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The Confederate Stories of America: The Short-Story Cycle and the Representation of the American South

Ikuko Takeda

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THE CONFEDERATE STORIES OF AMERICA:
THE SHORT-STORY CYCLE AND THE REPRESENTATION OF
THE AMERICAN SOUTH

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation examines the ways in which the short-story cycle has provided a unique generic framework for representing and investigating the complex interplay of contending forces that constitute what we think of as the American South. Often confused with a collection of disparate short stories or a novel, the short-story cycle is a collection of short stories in which each story is independent, but simultaneously interrelated to one another. Although the South has produced a number of short-story cycles or linked story collections, scholars have not paid much attention to the connection between the genre/form and the region. I consider, however, the genre/form has been an apt medium for writers to represent Southern society, which is a mosaic of diverse races and values, but certain actors and groups within it have attempted to imagine it and present it as having some sort of fundamental unity.

The most substantial scholarship on the genre agrees that some of the precursors of the American short-story cycle are a collection of regional sketches written in the nineteenth century. In order to clarify the important role that the short-story cycle has played in the history of the South and its literary history, I examine not only a short-story cycle proper such as William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* (1942) and Eudora Welty's *The Golden Apples* (1949), but also the works that can be regarded as pioneers of the southern short-story cycle, such as George Washington Cable's *The Grandissimes* (1880) and Charles Chesnutt's *The Conjure Woman* (1899). I also analyze Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923) and Julia Peterkin's *Green Thursday* (1924) not as a representative of literary modernism, for which scholars have considered the genre has a strong affinity, as an intersection of precursors of the cycle written in the nineteenth-century South and that written in the twentieth-century South. My dissertation explores how southern writers have been shaping the genre, adapting it to their own use, and redefining its limits so as to go beyond the idea and representation of "the South."

INTRODUCTION

The American South has produced a number of short-story cycles. This term refers to the form of a series of short stories, which is neither a collection of disparate short stories nor a long novel with a strong sense of unity. Augustus Baldwin Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes* (1835) is one of the first linked story collections in the U.S. After the Civil War, linked story collections such as George Washington Harris's *Sut Lovingood: Yarns Spun By a Nat'ral Born Durn'd Fool* (1867) and Frances E.W. Harper's *Sketches of Southern Life* (1872) became increasingly popular. Many of the southern local colorists such as Constance Fenimore Woolson, Grace King, Kate Chopin, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, and Charles Chesnutt used the form to describe the "exotic" South. Some of the most important works of this genre—such as Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1929), William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* (1942), and Eudora Welty's *The Golden Apples* (1949)—were written in the twentieth-century South. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, there has been a number of well-received southern short-story cycles such as Lewis Nordan's *Music of the Swamp* (1992), Randall Kenan's *Let the Dead Bury Their Dead* (1992) and *If I Had Two Wings: Stories* (2021), and (arguably) Cynthia Shearer's *The Celestial Jukebox* (2004). In each text the short-story cycle form functions differently, yet we might say the form has been an apt medium to represent Southern society, which is a mosaic of diverse races and values, but certain actors and groups within it have attempted to imagine it and present it as having some sort of fundamental unity. My project is to examine the ways in which the short-story cycle has provided a unique generic framework for representing and investigating the complex interplay of contending forces that constitute what we think of as "the South."

The short-story cycle, sometimes referred to as linked short stories, a story sequence, or a composite novel, is a collection of short stories in which each story is independent, but simultaneously interrelated to one another. Although there are many terms corresponding to the

short-story cycle, I would like to use the word “the short-story cycle” because the term has been used most frequently, and I find the notion of wholeness and enclosure that the word “cycle” implies significant in order to understand the development of the short-story cycle in the South. The short-story cycle, like the epic form, novel form, or lyrical form, is a form of narrative that a writer adopts. At the same time, however, I consider the short-story cycle not only as a literary form but also as a literary genre like the epic, the novel, or poetry. According to *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, “literary genre” is “a recognizable and established category of written work employing such common conventions as will prevent readers or audiences from mistaking it for another kind,” and although the term “form” “can refer to a genre,” “[when] speaking of a work’s formal properties, critics usually refer to its structural design and patterning, or sometimes to its style and manner in a wider sense, as distinct from its content” (Baldick). Following these definitions, I will use the term “the short-story cycle form,” when I analyze a literary work’s structural design and patterning; on the other hand, I will use the term “the short-story cycle” to describe a literary genre when I explore the key to understanding literary works employing common conventions.

The distinction between the short-story cycle and the collected short stories, or the short-story cycle and the novel, is both ambiguous and controversial, but I would like to follow Susan Garland Mann’s definition: in the short-story cycle,

the stories are both self-sufficient and interrelated. On the one hand, the stories work independently of one another: the reader is capable of understanding each of them without going beyond the limits of the individual story. On the other hand, however, the stories work together, creating something that could not be achieved in a single story. (15)

Whereas Mann’s definition seems not to attach importance to authorial intent to link stories, Forrest L. Ingram, who is a pioneer in the study of this genre, privileges authorial intent in the short-story cycle. He defines a short-story cycle as 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, emphasis in original). If we follow his definition, for example, we should not classify George Washington Cable's *Old Creole Days* (1879), which consists of eight short stories that were originally published in Scribner's Monthly from 1873 through 1876, as a short-story cycle; the author was "not sanguine about the book" and "made only the barest revisions" in the original stories (Turner 84). Moreover, the publisher declined Cable's suggestions about the order of stories, heading of each story, and the title of the book (Turner 84-85).

On the other hand, in *Race and Culture in New Orleans Story* (2014), which analyzes short-story cycles set in New Orleans, James Nagel regards *Old Creole Days* as a cycle. Nagel thinks the volume fits in his definition of the short-story cycle, that is, it has "definable elements of coherence in setting and character, and most of them gain further depth through thematic congruence, the progressive enhancement of central ideas as each subsequent story enriches the basic conflicts" (56). His definition is similar to Mann's in that both seem to leave room for the short-story cycle to come together even if not planned by the author. The difference between Ingram's conception of the short-story cycle—the idea that the author is the one doing the linking—and Mann's/Nagel's one seems to come from the difference between traditional genre analysis and contemporary analysis. While traditional genre theorists assume that a work belongs to a particular genre, contemporary theorists have seen genres as cultural products. In *Genre and Television* (1992), for example, Jason Mittell argues that genres "exist only through the creation, circulation, and consumption of texts within cultural contexts" (11). If this is true, Nagel's reading *Old Creole Days* as a cycle seems to make sense; regardless of the author's intention, when reading the stories as a collective unit, the readers encounter a record of conflicts, changes, and historical events in New Orleans.

Following Mann's and Nagel's definitions of the short-story cycle, I would like to respect some conceptual flexibility to decide what is and what is not the short-story cycle. What is important for my project is not authorial intent, but a tension between the short-story cycle and the novel as well as the short story. As Rocio G. Davis notes, the short-story cycle, "which hovers between the novel and the short story, may be considered the perfect medium with which to enact the feeling that one falls 'between two stools'" ("Negotiating" 324). Considering the short-story cycle has reflected the South's position as what Tara McPherson calls "a region in flux, under constant negotiation, constructed and defined as much by its excessive performance as by its geographic borders" (31), I believe we should leave considerable latitude in determining the borderline between the short-story cycle and other literary genres.

Literary scholars often trace the origin of the short-story cycle back as far as the epic poems such as *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, or connected stories such as Boccaccio's *The Decameron* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. At the same time, however, "[f]rom the beginning of the professional study of American fiction, the role of the short-story cycle has been largely unrecognized in literary scholarship, overlooked and misunderstood despite its essential role in the development of the national literature" (1), as James Nagel laments in *The Contemporary American Short-Story Cycle*, which is one of the few book-length studies of the genre. The most substantial scholarship on the genre agrees that some of the precursors of the American short-story cycle are a collection of sketches such as Sarah Josepha Hale's *Sketches of American Character* (1829), Augustus Baldwin Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes* (1835), and Caroline Kirkland's *A New Home—Who'll Follow?* (1839). Naming these early sketches "the village sketch composite," Maggie Dunn and Ann Morris write, "in such works, one could capture a 'sense of place' in many minute particulars, including among these particulars an ethos of community that reflects a complex network of human lives" (23). Although Maggie and Morris

include later regional sketches such as Kate Chopin's *Bayou Folk* (1894) and Hamlin Garland's *Main-Travelled Roads* (1891) in the category of village sketch composites, I would like to use the term "village sketch composite" to refer only to the regional sketches written before the era of local color literary movement. Writers during the last three decades of the nineteenth century seem to adopt the sketch form with a certain set of concerns that were different from those of earlier writers.

During the period of the local color literary movement, many writers produced works that could be seen as precursors of the short-story cycle in order to represent the regions. These works often include a narrator who is visiting a strange place and observing the lives of other people: Frances E.W. Harper's *Sketches of Southern Life* (1872) is based on Harper's own travels in the South; and the narrator-traveler in Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896) describes her experience in a Maine seaport town. In this sense, early short-story cycles often have characteristics of travel narratives, which reflect the popularity of northern tourism at the time. Depicting the lives of other people in other places, the sketch form became a useful method for regional writers to satisfy their readers—northern white Americans who became more and more interested in their own country after the Civil War and sought "authenticity and rootedness" (Barrish 79) in the era of modernization. According to Amy Kaplan's *The Social Construction of American Realism* (1992), both writers and their readers in this period needed a medium that could embrace traditional social structures, but at the same time could help them to adapt to new circumstances.

Following Bill Hardwig's example in *Upon Provincialism: Southern literature and National Periodical Culture, 1879-1900* (2013), which is one of the most important studies for my project, I intend to use "local color" and "regional writing" interchangeably. Although some literary scholars have regarded "local color" as inferior to "regional writing," or judged one more

feminine/masculine than the other, I believe that there is no major distinction between “local color” and “regional writing.” For example, in *Writing Out of Place: Regionalism, Women, and American Literary Traditions* (2003), Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse intentionally use the term “regionalism” in order to distinguish “local color” writers “who accept the assumptions of the regionalizing premise” and “regionalist” (female) writers who resist those assumptions. I do not share the viewpoint that sees regionalist writing as more literary or inherently more powerful than local color writing.

Regional sketches became precursors of the short-story cycle for reasons not limited to their ability to depict multiple scenes in a strange place. The themes and preoccupations of local color fictions were well suited to the short-story cycle form. According to Fetterley and Pryse, in regional fictions, “identification with the other’s separateness does not preclude recognition of the other’s separateness, her or his ‘otherness’,” and thus, local color fictions emphasize “the modeling of mutual empathy” (356). The short-story cycle requires the readers not only to understand each story—to look at a sketch of regional life—but also to connect each story, its characters, and their lives. By making positive efforts to understand the book as a whole, the readers approach the entire picture of a place, and therefore, feel empathy with “others.” In a short-story cycle, “there is more room for subjective interpretation and active participation; the reader’s task thus becomes simultaneously more difficult and more rewarding” (“The Short Story Sequence” 158), as Robert M. Luscher writes. Because of this reason, perhaps regional writers found in the short-story cycle a method to urge the readers to understand the reality of other people in other places and empathize with them.

Moreover, the short-story cycle form helped regional writers to resist being incorporated into the mainstream. As Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse conclude in *Writing Out of Place*, the thematics of regional writings are “those of resistance”; local color writers subvert the

assumptions that “the dominant discourse considers unassailable” (167). In the late nineteenth century, most “high” realist writers adopted the novelistic form, which offered them “the opportunity to be considered a major author of fiction,” and their readers also “accorded considerable significance to plot, and the novel’s investment in plot provided one source of its prominence” (Fetterley and Pryse 170). On the other hand, early short-story cycles written by local color writers often do not have plots in the novelistic sense. As Gerald Lynch argues, whereas “the novel coheres most obviously in being a narrated plot extended over a comparatively lengthy period of time,” short stories “so often describe only climactic actions” (22). Even in a short-story cycle, Lynch continues, stories “always lack the traditional novel’s chief advantage as a unified action (whether external or internal), temporary continuous, and couched in a totalizing narrative form” (22). Lacking novelistic plot, which seems inseparable from the dominant totality, the short-story cycle form allowed regional writers to subvert a unified notion of nation as well as region.

This new literary form became a useful tool especially for southern local-color writers and their readers in the era of Reconstruction. In the 1870s, as magazines proliferated throughout the Northeast, Southern short fictions “promptly dominated the periodical market,” because they responded to the demands of the day, that is, redefining the nation’s “regional relationships and national identity” (Ewell and Menke xxxvii). As Nina Silber argues in *The Romance of Reunion*, in the period of reconstruction, the idea of reconciliation and reunion, which romanticized and feminized the South, blossomed and was pursued through novels, journals, tourism, and minstrel shows, by middle- and upper- class northerners. Under such circumstances, Barbara C. Ewell insists, “local color served to name and contain as ‘regional’ many of the disturbing differences that remained unresolved by the Civil War and its aftermath” (164). If this is so, it seems reasonable that the short-story cycle, which allowed the northern readers to see exotic and

nostalgic sketches of the Old South, as well as to feel empathy for romantic, feminine Southerners, became a popular literary form among southern local colorists.

While agreeing with Ewell's comment that local color fictions tried to resolve the "disturbing differences" after the Civil War, however, I maintain that short-story cycles written by southern writers, in fact, subverted the monolithic view of the South and of its relationship with the rest of the nation, rather than simply naming and containing the differences as "regional." Recent scholars have revealed regional writings' interest in both local and global matters. Tom Lutz in *Cosmopolitan Vistas* (2004) argues that the "hallmark of local color and later regionalist writing, then, is its attention to both local and more global concerns, most often achieved through a careful balancing of different groups' perspectives" (30). Likewise, Bill Hardwig's *Upon Provincialism* (2013) argues that, despite their image as "provincial," regional works in the era of local color literary movement "share many cross-gender, cross racial, cross ethnic impulses and interests" (13) and that "an investment in the local allows writers and readers to engage in national and global concerns" (7). Although neither Lutz nor Hardwig analyzes the unique generic framework of the short-story cycle, Hardwig regards "local color and travel sketches" (3), as the medium which reveal the national anxiety after the Civil War, rather than "the longer, denser novels that are often presented as more important and more illustrative of the era" (4).

Developing Hardwig's concern about the relationship between short fictions written in the late nineteenth century South and national as well as global imaginings, *The Confederate Stories of America* examines the ways in which short-story cycles written by southern writers have reflected, reshaped, and always gone beyond the idea of "the South." In *Race and Culture in New Orleans Story*, analyzing short-story cycles written by Cable, Grace King, Alice Dunbar Nelson, and Kate Chopin, James Nagel concludes, "their volumes fulfilled the highest demands of the

cycle tradition, the norms of Local Colorism, and the regional ethical explorations that had become standard in American Realism” (160). While I find Nagel’s argument about the relationship between the short-story cycle and historical as well as cultural complexity of New Orleans quite helpful for my project, I maintain that the short-story cycle does not only “fulfill” the demands of the genre and Local colorism, but also subverts the assumptions of local colorism, in continuously expanding the limits of the genre.

The short-story cycle provided a unique generic framework for southern writers. I would not say that the short-story cycle was a distinctive genre for the South. Instead, I would contend that southern writers have used and developed the form in unique ways to represent the complex society of the South and its relation to the rest of the nation. The first aim of *The Confederate Stories of America* is, therefore, to clarify the important role that the short-story cycle has played in the history of the South and its literary history. But more importantly, by examining the functions of the genre in the South, I would like to consider how southern writers have been shaping the genre, adapting it to their own use, and redefining its limits. Since the short-story cycle is the form that tries to resist the concept of dominant form itself, which embodies the unified notion of such as nation and region, I believe, southern writers have been redefining what “counts” as a short-story cycle, instead of making it a concrete form to represent their nation and region.

I would like to briefly explain the title of my dissertation, *The Confederate Stories of America*. This title is, of course, a play on the Confederate States of America. At the same time, however, the word “confederacy”— “a union by league or contract between persons, bodies of men, or states, for mutual support or joint action; a league, alliance, compact” (*OED*)—is an appropriate word to describe the southern short-story cycle. In southern short-story cycles, stories are not simply put together; rather, they unite “for mutual support” in order to resist what

is expected of, or constructed by, existing southern literature. In “Faulkner, Welty, and the Short Story Composite,” Sandra Lee Kleppe suggests “the Short Story Confederacy” as “a new genre,” noting that “what is most characteristic of the contemporary short story composite may have originated, in part at least, in the South”: “‘The Short Story Confederacy’ consists of stories connected by a pact against a formal foe, whether it be the unifying tyranny of the novel or the arbitrary anarchy of the loose collection” (178). While I agree with Kleppe that the short-story cycle “is certainly not limited to the South, but it is typical thereof” (178), I believe that the stories in the southern short-story cycles not only rebel against “a formal foe” but also unite against existing ways of representing the South.

In order to trace the evolution of how southern writers have shaped the short-story cycle, *The Confederate Stories of America* begins with examinations of the two regional fictions in the era of the local color movement, George Washington Cable’s *The Grandissimes* (1880) and Charles Chesnutt’s *The Conjure Woman* (1899). Although neither of these works is a short-story cycle proper that fits the definition of the short-story cycle as I mentioned earlier, they both display the elements that become the major characteristics of the short-story cycle in the South. The first chapter, “The Rise of the Southern Short-Story Cycle: George Washington Cable’s *The Grandissimes*,” investigates Cable’s *The Grandissimes*, which is usually categorized as a novel and Cable himself called a novel. Analyzing the book’s potential of being recognized as an early short-story cycle will reveal some important characteristics of the southern short-story cycle. In this story, protagonist Joseph Frownfeld, who is a Philadelphia native, introduces the complex, extended Creole family, “whose intertwined stories emphasize the needed reconstruction of all sections of the country toward compromise” (Kennedy-Nolle 178). Although the story traces the fortunes of protagonist Joseph Frownfeld, not all of the stories depict him; presenting a different member of the Grandissime family, each story offers numerous sub-plots. In addition, Cable

incorporated an independent short story he had written before—a famous episode of *Bras Coupé*, an African prince and a proud slave—into this book. Weaving together the stories of multiple characters, the readers reach a larger story; these tensions merge into a larger whole which fits to a traditional romance, the happy union between Aurora Nancanou, a creole widow, and Honoré Grandissime, the head of the family. Crucially, while a larger story constructed through the book represents a national story embodied by a romantic reunion between the North and the South, each story represents race problems, incorporating ongoing and disruptive racial tensions as noise that refuses to be integrated into the national story.

Chapter Two, “Reading, Mapping, and Experiencing the Region: Charles Chesnutt’s *The Conjure Woman*,” focuses on Chesnutt’s *The Conjure Woman* (1899). Often read as a collection of plantation tales such as Joel Chandler Harris’s *Uncle Remus: His Song and His Sayings* (1880) and Thomas Nelson Page’s *In Ole Virginia; Or, Marse Chan and Other Stories* (1887), *The Conjure Woman* consists of seven short stories in which Julius McAdoo, a former slave living on a devastated plantation, narrates African American folktales to John and Annie, the white couple from the North. Each story exhibits a similar pattern: the couple attempt to do something to change the old plantation which Julius finds inconvenient, then he begins to tell of a past story that includes the mysterious power of conjuring and that is somewhat parallel to John and Annie’s present situation. By choosing a single locale as his conjure stories’ setting and repeatedly illustrating specific events that happened there, which is a typical characteristic of the short-story cycle, Chesnutt rewrites the representation of the “exotic” South that traditional plantation fictions have constructed and instead depicts the South seen by (ex) slaves. Moreover, the combination of the repetition and accumulation of the stories represents day-to-day negotiations between the (ex)slaves and the whites, through which the northern couple grows familiar with, experiences, and understands the region.

The first two chapters of *The Confederate Stories of America* analyze the works with the potential of being recognized as an early short-story cycle. In Chapter Three, “Reshaping Earlier Regional Sketches: The Representation of African Americans in Jean Toomer’s *Cane* and Julia Peterkin’s *Green Thursday*,” I examine two works which might be located as transitional works that bridge the precursors of the short-story cycle written in the nineteenth-century South and that written in the twentieth-century South. While literary scholars have regarded Jean Toomer’s *Cane* (1923), which consists of vignettes, short stories, poems, and short plays, as a kind of a mutation in the history of American literature, they have often dismissed the relationship between this book and literary traditions before Toomer. Although Julia Peterkin’s *Green Thursday* (1924), which consists of twelve short stories and was written just after Peterkin’s reading *Cane* (James 144), was sensational and quite “modern” for people at that time, now it is often mentioned as a local color fiction. By reshaping earlier regional sketches, both *Cane* and *Green Thursday*, in different ways, try to represent changes surrounding blacks in the early twentieth century South. Witnessing the movement of black people out of the South and the region’s losing African American folk cultures, Toomer unsettles the reading practices and conventions of the local color fictions, which stereotyped black people as a tool to represent the authenticity of the region. In Peterkin’s case, the short-story cycle form represents her struggle to confront the same kind of changes surrounding black people that Toomer describes, which threatens her position of privilege as the wife of a plantation owner. For Peterkin’s poor black southerners, even a profound experience represented in each story is swallowed up by the cyclical pattern of poverty, seasons, life and death, as well as women’s hardships represented through the whole volume. Thus, the genre’s characteristics as a “cycle” enables Peterkin to describe black people’s rootedness to the land and their lack of ability to get out of the region, but simultaneously provides her with a means of some sort of solace in a modernizing South.

Chapter Four, “Molly Beauchamp and the Affordances of the Whole: William Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses*,” investigates Faulkner’s approach to the notion of wholeness. *Go Down, Moses* (1942) consists of seven short stories, most of which were originally written as independent stories and concern the history of the McCaslin clan. While earlier scholars emphasized the book’s novelistic unity by claiming Isaac McCaslin to be its protagonist, more recent critics have tended to recognize the narrative disunity of the volume. Both approaches, however, presuppose the existence of a novelistic wholeness, which Faulkner successfully achieved in his previous major works, such as *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!*. Whereas those novels seem to picture a whole as unifying and enclosed, I believe, in *Go Down, Moses*, Faulkner questions the assumption that a whole is always perfect and totalizing and explores an alternative version of the whole. Using the notion of “affordance” that Caroline Levine introduces in *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (2015), I would like to examine the affordances of what Faulkner has regarded as wholeness, which resonate with those of the short-story cycle form. Rather than a perfect and totalizing whole that Faulkner’s previous novels embrace, *Go Down, Moses* achieves a bounded, inclusive, and shared whole. In order to examine the affordances of the short-story cycle form, I focus on Faulkner’s characterization of black woman, Molly Beauchamp, who most closely represents the alternative model of wholeness that can take the place of and subvert the wholeness sought by the McCaslin men.

In the final chapter, “How to Achieve Self-fulfillment in the Modern South: Formal Development from Eudora Welty’s *Delta Wedding* to *The Golden Apples*,” I focus on the formal and thematic development from Welty’s first novel *Delta Wedding* (1946) to one of the most typical works of the short-story cycle, *The Golden Apples* (1949), both of which depict complicated human relations in the Mississippi Delta. The former illustrates the Fairchilds, who live on a plantation, focusing on women’s pent-up feelings about the family’s hero George

Fairchild. George, whose acceptance and love gives the women individually a sense of worth, represents the system of the clan in which a man chosen by the women holds the power to govern them. In *The Golden Apples*, on the other hand, the women in an imaginary town named Morgana hope to have a personal relationship and share a secret with King MacLain, who probably has many children everywhere he goes, and suddenly runs away from the community. Thus, there are similarities between the two books: Morgana is a world that grows out of the Fairchilds, and King takes over George's role. But while the Fairchild women try to keep the harmony of the clan by replacing their emotions and individuality with their love for George, the Morgana women, having more interest in their own matters after their hero's disappearance, lose the spirit to maintain the integrity of the community, which has served those women particularly well. If the novelistic form of *Delta Wedding* represents the Fairchilds' struggles to create totality, the short-story cycle form displays the characters' failure in attempting to do so. In *The Golden Apples*, therefore, the short-story cycle's refusal to develop into a novel resonates with the characters' lack of interest in generating harmony. Moreover, while the novel and the short-story cycle respectively offer Welty a different approach to individuality in the modern South, Welty suggests that the cycle form embodies a way for her fictional characters living there to achieve a sense of self-fulfillment.

In my conclusion, I end with the short-story cycle in the contemporary South. As some literary scholars have pointed out, the short-story cycle has become a popular literary form in what we think of as postcolonial literature. Using Cynthia Shearer's *The Celestial Jukebox* (2004) as an example, I would like to show the ways in which the short-story cycle allowed writers to represent the reality of the contemporary South, which might be defined as "the (national, hemispheric, or global) South" (Smith 12). In *The Celestial Jukebox*, Shearer purposefully breaks up the classical short-story form to emphasize the instability of a character,

time, and space in Madagascar, an imaginary town in the Mississippi Delta, in which the new order emerging out of immigration is threatening, and almost subverts the old hegemonic order. Simultaneously, however, the South has been a postcolonial space for a long time. According to Jennifer Rae Greeson, the South embodies “both sides of the disavowed binary”:

“simultaneously colonial and colonized, it diverges from the nation writ large on the basis of its exploitativeness—as the location of the internal colonization of Africans and African Americans in the United States—and on the basis of its exploitation—as the location of systematic underdevelopment, military defeat, and occupation” (3). Although the notion of the postcolonial South has only recently been recognized, the fact that southern writers have used and developed the short-story cycle form in unique ways to represent the region for over a century might suggest the important role that this rather neglected genre played in the history of Southern and American literature.

My attempt to delineate southern writers’ redefining of the short-story cycle will reveal new aspects of this rather neglected genre. While there have been only a few books which study the short-story cycle in general, some excellent books have been published on short-story cycles written in a particular time and/or place: Gerald J. Kennedy’s *Modern American Short Story Sequences: Composite Fictions and Fictive Communities* (1995) analyzes modern American short-story cycles as modes of modernist expression; James Nagel’s *The Contemporary American Short-Story Cycle: The Ethnic Resonance of Genre* (2001) considers how and why the short-story cycle became the genre of choice for ethnic writers in the U.S.; and Gerald Lynch’s *The One and the Many: English-Canadian Short Story Cycles* (2001) as well as Patrick Gill and Florian and Florian Kléger’s *Constructing Coherence in the British Short Story Cycle* (2018) respectively traces the history, diversity, and continuing popularity of the short-story cycle in Canada and Britain. These four books not only show the connection between the short-story

cycles and American modernism, American ethnic literature, or Canadian/British literature, but also have deepened and expanded the study of this genre. Like them, *The Confederate Stories of America* aims to shed a new light on the study of the short-story cycle.

CHAPTER 1

THE RISE OF THE SOUTHERN SHORT-STORY CYCLE: GEORGE WASHINGTON CABLE'S *THE GRANDISSIMES*

George Washington Cable's *The Grandissimes: A Story of Creole Life* (1880) was highly appreciated by its contemporary northern readers. H. H. Boyesen, a literary critic of the time, called Cable "the first southern novelist . . . who has made a contribution of permanent value to American literature" (131), and later Louis D. Rubin, Jr. evaluated the text as "the first 'modern' southern novel" (78). Simultaneously, however, many criticisms have regarded the book as a failed novel, pointing out its defects. One critic, for example, claims the book to be "[a] gallery of impressions," "a gallery of portraits in which individuality is confused" (Clay 36), and another points out the book's lack of "singleness and directness" (Turner 160).

Indeed, *The Grandissimes* lacks "singleness and directness." Consisting of sixty-one chapters, the text includes multiple plots such as protagonist Joseph Frowenfeld's adaptation to Creole society, Creole people's love affairs, free black people's love and hatred toward other Creoles, and the story of a slave named Bras-Coupé. Each chapter, which usually focuses on one or two characters, is connected to another sometimes directly and at other times indirectly. The first chapter "Masked Batteries," for example, describes a *bal masqué* at the Théâtre St. Philippe, introducing the major Creole characters to the readers. The next chapter "The Fate of the Immigrant" depicts an immigrant family, the Frowenfelds, and their unfortunate fate. The third chapter, "And Who Is My Neighbor?," introduces the old Creole families in New Orleans. And the fifth chapter, "Family Tree," explains a part of the Grandissime genealogy, which starts with the birth of Indian queen Lufki-Humma in 1673.

Although in order to read one chapter the readers need a knowledge acquired in the previous chapter(s), most chapters are semi-independent and have their own beginning and ending. Moreover, some chapters in *The Grandissimes* seem quite independent but help the

readers to foster a better understanding of other chapters; for instance, the fifth chapter, “Family Tree,” is a complete story as it is, but is simultaneously related to the rest. This seems not quite different from a regular novel, but the book goes against reader expectation of the novel.

According to Robert M. Luscher, in the novel “chapters develop an extended, continuous, and progressively unified drama of interacting characters within a clearly discernable temporal and causal frame,” and readers of a novel “expect to construct formal and thematic coherence, bridge gaps, reassemble fragmented narratives, and organize diverse casts of characters.” The readers of *The Grandissimes* also engage themselves in constructing formal and thematic coherence, but without what Luscher calls “the secure causal and temporal spine the novel provides” (“The American Short-Story Cycle” 358).

Considering these characteristics of *The Grandissimes*, one confronts a simple question: Is this book really a failed “novel”? Or, should we read it as something like, but not quite, a novel? *The Grandissimes*, employing so many frames and lacking a chronological structure, “is unusually incoherent by late-nineteenth-century standards” and therefore, the book “is difficult to classify in terms of genre,” as Stephanie Foote writes (102-03). “The novel,” as Foote as well as this chapter assumes, is a literary genre that embraces a long-term and organic development of plot, as seen in the novels written by Cable’s contemporaries such as Henry James, William Dean Howells, and Mark Twain.

Rather than a nineteenth-century realist novel, *The Grandissimes* is a novel-length book comprising many stories; in other words, the book has characteristics of the short-story cycle, not so unlike Cable’s first collection of sketches *Old Creole Days* (1879). As I wrote in the introduction to *The Confederate Stories of America*, I consider the short-story cycle to be a narrative of resistance. *The Grandissimes*, which consists of many parts but produces a novelistic whole, or, which seemingly achieves a novelistic whole but includes disharmonious parts,

occupies what Rocio G. Davis calls “an indeterminate place within the field of narrative” (“Short Story Cycle” 406). *The Grandissimes* refuses to be easily categorized as an existing literary genre, such as the regional sketch, southern romance, and realist novel.

In *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers* (1984), Nina Baym notes that in late-nineteenth-century America the “concept of plot distinguished novels from other literary modes” such as the sketch or tale (70).¹ Cable himself considered the novel to be a genre dependent upon the plot, and while aspiring to be recognized as a novelist in order to become a first-rate writer, he did not appreciate the novel’s emphasis on the plot. In “condemning artificially contrived plots” and “demanding the plot be only the vehicle for bringing the problem of the story into strong relief, for giving logic to the portrayal of typical characters in real situations” (Turner 80), Cable wrote to his literary friend, H. H. Boyesen:

The great problem of a novel should be something beyond and above the mere puzzle of the plot, something great and thought-compelling, that teaches without telling, that brings to view without pointing, that guides without leading and allures without fatiguing, through the dimness and shadow and uncertainty of a new path out at last upon the illimitable savannahs of God’s sweet, green nourishing truth. (qtd. in Turner 80)

Whether Cable’s use of the term “a novel” refers only to a realist novel or includes a romance is not clear. What is important here is not, however, Cable’s definition of the novel but the fact that Cable felt the need to go beyond the novelistic, “mere puzzle of the plot.” *The Grandissimes*’s so-called weakness as a novel—its lack of coherent, organic development of the plot—seems to reflect Cable’s belief in the novel’s potential to express “something great and thought-compelling” “beyond and above the mere puzzle of the plot.” Moreover, the fact that his metaphor uses the very southern/Louisianan imagery of the jungle-ish “savannah” seems

¹ Developing Baym’s argument, Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse write that in the late nineteenth century, most “high” realist writers adopted the novelistic form, which offered them “the opportunity to be considered a major author of fiction,” and their readers also “accorded considerable significance to plot, and the novel’s investment in plot provided one source of its prominence” (Fetterley and Pryse 170).

interesting; consciously or unconsciously, he conflates the difficulty of the place with that of the form to represent the region.

The short-story cycle form was a direct result of Cable's attempt to convey "something great and thought-compelling" without depending on the novelistic plot. The text, because of its subjects, happened to approximate what might be called the short-story cycle form. The theme of the book, or "something great and thought-compelling" in his words, which led Cable to experiment with the forms of both the novel and the short story to create a form that later became defined as the short-story cycle, was racial injustice in the South and the nation. Cable once wrote that he "meant to make *The Grandissimes* as truly a political work as it ever has been called," for "it was impossible that a novel written by me then should escape being a study of the fierce struggle going on around me, regarded in the light of that past history—those beginnings—which had so differentiated the Louisiana civilization from the American scheme of public society" (*The Negro Questions* 14). In order to teach—but, again, without telling, pointing, or leading—his readers about "the fierce struggle going on around [him]," he resists a novelistic plot structure and instead creates something like a novel which brings about a different effect from the novelistic form.

Several scholars have seen *Old Creole Days*, not *The Grandissimes*, as the predecessor of the short-story cycle. Before becoming a full-time writer, Cable, whose parents moved to New Orleans from Indiana and settled in the Américain section of the city, wrote several stories about the history and culture of Creole people. Some publishers accepted Cable's Creole stories, and in 1879 he published *Old Creole Days*, which consists of eight short stories originally published in Scribner's Monthly from 1873 through 1876. John Cleman points out Cable's strong "sense of the milieu" in this book; admitting that although *Old Creole Days* does not have the unity of short-story cycles such as *Winesburg, Ohio*, *In Our Time*, and *Go Down, Moses*, he says, "there

is a measure of coherency in the whole gained in part from the consistently rendered, inescapable presence of the milieu and from the manner or voice of the narrative guide” (*Revisited* 48).

Likewise, analyzing short-story cycles set in New Orleans, James Nagel reads *Old Creole Days* as a cycle.

Rather than reading *Old Creole Days* as a collection of short stories or a short-story cycle and *The Grandissimes* as a novel, I propose that both texts evoke the properties of the short-story cycle in different ways. I have chosen *The Grandissimes*, rather than *Old Creole Days*, to analyze in this chapter, for the former more clearly shows the earliest signs of what later southern short-story cycles would seek and achieve; that is, representing the accepted notion of “the South” but simultaneously depicting the things left out of it.

Perhaps the short-story cycle turned out to be a genre that adequately represents a strained relationship between the North and the South after the Civil War. In the following section, focusing on the form and Cable’s theme of race, I will analyze how in the text, Cable achieved something like the short-story cycle form. In *The Grandissimes*, race problems become a “local” matter, or just a “part” of the book, and are not integrated into the wholeness of a novelistic, larger story. A larger story constructed through the book is, in short, a national story embodied by a romantic reunion between the North and the South. Racial issues, however, have a powerful presence as noise in the national story, refusing to be integrated into concepts such as “the South,” “the North,” and the nation, threatening and going beyond them. Representing a complex relationship between the South and the rest of the nation, the unique narrative form of *The Grandissimes* foretell the development and success of the short-story cycle in the twentieth-century South.

1. Drawing the Ugly Part of the Region/Nation

In 1870s, as magazines proliferated throughout the Northeast, Southern short fictions

“promptly dominated the periodical market,” because they responded to the demands of the day, that is, redefining the nation’s “regional relationships and national identity” (Ewell and Menke xxxvii). As Nina Silber shows in *The Romance of Reunion*, in the period of Reconstruction, the idea of reconciliation and reunion, which romanticized and feminized the South, blossomed and was pursued through novels, journals, tourism, and minstrel shows, by middle- and upper- class northerners.

Ultimately, Yankees sought to re-create the Victorian ideal through the reconciliation process. Their image of the South conformed to their image of the idealized feminine sphere; in northern eyes, the South became a region of refined domestic comfort, and the union of North and South restored the sense of domestic harmony that northern society no longer possessed. (9-10)

The representation of the romantic, feminized South helped the northern readers not only to re-imagine and re-unite with the region once they had broken with. Southern fictions served to reproduce the “South,” whose differences from the other parts of the nation are pleasant but not threatening any longer, and therefore, to let the northerners reconfirm their identity as an American. In this sense, Silber argues, southern fictions after the Civil War contributed toward the creation of the notions of the South and the North, and as a result, the unified notion of nation.

In order to establish the ideal notions of the South, North, and nation, southern fictions had to remove the “ugly” part of the region, especially issues of slavery and racial injustice. Because of immigration problems and ethnic tensions in the northern areas in the late nineteenth century, northern people could not treat racial issues as having nothing to do with them any longer. As Nina Silber puts it, “the northern reunion with the South demanded a degree of ignorance when it came to issues of slavery and race: ignorance of the way slavery had worked in the past, or the role it played in the nation’s history, and of the present state of race relations” (156). The

northern readers expected Southern fictions to delineate a romantic South, ignoring race problems.

Besides, it was the era of the Genteel Tradition, which aims to let the readers see the ideal, pleasant side of society through literary works. Louis Rubin, Jr. says, as is true of Cable's early stories, when "the attempt to render the details of regional experience drew the artist's eye toward the inclusion of unpleasant and even ugly elements, the magazine editors who guarded the sensibility of their readers were quick to protest" (45). While thinking seriously about social problems in the region, Cable had to accommodate himself to the magazine editors of the dominant, Genteel Tradition so as to get his stories published. How to compromise with the editors on his awareness of social issues was one of the biggest problems the young author confronted.

Whereas Cable had to abstain from social criticism in his earlier stories, by adopting the novelistic form in *The Grandissimes*, he tried to prevent his book from ending up as a genteel romance. Louis Rubin Jr. explains about the development from *Old Creole Days* to *The Grandissimes* as following:

In the stories of *Old Creole Days* in which plot is most prominent, Cable shows a tendency to rely on romantic sentimentality, to construct love stories in the conventional tradition, and to keep his protagonists within the confines of the demands of the genteel romance, so that they tend to be wooden and two-dimensional. If Cable was to develop as a novelist, he would have to find a plot, which is to say, a meaning, for his material that would permit a deeper exploration of the social texture of his chosen milieu than was required in a short story. But could he do this? (61)

I believe that Cable found "a meaning" which "would permit a deeper exploration of the social texture" in *The Grandissimes*. The novelistic form was not, however, the perfect medium for him to fully represent the "meaning."

