



AFRICAN, NATIVE, AND JEWISH  
AMERICAN LITERATURE AND THE  
RESHAPING OF MODERNISM

ALICIA A. KENT



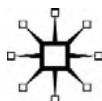
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Literature and the Reshaping of  
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Alicia A. Kent, PhD

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## Introduction

*Let us go then, you and I  
As the evening is spread out against the sky  
Like a patient etherized upon a table.*

—T. S. Eliot, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”

*Come,  
Let us roam the night together  
Singing.*

—Langston Hughes, “Harlem Night Song”

So begin two poems of the early twentieth century, one by a principal Modernist and one by a celebrated writer of the Harlem Renaissance, with a call to go out into the night. “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (1915), seen by many critics as the first full-fledged Modernist poem in English, begins with an invitation to go out into the night, the journey framed by the majestic beauty of the evening sky. The elegance of a rhyming couplet reinforces this splendor. But the beauty is abruptly undercut by the grotesque image of a patient etherized on a table, near dead, like the world that T. S. Eliot’s poem will go on to explore.

Langston Hughes’s poem “Harlem Night Song” (1926) begins with a similar invitation to join the speaker on an evening journey, but unlike Eliot’s speaker, Hughes’s singer celebrates the night. “Together” they will roam the night singing, providing a sharp contrast to the lonely patient on the table. In the next single-line stanza of Hughes’s poem, the speaker calls out “I love you” to a lover as well as to Harlem and the night. Eliot’s image of the modern city is barren

and ugly (it is “like a tedious argument”), while Hughes’s image celebrates the vibrancy of Harlem where “Down the street / A band is playing.” The speaker sings “Across / The Harlem roof-tops,” inviting a connection to Walt Whitman’s celebration of song, self, and America: “I sound my barbaric yawp over the rooftops of the world.” The unrhymed syncopated rhythm of varying lengths in “Night Song” contrasts with the mocking singsong nursery rhyme rhythm of “Prufrock,” in which “women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo.” Hughes’s poem ends with “singing,” celebrating the speaker’s linguistic ability to find his way into the world. Eliot’s poem ends by nullifying the opening invitation to go somewhere, anywhere. Instead, Prufrock waits and does nothing. Indecisiveness paralyzes Prufrock like the patient etherized on the table, while the speaker of “Harlem Night Song” enacts the very singing he invites his lover to share.

Reading these two poems alongside one another reveals an intertextual dialogue about the meanings of modernity, including both poets’ formal experimentalism, their thematic focus on the modern city, and their interest in movement and travel, signaled by the two poems’ opening invitations to take a journey into the night. But the differences are just as noteworthy and reflect different artistic responses to the socio-historical conditions of the early twentieth century. Eliot emphasizes nostalgia for an ancient classical past that no longer shores up the ruins of the modern, fragmented world, while Hughes insists on tying his experimentalism to African American forms and urban rhythms to celebrate the everyday beauty of the people and of Harlem. These divergences register as a call for a more comparative look at modernity, one that examines the meanings of modernity not only for those sanctioned as Modernist but for those considered outside of the early-twentieth-century literary movement in the United States. Such an approach offers the opportunity to develop a more historically and culturally inclusive understanding of the modern era.<sup>1</sup>

This book provides such a comparative examination of modernity within the United States. *African, Native, and Jewish American Literature and the Reshaping of Modernism* focuses on what modernity would look like when viewed from the vantage point of those cultures labeled “primitive,” “traditional,” “old world,” or to borrow Paul Gilroy’s phrase, the “countercultures of modernity” (*Black Atlantic*). In recent years, scholars of feminist, ethnic, and postcolonial studies have begun to offer a more detailed understanding of the

social and cultural expressions through which modern identities have been constructed.<sup>2</sup> Joining the effort to reassess modernism, I examine the relationships of three cultural groups—African Americans, Native Americans, and Jewish Americans—to modernity in order to understand the ways writers of different cultures within the United States negotiate, contest, and ultimately reshape modernity. My book, part of an ongoing shift in Modernist studies, joins a growing effort to see modernist writers as part of a broader cultural and literary landscape. Following Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s call, I seek to participate in “moving the centre” to “a pluralism of centres, themselves being equally legitimate locations of the human imagination” (8), for literary scholars have much to learn by “opening out the mainstream to take in other streams.”

Writers and literary critics have defined modernity as the historical and cultural conditions of the early twentieth century, a particular cultural moment of breaking with the past.<sup>3</sup> As Michel Foucault describes it, modernity is “a break with tradition, a feeling of novelty, of vertigo in the face of the passing moment” (39). Admitting that the definition of modernity is as fleeting as the feeling of modernity itself, I define modernity in this book as the landscape resulting from the changing epistemological, economic, political, and social conditions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a particular relationship to time and space shaped by the material conditions of the turn-of-the-century period of roughly 1880 to 1940. Characterized by accelerating industrialization, the spread of capitalism, changing modes of production and consumption, rapid technological changes, increased urbanization, and massive immigration and internal migrations (both forced and chosen) from rural areas to cities, this period marks a time of tremendous social transition that led to a fundamental shift in the ways people engaged in the world and interacted with one another. While modernization was limited and uneven in its international scope, colonialism spread the goals of modernization to a wider range of peoples while simultaneously appropriating their economic resources, seen most obviously in the efforts of European nations to divide up Africa in this period in “the scramble for Africa.” The United States emerged as a colonial power in this period when, in 1898, it annexed Hawaii, seized the Philippines from Spain, won the Spanish War in Cuba, and gained control of Puerto Rico.

The increased dispersion of whole groups of people resulted in the creation of new diasporas and widespread intercultural contact among

different groups of people (Appadurai; Clifford), which in turn produced the conditions of cultural hybridity as well as racial and ethnic violence, cultural separatism, and xenophobia.<sup>4</sup> This crosscultural dynamic profoundly changed people's views about culture and produced new understandings of race and ethnicity, both of which in turn altered writers' relationships to literary form and, of specific interest for my project, led ethnic writers to experiment with genres not previously associated with ethnic writing.<sup>5</sup>

Beyond the important revisionist effort to include ethnic writers in the study of modernism, in this book I argue that the conversation about modern texts must include discussions of ethnicity. Rather than simply add ethnic writers to Modernist studies, this project calls for new methodologies, the distinction that Johnnella E. Butler makes between canon "reform" and "transformation" (8). Not just appending more writers to the Modernist canon, this endeavor requires reconsidering earlier literary criticism, periodization, and definitions. Because increased intercultural encounter is a constitutive feature of modernity, configurations of race and culture must bear on the understanding of modern literature. This book seeks to offer an alternative conceptual framework for understanding modernity as a historical moment when increased crosscultural contact, coupled with emerging ideas about cultural pluralism, produced particularly new racial and ethnic identities. This more inclusive comparative definition in turn necessitates the (re)consideration of ethnic writers in relation to one another and to Modernist writers.

In the modern effort to break from the past, African, Native, and Jewish Americans, among others, were constructed as the antithesis to modernity, the foil upon which mainstream society could define itself as modern. Many Modernist artists, anthropologists, and other scholars in the early twentieth century rendered these three ethnic groups as primitive in order to define their own position as modern. These three groups became the object onto which the modern's desire for a unified sense of self in a fragmented society could be projected. Many Modernists appropriated images and objects from cultures deemed antimodern but paradoxically turned them into the quintessence of modern art. While work on primitivism in Modernist art has often focused on the appropriation of Native American and African cultures, African Americans and Eastern European Jewish immigrants were also identified as not-modern and processed through a variety of primitivizing tropes that saw them (and others) as "a threatening horde, a faceless mass, promiscuous, breeding, inferior—at the farthest edge,

exterminatable" (18), as Marianna Torgovnick describes it. African, Native, and Jewish Americans were rendered Other, different, and exotic—either as an antidote to the ills of modernity or as an example of the failure to become modern. Some coveted these cultures as untouched and somehow untouchable by the vices of modern society, while others had the contradictory response and used their Otherness to justify their (cultural) extermination.

Constructions of African, Native, and Jewish Americans as primitive reveal less about the nature of these cultures than about the needs of those defining themselves as modern. As Torgovnick argues, "The needs of the present determine the value and nature of the primitive. The primitive does what we ask it to do. Voiceless, it lets us speak for it. It is our ventriloquist's dummy—or so we like to think. [. . .] It tells us what we want it to tell us" (9). Yet what happens when the ventriloquist's dummy speaks for itself? While Torgovnick's and other important studies of primitivism in this period have focused on representations of the Other, my work uncovers what the modern looks like when seen from the perspective of those who have been primitivized. Examining fiction by African, Native, and Jewish Americans reveals that writers from these communities developed their own strategies of self-representation, strategies that experiment with genre and narrative form to reflect the conditions of modernity specific to their cultural and racial experiences.

Important scholarship has sought to bring ethnicity and race into the conversation about modern texts, Modernism, and modernity<sup>6</sup> but has underrepresented the heightened crosscultural contact central to the modern experience. Similarly, literary criticism on early-twentieth-century writing by African, Native, and Jewish Americans has largely focused on questions of identity, survival, and assimilation, but has not explored the dynamics of intercultural encounter so integral to the understanding of modernity.<sup>7</sup> Examining these groups in relation to one another reveals cultural encounters not just between mainstream culture and its "subcultures," but also the cultural interactions, dialogue, and confrontations among three cultural groups. Such a focus expands the white/black dichotomy prevalent in American literary studies and develops an intercultural understanding of modernity, and it renders visible modernity's complex cultural matrix, to use Laura Doyle's appropriately spatial model. The recent cross-fertilization of literary and anthropological studies has produced exciting new understandings of modernity for both fields, but these studies tend to focus on anthropologists' and Modernists' representations of the Other.<sup>8</sup> By



contrast, in this book I put at the center the literary responses of those who have been primitivized and anthropologized. I suggest that it is crucial to reposition the scholarly endeavor this way in order to see from the perspective of peoples who historically have been the subjects of anthropology and of Modernist appropriation, and to hear the responses of those who have been represented. Rather than examine representations of these three ethnic groups in modernist writing, in this study I focus on the ethnic writers themselves in an effort to bring ethnicity and race into the conversation about modern texts.

The Modernist period of radical changes in literary form is simultaneously marked by radical demographic changes, events that Modernist artists often disregard: the Great Migration of 1910–30, when over one million southern African Americans migrated to northern cities; the dissolution of Indian lands in the 1887 Dawes General Allotment Act; the closing of the American frontier in American consciousness<sup>9</sup> following the end of the “Indian Wars,” punctuated by the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890; and the great influx of immigration from Eastern Europe between 1880 to 1920, when more than two million Jews immigrated to the United States. For the three ethnic groups most directly affected by these events, the modern era was experienced as a period of homelessness and dislocation, as well as escape and freedom, and while these experiences resulted from different historico-cultural contexts, they fundamentally shaped the artistic response of African, Native, and Jewish writers in this period. The increase in migration, coupled with new meanings of race and ethnicity, meant that African, Native, and Jewish Americans experienced the phenomenon of the modern not only as a temporal break but also as a physical dislocation. For all three groups—African Americans as they migrated to new places within the United States to ensure their safety, Native Americans, as they were dispossessed of their homelands and dispersed throughout the United States, and Jews, as they left Eastern Europe to escape the antisemitism there—the distinction between the past and present was understood in terms of geographic movement as they left one place and moved to another.

For these three groups, the response to the break from the past occurred on multiple planes: the spatial plane, as they located a new sense of home and identity away from previous homelands; the temporal plane, as they repaired a break with a past that mainstream American culture had sought to repress; and the rhetorical plane, as they moved increasingly from writing autobiographical accounts to

writing fiction—particularly novels that experiment with the boundaries of genre. The genre movement from autobiography to fiction serves as a kind of literary experimentalism that enacts, figuratively and formally, the heightened migration these cultural groups experienced. Instead of examining themes of migration in literary texts or characters who migrate in ethnic literature, I focus in this book on the politics of genre choice in six novels—Charles Chesnutt’s *The Marrow of Tradition*, Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Mourning Dove’s *Cogewea*, *The Half-Blood*, D’Arcy McNickle’s *The Surrounded*, Abraham Cahan’s *The Rise of David Levinsky*, and Anzia Yezierska’s *Bread Givers*—to understand the formalist response that their rhetorical movement constitutes.

Literary critics have done much important work to examine the thematic representations of migration, particularly in African American literature,<sup>10</sup> but such studies have not explored the formal and aesthetic experimentation that migration occasioned. Rather than offer a broad survey of literary representations of the migratory experience for one cultural group, this book focuses on six exemplary, if not representative, novels that illustrate not only thematic but also genre movement. While migration and physical movement affected all of the writers examined here, in this project I am less interested in their biographical experiences than in exploring their experimentalism with literary forms, which I see as a mimetic response to the broader increase in movement faced by African, Native, and Jewish Americans and the concomitant emergence of ideas about cultural relativism. Through their fiction these writers provide an alternative poetic aesthetic to Ezra Pound’s “make it new”<sup>11</sup> campaign to reform poetic diction away from the emotionalism and insularity of the Victorian era, and they instead offer representational strategies that draw on different literary and linguistic traditions.

The experience of exile for many Modernist writers was often an individual response to the conditions of modernity. But the mass migration that has defined the modern era for the three groups examined here was a different experience altogether: Americans of African descent survived the Middle Passage, the move out of slavery, and migration out of the South to escape poverty, confinement, and racial violence; Jews immigrated to escape poverty and antisemitic persecution; and Native peoples endured forced migration followed by confinement on reservations. The definition of modernity for African, Native, and Jewish Americans changes from travel abroad and individual exile to an experience of migration and upheaval, one encapsulated

by Eliot's call to "go" versus Hughes's call to "roam" in the opening poems of this chapter. Travel implies a beginning and end, a site of departure with the promise of an eventual return and homecoming. Migration does not include this sense of return, as Iain Chambers points out:

Migrancy, on the contrary, involves a movement in which neither the points of a departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain. It calls for a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation. Always in transit, the promise of a homecoming—completing the story, domesticating the detour—becomes an impossibility. (5)

Migrancy radically changes one's relationship to home. "Home is the place where when you have to go there / They have to take you in," Robert Frost wrote in his 1914 long poem, "The Death of the Hired Man." By contrast, for these three groups, home was not a constant, and modernity meant the inability to return home, making the nostalgia of many Modernists an impossible project.<sup>12</sup>

While not all Euro-American writers of this period experienced nostalgia, the self-imposed homelessness and chosen exile of many Modernists still contained the possibility of a return to home, even if a return was not wanted. By contrast, most Jewish American immigrants could not return to the poverty and antisemitism of Eastern Europe, and many African Americans could not return to the violence and confinement of the South. For most Native Americans, a physical return home became an absolute impossibility: the US Government had forcibly removed them from their land and replaced it with a small, often substandard plot of individually owned land while opening up Indian lands for Euro-American settlement. The final decade of the nineteenth century marks a particularly striking convergence of these experiences. African Americans faced an upsurge in violence in what historians have called "the racial nadir"; the enormous emigration of Jews from Eastern Europe began in this period; Native Americans saw the end of Indian Territory (a portion of the United States preserved for Indians) with the establishment of the territory of Oklahoma in 1890, the same year demographers locate the population nadir of Native Americans.

One of the most salient effects of their geographic dispersal was the contact with other cultures and the subsequent changes in ideas about cultural pluralism this contact brought. African, Native, and Jewish Americans came into increasing contact not only with Euro-Americans

in this period but also with each other, as well as with other American cultural groups and foreign cultures (for those who traveled abroad). This period saw unprecedented social and physical movement in American society as people moved in social class and from agricultural to urban areas. The nation experienced a tremendous population growth, spurred in large part by the increased immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe and other regions. By 1910 one third of the American population was either foreign-born or had at least one parent who was. America was becoming an industrialized and urban nation as people moved out of agricultural areas and into urban centers. In 1880 half of the US workforce was in agriculture, but by 1920 only about a quarter worked in agriculture. These internal migrations, coupled with the influx of immigrants, radically changed the face of the American city. Americans increasingly had more direct contact with the three groups examined here, and few Americans by this point could fail to see that the United States was a country of many cultures and races.

Of course, crosscultural contact is neither a new phenomenon nor the sole province of the modern era. But the late nineteenth century marks the beginning of the period when Americans acknowledged the nation's cultural diversity. As Susan Mizruchi argues, "This was the era of America's self-consciousness about its extraordinary diversity—the era, that is, of its multicultural becoming—and rising rates of immigration and growing perceptions of the world's interconnectedness served daily assault on the forces of parochialism" (39). This awareness led to fundamentally new definitions of race and culture and spurred the production of new ethnic identities in American society. For African, Native, and Jewish Americans in particular, issues of homelessness, dislocation, movement, and travel and the resulting hybridity, assimilation, and crosscultural violence became central to the modern experience.

The increased contact, both locally within the nation's borders and globally through colonialism, led to new ideas about the self in relation to the Other that markedly altered the seemingly naturalized categories of race and ethnicity. As part of broader ontological changes occasioned by the rapid changes of modernity, conceptions about the interactions among people underwent significant revision in this period.<sup>13</sup> Theories of a racial hierarchy, which found justification in earlier Darwinian theories of evolution (even as Charles Darwin insisted his theories did not explain differences in human beings), led to the newly developing field of eugenics, which argued

that differences among groups of people were based on biological (racial) characteristics.

Yet this period simultaneously saw a re-evaluation of these racist beliefs. At the end of the nineteenth century, the newly emerging fields of anthropology and sociology put forth the concept of culture and made possible the notion of “cultures,” rather than an evolutionary model that placed light-skinned Europeans above other supposedly less-developed darker-skinned racial groups. Franz Boas, a leading figure of these revolutionary changes, highlighted this shift in a 1907 lecture: “Anthropology’s most significant contribution is the notion of cultural relativism in which civilization is not deemed more superior than other cultures” (*Shaping* 280–81).<sup>14</sup> African, Native, and Jewish Americans all became the subjects of study in anthropology’s efforts to dismantle the evolutionary hierarchy. Coupled with increased intercultural contact, these changes in perceptions about race and ethnicity constitute a defining aspect of modernity and become even further magnified in postmodernity. Werner Sollors suggests this point in his foundational work *Beyond Ethnicity*: “Instead of looking at various ethnic traditions as merely growing from very parochial beginnings to modernist assimilation, we may also see ethnic identification itself as a modern phenomenon” (245). The migrations experienced and narrated by these authors occurred at a particular historical moment when new racial and ethnic identities were being produced, and the intersection of these phenomena imbricates these writers in modernism.

On a very literal level, migration meant these cultural groups increasingly came into contact with one another in the ghettos of America’s quickly growing cities, in the settlement houses that sought to assimilate outsiders, in schools, at jobs (these groups were concentrated in “unskilled” manual labor jobs in cities), and in the shared battles against oppression and struggles for civil rights. Migration also brought increased clashes among racial, cultural, and ethnic groups, and this period saw an increase in racial riots and lynchings even as it simultaneously saw the spread of new hybrid forms of entertainment, such as jazz and the vaudeville stage, both of which drew from a wide range of cultures from within and outside the United States. With the growth of jazz, considered by some as the first uniquely American musical form, American popular culture itself became increasingly hybrid.

