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Locating the Short Story Cycle

Suddenly I decided to go back to the *Winesburg* form. That is really a novel. It is a form in which I feel at ease. I invented it. It was mine. ('To Roger Sergel', in Anderson 1984: 220)

I have even sometimes thought that the novel form does not fit an American writer, that it is a form which had been brought in. What I wanted is a new looseness; and in *Winesburg* I had made my own form. (Anderson 1942: 289)

In the summer of 1938, Sherwood Anderson began work on a new novel, but he was unhappy with the result. He decided to 'go back to the *Winesburg* form' (Anderson 1984: 220). According to him, when *Winesburg, Ohio* appeared in 1919, its form was wholly new – he had invented a new genre, named it for his volume, and claimed ownership. In his *Memoirs* (1942), Anderson links his formal innovation to an idea of US nationhood, which bolstered his sense that creating a national literature was paramount to the artistic projects of his time and circle; this sentiment repeats throughout his essays, memoirs, and letters. His reputation as a pioneer grew in proportion to his influence on other modernists, including most famously Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Jean Toomer, and John Steinbeck. Anderson, seen so often as the arbiter of the genre, would chase the genre's magic for decades. His claims reveal the genre's power in capturing what seemed to be new experiences and ideas about storytelling.

Anderson's disparate statements on the volume's form – that it is and is not a novel – reveal a lack of language available to describe its seemingly unique position between novel and short story collection. The interplay between independent and interconnected tales generated new ways to tell stories, especially as authors increasingly concluded

that ‘Life is a loose, flowing thing. There are no plot stories in life’ (Anderson 1942: 289). In *A Story Teller’s Story* (1924), Anderson crystallises his intent: ‘What was wanted I thought was form, not plot, an altogether more elusive and difficult thing to come at’ (1989: 352). The lack of certainty about what to call this form and the sense of innovation remain with the cycle even today. Anderson’s *Winesburg, Ohio* remains a touchstone, even standard-bearer, for the genre.

His claims to utter originality are, however, a bit false. Fiction had long exhibited an aversion to unity, clarity, and resolution and sought new ways to express fragmentation, confusion, and indecipherability. Anderson made innovations to the form, maximising its expressionist possibilities and engaging an appreciation for local places and quotidian events that would inspire Faulkner, Steinbeck, and the rest. Yet, *Winesburg* follows a long tradition of volumes that had exactly the kind of ‘new looseness’ Anderson claims for his own volume, including modernist works that directly preceded his own such as Gertrude Stein’s *Three Lives* (1909) and Edgar Lee Masters’s poetic cycle *Spoon River Anthology* (1915). The particular device of using a common setting for a series of prose tales, as in *Winesburg*, dates to at least the mid-nineteenth century in the United States and Europe. This chapter corrects the long-held assumption that the form began with modernist blockbusters and instead suggests that modernist writers revised a vibrant regionalist tradition to their own uses. I trace the development of the cycle from a regionalist tradition often marked by an attention to those living on the fringes of America. Scholars, due in part to a modernist investment in newness and in part because of the writers he influenced, have tended to take Anderson too much at his word. Instead, *Winesburg* cast modernity in terms of a mode of literary expression invested in both realism and the newest avant-garde practices, generating a watershed moment in an already dynamic genre.

The short story cycle’s treatment of a particular place descends from nineteenth-century village sketchbooks – what Sandra Zagarell (1988) terms, in her seminal essay, ‘narrative[s] of community’. Such volumes privilege a singular setting, emphasise localised language and practices, obfuscate linear/chronological development in favour of process, render the quotidian in episodic tales, and depict narrators who are ‘participant/observers’ (Zagarell 1988: 503). According to Zagarell, a ‘Narrative of community thus represents a coherent response to the social, economic, cultural, and demographic changes caused by industrialism, urbanization, and the spread of capitalism’ (1988: 499). Zagarell isolates the genre’s core conventions in the

works of Elizabeth Gaskell and Sarah Orne Jewett, among others. However, the volumes do not evince a wholly coherent, positive preindustrial ideal but instead are deeply entrenched in the alienation that accompanied urbanisation and industrialisation. Zagarell, too, reconsidered the wholly positive depiction of community she examined in her original essay to acknowledge the ‘many-valenced’ treatments of community. Almost twenty years after the publication of her original essay, Zagarell wrote of these communities that ‘Some are sustaining, some destructive; all are contingent on the specific history, racial and ethnic circumstances, gender relations, sexual norms, and other factors which inform them’ (2007: 434).

My own term for this organising principle, ‘limited locality’, reflects the cycles’ ambivalence to the promises of community. Limited locality refers to the ways in which such texts depend upon the construction of a restricted geographic terrain to contain and ground the narratives. They are limited because they take as their focus a bounded geography and because the texts emphasise descriptions of particular, selected features of that geography. Short story cycles are not linked exclusively by setting. In *Winesburg*, for instance, recurring characters, a shared temporal setting, and the central figure of George Willard further integrate the stories. Yet, the story of the cycle in American literature begins with locality because the connections between regionalist and modernist concerns are especially explicit and pronounced in these cycles. The long history of cycles linked by locality reveals that preoccupations with the nation and nostalgia persist into modernism, as Anderson’s comments intimate, and that experimentation with form as a response to modernity is present in the earliest cycles.

Mapping Genre, Guiding the Emigrant

From the earliest volumes centred on locality in the 1820s to the publication of *Winesburg* in 1919, the United States underwent a massive transformation in its very shape and scope. The regions depicted in these cycles were often actually new to the nation’s geography, and the localities they depicted were distanced from metropolitan centres. As Paul Giles shows, states such as Nebraska, the Dakotas, and California entered the union during this period; geography became a compulsory course in school; and the United States began to be referred to as a singular rather than a plural noun (2007: 41–4). Under these conditions, the literature of this period

‘tends not only to be saturated in locality but also to understand that locality as a guarantee of its own authenticity and its patriotic allegiance’ (Giles 2007: 45). The ubiquity of limited localities indicates the extent to which these narratives particularise and integrate these places.