For Cable, "the meaning" was related to the "ugly" part of the region as well as the nation,

that is, issues of racial injustice. Having researched regional history and conditions from a journalistic viewpoint, Cable took a critical look at issues of slavery and racial injustice. After publishing *The Grandissimes*, in some essays such as “The Freedman’s Case in Equity” and “The Silent South,” he criticizes the southern attitude toward race and tries to appeal to the southerners’ conscience. During the time writers who “challenge[d] the rhetoric of pan-white southern identity . . . such as Cable” were “conspicuously rare” (Watts xix), Cable, criticized by southerners for condemning race problems in the region, had to leave the South in 1885. *The Grandissimes*, as many scholars have pointed out², by reflecting the postbellum South in early-nineteenth-century Louisiana. and describing race problems in Creole society, indirectly criticizes the problems of the day. Cable tried to deal with the “ugly” part of the region while meeting the demands of society for the romanticized South as a part of the nation, and as a result of these contending pressures, *The Grandissimes* assumes a form much akin to that of the short-story cycle.

2. The Parts/Region vs. the Whole/Nation

The Grandissimes, in which each chapter depicts New Orleans colorfully and realistically like a local sketch, has the characteristics of local-color fictions. In a similar way as each story in *Old Creole Days*, each chapter in the text describes not only various local people such as a Creole notable, a free man of color, a doctor, a politician, but also the New Orleans townscape and its nature in detail. For example, Chapter 46, which begins with the sentences, “Ask the average resident of New Orleans if his town is on an island, and he will tell you no” (269), uses almost four pages to describe the geographical features of the city.

² For example, Christopher E. G. Benfey notes that New Orleans just after the 1803 Louisiana Purchase is “an allegory of Reconstruction, a carefully coded portrait of New Orleans during the 1870s” (201). Gavin Roger Jones also writes, “clearly set at the time of the Louisiana purchase in 1803, it also spoke to the post-Reconstruction South, especially in the central section dealing with the brutal treatment of the rebellious slave Bras-Coupé” (122).

Regional fictions after the Civil War often include a narrator/protagonist who is visiting a strange place and observing the mysterious lives of other people: Frances E.W. Harper's *Sketches of Southern Life* (1872) is based on Harper's own travels in the South; and the narrator-traveler in Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896) describes her experience in a Maine seaport town. These protagonists play a role in introducing the readers to an "exotic" place by letting them identify with the protagonists and have a vicarious experience. Moving from Philadelphia to Louisiana, Joseph Frowenfeld, like other narrators in regional fictions, has a role as an observer and interloper. Besides, being "an American by birth, rearing and sentiment, yet German enough through his parents" (8), he is a perfect protagonist who intermediates between the Creole characters and the American readers; he is expected to learn the nature of America and how to become a "proper" citizen.

As an outsider, in each chapter Frowenfeld encounters strange customs, local speech, and Creole characters, which produces a sense of mystery or ambiguity. This sense of mystery or ambiguity, John Cleman says, "is integrated but dramatically and significantly deepened in the use of natural environment," and in his use of "local color elements" ("Local Color" 396-97). In each chapter the readers have to figure out who is who and what is happening, and in the next chapter they confront a new mystery. For example, the first chapter asks the question, "Who are Honoré Grandissime, Doctor Keene, and the De Grapion women?" While the first question is answered in the following chapters, these chapters offer the readers new puzzles such as "Why are there two Honoré Grandissime?," "Who tried to kill Agricola?," and "What on earth is a story of Bras-Coupé?" Thus, questions asked in each chapter allow the readers to approach the mysterious atmosphere of Creole New Orleans. *The Grandissimes* represents Frowenfeld's "perusal of this newly found book, the Community of New Orleans" (103).

While describing lives in New Orleans realistically as Cable's earlier sketches/short stories

did, each chapter in *The Grandissimes* merges into a larger whole that embodies a national story. The framework for the whole story is the white/hetero marriage between a handsome and noble Creole, Honoré Grandissime and a beautiful widow Aurora Nancanou as well as Joseph Frowendeld's adaptation to New Orleans society. In the first chapter "Masked Batteires," Honoré, the head of *The Grandissimes*, and Aurora, a descendant of *The Grandissimes*'s old rival, the Nancanous (the De Grapions), happen to meet each other at a *bal masqué*. Although they seem attracted to each other, they do not unmask to the end, and part without revealing each other's identity. The chapter expects the readers to follow the relationship of the physically and metaphorically masked couple through the book. The next chapter, "The Fate of the Immigrant," hints at the development of Frowenfeld, who has just lost his family to yellow fever in the peculiar community of New Orleans, and his romance with a beautiful girl, who later turns out to be Aurora's daughter, Clotilde. Thus, at the very beginning of the book Cable clarifies the framework plots for the whole story.

At the end of the book these framework plots come to a resolution: overcoming some difficulties, Honoré Grandissime and Aurora get married in the final chapter; in Chapter 60, one chapter before the last, the readers find Frowenfeld and Clotilde confirm their love for each other; additionally, by the end of the book Frowenfeld achieves fame as an owner of a new drug store, which is "not only the latest closed but the earliest opened of all the pharmacies in New Orleans" (303). Both the fruitions of love between Aurora and Honoré, who is the head of the Creole family but tries to establish good relations with Americans, and that between Clotilde and Frowenfeld, who is a liberal American trying to understand Creoles, symbolize a brilliant future of the nation and the region. Thus, the framework plots and final closure are designed to satisfy the readers, who seek a romantic reunion between the North and the South. The framework question and the answer to the question contribute to the establishment of national identity.

Simply put, each chapter, or “part,” of *The Grandissimes* portrays the region, whereas the book’s whole contributes to a national story. Each chapter concerning local stories seems to be absorbed in the satisfying resolution of the framework plots, namely, the romance between Honoré and Aurora, as well as that between Frowenfeld and Clotilde, both of which embody a bright future of the nation. The book seems to consign other sub-plots to oblivion, letting them be drowned out of existence by a peaceful, final closure. The plots especially lacking a satisfactory resolution are the stories concerning black characters. Palmyre Philosophe, the Nancanous’ enslaved maid, has loved Honoré for a long time and watches for a chance to get her revenge on his uncle Agricola Fusilier, who, knowing her love for Honoré, forced her to marry Bras-Coupé, an enslaved African prince. Accomplishing her revenge and driven out of the country, at the end of the book she inconspicuously lives in Bordeaux as “Madame Inconnue.” Honoré’s half-brother, Honoré Grandissime f. m. c. (free man of color) has been in obscurity because of his mixed background, and he kills himself suffering from hopeless love for Palmyre. Clemence, “*marchande des gâteaux* (an itinerant cake-vender)” (78) is killed by a Grandissime man for helping Palmyre’s revenge against Agricola, and Bras-Coupé is lynched by Grandissime men. While providing important subplots for the book, by the end of the book these black characters disappear in the satisfactory resolution to the framework plots. To put it simply, the main plots contribute to the reconstruction of the nation, whereas the subplots appear to be forgotten as mere “local” matters. The book thus seems to figuratively replicate a racist violence against blacks in order to facilitate an inter-regional white reconciliation.

This confrontation between individual parts and the whole in *The Grandissimes* is partially because of Cable’s editors’ demands. When he worked on *The Grandissimes*, they wanted him to avoid “local color” and instead to write a realist novel. Robert Underwood Johnson, one of the editors, once wrote to Cable: “By too much ‘local color’ Mr. Gilder and I mean descriptions of

local customs and characters not necessary to the story which distract from the thread of the plot—the tendency to tell all the truth . . . too many facts about the characters—in other words a historical tendency” (qtd. in Ladd, *Nationalism* 43). According to Barbara Ladd, Johnson and Gilder “associated the ‘historical tendency’ with local color as distinctly unimportant to the extent that it was concerned with the particularities of history rather than with the ‘universality’ of the modern, the national, character” (*Nationalism* 43). By concluding *The Grandissimes* with the success of love that mirrors the romantic union between the South and the rest of the nation, Cable represented what his editors called “universality.”

As easily expected, many scholars have criticized this romantic resolution as the book’s flaw and as Cable’s weakness as a novelist; Michael Kreyling wrote, for example, “Cable brings [powerfully balanced attitudes and prejudices constructing *The Grandissimes*] all into romantic sunlight in the end. Perhaps this ultimate optimism presages the fading of his literary career into bathos and genteel piety in the following decades” (Introduction xvi). This kind of dissatisfaction arises, however, not simply because racial problems are absorbed into the romantic resolution. Rather, critics seem to attack the ending of the book because such problems do exist, not disappearing in the happy ending. The white/hetero marriage plots might give the reader the false illusion of comfort and resolution, thus almost “forgetting” the racial problems at the conscious level, while the racial problems nevertheless continue to unsettle the reader and cause discomfort by refusing the integration into/ resolution with the superficial marriage/romance plots. For example, we can find the romance between Honoré and Aurora and that between Frowenfeld and Clotilde to be the main plot just because the book begins and ends with it. Yet, each chapter does not necessarily focus on these “important” characters; for instance, Palmyre’s love for Honoré and Honoré f. m. c’s love for Palmyre occupy more pages than Aurora’s one for Honoré and Honoré’s one for Aurora. Further, Cable hardly depicts the development of a romantic

relationship between Frowenfeld and Clotilde; the young couple ends up together without any hurdles.

In *The Grandissimes*, when the book ends with the fruitions of love, which symbolizes a bright future of the nation, local stories/ parts assert themselves without being absorbed in the whole, national story. In Chapter 17, remembering his new acquaintances, such as Aurora, Palmyre, two Honorés, and Agricola, Frowenfeld refuses to listen to a “discord” caused by them: “they all came before him in his meditation, provoking among themselves a certain discord, faint but persistent, to which he strove to close his ear” (96). Although Frowenfeld, blocking his ears to discord, goes toward the novelistic ending emphasizing a harmonious nation, the discord lingers on in the book. On the one hand the book achieves the novelistic reconciliation, on the other hand it produces noises that refuse to join the harmony of the nation, namely, the more problematic aspects of racist violence. In the following section I will analyze the process in which the short-story cycle form allows such discords/noises to come and linger on.

3. The Parts/Region as Noise

Described as “[a] gallery of impressions” and “a gallery of portraits in which individuality is confused” (36) by Charles M. Clay, *The Grandissimes*, in which one plot is quickly displaced by another, causes the readers to forget details, making it difficult for them to grasp the whole picture of the book. Since each plot does not necessarily have a temporal as well as contextual relation to other plots, the readers are able to move through the book without recalling details in the previous chapters.

Perhaps the readers’ forgetfulness of details depends to a large extent on Cable’s narrator. While appearing on every chapter and giving an account of all events, the narrator lacks coherence: sometimes he narrates Frowenfeld’s story in a friendly way and other times deals with him merely as one of the characters, calling him “the apothecary” or “the immigrant”;

sometimes the narrator describes events objectively and other times expresses him/herself forcibly. Before describing Clemence's lynching, for example, the narrator starts Chapter 56 "Blood for a Blow" as follows:

It seems to be one of the self-punitive characteristics of tyranny, whether the tyrant be a man, a community, or a caste, to have a pusillanimous fear of its victim. It was not when Clemence lay in irons, it is barely now, that our South is casting off a certain apprehensive tremor, generally latent, but at the slightest provocation active, and now and then violent, concerning her "blacks." This fear, like others similar elsewhere in the world, has always been met by the same one antidote—terrific cruelty to the tyrant's victim. So we shall presently see the Grandissime ladies, deeming themselves compassionate, urging their kinsmen to "give the poor wretch a sound whipping and let her go." Ah! what atrocities are we unconsciously perpetrating North and South now, in the name of mercy or defense, which the advancing light of progressive thought will presently show out in their enormity? (315)

The narrator claims that having "a pusillanimous fear of its victim" is a characteristic of tyranny, and that atrocities are perpetrated North and South "in the name of mercy or defense." Different from his objective attitude towards events happened in the previous chapters, here the narrator denounces white supremacy in "our south," "North and South now," and "elsewhere in the world," forbidding the readers from seeing Clemence's death as merely a cruel event that happened in a particular place and time. Here the narrator almost seems to speak on behalf of Cable, who has found difficulty in condemning the southern and northern attitudes toward race directly in his fiction.

As I noted in the previous section, Cable's honest opinion on issues of slavery and race in the South and the U.S. was unfavorable for his editors and readers. In order to incorporate such opinion into his work, the narrative form that causes and allows for the readers' forgetfulness of details was perhaps a useful method for him. In the case of the citation above, since the narrator's/Cable's real intention does not have a direct link to the framework plot and its ending, its radicalness does not become a major problem. Indeed, the succeeding chapters depict Agricola's deathbed and the fruitions of love, as if Clemence's lynching had never happened.

The readers' forgetfulness of details, caused by the book's narrative form, seems to have relevance to its characterization. As some reviewers have complained, the existence of many subplots in the text seems to weaken the strength of characterization. Lacking chronological coherency and including so many plots, the book fails to describe the characters' "organic" development. The most conspicuous one is Joseph Frowenfeld; regarding the characterization of the protagonist as the crucial flaw in the book, Louis Rubin Jr. says, for example, Frowenfeld remains "high-minded but wooden and lifeless" throughout the text (95). The reviewers' disappointment at the characterization of Frowenfeld might come from his position as neither the narrator of a regional fiction or that of a realist novel. Moving from Philadelphia to Louisiana, Frowenfeld seems to be a perfect protagonist who intermediates between the Creole characters and the American readers; he is expected to learn the nature of America and how to become a "proper" citizen.

The characterization of Frowenfeld is, however, drastically different from that of the protagonists in the late nineteenth-century regional fictions. Indeed, although the book traces Frowenfeld's fortune, since each chapter focuses on a different character, the book fails to adequately convey this young American's discovery in a strange region. Rather, the structure of the text reveals what Frowenfeld does not know. Cable makes many important events happen in the absence of the protagonist, letting only the readers see the scenes. In the first chapter the narrator, saying "let us draw nearer and see what chance may discover to us behind those four masks" (3), unmask the two beautiful women, Aurora and Clotilde; then in Chapter three and six, Dr. Keene tells Frowenfeld about the De Grapion women, who are "the finest women—the brightest, the best, and the bravest—that I know in New Orleans" (15). Consequently, when a veiled but beautiful lady who is "accompanied by a slender girl" (44) comes to Frowenfeld's store in the ninth chapter, the readers immediately recognize them as the De Grapions, but

Frowenfeld has no idea that they are the mother and daughter being discussed. Making Frowenfeld not acute enough to detect a problem, Cable skillfully urges the readers to know better than Frowenfeld, but less than the narrator. In this way, the narrative structure of the book avoids making Frowenfeld a protagonist of local color fictions. Cable expects the readers to see New Orleans/the South not through the viewpoint of Frowenfeld, but through their own eyes.

Frowenfeld is different not only from the protagonist of a local-color fiction, but also from that of a realist novel. In *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism from 1719-1900* (2005), which equates the history of the novel and that of the modern individual, Nancy Armstrong insists that novels try to transform “unleashed individualism into civil morality.” She writes:

It is through a series of what might be called lessons, after all, that novels transform signs of an individual’s natural excess into the cultural wisdom of a citizen-subject. . . . The novel is more like a ubiquitous cultural narrative that not only measures personal growth in terms of an individual’s ability to locate him-or herself productively within the aggregate but also and simultaneously measures the aggregate in terms of its ability to accommodate the increasing heterogeneity of individuals. (51)

Although I do not think Armstrong’s theory applies to all modern British novels, her theory might be applicable to the American novels written in the nineteenth century, when the nation experienced a radical shift of its social order. In particular, the realist novels written after the Civil War, when the U.S. tried to reestablish the nation, seem to have a tendency to create a self-governing subject such as Huckleberry Finn in Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Silas Lapham in William Dean Howells’s *The Rise of Silas Lapham*.

I have no space to analyze the relation between the modern individual and the history of the American novel. But if the novelistic narrative tends to transform “unleashed individualism into civil morality,” it seems interesting that when Cable tried to write a realist novel in the late-nineteenth century South, the protagonist remains, from beginning to end, what Rubin Jr. calls “the high-minded but wooded and lifeless” character and what Barbara Ladd calls “a somewhat

naive spokesman for the ideals of U.S. nationalism” (47). Frowenfeld never shows “signs of an individual’s natural excess” in Armstrong’s words, and therefore, the book does not depict his transformation into a good citizen; rather, it consistently depicts him as an embodiment of “civil morality.”

Perhaps the short-story cycle, which, at least in America, developed from collections of regional sketches, does not have aptitude for depicting an individualistic “organic” development.³ In *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (2000), Franco Moretti explains the reasons for the inextricable link between Bildungsroman and the novel. He notes;

[The novel] discovers, or perhaps creates, the typically modern feeling and enjoyment of “everyday life” and “ordinary administration”; Everyday life: an anthropocentric space where all social activities lose their exacting objectivity and converge in the domain of “personality.” Ordinary administration: a time of “lived experience” and individual growth—a time filled with “opportunities,” but which excludes by definition both the crisis and genesis of a culture. (12)

On the one hand, the traditional Bildungsroman in the novelistic form depicts an individual’s everyday life and growth, which exclude social objectivity and “the crisis and genesis of a culture.” On the other hand, the short-story cycle is, from its origin, more interested in “the crisis and genesis of a culture” than in an individual’s growth: though early local-color sketches often depict a protagonist’s encounter with a strange culture, it is merely a vehicle for conveying a unique culture of a region. Because of its short-story cycle structure, *The Granddissimes* renders the protagonist as a modeled citizen who describes the region to some extent objectively, rather

³ As Susan Garland Mann argues, the short-story cycle as a genre has an affinity for *Bildungsroman*: “One of the most important subgenres involving these cycles is based on the *bildungsroman*: stories joined together to describe the development of a young person, generally from adolescence to maturity” (9). But I do believe that the short-story cycles that focuses on a protagonist’s development, such as *Winesburg, Ohio*, Faulkner’s *The Unvanquished* (1938) and Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street* (1984), go against the traditional novel of formation, which depicts a protagonist’s “organic”—“normal”—development, indicating the illusoriness of an individualistic “organic” development.

than his transformation into a good citizen.

While *The Grandissimes* adopts a protagonist who remains a model citizen throughout the book, its narrative form highlights sub-characters' "natural excess" in Armstrong's words. We can easily see "unleashed individualism" in many characters such as Agricola, Palmyre, and Clemence. Roughly speaking, we might categorize the main characters concerned with the nation's plots—Frowenfeld, Honoré, Aurora and Clotilde—as model citizens by nature, and the sub-characters concerned with local plots as excessive individuals. Perhaps one of the most eccentric characters is Clemence, a black marchande who passes "in rue Royale ev'y mawnin' holl'in' 'Bé calas touts chauds, 'an' singin'" (83). Clemence used to deny the saying that slaves were "the happiest people under the sun" in front of white people, but nobody cared:

"Mawse Chawlie," she said again, "w'a's dis I yeh 'bout dat Eu'ope country? 's dat true de niggas is all free in Eu'opr?"

Doctor Keene replied that something like that was true.

"Well, now, Mawse Chawlie, I gwan t' ass you a riddle. If dat is so, den fo' w'y I yeh folks bragg'n 'bout de 'stayt o' s'ierty in Eu'ope?"

The mincing drollery with which she used this fine phrase brought another peal of laughter. Nobody tried to guess. (250)

Asked by Clemence why people brag about Europe, in which blacks are free, white people do not try to guess about her question, for she is just an "excess" of society. Her existence does not harm the community's harmony: "To Clemence the order of society was nothing. No upheaval could reach to the depth to which she was sunk. It is true, she was one of the population. She had certain affections toward people and places; but they were not of a consuming sort" (251).

Considering the book's structure, it is noteworthy that Clemence's accusation against the deception of racial discrimination is ignored by whites and does not disturb the community's harmony. That is, while the book describes excessive characters like Clemence, the book's structure contributes to the (white) readers' forgetfulness of details, maintaining harmony

achieved through the book. It is racial discrimination and/or caste that causes the “excess” of such characters as Clemence, Agricola, Palmyre, and Honoré f. m. c., and therefore, they seem to convey what Cable calls “something great and thought-compelling” without telling, pointing, or leading. But the plots concerning these characters—Palmyre’s revenge against Agricola, her love for Honoré, Honoré f. m. c.’s love for Palmyre—seem to come under the cloak of what can be called the main plots, namely, the romance between Honoré and Aurora, and that between Frowenfeld and Clotilde. These excessive characters, because of their very “excess,” cannot and do not have to be connected to the main plots.

Significantly, however, the book’s form also makes it difficult for the readers to forget details/sub-characters. The book seems to enable the readers to forget details by consigning excess to the “minor” characters—and leaving the readers with the conventional narrative closure of white marriages—relocating that excess to these powerful voices of resistance. In *The One vs. The Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (2003), Alex Woloch asks, “How can many people be contained within a single narrative?” (11). According to Woloch, the nineteenth-century realist novel includes both the round protagonists and the flat, minor characters, and the dynamic interaction between them registers “the competing pull of inequality and democracy within the nineteenth-century bourgeois imagination” (31). In addition, the minor characters are “always drowned out into the totality of the narrative” (38). *The Grandissimes* is quite different from what Woloch assumes as a novel; Cable’s main characters, fixed as model citizens, are not particularly round, and more importantly, the sub-characters are not drowned out into the narrative’s totality.

If Cable moves excess to the parts of the volume, in which most readers wouldn’t expect to find it, then he troubles their readerly expectations even as he still gives them, in the superficial plot of romance, what they want. Because of the harmony achieved by the ending of the main

plots, excessive characters in the sub-plots seems not to become a matter of importance. The sub-characters' stories, however, because of their very excess, make noise in the book, refusing to be drowned out in the harmony of the main plots. For instance, Clemence repeatedly appears in the book and has a stronger presence than Clotilde, who does not reveal her feelings readily.

Clemence's lynching is one of the most shocking events in the book, and her pleading for her life, lasting for several pages, is literary noise:

"Ah! no, mawsteh, you cyan' do dat! It's ag'in' de law! I's 'bleeged to have my trial, yit. Oh, no, no! Oh, good God, no! Even if I is a nigga! You cyan' jis' murdeh me hyeh in de woods! Mo dis la zize! I tell de judge on you! You ain' got no mo' biznis to do me so 'an if I was a white 'oman! You dassent tek a white 'oman out'n de Pa'sh Pris'n an' do 'er so! Oh, sweet mawsteh, fo' de love o' God! Oh, Mawse Challie, pou' l'amou' du bon Dieu n'f? pas ?a! Oh, Mawse 'Polyte, is you gwan to let 'em kill ole Clemence? Oh, fo' de mussy o' Jesus Christ, Mawse 'Polyte, leas' of all, you! You dassent help to kill me, Mawse 'Polyte! You knows why! Oh God, Mawse 'Polyte, you knows why! Leas' of all you, Mawse 'Polyte! Oh, God 'a' mussy on my wicked ole soul! I aint fitt'n to die! Oh, gen'lemen, I kyan' look God in de face! Oh, Mich?s, ayez piti? de moin! Oh, God A'mighty ha' mussy on my soul! Oh, gen'lemen, dough yo' kinfolks kyvvah up yo' tricks now, dey'll dwap f'um undeh you some day! Sol? lev? l?, li couch? l?! Yo' tu'n will come! Oh, God A'mighty! de God o' de po' nigga wench! Look down, oh God, look down an' stop dis yeh foolishness! Oh, God, fo' de love o' Jesus! Oh, Mich?s, y'en a ein zizement! Oh, yes, deh's a judgmen' day! Den it wont be a bit o' use to you to be white! Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, fo', fo', fo', de, de, love O' God! Oh!" (323)

We might understand the earlier part of the paragraph with relatively little effort, but as the paragraph proceeds, with the mixture of Black English and Creole French, it becomes more and more difficult to understand. In the last sentence, "for the love of God" becomes just noise, "Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, fo', fo', fo', de, de, love O' God! Oh!" Further, the paragraph, which comprises multiple languages, italicizes many words, and ends every sentence with an exclamation mark, looks "grotesque." After this scene, although the book proceeds to the aesthetic whole and the happy ending of the national story as if nothing had happened, Clemence's "excess" as a character and the brutality of her lynching remain as a remnant in the book.

The form of *The Grandissimes*, which enables the readers to forget details but simultaneously forbids them to do so, reveals the system of racial discrimination in the postbellum South and the nation. In short, the book's whole/the nation maintains its harmony only by ignoring its narrative parts/local conditions as mere "local" matters, refusing to listen to discords generated by them. Used by Cable several times in the last several chapters, the phrase "feeling all right" seems to ironically suggest this system of exclusion. In Chapter 52, when Honoré asks Dr. Keene why he gives up Clotilde, not competing with Frowenfeld for her love, he answers, "Not till I feel all right here," pointing at his chest (301). And in the sixtieth chapter titled "All Right," when he sees Honoré, Aurora, Clotilde and Frowenfeld walking together, "he murmured bitterly to himself," "Now we're all right" (334). Then the narrator says:

Yes, if his irony was meant for [Clotilde and Frowenfeld], he divined correctly. Their hearts had found utterance across the lips, and the future stood waiting for them on the threshold of a new existence, to usher them into a perpetual copartnership in all its joys and sorrows, its disappointments, its imperishable hopes, its aims, its conflicts, its rewards; and the true—the great—the everlasting God of love was with them. (334)

This couple, which represents the (re)union of the North and the South, and for whom "the future stood waiting" "on the threshold of a new existence," makes Dr. Keene and the narrator "feel all right."

As a liberal young American, Frowenfeld gets furious about the unfair treatment of black and mulatto characters, especially that of Honoré Grandissime f. m. c.. Yet, when he gets accustomed to life in New Orleans and earns Clotilde's love at the end of the book, he seems to have completely forgotten about the tragedy of the black characters. After the scene cited above, the narrator says, Frowenfeld and Clotilde "paused a little within the obscurity of the corridor, and just to reassure themselves that everything was 'all right,' they—" (334). Although they might successfully "reassure themselves," the very fact that the couple have to be convinced that

“everything was ‘all right’” seems to reveal the existence of something forgotten, or something that cannot and should not be forgotten—Honoré f. m. c.’s death, Clemence’s lynching, Palmyre’s escape from the States—in the process of achieving the state of being “all right.”

In *The Grandissimes*, the seemingly forgotten parts/regional matters always show their presence as noise, disturbing the harmony of the whole, national story. For Cable, a local matter is always and already a national one—and vice versa. In spite of his fame as a “southern writer,” he disliked the monolithic view of the South and of its relationship with the rest of the nation. In the lecture at the University of Mississippi he claims that “there will be no South . . . What we want —what we ought to have in view—is the No South!” (*The Negro Question* 43-44). Likewise, in a commencement address at the University of Louisiana, he states: “[Writers] will remember, moreover, that literature, like charity, “begins at home”; will write about their own state, their own town, possibly even their own little neighborhoods; but they will never conceive of their audience as less than their entire nation, and will write remembering that in these days the whole enlightened world is one vast whispering gallery” (*The Negro Question* 48). Writing about his own “little neighborhoods” in his works, for him, they are always related to and a part of “the whole enlightened world.”

Recent scholars have reflected on Cable’s local as well as global concerns. In “Moving Toward a No South: George Washington Cable’s Global Vision in *The Grandissimes*” (2012), Katherine A. Burnett reads *The Grandissimes* as Cable’s restitution of “southern” problems within a national and global discussion. Bill Hardwig, in the introduction of *Upon Provincialism* (2013), notes that Cable, who resisted the “danger of regionalism being a static and nostalgic abstraction” (7), had a sense of “decentralization.” Interestingly, both Burnett and Hardwig differentiate Cable’s global perspective from that of the recent Global South criticism. While new southernists focus on the systematic global connections shown in southern literature,

Burnett says, Cable tried to see what was considered as the “southern problem”—the problem of civil rights and race relations—as that of global human rights. Likewise, Hardwig argues that new southernists’ method of deterritorialization is “expansive and involve[s] moving outward,” whereas “Cable’s sense of decentralization is constricting and involves moving inward, away from the abstracted region to the local or specific place” (7). Cable’s global perspective, as both Burnett and Hardwig point out, comes from his strong concerns on specific, local problems. And the narrative form of *The Grandissimes* clearly shows the writers’ local and global views.

4. “The Story of Bras-Coupé”—an Anchor Story

The form of *The Grandissimes* represents the parts/regional conditions not only as something that disturbs the aesthetic whole/nation, but also as something that exposes the inseparable relationship between region and nation. While the romance between Honoré Grandissime and Aurora Nancanou seems to be an independent plot, for example, this plot proceeds in exact parallel with Honoré f. m. c.’s and Palmyre’s impossible love. Besides, although Clemence’s tragedy seems to have nothing to do with Honoré and Aurora’s love affair and Aurora does not even know of the black merchant’s existence, Clemence was killed because of broken-hearted Palmyre’s revenge against Agricola, and more importantly, because of the unsettled condition of *The Grandissimes* caused by Honoré’s secret love for Aurora. Thus, a part of the book is connected to other parts and the whole at various levels.

As I have argued so far, considering the tension between the parts/region and the whole/nation represented by the narrative form, we should read *The Grandissimes* as (a precursor of) the short-story cycle, rather than as an example of the nineteenth-century realist novel, which often assumes an organic, coherent development of the plot. Besides, this feature of the book might explain the reason why *The Grandissimes* had to be a short-story cycle, rather than a collection of short stories. Different from the short-story cycle, in the collection of sketches/short

stories each story is not necessarily interrelated to another, and does not produce a larger whole. But in trying to represent racial problems, Cable knew his characters are, regardless of their intentions, connected to one another at multiple levels, and in this respect the book had to be a short-story cycle, not a collection of short stories.

The Grandissimes includes “The Story of Bras-Coupé,” an independent short story. Perhaps what the book’s inclusion of the short story demands is that we read the volume as a short-story cycle if we want to read it correctly or profitably. Bras-Coupé is an enslaved African prince at a Grandissime plantation. Agricola allows Bras-Coupé to marry Palmyre, who has been assigned to interpret the slave’s language, knowing her secret love for Honoré. On his wedding day, Bras-Coupé gets drunk and attacks his overseer. Pursued by the angry mob of the Grandissime men, he hides himself in the swamps outside of New Orleans. In spite of Honoré’s order to prohibit the clan from punishing the enslaved prince, the mob lynches him. On the dying bed, when asked by a priest where he is going, Bras-Coupé “lifted his hand, and with an ecstatic, upward smile, whispered, ‘To—Africa’—and was gone” (193). While this episode is a part of the history of *The Grandissimes*, it also provokes a more universal issue: the brutality of slavery, colonialism, and racial injustice.

“The Story of Bras-Coupé” was originally the short story titled “Bibi.” Passed from one publisher to another, the story did not find a home. As is well known, George Parsons Lathrop, the assistant editor of Scribner’s, returned the story “on account of the unmitigatedly distressful effect of the story” (qtd. in Turner 54). Since “‘distressful effect’ was precisely what Cable intended,” Christopher E. G. Benfey notes, Cable put the story aside” and later incorporated it into *The Grandissimes* (112). Rather than using it as merely a part of the book, according to Cable, the book actually developed from “Bibi”: “In *The Grandissimes*. . . there is a short story, to and around which the whole larger work is built. It is the episode of Bras-Coupé, which was

written much as it stands before the novel was begun. I do not know that anyone has ever resented this piece of incorporation, yet I mention it to disclaim all present approval of such methods” (qtd. in Ladd, *Nationalism* 70). Whether this statement is true or not, we might say that incorporating the short story into the book was highly important for Cable. Perhaps developing the short story into the whole larger work was the only way for Cable to get it published and to cause a “distressful effect.”

According to Rolf Lundén, quite a few short-story cycles include an “anchor story” that “assumes a hegemonic position in the text,” such as “The Dead” in *Dubliners*, “Big Two-Hearted River” in *In Our Time*, and “The Bear” in *Go Down, Moses* (124). In a similar way to these stories, “The Story of Bras-Coupé,” around which the book grows, differs from other stories/chapters because of its length and significance in the book. Portraying an event that happened before Frowenfeld’s arrival in New Orleans, “The Story of Bras-Coupé” does not have direct ties to other stories. Yet, as I will argue below, the story, which is narrated by multiple characters and reappears in the book several times, functions as an “anchor story,” connecting one part to another and to the whole.

I would not say that the existence of “The Story of Bras-Coupé” makes *The Grandissimes* a short-story cycle. But it does challenge the two popular literary genres of his days, namely, the novel and the collections of sketches/short stories: “The Story of Bras-Coupé,” in short, confronts novelistic convention that successive chapters “organically” develop toward the end; it also aims at what cannot be achieved in the collections of sketches/short stories, in which each story does not necessarily have to be interrelated to one another.

From the beginning of the book, the Creole characters often mention the name of Bras-Coupé to Frowenfeld. But whenever he hears the name, he misses the opportunity to learn about it. Thus, Cable keeps deferring his exposure to the story until the middle of the book. In Chapter

27, “The Fête de Grandpère,” which depicts the grandpère’s birthday at the Grandissime mansion, Honoré’s cousin and protege Raoul Innerarity narrates the episode of Bras-Coupé in front of the young family women. On the same day, Honoré Grandissime and his half-brother, Honoré f. m. c. respectively tells Frowenfeld about the episode. Instead of describing the stories told by Raoul and two Honorés, the narrator tells his/her version of “The Story of Bras-Coupé.” Before beginning the story the narrator says, “‘A very little more than eight years ago,’ began Honoré—but not only Honoré, but Raoul also; and not only they, but another, earlier on the same day, —Honoré, the f. m. c.. But we shall not exactly follow the words of any one of these” (169). Refusing to follow the three versions of the episode of Bras-Coupé, the narrator tries to offer the readers a “neutral” version of the story.

We have no access to the three versions of the episode, but we can guess a certain purpose with which the three characters told the story. Raoul told the story at the grandpère’s birthday in front of the Grandissime women in order to celebrate and reconfirm familial unity by scapegoating the African prince; perhaps Honoré Grandissime wanted Frowenfeld to empathize with his incompetence in handling the white Creole supremacy of the clan; and Honoré f. m. c. told Frowenfeld the story so that the apothecary might learn about the reality of “free” quadroons in New Orleans—“free in form but slaves in spirit” (196)—as well as the background of his hopeless love for Palmyre. As Katsumi Satouchi maintains, “The Story of Bras-Coupé” functions as a measure of one’s level of enlightenment; a prejudiced character cannot notice the implied irony of the story and regards Bras-Coupé as a poor barbarian not as a hero fighting against slavery (371).

The same is equally true of the readers. As Barbara Ladd notes, “The Story of Bras-Coupé” told by the narrator works not to “present anything resembling an ‘authorized’ version of events but to signal for the astute reader the ‘constructedness’ of the story” (64). Cable tried to let

the readers see that there is no “true” history, and every history is constructed with a certain purpose. Importantly, the narrator’s—and Cable’s—purpose to construct the history of Bras-Coupé is to let only the readers get a peek into the “neutral” version and interpret it by themselves. The narrator refuses to tell us not only the three versions of the story, but also Frowenfeld’s response to and thoughts on the story. By doing so, the narrator rejects northern, and perhaps national views on the history of Bras-Coupé. “The Story of Bras-Coupé,” in short, brings the readers beyond the narrow world of the Creole family, New Orleans, the South, and the United States. Cable allows the readers (but only the eager ones) to see the world even better than a Creole pacifist, an intelligent mulatto, and an American emancipationist, without being restricted by the notion of race, region, and nation.

The Bras-Coupé story is not just retold many times, but also reappears many times in different ways. When enslaved, the African prince named himself “Bras-Coupé,” meaning “the Arm Cut Off” in French, in order to show that “his tribe, in losing him, had lost its strong right arm close off at the shoulder.” By doing so, he “made himself a type of all Slavery, turning into flesh and blood the truth that all Slavery is maiming” (171). In fact, the image of Bras-Coupé/the Arm Cut Off often appears in the book as a symbol of slavery. For example, a gun-shot wound in Palmyre’s shoulder, which she suffered when trying to kill Agricola, seems to suggest that without a proper treatment by Frowenfeld, she might have become another Bras-Coupé. As another example, the tragedy of Clemence, who is caught by the Grandissime men near the swamp on the suspicion of helping Palmyre’s revenge against Agricola and shot by someone of the clan once they let her go, is quite parallel to that of Bras-Coupé, who was caught and lynched by the Grandissime men near the swamp on the suspicion of damaging the clan. Furthermore, Honoré f. m. c., told by Frowenfeld to give himself to those people “who groan, or should groan, under the degraded lot which is theirs and yours in common,” says that he cannot be Toussaint

l'Ouverture, the leader of the Haitian Revolution; "Ah cannod be one Toussaint l'Ouverture. Ah cannod trah to be. Hiv I trah, I h-only s'all soogceed to be one Bras-Coupé" (196). As his word "I h-only s'all soogceed to be one Bras-Coupé" shows, in *The Grandissimes* every black character has the potential to become a Bras-Coupé.

Thus, the image of Bras-Coupé/the Arm Cut Off reappears not only as a black character but also as an object. Perhaps most eerily representing the endlessness of the Bras-Coupé story is a little figure Palmyre made— "the image, in myrtle-wax, moulded and painted with some rude skill, of a negro's bloody arm cut off near the shoulder—a Bras-Coupé—with a dirk grasped in its hand" (314). Jenny Franchot writes that a "relic of slave insurgency, Palmyre's sculptured arm radically condenses the narrative complexities of Bras-Coupé's story that otherwise filter through the novel's master narrative as the fragmentary legend that everyone is seeking to hear and to tell" (46). But more precisely, with or without the sculptured arm, the image of Bras-Coupé/the Arm Cut Off reappears many times as something that cannot be filtered through the main plots as a fragmentary legend. Whether in a main plot or a sub plot, Bras-Coupé recurs throughout the book.

Even though the story of Bras-Coupé is just an event that happened within a Creole family, it is the story of every black/slave and of everyone who tries to tell and listen to it. In this sense "The Story of Bras-Coupé" is neither incorporated into nor drowned out by the nation's story as a mere local story; rather, it is both a national and a regional story. Functioning as an "anchor story" of the short-story cycle, "The Story of Bras-Coupé" connects a part/local condition to another, and to the whole/nation. Further, considering Bras-Coupé's image as a type of all slavery, Cable's strong interest in New Orleans let him see what seem to be local problems in a broader perspective and recognize them not only as national but also as global ones. "The Story of Bras-Coupé" shows that a local matter is always and already a national as well as global one,

and that racial problems always go beyond the notion of “the North,” “the South,” and “the nation.”