The spread of these new cultural expressions suggests that intercultural contact occurred intertextually as well, if not always through

direct contact. Throughout the nineteenth century, popular stage representations yoked together these three groups. Minstrel performances combined musical forms from African American, Irish, European, and Euro-American cultures and provided social commentary on African Americans, Native Americans, and Jewish Americans, as well as other groups including the Chinese, Irish, and German (Toll). Even as the minstrel show (as an organized stage performance) began to fade in popularity by the end of the nineteenth century, Americans continued to consume these groups as exotic ethnic Others through other forms of popular entertainment, including zoos, world's fairs, circuses, and vaudeville shows—what Lori Jirousek calls “spectacle ethnography” (26). These cultural groups read about one another in the growing newspaper accounts of the period, saw representations of a variety of ethnic Others in political cartoons and photographs, encountered one another in celluloid form in movies, and consumed nonfiction and fiction increasingly produced about and then by writers from these three groups.<sup>15</sup>

While the increased exposure through mass media introduced different cultural groups to one another on a broader scale, it also reinforced longstanding stereotypes and caricatures and dispersed those images to a wider audience. The first feature-length film to be produced, *Birth of a Nation* (1915), for example, perpetuated the notion that black men were savage rapists of innocent white women. While not all such representations were as virulent as *Birth of a Nation*, many Euro-Americans first encountered other races, particularly Native Americans and Jewish immigrants, through film in highly stereotypical and often racist portrayals. Notably, the first major American film to use synchronized sound (i.e., the first “talkie”), *The Jazz Singer* (1927), exposed Americans to Jewish American culture while simultaneously helping spread racist caricatures of African Americans, seen in Al Jolson's portrayal of a second-generation Jewish man's efforts to break from the old world values of his father; he made his break from the past through blackface performances.

Particularly in this period, Native, African, and Jewish Americans were racialized in the debate about what it meant to be American. These three groups were seen either as a “problem” or “question” the nation needed to solve, or a “case” to be studied in defining itself. As Walter Benn Michaels has argued, America defined itself in terms of a racialized family in this period, excluding those who were seen as not white. Much like African and Native Americans, Jews in the late nineteenth century were seen as a distinct nonwhite race (as Orientals,

Semites, or Hebrews), inferior to Euro-Americans, and excluded from membership in the national family.<sup>16</sup> Nativist arguments attempted to exclude Jewish Americans on the basis that they were foreign-born and racial Others, and hence un-American. At the same time, African Americans were denied the full civil rights of American citizenship because they were seen as not American due to racial inferiority. Conversely, while many Indian tribes continued to maintain their status as separate and sovereign nations, the 1924 Indian Citizenship Act attempted to subsume American Indians into American society. This effort occurred at the same time as the Immigration Restriction Act, which limited the number of immigrants to the United States based on the 1890 Census and effectively halted Jewish immigration to the United States. Hughes's poem "Likewise" in *Montage of a Dream Deferred* connects Jews to the feeling of being separated from the newly emerging American family:

Sometimes I think  
Jews must have heard  
the music of a  
dream deferred.

African, Native, and Jewish Americans all must have heard "the music of a / dream deferred."

While the historical differences are significant, the racism faced by African Americans and Native Americans in modernity is a close relative to the antisemitism that Jewish Americans experienced. Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus argue that we need to see racism and antisemitism as products of the same historical circumstances, not as existing "in two hermetically sealed historical settings" (2). The dislocation and oppression that Jewish, Native, and African Americans faced resulted from the same fundamental forces of modernity; they were the shameful by-products of the modern effort to categorize and to force a break with tradition. As Gilroy writes in his afterword to Cheyette and Marcus's collection of essays, "antisemitism and its sibling racisms cannot be reduced to peripheral features of modernity; and [. . .] their consequences cannot be explained as regrettable lapses from otherwise unblemished standards or written off as the patterns of misconduct" (296). Instead, scholars must insist on examining both forms of oppression together and as a consequence of modernity.

African, Native, and Jewish Americans faced the consequences of heightened assimilation efforts in this period. All three groups were

deemed less advanced on the evolutionary hierarchy, which ranked human beings from civilized to savage in terms of how they had progressed. Based on the Aristotelian concept of the Great Chain of Being (*scalae nature*),<sup>17</sup> the world of the nineteenth century was organized as a ladder with human beings on top, followed by animals and then by plants. This schema further divided humans into stages of development from savagery through barbarism up to civilization, which represented the highest level of human development. In an effort to force these groups to move up the evolutionary ladder and become modern, American society was preoccupied with assimilation—forcing Native Americans to adopt the English language, capitalism, and Euro-American education, and demanding that immigrants Americanize and abandon old world ways. On the other hand, the nation refused to allow African Americans to assimilate in this post-Civil War period; in 1896, *Plessy v. Ferguson* legalized the racial segregation that had long been the reality in the South, even as African American organizations sought acceptance into mainstream American society. If these groups failed to become modern, cultural erasure could be used to define them out of existence.

As a result, these three groups experienced modernity as an attempted eradication of their distinct cultural identities in the modern effort to break from history. For African Americans, oppression (seen most blatantly in the increase of lynchings and racial riots) sought to deny any sense of cultural identity that the Middle Passage and enslavement had failed to destroy. For Native Americans, forced assimilation became the accepted form of genocide after it became clear that the forces of colonization had failed to obliterate their existence. Jewish Americans faced a denial of so-called old world values that clashed with American gender, family, religious, and other social structures, and unlike African and Native Americans, Jews were increasingly criticized for moving up the hierarchy too quickly.

In response to the denial of these cultures, anthropologists worked aggressively and passionately to preserve them. In the early part of the twentieth century, the professionalization of anthropology made possible the more widespread recognition of non-European peoples as cultures and not merely as people less advanced on the evolutionary hierarchy. But in allowing itself to recognize distinct cultural forms in the wake of early-twentieth-century efforts to modernize, homogenize, Americanize, and Westernize (and now, globalize), anthropology objectified the very cultures it helped recognize. It rendered them as artifacts of the past needing to be preserved in literature and



museums, what has come to be called “salvage” anthropology. As an academic discipline, anthropology reinforced the idea that these cultures were Other, often manufacturing difference in order to justify its project (Arens, *Man-Eating Myth*). Intended to protect these cultures from extinction before the modern world obliterated them, anthropological efforts also served to fix the image of these cultures at a particular moment in time, what anthropologists now call the “ethnographic present,” negating the history of change these groups have always experienced (Clifford, “Authority”; Vine Deloria, *Custer*; Fabian; Trouillot). The concomitant development of new technologies such as photography and film, while at first seen as a solution to the limitations of translating oral cultures into writing, exacerbated the problem. The new media portrayed and thus forever preserved these cultures as traditional and unchanging and distributed these static images to a broader population.

The constructions of these groups’ cultures as nonexistent or vanishing, as primitive or foreign, required a new relationship to the past. Rather than assimilate to American culture or disappear as “salvage” anthropologists expected them to, these groups asserted a new sense of their cultures that incorporated the changes they experienced in modernity. African Americans responded by reclaiming a past that celebrated the very forms American society had deemed not modern (e.g., Negro spirituals and folklore) in order to articulate the African influences within American culture. Conversely, Jewish Americans attempted to find what America meant within a broader Jewish transnational culture and history (Wald, “Crucibles”). Many Jews attempted to embrace a new home while holding on to a continued sense of diasporic identity, offering a blend of American and old world ways with different degrees of both elements. Native Americans largely rejected both of these responses; instead of trying to find Indian contributions to American culture or the American contribution to Indian cultures, they attempted to carve out a separate place for Native Americans distinct from, albeit affected by, American society. The efforts to create a new relationship to the past led all three communities to cultural renaissances, including the Harlem Renaissance, the Yiddish theater movement, and the early stages of a Native American literary renaissance.

In reconstructing the past, these communities each formed a sense of a collective diasporic identity, a deterritorialized communal identity that links people based not on racial or geographic affiliation but rather on a sense of a shared and ongoing history of displacement, as

James Clifford defines it (*Routes*).<sup>18</sup> Through crosscultural contact, each group formed and solidified its sense of an ethnic culture. For Native Americans, the formation of a pan-tribal identity was, ironically and unintentionally, an outgrowth of the boarding school experience where Native Americans from many different tribes encountered one another. For African Americans, the earlier experiences of forced removal from Africa and enslavement, followed by the collective experience of the Great Migration, led to the creation of a diasporic African American identity. This identity crossed African tribal and language lines and later a variety of southern affiliations and united people in the effort to recreate ties to the past. Jews in Eastern Europe had already created a shared secular Yiddish culture that negotiated regional and local differences; called *Yiddishkeit*, it grew out of segregation and life in the Pale of Settlement. For those who fled Eastern Europe and found themselves in contact with Jews of German origin, the creation of a Jewish American identity that crossed national and linguistic differences was crucial for survival in the United States.

Enabled by the formation of diasporic identities, the birth and growth of collective political movements for each of these three groups occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Pan-Indian movements and a sense of a collective, multi-tribal Indian identity, seen in the formation of the Society of American Indians in 1911, emerged in this period. It also was a time when African Americans united collectively to gain civil rights; the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded in 1909 and the National Urban League was established in 1911. African Americans also developed a growing interest in a return to Africa, spearheaded by the efforts of Marcus Garvey and his “Negro Zionism,” as some called it. The period also occasioned the construction of an immigrant Jewish identity in America. For example, Jewish labor unions developed in this period to protest poor working conditions. Zionism, which called for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine to end the diasporic wanderings of the Jews, began to take hold in America at the beginning of the twentieth century, and in 1917, the Zionist Organization of America was established.

For these groups, the modern era ushered in the negative experiences of dispersal from homelands, primitivization, scientific racism, and racial categorization, but it also brought the positive experiences of cultural renaissance, the realization of shared diasporic identities, the formation of pan-cultural movements, and the struggle for

emancipation and equality. As a result of these developments, the study of crosscultural encounter is central in efforts to understand this period, as W. E. B. Du Bois calls for in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903): “We are compelled daily to turn more and more to a conscientious study of the phenomena of race-contact,—to a study frank and fair, and not falsified and colored by our wishes or our fears” (476). The contradictory oppressions and freedoms that these cultural groups experienced are themselves the outcomes of the modern effort to deny the past and force a break with tradition.

### LITERARY EXPERIMENTALISM WITH A DIFFERENCE

The constructions of these groups as primitive and vanishing, monolithic and unchanging, or different and exotic—in short, as antimodern—inevitably shaped the rhetorical contexts into which African, Native, and Jewish American writers entered. These groups, like the Modernists, experienced a break with the past in relation to modernity, but the break was forced, required, or expected, rather than chosen or desired. For many of the Modernist artists and writers of the early twentieth century, the disorder of the modern world led to a lack of confidence in an objective, external reality and demanded a fundamental change in representation that could speak to the alienated individual of the modern world. But the Anglo and American Modernist journey to fill the void of sterile European culture, represented in the great Modernist discursive event of Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922), seems strangely incongruous with the historical experience of these three groups. The Modernist search outside Western society for an antidote to the spiritual, sexual, philosophical, and cultural bankruptcy of the modern world does not correspond with Native American efforts to recover cultural identities denied by European colonizers, African American efforts to reconstruct a link to an African past rejected by American culture, and efforts of Jewish Americans exiled from homelands to forge a new identity while still maintaining a connection to the past. While the Modernists were breaking from Victorian, bourgeois conventions, these writers were often responding to racist constructions of non-Anglo cultures, stereotypes that Hurston called “the American Museum of Unnatural History,” where all non-Anglo-Saxons are “uncomplicated stereotypes” mounted in the museum and “made of bent wires without insides”; the American Indian wears “an eternal war-bonnet”; the Jew

is heartless; and blacks “eternally shuffle, and their eyes pop and roll” (“White Publishers” 951–52).

A central argument of this project is my claim that African, Native, and Jewish American writers confronted a crisis of representation parallel to that of the Modernist writers, and, also like the Modernists, they envisioned art as a response to the fragmentation of the modern world. But for African, Native, and Jewish American writers, the crisis of representation resulted from different socio-historical circumstances and different rhetorical contexts. The question for writers from these communities was not how to respond to realism’s claim to mimetically represent reality, but how to both respond to the dislocation that modernity presented and rewrite negative constructions of these groups as unable to adapt to modernity.

The moment when Modernist artists undermined the notion of mimetic representation coincides with the very moment when African, Native, and Jewish Americans increasingly represented themselves through written expression. In particular, the modernist period saw a heightened production of novels by members of these three groups, just as Modernist writers such as Eliot scrapped the traditional novel form and just as views of race and ethnicity shifted. Scholars have linked the rise of the novel to the development of industrial capitalism and the advent of modernity with its concomitant movement of rural to urban, growth of cities, and rise of an urban culture (Lukács). For African, Native, and Jewish Americans, however, this genre was largely something to be consumed but not produced, to be the subject of but not the author of. In the nineteenth century, publishers by and large limited writers in these cultural groups to publishing poetry and autobiographies, in part because readers sought work by ethnic and immigrant writers largely to read an “authentic” account of experiences outside their own or to catch a glimpse inside exotic cultures. Many African, Native, and Jewish American writers in this period, however, resisted this genre pressure by increasingly writing fiction, with a notable rise in published novels by all three groups beginning in the 1890s. America’s transition toward “becoming multicultural” (Mizruhi) coincides with the period when American literature becomes recognizably and tangibly polyethnic. Not a coincidence, the convergence of these events—the Modernist rejection of realist literary forms, the growing acceptance of cultural pluralism, and the rise in novels written by ethnic writers—necessitates an understanding of modernity and modernism that includes multiethnic writing.

Most of these ethnic writers in the late nineteenth century followed the genre prescriptions of William Dean Howells's realism, and many wrote vernacular fiction. These were the available genres for ethnic writers, in part because they entered an American literary tradition at the moment it desperately sought to distinguish itself from British literary conventions,<sup>19</sup> and in part because they faced a pre-existing ideological framework for representing ethnic Others to mainstream readers (Harris). But their use of hybrid dialects also resulted from the increased migration and concomitant intercultural encounter of this period and fundamentally changed literature of the twentieth century. As literary critic Michael North notes, "the movement and mixture of peoples and their languages, dialects, and vernaculars is the defining condition of the literature of our time" (*Dialect* 33–34). The inclusion of dialect, in dialogue but also in the first-person narrative voice (for example, in Yeziarska's *Bread Givers*), enabled some to preserve already hybrid languages in the face of dizzying changes, even as they resisted offering a static portrait of these communities. Incorporating vernacular and folk traditions in the written form of the novel enabled these writers to resist the modernist denial of their past by blending the past with the present at the very moment of transition.

On a linguistic level as well as on the genre level, these writers negotiated between realist and Modernist forms, ethnography and fiction, historical document and novel, and oral and written expression. This genre destabilization constitutes a kind of formal experimentalism, albeit a different kind from that of many Modernist artists, one occasioned by the dislocation as well as the cultural hybridity these groups experienced. Recasting their genre movement as literary experimentalism contradicts the assumption that ethnic writing is traditional, parochial, and not modern, as Sollors notes readers often assume (*Beyond Ethnicity* 243).

For many ethnic writers in this period, however, genre signals were, and often still are, ignored, and their novels are often read as ethnographic, "real" accounts providing knowledge about the true nature of strange and different cultures.<sup>20</sup> The belief that one could read literature by non-mainstream writers to gain insight into cultural alterity can be traced to this turn-of-the-century period, which saw the concomitant rise of ethnography and American realism (Elliott). This tendency may ironically be a function of the genre choice of the novel itself. The novel's focus on the particular experiences of a particular individual in a particular time and place has led readers, since

its inception, to read novels to satisfy their desire for verisimilitude, to believe the novel provides, as Ian Watt argues, “a close correspondence between life and art” (478). Yet one of the first major European novels, Miguel de Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* (1605), provides a warning against such readings. *Don Quixote* chronicles a man who tries to literalize romances, a man who takes fiction to be fact, and as a result goes mad and lives a life of delusion. Mining texts for the factual knowledge they believe they can learn about another culture, readers of texts by ethnic writers often mimic Don Quixote’s error of confusing fact with fiction.

For example, Cahan’s *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), a novel about an immigrant Jewish man’s rise to success in America, was often considered the writer’s autobiography, even though Cahan, a lifelong socialist, was never the millionaire that his fictional Levinsky was. Similarly, many read Yeziarska’s *Bread Givers* (1925) as an autobiography or a documentary of Jewish immigrant life in New York’s Lower East Side, even after her daughter revealed that Yeziarska not only made up her fictional story but also highly exaggerated her later published autobiography *Red Ribbon on a White Horse* (1950). Critics have tried to connect and often conflate Hurston with her protagonist Janie in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). In a similar move, recent literary criticism has attempted to prove that McNickle’s novel *The Surrounded* (1936) is autobiographical, even though it takes place on the reservation that he left as a youth and to which he never returned until just before his death, in contrast to his protagonist Archilde. Even when autobiographical connections cannot be made, readers have attempted to interpret novels by ethnic writers as fact. Readers have often believed Chesnutt’s historical novel *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901) is a true account of actual historical events, even though Chesnutt changed key elements. Similarly, Mourning Dove’s editor claimed her novel *Cogewea, the Half-Blood* (1927) was a factual, historical account written by a “real” Indian.

Despite such misreadings, the writers examined in this book resisted the genre pressures to write “real” accounts and instead chose to write fiction in response to the rapid changes of modernity. The following chapters examine in more depth six particularly intriguing, if not necessarily representative, novels by African, Native and Jewish American writers. Three of the novels (one from each ethnic group)—Chesnutt’s *The Marrow of Tradition*, Mourning Dove’s *Cogewea* and Cahan’s *The Rise of David Levinsky*—were written before “the world broke in 1922 or thereabouts,” as Willa Cather put

it (qtd. in North, *Reading 1922* 3), and they provide insight into early efforts in each community to move from autobiographical writing to fiction. The later three novels (again, one from each community)—Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, McNickle's *The Surrounded*, and Yezierska's *Bread Givers*—offer more pronounced examples of literary experimentalism in their response to the racialized rhetorical contexts each writer entered.

Facing the denial of their humanity and culture, and the belief that African Americans were unable to become modern, Chesnutt and Hurston (Chapter 2) offer alternative portraits of African American culture to counter the negative portrayals of minstrelsy and the construction of racial difference. Chesnutt's historical novel examines the sites of intercultural contact—both the blending and clashing—between Euro-American and African American cultures in order to challenge the doctrine of racial differentiation used in the segregationist period to justify terrorism and violence against African Americans. Hurston, an anthropologist trained by Boas and a key figure in the Harlem Renaissance, experimented with other literary genres in her life, but fiction allowed her to move beyond Boas in order to examine sites of intercultural contact among diasporic Africans, anticipating postmodern anthropological theories about culture as a site of contact and change. While each responded to the dehumanizing forces of modernity by reclaiming representational control, Chesnutt focused on creating an African American literary tradition that would illustrate his similarity to other American writers, while Hurston responded by uncovering and preserving African American oral culture to illustrate its ability to survive the radical changes spurred by the Great Migration.