From the genre’s earliest phases, writers and reviewers alike questioned whether the diversity of the United States could be expressed in the novel, and Anderson’s comments suggest that this notion persisted among modernists. Book reviews and popular essays of the nineteenth century often debated the suitability of the novel to the United States. As a tastemaker, William Dean Howells’s comments are illustrative: ‘In most American novels, vivid and graphic as the best of them are, the people are segregated if not sequestered, and the scene is sparsely populated . . . we excel in small pieces with three or four figures, or in studies of rustic communities, where there is propinquity if not society’ (1910: 253). He continues: ‘I am not sure that the Americans have not brought the short story nearer perfection in the all-round sense than almost any other people’ (Howells 1910: 254). He attributes this refinement to a national temperament of ‘hurry and impatience’ and a robust magazine industry (Howells 1910: 254). The modern short story cycle emerged from the rise of the short story in magazines and a simultaneous demand for longer books. The sketchbook – and later the cycle – allowed for the diversity and refinement of the short story and the ambition of the novel.

Published in 1839, Caroline Kirkland’s *A New Home – Who’ll Follow? or Glimpses of Western Life* exemplifies the extent to which formal concerns intersect with anxieties of national and local integration in early volumes. In 1837, the same year that Michigan attained statehood, Kirkland and her husband acquired eight hundred acres in Michigan and set out to establish a village. The village, Pinckney, became the basis for the fictional town of Montacute in *A New Home*. This volume, composed of sketches and descriptive vignettes, introduced readers to the rigours and challenges of frontier life in the partially settled region. In the preface, Kirkland announces that her original impulse was to adhere to life but that fiction intervened:

I claim for these straggling and cloudy crayon-sketches of life and manners in the remoter parts of Michigan, the merit of general truth of outline. Beyond this I venture not to aspire. I felt somewhat tempted to set forth my little book as being entirely, what it is very

nearly – a veritable history; an unimpeachable transcript of reality; a rough picture, in detached parts, but pentagraped from the life; a sort of ‘Emigrant’s Guide’. . . But conscience prevailed, and I must honestly confess, that there be glosses, and colourings, and lights, if not shadows, for which the author is alone accountable. (Kirkland 1990: 1)

Kirkland maintains that the book approximates a ‘veritable history’, indicating the extent to which she intends for *A New Home* to be read as a guidebook to the would-be traveller. That most of her readers would never venture to Michigan is irrelevant, because the book, as the preface makes explicit, strives to introduce this place to the national imagination. Thus, she needs to impress upon her readers the veracity of her descriptions.

A New Home subscribes to the belief that sustained geographic proximity fosters a sense of positive communal affiliation. In 1887, Ferdinand Tönnies gave a name to this nineteenth-century vision of organic and authentic community, *gemeinschaft*, which opposed artificial, industrial affiliation, *gesellschaft*. Characterised by ‘locality, which is based on a common habit’, the logic of *gemeinschaft* maintains that ‘The proximity of dwellings, the communal fields, and even the mere contiguity of holdings necessitate many contacts of human beings and cause inurement to and intimate knowledge of one another’ (Tönnies 1957: 42–3). Tönnies theorised that shared land and interests generated genuine communal commitment. *A New Home* narrates the process by which this unsettled land becomes a community and, by extension, part of the nation. In Kirkland’s Montacute ‘something new is born, a pluralistic, polyphonic culture that honors the original viewpoints and practices of each constituent group and may well represent the future of America itself’ (Zagarell 1990: xxix). *A New Home* models an inclusive vision of the nation, made up of such communities; this model embraces the wanderlust of moving West while maintaining an elegiac mood for a disappearing landscape. Kirkland describes the dangers of traversing ‘Michigan mud-holes’ and the beauties of the forest’s ‘gosling-green suit of half-opened leaves’ (1990: 5). Descriptions of such geographical features render these unfamiliar places legible. Thus, these texts function not only to depict the uniqueness of place, as Kirkland suggests in her preface, but also to help constitute the nation’s image of itself through descriptions of the land’s physical features.

The circumstances surrounding the Kirklands' founding of Pinckney and the composition of *A New Home* indicate that her volume is meant to be an attempt at a national form. In the first sketch, Kirkland describes 'the remote and lonely regions' as being 'beyond measure delicious to one "long in populous cities pent"' (1990: 5). Quoting Milton, Kirkland attempts to persuade her reader that the Michigan landscape is worthy of the great English poets. She charges that 'We must have a poet of our own' and speculates that Shelley, Charles Lamb, or Bulwer might be up to the task (Kirkland 1990: 6). These descriptions of the landscape and the call-to-pens essentially amount to a defence of this new territory's incorporation. Instead of poetry, though, the national form is, for Kirkland, the sketch volume. Kirkland acknowledges that her work is indebted to Mary Russell Mitford, whose chronicles of life in a small English hamlet, *Our Village*, 'suggested the form of my rude attempt' (1990: 2). This self-effacement reveals not just the popularity of an international sketch tradition but also the extent to which this American author saw herself in conversation with it. For Kirkland, this reliance on an English model did not detract from the American-ness of her own volume. *A New Home* is extraordinary in its explicit announcement of itself as an 'Emigrant's Guide' and in the conditions of its production. The volume portends the fascination with community and nation that dominates nineteenth- and twentieth-century short story cycles. It also dramatises the extent to which nation is defined by both regional ties and transnational exchanges. Her allusions to quaintness and the tone of sentimental retrospection initiate a mode of nostalgia that celebrates the particularity of a place. A number of early cycles embrace nostalgia and substantiate their seriousness through claims of realism in the manner of Kirkland's, including Augustus Baldwin Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes* (1835) and Eliza Buckminster Lee's *Sketches of a New England Village, in the Last Century* (1838). These early volumes centre on integrating distant, often cloistered, locales into the national imagination at a time when the very shape of the nation was changing radically, moving West and reshaping commerce and life in the East.

All of these volumes followed in the wake of Washington Irving's enormously popular *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1820), which initiated the unifying figure and the significance of travel, heralding the construction of nation in relation to international traditions. In a preface to the American edition, Irving cautions readers that his book lacked pretensions to 'finished composition',

explaining instead that the sketches ‘partake of his own thoughts and feelings; sometimes treating of scenes before him, sometimes of other purely imaginary, sometimes wandering back with recollections to his native country’ (1930: xvii). Part deprecation and part instruction, this preface is typical of authorial introductions of the nineteenth century. Most significantly for the history of the cycle, it frames the subsequent stories as flexible and connected but not always easily unified. Mary Weatherspoon Bowden’s study of Irving goes so far as to claim he is not ‘a short-story writer but a composer of books: thus, a story in one of his books is more than that story alone, for it gains meaning from what came before and gives meaning to what will follow’ (1981: 9). Kennedy shows how Irving’s volumes ‘were atypical of later short story collections, since from the outset he anticipated book publication and crafted his narratives for homogenous effects’ (1988: 10) unlike later volumes by Balzac, Hawthorne, and Turgenev, who wrote tales individually for magazines before collecting them. Linked by the personality and charm of its ostensible author, Irving’s book assembles story, essay, tragedy, and satire into one volume of stories that can be read singly (as stories such as ‘Rip Van Winkle’ and ‘The Legend of Sleepy Hollow’ routinely are) but mean more when taken together, especially as they provide a view of place.