In writing a novel set in the South, Cable encountered the difficulty of creating a large story about the history and racial issues of New Orleans, which he had depicted in sketches/short stories. He solved this problem by writing these issues as small paintings while creating a larger, national story, which brings a sense of totality into the whole book. As a result, *The Grandissimes* reaches the short-story cycle form, which is a collection of small stories but simultaneously creates a larger whole. Causing the readers’ forgetfulness of details and the tension between narrative parts and the whole, the unique form annuls the monolithic distinction between the North and the South as well as the nation and the region, illuminating racial problems as what go beyond such binaries. In sum, because of the difficulty of writing racial issues in a novel, Cable creates something like a novel which brings about a different effect from the novelistic form, and therefore, he achieved “something great and thought-compelling,” or “God’s truth,” which he thought the novelistic plot of his days could not offer.

Although *The Grandissimes* is not a “proper” short-story cycle, what its narrative form tried to achieve—portraying those who dropped out of a large, national story and who convey a “truth,” which is beyond the monolithic view of “the South,” “the North,” and the nation—foretells the rise of the southern short-story cycle. As we will see in the following chapters, later works that more fully embrace the short-story cycle form achieve what Cable is trying to do more successfully. Rereading *The Grandissimes*, which Louis D. Rubin, Jr. once called “the first ‘modern’ southern novel” (78), not as a failed novel but as one of the earliest short-story cycles written in the South, might give us a hint as to why the region has produced many short-story cycle masterpieces.

CHAPTER 2

READING, MAPPING, AND EXPERIENCING THE REGION: CHARLES CHESNUTT'S *THE CONJURE WOMAN*

As I discussed in the previous chapter, in *The Grandissimes*, George Washington Cable struggled to achieve, in his words, “something great and thought-compelling,” or “God’s sweet, green nourishing truth,” without “telling,” “pointing,” or “fatiguing” the readers (Turner 80). As a result, he stumbled upon a form that shares many of the qualities of the short-story cycle, and this form enabled him to represent the accepted notion of “the South” but simultaneously depict the things left out of it. While a larger story constructed through the whole book embodies a romantic reunion between the North and the South, individual parts of the volume have a powerful presence as noise in the national story, illustrating racial issues that cannot be integrated into concepts such as “the South,” “the North,” and the Nation. In a similar way, Charles Waddell Chesnutt, Cable’s literary mentee, aimed to educate his readers, especially white readers, through his writing. He wrote in his diary:

Besides, If I do write, I shall write for a purpose, a high, holy purpose, and this will inspire me to greater effort. The object of my writings would be not so much the elevation of the colored people as the elevation of the whites, —for I consider the unjust spirit of caste which is so insidious as to pervade a whole nation, and so powerful as to subject a whole race and all connected with it to scorn and social ostracism—I consider this a barrier to the moral progress of the American people; and I would be one of the first to head a determined, organized crusade against it. (*Journals* 139-40)

Reading *The Conjure Woman* as an early example of the short-story cycle,¹ this chapter aims to clarify how Chesnutt needed and explored the form in order to achieve his “high, holy purpose” and to rewrite southern plantation fiction. I especially focus on the pattern of repetition and expansion produced by the form, and its relation to Chesnutt’s treatment of his fictional space/place. By using the pattern of repetition and expansion, Chesnutt lets his characters and

¹ Some scholars have read *The Conjure Woman* as an early example of the short-story cycle. See Dunn and Morris xxi, Luscher 366, Pacht 31, Nagel 4, Greene and Young-Minor 22, and Sollors 6.

readers get familiar with the region based on the realities of slave life.

Born in 1858, in Cleveland, Ohio, as a free African American of mixed-race heritage, Charles Waddell Chesnutt moved to his parents' hometown of Fayetteville, North Carolina, which he once described as "the town where I spent my own boyhood and early manhood, and where my own forebears have lived and died and laid their bones" (Chesnutt to Page, May 20, 1898). Although he returned to Cleveland in 1884, "his personal experiences with southern folklore and racial prejudice would be a major influence on Chesnutt's writing throughout his life" (Burnett and Lemon 219). In the mid-1880s he revisited his father-in-law's garden in North Carolina and listened to a folk tale told by an old African American man, and this experience encouraged him to write "The Goophered Grapevine" (1887), the first conjure tale told by Uncle Julius McAdoo, followed by three more conjure stories ("Po' Sandy," "The Conjuror's Revenge," and "Dave's Neckliss"). Ambitious to become a successful writer, Chesnutt became more interested in publishing a novel, rather than short stories, but in 1898, Walter Hines Page, an editor at Houghton Mifflin, asked him to "produce five or six more" conjure stories so that they could publish them in a collection (Andrews, "Introduction" xxvi-xxvii). The ambitious writer wrote six new conjure stories in less than two months, and the next year Houghton Mifflin published *The Conjure Woman*, which consists of seven conjure stories.

Chesnutt wrote *The Conjure Woman* as a collection of short stories, rather than a novel: "[*The Conjure Woman*] was not, strictly speaking, a novel, though it has been so called, but a collection of short stories in Negro dialect, put in the mouth of an old Negro gardener, and related by him in each instance to the same audience, which consisted of the Northern lady and gentlemen who employed him"² ("Post-Bellum" 221). Chesnutt also wrote in his letter to Walter

² This statement of Chesnutt seems a little inappropriate considering that most contemporary reviews of *The Conjure Woman* that are available on the archive website The Charles Chesnutt Digital Archive regard the volume as a collection of tales/short-stories. This fact, however, indicates how keenly he was conscious of the form of the

Hines Page about his plan to create a collection of short stories: “I imagine the tales in this batch are similar enough and yet unlike enough, to make a book” (Chesnutt to Page, May 20, 1898).

Chesnutt’s intention to make the book a collection of short stories rather than a novel perhaps comes from his awareness of the trend of literature in those days, namely, collections of plantation tales including Joel Chandler Harris’s *Uncle Remus: His Song and His Sayings* (1880) and Thomas Nelson Page’s *In Ole Virginia; Or, Marse Chan and Other Stories* (1887), in both of which an ex-slave expresses his fidelity to his old master and nostalgic longing for the good old days. While participating in this trend of literature, Chesnutt reacted against it as well. Pointing out southern plantation fiction’s stereotypic treatment of federal ex-slaves, Chesnutt once criticized Maurice Thompson, a southern writer who published some short-stories depicting small Indiana towns; “Maurice Thompson’s characters are generally an old, vulgar master, who, when not drunk or asleep, is amusing himself by beating an old negro. Thos N Page and H S Edwards and Joel C Harris give us the sentimental and devoted negro who prefers kicks to halfpence” (Chesnutt to Cable, June 13, 1890).

While many of the contemporary reviews of *The Conjure Woman* characterized the book as “a close rival of ‘Uncle Remus’” (“Plantation Tales”) or “not as good as Uncle Remus’ stories” (“Current Literature”), recent critiques have regarded Chesnutt’s volume as belonging to the large family of the plantation fiction but simultaneously more complicated than Harris’s and Page’s works in terms of its structure and purpose.³ In *The Narrative Forms of Southern Community* (1999), Scott Romine argues that the narrative form of Thomas Nelson Page’s *In Ole Virginia* “recuperate[s] the former slave’s authentic, rather than performative, commitment to the

book.

³ For example, Gretchen Martin insists that Chesnutt utilizes a conventional narrative structure in order to “create overt and covert content vastly different from the traditional plantation school” (69); and Richard H. Brodhead argues that one difference of Chesnutt’s practice of the plantation fiction is that “without in any sense exploding the artifice of this kind of tale, Chesnutt lightly underlines the fact of its artificiality” (196).

social order.” Romine briefly mentions Chesnutt’s *The Conjure Woman* as a counterpart text that provides “a kind of photographic negative of the positive images” produced by Page’s conservative text (97). Surely, if the traditional plantation romance recuperates the hegemonic order in the community, *The Conjure Woman* does not exactly recuperate the hegemonic order; in each story, Julius’s performative narrative slightly changes the circumstances surrounding the main characters.

One thing that makes Chesnutt’s book more of a short-story cycle than a collection of plantation tales is its focus on a shared geography. Michelle Pacht notes that the “unity provided by *The Conjure Woman*’s single setting, repeated characters, and elaborate frame allows it to be classified as an early example of the American short story cycle” (29). Throughout the volume Chesnutt repeatedly raises specific names of geographic space such as Lumberton Plank Road, Wilmington Road, Beaver Creek, Rockfish Creek, Front Street, Mineral Spring Swamp, the Cape Fear River, and the plantations owned by Mars McAdoo, Mars Jim McGee, Mars Marrabo McSwayne, Mars Henry Brayboy, and the Murchisons. As Sarah Ingle notes, “the common setting of Chesnutt’s conjure tales links the author’s works together in ways that create a sense of continuity and familiarity,” similar to William Faulkner’s fictional Yoknapatawpha County (150). Moreover, Lena M. Whitt points out that the readers can draw a map of the fictional county if they follow Chesnutt’s reference to places in the area (43), and in fact, the Norton Critical Edition of *The Conjure Stories* includes the two maps of Chesnutt’s fictional region, “Map of the Terrain of Chesnutt’s Conjure Tales” and “Detailed Map of Julius’s Neighborhood in Chesnutt’s Conjure Tales.”

In contrast to Chesnutt’s emphasis on geographic names, neither Harris nor Page attaches any importance to names of geographic sites. Most stories of Uncle Remus are narrated in Uncle Remus’s cabin, and in his tales the old man refers to geographic sites just as “the road,” “the

woods,” or “the yard”; in short, what happened to the main characters such as Br’er Rabbit, Br’er Fox, and Br’er Bear is more significant than where it happened. As its title shows, the stories of *In Ole Virginia* are set in Virginia before and during the war, but the stories do not have a specific setting in common. In “Marse Chan,” for example, ex-slave narrator Sam tells a northerner visiting Virginia the story about the two plantations in eastern Virginia, owned by men whom the narrator calls “Marse Chan” and “ole Cun’l Chahmb’lin.” Similarly, in the next story “Un’ Edinburg’s Drowning,” a northerner listens to a story about a plantation owner “Marse George,” told by George’s former slave “Unc’ Edinburg,” on “the muddiest road in eastern Virginia” (39). Although these stories hold a similar pattern, reading both stories does not provide new information or perspective on a geographic place.

By choosing a specific locale as his tales’ setting and illustrating specific events that happened there, Chesnutt rewrote the representation of the “exotic” South that his (northern) readers expected. As I explained in the previous chapter by referring to Nina Silber’s *The Romance of Reunion* (1993), traditional plantation tales, offering the stereotypical figure of blacks as well as the South, enable the northern readers to reevaluate the South as an object of interest and accept the region as a part of the nation. Chesnutt dared to use the same literary mode in order to represent an alternative South that is left out of representations of the region depicted by his contemporary (white) writers. In other words, as Christopher Bundrick puts it, he “tries to hijack Harris’s pastoral motif in an effort to reveal the other side of . . . the two-faced South” (48). As studies of the short-story cycle genre have pointed out, having a single setting where all actions take place and which produces topographical unity is a typical characteristic of this genre. Many traditional short-story cycles such as James Joyce’s *Dubliners*, Sherwood Anderson’s *Winesburg, Ohio*, William Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses*, Eudora Welty’s *The Golden Apples*, Gloria Naylor’s *The Women of Brewster Place* and Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on*

Mango Street have a unifying setting. In some works, such as *Winesburg, Ohio* and *The Women of Brewster Place*, the place that reveals a wide variety of aspects in each short story almost becomes the central character. Besides, since such short-story cycles illustrate a particular geographic area repeatedly, the reader can relate one geographical location to another, delineating a map of the area. Some works, in fact, include a fictional map of the setting such as the one included in the first edition of *Winesburg, Ohio*. Other works, without a physical map, have tempted the readers to draw a map. For instance, there is a website named *The Mapping Dubliners Project*, which is “a reference tool and critical resource for scholars and students who want to explore the geospatial elements of James Joyce’s *Dubliners*” (Mulliken), and where the Google Map version of *Dubliners* map is available.

There must be multiple reasons why so many short-story cycles have adopted a single setting and represented an area on a “map” (whether or not the book physically includes a map), but perhaps the act of reading a short-story cycle is roughly parallel to that of mapping a locale. Robert M. Luscher describes a locale as one of “shared intertextual features” employed in a short-story cycle for its coherence. He notes, “[a] locale such as an apartment complex, neighborhood, town, or region provides stories with a literal common ground that may also become metaphoric, transcending the role of stage or background. In essence, the gradual spatial development of a place replicated the imaginative assembly of the stories themselves into a larger whole” (“The American Short-Story Cycle” 362). In relating one story to another, and one geographical spot to another, the readers are able to establish a larger whole—a full-length picture of a book and a place.

I would not claim that Chesnutt intentionally explored the short-story cycle—which was not established in his day—in using the genre’s affinity for shared geography. Instead, I believe that Chesnutt, choosing a single locale for his conjure stories’ setting and letting the northern

couple buy the land and put it to new use as a vineyard, repeated and expanded the locale through the volume in order to let his characters and readers “experience” the region.

Experiencing the region here means getting familiar with the region based on the realities of slave life, rather than the idealized, nostalgic mystique of the “Old South” which traditional plantation tales often represented. The result is that the book acquired the qualities of the form that is later called the short-story cycle, in which topographical unity produced by a single setting enables a writer to offer a realistic portrayal of the place.

1. The Northerners’ Experience of the Region

As Nina Silber argues, fictions devoted to plantation themes and a reunion between the North and South sold extremely well in the 1890s. Often represented through marriage and financial cooperation, the reconciliation was effected only because middle-class northerners learned to love the old plantation aristocracy and elements of the old South’s racial code. Silber notes,

[T]he defining feature of the black presence in these dramas of reunion was the role of blacks in the class structure, as servants committed to their own social caste as well as to the class status and position of the masters. For the northern middle and upper classes of the late nineteenth century, all too familiar with labor unrest and turmoil, these depictions of faithful African American workers, passionately committed to their own inferior social rank, held a special significance. (109)

Thus, the reunion was only possible through the continued oppression of black people, oppression that was muted by the old southern myth.

Although *The Conjure Woman* seems to follow the formula of romantic reunion appearing in the fictions of conciliation, the book represents a reunion that is different from the one disguising the oppression of black people. Chesnutt adopted the patterns of repetition and expansion made possible by the narrative form in order to represent the realities of slavery and the ideals of post-bellum society. While the volume as a whole makes each individual story take

part in a cumulative process of a metaphorical reconciliation, the repetition of Julius's narrative subverts this narrative trend. In other words, by repeatedly describing struggles between Julius and the northern couple through the tales about slaves' predicaments, he clarifies gaps, or tensions, between the book's parts and whole.

The Conjure Woman, which consists of seven short stories told by ex-slave Julius McAdoo, repeats stories that follow a particular pattern, but it also simultaneously expands a larger story throughout the volume. First, the short-story cycle form emphasizes the repetition of Julius narrating: in every story Chesnutt "utilizes the tale-within-a-tale frame" which makes John "always the first and last to speak, leaving his roles as superior and interpreter intact" (White 90). Further, each story in the volume exhibits a similar pattern: John and Annie attempt to do something to change the old plantation—buying a mule, clearing up the woods, or tearing down the old schoolhouse, for example—which Julius finds inconvenient or objectionable. Then Julius begins to tell of a past story that includes the mysterious power of conjuring and that is somewhat parallel to John and Annie's present situation. By telling them a story, Julius tries to manipulate the white northerners and by the end of the story he indirectly persuades them to change or not to carry out their plan. As Richard Brodhead claims, "we learn to recognize the set moves of a certain formal protocol" when "Uncle Julius always shows up at an opportune moment yet again, with yet another story to tell in which someone yet again seeks out 'the cunjuh wom'n up tuh deh Lumberton road' who yet again (for a piece) 'wukd huh roots'" in Chesnutt's conjure stories (196).

Whereas the book's cycle form emphasizes the repetition of Julius's narrative, the form produces a sense of development or expansion in the volume. According to Rold Lundén, one of the important characteristics of the short-story cycle is "the successive modification or expansion of the text, i.e. that each individual story takes part in a cumulative process of meaning" (34). In

the case of *The Conjure Woman*, the passage of time expands the text. Although we do not know exactly how long has passed from the first story to the last, at the beginning of “Sis’ Becky’s Pickaninny,” which was written specially for *The Conjure Woman* as the fifth tale of the volume, John says that “toward the end of [their] second year” in North Carolina, Annie’s ailment “took an unexpected turn for the worse” (102). It is presumable, therefore, that at least three years have passed by the end of the volume, and we can see various changes that have happened for the three years. At the beginning of the volume John finds “shrewdness” in Julius’s eyes and his character (6) and laughs at the tales told by Julius, but gradually begins to enjoy listening to them. Moreover, in the last story “Hot-Foot Hannibal,” a metaphorical reconciliation of the North and the South is achieved: Malcom Murchison, a southerner, and Annie’s sister Mabel, a northerner, get married after a quarrel. Furthermore, when Malcom and Mabel set up housekeeping and offer Julius to enter their service, “he preferred to remain with” John and Annie for “some reason or other” (130). By the end of the volume, John, Annie, and Julius seemingly come to construct a better relationship, which symbolizes the rapprochement between the North and the South.

Curiously enough, Chesnutt’s contemporary readers seem utterly uninterested in the repetition and successive expansion of Julius’s conjure tales. Only two out of seventy-two reviews that are available on the archive website *The Charles Chesnutt Digital Archive* refer to the enjoyment of reading the book as a whole: for instance, one reviewer notes that “they are good tales—of a different order, but good, and though each is complete in itself, the seven make a series of charmingly humorous stories” (“New Books”), and another writes that “Taken each by itself or as a whole, these stories from the pen of Mr. Charles W. Chesnutt are remarkably interesting” (“Current Fiction”). In addition to these two reviews, another three reviews mention the last story “Hot-Foot Hannibal,” which, according to one of them, “ends a very pleasant little

book in a very pleasant way” (*The Conjure Woman*), though without interpreting it in terms of a metaphorical reconciliation of the North and the South. One notes that, for example, in the end of the last story Julius successfully brings “two estrayed lovers together and effecting a reconciliation—by prearrangement with the young man” (“Darkey Superstition”) and the other concludes that when Uncle Julius tells about “Hot-Foot Hannibal” “for the purpose of reuniting a pair of young lovers temporarily estranged, we feel that this is the real Julius, relic of plantation days, and the other Juliuses in the book are mere figures” (Anon).

Rather than finding pleasure in feeling a sense of development or expansion in *The Conjure Woman*, Chesnutt’s contemporary readers seem to enjoy “studying” the pleasant elements of the old South’s racial code displayed in the volume, which made them move toward the rapprochement that Silber discusses. Many contemporary reviews use the word “study” to describe the volume, evaluating it as “a study of race characteristics” (“That Conjure Woman”), a “psychological study of the negro” (Mabie), or “the study . . . of North Carolina ‘darky’ life on a plantation” (Anon). Frequently using the terms including “amusing,” “delightful,” and “pathos” as well, the northern readers seem to find the volume to be “amusing blendings of the grave and the comical” (“Literature”) and “A cunning mixture of pathos and humor” (“Plantation Tales”). In short, “if we put aside all questions regarding slavery, as once existed in the United States” (Anon), or perhaps because the book enables them to put aside such questions, the readers can enjoy studying black lives in the Old South illustrated in *The Conjure Woman*, which is “replete with the humor and tragedy of slavery, so skillfully blended that often one does not know where the one begins and the other ends” (Morgan). Further, considering that some reviews see the sequence between the Old South and the postbellum South, where witchcraft “still beclouds the intelligence and hinders the development of the colored people” (“Current Literature”), it is plausible that through their “study” the northern readers learned to accept not only the old

plantation aristocracy but also white southerners of their day, who show “crying need for education” (Anon).

The fact that Chesnutt’s contemporary readers ignored or were uninterested in the successive expansion of *The Conjure Woman* and read it just as a “collection of delightful southern myths” (“Book Notes”) reveals the writer’s complex and subtle approach to fictions devoted to plantation fantasy. Although some might argue that Uncle Julius’s role in bringing together two white people for marriage is perilously close to that of the “magical Negro” in contemporary fiction, by demonstrating gaps, or tensions, between the book’s parts and whole, Chesnutt proves that only the endless struggles between whites and blacks as well as southerners and northerners can bring the mutual understanding embodied by the ending of the volume. This feature of the book differentiates the rapprochement toward which Chesnutt was moving from the one aimed at by his contemporary writers, such as Ruth McEnery Stuart, Joel Chandler Harris, and Thomas Nelson Page, with whom many contemporary reviews consider Chesnutt to be ranked.

While the repetition of Julius’s narrative makes it easy for readers to anticipate what will happen in a story, as I noted above, because of the repetition, the works take on a similar aspect. The stories in *The Conjure Woman* depict several plantations surrounding Dugal’ McAdoo’s Plantation—such as Henry Brayboy’s Plantation, Marrabo McSwayne’s Plantation, “Mars Jeems” McLean’s Plantation, Dunkin McSwayne’s Plantation, Marrabo Utley’s Plantation, Jim McGee’s Plantation, and Old Munchison Place, most of whose names begin with “M(c),” suggesting their Scottish origin. In addition to their names, these slave owners have similar characteristics; as William L. Andrews points out: “the parsimonious Scots in Chesnutt’s conjure tales cheat each other, indulge their gambling vices, hunt down their runaways, argue with their wives, curse their slaves, and worry over their bankbooks” (261). Moreover, slaves working at

these plantations also lack individuality and have similar characteristics—some of them are diligent and obedient while others are cunning and lazy. Although each story typically focuses on one or two slaves working at a different plantation, because of their similar characteristics, it is difficult to distinguish one slave from another. In the stories narrated by Julius, in short, there are usually only three categories of people: the whites from the South, (ex) slaves, and conjurers.

The repetition brought by the narrative form thus stresses not only the ordinariness of Julius's "coaching" the northerners but also that of adversities suffered by slaves. Slaves in Julius's conjure tales are easily sold for their masters' convenience ("The Goophered Grapevine," "Sis' Becky's Pickaninny," and "Hot-Foot Hannibal"), ruthlessly exploited by their cruel masters ("Mars Jeems's Nightmare"), separated from their family/sweetheart ("Po' Sandy" and "Sis' Becky's Pickaninny"), treated nastily by a "cunjuh man" who live "in de free-nigger sett'ement" ("The Conjurer's Revenge" and "The Gray Wolf's Ha'nt"), and victimize one another ("Hot-Foot Hannibal"). In addition, considering that in most stories slaves use conjures to overcome inconveniences or injustices arising from their hardships, the repetition of conjure tales suggests slaves' day-to-day struggles in and resistance against a white dominated society. Furthermore, since in almost every story John and Annie try to do something to change their new property, former Dugal McAdoo's plantation, and Julius, pursuing his own interests, tries to manipulate the white northerners by telling conjure tales, we might see the repetition of Julius's tales as day-to-day negotiations between the northerners and the ex-slave.

It is through these patterns of repetition and expansion brought forth by the narrative form that Annie, John, and the readers get familiar with the fictional setting. In "The Goophered Grapevine," the first story of *The Conjure Woman*, after giving an account of his and his wife's moving to Patesville, North Carolina, the narrator John tells about the day when they visited a place that he thought might suit his grape-culture.

One day I went over with my wife to show her the place. We drove out of the town over a long wooden bridge that spanned a spreading mill-pond, passed the long whitewashed fence surrounding the county fair-ground, and struck into a road so sandy that the horse's feet sank to the fetlocks. Our route lay partly up hill and partly down, for we were in the sand-hill county; we drove past cultivated farms, and then by abandoned fields grown up in scrub-oak and short-leaved pine, and once or twice through the solemn aisles of the virgin forest, where the tall pines, well-nigh meeting over the narrow road, shut out the sun, and wrapped us in cloistral solitude. Once, at a cross-roads, I was in doubt as to the turn to take, and we sat there waiting ten minutes—we had already caught some of the native infection of restfulness—for some human being to come along, who could direct us on our way. At length a little negro girl appeared, walking straight as an arrow, with a piggin full of water on her head. After a little patient investigation, necessary to overcome the child's shyness, we learned what we wished to know, and at the end of about five miles from the town reached our destination. (5)

The fact that Chesnutt added this long paragraph when he incorporated “The Goophered Grapevine” into *The Conjure Woman* is important because this scene seems to foretell what will happen to John and Annie in the following stories. At the beginning of the volume John and Annie are “lost” in the unfamiliar region, but through the stories they find someone “who could direct us on our way” and finally reach their destination. In fact, at the end of “The Goophered Grapevine” John decides to hire Julius as their “coachman,” and having Julius as a coachman, the northern couple never get lost in the following stories.

Julius, as a coachman, leads John and Annie to their destinations. In the stories following “The Goophered Grapevine,” the northern couple gradually get familiar with the local geography. As I mentioned, “Hot-Foot Hannibal,” the last story of *The Conjure Woman*, describes the reunion between Malcom Murchison, a local plantation owner, and Annie's sister Mabel. Significantly, this reunion is the result of the northerners' acquisition of geographical knowledge and their ability to choose a right way. One afternoon John, Annie, and her sister Mabel drive to a neighbor's vineyard. At the beginning of the story Annie insists on taking “the short road” to their destination while Julius recommends “de big road.” Then, Julius tells the

northerners the story of Chloe, who has lost her beloved Jeff betrayed by Hannibal, his rival in love, and whose ghost appears on the short road: “Chloe’s ha’nt comes eve’y ebenin’ en sents down unner dat willer-tree en waits fer Jeff, er e’s e walks up en down de road yander, lookin’ en lookin’, en waitin’ en waitin’, fer her sweethea’t w’at ain’ neber, neber come back ter her no mo” (129). After listening to the story, John, Annie, and Mabel choose the long road instead of the short and happen to meet a servant of Malcolm Murchison, with whom Mabel has recently broken up with, and to learn that Malcom is “gwine ‘way on de boat ter Noo Yo’k dis ebenin’” (225). Then, Mabel encounters Malcom on his way to the wharf and the young couple gets back together.

“Hot-Foot Hannibal” is a work Chesnutt wrote as the last story of *The Conjure Woman*, not one of the stories that had been published in a magazine. The last scene of the story—the reunion between Mabel/the North and Malcom/the South—completes a storyline and brings a kind of wholeness to the book. The “right” way the characters choose at the end of the story is, however, ultimately the North’s colonization of the South and the reestablishment of slavery; John becomes in essence a southern slave owner, and Malcom, who used to be a local celebrity before the war, barely maintains his plantation by marrying Mabel. In this sense, the outcome achieved through the whole book is neither a true solution nor reconciliation. Symbolized by the episode in which the northerners reluctantly chose “the big road” instead of the short one to their destination, the North and the South still have a long way to reach a true solution/reconciliation.

Yet more importantly, Chesnutt hints at the irony involved in the book’s conclusion. Symbolized by Chloe’s ghost, who comes every evening “lookin’ en lookin’, en waitin’ en waitin’, fer her sweethea’t w’at ain’ neber, neber come back ter her no mo,” the book’s ending leaves an unpleasant aftertaste. In other words, the book’s form exposes what cannot be fully obscured by its denouement and reveals the permanent reality of the region. Besides, the book’s

“happy” ending remains mysterious. Seeing Malcom and Mabel’s “reconciliation,” John narrates, “I do not know whether or not Julius had a previous understanding with Malcolm Murchison by which he was to drive us round by the long road that day, nor do I know exactly what motive influenced the old man’s exertions in the matter” (228). Chesnutt does not let John and the readers fully know the reason why Julius has brought the northerners to the long road so as to reunite Mabel and Murchison, by which the ex-slave gains nothing.

Given the unnatural sequence of events leading up to Mabel and Murchison’s reconciliation, it can be presumed that Annie, who wants her sister to marry Malcolm and remain in the South, has found out in advance which road Malcolm would take that day, and has Julius tell Mabel the ghost story of Cloe in order to reunite the couple. When the group is on the long road, after “a few words exchanged in an undertone between” Annie and Mabel, Annie makes Julius stop the carriage to pick flowers, while Mabel disappears. Then Julius takes an “unconscionably long time” finding the fan that Annie has dropped, and not long after he picks up the fan, Mabel and Malcolm appear “arm in arm” and with their faces “aglow with the light of love” (130). Considering the fact that Julius’ tale always ends up working to the advantage of himself or Annie, both of whom are in different ways excluded from white patriarchy but in fact have John under their control, it makes sense for them to plot together. If this is true, we might say that it is a collaboration or cooperation between an ex-slave and a northern woman that brings about the metaphorical reconciliation between the North and the South, which seems mainly symbolized by the northern man becoming a southern slave owner and the southern man maintaining his plantation.

In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (1990), James C. Scott examines the many guises taken by the powerful and powerless respectively for their own ends and the interaction between them. Using the terms “the public transcript” and “the hidden

transcripts,” he analyzes many forms of subordination such as slavery, serfdom, and caste subordination.

Instead, I try to make out a case for a different study of power that uncovers contradictions, tensions, and immanent possibilities. Every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, a “hidden transcript” that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant. The powerful, for their part, also develop a hidden transcript representing the practices and claims of their rule that cannot be openly avowed. A comparison of the hidden transcript of the weak with that of the powerful and of both hidden transcripts to the public transcript of power relations offers a substantially new way of understanding resistance to domination. (xii)

Both Julius and Annie—the powerless and the powerful, though Annie can be categorized as the powerless because of her subordinate status to white men—create what Scott calls a hidden transcript, which reacts back on the public transcription, “the self-portrait of dominant elites as they would have themselves seen” (18). In *The Conjure Woman*, the public transcript is represented by John’s narrative as a northerner who is now a plantation owner in the South. Moreover, it might be possible that Julius, who was invited by Mabel and Malcom into their service but “preferred to remain with” John and Annie for “some reason or other” (130), chooses to stay with the northern couple not because he prefers the couple but because they are easier to manage than Mabel and Malcom, especially Malcom, a southern man who must be skilled at dealing with black people. As long as he stays with John and Annie, Julius can manipulate them for his own benefit, which benefits Annie as well.

Julius and Annie create hidden transcripts through telling and listening to conjure stories. Through the repetition of the ex-slave’s narrative, his view of the neighborhood strongly influences Annie’s own. When Julius tells the northerners about a place, he always explains who lived there and what happened. As Joshua Kotzin maintains, “Uncle Julius tells a story about a place or a building or a plot of land or a river crossing, and what emerges as most significant is his ability to give these places meaning, to ‘conjure up a meaningful truth about these places’

past” (71). For Julius, a place is always related to an event experienced by the blacks: for instance, the sawmill is where Sandy was sawed up in “Po’ Sandy,” and Mineral Spring Swamp is where Prims found the conjure man’s shoot in “The Conjuror’s Revenge.”

Narrating the conjure stories, Julius successfully makes Annie adopt his way of seeing the neighborhood. At the beginning of “Po’ Sandy,” for example, Annie asks John to build a new kitchen in the back yard. John decides to use the lumber of the old school house on the northeast corner of his vineyard to save expense. But hearing Sandy’s story told by Julius—Sandy, a slave who turned into a tree to stay with his wife but was sawed into lumber, haunts the schoolhouse made of the lumber—Annie decides not to build a kitchen out of the lumber of the old schoolhouse. When asked by John if she allowed herself “to be influenced by that absurdly impossible yarn which Julius was spinning to-day,” she answers, “I know the story is absurd . . . and I am not so silly as to believe it. But I don’t think I should ever be able to take any pleasure in that kitchen if it were built out of the lumber” (22). Whether or not she believes in Julius’s story, after hearing it, she cannot but see the schoolhouse as a place haunted by Sandy’s spirit. At the end of “Po’ Sandy,” Julius asks her if he could hold the meetings of a black church at the schoolhouse and John realizes that they have been taken in. Importantly, moreover, Annie’s view of the neighborhood forces John to change his plan—to use the lumber of the schoolhouse in order to save expenses—and to buy new lumber. As he puts it, “Of course she had her way” (22). John can never reject his wife’s suggestion concerning the “land and the things” (90).

While John regards the story of “Po’ Sandy” as a fairy tale, it forms Annie’s reality. Yi-Fu Tuan’s notion of “space” and “place” might help us understand how the tale of “Po’ Sandy” forms Annie’s reality. Defining “experience” as “a cover-all term for the various modes through which a person knows and constructs a reality” (8), in *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977), Tuan argues that an “object or place achieves concrete reality when our

experience of it is total, that is, through all the senses as well as with the active and reflective mind” (18). According to Tuan, “[a]bstract space, lacking significance other than strangeness, becomes concrete place, filled with meaning” (199). In short, “[w]hen space feels thoroughly familiar to us, it has become place” (73). I claim that this transformation from space to place is what Annie experiences in “Po’ Sandy.” While the sawmill and the old schoolhouse have been what Tuan calls “abstract space” for Annie, by listening to Julius’s tale, the sawmill becomes a “place” where Sandy was sawed up and the schoolhouse a “place” which was made of the lumber produced by Sandy’s dismembered body. Annie, crying “What a system [slavery] was . . . under which such things were possible!” and “Poor Tennie!” (22) after listening to Sandy’s story told by Julius, understands and sympathizes with the situation surrounding the slaves. In short, she experiences the “space” where the slaves lived and it becomes a “place.” Thus, she constructs a reality that she has never before imagined.

Not only in “Po’ Sandy,” but also in other stories, through Julius’s coaching, Annie experiences the “space” of her neighborhood and comes to understand it as “place.” In “Mars Jeems’s Nightmare,” for instance, she comes to see her neighborhood, the former plantation of Mars Jeems McLean, as a place where the cruel white owner had terrible nightmares because of a spell placed by Aunt Peggy; in “Sis’ Becky’s Pickaninny,” she recognizes the land “down on de Wilm’l’ton Roadm ‘bout ten miles fum heah, des befo’ you gits ter Black Swamp” as the home of Sis’ Becky, whose child turned into a bird in order to meet his mother.

Although John also gets acquainted with the neighborhood through Julius’s “coaching,” the white northerner’s view of the region is quite different from Julius’s and Annie’s. John finds Julius’s knowledge on the region “very useful” because it helps him to establish his new business. He sees the neighborhood from the viewpoint of an entrepreneur; in other words, the narrator uses Julius’s knowledge of the neighborhood in order to make a profit. He continues,

Toward my tract of land and the things that were on it—the creeks, the swamps, the hills, the meadows, the stones, the trees—he maintained a peculiar personal attitude, that might be called predial rather than proprietary. He had been accustomed, until long after middle life, to look upon himself as the property of another. When this relation was no longer possible, owing to the war, and to his master's death and the dispersion of the family, he had been unable to break off entirely the mental habits of a lifetime, but had attached himself to the old plantation, of which he seemed to consider himself an appurtenance. We found him useful in many ways and entertaining in others, and my wife and I took quite a fancy to him. (90)

John considers Julius's attitude toward "my tract of land and the things that were on it" to be "peculiar," or "predial." Here John misunderstands Julius's personal attitude towards the "land and the things." As Richard E. Baldwin claims, in fact, the stories in *The Conjure Woman* "reveal how little Uncle Julius sees himself as another's property, while the tales reveal how little the slaves themselves had thought that way" (396). By believing (or pretending/trying to believe) in Julius's self-recognition as "an appurtenance," John allows himself to possess the neighborhood and Julius. To interpret Julius as "an appurtenance" is convenient for John, who has just become a new owner of the plantation and hence of Julius.

As Heather Gilligan notes, Julius's tales "present a world where the act of reading is of utmost importance" (203). Chesnutt describes John as an urban reader of his time; throughout the volume the northerner enjoy reading "the newspapers and magazines," "a rudimentary novel," and philosophical books (80). While John always laughs at Annie's naïve response to Julius's conjure tales, Chesnutt does not necessarily depict her as a reader of sentimental novels; it is John, not Annie, who kills time by reading "a rudimentary novel" that depicts "the impossible career of the blonde heroine" (23). On the other hand, Annie seems to enjoy the conjure stories told by Julius more than John's reading materials. At the beginning of "Sis' Beck's Pickaninny," John reads novels to her, who has become "the victim of a settled melancholy, attended with vague forebodings of impending misfortune," but it does not "rouse her from the depression into

which she had fallen” (102). Then Julius visits them and mentions a story about Sis’ Becky, which John thinks “might interest my wife as much or more than the novel I had meant to read from” (102) and indeed her “condition took a turn for the better from this very day, and she was soon on the way to ultimate recovery” (111). Considering that Annie experiences the region through “reading” Julius’s conjure tales, Chesnutt casts doubt on John’s passive reading and elicits more attentive reading from Annie.

One thing that I must add here, however, is that John does not always “misread” Julius’s conjure tales, for Annie’s “reading” experience influences his own as we saw in “Po’ Sandy.” In “The Gray Wolf’s Ha’nt,” he uses the exact same words as Annie uses in the previous story “Sis’ Beck’s Pickaninny,” “bear[ing] the stamp of truth,” to describe Julius’s tales as such: “Of tales of the old slavery days he seemed indeed to possess an exhaustless store, —some weirdly grotesque, some broadly humorous; some bearing the stamp of truth, faint, perhaps, but still discernible; others palpable inventions, whether his own or not we never knew, though his fancy doubtless embellished them” (82). While finding some stories “palpable inventions,” he says, “even the wildest” includes “an element of pathos,” that is, “the tragedy,” “the shadow of slavery and of ignorance,” or “the sadness of life” (82). Here John does not emphasize whether a story told by Julius actually did happen or not. For him, now, Julius’s tales bear “the stamp of truth,” because they represent “the shadow of slavery.”

What did Chesnutt, identifying John as a passive and failed reader and Annie as a more candid and active one, expect from his readers? In contemporary reviews of *The Conjure Woman*, there is surprisingly little reference to the northern couple. Most reviews do not analyze the characteristics of John and Annie at all, while some of them refer to them just as a Yankee and his wife. Although some reviews mention the name of Annie, interestingly, no reviews use the name of John. But this fact does not necessarily mean that Chesnutt’s contemporary readers

completely identified themselves with John and/or Annie. One review calls them “the unsophisticated Yankee[s]” (“Book Notes”), seemingly differentiating its readers from the northern couple. A few reviews confused the narrator John with Chesnutt: one reviewer notes, for example, “Mr. Chestnut” lectures “to Julius about the Rabbit Foot superstition so prevalent among the slaves” (Alexander), though it is not Chesnutt but John who lectures to the ex-slave.

The Conjure Woman, in which Chesnutt aimed to “elevate” his white readership, assumes and represents multiple layers of readers. Perhaps some contemporary readers identified with the northern couple, while others were more sensitive to the ironies of Chesnutt’s approach. For some readers John is almost invisible, whereas for other readers he is less intelligent than Julius. Depicting John and Annie as typical northern readers in his time and making “the plots of the conjure stories offer a range of tone and interpretive possibility” (Duncan 73), Chesnutt lets his readers see and judge the northern couple’s “reading” or “misreading” the conjure tales. Jennifer Riddle Harding’s argument on another conjure story, “Dave’s Neckliss,” which is not included in *The Conjure Woman*, is applicable to Chesnutt’s other conjure stories: “What Chesnutt seems to expect is a supple reading by people who are alert to metaphors and puns, who suspect irony and satire from the beginning, and who are inspired by the closing frame to reflect on the story’s possible meanings” (442).