Similar to African Americans, Native Americans faced a rhetorical context that depicted them as unable to adapt to the modern while they also faced government-sponsored forced assimilation and the dispersal of Indian peoples to speed up their assumed disappearance in the modern world. Both Mourning Dove and McNickle (Chapter 3) counter these efforts by blending fictional and scientific genres and oral and written narrative forms to illustrate the adaptability of Native Americans to modernity while simultaneously maintaining the sovereignty of Indian cultures. As is the case of Hurston's novel, Mourning Dove's *Cogewea*, one of the first novels published by a Native American woman, incorporates oral stories in the written form, enabling her to resist anthropological efforts to fix Native American cultures as static and traditional. Like Chesnutt, who portrays American culture as

already changed by African Americans, Mourning Dove depicts Salishan culture as a fluid and changing blend of old and new forms; unlike Chesnutt's portrayal, Mourning Dove's portrait remains Native, even as it adapts to modernity and contact with other cultures. McNickle, an anthropologist of Indian cultures, offers a compelling negotiation of anthropological reporting, retelling of oral stories, and fictional representation in *The Surrounded* that offers alternative means of representing the oral in written form, similar to Hurston's anthropological negotiation and critique. Both Native authors examined here, however, present Indian cultures that remain distinct from mainstream American culture.

Just as Mourning Dove and McNickle adapt oral Salish stories to the written form, Cahan and Yeziarska (Chapter 4) adapt Yiddish to English in their novels for a mainstream American audience. Like Chesnutt, Cahan chose to adopt Howell's brand of realism in *The Rise of David Levinsky*. The first Eastern European Jewish immigrant to publish a novel in English, Cahan largely avoided using Yiddish or immigrant dialect in his novel in favor of standard English narration and dialogue to carve out a place for Jewish immigrants in American culture. By contrast, Yeziarska, in *Bread Givers*, interjects the popular genres of American culture with Jewish folklore, creating a hybrid novel infused with Yiddish proverbs and American expressions, Jewish customs and American practices, and most strikingly, a narrative voice that blends Yiddish syntax with English. Like Chesnutt, Yeziarska puts forth a syncretist model of the old melding with the new. Much like McNickle's effort, she also offers a formalist response to preserve this cultural blending in the wake of immigration restrictions that virtually halted Eastern European immigration in the 1920s, a move that also parallels Hurston's preservation efforts in the face of the Great Migration.

For the six writers explored here, fiction and the novel form itself became a means of (re)claiming representational control; their genre choice allowed them to offer alternative portraits that countered the dehumanizing, static images that were portrayed on the minstrel stage, perpetuated by anthropological notions of vanishing cultures, and obliterated by modernization efforts. These writers employed fiction to articulate their own theories of representation that countered modernist and anthropological efforts to construct them as not modern, even as they employed literary genres that Modernists had deemed premodern. Rather than fix cultures in an ethnographic present, as anthropological genres risk doing, these authors chose the



novel form—with its emphasis on “the development of its characters in the course of time” (Watt 471)—precisely because it discursively emphasizes diachronic change. While some of these writers (Hurston and McNickle in particular) employed the early anthropological discourses of Boas and his students, all of them used fiction as a means of countering anthropological categorization and objectification. These writers engaged in the anthropological project of cultural representation and developed strategies for writing about cultures just as anthropologists have, but they did so through fiction, paralleling Clifford Geertz’s view in *The Interpretation of Cultures* that cultural representation is an interpretive process, not a positivist scientific one.

In providing alternative means of cultural representation, these writers offer solutions for the contemporary crisis of representation occurring in anthropology today. Several writers examined in this book formally represented migratory subjectivity in their use of free indirect discourse (most notably Chesnutt, Hurston and McNickle), a modernist technique in which the narrative consciousness migrates from subjectivity to subjectivity. This literary technique allowed each novelist to enter into the consciousness of multiple characters and thus represent a range of psychological and sociological responses to modernity that neither anthropology nor minstrelsy was able to do. Their effort parallels the more recent move in anthropology to include multiple perspectives in an ethnographic document in an effort to overcome the limits of representation.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, narrative allows these writers to recontextualize their cultures as living, changing, and adapting to modernity as a response to the static portrait that anthropologists of the early twentieth century have registered. Mourning Dove, McNickle, and Hurston, for example, included oral stories within the larger context of the modern novel of return to show how traditional stories were used in the modern era. Chesnutt’s, Mourning Dove’s, McNickle’s, and Hurston’s novels focus on mixed-race protagonists to offer a portrait of their communities as always already in contact with other cultures, a move that addresses Clifford’s later critique of Boasian salvage anthropology (*Routes*).

The very form of the novel, with its focus on an individual protagonist rather than a “type,” denies the anthropological effort to generalize about an entire culture. Novelists inevitably rely on their own experiences in writing fiction; indeed each of the novels examined here shares connections with its author’s life. But in choosing to write a novel, each of these writers implicitly, and at times explicitly, makes a claim that the work is fiction, not fact, that it is individual,

not representative. As Watt argues, a primary criterion of the novel as it first developed was “truth to individual experience,” which is by definition “unique” (465). The novel form defines itself in part by its particularity and its representation of characters “as particular individuals in the contemporary social environment” (469) rather than cultural types or racial representatives. These authors’ genre choice signals that their texts are not to be confused with historical document or ethnography, even while they have imbedded those very genres within their novels. The promise of a neat, happy ending in *Cogewea*, *Bread Givers*, and even *The Marrow of Tradition* (even if each text only intimates but does not achieve a resolution within the pages of the book) and the extreme tragedy of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* signals the reader that these texts are fiction, not documentary.

Freed from the role of de facto native informant, these writers were also free to discursively imagine what could not take place in the real world. The imaginative license that fiction provides enabled these writers to create an intercultural dialogue, at least within the pages of their texts, where people of different backgrounds listen, learn, and adapt from one another. At times, crosscultural interaction occurs on the plot level, as in Hurston’s and McNickle’s novels. But the novel form itself, in contrast to anthropological or historical account, deepens this dialogism by putting different linguistic traditions in conversation with one another. As Mikhail Bakhtin has suggested, the novel is a hybrid construction, a blend of languages, styles, and utterances in a heteroglossic construct. Rather than a closed system, the novel is polyphonic and includes a mix of voices and of genres, many languages and meanings juxtaposed with one another in narrative tension. The heteroglossia of the text foregrounds the Bakhtinian notion that language consists of multiple voices, allowing the reader to hear the repressed voices alongside the hegemonic voices in a dialogic exchange.

These writers’ genre choice inserts them into an ongoing intertextual conversation with other novelists. Many of the writers examined in this book longed to be novelists from a young age, and some, most notably Chesnutt and McNickle, stated explicitly that they wanted to be a part of the American or Modernist literary traditions. In their desire to integrate themselves into literary traditions outside of their ethnic communities, all six of these writers registered a mimetic act of resistance to the production of difference so prevalent in the turn-of-the-century period, and (re)established their link to a tradition to repair the severed link to the past that modernity occasioned. To write fiction was to say “I’m human,” “I’m civilized,” and “I’m American,”

as the first Jewish American novelist Issac Mayer Wise put it in his appeal to Jewish Americans to write novels (Harap).

Each of the six novels examined here offers a different answer to the position of African, Native, and Jewish Americans in American culture and in modernity. While *Mourning Dove's* and *McNickle's* protagonists ultimately resist incorporation into American society even as they adapt to the modern, Chesnutt's and Cahan's protagonists still strive for, even if they do not fully attain, such inclusion. Hurston's and Yeziarska's protagonists offer a third response, an attempt to mix the old with the new; Sara Smolinsky in *Bread Givers* acknowledges she must blend Jewish and American cultures while Janie in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* brings the cosmopolitan to the rural.

Examining the fiction of these early-twentieth-century writers highlights not only the changes that the modern world has brought to African, Native and Jewish Americans but also reveals the ways these three groups have changed that world. Through their genre hybridity, these writers questioned, challenged, and ultimately changed the novel form itself. The novel historically developed as its own genre by defining itself against folktales (that is to say, as novel in relation to folklore, as Mary Layoun argues), but these authors experimented with literary form by incorporating folk elements into the novel. *McNickle*, in particular, altered the novel to include oral elements, discursively illustrating that the modern could adapt to include Native American cultures. *Mourning Dove* and *Hurston* similarly changed the novel to include folk elements not simply to add local color but rather to demonstrate the complexity of Native and African Americans (respectively). Still others invoked conventional narrative structures but deployed them for nontraditional ends. Both *Yeziarska* and *Mourning Dove*, for example, wrote romance novels with traditional marriage plots, but both female protagonists reject the standard ending of marriage to a Euro-American and assimilation, in favor of marriage to another culturally mixed character. *Yeziarska's* and *Cahan's* rags-to-riches novels challenge the very genre they use in their protagonists' sense of homelessness in modernity. *Mourning Dove's* western romance novel resignifies the genre to counter the static portrait of traditional Indian culture it perpetuated, while *Chesnutt's* genre blending in his realist novel demonstrates the relevance of romantic literary conventions to the modern experience of African Americans. These writers had to write within the space already constructed for them as Jews, "Injuns," and "Negroes," as primitive and unchanging, as old world and traditional, but fiction allowed

them to write their way out of those spaces and to author their way into modernity. Rather than force a break with the past in order to become modern, these writers reshaped modernism to include the old alongside the new, and in the process, they created something new out of something old.

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## African Americans: Moving from Caricatures to Creators, Charles Chesnutt and Zora Neale Hurston

*The Negro has been a man without a history because he has been considered a man without a worthy culture.*

—Arthur Schomburg, “*The Negro Digs Up His Past*” (942)

In the wake of the failures of Reconstruction, in the midst of increased violence against African Americans, and on the eve of the Harlem Renaissance, Arthur Schomburg offered this call in “The Negro Digs Up His Past” (1925): “The American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future. [. . .] History must restore what slavery took away, for it is the social damage of slavery that the present generation must repair and offset” (937–38). Schomburg, the founder of one of the world’s largest repositories of African American texts, insists that the task of African Americans in modernity is to restore, preserve, and celebrate that culture. Like Schomburg, many African Americans writing between 1880 and 1940 countered the hegemonically imposed break with the past by re-creating a link to it and preserving it at the moment it was being severed. As W. E. B. Du Bois wrote in “Criteria of Negro Art” (1926), art by African Americans “is as new as it is old and as old as new” (1002), suggesting that African American art resists the modern’s break with the past by synthesizing the past with the present.

While Modernists envisioned their revolt from the past as a break from Victorian values and epistemologies, what Paul De Man calls “a desire to wipe out whatever came earlier” (148), the break with tradition for Americans of African descent happened much earlier as a

forced break during the Middle Passage and slavery. Malcolm X captures the sense of a violent break that predated the Modernists' when he writes in his autobiography, "We didn't land on Plymouth Rock, my brothers and sisters, Plymouth Rock landed on us" (201). Africans kidnapped in the trans-Atlantic slave trade were the first "modern" subjects, experiencing the world through unparalleled dislocation and migration (Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*). Instead of discovering a New World, newly arrived Africans faced not only enslavement but also a violent denial of their subjectivity and culture. As Werner Sollors and Maria Diedrich note, "For the European the encounter with America represented human progress in history, but for the slaves it meant their expulsion from history" (50). Following the end of slavery, African Americans sought to rebuild their ties to an African past by synthesizing African and Euro-American ways,<sup>1</sup> but they would have to make it new in the wake of "their expulsion from history."

The end of the Civil War and of legalized slavery ushered in radical changes to the South, including rapid industrialization, the political upheaval of Reconstruction, and freedom for enslaved African Americans.<sup>2</sup> But the end of the war did not occasion a break with the past; it signaled only a new phase under a new name for the same old conditions of modernity for many African Americans. While the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865 decreed African Americans free, in reality many African Americans continued to live in slave-like conditions through a series of laws and practices that kept many confined in the same positions they were in before the Civil War. As soon as the Civil War ended, states in the South worked quickly to pass the Black Codes (based on the antebellum Slave Codes), which limited African Americans' freedom to speak, travel, and choose where to live—in short, to be citizens of the United States. While the federal government attempted to integrate African Americans into the larger American culture through education and the economic efforts of the Freedman's Bureau, the Black Codes forced many African Americans to limit their movement and required them to work, perpetuating slavery even after it had been abolished. By 1880, some 75 percent of African Americans in the United States lived in the South under legally sanctioned slave-like conditions (Franklin and Moss 277). While the war's end meant the modern experience for African Americans would include liberation, whites in the South responded by overtly denying African Americans that freedom.

The experience Booker T. Washington describes in his autobiography *Up from Slavery* (1901) captures the incongruity of a tentative

freedom laced with its denial. Born into slavery, Washington remembers the end of the Civil War as the “day of freedom”; it meant that African Americans could throw “off the mask” and “let it be known that the ‘freedom’ in their songs meant freedom of the body in this world” (15–16). For Washington, African Americans were physically free to remove the mask of servitude they had worn as a survival mechanism in slavery. But they also suddenly faced the conditions of modernity that they themselves had not created. At the moment of celebration, Washington realizes the responsibility of his freedom and autonomy:

The great responsibility of being free, of having charge of themselves, of having to think and plan for themselves and their children, seemed to take possession of them. [. . .] In a few hours the great questions with which the Anglo-Saxon race had been grappling for centuries had been thrown upon these people to be solved. These were the questions of a home, a living, the rearing of children, education, citizenship, and the establishment and support of churches. (17)

While people of European descent had had hundreds of years to adjust to their position in the world, African Americans faced a game of catch-up in confronting the conditions of modernity. Washington embraced this opportunity, reclaiming his independence after slavery had denied him agency, believing that he, too, could face “the great questions with which the Anglo-Saxon race had been grappling.” Washington responded by asserting his place in the American success story; he modeled his autobiography after Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography* and named himself after the founding father of America, George Washington (27). He optimistically assumed that the advent of modernity for African Americans meant their incorporation into mainstream American culture.

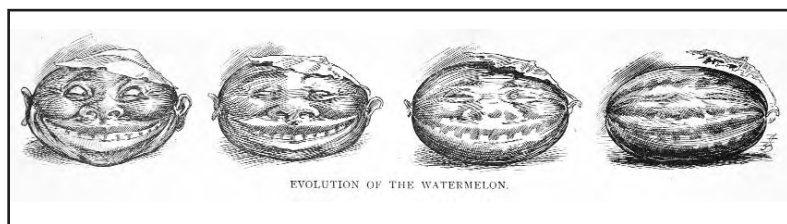
Like Washington, many African Americans assumed that freedom meant the rights of full citizenship and integration into the broader American society, only to be denied this access (Franklin and Moss). For a brief period, federal control of the Reconstruction process produced significant changes for African Americans; they gained the right to vote and elected several African Americans to state legislatures and Congress, while others held important governmental offices. In perhaps the most long-lasting effect of Reconstruction, most African Americans gained access to the public educational system, albeit a segregated one. While Reconstruction had ushered in a period of brief political gains, it ended gradually with a clear sense of failure to



accept African Americans as an integral part of American culture, and nearly a century would pass before African Americans would experience the same access to civil rights that they did during Reconstruction.

The more lasting effect of Reconstruction proved to be an increase in physical and discursive violence against African Americans. Southern whites responded to Reconstruction with increased lynchings, beatings, rapes, and murders of African Americans; indeed, this period saw the birth of many white supremacist terrorist groups. Without the institution of slavery as a means of control, whites defended the need for legal and extralegal means of control through an elaborate discursive construction that exploited white fears of retribution for four hundred years of black enslavement: whites claimed that freed slaves were savage and violent in order to justify their mimetic response of violence against African Americans. In a dynamic anthropologist Michael Taussig calls “the colonial mirror of production” (66), whites justified their own savagery by attributing savagery to African Americans, even if African Americans had not acted as such (a move that parallels the construction of Native Americans as primitive to justify their cultural genocide).

Southern whites appealed to the notion of racial differentiation, a long-held cultural doctrine that had helped justify *de jure* slavery and that was now employed to justify *de facto* slavery. The then-prevalent notion of a racialized evolutionary hierarchy helped justify African Americans’ position on the bottom rung of the social and economic ladder and to assure whites’ place at the top (see Chapter 1). An 1892 cartoon entitled “The Evolution of the Watermelon” (Figure 2.1, artist unknown) suggests that African Americans were even lower in the evolutionary hierarchy than plants and animals. Published in the weekly satirical magazine *Judge*, this overtly offensive drawing shows



**Figure 2.1** “Evolution of the Watermelon,” cartoon from *Judge*, 1892.

Photo by University of Michigan Photo Services.

a black man evolving into a watermelon, simultaneously perpetuating the stereotype that African Americans love watermelon and implying that African Americans were subhuman, even below plant life. Such carefully constructed acceptance of racial difference helped post-Civil War American legal and social systems maintain white supremacy. The landmark Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) legalized the segregation that had long been the reality, most obviously in the South but in other parts of the United States as well. Maintaining difference between the races through separate facilities became the means, in lieu of slavery, to justify white superiority and dominance.

In response, African Americans in large numbers began to resist the confinement and violence they faced in the South by leaving. In *Up From Slavery*, Washington explains that one of the first things freed slaves did at the end of the Civil War was to exercise their freedom through movement. No longer enslaved, the people, he writes, agreed that “they must leave the old plantation for at least a few days or weeks in order that they might really feel sure that they were free” (19). Between roughly 1870 and 1930, millions of African Americans migrated from southern rural areas in search of a better life. In what has come to be called the Great Migration, the largest demographic shift in American history, they migrated to northern cities (particularly New York and Philadelphia), midwestern cities (most notably Chicago and Detroit), and even western cities such as Richmond and Los Angeles, California. The Great Migration was the largest redistribution of population in the nation’s history (Marks; Rodgers) and significantly altered America’s major cities, with both positive and negative consequences.

The Great Migration began soon after the end of the Civil War,<sup>3</sup> increased significantly with the coming of World War I, and reached its crest in the 1920s. While this massive internal migration was not an organized movement, the *Chicago Defender*, a widely read African American newspaper headed by northern transplant Robert Abbott, actually called upon blacks in the South to embark on “the Great Northern Drive” on May 15, 1917. Some seven hundred thousand to one million African Americans left the South between 1917 and 1920, and another eight hundred thousand to one million left in the 1920s (Trotter, “Migration/Population” 1781). In all, more than six million African Americans left the South between 1916 and the 1960s (Rodgers 12).<sup>4</sup> This “epic relocation of a culture” (Rodgers xiii) fundamentally changed American culture and thus is a central aspect of understanding modernity, not only for African Americans but for all

Americans. Notably, however, despite its huge impact, most Modernist writers never discussed the newly arriving African American migrants when they described the modern city (Scruggs).

Part of a larger international shift from rural to urban and from agricultural to industrial (Trotter, Introduction), the Great Migration resulted from a range of economic, political, and social pressures that both pushed African Americans out of the rural South and pulled migrants to northern cities. Many sought a better way of life than the South could offer while others felt driven out by inhospitable conditions, only to find some of the same conditions replicated in the North (Rodgers; Grossman). The decision to migrate may have been a choice between two negative situations—on the one hand, violence, disenfranchisement, and segregation in the South, and on the other hand, racism, loss of home and community, and disruption of daily lives in the North. Nonetheless, migration represented an act of agency, the means to assert a sense of identity and control over one's life, an act of resistance to the confinement and violence of the South (Grossman; Rodgers; Foner and Mahoney). As Amiri Baraka notes, "It was a decision Negroes made to leave the South, not an historical imperative" (96).