For American readers, Irving offers glimpses into English rural life; for British readers (Irving’s book was one of the first American bestsellers in England), Irving constructs New England legends, often through the recurring figure Diedrich Knickerbocker. In the essay ‘English Writers on America’, he even tries to broker a literary ceasefire between English and American writers by calling for a transnational exchange of literature that would seek artistic worth over national origin. Originally published serially in seven parts, it was later put forth as a book. In this, *The Sketch Book* aligns with contemporary publishing practices, as selected stories or even whole books are published in magazines before being arranged and edited into a cycle. Irving continued to work in the genre in *Bracebridge Hall* (1822) and *Tales of a Traveller* (1824).

Romanticism and Realism at the Crossroads of Genre

Although Irving’s volume has more generic diversity and less cohesiveness than an archetypal short story cycle, it paved the way for the modern American short story cycle, which emerged from two,

overlapping, strands of nineteenth-century fiction: the metaphysical and moral quandaries that animate American romanticism and the fascination with the quotidian and local that ground regionalist sketches. Nathaniel Hawthorne's and Herman Melville's short story collections, produced in the context of and embracing American romanticism, reveal thematic and artistic continuity that influenced the rise of the short story cycle. Hawthorne is a particularly fascinating case in the history of the short story cycle. By 1834, Hawthorne had conceived of and written three short story cycles that were never published in the connected form he intended: *Seven Tales of My Native Land*, *Provincial Tales*, and *The Story Teller*. Remnants of these early cycles would be published in *The Token*, a gift periodical, and later included in *Twice-Told Tales* (1837), but publishers were averse to releasing them as single, connected volumes. Hawthorne knew that linked tales would demand greater literary and public respect than a collection or discrete tales.¹ Anxieties about literary influence and longevity in relation to form recur in Hawthorne's *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846).

In the opening story, 'The Old Manse', the narrator hopes that his time in the house, based on the home in Concord, Massachusetts where Hawthorne lived for the first three years of his marriage, would lead him away from 'idle stories' and toward 'a novel that should evolve some deep lesson and should possess physical substance to stand alone' (Hawthorne 2003: 4). The opening is replete with moments that apologise for having produced only stories, yet the biographically inflected frame tale also establishes that the stories, taken together, provide the 'deep lesson' and 'substance' of a novel. Hawthorne theorises this as he discusses the American Indian artefacts that await discovery on the property: 'Their great charm consists in their rudeness and in the individuality of each article, so different from the productions of civilized machinery, which shapes everything on one pattern' (9). Here he comments on how the idiosyncratic loveliness of an artefact or a story offers a reprieve from the monotony of industrial production; this is rather ironic given that the story flourishes because the factory and railroad made possible the production and transportation of the very magazines and newspapers that would print such tales. Hawthorne blends romanticist ideas about spontaneity and reflection – after all, the opening story reads like a spontaneous walk through the grounds, even as it is retrospective – with the emerging conditions of the industrial age. Indeed, Hawthorne celebrates the 'newspaper

scribblers and almanac makers' who 'throw off in the effervescence of a moment' (16) art more real and true than the many generations of parsons who occupied the house before him.

Hawthorne and Melville, in *The Piazza Tales* (1856), both begin their volumes with frame narratives set in antiquated houses that are being made new by the writers, who serve as narrators. Hawthorne's tale follows the author-narrator rambling through the estate, considering the ways in which the collective past shapes his present. His rambling suggests a way of reading the subsequent stories. Melville's opening tale, likewise, describes the author-narrator's home as he recounts adding a piazza to a seventy-year-old structure to capture the sunlight and views in the Hoosac Mountains of Massachusetts. 'The Piazza' offers a new vantage to look at Melville's past work – just as the piazza in the story reframes the old farmhouse and invites fresh views of its environs. In both collections, all of the stories, save these opening tales, had been previously published. These original framing pieces, which locate the composition of the subsequent stories in a place and time, announce an authorial vision of connection for the volumes.

Hawthorne and Melville envisioned their works having thematic and textual continuity, if not unity. Even as he apologises for not producing the novel or philosophical treatise he had hoped, Hawthorne explains that 'With these idle weeds and withering blossoms, I have intermixed some that were produced long ago – old, faded things, reminding me of flowers pressed between the leaves of a book – and now offer the bouquet' (2003: 26). Like a bouquet, these tales are beautiful singly but even more lovely when they play off each other. Both collections draw on the interplay of extended, allegorical stories that meditate on the often sinister aspects of humanity and the relief of lighter, humorous sketches. Moreover, the volumes include 'Smaller clusters of three or more stories' (Kennedy 1988: 16) that are more highly integrated than the volume as a whole. In Hawthorne's volume, a sequence of stories including 'Legends of the Province House', 'Howe's Masquerade', 'Edward Randolph's Portrait', 'Lady Eleanor's Mantle', and 'Old Esther Dudley' all 'variously sugges[t] the legacy of that grim architectural emblem of royal government' (Kennedy 1988: 16). In Melville's volume, the ten sketches that comprise 'The Encantadas' produce a similar sequence within a cycle. In doing so, Hawthorne and Melville set a precedent for cycles within collections that many contemporary writers continue, including John Updike, Amy Bloom,

Junot Díaz, and Jhumpa Lahiri, whose *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) takes its title and epigraph from Hawthorne.

The stories in Melville's and Hawthorne's volumes gain further coherence as they examine the relationship between nature and the domestic, announced in their travels through their estates in 'The Piazza' and 'The Old Manse'. That each author-narrator haunts a place that inspired so much writing anticipates stories that depict characters who are haunted by the tensions between nature and art, reality and the imagination, perception and knowledge – recurring themes that link the stories (Lordi 2006: 324). Melville's opening is especially concerned with issues of perspective; as a fictionalised authorial figure recounts a visit to his only visible neighbour, he meditates on how one's life looks from another's perspective. His house, a relatively modest farmhouse, looks like a palace through the 'mirage haze' (Melville 2006: 108) of the intervening mountain space. His neighbour sees it as the home of 'a happy being'; the narrator, knowing that his home is not the place of idyllic joy his neighbour imagines, simply confesses that 'well could I wish that I were that happy one of the happy house you dream you see' (112). Melville concludes with this moment of wistfulness undercut by reality, which is a central tension in the regionalist writing that emerges in the mid- to late nineteenth century.