The Conjure Woman as a whole moves toward the rapprochement between the North and the South and enables its readers to study and accept the South as a part of the nation. Not despite but because of its organic development of the novelistic plot, the volume highlights the process for reaching the goal, namely, repeated, day-to-day negotiations between the (ex)slaves and the whites. And through the repetition and expansion the northern couple grows familiar with, experiences, and understands the region. Moreover, showing the readers the process repeatedly, Chesnutt is trying to point toward a South that does not rely on plantation fantasy and

that is not beholden to that sort of romance, though whether the readers take advantage of this opportunity or not depends on their ability and efforts to appreciate his tales.

2. The Readers' Mapping of the Region and the Text

Choosing a single locale as his conjure stories' setting, Chesnutt repeats and expands the stories through the volume in order to rewrite southern plantation fiction. As we have seen so far, this narrative form enables him to represent the realities of slavery and the ideals of post-bellum society and therefore to let his characters and readers "experience" the region. The combination of the repetition and successive expansion of the text focusing on a shared geography is surely one of the characteristics of the short-story cycle.

The narrative form of *The Conjure Woman* seems to anticipate another feature of the short-story cycle: urging the readers to map the locale. As I argued earlier, the act of reading a short-story cycle is roughly parallel to that of mapping a locale, and therefore some short-story cycles such as *Winesburg, Ohio* include a fictional map of the setting, and others, without a physical map, tempt the readers to draw a map in their minds. In *Graphs, Maps, and Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* (2007), Franco Moretti asks a question; "What do literary maps do"? (35).

What do literary maps do . . . First, they are a good way to prepare a text for analysis. You choose a unit—walks, lawsuits, luxury goods, whatever—find its occurrences, place them in space . . . or in other words: you reduce the text to a few elements, and abstract them from the narrative flow, and construct a new, artificial object like the maps that I have been discussing. And with a little luck, these maps will be more than the sum of their parts: they will possess "emerging" qualities, which were not visible at the lower level. (53)

What Moretti calls "'emerging' qualities" of literary maps correspond to that of the short-story cycle; like literary maps, a short-story cycle as a whole is more than the sum of its parts.

Since the short-story cycle does not fully give an overall picture of the book, it is difficult

to visualize its fictional setting as a whole, which is in contradiction to the encyclopedic novel. As a result, the form offers a different way to experience geography, and one that may be more useful for certain types of ideological or political projects. In Chesnutt's case, using the form allows him to deal with southern geography that is not beholden to plantation fantasy.

I would not claim, however, that Chesnutt tempts the readers to map his fictional region by adopting the short-story cycle form; instead, I do believe that he tries to depict the South seen by black slaves, which culminated in the form that tempts the readers to create a map. More precisely, as a result of Chesnutt's attempts to represent the South that is different from the one represented in plantation romance, the volume becomes the one that urges the readers to create a map of Julius's conjure tales but simultaneously rejects such attempts or lets the readers draw an imperfect, defective map. The term "the readers" here refers to both Chesnutt's contemporary readers and today's readers, though most of Chesnutt's contemporary readers seem more interested in studying the exotic South than in grasping the whole view of the fictional setting, as I argued in the previous section.

Julius enables the readers to visualize the neighborhood. He not only grasps the geographic distribution correctly, but also relates the name of a place to who lived and what happened there. When he first meets with Annie and John in "The Goophered Grapevine," for example, Julius says "I lives des ober yander, nehine de nex' san'-hill, on de Lumberton plank-road" (6) and then he introduces conjure woman Aunt Peggy, saying "Dey wuz a cunjuh 'oman livin' down 'omngs' de free niggers on de Wim'l'ton Road, en all de darkies fum Rockfish ter Beaver Crick wuz feared er her" (7). Although at this moment neither John nor Annie is familiar with the word "Lumberton plank-road," "Wim'l'ton Road," "Rockfish" and "Beaver Crick," and perhaps Julius is aware of the fact, he mentions the specific names of local places. The readers, therefore, learn the two main roads "Lumberton plank-road" and "Wim'l'ton Road," and recognize that Annie

and John's new property lies between Rockfish Creek and Beaver Creek.

Although narrator John sometimes describes the local geography, because of his poor knowledge, he fails to let the readers visualize his neighborhood. In "Po' Sandy," for instance, the northerner depicts the way to a sawmill on the rockaway Julius drives: "We drove down the long lane which led from our house to the plank-road; following the plank-road for about a mile, we turned into a road running through the forest and across the swamp to the sawmill beyond. Our carriage jolted over the half-rotted corduroy road which traversed the swamp, and then climbed the long hill leading to the sawmill" (14). Describing what he sees as a stranger, John does not help the readers get familiar with the region.

In a similar way that Julius's conjure stories expand a larger story throughout the volume, they let us expand the area we can recognize. The first story "The Goophered Grapevine" focuses on John's vineyard, formerly Dugal McAdoo's plantation; the next story "Po' Sandy" happens at Marrabo McSwayne's Plantation, the closest plantation from John's vineyard; "Mars Jeem's Nightmare" is also set in John and Annie's close neighborhood; the settings of "The Conjuror's Revenge" are in the opposite side of Lumberton Plank Road; "Sis' Becky's Pickaninny" happens in Bladen County, which is far from the northerners' residence. By reading the volume, thus, the readers acquire geographic knowledge on the region.

Julius not only mentions specific names of places, but also frequently refers to a distance from one point to another. For example, he informs the northerners that it is five miles from their residence to town, more than forty miles to Robeson County on the Wim'l'ton Road, and ten miles to Kunnel Pen'leton's plantation, which is just before Black Swamp. It seems, therefore, we can draw a map from geographic information Julius gives.

Importantly, however, by just reading the book it is almost impossible to draw a detailed map like "Map of the Terrain of Chesnutt's Conjure Tales" and "Detailed Map of Julius's

Neighborhood in Chesnutt's Conjure Tales" contained in the Norton Critical Edition of *The Conjure Stories*. Only after consulting an actual map of the Fayetteville region, to which "Chesnutt maintains a striking degree of fidelity" (Ingle 150), can one draw a detailed map of Chesnutt's conjure tales.⁴ We might be able to draw a rough map if we try hard, but the map would mostly likely be different from that of the Norton versions. Although the readers learn specific names of Chesnutt's fictional landscapes and expand the area they can identify, they have difficulty in mapping the region. Julius's narrative seems to tempt them to draw a map, but instead reveals the difficulty in doing so.

One of the things that make it difficult to draw a map of *The Conjure Woman* might be the limited geographical information available to the readers. Although Julius seems to attach importance to a distance from one place to another, he never refers to directions. John, for example, explains that on "the northeast corner of [his] vineyard in central North Carolina, . . . there stood a small frame house" (14). In contrast, his coachman does not use a word suggesting a direction.

Moreover, although in each story Julius tells the northerners/readers a lot about the neighborhood, there is lack of balance in the geographical information Julius gives. In almost every story, for instance, he mentions conjure woman Aunt Peggy, and whenever he refers to her he says, "de free nigger conjuh 'oman down by de Wim'l'ton Road," though the wording is slightly differs each time. The word "down in/to Robeson County" comes up in Julius's narrative almost thirty times, while John and Annie neither refer to nor go to Robeson County in the stories. In addition, Julius frequently refers to "de swamp," where a slave meets his/her sweetheart, a runaway slave hides, or a conjurer secretly casts a spell.

⁴ According to Ingle, the "stories mention by name three of the surrounding counties—Robeson, Bladen, and Sampson—and also identify local waterways such as Rockfish Creek and Beaver Creek." Besides, "Historical Maps of Cumberland County" shows the names of the roads Julius mentions in his stories (150).

The repetition of particular landmarks mirrors slaves' experiences in the region. Julius's repetition of Aunt Peggy's occupation and her dwelling place reveals how important the information was for slaves; they secretly go to her place whenever they need a solution to their problems such as reforming a cruel master ("Mars Jeems's Nightmare"), taking back a slave who has been sent away ("Sis' Becky's Pickaninny"), and protecting themselves from a conjure man ("The Gray Wolf's Ha'nt"). Presumably, slaves consider "de free nigger conjuh 'oman down by de Wim'l'ton Road" as their last hope. In addition, the reason why Julius often makes reference to "down in/to Robeson County" is because white people send slaves there in order to make them work for another plantation: for instance, ordered by "Mars Marrabo" to go to Robeson County to help his old uncle, Sandy asks Tennie to turn him into a tree because it "wuz so fur down ter Robeson dat he didn' hab no chance er comin' back ter see her tel de time wuz up" (16). Besides, Julius often refers to "de swamp" because it is the place where slaves can hide themselves from their owners and do what they want to do. I would not oppose Sarah Ingle's claim that the "repetition of familiar landmarks resonates with the repetition of characters to create a sense of community . . . across time as well as across space" (151). But if this is true, I believe, the repetition represents slaves' "sense of community."

By narrating the conjure stories Julius gives the listeners/readers a sort of unofficial map of the region, or an alternative interpretation of the map. Surely, the narrative form allows the readers to expand the recognizable area, but simultaneously, the repetition of particular landmarks brought forth by the form emphasizes the exclusivity of the area. Likewise, Julius often refers to a distance from one place to another because the length of the space between two points is crucial for slaves. Having no means of transportation except for walking, slaves walk from one place to another at night. Julius says, for example, "a nigger didn' mine goin' fi' er ten mile in a night" to eat Mars Dugal McAdoo's scuppernongs (7), or Sandy "wouldn' 'a' mine

comin' ten er fifteen mile at night ter see Tenie" (44).

Moreover, the fact that Julius does not refer to directions indicates slaves' lack of cartographic sense. Taking as an example of "Tobe's Tribution," which is one of Chesnutt's conjure tales but not included in *The Conjure Woman*, Sarah Ingle points out a distorted representation of direction. In the story, slave Tobe decides to escape from slavery and to go to the North, only to head in the wrong direction, the south, just like Huck and Jim in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Ingle 160-61). Thus, despite his current status as a "free nigger," Julius's conjure tales, which depend on his experience during slavery or on experiences he has heard about for many years from his folks, reflect slaves' experiences in the region.

Reflecting slaves' experiences of the region, Julius's conjure tales make it difficult for the readers to draw a map. Since former slaves cannot move freely, they do not fully understand spatial relations in their area. According to Yi-Fu Tuan, "[s]paciousness is closely associated with the sense of being free." He argues;

Freedom implies space; it means having the power and enough room in which to act. Being free has several levels of meaning. Fundamental is the ability to transcend the present condition, and this transcendence is most simply manifest as the elementary power to move. In the act of moving, space and its attributes are directly experienced. An immobile person will have difficulty mastering even primitive ideas of abstract space, for such ideas develop out of movement—out of the direct experiencing of space through movement. (52)

A slave is not, strictly speaking, an "immobile person," and perhaps s/he has what Tuan calls "primitive ideas of abstract space." But lacking the power to move and act freely, slaves cannot experience space through their bodies, and therefore, have only limited places.

The slaves in Julius's conjure tales also lack the ability to grasp space. In "Sis' Becky's Pickaninny," for example, Colonel Pendelton decides to trade one of his slaves, Sis' Becky, for the racehorse named Lightnin' Bug, though pained by separating her from her baby Mose. Trying to avoid hurting her, Pendelton tells her that he is going to "sen' her down to Robeson County fer

a day er so, ter he’p out his son-in-law in his wuk” (105). Believing in her owner’s explanation, Sis’ Becky departs with the horse trader. Julius narrates:

Well, dis yer hoss trader sta’ted out wid Becky, en bimeby, atter dey ‘d gone down de Lumbe’ton Road fer a few miles er so, dis man tu’nt roun’ in a diffe’nt d’rection, en kep’ goin’ dat erway, ‘tel bimeby Sis’ Becky up’n ax’ ‘im ef he wuz gwine ter Robeson County by a noo road.

‘No, nigger,’ sezee, ‘I ain’ gwine ter Robeson County at all. I’s gwine ter Bladen County, whar my plantation is, en whar I raises all my hosses.’ ‘But how is I gwine ter git ter Mis’ Laura’s plantation down in Robeson County?’ sez Becky, wid her hea’t in her mouf, fer she ‘mence’ ter git skeered all er a sudden. (105-06)

Sis Becky knows from her experience that Lumbe’ton Road brings her to Robeson County. Yet, having no sense of direction, she does not realize that she is going in the exact opposite direction. Not allowed to experience space, she cannot grasp spacious relations even in her birthplace.

Chesnutt contrasts Sis Becky’s immobility and poor sense of direction to a bird’s mobility and sense of orientation. When Aunt Nancy, a plantation nurse taking care of Mose during Sis Becky’s absence, asks Aunt Peggy to let him “see his mommy,” *The Conjure Woman* turns him into a humming bird: “So w’en Aun’ Nancy had gone ‘way, Aun’ Peggy tuk’n wukked her roots, en tu’nt little Mose ter a hummin’-bird, en sont ‘im off fer ter fin’ his mammy. So little Mose flewed, en flewed, en flewed away, ‘tel bimeby he got ter de place whar Sis’ Becky b’longed” (107). In contrast to his mother, Mose, with no spacious knowledge but now with freedom and power to move, flies to and finds his mother before long.

Mose’s ability to fly to see his mother, which presents a strong contrast to his mother’s immobility and poor sense of direction, suggests a possible freedom in the region. Damian Alan Pargas analyzes “the experience of fugitive slaves who fled to sites of informal freedom by remaining within the slaveholding South” (“Introduction” 13), especially in southern towns which provide slave refugees “with opportunities to perform various occupations and earn money to sustain themselves indefinitely” (“Seeking Freedom” 126). Although Patesville is not

one of the big cities like St. Louis, Baltimore, and New Orleans that “served as ‘gateways to freedom’ for some daring runaways” (Pargas, “Seeking Freedom” 118), considering that the town has “de free-nigger sett’ement,” where a conjure woman and a conjure man live, perhaps slaves in the town are familiar with the idea of seeking what Pargas calls “informal freedom” “where fugitives attempted to live free illegally” (“Seeking Freedom” 131). In fact, it is possible that *The Conjure Woman* and man appearing in Julius’s narrative are slave refugees who hide their slave identity by using their identity as or pretending to be conjurers. While Julius’s informal map reflects slaves’ lack of ability to grasp space, it always implies their desire for (informal) freedom, which is, in Moses’ case, brought by Aunt Peggy’s spell.

Chesnutt emphasizes not only slaves’ immobility and desire for freedom, but also their rootlessness. Like Sis’ Becky, many slaves in Julius’s conjure tales are easily sold or sent away by their masters: in “The Goophered Grapevine” Mars Dugal McAdoo repeatedly sells his slave Henry to a stranger in Spring and buys him back in Winter in order to make a profit; and some plantation owners sell their slaves to “Noo Orleens” or “Souf.” Perhaps “Po’ Sandy” is the best example to show what Sarah Ingle calls the “devastating rootlessness and uncertainty of slavery” (152). Because Sandy is a capable worker, his master always sends him to his children for a month or so, “tel bimeby it got so Sandy didn’ hardly knowed whar he wuz gwine ter stay fum one week’s een’ ter de yuther” (16). By turning into a tree, he literally acquires stability and rootedness. As a result, however, he is sawed up into lumber and then used to build a schoolhouse; completely losing his ability to move, he does nothing but “moan,” “groan,” “holler” and “sweek” as a ghost (21).

Deprived of their right to move freely, slaves in Julius’s tales do not understand spacious relations. It seems natural, therefore, that his tales offer only limited geographical information to the readers. If we draw a map according to Julius’s narrative, the imperfect map reflects slaves’

immobility and rootlessness. By finding the difficulty of mapping the region, the readers experience slaves' space. The narrative form urges us to draw a map of slaves' Patesville, just as Julius gradually makes the northern couple acquainted with his or his folk's version of the region through his tales. In this sense, I agree with Ingle's claim that "[o]nly by mapping the landscape of Chesnutt's conjure tales collectively rather than individually can readers gain a full sense of the irony and metaphorical power of their geography" (161), but I would rather say that only by failing to map the landscape of his conjure tales, can we do so.

For (ex)slaves, this world of which the readers cannot create a map is a real society. In "The Conjuror's Revenge," after listening to Julius's tale Annie says, "That story does not appeal to me, Uncle Julius, and is not up to your usual mark. . . . In fact, it seems to me like nonsense" (30-31). Apologizing for his failure to please her, Julius says:

"I'm sorry, ma'm," he said reproachfully, "ef you doan lack dat tale. I can't make out w'at you means by some er dem wo'ds you uses, but I'm tellin' nuffin but de truf. Co'se I didn' see de cunjuh man tu'n 'im back, fer I wuzn' dere; but I be'n hearin' de tale fer twenty-five yeahs, en I ain' got no 'casion fer ter 'spute it. Dey's so many things a body knows is lies, dat dey ain' no use gwine roun' findin' fault wid tales dat mought des ez well be so ez not." F' instance, dey's a young nigger gwine ter school in town, en he come out heah de yuther day en 'lowed dat de sun stood still en de yeath turnt roun' eve'y day on a kinder axletree. I tol' dat young nigger ef he didn' take hisse'f 'way wid dem lies, I'd take a buggy-trace ter 'im; fer I sees de yeath stan'in' still all de time, en I sees de sun gwine roun' it, en ef a man can't b'lieve w'at 'e sees, I can't see no use in libbin' - mought's well die en be whar we can't see nuffin. (31)

Using the episode concerning the Copernican/Ptolemaic theory as an example, Julius asserts that his tale is the truth because he has been hearing the story for twenty-five years and claims that it is useless to find fault with tales that might be true. In other words, for Julius, conjure tales are "truth" agreed and shared by the slaves living in the region, not a "fact" that is self-evident in modern society. From the standpoint of modern realists that only believe in what they can see, the region seen by (ex)slaves cannot be represented on a map but is nonetheless pure,

unmistakable “truth” for (ex)slaves.

The black South Chesnutt depicts is a world that cannot be represented on a map; simultaneously, it should be, to begin with, a world unrelated to a map. According to Mikio Wakabayashi, the act of mapping reveals the human desire for grasping the whole view of the world: “The imaginative conceptualization or the imagination of the world exposes the existence of the human will, or desire, despite our lack of geographical knowledge, to hold the entirety of the world in the palm of our hand and to locate and understand ourselves in the entirety” (101). Maps function as a medium of power, and in the universe of *The Conjure Woman*, they embody the white desire for power. Getting familiar with the neighborhood through Julius’s “coaching,” John and Annie acquire a “map” of the region. On the one hand, their “mapping” of the region leads them to a metaphorical reconciliation between the North and the South, which is nothing more than the white imagination and desire. On the other hand, the region seen by (ex)slaves in Julius’s conjure stories resists easy mapping, for they are not even allowed to hope for power.

In *The Conjure Woman*, the white northerners’ desire to “map” the South corresponds with the readers’ desire to fully understand the book as a whole. While the characters seem to succeed at mapping, we fail to do so. By this failure, however, we come to choose a different “way” from the one that the characters choose at the end of “Hot-Foot Hannibal,” that is, the reconciliation achieved only through protecting white supremacy and concealing racial problems. Whether or not the readers actually try to draw a map of the fictional setting, by realizing the difficulty of drawing a map or imagining a specific geography of the seeing, we experience slaves’ predicaments, immobility, and rootlessness. In tempting the readers to draw a map of Julius’s conjure tales but simultaneously rejecting such attempts, or letting the readers draw an imperfect, defective map, the volume makes us experience not the romanticized old South but the South seen by slaves. The narrative form thus arouses but thwarts the readers’ desire to hold the entirety

of the book in the palm of their hand.

If, as I have argued, mapping is associated with white supremacy, and the book is about the failure of mapping, then Chesnutt wants his readers to have the opportunity to fail to map the setting, rather than the opportunity to map or look at a map of the setting. Unlike William Faulkner or Sherwood Anderson, Chesnutt did not show a map of his fictional setting to his readers. Whether he intentionally refused to draw a map of his conjure tales' setting or not is unclear. Perhaps he did not have an idea of including a map in *The Conjure Woman*. Yet, considering a striking degree of resemblance between landmarks/geographical features of Fayetteville and those of Chesnutt's Patesville, it seems almost impossible that he did not visualize a map of his fictional region in writing the conjure stories. In any case, showing the readers a map of his fictional setting seems irreconcilable with what he has attempted in the volume.

Although it is doubtful that Chesnutt intended them to, the two maps in the Norton Critical Edition enable the readers to interrelate Julius's conjure tales, to visualize slaves' version of the region, and to grasp the spatial distribution of the region. Significantly, "Map of the Terrain of Chesnutt's Conjure Tales" and "Detailed Map of Neighborhood in Chesnutt's Conjure Tales" tell more than they show; they expose Chesnutt's expanded view of the region. In short, these maps draw the United States on a smaller scale; John's vineyard in Cumberland County represents, indeed, North Carolina in the United States. Centered around John's vineyard, the town, which includes "a red brick market-house," "hotels, a court-house, a jail, stores, offices, and all the appurtenances of a county" (3), lies in the north. This area, from which John and Annie come to Dugan McAdoo's former Plantation, is always related to the North. On the other hand, the rural area, Robeson County and Bladen County, lies in the south. In Julius's conjure tales, slave owners send or sell their slaves "down ter Robeson," in worse cases to "down Souf," and in the

worst case to “Noo Orleens.” Thus, Chesnutt relates the south to the slaves’ wretched situation. Moreover, the residence of conjure woman Aunt Peggy, who has “European as well as African” roots, lies in the northeast of John’s vineyard, that is, the direction between Europe and Africa from North Carolina.⁵ In a similar way, the residence of conjure man Uncle Jube, “a Guinea nigger,” is in the southeast of John’s vineyard, as Guinea is to the southeast of North Carolina. A map of Chesnutt’s conjure tales thus represents not only spatial distribution of the region but also the wider history surrounding black people.

Chesnutt imagined a larger world in the world of his conjure tales. According to Charles Aiken, Faulkner, who did draw a map of his Yoknapatawpha County, “did not look inward and think of Yoknapatawpha County as a closed geographical model. Inhabitants of the fictional place reach toward other areas and operate within a broader spatial context” (56). Surely, as Jay Watson says, Faulkner’s fictional place “extend to such places as New Orleans, the Mississippi Delta, Memphis, Chicago, the Appalachian Mountains, Cambridge, the Caribbean, and the battlefields of Europe” (“Introduction” X). Likewise, Chesnutt’s fictional place extends to New Orleans, Northern Ohio, New York, and Africa. As Richard Brodhead points out, at the beginning of every story John says that they come from Ohio, the North, to North Carolina; “Every time [John] opens his mouth, this man says where he comes from” (198), and John is expecting a new railroad connecting the North and the South: “The new railroad will be finished by the middle of summer, and I can ship the melons North, and get a good price for them” (23). While John sees the region as an outsider from a larger world, Chesnutt sees a larger world as an insider.

The Conjure Woman is quite different from traditional plantation tales such as *Uncle Remus: His Song and His Sayings* and *In Ole Virginia; Or, Marse Chan and Other Stories*. While

⁵ According to the note on the text, by “identifying Aunt Peggy as both a ‘witch’ and a ‘conjure woman,’ Chesnutt stresses the multiple geographic roots—European as well as African—of the folk stories Julius tells” (Chesnutt, *The Conjure Stories* 8).

these plantation tales depict federal slaves' experiences from white readers' point of view, relying on plantation fantasy, Chesnutt's conjure tales not only depict slaves' experiences but also force the readers—both Chesnutt's contemporary and today's readers—to relive their experiences. Like a typical short-story cycle, *The Conjure Woman* has a single setting where all actions take place, which produces topographical unity, enables Chesnutt to offer a realistic portrayal of Patesville, and frustrates the readers' attempt to draw a map of the setting. Chesnutt's attempts to represent the South, which cannot be fully represented in the traditional plantation romance, suggest the short-story cycle's affinity for shared geography and topographical unity. In the next chapter, I will explore two southern short-story cycles written in the era of literary modernism, Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923) and Julia Peterkin's *Green Thursday* (1924), in both which the concept of place plays an important role.

CHAPTER 3

RESHAPING EARLIER REGIONAL SKETCHES: THE REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN JEAN TOOMER'S *CANE* AND JULIA PETERKIN'S *GREEN THURSDAY*

Regional literature underwent a radical change in the first quarter of the new century. In the early twentieth century, regional sketches and travel narratives were replaced by regional novels, including those produced by writers such as Willa Cather and Edith Wharton (Luts 106). On the other hand, regional sketches and travel narratives also developed into the twentieth-century short-story cycle. One of the most successful of these is Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919).

While seeing nineteenth-century regional sketches as the precursors of the short-story cycle, most critics have argued that the genre's popularity coincides with the arrival of the new century, especially with the rise of modernism in literature, when, in Gerald Lynch's words, "the revolutionary impact of Darwin, Marx, Freud, and Einstein was cumulatively felt and all traditional systems were coming under a destabilizing scrutiny" (23). Lynch emphasizes the importance of the year 1919, when Anderson published *Winesburg, Ohio*, "the first modern American short story cycle of place," pointing out that "this new generic form" emerged at roughly the same time in the States, Canada (J.G. Sime's *Sister Woman* [1919]), and Ireland (James Joyce's *Dubliners* [1914]) (64). In *Modern American Short Story Sequences*, J. Gerald Kennedy notes that, including narrative devices such as "fragmentation (in discrete, discontinuous short narratives), juxtaposition (in the purposive conjoining of complementary texts), and simultaneism (in the theoretically concurrent unfolding of separate actions)," and projecting "diverse situations from different perspectives through separate narratives," the short-story cycle "typically assumes a form reflective of the 'multiplicity' that Henry Adams identified as the quintessential feature of the new century" (xi).

I would not argue against the idea that the short-story cycle as a genre has an affinity for literary modernism. Rather, I would like to suggest an alternative literary history of the short-story cycle, one that is rooted more in an evolution from earlier genres than in the dramatic break or rupture that is often associated with modernism. As we have seen in the previous chapters, in the American South the emergence of this genre was not a sudden occurrence at all. George Washington Cable and Charles W. Chesnutt respectively aimed to represent their Souths—Cable’s Creole New Orleans and Chesnutt’s post-plantation North Carolina as seen by ex-slaves—and convey their meanings. For them, neither the collection of local sketches nor the nineteenth-century realist novel was a perfect medium to achieve their aim, and as a result, *The Grandissimes* and *The Conjure Woman* acquired the properties of the literary form that later became known as the short-story cycle. Although formally unsophisticated and artistically underdeveloped when judged by later versions of the short-story cycle, both works had done the sorts of things that later literary works were able to achieve by embracing the short-story cycle form more thoroughly; in short, they tried to represent the South that was hidden by the monolithic view of the region as the nation’s Other.

Considering that collections of local-color sketches/short stories laid the foundation for the proliferation of American short-story cycles, we should look more closely at the transition from (the precursors of) short-story cycles written in the late-nineteenth century to modernist short-story cycles. As Harilaos Stecopoulos writes, contemporary scholars have focused on a continuity, rather than a gap, between literary regionalism and modernism, “by demonstrating that the exclusionary and prejudicial qualities so often ascribed to local writing could also be located in modernism, and by showing that the generative critical function frequently assigned to the avant-garde could be identified in certain types of regionalism” (21-22). Short-story cycles by regional writers, I believe, help us understand how late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century

regionalism contributed to modernist writers' formal innovations.

Several modernist writers in the South produced short-story cycles: Richard Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938), William Faulkner's *The Unvanquished* (1938) and *Go Down, Moses* (1942), Katherine Anne Porter's *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1939) and *The Leaning Tower and Other Stories* (1944), and Erskine Caldwell's *Georgia Boy* (1943), for example. But this chapter examines earlier examples, Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923) and Julia Peterkin's *Green Thursday* (1924), both of which might be located as descendants of early regional sketches and at the same time as the beginning of short-story cycles of the twentieth-century South.

Compared to *The Grandissimes* and *The Conjure Woman*, either *Cane* or *Green Thursday* could more easily be categorized as a short-story cycle, although the former is sometimes referred to as an experimental "novel" and the latter as a collection of short stories. Susan Garland Mann and other literary scholars on the short-story cycle have regarded *Cane*, which consists of vignettes, short stories, poems, as well as short plays, and in which each piece works together to create a larger whole, as a representative of this genre rather than a novel. In *Race, Manhood, and Modernism in America: The Short-Story Cycles of Sherwood Anderson and Jean Toomer* (2007), for instance, Mark Whalan examines how both Anderson and Toomer, respectively in *Winesburg, Ohio* and *Cane*, strategically use the short-story cycle form to tackle the issues of race and gender in modern America.

Green Thursday, which was written just after Peterkin's reading *Cane* (James 144), consists of twelve stories, most of which depict a poor black family, the Pinesetts, over a period of years. Some scholars have read the volume as a short-story cycle. Noel Polk considers the book to be "a descendant of Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*" and "an ancestor of Hemingway's *In Our Time* in 1925 and Eudora Welty's *The Golden Apples* in 1949" (179), though he does not use the term, the short-story cycle. In addition to these books, Charles Joyner

also refers to *Dubliners* and *Go Down, Moses*, admitting *Green Thursday*'s "distinctive contribution" to the genre (x).

While both *Cane* and *Green Thursday* can be seen as modern short-story cycles, they retain traces of earlier regional sketches. In spite of *Cane*'s strong image as a mutation in the history of American literature, this book, in fact, has many things in common with local-color fictions written in the South. For example, the modes of presentation for the sketches in part one and two (McKay 243) and a detached manner in which an outsider narrates a story about the region are quite similar to those appearing in local-color fictions. After Julia Peterkin's death in 1961 "her works were almost entirely forgotten, described in the footnotes to literary history either as local color or lurid sensationalism" (Williams, "Julia Peterkin" 348). J. A. Bryant Jr., in fact, regards *Green Thursday* as "another better-than-average contribution to the South's continuing output of local color" (24). When published, however, the book was quite "modern" for people at that time. In the essay "Is There a Southern Renaissance?" (1930), for instance, Howard Mumford Jones twice mentions Julia Peterkin as one "in the list of distinguished contemporary novelists," who foretell "a distinct re-birth of letters" of the South.¹

Rereading *Cane* and *Green Thursday* as transitional works that bridge the precursors of the short-story cycle written in the nineteenth-century South and that written in the twentieth-century South might reveal how southern writers adopted and developed this literary form to represent and, more importantly, to criticize the representation of the South. I would not argue that southern short-story cycles written in the era of modernism should be clearly distinguished from modern short-story cycles written in different regions or nations. Rather, I believe that southern

¹ Quoting this essay, Hiromi Ochi, in *The Southern Moments of Modernism*, claims that Howard Jones treats socially aware writers including Peterkin and James Branch Cabell as a proof of "a distinct re-birth of letters" in the South, and that the fact that Southern Renaissance excludes these writers reveal the arbitrariness of the frame of reference for southern literature (54).

writers' aspirations for representing the South that could not be fully portrayed in the existing literary genres corresponded to the modernist atmosphere of early-twentieth-century America, which "mobilized formal innovations designed to explore the potentially unsettling experience of modernity's multiple temporal forms" in Leigh Anne Duck's words (8). In other words, southern writers have been ready to participate in shaping what we now think of as modernism from the inside, rather than appropriating it or responding to it as though it were alien to them.

Surely, both Toomer and Peterkin had a direct experience of the emergence of modernity in the States. Jean Toomer was born in Washington, D.C. the son of a Georgia farmer with African American as well as European heritage. In 1921, he got a job in Georgia, and this experience motivated him to write *Cane*. Born in Laurens County, South Carolina, Julia Peterkin married the owner of Lang Syne Plantation near Forte Motte, but "[w]henver the chance offered she escaped for a trip northward—to see Cabell and Emily Clark in Richmond, to visit a sister in New York, and so on" (Mencken, *My Life* ch. 25), "reveling in the opportunity to shop, eat exotic food, attend plays, listen to concerts, and take in museums" (Williams, *A Devil* 13).

While feeling the modern atmosphere of the nation, neither Toomer nor Peterkin fully embraces the image of the South as a backward part of the nation, which allows the nation to imagine itself as progressive and enlightened. According to Leigh Anne Duck, "[w]hile the insistence on regional difference served to disavow southern racism as the archaic reminder of a backward culture—preserving the nation-state's emphasis on its liberalism and modernization—the romanticization of the southern past served to retain white supremacist conceptions of a national people as a prominent trope in U.S. nationalism (20). Duck refers to the American journalist H. L. Mencken as a person who shows the "tension between nostalgia and critique" concerning the South. In a similar way he did to other contemporary southern writers, Mencken inspired Toomer and Peterkin to create a new southern literature. In *After Southern Modernism*,

Matthew Guinn argues that the quest for cultural identity “helped to define southern modernism, from angry reactions to H. L. Mencken’s tirade against the ‘Sahara of the Bozart’ to the late high-modernist novels of Faulkner”:

As the twentieth century unfolded, the quaintness of the local-color movement, exploded by the skepticism of the modern period, gave way to an increasingly desperate search for a redemptive myth of southern history and identity, a usable past. The framework of a specifically “southern” literary consciousness began to emerge as literary southerners between the 1920s and 1950s reached into their past for material. (xvii-xviii)

The local-color movement “gave way to” modernist Southern writers’ search for “a redemptive myth,” or “a usable past” in Guinn’s words, and the quest is partially related to their angry reaction to Mencken’s “Sahara of the Bozart” essay. If this is true, however, it is suggestive that both Toomer and Peterkin, being fully conscious of Mencken’s essay,² seem to have no interest in “a redemptive myth” and “a usable past” of the South, and that both *Cane* and *Green Thursday* have many things in common with earlier local-color fictions.

I would claim that it was changes surrounding blacks in the South, rather than the region’s “redemptive myth” or “usable past,” that led Toomer and Peterkin to make formal innovations., Nghana tamu Lewis points out the importance of Mencken’s lesser-known essay “Negro as Author” for Peterkin. Published in the same year as “Sahara of the Bozart,” this essay articulates Mencken’s evaluation of black literature, which is relevant to his underestimation of southern culture. He writes:

The black man, I suppose, has a fairly good working understanding of the white man; he has many opportunities to observe and note down, and my experience of him convinces me that he is a shrewd observer—that few white men ever fool him. But the white man, even in the South, knows next to nothing of the inner life of the negro. The more magnificently

² Toomer read Mencken’s “Sahara of the Bozart” essay, which “started him thinking about the South and everything the region meant to black people” (Scruggs 158). Inspired by the essay, on the other hand, Peterkin contacted Mencken in January 1921, then he went on to manage her early literary career, eventually guiding her to Alfred Knopf, who published *Green Thursday* in 1924 (Robeson 761).

he generalizes, the more his ignorance is displayed. What the average Southerner believes about the negroes who surround him is chiefly nonsense. His view of them is moral and indignant, or, worse still, sentimental and idiotic. The great movements and aspirations that stir them are quite beyond his comprehension; in many cases he does not even hear of them. The thing we need is a realistic picture of this inner life of the negro by one who sees the race from within—a self-portrait as vivid and accurate as Dostoyevsky's portrait of the Russian or Thackeray's of the Englishman. (320-21)

Whether Toomer and Peterkin read this essay or not is unclear, and even if they did, I'm not sure how they would perceive this problematic essay. But at least for both writers, depicting black southerners with a greater degree of nuance, complexity, and diversity gives them a chance to modernize southern literature.

Toomer saw southern modernization in "[t]he great movements and aspirations that stir black southerners" in Mencken's words. As many scholars have pointed out, the second part of *Cane*, which is set in the North, focuses on "the great migration of blacks to Northern cities, highlighting their difficulty in navigating a new urban landscape" (Pickens 729). Consisting of three sections—the first part is set in Georgia, the second moves to the North, and the third moves back to the South—*Cane* reflects Toomer's witnessing the movement of black people out of the South and the region's losing African American folk cultures, and as Lawrence R. Rodgers notes, the volume "allows itself to be read as migration fiction (Rodgers 81).

Peterkin was also keenly aware of the mass migration of African Americans from the South, though in a quite different manner from Toomer. Departing from the critical tendency to read Peterkin's works as "her alleged 'realistic' representation of the Gullahs," Lewis maintains that "Peterkin's writing should be read through a modernist, rather than a realist, lens because the 'truths' represented in her work reveal as much about her status as a white modern southern plantation mistress struggling in the immediate South Carolina context of the political and social realities of early 20th-century America as they do about her black subjects' collective status—both literal and fictive" (590). According to Lewis, Peterkin was "[u]ndoubtedly . . . aware of the

developments and events that . . . catapulted South Carolina into cross-cultural mayhem before and after blacks began to leave the state in large numbers” (595-96). Although I believe that Peterkin, in her own sincere way, tried to describe black people with a greater degree of nuance and complexity, I agree with Lewis that Peterkin’s fictions and black characters reflect her anxiety about losing her position of privilege as the wife of a plantation owner.

Rereading *Cane* and *Green Thursday* as transitional works that connect the precursors of the short-story cycle written in the nineteenth-century South and that written in the twentieth-century South, I would like to explore how Toomer’s and Peterkin’s interest in changes surrounding blacks in the South expanded the limit of earlier southern short-story cycles, most of which make self-evident the close connection of African Americans with the region.

1. Beyond the “Norths” and the “Souths”: Jean Toomer’s *Cane*

Jean Toomer writes about *Cane*’s design in his letter to his literary friend Waldo Frank:

From three angles, *CANE*’S design is a circle. Aesthetically, from simple forms to complex ones, and back to simple forms. Regionally, from the South up into the North, and back into the South again. Or, From the North down into the South, and then a return North. From the point of view of the spiritual entity behind the work, the curve really starts with Bona and Paul (awakening), plunges into Kabnis, emerges in Karintha etc. swings upward into Theatre and Box Seat, and ends (pauses) in Harvest Song.

Whew! (*Reader* 26)

According to Barbara Foley, Toomer’s description of the book’s circular design roughly correlates with the order of its composition; publishing “Bona and Paul” in Washington, he moved to Georgia and wrote “Kabnis,” then after his trip wrote some stories in part one (156).

Toomer’s explanation about the real order of *Cane*—from the North to the South, then back to the North—not only recapitulates the order of its composition; the order also follows the traditional pattern of local color fictions. As with the northern narrator in Chesnut’s *The Conjure Woman*, most local-color fictions are narrated from the perspective of a visitor, or an interloper.

In these fictions, a narrator visiting a foreign land often leaves the place at the end of the book.