To keep African Americans confined to southern rural areas, many whites responded with threats, scare tactics, and outright violence. Some tried to persuade African Americans to remain on plantations by promising improved conditions (although often not delivering on promises), but others were less subtle, making threats and enforcing vagrancy and employment laws (Franklin and Moss 279). Whites sometimes forcibly prevented African Americans from leaving the South, as announced by a front-page article in the *Chicago Defender* on March 24, 1917, "Arrests Made to Keep Labor from Going North." In this case, police beat and arrested migrants at a train station in Savannah, Georgia, for simply attempting to leave the city. The article notes, "The whites here are up in arms against the members of the Race leaving the south."

Lynchings and other racial violence reached such a peak at the turn of the century that many historians have dubbed this period the "Decades of Disappointment" and "the Nadir of Black Experience" (Gates and McKay 464). These terms contrast discordantly with the mainstream historians' name for the same period, "the Progressive Era" (and ironically invoke the population nadir for Native Americans, which demographers locate in 1890). In the final sixteen years of the nineteenth century, there were more than 2,500 lynchings

(most victims were African American); before the outbreak of World War I, there had been 1,100 more (Franklin and Moss 312). During this period, racial riots increased to the level of an “epidemic” (Franklin and Moss 313). Women faced increased sexual violence as well, and many women chose to migrate to escape rape by white as well as African American men and domestic abuse in their own families (Hine 138).<sup>5</sup> Scholars have called this turn-of-the-century period the “Great War” for African Americans because of the violence they faced (Rampersad).

World War I served as a key turning point in the transition to modernity for African Americans and served to speed up the liberating effects of the Great Migration even as it hastened the transition from rural to urban areas. The increased need for arms and supplies to support the military effort overseas and the simultaneous decrease in the supply of male labor because of military service created more opportunities for African Americans in American industry. For American and Anglo modernists, World War I marked a violent rupture from the past, the moment when optimism about humanity’s ability to achieve greatness was shattered. But for many African Americans, World War I opened up the potential for economic opportunity and a new life.

Yet while many imagined freedom in the North, this dream was often deferred. Migrants often found resistance from white urban residents, and they regularly faced residential segregation, job discrimination, and outright violence in major northern cities. African Americans increasingly found themselves confined to inner-city ghettos (a term that invokes the historical experiences of Jews), forced to pay higher rents for deteriorating housing, and unable to move to other areas of the city because of housing discrimination (Trotter, “Migration/Population”). As the number of African American migrants increased, whites left the central city, taking with them employment opportunities, industrial parks, factories and shops, and other key infrastructure (Franklin and Moss 470–72). As a result of the Great Migration, African Americans became a predominantly urban population, with 80 percent of African Americans living in cities by the 1970s (Trotter, “Migration/Population”). The great literary achievements of the Harlem Renaissance are due in part to the migration of many African Americans to Harlem and other urban centers, but the related rise of the ghetto can also be traced to the Great Migration. While the Great Migration fundamentally changed the nation, migration out of the South failed to provide African Americans with the integration into American society that many sought.

Paradoxically, the Great Migration ushered in a new phase of modernity for African Americans as one of possibilities, both immediate and deferred. During Reconstruction, the daily lives of many African Americans in the South did not substantially differ from the days of slavery, but the Great Migration fundamentally changed the lived experiences of most African Americans—those who left and those who stayed behind. The experience of migration and dislocation reshaped African Americans' engagement in the world and their sense of identity. Because of the radical change from confinement in the South, African Americans could imagine that "they or their children will live and work in places other than where they were born," as Arjun Appadurai describes a fundamental aspect of modernity (*Modernity* 6). While Appadurai is discussing post-World War II globalization, the sense of a diasporic, deterritorialized identity for African Americans can be traced earlier to the Great Migration. Migration as a means to freedom became a shared experience and a hallmark of modernity for African Americans, and it has become a central motif of modern African American novels, short stories, drama, poetry, and songs.<sup>6</sup>

The Great Migration, however, did not represent a fundamental break from southern African American culture. African Americans synthesized customs from the South and their newly acquired urban and industrial experiences. Blues, for example, served as a migrant genre that brought southern African American elements to the North and put them in contact with other Euro-American and European-influenced forms (Griffith 59). As the blues migrated North and confronted European-influenced ragtime, African Americans forged a new form, urban jazz (Griffith 56). Maintaining continuity with southern culture through blues and gospel complicates the Modernist notion of a break with tradition.

Rather, African Americans deliberately broke with the past by rejecting mainstream representations. The repudiation of dehumanizing images began as early as the first narratives by enslaved Africans before the eighteenth century but reached new levels by the end of the nineteenth century. Popular portrayals of African Americans at this time emphasized racial difference and suggested that African Americans could not make the transition into modernity. Denying African American culture, Euro-Americans sought to construct African Americans in their own image. Turn-of-the-century theatrical productions, advertisements, and political cartoons depicted African Americans as inferior to whites, portraying racist caricatures of African Americans with exaggerated lips, huge feet, bulging eyes

and uncontrolled hair, differentiating them from whites and thus justifying their differential treatment in American society. Similarly, literature, particularly in the “plantation tradition,” lampooned African Americans as absurd in their efforts to be white and backward in their ignorant, rural ways. While this satire appeared as early as the 1830s, the post-Reconstruction permutation upheld an idyllic vision of the pre-Civil War plantation in which benevolent white paternalism oversaw happy and inferior African American laborers.

The songbook cover for a popular musical hit in 1896 (Figure 2.2), the same year as the *Plessy* decision, reveals the widespread dispersal of this image.<sup>7</sup> The black, white, and red cover art for “All



**Figure 2.2** Songbook cover of “All Coons Look Alike to Me,” 1896.

Songbook cover originally published by M. Witmark & Sons, 1896. Reprinted with permission from Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Music A-8985.

Coons Look Alike to Me” is obviously objectionable because of its dehumanizing stereotypes of African Americans. Beyond this objectification, the drawing constructs interracial difference (even as it represents caricatures of only one race). This picture intimates a difference between Euro-Americans and African Americans by emphasizing the similarity among African Americans: all African Americans “look alike,” that is to say, all are alike in that they are not like Euro-Americans. The African Americans portrayed here—as theatrical productions, popular literature, advertisements, and children’s toys often portrayed them—are made to look ludicrous in their imitations of upper-class Euro-American manners and dress. These dandies dress like Euro-Americans in tuxedos, spectacles, and evening gowns, yet they look absurd with their over-emphasized lips, gaping mouths, and bulging eyes, the very elements that make them “look alike” yet *not* like Euro-Americans. The image serves to ridicule African Americans by denying their ability to imitate Euro-American culture and suggests that they can never be like other Americans. The emphasis on *intraracial* similarity depends upon the construction of *interracial* difference.

Nineteenth century minstrelsy, the source of this song, similarly worked to deny the humanity of African Americans by portraying them as ridiculously inept imitators of Euro-Americans and satirizing their failure to become modern. The stock character of Zip Coon (and later Dandy Jim) depicted a ludicrous imitation of the Euro-American urban dweller and intimated the inability of African Americans to make the transition into modernity. Emerging in the United States in the 1820s, minstrel shows, the first distinctly American form of stage entertainment, began primarily as blackface musical performances by Euro-Americans imitating the supposed ways of African Americans, wearing burnt cork on their faces and drawing exaggerated lips often emphasized with red. By the middle of the nineteenth century, minstrel shows had become the most popular form of entertainment in American culture, and their popularity gradually declined at the end of the nineteenth century. While white imitators dominated the early period of minstrelsy performances, after the Civil War African Americans began performing in minstrel shows, also wearing blackface to exaggerate their features and to look more like whites trying to look like African Americans. By the beginning of the twentieth century, African Americans found that they had to wear blackface in order to perform on the mainstream American stage (Huggins).

While these blackface performances sought to emphasize racial difference through exaggerated caricature, they ironically relied on a



complex affair of mimicry in which whites imitated African Americans who in turn imitated whites—an imitation of an imitation (Lott; Toll).<sup>8</sup> And while blackface performance was intended to illustrate white superiority by satirizing African Americans as backward and ignorant, it simultaneously relied on imitating and appropriating African American cultural forms, “an affair of copies and originals, theft and love” (Lott 40).

Blackface minstrelsy, according to popular lore, began with a white man imitating the performance of an African American man and appropriating it for his own success. As the story goes, in 1828 Thomas D. Rice performed a song-and-dance routine “Jump Jim Crow,” in which he imitated a crippled African American stablehand singing and dancing. Rice claimed to be impersonating a “real” African American, dubbed Jim Crow, even telling people he had bought the man’s clothes for his costume. With this act he became a stage star in the United States and Europe, while the stablehand did not profit from the performance, and even his identity remains unclear today. Soon after Rice’s imitation, whites wearing blackface began performing imitations of Rice’s imitation of Jim Crow. Adding another layer of imitation, by the 1860s, African Americans wearing blackface performed imitations of whites’ imitations of Rice’s imitations of Jim Crow, in an endless chain of signifiers that have now lost their original signified. The song “Jump Jim Crow” itself highlights the mimetic aspect of minstrelsy. In commanding the viewer to “do jis so” and imitate the performer every time he “weel[s] about / And jump[s] Jim Crow,” the song demands its white audience to imitate the white man who is imitating an African American man. The song becomes a metacommentary on the imitation central to minstrelsy.

The minstrel show became a safe place for Euro-Americans to learn, or so they believed, about African Americans from a distance. Many gained their primary exposure to (what they presumed to be) African American culture through blackface performances. Of course, what Euro-Americans saw on the stage had little relation to the actual lived experience and culture of African Americans. Despite the story of Rice’s impersonation of an African American, minstrel performances did not contain “authentic” elements of African American culture; instead, whites projected their fantasies and wishes of anti-Victorian values onto African Americans and performed that image (Huggins). Blackface minstrelsy reveals more about its white audiences than it does about African Americans, as Ralph Ellison argues in “Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke” (*Shadow and Act*).



The desire to gain access to African American culture similarly propelled a growing ethnographic interest in African American culture. The period from the 1890s to the 1930s saw intense efforts to preserve and recover African American folk culture before, many feared, it disappeared in the wake of modernization, the movement from rural to urban, and the increasing intercultural contact it occasioned. In history and the newly burgeoning field of anthropology, fascination with African American culture resulted in a plethora of studies, and efforts to preserve the stories and dances of what many saw as a dying culture, an analogous move to the salvage project of Native American cultures in the same period. Writers, painters, and musicians further spread this fascination, as seen in the growing production and consumption of primitivist expression, which exoticized folk cultures and attempted to mine them for aspects presumed missing from Western culture.<sup>9</sup> This ethnographic romanticism paradoxically occurred at the same time as efforts to deny the existence of African American culture. As Eric Sundquist notes, “The 1890s witnessed the coalescence of seemingly polar contradictions in white racial attitudes. America, white as well as black, became engrossed in the preservation of black folk life at the same time harsh forms of segregation were being enacted” (286).

This discursive context, coupled with the massive dislocation caused by increased violence and the Great Migration, fostered the conditions for a crisis of representation, but one that created a particular relationship to representation for African Americans. African Americans had to contend with a preexisting dehumanizing and racist discourse, the always already constructed context of minstrelsy, dialect writing, and primitivism. As the unnamed fictionalized narrator in James Weldon Johnson’s *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912) points out, the image of “a happy-go-lucky, laughing, shuffling, banjo-picking being” (123) dominated mainstream readers’ views of African Americans: “Indeed, [these images] form an ideal and exclusive literary concept of the American Negro to such an extent that it is almost impossible to get the reading public to recognize him in any other setting” (122).

In response to the need for a multifaceted portrayal, many African Americans sought to (re)claim representational control of themselves by themselves, developing alternative representational strategies and narrative forms. After the Civil War, African Americans variously asserted themselves in order to illustrate their humanity—establishing newspapers, civil organizations, and schools, and publishing scholarly

works, biographies, and autobiographies in increasing numbers (Franklin and Moss). The desire “to register a public black voice in Western letters” (170), as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., discusses in *The Signifying Monkey*, preoccupied African Americans, first during slavery, but even more so afterward from the Reconstruction through the Harlem Renaissance. By the end of the nineteenth century, African Americans published the first histories and sociological studies of African Americans by African Americans (among them Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk* [1903]). Arthur Huff Fauset, a public school teacher from Philadelphia and brother of Harlem Renaissance writer Jessie Redmon Fauset, worked under the auspices of the American Folklore Society to preserve folk materials before they disappeared in a rapidly urbanizing South, making him one of the first to document African American culture. Mainstream publications began to publish essays by African Americans, and the African American press industry emerged. By 1896, more than 150 newspapers and magazines had been founded (Gates and McKay 471).

While nonfiction speeches and essays, slave narratives, autobiographies and biographies, and historical and sociological studies dominated African Americans’ earliest publications, by the end of the nineteenth century African Americans increasingly wrote fiction, poetry, and drama and published in the major literary trends.<sup>10</sup> The growth in self-representation spurred one of the central questions of modernity for African American artists: How should they represent African American culture in the wake of its denial? They hoped to demonstrate their humanity—that is, their human-ness—by refuting the image of African American culture as the negation of Euro-American culture and instead insisting that African Americans had “a worthy culture” (to use Schomburg’s phrase). Du Bois’s Harlem Renaissance manifesto “Criteria of Negro Art” captures the dilemma succinctly: “Until the art of the black folk compels recognition they will not be rated as human” (104).

### CHARLES CHESNUTT’S ELEGY TO SYNCRETISM IN *THE MARROW OF TRADITION*

Charles Waddell Chesnutt (1858–1932) established himself as one of the earliest artists to embrace the challenge to “be rated as human” by writing fiction.<sup>11</sup> In 1880, at the age of 21, Chesnutt declared in his journal, “I think I must write a book” (Journal Entries 21). A young, recently married stenographer and principal of a normal

school in North Carolina, Chesnutt had published only one short story in a local newspaper in 1872.<sup>12</sup> Yet he felt obligated, even morally compelled, to write fiction that would establish him as the progenitor of an African American literary tradition. Several decades before the Harlem Renaissance, Chesnutt expressed a belief akin to Du Bois's,<sup>13</sup> stating in the same journal entry:

The Negro's part is to prepare himself for recognition and equality, and it is the province of literature to pen the way for him to get it—to accustom the public mind to the idea; to lead people out, imperceptibly, unconsciously, step by step, to the desired state of feeling. If I can do anything to further this work, and can see any likelihood of obtaining success in it, I would gladly devote my life to it.

Writing fiction could change the fate of African Americans and bring them the same “recognition and equality” that Euro-Americans enjoyed by suggesting that African Americans were as intelligent as Euro-Americans. Chesnutt wrote in a letter to scholar Jerome Howard in 1900, “The notion that a man with such a drop of blood can have the same intelligence, culture, aspirations, ideas, foibles, and weakness as a ‘real’ white man can’t be knocked into some with a club. [. . . But] I believe it can be surreptitiously introduced by just such a story as you know so well how to write” (qtd. in Knadler 429). Hoping to mimetically establish himself as an integral part of the American literary tradition alongside great Euro-American writers, Chesnutt published four works of fiction in rapid succession: two short story collections in 1899 (*The Conjure Woman* and *The Wife of His Youth*), followed by two novels, *The House behind the Cedars* (1900) and *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901).

While Chesnutt published fiction significantly earlier than did the other writers examined in this book, and while *The Marrow of Tradition* is far less experimental on the formal level than the other novels examined here, he represents a key figure in the historical movement of ethnic writers toward fiction as the primary means of addressing the crisis of representation. Chesnutt largely avoided anthropological and autobiographical genres, and his fiction subtly challenged the anthropological project, as Robert Hemenway argues about *The Conjure Woman* (“Functions”).<sup>14</sup> Chesnutt revealed his proclivity toward fiction rather than sociology or anthropology in his often-quoted 1880 journal entry about his dream to become an author:

Fifteen years of life in the South, in one of the most eventual eras of its history, among a people whose life is rich in the elements of romance,

under conditions calculated to stir one's soul to the very depths—I think there is here a fund of experience, a supply of material, which a skillful pen could work up with tremendous effect. (Journal Entries 21)

Rather than report on “the supply of material” as a native informant might, Chesnutt sought to turn his experiences into fiction and “work [it] up with tremendous effect” through “skillful” literary technique. Even in his most anthropological writings, Chesnutt deliberately eschewed the scientific emphasis on “authenticity” and instead claimed to write fiction from the “imagination.” In an 1899 interview in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, Chesnutt asserted, “all of my stories have been of the imagination,” except, he specifically noted, for the two short stories, “The Wife of His Youth” and “The Goophered Grapevine” (“Aboriginal Author” 102). He insisted that his short stories were not “folktales” that he had collected but rather fictionalized stories strung together in novella form and recalled by an unreliable narrator, signaling their status as fiction, not ethnography. By inserting himself into the American literary tradition, Chesnutt hoped he could demonstrate that he was just like other great American novelists regardless of race.

Chesnutt, of course, wrote nonfiction and voiced some of his most contentious views about race in political essays (see, for example, “Future American”<sup>15</sup> and “White Man”). Yet fiction provided him with a safer place to critique America's caste system. At a time when African American writers faced physical intimidation for publishing their views—Chesnutt based the plot of *The Marrow of Tradition* on the actual events of the Wilmington Racial Riots in 1898, in which whites indiscriminately attacked African Americans following the publication of an editorial by an African American<sup>16</sup>—the novel allowed him to speak unspeakable beliefs through the “cover” of his characters, a kind of “ventriloquism” (Rasmussen). Chesnutt wrote in the letter to Howard that this cover afforded him the opportunity to voice a variety of opinions while commenting “surreptitiously” on each (qtd. in Knadler 429).

Chesnutt's political message in *Marrow*, however, received criticism from readers, particularly from leading literary critic William Dean Howells, who, despite supporting Chesnutt's earlier work, attacked *Marrow* as too political and claimed that it offered an unpalatably “bitter, bitter” message of race relations.<sup>17</sup> In a short 1901 piece in the *Cleveland World*, Chesnutt defended *Marrow*'s political element as “a fair statement” of the efforts to disenfranchise African Americans (“Own View” 873). Despite the disappointing

reviews and subsequent sales of *Marrow* and his next novel, *The Colonel's Dream* (1905), Chesnutt's turn-of-the-century fiction reached a larger white audience than any fiction previously written by an African American (Gates and McKay 522). As William Andrews argues, Chesnutt was the first African American writer "to use the white-controlled mass media in service of serious social fiction on behalf of the black community" (*Literary Career* 274).<sup>18</sup>

In the case of *The Marrow of Tradition*, Chesnutt viewed the novel as a site of potential social change, a place to imagine the unimaginable. In a narrative intrusion in *Marrow*, Chesnutt writes, "In works of fiction, such men are sometimes converted. More often, in real life, they do not change their natures until they are converted into dust" (304). Ironically in this work of fiction, the violent Euro-American leader is not "converted" and dies trying to defend his white supremacist views. In *Marrow*, fiction enabled Chesnutt to critique American society at its core and to show that racial difference was a "social fiction" ("Future American" 861), a central argument he makes on the thematic as well as on the formal levels.