Regionalism – evident in Hawthorne's and Melville's opening stories' emphases on locality and Irving's twin treatments of rural English life and New England – was the popular mode of much short fiction in the nineteenth century before and after romanticism. Hawthorne and Melville blend a regionalist fascination with place and romanticist concerns with creativity, the natural world, and the individual. The cycle is an especially rich mode for depicting the local, quotidian practices in the expanding nation before and after the Civil War. Later cycles of the nineteenth century, such as Hamlin Garland's *Main-Travelled Roads* (1891), Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896), Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's *The People of Our Neighborhood* (1898), Zona Gale's *Friendship Village* (1908), and Sui Sin Far's *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (1912), reflect a desire to unify the nation in the wake of the Civil War by appealing to a sense of lost rural traditions and incorporating new populations into the nation. These complicated cycles are not mere nostalgia; rather, they capture a place's response, often ambivalent, to modernity. The loose form of the cycle allows the authors to depict multiple responses to the forces changing these communities, rather than articulating a singular, conclusive statement.

Critical Nostalgia at the Turn of the Century

Early volumes explicitly announce – but implicitly trouble – a belief that geographically based community presents an antidote to the poisons of industrialisation and modernisation. Claims of verisimilitude in prefatory materials distinguish the earliest stages of the cycle, spanning from the mid- to late nineteenth century, whereas a greater emphasis on fiction and invention mark cycles published in the last decade of the nineteenth and first decade of the twentieth centuries. The emphasis remains on portraying a particular place, such as Dunnet Landing in Jewett's cycle, the small New England town of Freeman's volume, and the titular Wisconsin town of Gale's book. Though more explicitly fictionalised and increasingly fragmented, later cycles maintain some sense of Kirkland's 'Emigrant's Guide'. Even as they continue to treat place-based community, later cycles move increasingly toward disjunction, both in terms of their representation of communal affiliation and in their formal construction. Earlier cycles celebrate the possibility of *gemeinschaft*, but turn-of-the-century short story cycles increasingly treat geographically based community not as an armistice to the conflicting forces of modernity but rather as another battle site. Nostalgia becomes a weapon in that battle.

The language of nostalgia serves two purposes. First, it establishes a narrative mode that reacts to the very conditions of modernity, which 'involves a powerful vortex of historical conditions that coalesce to produce sharp ruptures from the past' (Friedman 2006: 433). Susan Stanford Friedman claims this rapid change produces 'a gamut of sensations from displacement, despair, and nostalgia to exhilaration, hope, and embrace of the new' (2006: 434). The second purpose of nostalgia is to advance locality as simultaneously the site of, cause of, and solution for the ruptures that accompany modernity. Late nineteenth-century cycles deploy a self-conscious sentimentality, or what I call 'critical nostalgia', to signal and respond to the issues of nation and formal experimentation that pervade the genre. Critical nostalgia refers to the creation of a wistful simplification that is undercut within the stories themselves. Cycles linked by limited locality deploy nostalgia as a sincere mode of expression, an evocation in defence of a certain locality, or a mode of expression ripe for satire and subversion. Often, and increasingly by the turn of the twentieth century, they engage these different uses of nostalgia simultaneously.

The nostalgic celebration of bygone, frontier, or unknown localities replaces the earlier cycles' emphasis on introduction and incorporation. Produced in the context of 'postwar reunion' following the Civil War, volumes by Jewett, Freeman, and Gale were apt vehicles for transporting a nostalgic sense of national cohesion because their settings gave 'the appearance that local communities were disengaged from national politics' (Joseph 2007: 11). Svetlana Boym uncovers nostalgia's historical basis as a medical ailment, largely among soldiers fighting far from home in Europe in the seventeenth century. In the US, nostalgia did not appear until the Civil War. Boym traces how nostalgia, once invalidating soldiers and inspiring poets, came to dominate how nations imagined themselves into being (2001: 14). She argues that 'Nostalgia itself has a utopian dimension, only it is no longer directed toward the future. Sometimes nostalgia is not directed toward the past either, but rather sideways' (Boym 2001: xiv). Given the frequency with which authors engage nostalgia in not-so-distant pasts (often, these cycles are set just a decade before their publication), the cycle's recursive form and engagement with critical nostalgia articulates the fragmentation and contradictions of this moment of making modernity.

A thwarted desire for places untouched by national turmoil permeates these story cycles, as is the case with Stephen Crane's *Whilomville Stories*, which were published serially in *Harper's* in 1899 and posthumously as a book in 1901. The title draws on the term 'whilom', meaning 'some time before or ago', evoking the nostalgic sense of place that resonates in the stories (Brown and Hernlund 1978: 116–17). Turn-of-the-century cycles capture the feeling of places rapidly being lost to industrialisation, although their ability to circulate in multiple forms to large audiences was only possible because of that same industrialisation. As noted, such regionalist writing arose, in part, from the proliferation of magazines and the economic opportunities they presented. The serialisation of stories often suggests the economic conditions under which many were produced. The publication of the *Whilomville* tales, for instance, helped to alleviate Crane's financial crisis and medical expenses. Similarly, following her parents' deaths, Freeman's stories appeared in *Harper's* and initiated her financial autonomy. The stories in *The People of Our Neighborhood* first appeared in *The Ladies' Home Journal* between December of 1895 and December of 1897. That these stories appeared in magazines before being collected into cycles indicates the autonomy of their individual tales

as well as the material advantages of cycles and collections drawn from previously published pieces. While these cycles maintain what Raymond Williams calls the ‘fly-in-amber quality’ of regionalism, they do so in highly self-conscious ways (1982: 61).

Such cycles maintain the connection between locality and community but increasingly expose the isolation of the individual. For instance, in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, Dunnet Landing functions as a dual metaphor for loneliness and community, which are posited as two responses to the impending changes facing the cloistered locale. The specific geography of the place correlates to the lives of the town’s citizens; the citizens of Dunnet Landing are ‘human analogues to the pointed firs, possessing the will to flourish with the incoming tide and the strength to stand tall at its ebb’ (Dunn and Morris 1995: 39). Much like Kirkland’s emphasis on mud-holes, Jewett’s emphasis on specific features of the landscape introduces that distanced locale into the national imagination. Jewett’s cycle opens with an introduction of the place:

These houses made the most of their seaward view . . . the small-paned high windows in the peaks of their steep gables were like knowing eyes that watched the harbor and the far sea-line beyond, or looked northward all along the shore and its background of spruces and balsam firs. When one really knows a village like this and its surroundings, it is like becoming acquainted with a single person. (Jewett 2000: 3)

The personification of the houses suggests the community’s solidarity and perceptiveness. The specific geographical feature of the firs resonates with the tenacity of the people. The sea, in its strength and brutality, symbolises change. Dunnet Landing suggests how persistently, if not universally, cycles represent localities as outposts, distanced from other places or marginalised by economic conditions. The final statement – that the town resembles a singular person – establishes a tension between the individual and the community that the narrator’s position over the course of the stories dramatises.