More importantly, however, in *Cane* Toomer tries to subvert the assumptions of regional fictions. The book's design as a "circle" differentiates the work from earlier southern short-story cycles, which usually employ the first and last stories that function as a framing device. George Clay notes that the short-story cycle often has a "framework question addressed throughout successive chapters and answered by the end" and achieves "[f]inal closure when the framework question is answered and the provisional closure ending previous chapters culminate in a satisfactory overall resolution" (27). Although I do not believe that all short-story cycles have a framework question and its answer, surely a short-story cycle has a specific order in which it must be read. In *The Conjure Woman*, for example, the first story must be "The Goophered Grapevine," which depicts the first encounter between a northern couple and an ex-slave, and the final story cannot but be "Hot-Foot Hannibal," which symbolically depicts a happy reunion between the North and the South. On the other hand, the readers can start reading *Cane* from any point. The book, in short, attaches importance to the dynamics of narrative movement rather than to a narrative order with a specific beginning and ending.

Many critics have attributed *Cane*'s experimental and fragmental form to Toomer's racial identification. Toomer refused to belong not only to a particular race, but also to any particular region or class. In *Essentials*, Toomer writes:

I am of no particular race. I am of the human race, a man at large in the human world,
preparing a new race.
I am of no specific region. I am of earth.
I am of no particular class. I am of the human class, preparing a new class.
I am neither male nor female nor in-between. I am of sex, with male differentiations.
I am of no special field. I am of the field of being. (XXIV)

Although *Essentials* was published years later than *Cane*, in the book we can see Toomer's refusal to rely on and contribute to apparently stable concepts, which existing literary works and

genres have assumed. It seems understandable that Toomer's self-definition as an "exile" enabled him to write this experimental cycle, which refuses to be categorized as a novel, a collection of short stories, or any other narrative form.

My reading of *Cane* as a reconstruction of regional sketches does not reject this view. By reshaping the form, Toomer successfully subverted the assumptions of a regional fiction, including the clear differentiation between the South and the rest of the nation, and the historically strong connection between black people and the South. During the era of local color literature before Toomer, according to Barbara C. Ewell and Pamela Glenn Menke, representing African Americans whose roles were clearly separated from white (northern) Americans helped writers to "preserve and celebrate values and ways of being that were no longer tenable in a society whose very premises were in question"; for example, African Americans, who were "often the target of lynchings and figures of great fear, were sanctioned in local color by their quaint (and deliberately amusing) distance from the 'reality' of economic and political inequality" (lvii). In *Cane*, Toomer reshapes southern local color writing, which has relied on a depiction of African Americans unconnected to reality, and connects their life with the reality of the nation of his time by using a unique form.

In order to represent African Americans, who are not necessarily attached to the South anymore, Toomer attempted to use but subvert the local color fictions which stereotyped black people as a tool to represent the authenticity of the region. Whereas the short-story cycle apparently performs similar functions both in local-color fictions and *Cane*, Toomer reshapes the form skillfully and uniquely in order to represent African Americans and the South in all their complexity. The following paragraphs will show how Toomer uses the short-story cycle in a similar way to local color writers before him, but simultaneously adopts this literary genre to his own use and redefines its limits. I would like to focus on the characteristic of *Cane*'s narrative as

an assemblage, which brings about the textual and interpretive motions as well as pauses, making it hard for the readers to read the text in a conventional manner and to empathize with the characters.

Like earlier regional sketches/short-story cycles, many works in *Cane* had been published in magazines before he published the volume. But whereas earlier writers chose not to fill in the gaps between stories, Toomer did. Both in part one and two of *Cane*, he inserts poems or vignettes between stories. Part one proceeds in the order of short story/poem/poem, and in part two Toomer reverses the order, poem (or vignette)/poem (or vignette)/short story. In any case there is no direct development or continuity between a piece and its previous or following one. As is often argued, such structure strengthens the book's impression as an assemblage, collage, or amalgamation. According to Linda Wagner-Martin, the fact that "Toomer included poems he had written earlier—seeing their usefulness to the total structure of *Cane*—suggests that he saw the process of 'writing' this book as an assemblage" ("Toomer's *Cane*" 21). Building on Wagner-Martin's characterization of the volume, I would like to define the term "assemblage" as the process of joining things or seemingly unrelated objects together.

Surely, Toomer presents *Cane* as an assemblage, and more significantly, by doing so he stimulates the readers' motivation to read the book as a whole and find a meaning in it. As I explained in Chapter One, "The Rise of the Southern Short-Story Cycle: George Washington Cable's *The Grandissimes*," the short-story cycle form urges the readers to search for "patterns of action, imagery, and meaning . . . without the secure causal and temporal spine" (Luscher "The American Short-Story Cycle," 358). Indeed, as Wagner-Martin notes, "the reader of the *Cane* fragments is working doubly hard both to make the segments cohere and to decipher—or perhaps to create—one constant point of view" ("Toomer's *Cane*" 20). Not despite, but because of pauses/gaps between pieces as well as parts, the readers try to seek and find "meaning" there,

which might bring a kind of wholeness into this fragmental work.

But what is the “meaning” or “one constant point of view” that Toomer urges the readers to create through the unique form? It is—though this may seem paradoxical—to avoid a particular meaning or one constant view about a region. As I have argued in the previous chapters using Nina Silber’s argument, southern local color fictions in the late nineteenth-century helped create the notions of the South and the North, and as a result, the unified notion of nation. As such, southern fictions often brought metaphoric reunion between the North and the South, and in the process, they needed to romanticize the ties between African Americans and the South, neglecting issues of slavery and racial injustice. In *Cane*, by refusing to create a particular meaning or one constant view about a region, Toomer unsettles views and reading practices that have been traditionally attached to local color fictions.

Moving from the North to the South, then back to the North, and from a short story to a poem, and a vignette to a short play, *Cane*’s fragment narrative produces a textual and interpretive motion. Reading *Cane* “as a border text by analyzing many of its constitutive oppositions and contradictions” (27), Francisco E. Robles claims that “*Cane*’s representations of flow . . . unsettle any presumptions of interpretive stillness” (31). Its power to “[unmake] settled reading practices in the process of unmaking itself” (Robles 29), I believe, mainly differentiates *Cane* from southern fictions in the late 19th century. Eurie Dahn argues that *Cane*’s structure as an assemblage “reveal[s] the universality of the local” (132), but since “universality” still embraces a particular meaning—the thing which occurs and is seen everywhere—*Cane*’s narrative seems to reject even the aspiration to universality.

As I explained in the previous chapters, local color writers achieved cosmopolitan views, which means this preoccupation of local-color fiction was well suited to the short-story cycle. But *Cane* seems to reject cosmopolitan views as well. While a narrator or protagonist in most

local-color fictions embraces cosmopolitan views by oscillating between an insider's and an outsider's perspective, *Cane*, as an assemblage, includes multiple narrators; one narrator only covers one story and then disappears in the next one. Some narrators tell a story as a complete insider. For example, the narrator of "Becky" is apparently a male member of the community, and as a witness he tells the readers about Becky, who is a white woman killed by her black sons. On the other hand, the narrator of "Fern" is a northern man, and he tells the story of the beautiful woman, Fern, for whom he resolves to do something as an outsider. Rather than representing a narrator or protagonist oscillating between an insider's and an outsider's perspective, Toomer creates multiple narrators, each of whose perspective is not easily changed.

Not despite, but because of multiple narrators' conflicting views, when reading *Cane* as a whole, the readers encounter many Souths and Norths. In short, this text contains just as many Souths and Norths as the number of narrators. More importantly, although each piece depicts people in a specific place at a specific time, one story is always related to another, overturning the readers' expectation of what a region is. For example, several stories in part one represent men's struggles to comprehend and get affection from women. The narrator of "Fern," a northerner, becomes deeply attracted to Fern and imagines she comes up to the North and marries a rich man. But in part two, we find the northern men also try but fail to get a woman they want. In part three, "Kabnis," the northerner, Lewis, hopes to bring the southern woman, Carrie K, to the North but gives up on the idea. These stories urge the readers to relate one story to another and to understand complicated relationships among men, women, and place, but the readers are unable to get a specific answer.

Trying to understand one story set in the South, the readers need to read not only other stories set in the Souths, but also stories set in the Norths. By refusing to create a specific narrator who oscillates among different groups' perspectives, Toomer questions and undermines

the assumption of local color literature, that is, a distinction between a region and the rest of the nation. In “Fern,” the more obsessive the narrator becomes about Fern’s southernness, the more conscious he becomes of the groundlessness of the distinction between the South and the North. In the end, he asks the readers: “Would you have completely forgotten her as soon as you reached Macon, Atlanta, Augusta, Pasadena, Madison, Chicago, Boston, or New Orleans?” (18). Here, he does not even distinguish between the North and the South. Moreover, there are many motifs seen throughout the volume, such as *Cane*, lynching, and the moon, which disable regional differences. As Wesley Beal points out, for example, *Cane* is “the material held in common throughout this book, and its very presence connects the text’s diasporic forms, characters, and spaces” (670).

As the question in “Fern” cited above suggests, *Cane* requires the readers to imagine moving—from a southern town to “Macon, Atlanta, Augusta, Pasadena, Madison, Chicago, Boston, or New Orleans” —, which brings about an interpretive movement. As Jay Watson notes, “the text’s own topography cites and engages a broader North-South geography pointing beyond Georgia toward new spaces, stories, and possibilities” (8). “Portrait in Georgia,” in which Toomer uses the traditional blazon poetry, clearly shows this tendency:

Hair—braided chestnut,
 coiled like a lyncher’s rope,
Eyes—fagots,
Lips—old scars, or the first red blisters,
Breath—the last sweet scent of *Cane*,
And her slim body, white as the ash
 of black flesh after flame. (13)

Here the poem requires the readers to connect a part of a body to its description, moving from the left side of the page to the right through the dash, a body part to another part, moving from the top of the page to the bottom, and the parts to the whole body, as if moving on a map. In a

similar way to the narrators moving from the South to the North and from the North to the South, the readers have to move in the text so as to interpret the poem. Moreover, as Robles suggests, “Georgia could also be the name of a woman, especially if the preposition were of” (32), or, the portrait might simply be “a lynching photograph, in which a slim white figure stands off to one side, or perhaps in the foreground, as a witness to (and participant in) a spectacle” (Watson, *Reading* 3). Kahn and Kishi note that the montaged face in this poem “personifies” the book’s “collage principle and functions as a microcosm of *Cane* itself” (29), and their idea applies not only to “Portrait in Georgia” but also through the volume, as the textual motion unsettles, and possibly overturns, the readers’ interpretation.

While urging the readers to keep moving, Toomer frequently interferes with the flow of reading and interpretation by using pauses and gaps in narrative. The first piece, “Karintha” describes the growth of the beautiful girl in four paragraphs. After describing Karintha as a woman, the vignette ends with the poem, as following:

Her skin is like dusk on the eastern horizon.
O cant you see it, O cant you see it,
Her skin is like dusk on the eastern horizon
. . When the sun goes down.

Goes down . . . (6)

Here the narrator pauses three times: by using the periods before “When”; a skipped line after “When the sun goes down”; and the periods after “Goes down.” These pauses stress the narrator’s sentimental feeling for the ill-fated mixed-race beauty. Thus in “Karintha” Toomer forces his readers to suspend reading by inserting poems, sets of dots, and skipped lines. These pauses throughout the volume often insinuate delicate, racial or sexual matters of the South.

As in “Karintha,” in many pieces of the volume pauses deny narrative coherence and make the readers read between lines. A short story in the first part such as “Fern,” “Esther,” and “Blood

Burning Moon” has many poems/songs, skipped lines, as well as sets of dots, and a story is often separated into several sections, each of which is marked with number. As is seen in these works, the women appearing in the first section of *Cane*, which concentrates on various black women in Georgia, do not have physical/mental stability and independence because of their race and gender. Toomer seems to show that when he draws a sketch of African Americans and “the South’s silent legacy of murder and miscegenation” (Nicholls 230), the story cannot but become one with no organic development and continuity.

Thus, the textual and interpretive motion and pauses/gaps brought by the fragmental form of *Cane* “[unmake] settled reading practices in the process of unmaking itself” in Robles’s words (29). In addition, *Cane*, whose narrative form prevents the readers from reading the text according to conventions, differs from other short-story cycles because it does not model empathy. As we have seen in *The Grandissimes* and *The Conjure Woman*, local color fictions emphasize what Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse call “the modeling of mutual empathy” (356): each work, in its own way, lets the readers understand the South as well as its racial problems and feel a metaphorical reunion between the North and the South, though the reunions represented in Cable’s and Chesnutt’s works were different from the “typical” reunion that was only possible through the continued oppression of black people. If earlier local-color fictions urge the readers to empathize with others in a different region, which leads to a metaphorical reunion between the North and the South, it seems to make sense that *Cane*, rejecting a monolithic view of the regions, avoids the readers’ simplistic sympathy.

Cane, which has as many narrators/protagonists as the number of pieces, lacks modeling of mutual empathy. According to George Clay, a short-story cycle often has a “recognizable protagonist (whether individual, family, or group) to empathize with as we realize what is at stake” (27). In fact, some short stories in part one of *Cane* include sub-characters that should be

recognizable, such as the Stone families and David Georgia, who appear repeatedly in different stories. It is not easy, however, to follow such characters because between these stories Toomer inserts some poems or vignettes, which differ from the previous short story in characters, narrative style, length, and subject. And even if we recognize these characters, Toomer does not allow them to elicit empathy, because they are typical, flat characters, rather than round.

A character that has the most potential to arouse the readers' empathy might be Ralph Kabnis in part three. Kabnis, like Toomer, is a multi-raced, intellectual northerner visiting Georgia. In the first section, working for a school and living in a cabin by himself, Kabnis struggles with a feeling of loneliness: he repeatedly tells himself, "Come, Ralph, old man, pull yourself together" (85). Although he seems to have a role in helping the outsider-readers to experience a feeling of mutual empathy, in the middle of the story, after hearing about the lynchings happening in the community, he stops working and becomes childish and helpless. Feeling afraid of lynching, he becomes increasingly apathetic, like other black men in the community, and loses his insight as an intellectual outsider. On the other hand, Lewis, who is also a northern intellectual and "what a stronger Kabnis might have been" (97), seems to serve as a substitute for Kabnis. Although Lewis has a potential to appeal to the readers, Toomer rejects the readers' identification with this heroic character also. Letting the characters call Lewis "queer" repeatedly and making him leave the community suddenly with no reason, Toomer suspends the readers' involvement with the northerner. If earlier local colorists' attempts to urge the (white northern) readers to sympathize with the reality of other people in other places were based on the distinction between insiders and outsiders, Toomer's refusal to model mutual empathy suggests his refusal of this assumption.

By adopting multiple pieces and using gaps between them, *Cane* plays with the readers, requiring them to move and pause, and thus unsettles their interpretation and reading practices.

These characteristics of the book enable Toomer to reshape southern local color fictions, which assumes the distinction between the region and the rest of the nation and the connection between the region and African Americans. Moreover, since depicting a region relies on and reproduces the meanings and reading practices historically attached to the region, which have often neglected or conveniently distorted racial issues, by troubling the distinction *Cane* highlights such issues, not as a local, national, or universal matter, but as the thing which refuses to be easily contextualized and given meaning.

Some characteristics of *Cane*'s narrative—its consciousness of literary form, engagement with race via primitivism, and sexual liberation, for example—were, surely, those of literary modernism. And Toomer, trying to go beyond the limited notions of race, region, class, and sex, was quite conscious about the possibility of new literary forms. Yet, considering his use and subversion of earlier regional fictions, we might see *Cane*'s unique form not as a new generic form coinciding with the rise of modernism in literature, but as a descendant of the short-story cycle written in the nineteenth-century South. Toomer's aspiration for representing African Americans of, and their migration from, the South corresponded to the modernist atmosphere of early-twentieth-century America. His encounter with literary modernism enabled him to develop and expand the boundaries of the southern short-story cycle.

2. Digging Southern Soil: Julia Peterkin's *Green Thursday*

Green Thursday consists of twelve stories, most of which depict a poor black family, the Pinesetts—diligent farmer Kildee, his wife Rose, their children, and their adopted daughter Missie—over a period of years. Each story illustrates an event that happened to the family: in “Green Thursday” Kildee and Roses’ first daughter Baby Rose dies; “Missie,” “Meeting,” and “Mount Pleasant” describes the couple’s adopting a daughter, Missie, and her encounter with religion; in “The Red Rooster” their second daughter, Sis, gets hurt by a rooster, while in the next

story, “Teaching Jim,” Kildee burns his son’s fingers so as to teach the child the danger of fire; “Cat Fish” is a comical story about Kildee’s attempt to make fertilizer; “Son” depicts the family’s dog Son’s death and Kildee’s awakening of sexual desire for Missie; in the next story, “A Sunday,” Kildee finds out about Rose’s adultery, and in the final story, “Plum-Blossoms,” he gets caught in a dilemma between a sense of responsibility for Rose and his love for Missie. Although these stories proceed in a chronological order, they do not show direct development. Yet, as a whole, they present the family’s chronic poverty, love and hatred, and slight changes in relationships.

Although some scholars have read the volume as a short-story cycle, in *Green Thursday*, the form functions in a different way from other cycles of the day, such as *Dubliners*, *Winesburg, Ohio*, and *In Our Time*. While in these works the form functions to a certain extent to embody a complex and unstable modern world and its lack of wholeness, the world of *Green Thursday* is still an agrarian society as that of parts one and three of *Cane*. After reading *Cane* with “pleasure and approval” (James 148), Peterkin was surprised to know that Toomer was at that time staying in Spartanburg, South Carolina, her mother’s hometown, in order to gather evidence for a book about how southern whites treated blacks (Williams, *A Devil* 63). We do not know how her reading of *Cane* affected her writing *Green Thursday*. But in a similar way to Toomer, Peterkin effectively uses repetition and the motif of cycle (or “circle” might be more appropriate in *Cane*’s case) brought about by the form. Like *Cane*, each story in *Green Thursday* is connected to another through particular motifs and themes. For instance, the fire that Maum Hannah causes to burn the white man’s house in “Ashes” is associated to the fire that kills Kildee and Rose’s daughter Baby Rose in “Green Thursday” and to hell fire that Missie learns about in “Meeting” and “Mount Pleasant” —“All the fire in the world came from hell. God swam it through seven rivers to cool it before he brought it here. Seven wide rivers” (65). Moreover, in “Teaching Jim”

Kildee burns his son Jim's hand so that he will not play with fire like his dead sister Baby Rose. In addition to fire, the motifs of ashes, blood, the moon, God, weeds, and soil appear again and again throughout the volume, interconnecting the stories.

While the cycle form suggests Toomer's attempts to unsettle the assumption of local color literature, namely, the notions of the South and the North as well as the ties between African Americans and the South, it suggests Peterkin's struggle as the wife of a plantation owner to confront the realities of the early twentieth-century South. Using the cycle, Peterkin describes black southerners' chronic poverty, recurring problems, and little hope for the future. On the one hand, Peterkin's realistic representation of black people was highly appreciated by Harlem intelligentsia: W. E. B. Du Bois, in his review of the book, notes that "[Peterkin] is a southern woman but she has the eye and ear to see beauty and know truth" (81). On the other hand, "[s]ome recent scholars have charged that Peterkin's depiction of black culture presents a fictitious, thus an inaccurate, portrait of black life and reifies her status as a white plantation mistress spinning fiction from the Big House" (Hamer 67). I would like to examine the ways in which the short-story cycle enables Peterkin to represent black southerners with a greater degree of nuance but simultaneously provides her with a means of some sort of solace in a modernizing South.

The first story "Ashes" depicts a deeper reality under the surface of the pastoral scenery of the old plantation. At the beginning of the story, "Ashes" describes a fork in a road, one path leading to the black community and one to the white community, though both are almost hidden under "a grove of cedars and live-oaks and magnolias" (11). Peterkin continues:

Right where the two roads meet is a sycamore tree. Its milk-white branches reach up to the sky. Its pale, silken leaves glisten and whisper incomplete cadences in the hot summer sunshine.

When frost crisps the leaves and strains them and cuts them away, they flutter down, leaving golden balls to adorn every bough.

There is hardly a sign of the black, twisted roots. There is not a trace to be seen of their silent, tense struggle as they grope deep down in the earth. There is nothing to show how they reach and grapple and hold, or how in the darkness down among the worms they work out mysterious chemistries that change damp clay into beauty. (11)

While “silken leaves” of a sycamore tree’s “milk-white branches” glisten, its “black, twisted roots” and “their silent, tense struggle” are invisible. These passages above foretell what the volume aims at: revealing how black people, beneath white people’s bright lives, “reach and grapple and hold,” and how “they work out mysterious chemistries.” Sterling Brown once wrote that Peterkin justified William Wordsworth’s belief in going back to the “soil” and that black writers should follow her as a “mentor” (201). Surely, Peterkin tried to dig and show the soil of the South, which has long been plowed by black folks. Although the event “Ashes” describes seems to have no relation to other stories, this is “the pivotal story in *Green Thursday*, holding an intrinsic place in its structure” (xviii), as Charles Joyner notes.

As is seen in the roots metaphor in the paragraph quoted above, “Ashes” also represents black southerners’ rootedness to the land. While eleven out of twelve stories in the volume concern the story of the Pinesett family, “Ashes” centers on Kildee’s aunt, Maum Hannah. Maum Hannah is also one of the main characters of Peterkin’s Pulitzer Prize novel, *Scarlet Sister Mary* (1928), in which she raises an orphan named Mary. In “Ashes,” living on the former “Mass Richard Jeemes” plantation, most of whose land was sold, Maum Hannah says, “I been lib een my house eber sence I kin ‘member. Ol’ Cap’n sell de plantation, but ‘e tell me fo’ stay whe’ I is. I stay” (21). But one day white men visit her and ask her to leave her place, for they have bought the land and are building a new house there. Having nowhere to go, Maum Hannah asks God what to do. Following a sign from God, she secretly sets fire to the new dwelling. Then she walks down to the village to meet the sheriff, confess what she has done, and to show her loyalty to her former master and to God. She appeals to his conscience, saying that she has come to him

because her old master told that “De sheriff is de bes’ frien’ de niggers is got een dis worl’, next to Him and Jedus” (22). Listening to her confession, the sheriff lets her go.

“Ashes” is the only story that directly depicts white people in *Green Thursday*, which focuses primarily on black characters. Yet, as “Ashes” clearly shows, the hardships of the black characters’ lives stem from whites’ selfish acts both in the past and in the present. Although the rest of the book does not directly depict white characters, Maum Hannah’s experience in “Ashes” always evokes the cause of the black characters’ predicaments and their rootedness to the land described throughout the volume.

A short story, because of its brevity, has the capacity to elevate apparently trivial matters to great significance. According to Charles E. May, “[o]ne of the most significant implications of the compactness demanded of the short story is its need to transform mere objects and events into significance”; “Whereas the particular can remain merely the particular in the novel,” the particular acquires “general significance” in the short story (18). In this sense, I believe, the short story form offers Peterkin a way of capturing a slice of everyday life of the Pinesett family, representing their daily labor and continuing poverty without productive development.

Simultaneously, however, those trivial and everyday events, which each story in *Green Thursday* depicts, have significance to the people involved. For example, “Green Thursday” describes Baby Rose’s burning to death, and in the next story “The Red Rooster” a hungry rooster tries to eat Baby Sis’s “bright shiny eyes” like “blackberries” and picks them out (112). In *Reading Faulkner’s Best Short Stories*, comparing the novel to the short story, Hans H. Skei notes that while the novel “may conclude its main line of action long before the end and may then go on to tell new stories, reveal new destinies and new worlds” (36), the short story is “much more subtly adjusted to present our encounters with something beyond ourselves and everyday life” (36). He writes that “[the short story] is admirably suited to present existential

experience and thus function as exemplary. The modern short story reflects a modern experience and conscience, an experience of loss and pain, of something broken and not mended, of strings and attachments gone, of uncertainties as to one's place in the world and in society" (38). Skei's explanation about the short story might be applicable to Faulkner's short stories, such as "Barn Burning" and "That Evening Sun," which depict the characters' "encounters with something beyond [themselves] and everyday life."

Surely, each short story in *Green Thursday* seems to illustrate the Pinesetts' "encounters with something beyond [themselves] and everyday life" in Skei's words. Importantly, however, the Pinesett family are unable to give such an experience significance. For the family, who live from hand to mouth and whose life is full of anxiety because of their poverty, even such a shocking or profound moment is eventually lost in the ordinary flow of everyday toiling. In short, what Skei calls "an experience of loss and pain, of something broken and not mended, of strings and attachments gone, of uncertainties as to one's place in the world and in society" is not beyond but is in the family and their daily lives. In fact, shocking events such as baby Rose's death, the rooster's picking out Sis Rose's eyes, and Rosa's infidelity are rarely mentioned after the story depicting the event.

The short story is suitable for representing black peasant life in that it "transforms mere objects and events into significance," but the poverty-stricken Pinesett family is incapable of keeping the experience significant, and the short-story cycle form works well in demonstrating this contradiction. While each story in *Green Thursday* illustrates a profound moment experienced by the Pinesett family, such moments do not directly influence other stories nor continue into the following ones.

More significantly, in *Green Thursday* a profound experience represented in each story is swallowed up by the cyclical pattern, such as seasons, poverty, life and death, and women's

sufferings. As I have argued in the introduction to this dissertation, critics have debated whether the term “short-story cycle” is appropriate to describe the genre. According to Rolf Lundén, “the term ‘cycle’ has lost much of original meaning of completed circle, but the word still connotes, if not complete roundness, at least a sense of coherence, finality, and closure,” as well as “a continuity of sorts” (17-18). I will not discuss the term in depth here, but *Green Thursday* must be one of the most suitable works to be called a “cycle,” because it follows a typically cyclical pattern. The first work in the book, “Ashes,” for instance, begins in spring, and the last work, “Plum Blossoms,” also ends in spring. Although the works chronologically depict events over several years, they are part of a cycle of seasons. As the passage in the first story “Ashes” shows— “There is nothing to hint that life here could be sweet or that its current runs free and strong. Winter, summer, birth, death, these seem to be all” (10) —people’s lives are part of the ongoing cycle of seasonal time.

Representing a continuity of a narrative without progressive development, the cyclicity of *Green Thursday* properly describes the poverty of the Pinesett family. Throughout the volume, the family’s life is full of anxiety because of their poverty. Although Kildee works hardest in the community and is working in the field in almost every story, he cannot get much corn and cotton because the “land was too old and worn out” (129): “He didn’t mind work. . . . The question was, why couldn’t he have a chance to work and make something? That was all he wanted” (105). Rose, who is a devout believer in Christianity unlike Kildee, attributes the family’s poverty to Kildee’s irreligiousness: she thinks, “He did work hard. But things keep going wrong all the time. If Kildee would do like other men—If Kildee would seek and get religion—that might help” (106). Struggling to get over their poverty, they do not get a chance to do so. Combined with the cyclical pattern emphasized by the short-story cycle form, the family’s state of being poor fills the volume with a sense of helplessness.

Perhaps describing black rootedness to the land and their poverty and helplessness gives Peterkin a means to cover up her anxiety as the wife of a plantation owner. According to Nghana tamu Lewis, as early as 1895 “[v]arious developments urged black South Carolinians to mark their exodus in larger numbers than migrants from any other southern state.” Lewis writes,

At the height of the agricultural depression in the South, South Carolina’s black population declined by 50 percent, making whites the state’s majority for the first time in over a century. Though the boll weevil indiscriminately arrived and crippled cotton production throughout the region, black South Carolinians—mostly farm laborers rather than owners—predictably appear to have suffered the most economic hardship. (595)

Although in her essay Lewis only analyzes Peterkin’s novels, *Black April* (1927), *Scarlet Sister Mary* (1928) and *Bright Skin* (1932), *Green Thursday* strongly reflects black South Carolinians hardship and their migration from the South. In “Ashes,” in fact, asked to move out from her place by a white man, Maum Hannah thinks, “If Margaret were living—or if she knew where any of her boys were—she might go to them” (16).

Perhaps it is the motif of life and death that most clearly shows the inability of black people to escape from their land. At the beginning of “Green Thursday,” Rose is pregnant with their second child; Kildee thinks, “Two years ago this very month his little baby Rose was born. As soon as the moon changed, another baby would come. His baby too, the same as baby Rose was his. Maybe this next child would be a boy-child” (33). Later in the story baby Rose dies and on the same day another baby, Jim, comes into the world. This episode itself emphasizes the cyclical nature of life, but the motif of life and death repeatedly appears throughout the volume, embodying the cyclical pattern. In “Son,” for example, the family’s dog Son, whom Kildee loves like his own son Jim, is killed by a trap, and in “Plum Blossoms” Kildee’s beloved mule Mike, who is already quite old in “Green Thursday,” is now dead and in his place Kildee has gotten a new mule, Joe Young.

Some stories like “Green Thursday” and “Son” depict life and death directly, but other stories like “Plum Blossoms” only refer to life and death, without directly depicting them. In other words, life and death happen not only in stories, but also between stories. In “Mount Pleasant” we find the existence of “the little new baby” (89), who is born after baby Jim, but whose birth itself is never mentioned in the previous stories. Perhaps the birth of this new baby called “Baby Sis” happens between “Mount Pleasant” and the previous story, “Meeting.” In the later stories, the Pinesett children are collectively referred to as “the children,” so the readers are not sure if there has been a new birth or death. In a similar way, Maum Hannah, often appearing in the earlier stories, does not enter the stories after “Cat Fish.” We can assume that the old woman dies at some point between stories, but we do not know the truth.

The cyclical pattern also introduces one of the important themes of Peterkin’s books, namely, women’s sufferings. “Ashes” indicates that Maum Hannah bore many children, most of whom died or moved to another region, leaving her alone. Her physical strength— “[her old arms] were strong enough to wield an ax on the fallen limbs of the trees in the woods” (12)—and her stubbornness, which lets her burn the poor white’s house and get the sheriff on her side, suggest hardships she has undergone. The sixth story, “Finding Peace,” describes Maum Hannah’s sorrow for Missie’s growth into adulthood.

Missie took a deep breath and the little berry-stained dress tightened across her chest. Maun Hannah’s wise old eyes noticed that coming maturity had already begun to develop slight, curving breasts there. Yes, they showed plain with each quick breath that Missie took. Missie’s little heart seemed very full of something.

Tears came into the wise old eyes, for it came to Maun Hannah for the first time that Missie was becoming a woman. A woman. Maun Hannah’s mind could hardly accept it, yet it was so. Little Missie would soon be a woman, with all the troubles, the sorrows, of womanhood. (96)

Missie’s berry-strained dress, which symbolizes the beginning of the menstrual cycle, and curving breasts predict “all the troubles, the sorrows, of womanhood” including giving birth and

bringing up children. In “Cat Fish,” Kildee tries to make his own fertilizer by burying catfish underground, but soon wild dogs dig up the fish and damage the land. Seeing this scene, Maum Hanna thinks; “Well, life is like that. She had learned it. Women learn it early. Yes” (129).

Maum Hanna did learn, Missie will learn, and Rose is learning the hardships of womanhood, which Peterkin refuses to depict directly in the volume. Throughout the volume, Rose is pregnant, staying downhearted after childbirth, attending prayer-meeting enthusiastically, and bullying Missie because of Kildee’s affection for the girl. At the beginning of “The Red Rooster” Kildee thinks, “She had not mended just after Sis was born. Dissatisfied. He felt she had lost faith in him” (103). Thus, the readers realize her emotional instability and seek for redemption, but as with Kildee, they do not know the exact cause of her present mental condition. In “A Sunday” Kildee learns that Rose has an affair with Reverend Felder and that “All de men in de quarter is laughin’, makin’ spote o’ [him], right now” (153). Since the story portrays the event only from Kildee’s standpoint, the readers never know Rose’s feelings for Kildee and Reverend Felder.

As embodied by the three women from different generations, Maum Hanna, Missie, and Rose, the hardships of womanhood are passed down and repeated from generation to generation. Moreover, while women’s hardships continue without interruption, they do not become an independent story by themselves, for they are normal conditions, not events. Events such as Maum Hanna’s burning a white man’s house, Baby Rose’s death, and Kildee’s realization of Rose’s affair with Reverend Felder are each able to constitute a story. On the other hand, in Peterkin’s telling, womanhood, which is just a state that every woman is trapped in like poverty, cannot constitute a short story.

Exhibiting seasons, poverty, life and death, and women’s sufferings, the cyclical pattern seen in *Green Thursday* represents a sense of entrapment and enclosure, which seems to give

Peterkin some kind of satisfaction and relief. The volume ends with ambiguities, without any resolution, but with a sense of despair at their never-ending hardships. In the final story “Plum-Blossoms,” whose title implies Missie’s attaining the full maturity of womanhood, Rose, getting tired of a hard life, feels anger towards Missie, who is “always singing and happy” although “[t]here was nothing to be so happy about” (175). Rose tries to get Kildee on her side with a lie, and Kildee, believing that Missie has insulted his wife, whips the innocent girl in order to show that he is a “master in this house” (187). Yet soon he quits whipping and hurries out of the room into the moonlit fields: “What was he to do—What? He had to face things. He couldn’t run away—not from Missie. . . . He was caught in a trap. Caught fast. How could he ever get loose? Deep down in his heart, did he want to get loose? He was not sure” (188). Thus, the story comes to a close leaving the family’s future ambiguous. It seems impossible, however, Kildee, who is “caught in a trap” but “ha[s] to face things,” escapes from the land.

Although Kildee believes that through the repetition of each day he may reach a better life, the very hope keeps him connected to the land, which is “too old and worn out” (129). In “Green Thursday” Kildee works to kill the grass on *Green Thursday*, on which “to stir the earth . . . was a deadly sin” (28), because “Grass got the crop last year. . . . But this year, he’d kill that grass or die trying! Plowing every day was the only way” (34). While the final story “Plum-Blossoms” emphasizes a sense of impasse, at the beginning of the very story Kildee “picture[s] himself a time when things would be better. Easier. When his labor, his striving, would bear fruit. He’d give his folks a better house to live in. Give them pleasure. He himself would be different. Better. Happier. Freer. The picture was never quite finished (171). The cyclicity of *Green Thursday* represents not only a sense of entrapment and enclosure, but also a faint hope that if they persevere, one day they will find a better life. While Kildee keeps the hope by working every day, other characters including Rose keep it by believing in God. In the last scene of “Plum-

Blossoms,” Kildee, who does not believe in God, hears voices singing a chant at Meeting—“I’m—so—glad—My trouble—won’ las’ —always—” —and realizes that people are “Asking for help” and they “sing about trouble” (188). Representing not only black peasants’ trouble but also their hope enables Peterkin to emphasize black people’s immobility.

As the anchor story “Ashes” suggests, in *Green Thursday*, Peterkin tries to reveal how black people “reach and grapple and hold” under the surface of the pastoral scenery of the old plantation, and the short-story cycle form offers her an apt medium to do so. While the short story “transform[s] mere objects and events into significance” (May 18), for the Pinesetts, because of their daily poverty and labor, even a profound experience remains insignificant. Their extraordinary experiences are swallowed up by the cyclical pattern of poverty, seasons, life and death, as well as women’s hardships, in a similar way that a short story becomes a part of the whole book while barely maintaining its status as an independent story.

Simultaneously, however, these properties of the short-story cycle—in each story a mere experience gains significance, but then it becomes a part of the cycle, embracing the hope for getting out of it—enables Peterkin to turn away from the realities of her day, which threatens her position of privilege, and to find some kind of solace. The short-story cycle form represents her struggle as the wife of a plantation owner in the early twentieth-century South Carolina.

Both Toomer’s and Peterkin’s attempt to explore and develop the short-story cycle reflect their interest in, or anxiety over, in Peterkin’s case, changes surrounding black people in the early twentieth century South. By using the form’s characteristic as an assemblage, in *Cane*, Toomer avoids producing particular meaning, or one constant view, and unsettles reading practices and interpretations that stereotyped black people as a tool to represent the authenticity of the region. On the other hand, Peterkin tries to represent poor black southerners’ chronic poverty and their

inability to escape from the region, in which she must feel a sort of comfort, by using the characteristics of the short-story cycle form, namely, a story merging into the cyclic pattern.

Although the short-story cycle as a genre has an affinity for literary modernism, we should read southern modern short-story cycles in the context of both early regional sketches and literary modernism. *Cane* and *Green Thursday*, as transitional works that bridge the precursors of the short-story cycle written in the nineteenth-century South and that written by twentieth-century southern writers, show that the regional sketches did not disappear from southern literature; rather, they continued to develop according to southern writers' aspiration for representing the region and creating new southern literature. The next chapter will analyze William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* (1942) and examine how and why Faulkner required the short-story cycle form in order to tackle the vexed question of wholeness.

CHAPTER 4

MOLLY BEAUCHAMP AND THE AFFORDANCES OF THE WHOLE: WILLIAM FAULKNER'S *GO DOWN, MOSES*

In this chapter, I would like to examine the reasons why, and the ways in which, William Faulkner, one of the most famous Southern novelists, adopted the short-story cycle form in *Go Down, Moses* (1942). I am interested in the fact that Faulkner published this book after publishing several of his major novels, including *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). *Go Down, Moses* consists of seven short stories, most of which were originally written as independent stories. As is well known, Random House published the book as *Go Down, Moses and Other Stories* in 1942, but when they reissued it in 1949, Faulkner called for it to be published as *Go Down, Moses*; he wrote to his editor Robert Hass that “*Moses* is indeed a novel” (*Selected* 284). In an interview, Faulkner clarifies that the volume “was held together by one family, the Negro and the white phase of the same family, same people” (Gwynn 3).

Until the 1980s most criticism of *Go Down, Moses* wrestled with its genre (Wagner-Martin, “Introduction” 5), trying to classify it “as a novel or a story series” (Ohri 1). While many scholars emphasized the book’s novelistic unity by claiming Isaac McCaslin to be its protagonist, some scholars such as James Early and Joanne V. Creighton did so “by documenting Faulkner’s revisions to the published stories and by elucidating their shared themes” (Robinson and Town 192). As Jennifer J. Smith notes, however, “Faulkner’s composition process and revision practices further resist the critical tendency to read only unity and harmony in his canon. A story is never finished, never complete. Composition is deeply imbricated with revision” (116).

More recent critiques have tended to treat the volume as a story series (whether or not they call it a short-story cycle) rather than a novel. While recognizing the narrative disunity of the volume, such critiques have attempted to “trace a figure or theme as the connecting thread” (Smith 116). For them, the unity emerging from this incoherent narrative represents a certain

important theme of the book, such as a ritual hunt (Vickery), racial identity (Smith), or the connection between racism and the destruction of the region's natural resources (Pacht), and love (Muste).