Chesnutt's novel challenges cultural doctrines of racial purity and "ethnic absolutism" (Gilroy 2)—notions upon which white supremacists depended during the post-Reconstruction period to justify legalized segregation and racial violence. As Chesnutt wrote in an essay published in the *Boston Evening Transcript* in 1900, just before *Marrow* was published:

The colored people are the same as the whites in religion; they have the same standards and mediums of culture, the same ideals, and the presence of the successful white race as a constant incentive to their ambition. ("Future American" 861)

In writing *Marrow*, Chesnutt uses fiction to demonstrate that Euro-Americans are "the same" as African Americans. Rather than a fixed boundary between the races, *Marrow* depicts a contact zone: a web of interactions, confrontations, and encounters where both cultures shape and reshape one another.<sup>19</sup> Chesnutt himself described the color line in 1928 as "the vaguely defined line where the two major races of the country meet" ("Remarks" 514), a shared space of intercultural interaction where culture, power, and desire circulate in multiple directions across the boundaries of the color line.

To enact this boundary blurring in *Marrow*, Chesnutt experiments with free indirect discourse in which the narrative voice travels from

the consciousness of one character to that of another.<sup>20</sup> This technique allows the narrator, and by extension the reader, figuratively to become a wide array of people, including white supremacists, moderate and militant African Americans, sympathetic Euro-Americans and accommodationist African Americans, and educated and ignorant representatives of both races. In addition to using dialogue to voice different opinions, Chesnutt enables readers to enter characters' minds and hear their thoughts from their own perspectives and on their own terms. This literary technique allows Chesnutt to "travel back and forth to a multiplicity of selves, a journey the characters themselves do not take," as Susan Stanford Friedman writes (*Mappings* 91). While Friedman is discussing *Fires in the Mirror*, Anna Deveare Smith's one-woman performance of multiple racial, ethnic, and gendered characters provides an instructive analogy for Chesnutt's narrator. Although the characters in *Marrow* do not move outside their own viewpoints, the traveling narrative voice of the novel does, bringing the reader on a journey through multiple, often competing, perspectives and opinions. By inhabiting multiple consciousnesses, the traveling narrator in *Marrow* breaks down the boundaries erected by the color line but eradicated, at least on the formal level, through Chesnutt's fiction.

Chesnutt despaired of the construction of racial difference invoked by whites to justify their violence against African Americans.<sup>21</sup> The extreme and disheartening violence, in which neighbor turns against neighbor, boss against employer, even family member against family member, becomes the overwhelming focus of the final third of *The Marrow of Tradition*. Characters that readers have followed throughout the book are burnt alive, beaten to death, and stabbed. Any hope for harmony seems dashed. *Marrow* not only denounces the racist violence but also provides a radical (in the sense of getting at the root or core) critique of the very system of difference that required violence to defend its survival.<sup>22</sup>

In *Marrow*, Chesnutt draws upon and manipulates literary conventions of the American romance novel, analogous to his manipulation of the "plantation tradition" in *The Conjure Woman*, in which Chesnutt deploys stereotypes against themselves (Werner). *Marrow*, written in the tradition of American realism and based on actual historical events, also includes a melodramatic family saga, what Susan Gillman calls an "American race melodrama," to structure the bulk of its plot. Relying on the romantic device of doubling and the race melodrama's trope of "miscegenation,"<sup>23</sup> it explores the complex

relationships—such as those between racial differences and cultural similarities, as well as domination and symbiosis—between African Americans and Euro-Americans in a racially and politically divided nation. Some see Chesnutt's turn to romance as a nostalgic glance to pre-realist writing or as an "inconsistency in his canon" (McElrath, "Why" 98). Chesnutt's use of seemingly antedated literary conventions, however, allows him to deconstruct the color line in a markedly modern hybrid of romance and realism. By emphasizing similarity, he shows that cultural interaction across the color line has had an equally long history as legal and geographic divisions have had.

Chesnutt creates African American characters whose behavior mirrors Euro-American doubles and vice versa. Early in the novel, for example, two doctors meet on a train headed south and recognize each other as old acquaintances, one the favorite student of the other. In describing the two men, the text points out that they "represented very different and yet similar types of manhood" (49). Although differing in skin color and age, both men have similar builds and are "well dressed"; they are both "men of culture." Interrupting the description, the text glosses the dynamics of this interracial encounter, providing a fitting metacommentary for the novel's project: "A celebrated traveler, after many years spent in barbarous or savage lands, has said that among all varieties of mankind the similarities are vastly more important and fundamental than the differences. Looking at these two men with the American eye, the differences would perhaps be the more striking." Only to the American eye are racial differences more significant than human similarity. Chesnutt gets at the marrow of tradition of a racialized structure based at its core on socially constructed categories of difference in order to undermine this powerful social system.

Before publishing *Marrow*, Chesnutt commented on the widespread belief in racial difference, invoking "All Coons Look Alike to Me" directly. Chesnutt told an interviewer in 1899:

The words of the negro song, "All Coons Look Alike to Me" express the sentiment of the whole people of that section [the South]. The educated man or woman, no matter what his character and ability may be, who has one-sixteenth, or one-thirty-second, or one-sixty-fourth part of African blood is counted a negro and is debarred from the privileges of a white man or woman. ("Aboriginal Author" 101)

Notably, in *Marrow*, Captain George McBane, a white supremacist and leader of the novel's massacre, invokes the notion of intraracial

similarity, remarking, "All niggers are alike" (181), only to be proven wrong as the plot unfolds and illustrates that crosscultural similarities outweigh interracial differences.

Josh, the "black giant" (309) who leads the African American defense against the massacre, finds his double in the white supremacist McBane; both men turn to violence as their means of social change. McBane, however, more appropriately fits the widely circulated image of the violent black man than does Josh. McBane is described as "brutal" (252) because he advocates the indiscriminate killing of all African Americans (250), while Josh's militancy is presented sympathetically as an understandable response to his father's murder by McBane. *Marrow* reverses the racialized stereotype, illustrating that it is the Euro-American who is "more like" the negative portrayal than the African American.

Similarly, Chesnutt uses the convention of twinning to rewrite the racialized doctrine of "true womanhood," a nineteenth-century middle-class American ideal, circulated through women's magazines, etiquette guides, and novels, according to which women were judged by virtues of purity, piety, submissiveness, and domesticity (Welter). African American women historically existed outside this construction of female respectability, which only Euro-American women could fill (Tate). In *Marrow*, Chesnutt renders an African American woman the embodiment of this ideal of femininity rather than her Euro-American sister. In this context, Chesnutt's use of twinning exposes how the color line maintains racial difference (Kawash), but it also serves to dismantle that very system of difference by emphasizing interracial similarities and thus exposing its fictionality.

The Euro-American character Olivia Carteret and the African American character Janet Miller are half-sisters, yet they resemble one another so closely that physically they appear "ez ef dey wuz twins," as Mammy Jane says (8). While these two characters are not literally twins, they share the same Euro-American father, making them appear physically the same despite their racial difference. Their phenotypical likeness is further invoked when even Dr. Miller, Janet's husband, confuses the two when Olivia comes to his door begging for help: "A lady stood there, so near the image of his own wife, whom he had just left, that for a moment he was well-nigh startled" (323). Notably, *Marrow*'s plot powerfully reverses popular depictions of interracial relationships by revealing that Olivia's father loved Janet's mother, and he unmasks the reality of American life in which mixed marriages were not recognized as legal.



The two women share more than a familial connection; they share the mutual emotion of maternal grief, making the resemblance between them “even more striking” (325). The shared experience of motherly love unites black and white. In Chesnutt’s novel, it is not all the African Americans who look alike, as the 1896 songbook cover suggests; it is the African American woman and the Euro-American wife of the white supremacist. Such interstitial confusion undermines the system of racial differentiation on which white supremacy depended.

Chesnutt further emphasizes the interconnections between the interracial half-sisters by intertwining their fate at the end of the novel, a move that, as Samina Najmi argues, creates solidarity between Chesnutt’s white female readers and African Americans. While Janet wishes her familial connection to be recognized throughout the novel, Olivia repeatedly rejects her African American sister, almost miscarrying when she sees Janet early in the novel and later tearing up their father’s will in order to deny the legal marriage between their father and Janet’s African American mother. In the end, however, Olivia must recognize her sister as her own blood and “lawful sister” (327) in order to save her dying son. The Euro-American woman’s future depends on the African American woman’s decision, suggesting interdependence between the two races, despite Olivia’s (and the Euro-American community’s) denial. Further highlighting the dependence of Euro-Americans on African Americans, Olivia is helpless in the end to save her dying son because all of her African American servants are in hiding or dead as a result of the racial massacre her husband incited (312). Only Janet and Dr. Miller’s help can save the Carteret son. If this family saga is read as a synecdoche for the nation,<sup>24</sup> the future of American society depends on an analogous recognition of interdependence across the color line.<sup>25</sup>

When the two sisters finally confront one another as daughters of the same man, they undergo a dramatic change in positionality. Janet, who had longed for recognition from her sister, now towers over Olivia, standing erect “like an avenging goddess” (326). Olivia, by contrast, forsakes her pride, which “had been her life,” and now stands “in the attitude of a trembling suppliant.” The power dynamic has shifted, and Janet holds Olivia’s son’s life, and hence Olivia’s life, in her hands. But rather than take revenge, she acts the true woman by agreeing to Olivia’s pleas, hoping that Olivia “may know that a woman may be foully wronged, and yet may have a heart to feel” (329). *Marrow* has used the trope of twinning to resignify the racialized

model of “true womanhood,” applying this doctrine not to a Euro-American woman but to an African American woman. Indeed, Olivia recognizes Janet as “a noble woman,” and ultimately Janet is more the “true woman” than is Olivia.

Chesnutt has used the convention of twinning not only to disrupt the social order, as romance novels historically used this convention, but also to elucidate an important dynamic at play in intercultural encounter, what Taussig calls *mimesis*. Taussig does not use “*mimesis*” to invoke realism’s attempt to represent a direct imitation of reality in writing. Rather, he defines *mimesis* as the human tendency to imitate and be like the Other in situations of crosscultural contact, even in exchanges among groups of unequal power and privilege. Chesnutt indirectly invokes the idea of *mimesis* to challenge an underlying and prevalent assumption that minority groups aspire to become like (as the root of assimilate, “similar,” suggests) the dominant group.

The assimilationist model of a unidirectional transfer from the dominant group to its subcultures has ignored the interactive, albeit often unequal and violent, cultural exchange that has shaped American culture. By contrast, *Marrow* depicts multiple points of convergence, interracial exchanges, and crosscultural similarities. Chesnutt reframes the discussion by depicting crosscultural contact as a chain of performances back and forth across the color line, not just African Americans becoming like Euro-Americans. *Marrow* offers a view of culture as a complex web of imitations between oppressor and oppressed. Rather than prove that separate meant *unequal*, as *Brown v. Board of Education* did over fifty years later, *Marrow*’s emphasis on cultural interconnections and imitations illustrates that the two cultures had never really been separate, despite Euro-American efforts to divide them.

An excerpt from *Marrow* about Sandy—a formerly enslaved man now the servant of his former owner—evokes the matrix of imitation, one that includes both race and class: “His manners had been formed upon those of old Mr. Delamere, and were not a bad imitation; for in the man, as in the master, they were the harmonious reflection of a mental state” (130). Sandy imitates the Euro-American codes of gentility that he associates with the Old South, thus creating a resemblance between these two seemingly different men. While this imitation points to the paternalistic relationship between former slave master and slave and suggests Sandy’s efforts to act white, it also indicates these men’s similarities. Here, the African American man and the Euro-American master (Sandy is notably described as a “man”

and not a slave, in contrast to Mr. Delamere, who is called a “master”) are both capable of a refined “mental state,” suggesting the integrity of the Euro-American *and* the African American characters.

Sandy successfully imitates Euro-American southern manners because of his innately genteel “mental state,” while McBane, the former slave overseer discussed earlier, fails to learn such gentility. As the narrator says, speaking from the vantage point of the wealthy editor Major Carteret’s position, one “could hardly expect McBane to be a gentleman, but when among men of that [upper] class he might at least try to imitate their manners” (87). McBane’s class difference presents a greater barrier to cultural mimesis than Sandy’s racial difference. Chesnutt’s portrayal of crosscultural imitation, of Sandy’s ability “to be like” Euro-Americans, directly challenges the hegemonic view of racial difference. While not all such imitations in the novel are so “harmonious”—indeed, many lead to violence and destruction—this encounter is one of many examples of Euro-Americans and African Americans imitating one another, crossing back and forth across cultural boundaries. *Marrow’s* emphasis on boundary blurring prior to the massacre highlights the mixing and imitation that such border transgressions produce.

While it could be argued that Sandy’s imitation is a misguided effort to be Euro-American, the imitations portrayed throughout the novel are not simply of African Americans trying to act Euro-American. Chesnutt’s novel portrays a network of cultural imitation in which both groups blend and clash, shaping and reshaping one another so that neither remains untouched by the other, although the result is an “as yet imperfect blending” (42). For example, when the wealthy Euro-American mother Olivia Carteret finds a “good luck charm” (108) in her baby’s crib, placed there by her African American servant Mammy Jane to ward off evil after the baby almost dies, Olivia opts to “let it remain” in the crib, for “it at least would do no harm” (108). In leaving the charm in the crib, Olivia is implicitly acknowledging that Mammy Jane’s cultural practice might actually work and is indicating the ways Mammy Jane’s African American cultural traditions have influenced Euro-American culture. The charm is itself the product of hybrid cultures; a conjure woman with ties to voodoo and African traditions gave Jane the root, but Jane blesses it herself when she makes the sign of the Christian cross over it (47). Cultural practices, here and in the case of Sandy and McBane, circulate across racial boundaries.

Mimesis, however, is not always as peaceful as Olivia’s imitation of Jane’s imitation of Olivia, and it is deployed differently depending on

one's relationship to power. The colonizer uses mimesis to justify violent actions originally, but often falsely, attributed to the colonized. *Marrow* literalizes Taussig's notion of the colonial mirror of production. Wellington's Euro-American leaders use Sandy's supposed murder of a Euro-American woman to justify a racial massacre. The white rioters impute violence to the African Americans to justify *their* violence. When the Euro-American newspaper editor Ellis watches a cakewalk early in the novel, he reveals the widespread view that African Americans posed a threat to the town and that "the thin veneer of civilization might peel off and reveal the underlying savage" (119).<sup>26</sup> But Chesnutt's novel illustrates that it is the whites who pose a threat to the town, for they incite a full-scale massacre that kills men, women, and children. At first the African American doctor, Dr. Miller, assumes that whites could not commit such acts: "The white people of Wellington were not savages; or at least their temporary reversion to savagery would not go as far as to include violence to delicate women and children" (294). As this thought passes through Dr. Miller's mind, however, the reader knows that the white rioters have already killed Miller's young son and Mammy Jane. Whites "would applaud [the African American man's] courage while they stretched his neck, or carried off the fragments of his mangled body as souvenirs, in much the same way that savages preserve the scalps or eat the hearts of their enemies" (296). While whites call African Americans savage, it is the whites who engage in acts of savagery in an imitation of supposed African American savagery.

Chesnutt invokes mimesis to debunk notions of cultural purity upon which the American system of racial differentiation depended. As part of its melodramatic plot line, *Marrow* includes a minstrelsy masquerade that the villain uses to pin the murder of an elderly woman on an innocent man and conceal the true identity of the murderer. Tom, the Euro-American nephew of a white supremacist, first performs a blackface imitation of Sandy for a group of Euro-Americans from the North and then later revives this performance to provide himself an alibi for the robbery of his aunt. But his minstrel-like performances result first in the expulsion of the unwitting Sandy from his church and then in the town's near lynching of Sandy for the purported murder of Tom's aunt. Chesnutt knew how powerful and harmful images from the minstrel stage were. In *Marrow*, the narrator comments that the people of the North, many of whom had never known African Americans, "derived their opinions of him [the black man] from the 'coon song' and the police reports" (238).

The novel's first blackface performance serves to critique paternalistic Euro-Americans who have appropriated African American cultural practices (probably the very people who would serve as the audience for Chesnutt's novel). In *Marrow*, Euro-Americans from the North have come to Wellington to establish a cotton mill and to "study [. . .] the negro problem" (115) of the post-Civil War South. They are treated, as the text ironically states, "to a Southern white man's view of the negro" (115) in the form of a cakewalk performance. The Euro-Americans from both the North and the South believe they are witnessing a "genuine negro cakewalk" in order to get "a pleasing impression of Southern customs, and particularly of the joyous, happy-go-lucky disposition of the Southern darky and his entire contentment with existing conditions" (117). Chesnutt's description here of the Northerners parodies anthropological rhetoric, invoking the desire to see "genuine" and authentic primitives untouched by the onslaught of the modern world. Unbeknownst to the spectators, this "genuine" cakewalk performer turns out to be a Euro-American man (Tom) dressed in blackface performing as an African American man (Sandy). This imitation reflects the historical reality of the cakewalk, which, by the time of *Marrow*'s publication in 1901, had become a fashionable ballroom dance in which Euro-American performers wearing blackface imitated what they thought was an African American dance but was probably a satire of Euro-American slave owners by enslaved Africans in an endless chain of imitations of imitations.<sup>27</sup>

Ironically, the imitation is more real than the real thing for the Euro-American audience. When Tom and his unwitting African American dance partner win the contest, the visitors from the North break "into spasms of delight at the quaintness of the darky dialect and the darky wit" (118). The spectators watch, "sighing sentimentally over the disappearance of the good old negro of before the war, and gravely deploring the degeneracy of his descendants" (115), but they fail to realize that the degenerate descendant is a Euro-American man. So impressed are they with what they perceive as the authenticity of the performance that they never realize the dancer is a Euro-American man in blackface, and they award him with extra silver. The naiveté of the Euro-American spectators parallels the ignorance of Euro-American cakewalk dancers who imitated the cakewalk probably without an awareness of its origins as a "take-off" disparaging Euro-Americans earlier in the century.

Their belief in authenticity proves to be dangerous and almost leads to the lynching of an innocent man. The performance seems so

authentic that it later serves as Tom's alibi and provides the town with evidence to justify lynching Sandy. Not only Euro-Americans confuse Tom for an African American; Sandy also believes Tom in blackface is himself, thinking he sees a double of "himself hurrying along in front of himself" (167) the night of the murder. Sandy does not know what to make of what he sees, as he remarks, "Maybe it ain' me after all, but it certainly do look lack me." When Sandy realizes he doesn't look enough like his double, he imitates Tom imitating himself: Sandy "looked exactly like him, but seemed to be in something more of a hurry, a discrepancy which Sandy at once corrected by quickening his own pace so as to maintain as nearly as possible an equal distance between himself and his double." Sandy hurries up in an imitation of the man imitating him. When the moderate news editor Ellis witnesses the scene, he wonders "that there should be two men so much alike" (173). Here the novel invokes the earlier device of twinning, as Ellis notes that "the two were as much alike as twin brothers" (173), except for the "unsteady gait" (of Sandy, trying to hurry up to imitate Tom). While Tom and Sandy do not share the same genetic lineage as Janet and Olivia do (although Sundquist suggests that Sandy may actually be related to Tom's uncle Mr. Delamere [432]), they do share the same upbringing by Mr. Delamere.