The friendship between the narrator and Mrs. Todd, the interconnections and affinities amongst the townspeople, and the general affection the narrator feels toward the place and its people make Dunnet Landing seem like a communal paradise. As they relate the journey to and the events of the yearly Bowden family reunion, the highly integrated stories ‘The Great Expedition’, ‘A Country Road’, ‘The Bowden Reunion’, and ‘The Feast’s End’

depict what appears to be an idyllic rural community. According to Frances M. Zauhar, Jewett's volume minimises the 'independence and rugged individualism' of much American fiction and instead celebrates 'domesticity and friendship', which are constituted not by courtship and marriage, hallmarks of the domestic novel, but by 'a vision of mature friendship and mutually recognized affiliation' (2007: 412). In Jewett's volume, the trope of the tourist or emigrant narrator remains. She initially acts like the narrator of Irving's *The Sketch Book*, but the narrator in *Country* demonstrates that the tourist must become a member of the community and not merely flit outside its edges (Zauhar 2007: 414–15). As they leave the reunion, the narrator 'came near to feeling like a true Bowden, and parted from certain new friends as if they were old friends; we were rich with the treasure of new remembrance' (Jewett 2000: 117). The narrator's position at the end of the book appears to be a complete and total immersion into the community. The narrator celebrates her intimacy with the place and its inhabitants, especially sharing asides with Mrs. Todd that shape and confirm their friendship.

While Mrs. Todd's personal disclosures about the members and practices of the clan have been read largely in terms of her affinity for the narrator, the content of these disclosures often suggests the isolation omnipresent in Dunnet Landing. Thus, Jewett depicts a limited locality that offers only a provisional community to the narrator and denies community to some of its own members. The narrator spends a long section of the reunion describing the procession of Bowdens as they make their way to the site of the picnic. Led and organised by Santin Bowden, a man bent on military service but denied the opportunity, Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Caplin discuss the nature of Santin's proclivity for war, alcohol, and 'poor gloomy spells' (109). Mrs. Todd compares Santin's particularity to a certain 'sprig of laurel' (110) that will not bloom despite a welcoming landscape. She says of the laurel, 'Tis a real Sant Bowden, out of its own place' (110). The narrator adores Mrs. Todd's botanical metaphors, which draw on her trade and familiarity with place, but Mrs. Caplin just 'looked bewildered and blank' (110) before moving on to more gossip about his odd ways. She does not understand the connection between the laurel sprig and Santin. This small moment highlights the lack of understanding available to Santin and between the women.

As much as the narrator enjoys Mrs. Todd's stories, there are hints that Mrs. Todd can be domineering and dismissive. During the procession, the narrator remains almost entirely silent, taking

in the scene and enjoying the insights offered. When the topic of Captain Littlepage comes up – a person with whom the narrator has enjoyed some moments of disclosure and discourse – she writes, “‘The stories are very interesting,’ I ventured to say’ (111). The generality of the statement and the choice of ‘ventured’, as if she is testing the waters, suggest that Mrs. Todd is not exactly open to input. Indeed, Mrs. Todd immediately shuts her down, offering her take on Captain Littlepage’s stories. The narrator characterises Mrs. Todd as knowledgeable, generous, and affectionate, but the stories reveal that those qualities are balanced by her often harsh judgement, railroading of others, and commitment to disingenuous conventions. Of a distant relative, she says, “‘I hate her just the same as I always did; but she’s got on a real pretty dress. I do try to remember that she’s Nathan’s cousin’” (112). Throughout the day, she isolates certain individuals for her disapproval, and her joy from the day comes as much from pointing to others’ flaws as from seeing beloved friends and the old folks.

The recurrence of such moments and the narrator’s final statements on Mrs. Todd’s changed demeanour reveal that Dunnet Landing is not, after all, a communal paradise:

As the feast went on, the spirits of my companion steadily rose. The excitement of an unexpectedly great occasion was a subtle stimulant to her disposition, and I could see that sometimes when Mrs. Todd had seemed limited and heavily domestic, she had simply grown sluggish for lack of proper surroundings . . . More than one face among the Bowdens showed that only opportunity and stimulus were lacking, – a narrow set of circumstances caged a fine able character and held it captive. (Jewett 2000: 113–14)

The narrator recognises that the place itself makes full, sustained communal feeling impossible. The annual Bowden reunion offers a regular but infrequent opportunity for the citizens of Dunnet Landing to be fully engaged with each other. The narrator hears ‘the words “next summer” repeated many times, though summer was still ours and the leaves were green’ (116). That they look forward to next year even in the midst of the reunion suggests that such occasions are the exception rather than the rule. Their nostalgia, which Boym would call ‘side-ways’, for the event and its people while it is still happening reveals that nostalgia can be deeply ambivalent. To say that Dunnet Landing represents a coherent, positive community prior to industrialisation and urbanisation captures only a part of the place Jewett maps.

Jewett's cycle depicts how nostalgia often embraces a false simplification and sentimentalism that the content of the stories contradicts. For instance, Hsuan L. Hsu shows that *The Country of the Pointed Firs* sets forth a 'theme of prior cosmopolitanism' in that the narrator 'seek[s] a quiet retreat from urban life' but 'Ironically, the local colorist's nostalgia for a "prelapsarian" and homogenous region that "excludes historical change" leads her to discover the sea captain's own nostalgia for a historically prior period of cosmopolitan mobility' (2005: 39–40). In her conversation with the sea captain, the narrator learns that Dunnet Landing was once more highly interconnected to international trade networks than it is at the time of her visit. The Captain's nostalgia centres on the halcyon days of wide and frequent travel. Jewett's inclusion of the tale pokes holes in the narrator's (and often, the readers') desire to imagine Dunnet Landing as a quaint, isolated place only now being introduced to large-scale economic practices. Dunnet Landing is emblematic of localities that are represented as secluded outposts, distanced from other places or marginalised by economic conditions, but nonetheless entrenched in national and international networks. As this example from Jewett's cycle suggests, a brand of critical nostalgia saturates the cycles' treatment of the eponymous settings. Jewett's cycle makes especially clear how late nineteenth-century cycles borrow from the conventions of earlier cycles, such as romantic renderings of the geographical features and the use of tourist narrators; however, they also initiate the irony, scepticism, and disjunction that figure largely in *Winesburg* and later modernist texts.