Although these recent critiques help us appreciate the book, the critical tendency to find a connecting thread in *Go Down, Moses* often overlooks the potentiality of the narrative form Faulkner adopts. In fact, there is no difference between the type of unity found by those who read the book as a novel and the type found by those who read it as a story series. Both approaches presuppose the existence of a novelistic unity, which Faulkner successfully achieved in his previous major works. In finding a connecting thread/novelistic unity in *Go Down, Moses*, scholars seem to read the volume as what Dallas Marion Lemmon defines as “the rovelle,” which is “a novel or a near-novel composed of short tales or stories—a series of stories so interrelated and intertwined that their cumulative effects are novelistic” (1), rather than as a short-story cycle.

Defining the form of *Go Down, Moses* as a short-story cycle, Susan Donaldson proposes a new direction in the long history of critics struggling to find a novelistic unity in *Go Down, Moses*. Donaldson focuses on the “disunity, discontinuity, and never-ending strife” the form represents and claims that the volume “remains a battlefield of contending narratives, an unyielding contest between individual stories of resistance and discontinuity and the all-encompassing narrative of the McCaslins” (“Contending Narratives” 147). Although Donaldson's battlefield metaphor seems to be effective in considering Faulkner's narrative form, the creation of the narrative battlefield does not fully explain the reason why he uses the short-story cycle form, not the novelistic one, in *Go Down, Moses*. As David H. Evans claims, “Faulkner's richest works, like *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Go Down, Moses* are less like verbal mosaics than rhetorical battlefields” (19). For Faulkner, who has tried to represent multiple voices and experiences throughout his career, his fiction must always be “a battlefield of

contending narratives” in Donaldson’s words, whether it is expressed in the novelistic form or in the cycle form.

Describing *Go Down, Moses* as rhetorical or narrative “battlefields,” both Donaldson and Evans, in a similar way to the critics who read the book as a novel or a story series, seem to presuppose the existence of the authorized narrative that is connected to a kind of wholeness. Donaldson claims that a master narrative of the McCaslins, which is “very nearly interchangeable” with southern history (137) and “looms large indeed over all seven stories in *Go Down, Moses*” (138), attempts to “establish unity and continuity” but meets with “unceasing resistance” from the seven stories in the volume (139). In the rhetorical battlefields of Faulkner’s fiction, Evans notes, “virtually every character is fiercely concerned to present a narrative that will . . . become the authorized version” (19). But does an authorized narrative always have a hostile relationship with minor narratives? Do minor narratives necessarily resist against the authorized narrative or the totalizing whole? Or, is it always and necessarily an authorized narrative that creates wholeness?

Building on Donaldson’s approach to “disunity, discontinuity, and never-ending strife” (“Contending Narratives” 78), John Rowe proposes “a more radical ‘disunity’” in the volume, which confronts “the fundamental limitation of the family as simulacrum for community” that has been traditionally tied to the novel form (78-79). According to Rowe, permitting “the imaginative exploration of different social identities” (79) reflects Faulkner’s “attempts to give real voices, lives, and thus characters to African Americans, in ways that go far beyond his previous works” (80). He writes,

Whatever Faulkner’s modernist intentions in novels like *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, both of which certainly shape the “unity and coherence” of the stories in *Go Down, Moses*, he still understood at some level beyond the purely aesthetic that the political arguments of his major works demanded an African American voice at once more rebellious and utopian than any of the voices he ever projected in his fictions. (77)

I agree that the short-story cycle form allows Faulkner to break the “impasse” of his fictional project, that is, the creation of an aesthetic totality that sacrifices African Americans’ complex voices. I believe, however, that Faulkner in *Go Down, Moses* challenges the impasse of his fictional project by rethinking the existence of “unity and coherence,” rather than by ensuring it without sacrificing African-American voices.

Whereas Faulkner’s polyvocal novels seem to picture a whole as unifying and enclosed, in *Go Down, Moses* Faulkner questions and undermines the assumption that a whole is always perfect and totalizing. I would not claim that he is rejecting the concept of the whole, but that in *Go Down, Moses* he is exploring an alternative version of the whole, which is not necessarily unifying and totalizing.

Different from the totalizing whole of the novel, the alternative version of wholeness that Faulkner explores in *Go Down, Moses* is a bounded, inclusive, and shared whole. Wholeness can be totalizing and unifying but simultaneously shared and open to the things which seem to be excluded from or not to constitute a whole. Questioning and undermining the assumption that a whole is a bounded container, I believe, Faulkner encounters the alternative version of wholeness, or a different way of thinking about the affordances of what he has regarded as wholeness.

The affordances of a whole resonate with those of the short-story cycle form: although the cycle seems not to believe in aesthetic wholeness as the novel does, it achieves a bounded, inclusive, and shared whole. In order to examine the relationship between the affordances of a whole and those of the short-story cycle form, in this chapter I would like to focus on Faulkner’s black female characters, especially Molly Beauchamp. Molly Beauchamp, who has never searched for or believed in a sense of wholeness, is the character who most closely represents the

alternative model of wholeness that Faulkner explores in *Go Down, Moses*, one that can take the place of and subvert the wholeness sought by the McCaslin men.

Faulkner's characterization of Molly Beauchamp resonates with the unique affordances of the short-story cycle. Considering that Molly repeatedly appears in the volume as one of the most significant black characters, we might pay more attention to the relation between the short-story cycle form and Molly's place in the volume. Moreover, as is often mentioned, Molly has a clear resemblance to Caroline Barr, who cared for the Faulkner family and to whom *Go Down, Moses* is dedicated: "Who was born in slavery and who gave to my family a fidelity without stint or calculation of recompense and to my childhood an immeasurable devotion and love" (2). The relationship between Roth Edmonds and Molly echoes that of Faulkner and Caroline Barr, to whom critiques often have referred as Faulkner's "mammy."

Erin Kay Penner notes that "*Go Down, Moses* marks a radical departure from the aesthetic of black endurance with which Faulkner so famously characterizes Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury*" (417). I agree with the statement, but while Penner attributes the book's "radical departure" to Faulkner's characterization of Rider, "who shuns traditional elegiac and other literary modes of mourning and instead employs a form of violence that holds a particular terror for the African American community" (417), I would like to attribute it mainly to Faulkner's characterization of Molly. Whereas Faulkner achieves the aesthetic totality of *The Sound and the Fury* by glorifying the perseverance of black people represented by Dilsey, in *Go Down, Moses* Faulkner superimposes the affordances of wholeness/the short-story cycle on Molly's figure.

In the following sections, focusing on the notion of wholeness throughout *Go Down, Moses*, I would like to clarify how Faulkner challenges the idea of a whole as a bounded container. First, I would like to point out images seen throughout the volume that conjure the notion of wholeness: from McCaslin mansion to the black McCaslins' home, the volume is full

of “failed wholes.” Then, I will analyze the characteristics of the McCaslin men, who produce such wholes in the process of finding their places in society, and Molly, who seems to be the closest person to the alternative model of wholeness that can replace and subvert the one sought by the male characters. Moreover, each story in the volume directly reflects the form of a failed whole produced by characters, and as a collection of failed wholes, the volume demonstrates a new way of thinking about the affordances of wholeness.

1. Southern Society Full of Contending Failed Wholes

In the very last scene of *The Sound and the Fury*, Dilsey’s grandson and Benjy Compson’s attendant Luster deviates from the usual course the horse is used to taking, which causes Benjy’s hoarse cry. Then Jason Compson appears and reestablished the order violated by Luster: “The broken flower drooped over Ben’s fist and his eyes were empty and blue and serene again as cornice and façade flowed smoothly once more from left to right; post and tree, window and doorway, and signboard, each in its ordered place” (371).

As this very famous sentence of the novel shows, although order is restored, it is as empty as Benjy’s stare (Bleikasten 48). Pointing out “the need, perhaps the dire need, for some kind of social order” which is “a given for Faulkner” stemming from “his affiliation with a paternalist ideology” (102), Kevin Railey argues that “[t]his Faulknerian assertion of the need for order, of the need for people to know and to accept their places within a social order, leads us to understand Dilsey and the Gibson family,” who accept their place (65).

Surely, in the Faulknerian world, everything should be put “in its ordered place” so as to keep a social order, and black characters just have to accept their place and endure suffering. The notion of putting everything “in its ordered place” is also important for the aesthetic in Faulkner’s writings. As John Rowe points out, however, the aesthetic totality sacrifices African Americans’ complex voices, and in a similar way the social order in his fictional world comes at

the expense of black people.

On the other hand, it seems more difficult for people to maintain the social order in the world of *Go Down, Moses* than in Faulkner's previous works. Throughout *Go Down, Moses*, we can see many images of the imperfect wholes, which mirror a society lacking totality. In contrast to the image of the serene town square, which reestablishes its order at the end of *The Sound and the Fury*, and the closed Sutpen mansion, where Rosa Coldfield and Quentin Compson find Henry Sutpen living hidden for decades, old Carothers McCaslin's mansion remains half-completed. After their father's death, Uncle Back and Uncle Buddy "moved out of the tremendously-conceived, the almost barnlike edifice which he had not even completed, into a log cabin":

[They] domiciled all the slaves in the big house some of the windows of which were still merely boarded up with odds and ends of plank or with the skins of bear and deer nailed over the empty frames: each sundown the brother who superintended the farming would parade the negroes as a first sergeant dismisses a company, and herd them willynilly, man woman and child, without question protest or recourse, into the tremendous abortive edifice scarcely yet out of embryo, as if even old Carothers McCaslin had paused aghast at the concrete indication of his own vanity's boundless conceiving. . . . [P]resently and for fifty years afterward, when [Ike] himself was big enough to hear and remember it, there was in the land a sort of folk-tale: of the countryside all night long full of skulking McCaslin slaves dodging the moonlight roads and the Patrol-riders to visit other plantations. (193-194)

The house—"the tremendous abortive edifice scarcely yet out of embryo"—which lacks its windows and doors, and from which McCaslin slaves escape every night, represents the crumbling southern white patriarchy as an imperfect whole.

In addition to old Carothers McCaslin's mansion, the images of the imperfect whole seen through *Go Down, Moses* are often related to the decay of the Old South. Such wholes are would-be totalizing ones that have failed in some way, paradoxically because of their very attempt to be totalizing wholes, and refuse to admit the possibilities of gaps, absences, and faults.

Upon Ike's birth, his uncle Hubert Beauchamp gives him a "silver cup filled with gold pieces and wrapped in burlap and sealed with his godfather's ring in the hot wax" (223), which Hubert put "on the shelf in the locked closet" (225). Later Ike finds out that Hubert, suffering from dire poverty after Reconstruction—his mansion called Warwick "outwardly did not change" but inside "there was less and less . . . fine furnishings" (224)—, has borrowed the gold pieces from the cup and replaced it with pennies and "minutely-folded scraps of paper sufficient almost for a rat's nest": "I owe my Nephew Ike Beauchamp McCaslin five (5) pieces Gold which I, O.U constitutes My note of hand with Interest at 5 percent" (227). Thus, the silver chalice, which "recalls Keats's urn, . . . , one of the household gods in Roman tradition that represented the spirits of the family's home place" (Millichap 107), becomes a "tin coffee-pot" (227) brought by Ike when he moves in a rented room in Jefferson. As is symbolized by Hubert's silver cup, which was wrapped in inscrutable burlap but from and into which money has been freely moved, in *Go Down, Moses* what is supposed to be a bounded whole often turns out not to be bounded at all.

I would not claim, however, that *Go Down, Moses* represents the world lacking totality. This is in contrast to Faulkner's polyvocal novels such as *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, which represent the world where people still believe in the totality of life and try to put everything in its ordered place. Instead, I believe that in the world of *Go Down, Moses* what seems whole is not a bounded whole unlike the one reestablished at the end of *The Sound and the Fury* and deconstructed in *Absalom, Absalom!*. Whereas his polyvocal novels seem to picture a whole as unifying and enclosed, in *Go Down, Moses* Faulkner questions and undermines the assumption that a whole is a bounded container.

In order to examine Faulkner's use of whole in the volume, I would like to introduce the notion of "affordance" that Caroline Levine explores in *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (2015). According to Levine, affordance is "a term used to describe the potential uses or

actions latent in materials and designs” in design theory (1); for example, “[a] door- knob affords not only hardness and durability, but also turning, pushing, and pulling” (1). Adopting the concept of affordance, Levine argues that “a specific form can be put to use in unexpected ways that expand our general sense of that form’s affordance” (6). “With affordances in mind,” Levine notes, “we can see how forms can be at once containing, plural, overlapping, portable, and situated” (11), from which literary and cultural studies, including genre theory, could benefit.

Especially “Chapter II: WHOLE” of Levine’s book helps us reconsider not only the narrative form of *Go Down, Moses* but also the short-story cycle as a genre, which consists of several independent stories, or bounded wholes, and creates a larger unified whole. According to Levine, critics in the past two or three decades have worked hard to resist the political implication of unities and the containing power of form, celebrating difference and diversity, but “in the process they maintain the traditional formalist premise that forms totalize and unify” (25). Focusing on an influential formalist, Cleanth Brooks, and an influential anti-formalist, Mary Poovey, Levine suggests that “formalist and anti-formalist critics have shared a specific presumption . . . that literary forms can be easily mapped onto political communities—that there is an effective homology between the bounded wholeness of the lyric poem, for example, and the bounded wholeness of a nation” (25).

Levine’s point applies to Faulkner criticism as well. Readings of Faulkner’s fiction have tended to assume a homology between the bounded wholeness of his work and the wholeness of the (Old) South. And regardless of the differences in their approach to the wholeness/South, they seem to share the idea that a whole in Faulkner’s works is always bounded, containing, powerful, and totalizing. Cleanth Brooks, who Levine considers “is actually not formalist enough” because of his lack of “interest in the conspicuous differences among the forms he invokes” (31), is, needless to say, the foundational critic of Faulkner’s texts.

It is no surprise that Brooks, as a formalist, considers that “*Go Down, Moses* has a great deal more over-all unity than a superficial glance might suggest” and that a more accurate “title would be *The McCaslins*, for the book has to do with the varying fortunes of that family” (244). As I mentioned earlier, Brooks and many scholars have interpreted *Go Down, Moses* as a story of the McCaslins and/or that of Ike’s (failed) growth.

Levine casts doubt on the idea that “bounded wholes are always and necessarily dangerous and successful” (29). In order to “offer a methodological alternative to breaking forms apart” and ask “what exactly bounded wholes afford and what happens when they cross paths with other forms in the world,” she analyzes “a number of historical and literary encounters among bounded wholes, including medieval church spaces, narrative closure, and the division of Victorian life into gendered ‘separate spheres’” (29). She concludes; “While it is true that boundaries, such as those around nations and convents, do indeed confine and imprison, expel and exclude, they can also be put to use to disrupt the controlling power of other bounded shapes, the encounters themselves providing opportunities for new and emancipatory social formations” (45). Levine’s argument gives us an important insight into *Go Down, Moses* as well as the short-story cycle form. Each short story in *Go Down, Moses* seems to be a bounded whole in that it is complete as a story, but it also “disrupt[s] the controlling power of other bounded shapes,” namely, other short stories in the volume and the volume as a whole.

Significantly, in *Go Down, Moses*, the whole is not necessarily defining, unifying and totalizing. In some cases, like the yet-to-be-completed house that Carothers McCaslin “had not time to finish” (7) and Hubert Beauchamp’s silver cup, it appears to be a bounded whole but in fact is full of gaps, while in other cases a form resulting from avoiding a bounded whole becomes enclosed and confining, as is seen in Ike’s relinquishment of his property. Moreover, the black male characters aspire to establish a whole, but it never becomes a bounded one because of

whites' interference. In this chapter I would like to call these forms collectively "failed wholes" for convenience, though I would not necessarily consider a bounded whole to be a successful one.

Described by Ike as a "strong and ruthless" man who "has a cynical foreknowledge of his own vanity and pride and strength and a contempt for all he gets" (188), Carothers McCaslin exploits everything and everyone he can, including his slave Eunice and their daughter Tomasina. In order to remove a sense of guilt about their father/grandfather's exploitation, his male descendants—Buck, Buddy, and Ike—reject their ordered place, although in the world of the McCaslins, from the beginning, there is no such thing as an order. Buck and Buddy free their father's slaves and move to "a one room log cabin which the two of them built themselves and added other rooms to while they lived in it, refusing to any slave to touch any timber of it" (193) so as to be rid of the black McCaslin line. Likewise, Ike's relinquishment of his heritage and moving in "one small cramped fireless rented room in a Jefferson boarding-house" (222) exposes his desire to escape from the McCaslin history of miscegenation and incest.

These white McCaslins struggle to reject their ordered place and totalizing whole that Old Carothers McCaslin has tried to (but in fact failed to) establish. Ike's relinquishment of his heritage demonstrates this fact most clearly. Managing the money left to the children of Tomey's Turl, Ike even travels to Arkansas following Lucas's sister Sophonsiba Beauchamp, who has married a scholarly African American man living on a grant and almost starves in a log cabin. Ike makes an arrangement with a local banker to put three dollars into "her actual hand" on the fifteenth of each month for twenty-eight years (208). By putting Tomey's Turl's money in its ordered place and moving to a Jefferson boarding-house, he tries to form a new order that is free from the McCaslin past.

The form Ike tries to create in order to shatter the totalizing, bounded whole is, however,

also bounded. His asceticism is “too extreme, an abdication of social and familial responsibilities” (Brinkmeyer 213), which makes him “a widower now and uncle to half a county and father to no one” (5). Renouncing “his identity in the social world, Ike enters “a wilderness of boundless freedom and eternal verities” (Brinkmeyer 212), “since the earth was no man’s but all men’s, as light and air and weather were” (5). Importantly, although the whole created by Ike is enclosed, it does not protect him from the McCaslin past. In fact, in the later story “Delta Autumn” Ike learns that the McCaslin past he has tried to escape from never ends. In the story, a young mixed-race woman with a child visits Ike, confessing that the child is his young relative Carothers Roth Edmond’s and that she is the great-great-great-granddaughter of old Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin.

While the white descendants of Carothers McCaslin try to escape from the controlling power of the whole, African American characters build a home as a bounded place where they can establish safety and security. In the opening story “Was,” for example, Tomey’s Turl, a black son of Carothers McCaslin and his daughter Tomasina, marries Tennie after a long struggle, which unites the white McCaslin line and the Beauchamps and reunites the white and black McCaslin lines, making “a relation embodying for Ike the burden of personal guilt bequeathed by history” (Robinson and Town 195). Electing to remain on the McCaslin plantation even after his revelation, Turl firmly refuses to accept the money left by Carothers McCaslin and fathers three children.

Turl’s son Lucas Beauchamp also tries to make an independent home as his ordered place. Marriage is everything to Lucas not only because “it represents the one institution of social and even economic stability permitted black people after Reconstruction” (Matthews 206) but also because Lucas’s creation of “his own world” as “the head of his family . . . reflects the plantation world grounded in patriarchy and possessions” (Vickery 128). In short, sticking to his position as

a black McCaslin descended from a male line, Lucas tries to reestablish the order that old Carothers tried but failed to do, and therefore, according to Ike, he strikingly resembles his white grandfather. Ike considers: "He's more like old Carothers than all the rest of us put together, including old Carothers" (91). Ike also considers him to be "a vessel, durable, ancestryless, nonconductive, in which the toxin and its anti stalemated one another, seetheless, unrumored in the outside air," rather than "the battleground and victim of the two strains" (81). Described as "a vessel," Lucas, at least to some extent, seems to embody an enclosed whole.

It is not, however, easy for black men to build a home as a bounded whole. "The Fire and the Hearth" illustrates the strained relationship between Lucas and his white cousin Zack Edmonds, who brings Molly to his house after his wife dies in childbirth. When Lucas asks Zack for his wife, Molly returns home with Zack's child and in the white woman's shoes. After nearly killing Zack, Lucas says to himself, "How to God . . . can a black man ask a white man to please not lay down with his black wife? And even if he could ask it, how to God can the white man promise he wont?" (46). Black men are helpless against a white man's intrusion into the home they try to establish, and therefore, they have to redraw its boundary each time it is broken or threatened.

2. The Fire, Molly, and the Alternative Whole

Each story in *Go Down, Moses* thus depicts failed wholes produced by the McCaslin men—the false whole that is full of gaps, the enclosed and confining one resulting from avoiding a bounded whole, and the one that has difficulty in marking its boundary. While they produce such wholes in the process of finding their places in society, black women in the cycle cannot but accept their places in a similar way to Dilsey who accepts her place within a social order in *The Sound and the Fury*.

While Faulkner depicts Dilsey's strong position as a servant of the Compsons, in *Go Down*,

Moses, he emphasizes black women's vulnerable position in the family as well as in society. Black women in the cycle, in short, only exist in relation to other people, especially male white McCaslins. Eunice is bought by old Carothers McCaslin as a wife for his slave Thucydus but becomes pregnant by the white man, old Carothers McCaslin. Eunice and Carother's daughter Tomasina gives birth to Terrel after Tomasina's white father sexually exploits her. Whereas the black McCaslin men try to establish themselves as men, the black female characters have no choice but to accept their ordered place. And only the ledger's record of Eunice's drowning herself reveals the fact that she could not accept her ordered place.

Eunice and Tomasina, despite their vulnerable position in the family/society, are of major significance to the whole volume. Although the volume does not fully represent them as independent characters, by bringing the black line into the McCaslins and causing Ike's relinquishment, they have a substantial presence throughout the volume. While their story is told only in part IV of "The Bear," it repeatedly appears in different forms throughout the volume: in the opening story "Was," for example, Tomasina's son Tomey's Turl's desire for Tennie reunites the white and black McCaslin lines; in "Fire and the Hearth," "the black part of [Lucas's] blood heritage makes Molly as vulnerable before Zack as Eunice was before Carothers, and Tomasina after her (Kinney 332); the absurdity of Eunice and Tomasina's death parallels that of Mannie's death in "Pantaloon in Black"; and in "Delta Autumn" Eunice's great-great-great-granddaughter appears in front of Ike and devastates him.

Lucas's wife Molly also exists in relation to other people, but she has more direct influence on them. She raises her nephew Rider, and even after he becomes an adult "there was always food for him at any hour of day or night in the house of his aunt who didn't even want to take the two dollars he gave her each Saturday" (104). Moreover, she raises her grandchild Samuel Worsham Beauchamp on behalf of his parents and struggles to bring back his dead body in "Go

Down, Moses.” In spite of her tiny figure which “in the succeeding forty years seemed to have grown even smaller” (77), she is capacious and has abundant love toward others.

Molly plays an important role in the volume mainly because of her relation to the major male characters, especially Zack and Roth Edmonds and Lucas, whose strained relationship highlights the complexities of race and masculinity in southern society. While being a wife to Lucas and a mother to Henry Beauchamp, Molly is a “wife” to Zack, who brings her to his house after his wife dies in childbirth, and a “mother” to his child Roth. Roth and Henry have been almost brothers— “Even before [Roth] was out of infancy, the two houses had become interchangeable” (85)—, and for Roth Molly is “the only mother he . . . ever knew”:

. . . who had raised him, fed him from her own breast as she was actually doing her own child, who had surrounded him always with care for his physical body and for his spirit too, teaching him his manners, behavior to be gentle with his inferiors, honorable with his equals, generous to the weak and considerate of the aged, courteous, trustful and brave to all—who had given him, the motherless, without stint or expectation of reward that constant and abiding devotion and love which existed nowhere else in this world for him. . . (90-91)

While raising her own child, she gives Roth “constant and abiding devotion and love” “without stint or expectation of reward.”

As Koichi Suwabe points out, Molly is “a novelistic or typically Faulknerian female character, who not only exists in relation to other characters but also subverts the other characters’ romantic, patronizing expectations” (105). “The Fire and the Hearth” comically depicts Lucas’s quest for masculinity and resulting search for gold, which he believes is buried by Buck and Buddy. But “Molly emasculates Lucas with her request for a ‘voce’ (divorce)” (Suwabe 105), and eventually he gives up hunting for gold to prevent divorce. She also (though indirectly) emasculates Zack, who routinely expects Molly to live with him and raise his son

after his wife's death, by returning to Lucas.

Molly's attitude towards Roth Edmonds suggests her abundant love as well as her power to subvert the other characters' expectations. Although Roth Edmonds and Henry Beauchamp have been almost brothers, their relationship breaks up when the white boy realizes "his received cultural and genetic identities as white, wealthy, and infinitely privileged" (Lennard 68), as he recalls and regrets his separation from Henry: "Then one day the old curse of his fathers, the old haughty ancestral pride based not on any value but on an accident of geography, stemmed not from courage and honor but from wrong and shame, descended to him" (86). He does not allow Henry to sleep with him in the same bed, and Henry gets the message. For a month after this incident, he sees Henry and Lucas only at a distance, but one day he visits their house to have dinner, hoping the family welcomes him as they have been.

There was nothing in her face; he said it the best he could for that moment, because later he would be able to say it all right, say it once and forever so that it would be gone forever, facing her before he entered her house yet, stopping, his feet slightly apart, trembling a little, lordly, peremptory: "I'm going to eat supper with you all tonight." It was all right. There was nothing in her face. He could say it almost any time now, when the time came. "Course you is," she said. "I'll cook you a chicken." (87)

Although Molly's voice was "as it had always been, peaceful and steadfast," seeing the table set in the kitchen without Lucas or Henry, Roth realizes that "it was too late" (88).

His separation from his black family and "the only mother he would remember" (85) is a traumatic event for Roth, but he can see "nothing" in Molly's face. Perhaps Roth expects her to maintain a mother-son relationship with him as they have had, or to cry over losing her white "son." Thus, her unchanged attitude toward him despite their impaired relationship further hurts him, for it suggests she does not care about losing her white "son." He has had his "ordered place" in the Beauchamps until "the old curse of his fathers" (86) descends to him, and after losing the place, he has to restore it as an owner of the plantation: "For twenty years now he had

run it, tried to even with the changed times, as his father and grandfather and great-grandfather had done before him” (90).

Molly’s unchanged attitude toward Roth, however, does not mean that she is indifferent to him. She knows that, as a matter of course, Roth gradually develops a sense of racial superiority and that he and her family have to change who they are. Thus, she accepts Roth’s separation from her family as part of the natural order of things. She also welcomes and cooks for him as usual when he visits her family after an absence of nearly a month, not because she tries to act normal but because she accepts it as normal and loves him as she has done. Whether Roth retains the consciousness of race or not does not affect Molly’s attitude toward and maternal love for him. Since she has had no “ordered place” in society and has never searched for a sense of wholeness unlike (white) male characters, she has enough flexibility to adapt to change and love others. And as her unchanged attitude reveals Roth’s selfish presumption, she embraces a power to dismiss male characters’ romantic search for a sense of wholeness.

To be more precise, Molly has her own sense of order, which is totally different from the types of order for which the male characters search. In “The Fire and the Hearth,” she seeks divorce on the grounds of Lucas’ obsession with finding the buried money. She asks him for a divorce because, according to her, she is afraid that “he’s going to find” the money (79). She explains to Roth; “Because God say, ‘What’s rendered to My earth, it belong to Me unto I resurrect it. And let him or her touch it, and beware.’ And I’m afraid. I got to go. I got to be free of him” (79). Later, she gives Roth her reason for seeking a divorce as follows: “Mister Zack! Cant you see? Not that he would keep on using it just the same as if he had kept it, but he would fotch onto Nat, my last one and least one, the curse of God that’s gonter destroy him or her that touches what’s done been rendered back to Him?” (94). For Molly, who has never searched for a sense of wholeness unlike the male characters, wholeness is the thing which only God possesses

and which human beings should not destroy. Seeing Lucas's going to hunt for gold and touch His earth, all she can do is to "be free of him" (79).

Molly is, however, the only character who achieves the alternative model of wholeness that Faulkner explores, one that can replace and subvert the wholeness sought by the male characters. In "Go Down, Moses," the title story and the last story of the volume, Molly asks the county attorney Gavin Stevens to bring back the dead body of her grandson Samuel Worsham Beauchamp, who is executed in Chicago for murdering a policeman, and to give him a proper funeral. In order to explain to Molly about her grandson's death, Gavin Stevens visits the house of Miss Worsham, whose grandfather owned the parents of Molly and her brother Hamp Worsham. He sits with them "so that the four of them—himself, Miss Worsham, the old Negress and her brother—[make] a circle about the brick hearth on which the ancient symbol of human coherence and solidarity smoldered" (278):

"Sold my Benjamin," [Molly] said. "Sold him in Egypt."

"Sold him in Egypt," Worsham said.

"Roth Edmonds sold my Benjamin."

"Sold him to Pharaoh."

"Sold him to Pharaoh and now he dead."

"I'd better go," Stevens said. He rose quickly. Miss Worsham rose too, but he did not wait for her to precede him. He went down the hall fast, almost running; he did not even know whether she was following him or not. Soon I will be outside, he thought. Then there will be air, space, breath. . . .

"I'm sorry," Stevens said. "I ask you to forgive me. I should have known. I shouldn't have come."

"It's all right," Miss Worsham said. "It's our grief." (278-79)

The "circle about the brick hearth" makes Stevens feel suffocated and eventually excludes him from the room.

As "the ancient symbol of human coherence and solidarity," the fire on the brick hearth must be the bounded whole. This image of fire is interesting in considering the affordances of the alternative whole Faulkner explores in *Go Down, Moses*, since there's something richly

paradoxical at work here: while being a symbol of permanence and coherence, the fire is always changing and inevitably temporary. In other words, the fire on the hearth is unifying and containing, but simultaneously it keeps transforming, crossing paths with and stretching to reach other forms—oxygen, carbon and wood. Moreover, the fire is contained by the hearth, but not completely contained. Taken together, therefore, the fire and the hearth combine coherence, stability with mutability, and transformation.

Embracing coherence, stability with mutability, and transformation, the fire on the hearth is always accessible for people and not totalizing like a plantation house. The fire on the hearth placed in Lucas and Molly's house in "The Fire and the Hearth" reflects this paradox. Living in the house which Old Crothers Edmonds built for them when they married, Lucas and Molly keep "alive on the hearth the fire [Lucas] had lit there on their wedding day and which had burned ever since though there was little enough cooking on it now" (36). The fire on the hearth symbolizes Lucas and Molly's independence and permanent love, but, at the same time, their ability to keep the fire alive depends on whites.

The image of fire as a symbol of the more complex version of "wholeness," however, is even more significant when we associate it with Molly: the fire functions to bring people into a circle—they gather around to stay warm, cook, and talk—but that circle will inevitably dissolve. The circle of people who gather around a fire is a bounded whole, but it is one that expands and contracts, that is porous and open to new arrivals and departures. For example, the fire on the hearth at Molly's house welcomes Roth Edmonds and sees his separation from the family; and the fire on the hearth at Miss Worsham's house unites people and even accepts Gavin Steven, but soon makes him feel suffocated, and he escapes from the circle. The circle around a fire falls apart when the fire dies, but then it reconstitutes itself when the fire burns again.

Importantly, these images of fire reflect the narrator's point of view. In "Go Down, Moses"

the narrative point of view is a limited third-person, arguably focalized through Gavin Stevens—“Phi Beta Kappa, Harvard, Ph.D., Heidelberg, whose office was his hobby, although it made his living for him, and whose serious vocation was a twenty-two-year-old unfinished translation of the Old Testament back into classic Greek” (271). His “serious vocation” reveals his belief in and desire for the totality of life, which he has not gotten and perhaps will not get. The fact that he sees a fire as “the ancient symbol of human coherence and solidarity” and finds a kind of wholeness in the circle of people around the fire at Miss Worsham’s house seems to suggest another feature of this version of wholeness: the people who embrace it cannot necessarily see it. Chanting around the fire, Molly does not notice Stevens’s entering the circle: “The old Negress didn’t even look at him; she never had looked at him”; “But she cant hear me, he thought. She was not even looking at him. She never had looked at him” (278). Although she is now a part of the whole, it does not mean that she feels a sense of wholeness.

Her struggle to bring Samuel back home and to give him a proper funeral with a casket and flowers—she even asks an editor of the county newspaper to “put hit in de paper. All of hit” (280)—seems exactly the act of putting everything “in its ordered place” in the Faulknerian world. Her mourning for Samuel, however, comes from her unconditional love for him, not from her desire for wholeness, which she believes is possessed only by God. She loves her grandson with no expectations and wants him home, and as Gavin Stevens rightly guesses, “she doesn’t care how he died” (281).

Coming from Molly’s unconditional love for her grandson, the wholeness that overwhelms Gavin Stevens at Miss Worsham’s house is exclusive but simultaneously open and inclusive, in a similar way to a fire on the hearth. By repeatedly claiming that Roth Edmonds has sold her grandson in Egypt, Molly accuses Roth of having sent Samuel to Jefferson, when the boy broke into his commissary store, and having ordered him off the Edmonds place. Simultaneously, the

elegy represents not only Molly's personal grief for her grandson but also all black slaves' grief for being sold to the deep South. Reproaching southern white patriarchy, as John Rowe argues, the elegy is "the revenge Molly Beauchamp would take on all the Edmonds and McCaslins and Compsons and de Spains for selling her Benjamin to Pharaoh" (82). It seems natural, therefore, that Stevens feels suffocated and expelled by the circle of Molly, Hamp Worsham and Miss Worsham, all of whom are excluded by southern white patriarchy.

While Molly's elegy makes Stevens feel excluded, it is open to everyone, not only African Americans but white people. The next day, when Samuel's body comes on a train, a lot of people gather to see the hearse:

There were more than a dozen cars, but it was not until the train came in that Stevens and the editor began to notice the number of people, Negroes and whites both. Then, with the idle white men and youths and small boys and probably half a hundred Negroes, men and women too, watching quietly, the Negro undertaker's men lifted the gray-and-silver casket from the train . . . (279)

Then, when the hearse comes into the town square, "the merchants and clerks and barbers and professional men who had given Stevens the dollars and half-dollars and quarters and the ones who had not . . . watched quietly from doors and upstairs windows" (280). The station and town square in these scenes contrast sharply with the last scene of *The Sound and the Fury*—"post and tree, window and doorway, and signboard, each in its ordered place" in Benjy's empty, blue, and serene eyes (371)—considering that things and people surrounding the hearse are free from their "ordered place." While the hearse represents Molly's personal grief for Samuel, it is open to and involves everyone, regardless of race, sex, age, and occupation.

More importantly, in order to mourn for her grandson, Molly needs and involves Stevens and the newspaper editor. The hearse is followed by "the two cars containing the four people—the high-headed erect white woman, the old Negress, the designated paladin of justice and truth

and right, the Heidelberg Ph.D.—in formal component complement to the Negro murderer’s catafalque” (280). “[T]he designated paladin of justice and truth and right” and “the Heidelberg Ph.D.,” both of whom embody southern white patriarchy that Molly’s elegy seems to reproach and exclude, are “formal component complement to” her mourning. Reading the volume as a structured work unified “by the theme of the white man’s failure to love,” John M. Muste claims that “[a]ncient, senile, desiccated, [Molly] knows, as Roth Edmonds never knew, that love involves forgiveness”: “Molly is a final testimony to the power of love; as [“Go Down, Moses”] shows, this is a power of which the white man cannot avail himself” (378). As a “testimony to the power of love” in Muste’s words, the wholeness achieved by Molly reproaches but needs and forgives the white men, excluding and accepting them.

By claiming that Molly’s mourning forgives Stevens or southern white patriarchy, I do not mean it resolves racial problems in the South. Instead, I believe her mourning involves forgiveness in that it shows “other possibilities of what Ike might have become” (Myers 663). Myers claims that “[a]s paternalistic as their efforts to help Molly Beauchamp are, [Miss Worsham and Stevens] still represent a better response to the racial problems in the South than Ike’s withdrawal. Stevens, Worsham, and the Edmonds family suggest the possibility that Southerners will emerge who do not shirk their responsibilities” (Myers 663). Reproaching southern white patriarchy embodied by failed wholes, Molly’s mourning has power to accept and surpass them, showing the alternative whole and the future path for the new South. Paul Richard Connell points out that ““*Go Down, Moses*,” . . . stands in dialogue to “Was” as pre-life stands to afterlife . . . Mollie assumes a central role for the community, not like a prophet, but a sibyl who can apprehend dimly the form of the future” (262).

3. The Short-story Cycle Form as a Collection of Failed Wholes and Its Affordances

The short-story cycle form of *Go Down, Moses* reflects the relationship between the male

characters and the failed wholes they produce in the volume. In short, *Go Down, Moses* is a collection of stories as failed wholes; in a similar way to the wholes created by the male characters, stories in the volume easily transgress, break, and redraw their boundaries. This characteristic of *Go Down, Moses*—a collection of stories/novels as failed wholes—seems to be applicable to the short-story cycle in general. As Robert M. Luscher notes, “the short-story’s status as an independent formal unit presents a paradox if its incorporation into a larger aesthetic and conceptual whole is possible”: “a group of stories elaborates or expands upon character, contexts, actions, or ideas developed independently by others—either through well-defined networks of connection, subtly woven threads, or narrative deep structure” (“The American Short-Story Cycle” 358).

Notably, the approach that Faulkner takes in *Go Down, Moses* is a microcosm of his overall approach to his Yoknapatawpha saga. In his Yoknapatawpha novels, no one novel contains the whole saga; characters recur, are redefined, and are contradictory. Simultaneously, as Caroline Gordon states in her review of *The Portable Faulkner*, in the whole saga each work reveals “more than it states explicitly.” She writes,

All his books in the Yoknapatawpha cycle are part of the same living pattern. It is this pattern and not the printed volumes in which part of it is recorded, that is Faulkner’s real achievement. Its existence helps to explain one feature of his work: that each novel, each long or short story, seems to reveal more than it states explicitly and to have a subject bigger than itself. All the separate works are like blocks of marble from the same quarry: they show the veins and faults of the mother rock. (247)

We can see Yoknapatawpha novels, in total, as a kind of expanded version of *Go Down, Moses*.

As Luscher argues, short stories in the cycle generally bump each other, affecting their independence. As I will demonstrate, however, what is notable in *Go Down, Moses* is that the stories directly reflect the form of a failed whole produced by characters. Some stories such as “Was” and “Old People” seem quite independent, but both reflect only an individual’s version of

the past, embodying the false whole that is full of gaps. Other stories such as “Pantaloon in Black” and “The Fire and the Hearth” seek but cannot achieve full independence in the volume. The volume also includes “The Bear,” which is enclosed and confining as a short story because of its length and difficulty. Moreover, “Go Down, Moses” is, like its focused character Molly Beauchamp, enclosed but shared and open, accepting and surpassing other stories.