For Wellington's white leaders, mimesis is a tool to further white privilege, but for Sandy it serves as a tool of survival. Describing mimesis "as both the faculty of imitation and the deployment of that faculty" (68), Taussig suggests that the colonized parodies the colonizer not to be like the colonizer but rather to undermine its authority. As Taussig writes, "parody is where mimicry exposes construction" (68). When Ellis first sees the cakewalk performed, he believes he is watching Sandy. He later realizes, however, that it could not have been Sandy, for Sandy would never act in such a "grotesque" and "overdone" (119) way. Sandy had learned to imitate Euro-American southern gentility so well—as seen in his imitations of old Mr. Delamere—that he could not have performed an imitation of his own race. Ellis's recognition ultimately saves Sandy from being wrongfully lynched for the murder Tom committed. Sandy's imitation of Euro-American ways suggests not his internalization of Euro-American values or his repudiation of his ethnicity but a skillful and successful survival technique. The oppressed, in order to survive, knows the oppressor better than the oppressor knows himself, a form of Du Boisian double consciousness (*Souls*).

Tom's performance of Sandy, and indeed Sandy's performance of Tom's performance of Sandy, reveals the mimesis at play in intercultural encounter. That such encounters are performances is most evident when Ellis realizes Tom's "scheme" (217) (a word that highlights the deliberate performance of Tom's action) to imitate Sandy. Ellis recalls "something vaguely familiar, and yet seemingly discordant" (217) between the two look-alikes. The "discordant" element Ellis recognizes suggests Homi Bhabha's concept of colonial mimicry in which "mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (*Location* 86). Mimicry with a difference highlights the gap between the act and its imitation, between the event and its performance, between reality and representation. Tom's minstrelsy performance debunks white superiority by showing the degenerate to be a Euro-American character, as Gerald Ianovici argues. Even more subversively, Tom's imitation of Sandy and Sandy's imitation of Tom denaturalize racial categories and dismantle the fixity of cultural categories. Mimesis, as Taussig puts it, is a "space between," "a space permeated by the colonial tension of mimesis and alterity, in which it is far from easy to say who is the imitator and who is the imitated, which is copy and which is original" (78).

*Marrow* plays on this imitation of an imitation to offer a definition of culture that recognizes the two-way exchange of cultural practices and behavior. The subsequent revelation of Tom's mimicry suggests that American culture is a complex matrix of imitation; the performance is neither African American nor Euro-American but an amalgamation of both and something new altogether, what Susan Stanford Friedman calls "fusion hybridity," "the creation of something entirely new out of the mixing of two or more distinct phenomena" (*Mappings* 84). When Ellis realizes that he saw Tom imitating Sandy and thus Tom had murdered his aunt, he also realizes that the blackface performance belongs exclusively to neither culture: "The cakewalk,—the dancing,—the speech,—they were not Sandy's at all, nor any negro's! It was a white man who had stood in the light of the street lamp" disguised as an African American man (217–18). Blackface minstrelsy is, as Eric Lott argues, "mulatto" in character (48), the result of a long history of racial mixing. Minstrelsy was (and is) so central to American culture because of its "long, conflicted history of racial exchange that significantly 'blackened' American culture as it creolized African cultural imports, a history that in one sense makes it difficult to talk about expropriation at all" (39). The marrow of tradition—the origins of cultural traditions—cannot be traced to one race.

While mainstream performances of blackface depended on the construction of difference, *Marrow* reverses this portrayal by invoking the very form that maintained difference. In so doing, *Marrow* turns minstrelsy against itself to emphasize similarity. Hybridity implies, as Robert J. C. Young puts it, “making difference into sameness” (26), “a making one of two distinct things” (26), a process that “suggests the impossibility of essentialism” (27). Chesnutt’s use of minstrelsy highlights the ways that Euro-Americans imitate African Americans and vice versa, denaturalizing the notion of authenticity in a web of imitations of imitations that is neither African American nor Euro-American, yet both. American culture, he suggests, is the ever-changing product of intercultural hybridity, in which, as Pnina Werbner writes, “cultures evolve historically through unreflective borrowings, mimetic appropriations, exchanges and inventions” (4–5). Mr. Delamere voices this point about cultural hybridity: “All cats are gray in the dark” (*Marrow* 225); Americans are a blend of black and white cultural forms. *Marrow* portrays both the blending (seen in the minstrelsy and mixed races) and the clashing (seen in the murder) that have shaped American culture as a contact zone that borrows, blends, and appropriates from both groups.

Chesnutt’s profound critique of racial differentiation in *Marrow* came at a crucial point in the nation’s effort to define itself. In this transitional turn-of-the-century period, *de jure* segregation was about to collide with *de facto* intercultural contact as thousands, eventually millions, of African Americans began their migration from rural areas to America’s cities. (While in 1901 Chesnutt could not foresee the full effects of the Great Migration, he did witness its early stages and moved north to Ohio with his wife and young family in the 1880s.)<sup>28</sup> Chesnutt’s novel points out some important decisions America would need to make. The nation could pursue Jim Crow segregation, denying African Americans their central place in American culture, or it could acknowledge its deeply interrelated, hybrid culture. At the end of *Marrow*, Dr. Miller is invited “up” (329) to the Euro-American Carteret mansion, emphasizing the physical and metaphorical movement of racial uplift as he crosses the color line the Carterets had forbidden him from crossing earlier in the novel. Significantly, the Carterets allow Dr. Miller to enter through the front door this time. But *Marrow*’s warning is clear: “There’s time enough, but none to spare” (329) to save the Carteret child, and by extension, the post-Civil War American nation. The future of the United States (represented by Baby Dodie) will be saved only if Euro-Americans (represented by Major and Mrs. Carteret)



invite African Americans (represented by the Millers) to cross the color line and join the American nation.

As one response to the violence and dislocation that African Americans faced in modernity, Chesnutt sought to break with an oppressive and dehumanizing past by establishing an African American literary tradition that would illustrate the interconnections between African Americans and the rest of the nation. It can be argued that Chesnutt tried to be just like Euro-American novelists by inserting himself into the American literary tradition; conversely, Chesnutt's choice to write fiction as a tool to reveal the shared culture between Euro-Americans and African Americans suggests his belief that the novel is neither African American nor Euro-American, but both.

### ZORA NEALE HURSTON AND THE FICTIONAL FOLK IN *THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD*

The question of what constitutes African American culture in an era when that culture was denied, along with a growing debate about how to salvage, preserve, and represent it, gained increasing attention among the rising class of African American intellectuals (Du Bois's so-called "talented tenth"). In 1915, Du Bois founded the literary journal *The Crisis*, which provided publication opportunities for African Americans; Harvard-educated historian Carter G. Woodson organized the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History that same year. By the 1920s African American leaders in Harlem and other cities were actively working to (re)construct ties to the past and shape a new African American culture. As a result of the increased interaction among African Americans in northern cities, the 1920s saw an unprecedented outburst of creative activity among African Americans in all artistic fields, including poetry, fiction, drama, essay writing, music, dance, painting, and sculpture. In "The New Negro Movement"—a term coined in 1925 by sociologist and critic Alain Locke and later known as the Harlem Renaissance—African Americans, in larger numbers than ever in American history, represented themselves rather than being represented by others. The first collective literary expression of African American writers and artists, this artistic movement was concentrated in Harlem, but not limited to New York, and became more widespread, including renaissances in Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia, and throughout the United States.<sup>29</sup>

Zora Neale Hurston (1891–1960)—who migrated north from rural Florida and arrived in New York in 1925 at the height of the

Harlem Renaissance<sup>30</sup>—ensconced herself in the center of the debate about how to portray African American culture by representing the very people that minstrelsy sought to denigrate and the folk cultures that anthropology primitivized. In a lifelong project, she resignified popular and anthropological representations by celebrating working-class African Americans, the “folk,” the Negro “farthest down” (“Characteristics”), the “man in the gutter” (“Langston Hughes,” November 22, 1928, 131). She subverts and inverts the term “folk” not as lazy, ignorant, ridiculous, backward objects, but as human beings who have formed a distinct diasporic culture of their own despite efforts to deny such a culture and sever its ties to an African past. As Hurston writes in her autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road*, she hoped to share the richness of African American folk culture: “I wanted to show the wealth and beauty of the material to those who were in the field” (159). Rather than break with the past, Hurston insisted on returning to it and making it the primary focus of her artistic response to the conditions of modernity.

Like Chesnutt, Hurston experimented with free indirect discourse, not to dismantle a system of racial differentiation but to represent a collective diasporic voice, to bring the folk into the text, and, as Gates argues, to express the “collective black community’s speech” (*Signifying Monkey* 214). Chesnutt, not Hurston, as Gates states, may have been the first African American writer to use this literary technique; but while Chesnutt uses it to reveal interracial connections, Hurston uses it to create intraracial solidarity. Chesnutt and Hurston offered fundamentally different perceptions of what African American culture is and should be. Chesnutt argued for a syncretist American culture that blends Euro-American and African American elements, while Hurston celebrated a distinctly African American folk culture, even as it imitates and is imitated by Euro-American culture. Chesnutt chose to focus on sameness across the color line while Hurston chose to emphasize difference. Their differing views of culture reflect a broader change from a culture of imitation to a culture of authenticity, as Miles Orvell describes the transition. He suggests that nineteenth-century realist artists attempted to represent real culture by imitating it in their art, while twentieth-century modernist artists, attempting to break from the past, rejected such imitations and attempted to create the real themselves.

Hurston’s focus on working-class rural culture brought to the forefront a longstanding and divisive debate about the role of the folk in African American culture and art (Hemenway, *Hurston*). On the

one hand, this culture provided the newly forming African American literati with the material for a genuine folk tradition, as was the case for Langston Hughes, who made everyday African Americans the subject of his art. On the other hand, for many of the Harlem Renaissance leaders (such as Locke, Du Bois, Chandler Owen, A. Phillip Randolph, and James Weldon Johnson), the folk represented the history of slavery and oppression from which they were trying to break in their formation of a modern African American identity. While folk origins were important to the formation of a new culture, the focus of modern African American art was to be not on the past but on the future of the race, as Locke suggested in "The New Negro" (1925), replicating a similar break to that of the Modernists.<sup>31</sup> An exchange between Locke and Hurston captures the tension about the role of folk culture in demonstrating the dignity of African Americans. When Locke gave Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) a negative review, publicly criticizing her "oversimplification" of African American culture, Hurston responded with vitriol, charging that Locke knew "less about Negro life than anyone in America" (Boyd). Hurston's focus on the folk left her open to the accusation that she was perpetuating the minstrel tradition. Richard Wright, for example, feared that such a focus on the folk would inevitably confirm the negative stereotypes of blackface comedy. As he charged in his often-cited 1937 review of *Their Eyes*, published in *New Masses*, "Miss Hurston *voluntarily* continues in her novel the tradition that was *forced* upon the Negro in the theater, that is, the minstrel technique that make the 'white folks' laugh."<sup>32</sup>

Hurston felt limited by the Harlem Renaissance's focus on the "race problem" and its prescriptions for what African Americans could and should write about, and focused instead on African American folk culture, the very elements against which Renaissance leaders were trying to define themselves. As Hemenway writes, Hurston believed that "folklore collected would reclaim her village from racist stereotypes" (*Hurston* 84). Calling herself a "Queen of the Niggerati" (44), Hurston drew upon the everyday experiences, oral tales, language, music and dance of the African American folk. She collected her own folk material in order to counter what she saw as misrepresentations by mainstream artists and folklorists. Collections of African American folklore, especially by African Americans, were almost nonexistent when Hurston began collecting folklore, and she found those that did exist were superficial and lacking. In a letter to her teacher, anthropologist Franz Boas, written

in 1928 in New Orleans on a folklore collecting trip, Hurston dismissed the leading scholarship on African American folk culture as “a too hasty generalization” (“Franz Boas,” December 27, 1928, 135) and asserted that the material she was gathering was much better.

In contrast to Chesnutt, who rejected any implication that his fiction was anthropological, Hurston incorporated anthropological materials and methods in her fiction (and other genres) in response to the crisis of representation that modernity posed. As an interdisciplinary figure, Hurston, much like Native American anthropologist D’Arcy McNickle, travels between social science and literature, two fields that have long been on opposite sides of the debate over the issue of representation. Early in her writing career, Hurston noted the links she saw between anthropology and literary writing, as in a 1926 letter that includes this description of her class in anthropology at Barnard: “It is all about the religions of primitive peoples and is as full of things a writer could use as a dog is of fleas” (“Fannie Hurst” 85). By the late 1920s, while ensconced in the Harlem Renaissance, Hurston also associated herself with leading anthropological figures involved in transforming the discipline. She literally moved between Harlem, where she lived, and Columbia University, where she studied with Boas, a founder of American cultural anthropology. She acted as an intermediary between these two movements, both of which were engaged in codifying the meanings of African American culture in this period (Gambrell).

Boasian anthropology provided Hurston with a paradigm to see the African American population as a complex culture rather than an inferior race. While Boas’s own fieldwork focused primarily on the Indians of the Northwest Coast, he was an outspoken advocate for African Americans and a champion of African cultures.<sup>33</sup> At the moment when racial difference was being used to justify social and legal discrimination in the United States—Boas’s rise to prominence occurred in the period immediately following *Plessy v. Ferguson*—Boas posited a theory of cultural relativism rather than biological determinism. Hurston participated directly in the Boasian effort to disprove nineteenth-century racist arguments, which linked brain size with intelligence and ability. In one of her early projects with Boas, she stood on a Harlem corner with a pair of calipers and measured heads of African Americans to prove that race was not a factor in brain size.<sup>34</sup> Boas’s paradigm-altering definition of culture allowed Hurston to see the folk as a culture to celebrate rather than a “race problem” to be solved, an argument that Boas made long before leaders of the Harlem

Renaissance called for the same recognition (even as Boas argued for assimilation to solve the “Negro problem” [Hutchinson 77]).

Hurston encountered anthropology at the moment when the modern was attempting to deny a connection to the past, seen in such laments as T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and Ezra Pound’s critique in *The Cantos*. Hurston’s foray into anthropology was not an effort to mourn for what the Modernists saw as a loss of wholeness; instead, it enabled her to reconstruct a connection between Africa and its diasporic cultures. Where many Euro-American modernists decried the fragmentation of Western culture, Hurston responded by reasserting the vibrancy of African American folk culture.

Boasian methods, in particular field research, became an important tool in Hurston’s effort to revalue her childhood folk culture of Eatonville.<sup>35</sup> To avoid the ethnocentrism of earlier studies of culture, Boas argued that anthropology needed to be objective and scientific, empirical and inductive. He called for a scientific practice that required what he called “trained observers” (*Shaping* 287; 291–94) to live among the people for a fixed period of time, learn their languages, and return to report scientifically objective findings about that culture (what anthropologists have come to call “participant observation”). These scientific practices provided Hurston with formalized methods to collect, and justify the collection of, the stories and songs of the African American folk.

Hurston’s efforts to include folk elements in her novel replicated in some troubling ways the project of salvage anthropology. Just as anthropologists in the period worked frantically to protect oral cultures before they disappeared in the wake of modernization, Hurston drew upon her anthropological training to gather African American stories, music, and dance before the destabilizing effects of the Great Migration could instigate irrevocable changes to rural folk culture. Modern forms of entertainment, she feared, were replacing folk culture, as she wrote in her report on the “Florida Expedition” in 1927: “the bulk of the population now spends its leisure in the motion picture theatres or with the phonograph and its blues” (qtd. in Hemenway, *Hurston* 92). As she reiterated in her first known letter to Boas (March 29, 1927), she feared that African American folkways could soon disappear: “You see, the negro is not living his lore to the extent of the Indian. He is not on a reservation, being kept pure. His negroness is being rubbed off by close contact with white culture” (97). Hurston’s troubling invocation of Native Americans, in which she celebrates their confinement to reservations, also reveals her

complicity in Boasian salvage methods, which similarly attempted to uncover the “pure” essence of a culture rather than to see culture as organic and changing. Later that year, she participated in the effort to document the experiences of enslaved Africans in the United States when she interviewed Cudjo Lewis, considered one of the last surviving Africans brought to America on a slave ship. The widespread interest in Cudjo Lewis in the late 1920s parallels the popular and scholarly fascination with the supposedly last of the Native Americans, Ishi. In 1911, anthropologists “discovered” Ishi, who was billed as “the last wild Indian in North America” (the subtitle of anthropologist Theodora Kroeber’s biography of the man), and worked to preserve his story in much the way that scholars attempted to preserve Lewis’s story.

While a participant in what many see as the dangerous project of salvage anthropology, Hurston simultaneously recognized that African American folk culture was continually changing, even as she worked to capture, and thus essentialize and objectify, its practices. A year after she wrote about her anxiety that African American folk culture was disappearing, she wrote to Langston Hughes (April 28, 1928) with excitement about these very changes: “Negro folklore is *still* in the making. A new kind is crowding out the old” (116). The traditional folklore that Boasian methodology sought to preserve may indeed have been disappearing, but this new folk culture was valuable in its own right. Hurston reiterates this sentiment in “Characteristics of Negro Expression” (1934), writing “Negro folklore is not a thing of the past. It is still in the making” (836). In a vivid image that expresses her desire to preserve the old alongside the new, she adds, “The automobile is ranged alongside of the oxcart.”

Even after she ended her association with Boas, Hurston did not abandon her ethnographic techniques, and her career followed anything but a linear trajectory from anthropological to fictional writing. By the early 1930s, Hurston had begun to mix her anthropological training with her fictional writing to offer an alternative to mainstream representations of African American diasporic culture. Hemenway calls her effort to use both fiction and anthropology “a kind of vocational schizophrenia” which complicated Hurston’s life as she tried to bring together the scientific principles of accurate representation with the literary goals of imaginative fiction (*Hurston* 63). Rather than a complication, however, her genre mixing enables Hurston to carve out a methodology to accommodate her unusual position of native anthropologist, as both the object and the subject

of anthropological study, while still employing anthropology's methods for preserving folk culture.

While Hurston found in anthropology an alternative to the prescriptions of Harlem Renaissance leaders, she found in fiction a discursive solution to the genre limitations of Boasian methodology, which, in its efforts to establish itself as a legitimate academic field, insisted on clear demarcations between scientific and literary genres.<sup>36</sup> Challenging Boasian genres at the very moment when those methodologies were attempting to establish themselves in the academy, Hurston resists anthropology's genre prohibitions by including the objects of salvage anthropology (the folk stories and cultural activities) in fiction rather than an ethnographic monograph.<sup>37</sup> Her use of fiction parallels postmodern understandings of representation that challenge scientific claims of truth and objectivity.<sup>38</sup> Hurston's genre mixing serves as a kind of literary experimentalism that allows Hurston to both employ and deploy Boasian methods as a formal response to the crisis of representation and as a reactionary response to the disruptive effects of the Great Migration.