Stunted Growth, Fractured Form

The extent to which *Winesburg* departs from the earlier cycles is evident in its opening. Whereas nearly all of the earlier cycles begin with a description of the place, *Winesburg* begins with a character sketch of one the 'grotesques' that populate the town. The man's hermetic life initiates the alienation and disjunction that the stories explore. Anderson's cycle, set in the 1890s, evokes a sense that the railroad and World War I radically changed the small town. However, the elegiac tone is undercut by the recurring depictions of characters whose lives are marked by those qualities, such as alienation, dislocation, and frustrated expression, usually associated with modernism. Critical nostalgia allows the texts to have it both ways: they appeal to the sentiment that things were better once while also showing that they

are always the same. Critical nostalgia recurs in Anderson's focus on George Willard, the notion of progress, and the place itself.

The townspeople of Winesburg transfer onto George a romantic sense of youth, possibility, and lost opportunities. For example, his former schoolteacher fixates on his potential: 'Kate Swift's mind was ablaze with thoughts of George Willard. In something he had written as a school boy she thought she had recognized the spark of genius and wanted to blow on the spark' (Anderson 1999: 131). Kate is far from alone in this regard; his neighbours, parents, and peers all assign a kind of specialness to him that is tinged with nostalgia for their own misspent potential. The depiction of George in *Winesburg* suggests that communities rely on representative individuals for validation. To the extent that the development of George Willard creates an overarching thread, this cycle is akin to the *bildungsroman* or, more particularly, the *künstlerroman*. According to Franco Moretti, the development of the *bildungsroman* arose from a need for a symbol of modernity; the practitioners of the genre and their readers made youth that symbol and 'mobility' and 'interiority' its hallmark traits (1987: 3). Youth thereby renders modernity meaningful. *Winesburg* aligns with this tendency: faced with the mutability of modernity, these outposts, perceived as outdated or marginal, rely on George's growth to give meaning and stability to social conditions. However, in its emphasis on youth, *Winesburg* represents a significant departure from the earlier cycles, which focus largely, although not exclusively, on older travellers. Although George is a native of the town, his sensibilities and position as a newspaper reporter allow him to maintain the distance that Kirkland's and Jewett's emigrant narrators enjoy. The narrators' positions as participants/observers portend modernism's tendency to privilege an insider/outsider narrative voice.

Although George figures as a central organising figure in *Winesburg*, the cycle complicates his primacy through the emphasis on surrogate characters. The stories obscure the distinction between major and minor characters by having the latter function as protagonists in individual stories. For instance, Helen White, Enoch Robinson, and Seth Richmond are the protagonists of their own stories, and they often explicitly comment on why George has been singled out over them. While George appears to be a powerful unifying force, Anderson displaces some of his centrality onto the populace, questioning the possibility for textual and symbolic unity through an individual. The stories critique the aggrandisement of a single individual and challenge the

overt nostalgia often aligned with George. The sheer multiplicity of such alternatives intimates that this glorification is often arbitrary and violently minimises the potential of other promising figures, many of whom are artists (for instance, Enoch paints). Making George carry the burden of the localities' dreams parallels the burden of making him the centre of the story; the cycle suggests the caprice inherent in both. While *Winesburg* ultimately devotes more textual attention to George's acts of writing, it nonetheless shows the tenacity and choices made by those that stay and continue, often writing or painting for no audience. One effect of making minor characters the equal of the protagonist is to offer multiple answers to the simultaneous yet contradictory impulses of a modern, industrialised, and capitalistic society: a glorification of the autonomy of self and the romanticising of communal obligation and spirit.

Winesburg modifies the conventions of the *bildungsroman* by implying maturity rather than depicting it. In Anderson's cycle, the exact nature of George's maturity remains vague. Unlike the traditional *bildungsroman*, marriage does not represent a viable solution for demonstrating a commitment to social responsibility. The stories introduce and reject many suitors for George, including Helen White, Kate Swift, and Louise Trunnion; that the stories cast off so many options shows the inadequacy of this resolution. Rather than marking maturity and social commitment through an event, this cycle leads the reader to infer that maturity has taken place outside of the stories from the moments where the narrative voice most resembles George's retrospection. This extra-textual maturation represents a substantial 'gap' within the stories and solidifies that 'Important events occur off-stage' (Kelley 2000: 298). Major events often occur through implication; the specifics remain ambiguous despite their ramifications being felt in the stories.

For example, in 'Nobody Knows', an asterisk marks the major event in the story, sex between George and Louise Trunnion, about whom George has heard 'whispered tales' (Anderson 1999: 40). As he longs 'to talk to some man', the unstated events help establish George's attitudes toward women, sex, respectability, and even communication (41). While George takes heart in the fact that 'Nobody knows' (41) of his tryst, the phrase acquires ironic meaning. The mention of gossip and 'whispered tales' implies that, of course, people will know, as they already seemed to have known about Louise's past; the story depicts the power and ubiquity of gossip, the evidence for which is the fact that George listens to such hearsay. In this scene

and throughout, the cycle portrays the pitfalls of conjecture. George's misreading of this and other situations registers the impossibility of omniscience, even for a character granted special access to the lives around him.

Disjunction is central even to the explicitly paired stories 'The Strength of God' and 'The Teacher', which focus on neighbours Curtis Hartman and Kate Swift, respectively. The characters' stories take place feet apart on the same night and are sequenced together in the text. The extent to which they overlap appears to be proof of affiliation in *Winesburg*; however, disruption exists even in this highly integrated pair of stories. The characters remain oblivious to the others' struggles and desires, and the very division of the tale into two stories 'signals an important separation of consciousness' to the extent that 'Between them there is no compassion, no communication, no sense of community' (Kennedy 1995: 199). In these stories, connection is available exclusively – and only to a limited degree – to George.