Both “Was” and “Old People,” as their titles show, present stories about the past: the former depicts a historical event of the McCaslins that Ike hears from McCaslin Edmonds, and the latter depicts Ike’s first hunting trip and old people like Sam Fathers and Major de Spain. The story begins as following:

Ike McCaslin, ‘Uncle Ike’, past seventy and nearer eighty than he ever corroborated any more, a widower now and uncle to half a county and father to no one this was not something participated in or even seen by himself, but by his elder cousin, McCaslin Edmonds, grandson of Ike’s father’s sister and so descended by the distaff, yet notwithstanding the inheritor . . . (5)

This “fragmentary description without capitalization or punctuation of Uncle Ike McCaslin, who strictly speaking plays no role at all in the tale” not only suggests “the power of McCaslin storytelling” (Donaldson 138) but also gives the readers a sense of distance from the events told in the story. In addition, the tone of the story produces a somewhat different impression from other stories in the volume. Representing “the comical domesticated outlived impotence of the plantation . . . with an image of the hunt devoid of all spiritual and moral significance (Thyssen 95-96), “Was” is surely “a very funny story” (Klotz 8).

In a similar way that “Was” reflects the historical event seen by McCaslin Edmonds, “Old People” reflects only Ike’s version of the past. “The Old People” begins as the following: “At first there was nothing. There was the faint, cold, steady rain, the gray and constant light of the late November dawn. . . . Then the buck was there” (121). Barbara Ladd points out the similarity

between the opening words and those of the book of Genesis (“‘Father to No One’,” 49), and Michael D’Alessandro claims that “Faulkner’s description melding Ike’s vision with the biblical birth of the natural world foreshadows a god-like autonomy on Ike’s part to recreate himself” (386). D’Alessandro points out: “Since Faulkner shuts off readers from listening directly to tales about the ‘old people,’ attention again shifts to Ike’s valuation of them. In his constant alienation of the reader from Sam, Faulkner prompts readers to judge the character not as a real Indian but merely as Ike’s mythic one” (386). In a similar way as he does in “Was,” Faulkner gives the readers a sense of distance from the story.

Like the McCaslin mansion and Hubert’s silver cup, in “Was” and “Old People,” what is supposed to be a bounded whole—the past event—often turns out not to be bounded at all. After reading the rest of the stories in the volume, especially part IV of “The Bear” and learning about Old Carothers McCaslin’s exploitation of Tomasina and Eunice, however, it is difficult to read “Was” and “Old People” simply as comical or nostalgic. Reflecting an individual’s version of the past, both stories embody the false whole that is not bounded at all.

On the other hand, “The Bear” echoes the enclosed and confining whole Ike creates as a result of his attempts to avoid a bounded whole. “The Bear” is the longest and most famous story of the volume, depicting Isaac McCaslin’s initiation into the wilderness and his relinquishment of his grandfather’s heritage. As the fact that many scholars have been tempted to read the book as a kind of “Ike’s Bildungsroman” attests, the story affects the readers’ interpretation of the whole volume. For instance, Rolf Lundén regards “The Bear” as the “anchor story,” which “has been seen as a novella or a ‘miniature novel’” because of its “significance and length” (124); and Cleanth Brooks notes that “[f]or most readers ‘The Bear’ overshadows everything else in the book” (244).

Faulkner has suggested Part IV of “The Bear” does not “belong in [‘The Bear’] as a short

story, it's part of the novel but not part of the story" (Gwynn 273). This fact suggests that "The Bear" in *Go Down, Moses* is not an independent work, differentiating itself from "The Bear" as an independent short story. As Muste points out, however, "studies of 'The Bear' have usually directed most of their attention, and found most of their problems, in the puzzling intricacies of Part IV" (366). In other words, critics have regarded Part IV as compromising the aesthetic totality of "The Bear": Irving Howe argues, for example, "If Section IV were omitted, *The Bear* would profit in several ways" (257). But this fact also suggests that the problematic, puzzling inclusion of Part IV highlights the uniqueness of "The Bear" in *Go Down, Moses*, differentiating it from other stories in the volume. Consisting of the extremely complex, abstract conversations between Ike and Edmonds, Part IV makes "The Bear" the longest, most difficult story in the volume, letting it hold an exclusive position relative to the other stories. By including Part IV, in short, "The Bear" avoids being an independent short story and becomes a part of the short-story cycle, but as a result it becomes totalizing and in Brooks's words, it "overshadows" other stories in the book.

As I argued earlier, black male characters try to establish a home as a bounded whole, but they are helpless against a white man's intrusion into it. Likewise, some stories in *Go Down, Moses*, especially the ones focusing on black characters, seem to be independent but are forced to be a part of the short-story cycle. Originally published in *Harper's* in 1940, "Pantaloon in Black" was the "catalyst for Faulkner's initial conception of *Go Down, Moses*. Once he had written it . . . he suddenly saw where he wanted to go 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" (Singal 266). Believing that this story has no place in *Go Down, Moses* because of its main character Rider's living outside the McCaslin/Edmonds lineage, critics have tried to explain the reason why the story belongs to the

volume. Llewellyn argues that it “belong[s] to this collection by virtue of the impact that the story’s locale has on character and event. . . . Rider’s life is shaped and bounded by the land on which he has grown up, married, and been widowed. He belongs to the McCaslin plantation and reacts to that sense of belonging even as his story belongs to the collection” (500). Michelle Pacht claims that “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” (78).

I agree that Rider’s life, reflecting the life of the McCaslin plantation, helps us understand the world produced by the McCaslins. I believe, however, that Faulkner tempts the readers not only to see the McCaslins seen in Rider’s story, but also to interpret Rider’s personal grief just as a part of a larger whole. The hearth placed in Rider’s house—Rider and his wife Mannie “built a fire on the hearth on their wedding night as the tale told how Uncle Lucas Beauchamp . . . had done on his forty-five years ago and which had burned ever since” (104)—reveals the fragility of the whole Rider establishes: after Mannie’s sudden death, he stands “about the hearth where the fire which was to have lasted to the end of them, before which in the days before he was able to buy the stove he would enter after his four-mile walk from the mill and find her . . . had already fallen to a dry, light soilure of dead ashes when the sun rose yesterday” (105-06). As I argued earlier, as “the ancient symbol of human coherence and solidarity” (278), the fire on a brick hearth embodies the affordances of the whole: while being a symbol of permanence and coherence, the fire is always changing and inevitably temporary.

The affordances of the whole seen in the fire on the hearth placed in Rider’s house also represents the affordances and limitations of “Pantaloon in Black” as a part of the McCaslin saga. As Matthews points out, “Rider’s refusal to accept his loss quietly draws out the social symbolism of Mannie’s death. There’s no reason offered for her death; it comes as an

unanticipated blow, in much the way the racial violence of Jim Crow surprised its victims” (209). In a similar way that Mannie’s sudden death symbolizing the unjust society of the South destroys Rider’s home as a bounded whole, the readers and critics have tried to find the reason why the story belongs to the volume, as if otherwise its existence loses significance. “Pantaloon in Black” seems to be quite an independent story in a similar way to Rider’s family, but neither of them can ever be a bounded whole. As Sarah E. Stunden notes, in fact, Rider’s family is far from being independent; “it is not until Mannie dies that Rider is depicted as becoming fully aware of the limited opportunities for property ownership and the attendant security that is withheld from members of black society” (51).

Thus, stories in *Go Down, Moses* reflect the form of a failed whole produced by characters: “Was” and “Old People,” both of which depict the memory of the past, turn out not to be enclosed at all; “The Bear,” which seems to avoid becoming totalizing, becomes enclosed and confining; “Pantaloon in Black” tries to be but can never be fully independent.

To conclude this chapter, let me refer to “Go Down, Moses,” in which Molly Beauchamp’s elegy for her grandson produces the bounded and exclusive, but simultaneously open and inclusive circle. As the title story, “Go Down, Moses” is open to and shared by other stories; simultaneously, however, the story distances itself from them. “Go Down, Moses” is different from other stories in the volume in many ways. It is the only story focusing on a (black) female character, who in other stories has no voice. The story also reflects the viewpoint of Gavin Stevens, who is an absolute outsider in the McCaslin saga. Moreover, set in the contemporary South, the story keeps its distance from other stories depicting the McCaslin past. As Ticien Marie Sassoubre notes, “[t]he benevolent but impersonal businessmen of “Go Down, Moses” stand at the end of the arc of legal authority in the novel from an idealized agrarian past to the increasingly urban and commodified present of the South” (198).

On the other hand, like Molly herself who has no ordered place in society and only exists in relation to other people, the title story “Go Down, Moses” can relate to every story in the cycle. In making it the title story, Faulkner seems to expect the readers to see the story as representative of the volume. Thus, “Go Down, Moses” acquires the power to force the readers to re-acknowledge the story as a clue to understanding the other stories. For example, the readers might find *Go Down, Moses* as an elegy for African Americans: from the comical story of “Was” and “The Fire and the Hearth” to the nostalgic one of “Old People” and “The Bear,” each story can be linked to Molly’s grief for African Americans, including Tomasina, Eunice, Rider, and other unnamed black people. In addition, considering that “Delta Autumn,” the story before “Go Down, Moses,” mourns for the lost wilderness in and modernization of the South, we might see the last story as grief “for those seemingly more perfect days with which the book opened” (Schleifer 125) and the Old South depicted in the previous stories. In a similar way that Molly’s elegy is open to everyone in the town’s square, we can see the spirit of “Go Down, Moses” shared by other stories in the volume, incorporating these failed wholes into a larger aesthetic whole as a short-story cycle.

While “Go Down, Moses” gives the readers a hint to help them comprehend other stories, the story seems to establish itself as a kind of bounded whole, rejecting intervention by other stories. Although the story might urge the readers to interpret other stories as an elegy for black people and/or the old South, the stories have a low impact on the interpretation of “Go Down, Moses.” Surely, Molly is an important character in “Fire and the Hearth,” but failing to get her own “voce/voice” (divorce), she “is sentimentalized and stereotyped throughout the story” (Sensibar 116). As Suwabe notes, “[t]he full analysis of Molly . . . requires a detailed study of the final story, “Go Down, Moses” (105). She also appears in “Pantaloon in Black” and tries to save Rider from being lynched by whites, but narrated by the deputy as “the old woman—[Rider’s]

ma or aunt or something” (119), she is still sentimentalized and stereotyped. Besides, although Molly repeatedly accuses Roth Edmonds—the only McCaslin man appearing in the last story—of having sold her “Benjamin to Egypt/Pharaoh,” here he is mythified and his characteristics depicted in other stories do not affect the story. In short, the other stories in the volume do not help the readers appreciate “Go Down, Moses” as much as “Go Down, Moses” helps us gain a further understanding of other stories. As the “circle about the brick hearth” where Molly mourns for her grandson’s death makes Stevens feel excluded, “Go Down, Moses” preserves its independence as a short-story, rejecting intervention by other stories.

Although critics have focused on the narrative’s unity (finding a connecting thread of the stories) or disunity (seeing the book as what Donaldson calls “a battlefield of contending narratives”) in *Go Down, Moses*, it can be seen as both united and disunited at the same time. In short, the book’s power comes from its ability to be both at once. While the question whether the book’s narrative is united or disunited seems to assume its wholeness as a bounded container, the wholeness Faulkner assumes in *Go Down, Moses* is already failed, consisting of many failed wholes which reflect white voices as well as black ones.

Go Down, Moses is a collection of stories as failed wholes. As such, the cycle as a whole embraces the affordances of wholeness. Like a fire, which is coherent and unifying but always changing and crossing paths with other forms, and like the circle of people who gather around a fire, which is bounded but is open to new arrivals and departures, *Go Down, Moses* represents a bounded, inclusive, and shared whole. Different from the novelistic wholeness, the alternative version of wholeness that Faulkner explores in the volume can be totalizing and unifying but simultaneously shared and inclusive.

The affordances of this alternative whole /the short-story cycle resonate with those of

Molly Beauchamp, who does not believe in the notion of wholeness but whose devotion and love bring about a kind of wholeness throughout the volume. Faulkner's creation of Molly, therefore, enables him to break the "impasse" of his fictional project, that is, the aesthetic totality achieved by glorifying the perseverance of black people.

CHAPTER 5

HOW TO ACHIEVE SELF-FULFILLMENT IN THE MODERN SOUTH: FORMAL DEVELOPMENT FROM *DELTA WEDDING* TO *THE GOLDEN APPLES*

As typified by James Joyce's *Dubliners* and Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, perhaps one of the most representative characteristics of the short-story cycle is its focus on a community. Scholars have regarded the genre as well suited for rendering a community because it holds unity and multiplicity in tension. Gerald Lynch convincingly notes that, for example, the short-story cycle form is "unique for the way in which it often reflects the exploration of the failure of place and character to unify a work that remains tantalizingly whole yet fundamentally suspicious of completeness" (96). As for twentieth-century cycles (though he calls them "sequences"), Gerald Kennedy concludes that "[w]hereas ethnic and minority sequences often affirm an ongoing sense of community, collections portraying mainstream, middle-class life typically emphasize the precariousness of local attachments" (xiv). Roxanne Harde also explains that since the mid-twentieth century the short-story cycle form has "appealed to women writers from around the world who often use it to negotiate the tensions between individual identity and community" (1-2).

In what specific ways, however, does the short-story cycle offer more effective ways to depict the tensions between individual identity and community than other literary forms, especially the novel, which has been the dominant literary form for narrating the lives of individuals in communities? Or, have writers interested in portraying communities been drawn to the form's ability to portray the tension between unity and disunity? Moreover, if the short-story cycle has functioned as a useful method for ethnic, minority, and/or female writers to represent a community and individuals, does the form afford unique opportunities for representing the complexities of the modern South?

The works of Eudora Welty might offer answers to these questions. Welty was an innovative stylist—not only in the use of myths and fairy tales, but also in the development of hybrid genres: a short story, a novella, a novel, and short stories that evolved into a cycle. Nevertheless, she particularly succeeds as a stylist “in the short-story form that gives credibility and force to [her] accomplishments and influence” as Pearl Amelia McHaney notes (136-37). Even after publishing some novellas/novels, Welty insisted that she was just a short-story writer,¹ and that all of her novels “accidentally” came out of short stories.² Indeed, both *Delta Wedding* (1946), Welty’s first novel, and *The Golden Apples* (1949), her first and only short-story cycle,³ were transformed from short stories.

For Welty, using different styles served as useful methods to paint “morality as shown through human relationship,” which she calls “the whole heart of fiction” (*Stories* 804). Her attempts to depict complicated human relations in the Mississippi Delta made her feel the need to experiment with the novel form in *Delta Wedding* and the form of the short-story cycle in *The Golden Apples* (1949). Although few critics have studied the development from *Delta Wedding* to *The Golden Apples* and the formal differences between them, such as approach helps us to understand not only Welty’s poetics of fiction but also the short-story cycle genre’s characteristic concern with community and individuality.

Examining the formal and thematic developments from *Delta Wedding* to *The Golden Apples*, this chapter aims to suggest how and why Welty uses and develops the novel/short-story cycle form. In short, *Delta Wedding*’s novelistic form represents the (pseudo) wholeness that

¹ See Prenshaw, *Conversations* 86, 132, 272, 308-9, and *More conversations* 59, 77.

² See Prenshaw, *Conversations* 86, 132, 172, 272, 309, and *More conversations* 58.

³ Some scholars such as Ruth D. Weston, Jennifer J. Smith, and Susan V. Donaldson have regarded *Wide Net and Other Stories*, which includes several stories set in the Natchez Trace, as a short-story cycle. I believe that *Wide Net* has elements of the precursor of the short-story cycle and enables Welty to prepare for writing *The Golden Apples*. Since it would need another paper to examine this issue, however, in this chapter I would like simply to mention *The Golden Apples* as Welty’s first and only short-story cycle.

community members try to achieve, whereas *The Golden Apples* depicts individuals' failure to do so and provides a way to live as an individual, as a private person.

There are differences between the form and setting of *Delta Wedding*, a novel about the Mississippi Delta in 1923, and those of *The Golden Apples*, a short-story cycle about an imaginary town named Morgana in the Delta "set between 1905 or so and the late 1940s" (Marrs, *One Writer's* 104), but in both works Welty uses the two heroes to depict a complex, Southern society. The former depicts the Fairchilds, who live on a plantation, focusing in particular on women's pent-up feelings about their place in the family. The women find their lives in an uneasy relationship with George Fairchild, for his acceptance of them gives each of them individually a sense of identity as a worthy woman. George, whose love the Fairchild women seek and who drowns out their voices in the end, represents the system of the clan in which a man chosen by the women holds the power to govern them. On the other hand, according to Mrs. Fate Rainey's narrative in the first story of *The Golden Apples*, King MacLain probably has many children everywhere he goes, and continues to meet his wife secretly even after he runs away from home. King is similar to George in that every woman hopes to have a personal relationship and share a secret with both. In this sense, Morgana is a world that grows out of the Fairchilds, and King takes over George's role.

As many scholars have pointed out, both in *Delta Wedding* and *The Golden Apples* depictions of gender/sexuality are quite complicated. While "it was the boys and the men that defined" the Fairchilds always (*DW* 102), in the Delta "the land belonged to the women" "as if the women had exacted the place, the land, for something—for something they had had to give. Then, so as to be all gracious and noble, they had let it out of their hands—with a play of the reins—to the men" (*DW* 234). Although Welty notes that "[i]n the Delta it's very much of a matriarchy, especially in those years in the twenties that I was writing about" (Prenshaw,

Conversations 304), she also stresses that “the confusion over whether the Fairchild family is a matriarchy or a patriarchy is not simply a battle of the sexes” (Wieland 190). On the other hand, Morgana, which “King” MacLain governs, is a highly male-centric society, while the community’s mothers led by Miss Lizzie Stark gain real powers. Joel B. Peckham claims that in *The Golden Apples* women’s power is “expressed not as a challenge to patriarchal forces but as an effort to protect the sanctity of a woman’s ‘place’”; “It was in fact a defensive power, one resistant to radical change and supportive of the agrarian, romantic, religious, and chivalric traditions still prevalent in the deep South at the turn of the century” (195).

Some female characters in *Delta Wedding* and *The Golden Apples* suffer because exercising power over the community sacrifices their personal emotions. According to Brannon Costello, for example, *The Golden Apples* “paints a picture of a society in which . . . women must struggle in order to gain and maintain individual identities separate from the oppressive restrictions of the matriarchy” (“Swimming” 92). In both works, using the novelistic form and the short-story cycle form respectively, Welty tackles the problem of how to achieve self-fulfillment in a southern society, where gender, sexuality, and individuality are complexly intertwined. I would not argue which form is more suitable for depicting such a society. Rather, I believe that each form takes different approaches to individuality in the modern South, and that for Welty, the cycle form suggests a way for her fictional characters living there to achieve a sense of self-fulfillment.

1. “There Was No One Seeing Him But Herself”— Creation of the (Pseudo) Wholeness in *Delta Wedding*

World War II deprived Welty of her normal and peaceful life in Jackson, Mississippi, where she had written short stories prolifically. She became anxious about John Robinson, her beloved, as well as her brothers Edward and Walter, all of whom went to the war, so “writing fiction, which had brought Eudora so much fulfillment, came to seem more and more apart from what mattered” (Marrs 85). Under such circumstances, Welty wrote two short stories, “Delta Cousins” and “A Little Triumph,” both set in the Mississippi Delta, with the assistance of Robinson, who grew up in the Delta and who shared the diaries of his great-grandmother with Welty.

In these short stories, Welty “made little attempt to create a sense of the Delta past” (Marrs, *Eudora Welty* 129). In the short stories Welty tried to sketch the region from the perspective of a girl who is visiting her maternal relatives, and in this sense, these stories are similar to her earlier short stories in which a narrator or protagonist observes life and people of the South. In developing the stories into a novel, Welty portrayed a history of the plantation family and their reunion in 1923, when there was neither a war in the world nor a flood in the region, in order to “leave [her] characters all free to have a family story,” according to her (Prenshaw, *Conversations* 49-50). Left free to have a family story, however, the Fairchilds find it quite difficult to keep harmony in the clan, in which each member has begun to pursue self-fulfillment.

In writing the history of the fictional family, Welty realized her characters’ intricate feelings about the region, other family members, and themselves, which urged her to develop the short stories into a novel. About the difference between the short story and the novel, Welty once commented: “[In the short story] everything is subordinated to the theme of the story: characters

and mood and place and time; and none of those things are as important as the development itself. Whereas in a novel you have time to shade a character, allow him his growth, in a short story a character hardly changes from beginning to end” (Prenshaw, *Conversations* 45). In the process of developing the short stories into the novel, Welty allows her fictional characters to change. Although the Fairchilds cannot mature and each remains a fair “child” because of their attempts to hold traditional styles and values, they continuously struggle to stay unchanged in order to maintain the clan’s totality. As Laura Fairchild, who is visiting her relatives in the Delta and observes them with keen interest, thinks of it, the Fairchilds “changed every moment. The outside did not change but the inside did; an iridescent life was busy within and under each likeness” (*DW* 103). Through Welty’s attempts to develop the sketch of the Delta life into a familial story, the short story form becomes the novelistic one.

The novelistic form might be compatible with *Delta Wedding*, in which Welty portrays the lost past of a plantation family. Calling the novel “the literary form of the transcendent homelessness” (121), George Lukács explains that the novel as a genre is “the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, in which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem, yet which still thinks in terms of totality” (56). If so, it seems reasonable that the stories about Delta people require Welty to adopt the novelistic form, not only because they have gradually lost their plantation culture but also because they still long for what Lukács calls “the extensive totality of life” but do not experience it as a given. Thomas G. Pavel’s definition of the novel clarifies this point further. According to him, “the novel asks whether human beings can ever be morally reconciled with the world in which they are born, and feel at home in it” (18). To use Pavel’s phrase, *Delta Wedding* depicts the people who are unable to be reconciled with and “feel at home” in the clan, yet who still cannot but try to do so.

The novel depicts a traditional family preparing for the marriage of Dabney, the family’s

prettiest daughter. For the Fairchilds, there is no such thing as a sense of privacy nor that of self-fulfillment, as Shelly, who makes up her “shell” as a Fairchild but smartly knows how “unfair” (*DW* 173) the clan is, considers: “We never wanted to be smart, one by one, but all together we have a wall, we are self-sufficient against people that come up knocking, we are solid to the outside. Does the world suspect? that we are all very private people? I think one by one we’re all more lonely than private and more lonely than self-sufficient” (*DW* 172-73). Living in a traditional plantation family as the Fairchilds, each member feels a sense of loneliness rather than that of privacy or self-sufficiency.

Approaching Dabney’s wedding, each young Fairchild woman reflects on herself as a private woman rather than as a member of the Fairchilds, as Dabney’s mother Ellen, who looks back to the past before her daughter’s wedding, thinks, it “made everybody feel a little headstrong this week” (*DW* 88). Before her wedding, for example, “Dabney was not sure she was a Fairchild . . . Something, happiness . . . seemed to leap away from identity as if it were an old skin, and that she was one of the Fairchilds was of no more need to her” (*DW* 120). Three weeks before her sister’s wedding, Shelley begins to write about her feelings “in a book with the lock and key” (*DW* 172): “Sometimes I believe we live most privately just when things are most crowded, like in the Delta, like for a wedding. I don’t know what to do about anybody in the world, because it seems like you ought to do it soon, or it will be too late. I may not put any more in my diary at all till after the wedding” (*DW* 173).

Dabney’s wedding matters to these young Fairchild women, including Dabney herself, because it holds the possibility of a future pregnancy. As Linda Tate mentions, in the novel “[i]mages of feminine fertility abound,” including Ellen’s tenth pregnancy, Robbie Reid’s possible pregnancy, and Mary Dennis’s recent delivery of a son (18). Dabney’s wedding stirs up the young Fairchild women because it results in her sexuality becoming part of the public

domain, where women are required to reproduce, through offspring, unity and totality of the clan. Female sexual reproduction is about clan unity and totality, not about the individual.

In “Sexing the Domestic: Eudora Welty’s *Delta Wedding* and the Sexing Movement,” Laura Sloan Patterson claims that the young Fairchild women “struggle to integrate new attitudes about sexuality into lives rich with family tradition and legends”: throughout *Delta Wedding*, critiquing “the stereotypical roles of women—the type of ‘pure’ sexuality that can only be expressed through maternity and domesticity,”(44) Welty places her fictional characters “squarely within their era: an era saturated with many new ideas, including new ideas about sexuality, sexual practices, and women’s sexual roles” (38). Although I do not examine the ways in which the young Fairchild women reflect the new era’s attitude about sexuality as Patterson does, [0]I do consider the ways in which they experience an inner conflict between their “private” sexuality tied to self-sufficiency and “public” one tied to reproduction and domesticity.

Carey Wall analyzes the relations between Welty’s fictional community and her characters’ sexual roles from a different perspective. Wall regards Morgana as “communitas,” which emerges “when the members of a group, feeling the group’s need and knowing their obligation to collective life, shift from the individual part of themselves to the part of themselves that is a member of the collective” (91), and interprets sexuality in Morgana from the relationship with its characteristic as communitas. At the beginning of her essay she argues;

This is a discussion of liminal sexuality, or more clearly, people’s liminal use of sexuality for the purposes of communitas. As the sexuality possible in and commanded by communitas, it is out-of-individuality sexuality. It is as distant from Freudian or commodified sexuality, or even deeply gender-biased sexuality, as can be. This sexuality maintains collective life, out of which comes all individual life. (91)

Apart from whether I consider Morgana as “communitas” or not, not only Morgana but also the Fairchilds and other communities appearing in Welty’s fiction cultivate “collective life,” which

requires what Wall calls “out-of-individuality sexuality.”

Although the young Fairchild women feel anxious about their lives as Delta women, they unconsciously try to replace their desire for self-sufficiency with their love for George, the family’s hero. In the scenes following the ones I cited above, both Dabney and Shelley stop thinking about their private matters, or their “private” sexuality. Dabney suddenly shifts her thoughts about her situation to those about Uncle George, who “would come [to her wedding party] and say something just right.” She thinks that she “would then be entirely happy” and goes blank. Shelley’s diary finishes when it refers to George: “He expects things to be more than you think, and to mean something—something—He cherishes our weakness because they are just other ways that things are going to come to us” (*DW* 174). Their love for George makes their thinking process come to a stop.

Noteworthy is that in the process of subduing their private emotions, both Dabney and Shelly seem to speculate on George’s privacy, or his sexuality. Just after the scene I quoted above, Dabney recalls one memory of her childhood:

Two of their little Negros had flown at each other with extraordinary intensity here on the bank of the bayou. . . . Uncle George and Uncle Denis . . . had just come out of the bayou, naked, so wet they shone in the sun, wet light hair hanging over their foreheads just alike, and they were stamping their feet, flinging out their arms, staring to wrestle and play, and Uncle George reached up and caught the knife. “I’ll be damned,” he said (at that she thought he was wounded) and turning, rushed in among the thrashing legs and arms. . . . Uncle George grabbed the little Negro that wanted to run, and pinned down the little Negro that was hollering. Somehow he held one, said “Hand me that,” and tied up the other, tearing up his own shirt. (*DW* 123)

Whether or not we can see this scene as “a tentative un-closeting of George’s non-normative sexuality” (Tipton 113), it tells Dabney that “he differ[s] from the other Fairchilds” and “one human being can differ, very excitingly, from another” (*DW* 123). Although he becomes an ordinary, sweet uncle and hugs her as soon as he feels Dabney’s eyes on him, she is never able to

forget his naked body as he holds a knife, with which he threatens two black boys.

Nevertheless, Dabney's realization of George's "queerness" does not lead her to exclude him from the clan; instead, she comes to love him more because she becomes aware of the family hero's private secret and, therefore, recalls the memory at the very moment when she expects him to alleviate her acute anxiety. Keeping George's secret to herself, Dabney wishes to share "another way to be," or the sphere of her private sexuality, with him. Although she seems to respect his privacy, she in fact uses it to protect her individuality in the family. In other words, she unconsciously involves George's sexuality in the family as other women do, and in this sense his sexuality is not his own, but the clan's open secret, which would bring harmony to the Fairchilds.

Reflecting on her own life before her daughter's marriage, Fairchild mother Ellen, who has left Virginia to marry Battle Fairchild and is now pregnant with her tenth child, also uses George's sexuality to close her eyes from her personal matters. Dabney's marriage makes Ellen feel nostalgic for the old days before her arrival to the Delta, so in encountering a stray girl on the run in the woods, she becomes mesmerized by her beauty and superimposes the beautiful girl onto herself, to imagine how she would have been had she not married and come to the Delta. When she confides the secret of her encountering the girl to George, he says that he also has met the girl and "slept with her" (*DW* 167). Ellen is startled to hear him "say a deliberate wounding thing":

She glanced toward George, though she could no longer see him. A feeling of uncontrollable melancholy came over her to see him in this half-light, which had so rested her before he came out. Dear George, whose every act could verge so closely on throwing himself away—what on earth would ever be worth that intensity with which he held it, the hurting intensity that was reflected back on him, from all passing things? (*DW* 168)

It is difficult to determine if Ellen interprets his words literally or not, for she stops thinking

about his encounter with the girl. The scene continues as follows:

“Oh, George!” she cried, and then, “Sometimes I’m so afraid when Dabney marries she won’t be happy in her life.”

He patted her arm, yet not heavily or trying to turn her around. “Well, let’s go in,” she said. (*DW* 168)

Once Ellen gets a glimpse of his sexual activity, she averts her eyes from it and immediately changes the subject from their personal secret to Dabney’s marriage, which should be the family’s primary concern. In short, recognizing his personal secret, she puts him back where he has been, in the place of a family hero. Once she gets him back to the position, however, she meditates: “Only George left the world she knew as pure—in spite of his fierce energies, even heresies—as he found it; still real, still bad, still fleeting and mysterious and hopelessly alluring to her” (*DW* 168). In the same way as Dabney, Ellen peacefully ensures her privacy by keeping George’s sexual activity secret when it transgresses class or moral lines and as a result by making it a family affair.

George might be the “gay uncle” that “every southerner has” as Nathan G. Tipton claims (110). Yet this chapter does not concern the gender or sexual orientations of the Fairchild men. What I want to emphasize here is that for the Fairchild women, who use men’s sexuality to survive in a family where “[a]ll the girls knew” that “it was the boys and men that defined that family always” (*DW* 102), George’s “queerness” might be favorable. Feeling her bond to homosexual and/or effeminate hero, a Fairchild woman attempt to ignore their inner conflict between being/becoming a mother of the clan and their own sexuality.

According to Michael Bibler, Welty in her works used “a different form of humor to queer assumptions about what should count as a ‘normal’ in a South” (196). In the South that Welty portrays, Bibler continues, “powerful white and black women rupture local patterns of male dominance (as well as conventionally masculine forms of narration), and where effeminate men

unsettle narrow frameworks of marriage and family” (196). It might be arguable that the Fairchild women unconsciously exploit the men’s “queerness” so as to ignore the inner conflict between their “private” sexuality and “public” sexuality. By doing so, however, the women maintain the clan’s harmony and paradoxically contribute to the patriarchal, heteronormative society.

Robbie Reid, George’s wife, gets indignant at the Fairchild women using George to bolster the totality of clan. Refusing to “marry into” the Fairchilds (*DW* 230), she loves George as an individual, not as a Fairchild hero:

She drew her breath in fiercely as always when the fond, teasing, wistful play of the family love for George hung and threatened near. Nothing was worthy of him but the pure gold, a love that could be simply beside him—her love. Only she could hold him against that grasp, that separating thrust of Fairchild love that would go on and on persuading him, comparing him, begging him, crowing over him, slighting him, proving to him, sparing him, comforting him, deceiving him, confessing and yielding to him, tormenting him . . . those smiling and not really mysterious ways of the Fairchilds. In those ways they eluded whatever they feared, sometimes the very thing they really desired. . . .

Robbie desired veracity—more than she could even quite fathom, as if she had been denied it, like an education at Sunflower Junior College; from a kind of poverty’s ambition she desired it—as hard and immediate a veracity as the impact of George’s body. (*DW* 238)

She can hold George “against that grasp, that separating thrust of Fairchild love” because, unlike the women who are only capable of imagining his privacy, she knows “the impact of George’s body,” and therefore has a stronger individuality than other Fairchild women. Not because of Robbie’s position as an outsider and her humble origin, but because of her individuality and her access to George’s body—hard and immediate “veracity” —the Fairchild women fear and avoid her. For example, Shelly cannot forget the incident in which George rescues his niece Maureen, who is almost hit by the Yellow Dog on a trestle, and her “deepest uneasiness came from Robbie’s first words, ‘You didn’t do this for me!’ . . . And how George had looked at her!” (177). Here Shelley realizes that not the family but Robbie has a claim on George’s body.

Robbie's independence and struggle for self-fulfillment threatens the Fairchilds. Robbie reveals that George "performs the mask of family hero and yet not infrequently rejects it, and acknowledges that such a conflict goes for all the members of the Fairchilds" (Ishimoto 35). In front of the Fairchild women she declares:

"You're all a spoiled, stuck-up family that thinks nobody else is really in the world! But they are! You're just one plantation. With a little crazy girl in the family, and listen at Miss Shannon. You're not even rich! You're just medium. . . . You're either born spoiled in the world or you're born not spoiled. And people keep you that way until you die. The people you love keep you the way you are" (*DW* 253)

Such a criticism does not, however, affect the clan because, I believe, they do know what Robbie claims but still pretend to maintain the family's wholeness that they have never truly embraced. They self-consciously let "the people they love keep them the way they are" in order to abandon a sense of privacy/self-fulfillment and to keep the family's pseudo-wholeness.

Although the wedding momentarily disturbs the women's peace of mind, the women eventually return to the temporary or pseudo-wholeness of the family, "a hermetically sealed and self-perpetuating life, isolated from the brute realities of sharecropper sweat and cotton compress" (Costello, *Plantation Airs* 43). In the last chapter of the novel, for instance, Ellen thinks comfortably and silently, "The repeating fields, the repeating cycles of season and her own life—there was something in the monotony itself that was beautiful, rewarding—perhaps to what was womanly within her" (*DW* 329). Dabney's wedding is, in short, not an exceptional event, but a part of the repeating cycle, as it reminds her aunts of Mary Denis's wedding or Annie Laurie's funeral.

Even Robbie, who exhibits a strong sense of self, cannot pursue self-fulfillment in the Fairchilds. By the wedding party, Robbie, who has been running away from her husband George, reconciles with him in front of the whole family: "The whole family watched them 'make up'"

(*DW* 278). This reconciliation is the moment that Robbie wins his love, but also the moment that she accepts him as a Fairchild hero. At the end of the novel her presence is quite weak, as if her voice were drowned out by the family's repeated words, "The Fairchilds are the happiest people!" (311). But with George she returns to Memphis, where she will struggle to establish "as hard and immediate a veracity as the impact of George's body" (*DW* 238). Likewise, Laura Fairchild, who observes the clan feeling slightly awkward, refuses to stay in the clan and goes back to Jackson: "in the end she would go—go from all this, go back to her father" (326). The Delta is not a place that enables a person to pursue self-fulfillment.

In a similar way to the Fairchild women bringing harmony into the family by replacing their emotions and individuality with their love for George, Welty brings wholeness into the novel by portraying such a community. More accurately, the novel's aesthetic totality parallels the pseudo-totality to which the Fairchilds return in the last chapter. *Delta Wedding*, which, despite its title, "relates a series of mostly unremarkable events" preceding Dabney's marriage (Russ 65), may not qualify as a novel of manners, and has been criticized for being plotless. For instance, Diana Trilling bitterly criticizes the book by saying that "I find it difficult to determine how much of my distaste for Eudora Welty's new book, 'Delta Wedding,' is dislike of its literary manner" (60) and Helen L. Butler comments that "the work as a whole suffers because there is no organic wholeness to the plot, no selection of detail" (66). What makes *Delta Wedding* a novel seems, however, not a novelistic progression of the plot but a resolution, which is emphasized in the last few chapters. Not although but because female characters do not solve their personal problems, the family as well as the book itself successfully reestablishes their/its harmony.

This feature of the book—as a whole in which the Fairchilds' different perceptions and conflicts are aesthetically reconciled (Marutani 206)—might be related to the book's background. Welty sent the chapters of the novel overseas to John Robinson during the war, the

time of the loss of social harmony. As space is limited, I will not take up this matter in detail; it would suffice to say that the novelistic form let Welty reveal the illusoriness of peaceful plantation life. How can a person pursue one's personal matters belonging to a community that attaches the greatest importance to its unity as a whole? Like Laura Fairchild and Robbie Reid, Welty, departing from the novelistic world of the Fairchilds, answers this question in *The Golden Apples*.

2. "Everybody has their own visioning"— Collapse of the Pseudo-Totality in *The Golden Apples*

After World War II, feeling a "fierce need for freedom" (Marrs, *Eudora* 143), Welty lived briefly in San Francisco and New York City, and traveled extensively in Europe. During this period, she became keener to know the world beyond Mississippi, which she says was becoming "the vital component of my inner life" (*OWB* 76). It is no accident, therefore, that she leaves the world of the Fairchild plantation, which endorses harmony at the cost of individual privacy, and then begins to work on a contemporary southern community by using a totally new form.

The short-story cycle form—though she does not use any term to refer to the form she deployed in *The Golden Apples*—lets Welty reject the novelistic resolution she provided in the former work. In fact, she repeatedly refused to call the book which became *The Golden Apples* a novel. In her letter to her friend Frank Lyell, she claimed that the book she was working on was "not an incipient novel, but "a book of inter-related stories": "Not to bother with plot-threads and all that, but just to take up these people whenever and wherever in their lives that might interest me" (Welty to Frank Lyell, October 15, 1947). Likewise, in her letter to her agent Diarmuid Russel, declaring the book was not a "novel," she wrote; "I'll turn it down if that's the catch and maybe they'll turn back the book but nothing changes the book into a novel or play or poem, if

it's a book of related stories, then it is" (Welty to Russell, March 28, 1949). The fact that these letters are two years apart suggests her firm conception of the book's form.

Barbara Ladd claims that an "increasing sense of the literary value of resistance is at the bottom of her insistence that *The Golden Apples* should be read as a cycle of short stories rather than as another novel, because she had been pressured throughout the early 1940s to move from the short story into the supposedly more capacious (and certainly more lucrative) form" (*Resisting* 57). Ladd cites Welty's letter to Diarmuid Russel, in which she calls "attention to the gendered nature of discourse about novel writing" (*Resisting* 57): "When I only think of a novel, it scares me. I never wanted to be contrary, but it is the natural thing for me to do what I can within a lesser space. I suspect that that comes from my being a female, and is permanent" (Kreyling, *Author* 49). Welty's use of the word "contrary," Ladd argues, can "be associated with her theory of storytelling as resistance" (*Resisting* 57). Perhaps Welty was conscious of the novelistic pseudo-totality that can be achieved at the cost of female subjectivity, as shown by her female characters in *Delta Wedding*, and tried to write something more or other than a novel.