In her now widely read novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston most successfully challenges methods of cultural representation by relying on fiction while simultaneously drawing on ethnographic material.<sup>39</sup> Her blend of anthropology with fiction creates a hybrid form that allows Hurston to both preserve African American folk culture and recognize it as a culture "still in the making." Published between two ethnographic works, *Mules and Men* and *Tell My Horse*, *Their Eyes* serves as an important fictional bridge. Rather than an exposé of the unequal conditions African Americans continued to face in modernity, such as the critique Richard Wright offers in his writing, *Their Eyes* offers one attempt to mitigate the effects of the modern era by preserving the folk culture undergoing massive changes in the wake of the Great Migration.<sup>40</sup> Countering the denigrating stereotypes of Jim Crow and Zip Coon and the primitivizing tropes of anthropological discourse, *Their Eyes* celebrates the everyday lived experiences of the folk. It details the language, songs, music, games, and activities such as "playing checkers; playing coon-can; playing Florida flip on the store porch all afternoon" (105), as Tea Cake and Janie do during their courtship. Drawing upon stories from her childhood and from her folklore-collecting excursions, Hurston incorporates the text of African American folk songs and stories as a collection of oral folklore might do. But unlike these anthologies, she places them within the larger context of a novel to portray how

African Americans might use these texts in their daily lives, much like Native American novelists Mourning Dove and D'Arcy McNickle do. In the midst of the hurricane, for example, Hurston inserts the folk song, "Yo' mama don't wear no *Draws*" (149), a song that begins a game of playing the dozens. The text often introduces such pieces as folkloric objects, as in the example of the "mule-talkers," whose story is introduced with "Take for instance the case of Matt Bonner's yellow mule" (48), or as anthropological artifacts, such as the description of the Bahamian drummers (133). The folk elements are not essential to the plot, as they are in McNickle's novel, yet Hurston uses them not simply to add local color. For example, she occasionally includes the full text of collected stories rather than only reporting that storytelling occurred, conceivably to preserve and even honor the stories.

Hurston embraces the very methodology she critiques, employing Boasian collection methods to gather material for *Their Eyes*. She wrote *Their Eyes* while in Jamaica and Haiti recovering from a failed love affair with a young Columbia graduate student (Boyd), claiming in her autobiography that the novel "was dammed up in me, and I wrote it under internal pressure in seven weeks. [. . .] Anyway, the force from somewhere in Space which commands you to write in the first place, gives you no choice. You take up the pen when you are told, and write what is commanded" (*Dust Tracks* 175–76). But her work on this novel began much earlier, in the midst of her love affair. Hurston and two other anthropologists went to Eatonville, Florida, in 1935 to gather spirituals and work songs. They went on to Belle Glade in the Everglades, where Hurston introduced her colleagues to a community of Bahamians, witnessed the Fire Dance and, as Valerie Boyd describes it, "heard songs that were as close to Africa as they ever hoped to find in America" (276). In a June 1935 letter from Belle Glade, Hurston wrote about her successes in collecting material in the Everglades. Handwritten along the left side of this letter, Hurston added, "Look on the map of Florida & see Lake Okechobee, in the Everglades, our locale" ("Ruth Benedict" 353). Readers will recognize her references as "the muck" in *Their Eyes*, where Tea Cake and Janie become a part of the Bahamian community prior to the storm on Lake Okechobee that forces the couple to flee. Hurston left her trip early and returned to New York and Percy Punter, her lover. This material from the Everglades became intimately tied with her passionate affair, and both were to become intricately linked in *Their Eyes*, where Hurston rewrites her love affair by setting it in the Everglades (and giving it the more dramatic ending of murder).



Thematically, *Their Eyes* offers a justification for the anthropological project. Critics have offered myriad answers to the question of what Janie is searching for: happiness, a husband, an orgasm, home, family, freedom, her self, her voice, a listener. Janie may indeed be searching for all of these things, but scholars have also overlooked that Janie is also in search of a culture to celebrate and call her own: "She had been getting ready for her great journey to the horizons in search of *people*; it was important to all the world that she should find them and they find her" (*Their Eyes* 85). Here, Janie asserts a sort of anthropological project to search for people, the same project to which Hurston dedicated herself. The final image of the novel depicts Janie wrapping the horizon around herself in a fishnet that preserves her experiences in its meshes, a fitting metaphor for Hurston's anthropological salvage efforts to preserve traditional cultures before they disappeared.

*Their Eyes* makes a case for the importance of folklore to the vibrancy of a culture. As the novel opens and Janie returns to Eatonville, *Their Eyes* reveals that storytelling makes one human. The townsfolk sit on their porches at the end of a long day of labor during which they had been objects used by their employers, when "mules and other brutes had occupied their skins" (1). But now that their workday has ended and "the bossman" is gone, they become "powerful and human" by telling one another stories. Drawing upon the language of sovereignty, the text claims that their ability to sit "in judgment" makes them "lords" presiding over their own stories, as "they passed nations through their mouths" (2). While the text portrays their gossip as "burning statements" and their laughter at Janie as "killing tools," their gossip is simultaneously what makes them free, "walking without masters" (2), and united with one another, "walking altogether like harmony in a song." "Self revelation," the right to tell one's own story, is defined as "the oldest human longing" (6). Storytelling, the reader is told, keeps a culture alive. While Janie's life in Eatonville is full of drudgery and work in the store, the storytelling that occurs on the store's porch makes her world come alive, and the stories serve as "crayon enlargements of life" (48).

Hurston replicates Janie's project by including folk stories in a larger narrative structure that provides the context for understanding how they are told and used. In a pattern that typifies Hurston's relationship to anthropology, *Their Eyes* demonstrates the importance of collecting folklore and simultaneously offers, through its structure, an alternative approach to preserving folk stories as separate, discrete

entities (as many folklore collections did in this period). The narrative structure of *Their Eyes* traces the physical travels of its protagonist Janie as a synecdoche for her spiritual journey in search of the “horizon.” Critics have classified it as a bildungsroman, künstlerroman, quest, romance, tragedy, and even gothic horror (Curren). But the novel is also structured as a frame tale: it follows Janie’s journey even as it tells the story of Janie telling the story to her friend Pheoby. Janie refuses to tell just the facts of her life in the Everglades with Tea Cake. Rather, she insists on providing a larger context to understand that story, “de understandin’ to go ’long wid it” (7), as she tells the impatient Pheoby. The closing image of Janie enmeshed in a “great fish-net” (193) with all of her life experiences “in its meshes” condones yet revises the preservationist methods of salvage anthropology. Janie’s search for self serves as a counternarrative to both the selfless pantomimes of minstrel shows and the objectification of the Boasian salvage project.

In addition to offering a novel method to preserving stories, Hurston advances an alternative mode of representation to anthropology. While the ethnographic monograph generalizes from a particular experience and is accountable to those lived events (Narayan), Hurston’s choice to write a fictional story about one individual shows that she does not claim to represent an entire culture objectively. Like Mourning Dove, Hurston uses fiction to write about aspects of African American culture overlooked by Boasian fieldwork, with its reliance on a “typical” native informant. As a woman, Janie is not a participant in the central happenings of African American folk culture, the public male culture that was the focus of Hurston’s preceding anthropological collection *Mules and Men*. Participant observation, a central aspect of Boasian field research, does not inherently require a focus on men, although historically this methodology has tended to concentrate on male native informants, as Helen Carr has argued. Indeed Boas’s student Ella Deloria, who wrote about Sioux culture, focuses on women in representing a matrilineal culture. But in Hurston’s case, to focus on the representative aspects of a male-dominated African American folk culture meant focusing on the men in the public sphere.<sup>41</sup> Hurston’s choice of fiction rather than ethnography allows the reader to overhear the stories told by women on the back porch of the house (a metaphor for the domestic sphere), not just those told by men on the front porch of the general store (a similar metaphor for the public sphere).

Her choice of a narrative structure based on travel implicitly challenges Boasian concepts of culture as a fixed site of meaning. The

Boasian notion of the field as a “well defined area” (Boas, *Shaping* 108) was an important change to the nineteenth-century model of armchair anthropology and enabled anthropologists to divest themselves of ethnocentric values, but it also constructed cultures as unchanging and untouched by other cultures.<sup>42</sup> Hurston’s focus on descendants of the African diaspora, almost by definition, refutes the assumption that cultures are fixed, unchanging, and pure because of the long history of crosscultural encounter diasporic peoples have experienced. From a focus on African American workers in the Everglades to conjure women in New Orleans to voodoo practitioners in Haiti and Jamaica, her study of African diasporic communities enabled Hurston to see how cultures travel and circulate.

Not simply part of her antiestablishment tendencies or her cultivation of difference, Hurston’s revisions to anthropological methodology reflect her view that cultures are the product of intercultural encounter.<sup>43</sup> Her view anticipates postmodern anthropological theories about the nature of culture itself as a site of hybridity and change (for example, Clifford’s argument in “Traveling Cultures” in *Routes*). In Janie’s final spoken words of *Their Eyes*, the recently returned Janie encourages Pheoby to go out and experience the world for herself:

It’s uh known fact, Pheoby, you got tuh *go* there tuh *know* there. Yo’ papa and yo’ mama and nobody else can’t tell yuh and show yuh. Two things everybody’s got tuh do fuh theyselves. They got tuh go tuh God, and they got tuh find out about livin’ fuh theyselves. (183)

Implicit in this statement is a dual-layered call to action: a call to participate and a call to migrate. Janie calls for action by articulating a Boasian theory of ethnographic methodology—that is, the epistemological importance of participant observation, of going there “tuh *know* there.” Janie, then, functions as a native informant who returns from the field to tell her story about African American folk culture. But Janie also calls for migration and travel—her repetitive encouragement to “go” (“you got tuh go there” and you “got tuh go tuh God”) articulates her newly gained view about the importance of physical movement to the assertion of agency and to the realization of self knowledge, “tuh find out about livin’ fuh theyselves.”

Hurston’s more dynamic portrait of a culture in the process of change offers a counter-response to the construction of African Americans as a fixed and primitive people. As Appadurai points out, the native as “people confined to and by the places to which they

belong, groups unsullied by contact with a larger world, have probably never existed" ("Hierarchy" 39). Janie anticipates the point that intercultural contact has long existed when she asserts to Mrs. Turner, "We'se uh mingled people and all of us got black kinfolk as well as yaller kinfolks" (135). Janie's strongest argument to the anti-black sentiments of the self-hating Mrs. Turner is not to uphold the purity of the race but rather to illustrate that African Americans are an always already mixed people in contact with other races and cultures.

As part of her diasporic understanding of movement and migration, Janie, as traveling narrator, asks readers to rethink the meanings of modernity. *Their Eyes* figuratively comments on the Great Migration by depicting one woman's ability to find her voice and her freedom through movement. The novel relates a series of efforts to confine Janie physically and emotionally, and at each point, Janie resists those confinements through physical movement. Janie's decision to leave her husbands and migrate suggests an assertion of agency through movement that aligns her with the same articulation of independence that participants of the Great Migration demonstrated. Her return home not only signals her reintegration into her community, as many critics have argued,<sup>44</sup> it also replicates the migratory pattern of many women during this period, complicating the largely male South-to-North, slavery-to-freedom, binary understanding of the Great Migration. Her first step in her journey is to go south rather than north, as she "hurried out of the front gate and turned south" (31). For most women participating in the Great Migration, the movement out of a repressive South was in no way unidirectional. Many women moved back and forth between the North and the South and forged a cultural synthesis between southern and northern cultures (Hine). While the novel seemingly celebrates the break from the past that Janie's escape from home represents, her return home suggests the persistence of those links. Like Janie, who pulled in the horizon "from around the waist of the world and draped it over her shoulder" and "called in her soul to come and see" (184), *Their Eyes* insists on maintaining ties to the past.

At once a novel structured as a journey, a frame tale, and an alternative mode for preserving folk culture, *Their Eyes* resists essentializing African American culture and instead portrays many African American subcultures. Through her travels, Janie has to insert herself into the different folk culture of each community she enters. Critics have primarily read *Their Eyes* as a novel about a woman in an all-black town, and some have disapproved of it for failing to portray intra-

cial relations (e.g., Carby), arguing that Hurston problematically replicates the Boasian failure to depict contact with white society. Such readings, however, overlook the four cultures the novel depicts: Nanny's and Logan Killicks's ex-slave culture, Eatonville's all-black culture, Tea Cake's migrant culture, and an African diasporic culture seen in the encounter with the Bahamians on the muck. Hurston's portrayal of the Everglades challenges the notion of culture as a complex whole existing in isolation, for the muck offers Janie a new experience where everything seems "big and new" (123), a contact zone where cultures and genders mix. This migrant culture brings in people from all over the United States and beyond, from the Seminole Indians, who had lived in the Florida Everglades long before the Europeans and Africans came pouring in in "hordes" (125) by foot, wagon, and truck from "east, west, north and south." The migrants share a diasporic experience; they are transient—tired but also "hopeful" about the possibility their migrations might bring. On the muck, they develop a folk culture that blends and celebrates their diverse experiences: "All night now the jooks clanged and clamored. Pianos living three lifetimes in one. Blues made and used right on the spot. Dancing, fighting, singing, crying, laughing, winning and losing love every hour. Work all day for money, fight all night for love. The rich black earth clinging to bodies and biting the skin like ants" (125). The richness of the earth on the muck mirrors the sense of richness found in this newly forming culture, offering an alternative understanding of cosmopolitanism to the urban experience the Harlem Renaissance offered.

Hurston's focus on the interconnections between African Americans and the larger African diaspora aligns her with other Harlem Renaissance writers such as Hughes and Du Bois, whose 1915 study *The Negro* sought to connect people of African descent to combat the shared colonial oppression they faced. In her anthropological writings Hurston described Florida as "the inner melting pot of the great melting pot," as she put it in her 1939 "Proposed Recording Expedition into the Floridas" (*Go Gator* 67). While the novel portrays earlier instances of intercultural contact as violent—for example, Nanny's rape by her white slave master and Janie's mother's rape by a white school teacher—Hurston depicts the muck as a site of reciprocal interaction that creates a diasporic culture based on the African Americans' and Bahamians' shared experience of migrancy and homelessness. After they have lived there for a season, Janie and Tea Cake begin to forge an alliance with the Bahamians (133). At first

they are observers of Bahamian cultural practices, but they gradually become members in the community (136), as signaled by the narrative voice, which moves from spectator to participant (Kalb). Hurston's portrayal of such peaceful interactions with the Bahamians is particularly striking because of the intraracial tensions in this period between Bahamian immigrants and African Americans. As Sheila L. Croucher notes about Florida in the early twentieth century, "Both groups came seeking better economic opportunity, but they shared few cultural commonalities and developed a mutual distrust" (27).<sup>45</sup> Janie and Tea Cake forge a diasporic identity based on a common link to Africa among the migrants. When Lias, a Bahamian, says to Tea Cake (who has decided to stay on the muck in the storm), "If Ah never see you no mo' on earth, Ah'll meet you in Africa" (148), he is expressing a diasporic connection through their shared experience of exile from Africa.

Notably, Hurston was one of the first American folklorists to link African American and Bahamian cultures to their shared African pasts (Bordelon).<sup>46</sup> Her portrayal contextualizes modernity for African Americans as part of the larger international movement of the Black Atlantic, as Paul Gilroy calls the "web of diaspora identities and concerns" (*Black Atlantic* 218) that results from "movement, relocation, displacement, and restlessness" being "the norms rather than the exception" (133) for Africans living in the diaspora. Scholars have typically viewed African American movement as linear, from slavery to freedom (as John Hope Franklin's foundational African American history *Up from Slavery* or Lawrence Levine's study of African American culture, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*, describe it) or from south to north (as many migration scholars examine the African American experience). Gilroy's argument that movement for diasporic Africans spans the Atlantic, crosses national boundaries, and resists ethnic or racial categorization, fundamentally reconfigures the conventional view of African American history. In contrast to Chesnutt and most portrayals of African Americans prior to the Harlem Renaissance, Hurston (like Gilroy) paints a portrait of migration that moves to the Caribbean and has roots in Africa rather than focusing on the internal migration within America.

*Their Eyes* highlights the consequences of denying a shared diasporic experience in modernity. Tea Cake ignores the warnings of both the Bahamians and the Indians about the coming storm, symbolically denying the interrelatedness of their communities. Relying on natural

signs (the saw grass is blooming) and eschewing the influence of more modern techniques, the Indians are the first to anticipate the coming hurricane. When they pack up and leave the Everglades, they warn Janie and Tea Cake to go to “high ground” (146). The muck community, however, ignores the Seminoles, and instead relies on market indicators to predict natural disasters: “Beans running fine and prices good, so the Indians could be, *must* be, wrong. You couldn’t have a hurricane when you’re making seven and eight dollars a day picking beans” (147). As more signs began to indicate the coming hurricane (the rabbits scurry east, the winds pick up, snakes crawl by, larger animals head east, and finally the buzzards “went above the clouds and stayed” out of harm’s way), the Bahamians too begin to head east, not by foot as the Native Americans did but by car.

Janie and Tea Cake choose to stay, asserting their agency and refusing to be forced out but also ignoring the warnings from those outside the African American community and denying the importance of crosscultural alliances. Tea Cake claims that the “Indians don’t know much uh nothin’, tuh tell de truth. Else dey’d own dis country still” (148). Instead, he looks to the whites, arguing that because the white people haven’t left yet, it cannot be dangerous: “De white folks ain’t gone nowhere. Dey oughta know if it’s dangerous” (148). But Tea Cake is wrong to deny the interdependence of cultures within America and the power of the dispossessed and disadvantaged to work together. The muck also offers the only direct portrayal of negative contact with whites in the novel, seen in Tea Cake’s involuntary conscription to bury those killed in the hurricane.<sup>47</sup> When white men demand the bodies be segregated by race, saying “don’t lemme ketch none uh y’all dumpin’ white folks, and don’t be wastin’ no boxes on colored” (163), they reassert the importance of race and deny the crosscultural symbiosis that existed before that point. *Their Eyes* depicts the powerful forces of intercultural encounter, celebrating the symbiotic relationships that can develop as well as illustrating the dangers that can occur by rejecting crosscultural solidarity.

Because of the increased movement and the resulting transculturation that many African Americans experienced in modernity, Hurston could not accept the static portrait of culture offered by mainstream representations and even by anthropological salvage efforts. Instead, she replicates the cultural mixing on the textual level as well, blending oral and written genres and scientific and literary discourses in a hybrid fiction that employs yet revises anthropological methods. This genre mixing provides Hurston with a mode of

representation that could fit the transcultural experiences—"the stereophonic, bilingual, or bifocal cultural forms" (Gilroy, *Black Atlantic* 2)—African Americans have faced in modernity. Hurston demonstrates that just as folk culture is still in the making, the modern novel is still in the making, and she makes it new by incorporating African American folk elements in the modern novel form, not in Pound's sense of making it new but in Du Bois's sense of making it "as new as it is old and as old as new."