However, hubris undercuts even George's affiliation. As Kate Swift sets out on an 'unpremeditated walk', the narrator reflects, 'It was as though the man and the boy, by thinking of her, had driven her forth into the wintry streets' (Anderson 1999: 128). Of this moment, Mark Whalan argues that 'the fantasy of being able to write one's own life story, and write other people in and out of it at will, is momentarily indulged in during a moment where the imperative of wish fulfilment seems to override the literary codes of realism' (2007: 54). This moment signals Anderson's move away from sheer realism into an examination of interiority usually associated with modernism. George's fantasy – that he wills Kate from her house by the force of his imagination – ironically mirrors how Kate and others write stories onto George.

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

many buried desires and with the cycle's treatment of a generalised inability to communicate. For instance, George tells his mother, 'I suppose I can't make you understand, but, oh, I wish I could' (Anderson 1999: 30). Touched by her son's attempt at disclosure, Elizabeth 'wanted to cry out with joy because of the words that had come from the lips of her son, but the expression of joy had become impossible to her' (30). Anderson depicts the almost, but never fully, realised use of language in his emphasis on the characters 'wishing' and 'crying' but never actually 'saying'. The cycle's use of passive voice and muted verbs reflects the impossibility of communication between the characters and their lack of agency. The image of words on the verge of spilling out recurs in the book, and each occurrence layers onto previous moments of buried expression constituting a cyclicity of words unspoken. Treated as discrete moments, these admissions would seem simply anomalous personal inadequacies; in their repetition, *Winesburg* constructs a metanarrative about the very problems of narration.

The autonomy of the individual stories in the Elizabeth Willard sequence and their separation within the text contributes to the disjunctive quality of the cycle. In a letter dated 15 January 1917, Anderson indicated to Waldo Frank his intentions about the placement of the Elizabeth Willard stories: 'The other story concerning the death of George Willard's mother should not, I believe, be published too closely on the heels of the first story about her' (Anderson 1917). While 'Death' is separate, closed, and autonomous as a single story, alongside 'Mother' and 'Paper Pills' it is integrated, opened, and interconnected. The genre 'is an open work consisting of closed stories. Having finished one of the stories, the reader's sense is often one of closure; having read the whole composite, his or her final impression is one of openness' (Lundén 1999: 60). On a larger level, the trilogy of stories set Elizabeth's experience alongside so many others in the town, and her individual experience resonates with previous stories. For instance, Elizabeth's death comports with a revelation had by another character, in a story in which Elizabeth does not appear. Despite a deep desire to be loved, Alice Hindman, a clerk in the Dry Goods Store, realises at the end of 'Adventure' that she and 'many people must live and die alone, even in Winesburg' (Anderson 1999: 92). Elizabeth's death fulfils this revelation. Despite these parallel moments and insights, the stories do not indicate that the characters share – or, are aware of – their common experiences.

The fissures and gaps between the stories suggest that cycles, ostensibly united by community, often rewrite the very notion of the

term itself. As early as April 1918, Anderson was calling his stories *Winesburg*, to reinforce their interconnections (Curry 1980: 239). Anderson's depiction of Winesburg's geography is, however, ambiguous, reinforcing the stories' scepticism about the town generating a sense of *gemeinschaft* and complicating any unity that may be found in place alone. Specific locations, such as Winney's Dry Goods Store, recur but are not universally or consistently featured. The stories list street names, but their proximity to one another remains unclear. In the case of Winesburg, 'Anderson's Ohio village remains indistinct. In fact, the town map included in the 1960 edition of *Winesburg* reveals that only eight specific locations are identified' (Dunn and Morris 1995: 53). The illusion of the map suggests a desire to stabilise and read place. The illustrators completed the landscape with anonymous houses, churches, storefronts, and streets, mitigating the appearance of the cycle's intentional ambiguity. The uncertainty of the geographical markers within Winesburg is so extreme that 'one is never able to visualize the town's geography' despite the mapmaker's attempt to stabilise the town's dimensions (Mann 1989: 52). The resistance to easily recognisable, legible mapping reflects a concern with disrupting any sense of geographically based *gemeinschaft*. The geography of the place remains important in modernism – in the vein of Kirkland's desire to describe 'mud-holes' – but the emphasis shifts to a more deliberately tenuous sense of locality.

Locating Modernism in Place

Anderson saw *Winesburg* as wholly new, wholly modern, but his comments on *Winesburg*'s unity and inspiration often contradicted each other. For instance, he claimed on different occasions that the cycle was inspired by his hometown of Clyde and his tenement in Chicago. In a letter to Frank of November 1916, Anderson wrote, 'I made last year a series of intensive studies of people of my home town, Clyde, Ohio. In the book I called the town Winesburg, Ohio' (1984: 4). Some twenty years later, he would write that 'Winesburg was of course no particular town. It was a mythical town. It was people. I had got the characters of the book everywhere about me, in towns in which I have lived, in the army, in factories and offices' (Anderson 1942: 295). The place of inspiration matters in so much as it helps trouble a narrative of an exclusively urban modernism. His comments indicate the richly interconnected forces of the small town and city on modernist production, which the cycle so

powerfully dramatises. As seen in the epigraph to this chapter, he would claim it as a novel and as distinctly not a novel.

Partly, problems of memory and typical modernist bombast account for these contradictions, but I think there is something deeper at work: the work itself contains contradictions. It is both like a novel and not. It is both new and not. Anderson's comments after *Winesburg* illuminate these paradoxes. He worked for years on a book, 'Mary Cochran', that would never be published. He voiced his frustrations in letters to his publisher Ben Huebsch in 1919:

One of these days I shall be able to give you the Mary Cochran book. It has tantalized me a good deal but is coming clear now. In its final form it will be like *Winesburg*, a group of tales about the life of one person but each tale will be longer and more closely related to the development of the central character. It can be published in fact as a novel if you wish.

It seems to me that in this form I have worked out something that is very flexible and that is the right instrument for me . . . No one I know has used the form as I see it and as I hope to develop it in several books. (Anderson 1919)

His comments on this new book illuminate his somewhat paradoxical conception of *Winesburg*. He distinguishes this new volume as having more unity around the central character, suggesting that the displacement of George Willard lends *Winesburg* less than novelistic unity. That 'Mary Cochran' can be published as a novel, even if it not one exactly, underscores the flexibility of *Winesburg*.² Anderson's turn away from plot to articulate instead dramatic yet fleeting moments of character revelation and the rendering of subjectivity shaped the short story for the next century, but his mode was not wholly unique.