The study of the short-story cycle has discussed how the form functions in *The Golden Apples*, one of the best examples of a work in this genre. Many scholars have connected Welty's use of myth and the cycle form: for example, while Maggie Dunn and Anne Morris consider mythical components as a unifying function in this complex volume, Rolf Lunndén claims that Welty, using the form, "deliberately wants the mythical fragments to remain discrete and unfusable echoes from ancient times" (171). Other critics claimed that the cycle form explores the people of Morgana's feelings of "separation" and "isolation," which are dominant themes of modern writing. Susan Garland Mann notes, for instance, the form of the book "reinforces the characters' essential separateness and isolation from one another" (149).

Besides Welty's use of myth, many critics have analyzed the importance of gender and

sexuality in *The Golden Apples*. Such critics seem more interested in female character rather than the book's form, especially female artists such as Miss Eckhart and Virgie Rainey, often connecting them to Welty as an artist. Rebecca Mark claims, for example, that through Miss Eckhart, Welty brings "the buried history of women's art to life and thus literally to find her voice—a woman's voice—as an artist" (68). Seeing Morgana as a world that grows out of the Fairchilds, however, enables us to find an intricate connection between gender/sexuality and the cycle form.

In contrast to her earlier works, which basically depict an event happening in a short period of time, *The Golden Apples*, using the cycle form, shows the gradual change of the community over forty years. Taking the path of modernization, Morgana has begun to lose its grip on its people, as Joel B. Peckham explains: in *The Golden Apples*, "[t]he agricultural culture of the South and the closeness it brought are dying out and so is the kin-network that fastened it together. With the increasing industrialization of the South the connection between the people and the land has been lost and with it the main lines of communication and contact between them—the vine that binds them" (214). It is King MacLain who symbolizes the community's "closeness" and "kin-network," although, along with the Fairchilds, agrarian Morgana forms a pseudo-totality that can be achieved at the cost of individual subjectivity, rather than a true totality. At the beginning of the book, Morgana, where people idealize and sanctify King, constitutes a hierarchical society; as time goes by, people lose their power to unite the community, and in the final story "The Wanderers," when they do not idealize King any longer, he comes back to the town emasculated.

The cycle form, which explores "the failure of place and character to unify a work that remains tantalizingly whole yet fundamentally suspicious of completeness" in Gerald Lynch's words (96), clearly reflects Morgana's situation. Some stories in the volume exhibit Morgana as

a coherent community, remaining “tantalizingly whole,” though they often dramatize the process by which this order is enforced: Annual piano recitals held by piano teacher Miss Eckhart and her pupil’s mothers, which Cassie Morrison’s father calls “a military operation” (*GA* 373); girls’ summer camp on “Moon Lake,” the town’s gossip over King’s son Ran MacLain’s adultery in “The Whole World Knows,” and Mrs. Rainey’s funeral managed by the community’s women in “Wanderers.”

On the other hand, each of these stories focuses on a community member’s privacy, as is represented by music played by Miss Eckhart with a “face could have belonged to someone else,” telling “there was more than the ear could bear to hear or the eye to see” (*GA* 364), or Cassie’s “secret love” for Virgie (*GA* 353). In “Music from Spain,” Ran MacLain’s twin brother Eugene leaves home and wanders in San Francisco after slapping his wife Emma’s face for no apparent reason, following a Spaniard guitarist, who looks like a substitute for his absent father King. Eugene speculates about the personal life of the Spaniard, who cannot understand English, secretly imagining “living a life of freedom and excitement, the life of an artist touring the world, or the life of his ‘old man,’ King MacLain” (Graham-Bertolini 85).

Having more interest in their own matters after its hero’s disappearance, Morgana people are losing the spirit to maintain the integrity of the community. If the novelistic form of *Delta Wedding* represents the Fairchilds’ struggles to create totality, the short-story cycle form displays the characters’ failure in attempting to do so. In *The Golden Apples*, in short, the characters’ lack of ability to generate harmony or to reach resolution corresponds with the work’s resistance to developing into a novel. We might say, therefore, that the presence of George makes *Delta Wedding* a novel, whereas the absence of King makes *The Golden Apples* a short-story cycle.

Thus, while the short-story cycle form embodies a modernizing Southern community remaining “tantalizingly whole” (Lynch 96), it simultaneously represents a sense of privacy

sought and seemingly gained by the people living there. In the first story “Shower of Gold,” Mrs. Fate Rainey tells a passerby about King’s disappearance from Morgana. She says:

Well, through the years, we’d hear of him here or there—maybe two places at once, New Orleans and Mobile. That’s people’s careless way of using their eyes.

I believe he’s been to California. Don’t ask me why. But I picture him there. I see King in the West, out where it’s gold and all that. Everybody to their own visioning. (*GA* 325-26)

As her words “Everybody to their own visioning” suggest, everybody in Morgana now has his/her private view. After King’s disappearance from the community, having lost the only presence that unifies the members of the community, people become more and more independent. To put it more accurately, the very fact that King abandons his role as a “king” or a sexual predator, and in so doing, simultaneously deprives the Morgana people of their individual as well as collective sexual fantasies, foretells the decline in the community’s power to maintain its unity.

Morgana, which has begun to lose its grip on its people after, or around the same time as King’s disappearance, is moving from a “public” to a “private” sphere. To be more accurate, then community is moving toward an open acknowledgment of the private lives that always existed but were subsumed beneath the face of the pseudo-totality. The short-story cycle form, in which one story focusing mainly on one or two characters suddenly stops before switching to the next story centering around another/other character(s), brings forth a sense of privacy. Put another way, a story in the cycle does not have to fully develop nor offer a conclusion to a person’s feelings, thoughts, and characteristics. Using the form, Welty refuses to tell the readers how people confront their private concerns; instead, she just tells us what has happened to them. For instance, Cassie’s mother Mrs. Morrison looks merry with her friends in “June Recital” while neglecting her housework. In the last story, the readers know that she, “being so gay and flighty

always . . . went out of the room and killed herself” (*GA* 542), but we do not know the reason for her suicide. Thus, the short-story cycle becomes an appropriate form to portray the world in which fictional characters have begun to focus on their personal matters.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that *The Golden Apples* emphasizes sexuality, people’s most private activity. On one hand, the marriage between King and the albino Snowdie, an “ideal” white woman, is an extreme symbol of the gender/sexuality norms of Morgana. On the other hand, the women of Morgana secretly have had or hoped to have sexual relations with King⁴. For the women in Morgana, where King’s sexuality—especially before he runs away—takes a role as the community’s open secret, losing King equates to their losing the medium of converting their own private matters into the harmony of the community.

Along with King’s disappearance, sexuality gradually becomes not an open secret but a private matter. About the marriage between King and Snowdie, Kate Rainy says, “[a]t first it didn’t look like they would have any children” because of King’s frequent and long absence from the community (*GA* 321). But then he gave Snowdie a message, “Meet me in the woods” (*GA* 322), and she got pregnant, which surprised the whole town. In telling Kate Rainy of her pregnancy, Snowdie “looked like more than only the news had come over her” (*GA* 322): “It was like a shower of something had struck her, like she’d been caught out in something bright. It was more than the day. There with her eyes all crinkled up with always fighting the light, yet she was looking out bold as a lion that day under her brim, and gazing into my bucket and into my stall like a visiting somebody” (*GA* 322). “Something bright” wrapping Snowdie, or “a glow” her face had— “I didn’t know if I liked the glow,” Mrs. Rainey says (*GA* 323) —represents her clandestine meeting with King and her sexual enjoyment. Here King’s sexuality is not the

⁴ Although many readers have attempted to identify the children descended from King MacLain, Barbara Ladd claims: “one must note that aside from the legitimate, and male, twins Ran and Eugene MacLain, no children are ever identified in the text” (*Resisting* 60).

community's open secret anymore; it is something that the community wants to but cannot grasp, like "the impact of George's body" that only his wife Robbie knows. Perhaps because of this reason, Mrs. Rainey says as follows: "Except none of us felt very close to her all the while. . . We were mad at her and protecting her all at once, when we couldn't be close to her" (*GA* 323).

In the third story "Sir Rabbit," about fifteen years after King's disappearance from Morgana⁵, Mattie Will, who flirted with King MacLain's twins when they were teenagers, encounters King in Morgan's Woods. She goes to the wood with her husband Junior Holifield, whom she finds slow and dull, and King rapes her after he knocks Junior unconscious. Her experience with King leaves Mattie Will "prouder and more satisfied than her marriage to the common Junior Holifield" (Kreyling, *Understanding* 126). The fact that Mattie Will appears only in "Sir Rabbit" and not in other stories of the volume emphasizes her sexual behavior as a personal secret. Moreover, as Michael Kreyling notes, "Sir Rabbit" is eventually a "short interlude," which is located between, but not directly connected to, two long stories about female sexuality, "June Recital" and "Moon Lake" (*Understanding* 125). Or, as Rolf Lundén argues, the story might be categorized as a "satellite" that "could be taken out, or be replaced by another, new story, without great damage to the plot of the composite as a whole" (126). In a similar way to the story's position in the volume, Mattie Will keeps her experiences both with the MacLain twins and with King to herself.

Importantly, however, even though it seems to be easily "taken out" or "replaced by another, new story," "Sir Rabbit" is still a story belonging to the cycle, not an independent story such as "Lily Daw and the Three Ladies" and "A Memory" in Welty's short-story collection *A Curtain of Green and Other Stories*, both of which concern female sexuality. In "A Memory," for example, looking at people's flabby body and vulgar playing, the narrator-protagonist wishes "they all were dead" (*CG* 96). While in "A Memory" the narrator confides her experience only to

the readers, in “Sir Rabbit” Mattie Will shares her secret with people in Morgana, without telling it to them. Being clasped to King’s shoulder, she feels that “she was Mr. MacLain’s Doom, or Mr. MacLain’s Weakness, like the rest, and neither Mrs. Junior Holifield nor Mattie Will Sojourner; now she was something she had always heard of” (*GA* 409). As she finds herself “something she had always heard of,” now she shares Morgana’s open secret, and in this sense King’s sexuality is still barely a “public” matter. Just as an independent story in a collection of short-stories, “A Memory” neither affects nor is affected by other stories collected in *A Curtain of Green*; on the other hand, just like an independent story in a short-story cycle, Mattie Will’s sexual experience is her own but is simultaneously involved in the whole community.

In short, the form of *The Golden Apples* reveals an increasingly complicated negotiation between the private and public spheres in a changing southern society. As is represented by Morgan’s Woods, the town’s border where King invites Snowdie to come and also has sexual intercourse with Mattie Will, King’s and thus the people of Morgana’s sexuality straddles both the public and private spheres. From Morgan’s Woods, people could “look away into the big West” as well as look at “Morgana all in rays, like a giant sunflower in the dust of Saturday” (*GA* 411). Living in a modern southern community, King, in seeking personal fulfillment—which is symbolized by “the big West” —, tries to but cannot fully leave Morgana; thus he “butted like a goat against the wall he wouldn’t agree to himself or recognize” (*GA* 545).

Like a goat surrounded by the wall, being caught between a sense of independency and that of belonging to a coherent community, King and other people in Morgana cannot easily fulfill their “pure wish to live.” The cycle form, significantly, not only represents a complicated negotiation between the private and public spheres in modern southern society, but also provides a possible hint for attaining a feeling of self-fulfillment there: seeing the world as reading a short-story cycle.

The last story “The Wanderers,” which tells the story of Mrs. Rainey’s funeral from the perspective of her daughter Virgie, not only let the main characters depicted in the previous stories reappear but also introduces new characters. As Rolf Lundén points out, in “The Wanderers,” “all of these thirteen [characters we meet in the first story “Shower of Gold”] come back (plus about forty more), attesting to the clausal, or framing, capacity of the end of this particular composite” (96). Indeed, we meet more than sixty people including nameless ones and a relatively minor character such as Brother Damper, “whose father was the preacher when Mrs. Rainey was a child and baptized her as a girl” and whom “Virgie had never seen” (*GA* 537).

Depicting so many characters, “The Wanderers” emphasizes the notion of an individual having his or her own story. As is observed by Virgie: “Always in a house of death, Virgie was thinking, all the stories come evident, show forth from the person, become a part of the public domain. Not the dead’s story, but the living’s” (*GA* 522). For example, we learn that Mrs. Flewellyn, who is also one of the most marginal characters, “had caught the last breath of her husband in a toy balloon, by his wish, and had it at home still—most of it, until a Negro stole it” (*GA* 524). We also find that Snowdie, who confesses to Virgie that she had spent all the money her parents had in order to hire a private detective and look for King, turns out to be far from the independent, unyielding woman who appears in Mrs. Rainey’s narrative in the first story.

Considering “The Wanderers” reflects Virgie’s perspectives, we can conclude that Virgie is conscious of the existence of each individual’s story. On the other hand, most other characters seem less interested in the feelings and problems of others: for instance, the grave of Maideen Sumrall, “a poor country girl” who had been taken advantage of by Ran MacLain, the present mayor of Morgana, and died a suicide, never “bothers” him (*GA* 543). As Joel B. Peckham notes, of all people in Morgana, “Virgie seems to be the only one who can see people for who and what they are in each individual case, can see through them” (214).

Observing people attending her mother's funeral, Virgie sometimes associates a person's story to another, for example:

Ran was smiling—holding on to a countryman now. They had voted for him for that—for his glamour and his story, for being a MacLain and the bad twin, for marrying a Stark and then for ruining a country girl and the thing she did. Old Man Moody found her on the floor of his store—the place she worked—and walked out into the street with her in his arms. (*GA* 522)

Here we can get a brief glimpse of stories of Ran, Maideen, as well as Old Man Moody, and learn delicate relationships among them. Rebecca Mark points out that Welty's insight into her work at the end of *One Writer's Beginnings* helps explain "The Wanderers":

It is our inward journey that leads us through time—forward or back, seldom in a straight line, most often spiraling. Each of us is moving, changing, with respect to others. As we discover, we remember; remembering, we discover; and most intensely do we experience this when our separate journeys converge. Our living experience at those meeting points is one of the charged dramatic fields of fiction. (*OWB* 946)

Citing these passages, Rebecca Mark notes that in "The Wanderers" "the charged dramatic field is created precisely out of the coming together of characters and the dichotomy they represent—male and female, young and old, black and white, the past and the present, the dead and the living. Welty describes this confluence through the inner journey of Virgie" (233).

Welty's insight on the "meeting points" of our "separate journeys" seems to explain aspects of the short-story cycle. In short, both Virgie and Welty see the world in the same way as the readers see the one represented in a short-story cycle. The readers read each story or each character's story in *The Golden Apples* and sometimes connect one story to another: for example, we might see some "meeting points" of Mrs. Rainey's narrative in "Shower of Gold" and Snowdie's confession to Virgie in "The Wanderers," Miss Eckhart's figure in "June Recital" and that of Cassie Morrison, a spinster piano teacher, in "The Wanderers," and Ran MacLain's cry in "The Whole World Knows"— "Father, Eugene! What you went and found, was it better than

this?” (*GA* 472) —and Eugene MacLain’s daytrip with a Spaniard in “Music from Spain” as well as King’s “silent yell” (*GA* 538) in “The Wanderers.” In a similar way to our reading of *The Golden Apples*, Virgie discovers and remembers individuals’ stories and finds their meeting points.

Virgie has had a natural inclination for seeing the world in a “short-story cyclical” way. We get Virgie’s perspective on her fleeing from Morgana at seventeen: “Virgie never saw it differently, never doubted that all the opposites on earth were close together, love close to hate, living to dying; but of them all, hope and despair were the closest blood—unrecognizable one from the other sometimes, making moments double upon themselves, and in the doubling double again, amending but never taking back” (*GA* 546). As Hiromi Ochi argues, “Virgie has a perspective that challenges dichotomous relationships” (“Symphony” 115). It is this perspective that makes Virgie the only character throughout the volume that seems to attain self-fulfillment.

Virgie, however, cannot “keep her personal individuality and freedom” (Costello, “Swimming” 90) simply by having such perspective. In order to do so, she has not only to accept other individuals’ views but also engage in dialogue with them. It is King who enables her to do so. The day before Kate Rainey’s funeral, King tells her about himself in the time when he was running away, saying to her; “So bent, so bent I was on all I had to do, on what was ahead of me” (*GA* 535). And during the funeral; “he made a hideous face at Virgie, like a silent yell. It was a yell at everything—including death, not leaving it out—and he did not mind taking his present animosity out on Virgie Rainey; indeed, he chose her” (*GA* 538). Here Virgie finally recognizes him not as a town’s hero but as an individual human being and understands him.

Virgie’s dialogue with King gives her open-minded tolerance and empathetic understanding of others. Peggy Whitman Prenshaw points out that Welty, who often speaks of fiction as a path for communication, portrays in her fiction “how putting away the self, becoming the other, is a

path of communication with all that lies outside and beyond one's inner world" ("Eudora Welty" 8). As is represented by Mrs. Rainey's narrative in "Shower of Gold," the characters in *The Golden Apples* fail to put away the self and to become the other. Some people, like Kate Rainey, being busy interpreting others' stories at their discretion, fail to evoke understanding in others. Other people, including King, become self-focused and ignore another individual's story. Unlike these people in Morgana, by "putting away the self" and "becoming the other" paradoxically, Virgie gains her individuality and freedom.

Just before leaving the town, Virgie considers: "Then she was all to herself. Was she that? Could she ever be, would she be, where she was going?" I agree with Joel B. Peckham's claim that the answer to these questions "is yes and no": "She will be herself but that self will be made up of the connectedness that birthed her" (243). Virgie gains a life of her own because she realizes that her own life is always and already connected to others'. Achieving a sense of self-fulfillment, she finally speaks to the late Miss Eckhart in her mind and reconciles with the piano teacher, to whom she had bad manners in her childhood. Virgie recalls Miss Eckhart's favorite picture of Perseus with the head of Medusa in his lifted arm.

Cutting off the Medusa's head was the heroic act, perhaps, that made visible a horror in life, that was at once the horror in love, Virgie thought—the separateness. She might have seen heroism prophetically when she was young and afraid of Miss Eckhart. She might be able to see it now prophetically, but she was never a prophet. Because Virgie saw things in their time, like hearing them—and perhaps because she must believe in the Medusa equally with Perseus—she saw the stroke of the sword in three moments, not one. In the three was the damnation—no, only the secret, unhurting because not caring in itself—beyond the beauty and the sword's stroke and the terror lay their existence in time—far out and endless, a constellation which the heart could read over many a night (*GA* 554-55)

Now seeing things "like hearing them," Virgie appreciates both the Medusa and Perseus, as "a constellation which the heart could read."

Hiromi Ochi indicates an association between Virgie's seeing things "like hearing them"

and the notion of “hearing” Martin Heidegger introduces in *Being and Time* (“Symphony” 117).

In arguing that “[t]he fundamental existentialia which constitute the Being of the ‘there’” are “states-of-mind and understanding,” with which “[d]iscourse is existentially equiprimordial” (203), Heidegger claims:

We can make clear the connection of discourse with understanding and intelligibility by considering an existential possibility which belongs to, talking itself—hearing. . . .

Listening to . . . is Dasein’s existential way of Being-open as Being-with for Others. . . .⁵

It is on the basis of this potentiality for hearing, which is existentially primary, that anything like hearkening [Horchen] becomes possible. . . . What we ‘first’ hear is never noises or complexes of sounds, but the creaking wagon, the motor-cycle. (206-07)

If “listening to” is “Dasein’s existential way of Being-open as Being-with for Others,” Virgie, who sees things like hearing them and thus believes “in the Medusa equally with Perseus” (*GA* 554) is “being there,” being open and understanding others. Now she hears because she understands, which is quite opposite to Mrs. Rainey’s attitude in “Shower of Gold,” in which she rattles on without listening to and understanding her listener(s). According to Heidegger, “understanding arises neither through talking at length . . . nor through busily hearing something ‘all around,’” and “[o]nly he who already understands can listen” (208).

Heidegger’s examples of what we “first” hear— “creaking waggon,” “the motor-cycle,” “the column on the march,” “the north wind,” “the woodpecker tapping,” and “the fire crackling” (207)—correspond to the last two sentences of “The Wanderers.”

Then [Virgie] and the older beggar woman, the old black thief, were there alone and together in the shelter of the big public tree, listening to the marginal percussion, the world beating in their ears. They heard through falling rain the running of the horse and bear, the stroke of the leopard, the dragon’s crusty slither, and the glimmer and trumpet of the swan. (*GA* 555-56)

Here Virgie listens to “the marginal percussion” beaten in the world— “the running of the horse

⁵ According to John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, the translators of *Being and Time*, *Dasein* means “literally ‘Being-there’” (27).

and bear, the stroke of the leopard, the dragon's crusty slither, and the glimmer and trumpet of the swan" —, because she is now "Being-in-the-world" in Heidegger's words. Moreover, the situation where she listens to "the marginal percussion" "alone" but along with an unfamiliar, old black thief proves that she is "a Being-in-the-world with Others, a Being which understands" (Heidegger 206).

Consider this— "seeing things like hearing" is a short-story cyclical way of seeing the world. Reading the short-story cycle is like listening to the marginal percussion: every stroke of a musical instrument, their harmony, and their dichotomy. Listening to the marginal percussion enables us to be there, to understand them. Or, if we try to understand the marginal percussion, we can hear them, and there is always someone listening to the sound with you, though perhaps you and s/he hear different sounds.

Before ending this chapter, it is worth taking a look at Welty's revision of "The Flower and the Rock," which was an independent short story developed into "Music from Spain." Both stories, representing isolation and lack of communication in city life, depict a middle-aged man living in San Francisco, named Francis Dowdie in "Flower" and Eugene MacLain in "Music," and his tracing a Spanish musician, who seemingly does not understand English. As I explained at length in my report on my research at Mississippi Department of Archives and History,⁶ differences between the two characters reflect the nature of *The Golden Apples* and Welty's views on the short-story cycle.

First of all, Eugene and Dowdie often see things in different ways: whereas the former always has the existence of others in mind, the latter doesn't. Sometimes when they encounter

⁶ See Takeda, "Eudora Welty and the Short-Story Cycle: A Report on My Research at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History."

something new to them, Eugene immediately assumes another person's reaction but Dowdie doesn't. In looking at a sailor "having his girl photographed in the arms of a stuffed gorilla" (*GA* 478), only Eugene thinks he "would like to show that to somebody." When Eugene/Dowdie looks at the sign saying "Nothing but Gold to Touch the Flesh," Eugene feels "It could all make a man feel shame. The kind of shame one had to jump up in the air, kick his heels, to express—whirl around!" (*GA* 478), while Dowdie, noticing the sign, just passes it. Thus, Eugene shares his own experiences or feelings with unknown others, whereas Dowdie does not.

Considering that Eugene, though unconsciously, perceives the existence of others, it seems natural that he, both physically and mentally, establishes more intimate contact with the Spaniard than Dowdie does. Inviting the Spaniard for lunch, for instance, Eugene says, "Come on. I'm inviting you, all right. We'll eat" (*GA* 405), while Dowdie says, "tipping his finger to his companion's elbow," "Of course I want to buy your lunch" (14). Thus, whereas Eugene often uses "we"/"us" to talk to the Spaniard, Dowdie basically uses "I"/"me" instead.

In short, growing into a mentality that consists not only of himself but also of others, Dowdie transforms from a protagonist of a short story into a character of a short-story cycle, Eugene MacLain. Although Eugene naturally perceives the existence of others, he fails to achieve a sense of fulfillment; coming back to Morgana later in his life, he "seemed to hesitate on the street of Morgana, hold averted, anticipating questions. Sometimes he looked up in the town where he was young and said something strangely spiteful or ambiguous . . . but he bothered no one" (*GA* 553). He fails to achieve a sense of fulfillment because, while recognizing other people's stories, he interprets them at his discretion, as he admires the Spanish musician as a substitute for his absent father King: "Eugene clung to the Spaniard now, almost as if he had waited for him a long time with longing, almost as if he loved him, and had found a lasting refuge" (507).

As the transformations of “The Flower and the Rock” into “Music from Spain” reveals, perhaps Welty imagined a short-story cycle as a form in which the voices of others in the past as well as in the present incessantly enter and intrude one character’s present. Illustrating an increasingly complicated negotiation between the private and public spheres in modern southern society, she finds a form that represents individuals’ belief in and failure to achieve the wholeness of the community, and that also explores a way to gain a feeling of self-fulfillment in such a society.

Although Welty insists that she is a short-story writer, and other forms of works “accidentally” come out of a short story, she is quite conscious of literary genres or forms. Surely, both *Delta Wedding* and *The Golden Apples* come out of short stories, but not as Welty herself suggests, accidentally. Welty perceives the need to develop each of them respectively into a novel and a short-story cycle, in order to portray a lost past plantation family and a contemporary Southern community. The developments from *Delta Wedding* to *The Golden Apples* suggest that we need further study of her works in terms of their formal disparity. Moreover, as these works show, it is not simply the tensions between the individual and community embraced in the cycle form that have urged Welty to adopt the form; *Delta Wedding*, eventually, depicts the tensions as fully as *The Golden Apples* does. The latter, however, shows the struggles of people who, caught between such tensions in a modern community, struggle to achieve self-fulfillment, while also offering one solution to this problem.

CONCLUSION

While many American writers in the first half of the twentieth-century adopted the short-story cycle form to represent a complex and unstable modern world and its lack of wholeness, the form has also performed a crucial function in ethnic and postcolonial fiction in late twentieth and early twenty-first century America. Regarding the ethnic short-story cycle as “a hybrid within a hybrid,” Rocio G. Davis proclaims that the genre is “a particularly apt medium with which to enact the enigma of ethnicity, the feeling that one falls ‘between two stools’” (324). Building on Davis’s argument, James Nagel analyzes the ethnic short-story cycles including Jamaica Kincaid’s *Annie John* (1985), Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried* (1990), and Amy Tan’s *Joy Luck Club* (1989). He writes,

The American experience is, after all, the process of making one out of many. If this analogy were to be pushed a step further, there could be said to be an equivalence between an analysis of the themes that unite the stories in contemporary cycles and the ideas that consolidate American society. In this sense, the literary themes of immigration, ethnic diversity, the American Dream, cultural duality, language acquisition and loss, individual responsibility, the dynamic role of the past in the present, and intergenerational conflict over the preservation of cultural values might be said to mirror the issues that are very much of the moment in American society. (*Contemporary* 258)

While the short-story cycle has helped ethnic writers to represent American society, Nagel points out, critics have not paid much attention to the significant role that the short-story cycle has played in ethnic fiction (*Contemporary* 8).

If the short-story cycle enables ethnic and postcolonial writers to express “the feeling that one falls ‘between two stools’” in Davis’s words, it seems quite understandable that the genre has been well developed in the American South. The South, according to Jennifer Rae Greeson, embodies “both sides of the disavowed binary”: “simultaneously colonial and colonized, it diverges from the nation writ large on the basis of its exploitativeness—as the location of the internal colonization of Africans and African Americans in the United States—and on the basis

of its exploitation—as the location of systematic underdevelopment, military defeat, and occupation” (3). Although the notion of the postcolonial South has only recently been recognized, the fact that southern writers have used and developed the short-story cycle form in unique ways to represent the region for over a century might suggest the important role that this rather neglected genre played in the history of Southern and American literature.

Greeson and many other scholars in the new southern studies have tried to reconsider the South from the broader, global perspective. In *Look Away!: the U.S. South in New World Studies*, Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn propose that the history of the South is “simultaneously (or alternately) center and margin, victor and defeated, empire and colony, essentialist and hybrid, northern and southern (both in the global sense)” (9). Noteworthy is that the South’s position of “betweenness” is not brought about but rediscovered by globalization. As Martyn Bone stresses, “any transnational turn in the South—be it socioeconomic, demographic, and/or disciplinary—should not be seen simply as a radical (much less liberating) break from regional tradition but rather as revealing discomfiting historical-geographical continuities with what went before” (*Where* 3).

Cynthia Shearer’s *The Celestial Jukebox* (2005) represents the hybridity and betweenness that have been imposed on the region. The volume takes place in a contemporary, globalized, Southern community, named Madagascar, an imaginary town in the Mississippi Delta. Madagascar consists of multi ethnic groups such as Chinese immigrants, Hispanics, African Americans, Africans, and white Americans. Some scholars have considered this book as the representative of a more complex community in the South and as a work that goes beyond the established notion of “Southern literature,” for example: Karyn H. Anderson examines the space of Madagascar as “a site for negotiation between the competing forces of cultural homogenization and heterogenization”(199); Martyn Bone focuses on “contemporary African

migration to the South” portrayed in *The Celestial Jukebox*, which “gives new impetus to the development of Black Atlantic approaches within (new) Southern studies” (“Narratives” 65-66); and Neil Segars explores the Chinese grocer, Angus Chien’s new identity as a Chinese Mississippian.

Depicting multi ethnic groups in Madagascar, *The Celestial Jukebox* also portrays “white characters who, Shearer importantly signals, have always already been there but not given a voice in any official story of the South” (McKee 83). As Nahem Yousaf argues, “[w]hile a summary impression makes the novel seem an exceptional fetishization of a ‘multi-cuti’ South, Shearer’s depiction of an imagined community in the Delta may be read as a palimpsest landscape” (207). In fact, to answer the question about what inspired her to write *The Celestial Jukebox*, Shearer responds, “I wanted to get down on paper some of the things I loved in Mississippi that outsiders didn’t always see” (“Interview with Cynthia Shearer”). Yousaf points out that the book “rests on documented foundations that remain largely unknown outside the region: Chinese laborers migrated to the Delta around 1870, with many setting up groceries for free blacks during Reconstruction, and now comprise the largest Chinese population in a Southern state” (207). Indeed, in “Delta Autumn,” the sixth story of Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses*, Isaac McCaslin says, “Chinese and African and Aryan and Jew, all breed and spawn together until no man has time to say which one is which nor cares” (269). *The Celestial Jukebox* represents the hybridity that the region historically has embraced and “locates Mississippi as a part of the always-already globalized South” (Dischinger 66).

Consisting of thirty-seven chapters, each of which mostly reflects the perspective of one character, *The Celestial Jukebox* follows some characteristics of the short-story cycle. Significantly, however, the book seems to revise the classical form of the genre. Shearer says in her interview; “[o]riginally the book was 13 linked short stories. Then I revised the stories as a

novel, like cutting a deck of cards and shuffling it several times” (“Author”). Transforming “20-page chapters into 10-page chapters,” she changed what she called “linked short stories” into “a novel” (“Author”). Although Shearer calls and in fact subtitles the book “a novel,” the fragmental book is not a “typical” novel at all. As Matthew Dischinger writes, the book’s “chapters offer titles rather than numbers. This small narrative gesture speaks to the way the text feels like a collection of interrelated stories rather than a clear narrative of forward progress, an ethos that the novel’s frame story evinces” (63).

The fact that Shearer regards the cut and shuffled short-story cycle as “a novel” is significant. If the short-story cycle in the nineteenth and early twentieth century South has adopted and developed the form in unique ways to represent and investigate the complex interplay of contending forces that constitute what we think of as “the South,” in cutting and shuffling the “proper” short-story cycle form and remaking it into a novel, Shearer seems to reveal that the contemporary South cannot be adequately represented within the anti-hegemonic framework of “resistance,” “hybridity,” or “betweenness.” But we also might look at it another way: if cutting and shuffling a short-story cycle is enough to create “a novel,” perhaps the South has already embraced a kind of wholeness, or something that would become the basis for the wholeness that the novel embodies (and that the short-story cycle resists and questions), though we have been unaware of its existence.

When Shearer calls *The Celestial Jukebox* “a novel,” however, it is clear that the novel does not envision the achievement of the totalizing whole found in, for example, Faulkner’s novels such as *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, which represent the world where people still believe in the totality of life and try to put everything in its ordered place. Then, what does she assume her “novel” will accomplish that a short story cycle cannot? Shearer’s act of cutting and shuffling the stories seems to reflect the instability of character and place in *The*

Celestial Jukebox. In Shearer's book, the brevity and fragmented nature of each story seems to symbolize the fragility of the characters' self-identity. For instance, Angus Chien, who has been in Mississippi for more than 60 years, knows about the community better than others though people regard him as a Chinese; although people consider Boubacar to be a Mauritanian, he rapidly improves his English and gets familiar with American culture. Both Angus and Boubacar, in short, belong to both categories of Chinese/Mauritanian and the American. Not only the immigrants, but also native-born Americans face an identity crisis, for example: Dean, a white farmer, cannot make a living by farming while Aubrey, an African American whom Dean taught how to farm, becomes an economic success; Bebe Marie, who is from a wealthy plantation family, insists that her father is Henry Matisse.

Madagascar has no time, history or origin for all residents to share. The fact that Angus often gets a flashback to the 1938 Nanking Massacre, but at the same time his family's immigration to Mississippi is a part of the history of the region, reveals that the history of China has been incorporated into that of the South. Like Angus, all immigrants have their own history that cannot be shared by other residents of Madagascar, while the characters in *The Golden Apples* or *Go Down, Moses* share the same history, such as King McLain's fleeing Morgana, or the story of Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy. Besides, the Lucky Leaf Casino, whose workers are African immigrants, "occupie[s] what once had been Israel Abide's main cotton field, which had been so large it had taken six cotton pickers at the time to work it" (181), and the Casino has been ordering Angus to leave his landed property. As Bone clearly points out, the book "powerfully dramatizes the ambiguities arising from the intersection between the regional-historical legacies of slavery and contemporary African immigration to the U.S. South" (71). Thus, the space in Madagascar is always changing, and there is no concrete space like the Moon Lake in "Moon Lake" (*The Golden Apples*), or a forest of Old Ben in "The Bear" (*Go Down*,

Moses). As Karyn H. Anderson puts it, the book “illustrates the fragility of smooth space; the inhabitants of smooth space remain vulnerable to oppression from within and without” (214).

While Shearer’s act of cutting and shuffling short stories in *The Celestial Jukebox* reflects the instability of character and place, it also enables her to emphasize the notion of coexistence. The brevity of each chapter makes the connections to the preceding and following chapters clearer, making the daily, hectic relationships between characters more immediate. In multiple chapters, a subordinate character in the previous chapter becomes the main character. The first chapter, “Introit,” for example, depicts a white girl in Mississippi and her encounter with Angus Chien, the proprietor of the Celestial Grocery, the farmer Dean Fondren, and a young black boy named Aubrey Ellerbee; the second chapter, “Six Mabone,” describes a skinny Mauritanian boy named Boubacar, his arrival in Mississippi, and his encounter with “a skinny Chinese man” (25) whom the reader recognizes as Angus Chien; the third chapter named “Schottische,” narrated from the perspective of Angus, shows his relationship with Ellerbee and Dean, as well as his encounter with “a small woman” (40) dancing the schottische, whose name he learns is “Consuela” (89) in the eighth chapter.

While the form of *The Celestial Jukebox* emphasizes the daily, hectic relationships between characters, some chapters reflect characters’ isolation. For example, chapters that focus on Raine Semmes have nothing to do with their previous or succeeding chapters. Raine Semmes, who is a white, middle-class housewife, feels that nobody, including her husband and children, needs her. Unlike Angus, Dean, or Boubacar, she does not have a person to talk with, rely on, or to help her, except for the jukebox man, with whom she tries not to fall in love. The independence of her chapters, therefore, mirrors not only her own isolation but also her secret love with the jukebox repairman. In addition to Raine’s chapters, some chapters that depict Angus, Dean, or Boubacar, have no connection with the previous/succeeding chapters.

But because of the brevity or fragmented nature of each story in *The Celestial Jukebox*, the characters' isolation itself does not become as obvious as it does in many modern short-story cycles. In the book, both those who engage with others on a daily basis and those who do not, have moments when they feel like they are coexisting. While the short-story cycle often expresses hybridity through the entire volume by letting the readers link individual stories, some chapters in *The Celestial Jukebox* do so in a single chapter. For example, the twentieth-first chapter, "Nocturne, with Black Escalade," has many main characters, and the readers hear various voices at the same time. Moreover, in the latter parts of the volume, Shearer embeds multiple narrative perspectives in each short chapter. Chapter 33, "Special Riders," for instance, reflects the perspective of Dean and Raine. Although they neither know nor talk with each other, the reader can see the lonely white man and woman feeling the warmth of people, as they reluctantly but peacefully accept reality: Dean says to Angus, "Everybody all the time deliverin' each other, look like" (389); Rain thinks, "Hundreds of faces, illuminated by each other's lights, each face masking a separate story. Everyone was being careful, sorting themselves into the long shimmer of red taillights" (392).

The motives of music and jukebox embody the notion of coexistence in the book. Shearer connects a particular piece of music with each character's story: Raine, for example, always listens to Bob Dylan because she wants to live "inside some old soft Dylan song" (84); Boubacar listens to Mississippi music because it reminds "him a bit of Nigerian highlife sometimes, and soukous at others" (291). In the interview, Shearer says, "I picked music to show where the characters punch in their choices on the big imaginary jukebox of philosophy and life. I wanted to have some characters in the book genuinely and rightfully fear the music of the others who differ from themselves demographically" ("Author"). As "the big imaginary jukebox" embraces multiple individuals in Madagascar, *The Celestial Jukebox*/the jukebox at the Celestial Grocery

includes many stories/songs. At the beginning of the book, the narrator says: “Choosing a song did not mean that you’d actually get to hear it, hence the free money. The jukebox had never been quite right since the company that owned it had converted it from 78s to 45s. Sometimes it played the flip side of what you asked for. Sometimes it played the same song over and over for months, and Angus had to keep it unplugged” (33). Although songs played by a jukebox do not share the same time, history, or origin, they coexist in the half-broken device.

Despite the multiplicity of backgrounds among them, people in Madagascar, at least partially, “genuinely and rightfully fear the music”—or “philosophy and life”—“of the others” in Shearer’s words. And perhaps in the South, on which hybridity and betweenness have been imposed, has always and already embraced something that would become the basis for what Shearer regards as wholeness—“the big imaginary jukebox of philosophy and life”—though people have been unaware of its existence, or they have failed to “genuinely and rightfully fear the music of the others who differ from themselves demographically.”

The Confederate Stories of America has examined the ways in which short-story cycles written by southern writers have reflected, reshaped, and always gone beyond the idea of “the South.” Shearer’s act of cutting and shuffling the “proper” short-story cycle form and remaking it into “a novel” carries on the spirit of these writers. The short-story cycles will continue to show us the South that we have yet to see.

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