Finer Grain* could he re-create these problems through the text's very form.

The disjointedness James alludes to is even more pronounced in the worlds described by Hemingway and Faulkner, authors who stretched the genre to express the devastation of war. In tracing a boy's maturation into manhood in the stories and then injecting the horrors of World War I through the vignettes, Hemingway effectively shatters the world of his collective protagonist in *In Our Time*. Faulkner follows a family through generations of racism, slavery and betrayal to create a picture of the South both before and after the Civil War. The frayed family tree he creates in *Go Down, Moses* is replicated in the McCaslin family ledgers, an image which he re-creates yet again in the scattered branches of the text itself.

For O'Connor and Carver, the story cycle's structure demonstrates as it describes the fractured worlds within which their characters live. The slow movement towards grace in *Everything That Rises Must Converge* is created by O'Connor's use of stories as building blocks, allowing the reader to ascend higher and higher towards salvation. Carver's indictment of society's rootlessness in *Cathedral* is reflected in the story cycle's construction, and his depiction of strangers who will never meet or interact is imperative to his goals here. Though these stories might seem to repeat rather than progress, the title story—which occupies the crucial final slot in the text—represents a significant shift away from the cynicism of the opening text-piece. The fact that these characters each operate in their own isolated universe is lamented in the effort to connect them that is achieved by the shape of the cycle itself.

The works of Kingston and Erdrich represent a different phase in the story cycle's development, a movement back to the oral tradition from which the genre emerged. For them, the loose connections (with their implied fragmentations) are a natural way in

which to view the world, and though these authors often describe injustice, prejudice and fear, their characters are ultimately successful in their efforts to integrate the various threads of narrative to create a stable whole. Both *The Woman Warrior* and *Love Medicine* use the genre to represent the establishment of an identity, recognizing that identity is made up of unruly pieces of one's past, present and future. Both texts embrace rather than lament the inherent disjointedness implied by the story cycle.

The earliest texts explored here convey optimism about the world and humanity's place within that world, an optimism that is soon overwhelmed by confusion and loss in an increasingly fractured twentieth-century society. While the texts of Irving, Hawthorne, Jewett and Chesnut use the short story cycle as a step towards cohesion, the works of Cather and James, Hemingway and Faulkner, and O'Connor and Carver seem to recognize the inherently isolated nature of the individual in the modern world. These authors' attachment to the genre seems to recognize its ability to integrate disparate pieces into a unified whole while still highlighting the discontinuity between the elements of the text. The works of Kingston and Erdrich, by re-introducing literary traditions of the past, help recapture some of the optimism displayed by the earliest American writers. For them, the story cycle offers an opportunity to gather and unify more than just stories. Indeed, their texts demonstrate how genre can help gather and unify cultures as well.

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