Several individual texts influenced Anderson. The poetic cycle *Spoon River Anthology* by Edgar Lee Masters, with its emphasis on submerged voices in a small Midwestern town, reads almost like a blueprint for *Winesburg*. Indeed, Anderson read Masters's poetic cycle in a single evening (Love 1999: x). In his correspondence with Stein and in public statements, Anderson writes with great admiration for *Three Lives*, indicating that he read it well before he began writing *Winesburg*. He singles out 'Melanctha' as an exemplary model of short story form in a letter to Stein in 1924: 'Well enough I remember the first thing of your I read – in the *Three Lives* – about the nigger woman. Why it hasn't been included in

some of the lists of great short stories I don't know' (White 1972: 39). After the release of *Winesburg*, Anderson's letters indicate that Turgenev's *Sportsman Sketches* left a significant impression on him as well (Ingram 1971: 148). But it is the affinities between *Dubliners* and *Winesburg* that are most striking, especially as they set the stage for modernism in their respective contexts. According to Martha Curry, Anderson had no knowledge of *Dubliners* during the composition, citing Anderson's reading of *Ulysses* in 1920 at Frank's suggestions as his first exposure to Joyce and tracing the authors' first meeting to 1921. She concludes that 'independently of each other, James Joyce in Dublin and Trieste between 1904 and 1907 and Sherwood Anderson in Chicago between 1915 and 1916 were writing books remarkably similar in structure, narrative technique, and theme' (Curry 1980: 240).

What I find so interesting is the cycle's ongoing sense of newness: Anderson had not read Joyce yet they both produced volumes that seemed unlike what came before; Toomer, Hemingway, and Faulkner identified something uncommonly new in *Winesburg*; and titans of early twentieth-century criticism praise its innovations across many volumes. All of these pieces suggest that there were expansive changes to the literary landscape that the cycle tapped into and expressed. The structure of the cycle contributes to the sea changes in short stories that emphasise psychological complexity and round characterisation over plot and action. It paved the way for the fracturing of perspective in longer forms, such as the novel. Cycles suspend individual moments, letting them hang to develop motive and meaning, and then layer such moments one on top of another, creating meaning from accretion rather than development. Anderson's case reveals not so much the truth or definition of the genre but its power in capturing what seemed to be new experiences and ideas about storytelling.

Anderson's *Winesburg* typifies the modernist blockbusters that we most often associate with the cycle. The sheer abundance of place-centred cycles in US modernism testifies to the influence of limited locality. The three narratives of Stein's *Three Lives* are all set in a town called Bridgeport. Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County serves as the setting for several of his cycles, including *The Unvanquished* (1938) and *Go Down, Moses*, as well as many of his works that straddle the line between novel and cycle. The small Mississippi town of Morgana provides the setting for Eudora Welty's *The Golden Apples* (1949). Steinbeck returns again and again to Californian towns in his four cycles: *Pastures of Heaven* (1932), *The Red Pony* (1933), *Tortilla Flat* (1935), and *Cannery Row* (1945). In addition to these,

there are also those works that employ some level of limited locality on the borders of the cycle, such as Toomer's *Cane* (1923) and Langston Hughes's *The Ways of White Folks* (1934). Cycles set in urban centres tend to focus on a single area, as in Waldo Frank's *City Block* (1922). Although such cycles are set in urban spaces, they stake out a similarly limited geography within the cities, and the characteristics common to village narratives remain.

Susan Hegeman observes that a preoccupation with place denotes a particularly national form of US modernism. Given

the geographic context of the cultural great divide, we may now . . . see how often its interesting producers addressed, in similarly geographic terms, the paradoxes and unevenness of America's progress toward modernization. Willa Cather, W. E. B. Du Bois, William Faulkner, Zora Neale Hurston, William Carlos Williams, and many others may be said to have followed Pound's injunction to 'make it new' *within* the context of what might be described as the provincial, and the geographically and culturally marginal. (Hegeman 1999: 23)

Of the authors Hegeman lists, the works that concern the aforementioned geographic locales tend to be in cyclical forms, if not short story cycles exactly. For instance, Cather's *My Ántonia* (1918), although more highly integrated than a short story cycle, consists of a framed narrative and five stories that create a composite view of the Nebraska frontier. In blending of essay, history, anthropology, and story, Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) descends from the sketch tradition. Likewise, Hurston's *Eatonville Anthology* (1926) consists of anecdotes and character descriptions of the small Florida town. Williams's poetic cycle, *Paterson*, stands as one of the most prominent locality-based modernist texts. Composed of a mix of prose, poetry, history, and drama, the cyclical texts to which Hegeman refers contain distinct parts, which, when taken together, constitute a whorl with place at the centre.

The sense of alienation that characterises *Winesburg* and its modernist cohort parallels the earliest cycles' depiction of the struggle between the narrator and his or her community. The emphasis on place and shared experiences evokes questions about the possibilities for sympathy and community. The stories emphasise the promise of being on the inside in such localities even as they treat how much more keenly felt and dramatic exclusion can be in such tight settings. These tensions are not unique to either regionalism or modernism but are indeed central to both. Scott Herring argues

that ‘when scholars consider the role of regionalism in modern twentieth-century literatures’ they ‘stereotypically relegate it to singular case studies’ (2009: 3). This emphasis on singularity results from a general debasement of regionalism, often advocated by the modernists themselves. This brand of modernism ‘likes to think that it has uprooted itself from provincialism as a way of life and the provincial as a geographic entity when it leaves any pretty how town behind’ (Herring 2009: 2–3).

The preponderance of locality among modernist cycles makes clear that far from leaving the province, these localities are central to their modernist practices. Although some modernist texts positioned their innovation as a revolt from such places, they did so in the very terms and preoccupations of the earlier period. Short story cycles linked by a common setting express a deep ambivalence about the possibility of locality forging a sense of positive community. Cycles suggest that this anxiety about loss of community begins at the moment of settlement. After all, establishing something, such as a neighbourhood, a town, or a nation, necessitates knowing that it is impermanent. Even if doing so is futile, the sheer attempt to disentangle the web of lives and map these places is a critically nostalgic gesture, as it pays homage to and tarnishes localities such as Montacute, Dunnet Landing, and Winesburg.

Notes

1. For more on Hawthorne’s early experiments in the form and his thoughts on literary reputation, see Melinda Ponder’s *Hawthorne’s Early Narrative Art* (1990) and Millicent Bell’s introduction to *New Essays on Hawthorne’s Major Tales* (1993).
2. For an extended treatment of Anderson’s correspondence and composition in this period, see Martha Curry’s ‘Sherwood Anderson and James Joyce’ (1980). For more on the Chicago connection, see chapter 9 of Tim Spears’s *Chicago Dreaming: Midwesterners and the City, 1871–1919* (2005).