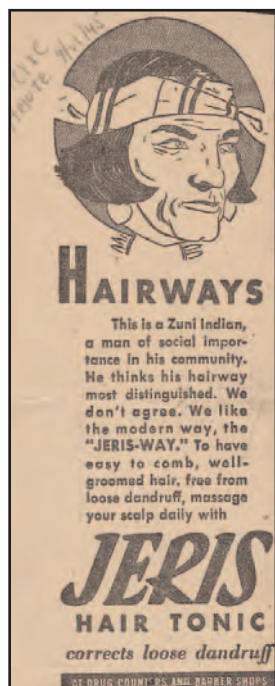


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## Native Americans: Moving from Primitive to Postmodern, Mourning Dove and D'Arcy McNickle

While nineteenth century minstrel shows are most associated with negative portrayals of African Americans, Native Americans in the second half of the nineteenth century also faced harmful stereotypes constructed through minstrelsy performances and other popular portrayals. From the middle of the nineteenth century to the Civil War, minstrel shows took particular interest in Native Americans—not as objects of satire, as was the case for African Americans, but rather as nostalgic symbols of an earlier time (Toll). Minstrel performers often depicted Indians as noble savages, a notion that French Enlightenment philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau articulated and James Fenimore Cooper's novels about a disappearing people crystallized. After the Civil War, portrayals of Indians shifted from innocents destroyed by modern civilization to violent threats to the progress of modern civilization. Minstrel shows reflected two dominant and pernicious views of Native Americans: primitive but disappearing representatives of a bygone era and violent, vicious threats to a new era.

By the twentieth century, Native Americans, like African Americans, were satirized for their supposed inability to evolve in the modern world. A 1945 newspaper advertisement for Jeris hair tonic (Figure 3.1), for example, depicts Native Americans as the symbol for everything “not modern.” In contrast to the modern consumer, who can use “the modern way, the ‘JERIS-WAY,’” the Zuni man is unable to adapt to the modern era. While the Zuni Indian is “a man of social importance in his community,” he is backward because “he thinks his hairway most distinguished.” The product makers, and hopefully the consumers, “don’t agree” because they prefer the modern way of the dandruff-preventing hair tonic.



**Figure 3.1** “Hairways,” newspaper advertisement for Jeris hair tonic, 1945.

Reprinted with permission from American International Industries and the Ad\*Access On-Line Project, Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising and Marketing History, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Ad #BH0487.

Despite the obvious humor of equating modernity with dandruff-free hair, this advertisement reveals the widespread view that Native Americans were a primitive people. In order to define their position as “modern” and their world as “new,” many Modernist artists and scholars in the early twentieth century constructed Native Americans as traditional and revered their cultures as immune from the trappings of modern society. While African Americans were mocked as degenerate for the inability to become modern, Native Americans were mourned as one of the casualties of modernity for the same failing.

Native American writers, like African Americans, found themselves inevitably having to respond to these representations. But unlike many African American writers in this period, such as Charles W. Chesnutt, who sought to insert himself into the American literary canon, incorporation into the broader American culture was not (and still is not) the goal for many Native American writers, as Craig Womack argues in *Red on Red*. Womack lays claim to a separate indigenous literary tradition, or more accurately, tribally-specific traditions: “*our* Native literature canon of the Americas” is “separate from *their* American canon” (7), as his telling subtitle *Native American Literary*

*Separatism* reiterates. While Womack argues against comparative ethnic studies approaches, such as the one taken in this book, I would respond that the intent of my project is not to incorporate and therefore subsume Native American literatures into the American literary canon. Rather my comparative approach highlights the shared connections alongside the differences in order to better understand Native and American literary canons and how each has developed historically.

Many Native Americans living in the United States have deliberately maintained (then and now) epistemological and ontological

paradigms that contrast with mainstream American ideas. Native American literatures pose a challenge to Anglo-American paradigms because their epistemological assumptions are often very different, as Paula Gunn Allen notes in *The Sacred Hoop*. Allen's argument runs the risk of erasing the significant historical specificities and tribal differences among the hundreds of different epistemologies that have been subsumed under the umbrella term "Native American" or "Indian" (as suggested by her use of the term "American Indian literature" instead of the plural "literatures"). But her characterization of Indian literatures is useful in emphasizing that in relation to mainstream American culture, American Indian cultures and their literary canons carry with them different value systems, assumptions about the universe, and social purposes. Native literary texts "enact a Native aesthetic of literature and culture" that differs from that of non-Indian literature, argues Kimberly M. Blaeser, an aesthetic that demands "a culturally accurate critical context" to interpret them (556).

In contrast to many African Americans, whose migrations can be seen as an assertion of their humanity, many Native Americans in the modern era faced radical dislocation from homelands through the US Government's forced dissolution of tribally held lands. Public policy toward Native Americans at this turn-of-the-century period (1887 to 1934) focused on ensuring their disappearance through a denial of their cultures and forced assimilation. While legalized segregation and violence denied African Americans the right to assimilate into American culture, Native Americans were forced to assimilate through education and violence. While African Americans responded by migrating away from the areas of the greatest violence, Native Americans faced forced migration as they were dislocated from their homes and their lands were divided up and given to non-Indian settlers. The experience of widespread dislocation and the denial of a unique cultural past became the hegemonically imposed definition of modernity for Native Americans.

The radical break from the past that modernity occasioned for Anglo and Euro-American Modernists began a few decades earlier for many Native Americans with federally funded efforts to rid American Indians of their culture and force them to assimilate to American culture. The passage of the Dawes General Allotment Act in 1887, which granted 160-acre allotments to each tribal male (with some regional differences in its specific rules of allotment), led to radical dislocation for Indian peoples in the modern era (see Clifton; Dippie; Hoxie). A product of the reform mindset of the post-Civil War era, the policy

was designed to foster individual land ownership and assimilate Indians into the mainstream of American society through the inculcation of Euro-American values, including the veneration of private property, individualism, and self-reliance (Dippie). The earlier Jacksonian policies of forced removal had claimed to save Indians by moving them further from Euro-American settlement and thus protecting them from the vices of civilization. By contrast, Dawes supporters believed they were saving Indians by “offering” them assimilation. As the Indian Rights Association asserted in 1886, the Dawes Act was a great advance toward the “general policy of gradually making the Indian in all respects as the white man” (qtd. in Dippie 177).

This effort proved devastating to Native Americans. The Dawes Act caused the loss of over 60 percent of Indian-owned land during the period of allotment (Dippie), ironically continuing the dispersal of tribal groups begun decades earlier under the Jacksonian policies that the Dawes Act purportedly intended to correct. The Act carved allotments from reservations lands and gave leftover Indian lands to non-Indian settlers, resulting in the break-up of communally owned Indian homelands. As Indian anthropologist D’Arcy McNickle writes about the Dawes Act, “The effect of the law in operation was almost exactly what its opponents anticipated—it became an efficient mechanism for separating the Indians from their lands and pauperizing them” (*Native* 83). By 1909, two-thirds of the allotted land had passed out of Indian ownership, he notes, and in the 45 years following the passage of the Dawes Act, some 90 million of the 140 million acres of Indian lands had transferred to non-Indian owners (83).

As an overtly expressed effort to rid Indians of communal values and end “tribal designation,” the Dawes Act also signified the attempt to end Native American cultures as distinct and separate from American culture. The underlying assumption of this Act was the widespread belief that the Indians were a vanishing people, and that only “civilized,” Euro-American values could save them. From the perspective of Native Americans, this policy of forced assimilation was not a choice to reject the past, as was the case for Anglo modernists, but rather an externally imposed suppression that resulted in the weakening of cultural traditions and practices.

Following the Dawes Act, Congress passed a wave of legislation to suppress Indian cultures and spread Christian, Euro-American values, in the name of easing the transition to the coming age. These efforts outlawed the Plains Indian Sun Dance, imposed cutting of long Indian hair, and required children be punished for speaking Indian

languages. The advent of off-reservation boarding schools, also aimed at assimilating Indians, served as another dramatic effort in modernity to force Native Americans to rid themselves of their distinct tribal cultures (see Dippie; Hertzberg; Hoxie; Nabokov). Following the Civil War, missionary organizations largely took responsibility for managing and educating displaced Indians, who had been removed from homelands and relocated to reservations earlier in the nineteenth century. In 1879, Congress entered the business of Indian education by funding General Richard H. Pratt's boarding school at Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Soon after, Congress dramatically increased appropriations for Indian education, and an increasing number of Indian children were forcibly removed from their families to live at off-reservation boarding schools around the country.<sup>1</sup>

Also part of the reformist efforts of the period, the federal government perhaps saw itself as helping Native Americans make the transition into modernity by educating their children to Euro-American values. As Pratt told Congress, "We accept the watchword, let us by patient effort kill the Indian in him and save the man" (qtd. in O'Brien 76). While Pratt may have seen assimilation as a benevolent act, his comment also suggests that while outright physical destruction of Native Americans was no longer acceptable, government-sponsored cultural extinction was. The goal of the government-funded schools was to prepare Indians for modern society, to "transform them into worthy, productive American citizens," as Pratt wrote (42), but as one boarding school student, Sun Elk from the Taos Pueblos, put it, to be civilized simply meant to "be like the white man" (Nabokov 222). The advantage of the off-reservation boarding schools was clear: assimilation could occur more rapidly and permanently without the influence of family and tribe (O'Brien 76).

Contrary to Pratt's rhetoric of saving Indians and preparing them for survival in mainstream society, the effects of boarding schools on many was destructive: only about one out of every eight students who entered Carlisle graduated. Some returned to traditional lifestyles, some adjusted well to new lives (and became examples in boarding school publications), but others "went utterly to pieces" (Hertzberg 18), and many died prematurely. The cultural costs of the boarding schools were significant, as many first-person oral and narrative accounts of the boarding schools attest.<sup>2</sup> The values inculcated by the boarding schools deeply marked an entire generation of Indians who attended boarding schools all over the country (including over 4,000 who attended Carlisle).<sup>3</sup> Denigration of tribal identity, inherent in the

teachings of Euro-American values, led to self-hatred and alienation for many (Dippie 263–64).<sup>4</sup> While the Middle Passage served as the overt government-sanctioned project to separate Africans brought to the Americas from their culture and past, the Dawes Act and the boarding schools served as the overt government-funded effort to dislocate Native Americans from their homelands and cultures.

The Massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890—considered the last physical clash of Indian peoples with the US Army and the end of the Indian Wars—marked another significant act of repression. The massacre, in which the US Army slaughtered some 300 men, women, and children on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, sought to suppress the Ghost Dance religion, effectively preventing American Indians from observing religious freedom and cultural expression.<sup>5</sup> The year 1890 also marks two other significant events: the closing of the American frontier (according to the popularly accepted Turner thesis), and the population nadir for American Indians, who faced severe demographic collapse until the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> The establishment of the Territory of Oklahoma in 1890 signaled the end of the concept of Indian Territory as a portion of the United States preserved for the Indians. The closing of the American frontier effectively ended the centuries-old way of life for the Plains and Plateau Indians, who had followed a migratory pattern of hunting. As a result of these significant changes, migration as a chosen way of life was replaced by the dissolution of tribal lands and forced migrancy. An official policy of forced assimilation and the attempt to eradicate distinctive tribal cultures became the hegemonically imposed definition of modernity for Native Americans.

The government's policies to end Indian cultures through forced assimilation, which punctuated the rapid population decline of American Indians since contact, exacerbated the popularly held belief in the "vanishing American."<sup>7</sup> This long-held, widespread cultural construct, maintained by anthropologists and sustained in popular literature, held that American Indians would soon die out as a culture and as a people. This view led to a flurry of academic interest in preserving traditional Indian culture.<sup>8</sup> Anthropologists worked frantically at the end of the nineteenth century to preserve a pure, traditional Indian culture before, they believed, it disappeared from the modern world. This fear translated into an intense effort to document Indian tribes and languages and to collect tribal stories before they vanished.

A gradually emerging belief in the value of other cultures buttressed the effort to rescue Indian cultures before their demise. By the

late nineteenth century, the hegemonic view of race and culture began to change from notions of a racial hierarchy to a view of cultural plurality, seen in the revolutionary work of Franz Boas.<sup>9</sup> Boas found in Native American oral literatures the grounds to rebut the theory of unilateral evolution, which placed human development on a racial hierarchy with the dark-skinned savage on the bottom rung, on up to the highest rung of civilized white Western man.<sup>10</sup> Boas, whose early field research focused on Native American cultures, particularly in the Pacific Northwest, sought to demonstrate that Native American cultures were not inferior to European civilization; rather, he worked to show that cultures developed differently in response to different environmental conditions. By the early twentieth century, Boas feared that there were almost no Indian cultures that were “uninfluenced by whites” (Dippie 232), and he and his disciples worked to preserve what they could of Indian cultures, a project that has come derogatorily to be called “salvage” anthropology. While anthropologists demonstrated the significance of Indian cultures, in so doing, they rendered them objects of the past needing to be preserved in literature and in museums.

Anthropologist Oliver La Farge, who played a long-term active role in shaping governmental policy toward Native Americans in this period, provides a compelling testimony of this view, to which he subscribed in his portrayal of the Navajos in his novel *Laughing Boy* (1929). After an early trip to Navajo country at the end of the 1920s, La Farge had come to one conclusion: “The Indian story had to end in tragedy” (*Raw Material* 177). His view that Indians were a dying and doomed people became the major theme of *Laughing Boy*, which earned him the Pulitzer Prize in 1930. About this novel, which focuses on Navajo culture, La Farge writes:

I saw our own Indians as inexorably doomed, I saw that they must come increasingly into contact with our so-called civilization, and that (I then thought inevitably) contact meant conflict and disaster. I put this idea into the book, along with anger at certain evil things that I had seen, and then I let myself out by sending my hero, after the final tragedy, back into my own dreamland, the untouched, undisturbed Navajo country where the white man was not a factor and would not become one within my time. (177)

La Farge’s widely read novel provides testimony for the cultural currency of the prevailing view of the time that Native Americans were a vanishing people.



The flip side to these elegiac portrayals of Indians as a vanishing race was the portrayal of Indians as a doomed race. Such views, in contrast to the Boasian notion of cultural pluralism, saw the Indians as sentenced to disappear because of their inferiority and inability to adapt to the modern era, a view that parallels the belief that African Americans were incapable of becoming modern. When not portrayed as hostile savages (usually after the outbreak of frontier violence between Indians and the US Army), Indians were generally depicted as public welfare dependents, alcohol and tobacco addicts, and beleaguered primitives doomed to extinction—"dumb, drunken, dirty, and degraded" as Roger Fischer puts it in his study of American cartoons. The most virulently brutal cartoons portrayed Indians as so degraded that they chose alcohol or tobacco over food for their children. The cultural work of such images made it easier for non-Indians to blame Native Americans for their supposed demise.

The portrayal of Native Americans as a race facing virtual extinction took a more romantic turn following the closing of the frontier. The widely popular photographs of Edward Curtis perhaps best epitomize this nostalgic view.<sup>11</sup> Curtis's work portrayed Native Americans from coast to coast and Alaska in three main but overlapping categories: primitively inferior peoples, what I call the "close to nature" image; exotic, violent, and war-hungry savages; and, most popularly, a vanishing race whose true essence or "Indianness" could be "captured" and preserved in photographs before Indian cultures disappeared. Aesthetically beautiful in their stark figures and contrasting shades of black and white, Curtis's highly stylized and often posed images represent simultaneously real people and constructed images, both a documentation of Indian peoples at the turn of the century and a nostalgia for a time and an Indian that never existed.

Curtis's photographs demonstrate his keen aesthetic sense and incredible technical skill but also highlight his tendency to perpetuate the illusion of the vanishing American. The photograph by Curtis in Figure 3.2 illustrates early salvage efforts to document an idyllic natural paradise untouched by the modern world. The pure water reflecting the canyon rocks and trees, and a seemingly endless sense of space as the camera angle draws the viewer's eye deeper into the canyon, promises escape from modern civilization as it moves further upstream. The pristine landscape occupies the majority of the picture, while the faceless woman, dressed only in "natural" clothing, stands to the side of, rather than dominates, the natural landscape. Her standing body repeats the vertical image of the palm tree standing

above her as if to signal her symbiotic relationship with her natural surroundings. The use of a woman, whose bare breasts represent her freedom from the constraints of modern society, emphasizes the theme of native peoples' closeness to nature before contact with



**Figure 3.2** “Before the White Man Came—Palm Canyon, 1924,” photograph by Edward Curtis.

Photograph originally published in *The North American Indians* (1926) by Edward Curtis. Reprinted with permission from McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library, plate no. 508, cp15001.

Euro-American culture. Yet Curtis's caption, "Before the White Man Came—Palm Canyon, 1924," belies the irony; the photograph could only have been taken *after* and as a result of contact with "the White Man," namely Curtis himself. This photograph also reifies the primitivist gaze seen in Modernist art. Invoking the paintings of Paul Gauguin and Henri Rousseau, Curtis's image presents the Native woman as simple and uncivilized in her nakedness and celebrates a lack of civilization for its innocence and distance from societal evils. Curtis's work arguably most exoticized Native American women and girls, tapping into centuries of objectification by non-Indian historians, anthropologists, and writers who saw Indian women as exotic not only for their primitiveness but also because of their gender.

Curtis's photographs represent a prevalent discourse that paternalistically sought to preserve Indians but in doing so essentialize them as unchanging and primitive. Curtis often constructed scenes and posed pictures to make his subjects look "more Indian" (Lyman). In many of his most well known images, Curtis himself made the costumes for his subjects to wear, and his work shows different men from different tribes wearing the same outfit. In addition to bringing his own props to use in shoots, Curtis regularly retouched negatives to remove modern elements, such as covered wagons, product labels on clothing or teepee canvases, and American-style hats, suspenders, and parasols (Lyman). The closely cropped "mug shot" pose that Curtis often used removed the setting, which could signal the ceremonial context of the photograph and could indicate that the subject is not in everyday clothing. In one series of photographs, Curtis posed a Yebetchai religious ceremony to capture it on film. Nervous that photographing the ceremony would make it lose its religious significance, the dancers insisted that Curtis make their costumes himself, and they performed the dance backward, probably unbeknownst to Curtis (Lyman 69). The appearance of authenticity became more important than actual authenticity for Curtis. He emphasized the authentic, even when it was manufactured, reflecting a modernist ethos that sought to elevate photography and other mechanical reproductions as art. While nineteenth-century photography saw the machine of replication as a democratizing agent that could imitate elite forms, early-twentieth-century artists appropriated the photograph as a means to render the authentic in high art (Orvell).

As these examples suggest, American culture constructed primitivist and essentialist discourses in its attempts to understand and represent the "real" of Native American life before it disappeared due to disease, violence, assimilation, an increase in "mixed bloods," and

modernization. Through photography, film, ethnographic accounts, popular novels, and collections of Native American stories, American society constructed its vision of a traditional, authentic Indian culture that had little relation to modern Native American daily life. Vine Deloria, Jr., exposes this distortion when he writes, "Not even Indians can relate themselves to this type of creature who, to anthropologists, is the 'real' Indian" (*Custer* 82). The discourse of the vanishing American, despite the demographic evidence that the Native American population has been increasing since 1890 (Thornton), has persisted in the portrayal of Native Americans. By preserving the traditions and culture in writing and photography, American society has come to see Indian cultures as fixed in time, what it was at the time of writing as what it has always been. This static portrait denies the tradition and history of change that American Indian cultures have always had.

Of course, Indian peoples did not vanish in the United States, despite widespread forecasts of their demise and despite government policies to speed up the process. Just as World War I functioned differently for African Americans than it did for Euro-Americans, World War I paradoxically helped to promote Indian rights rather than occasioning the despair it did for many Modernist artists. The 1924 Indian Citizenship Act (passed the same year that Congress passed sweeping immigration quotas that virtually halted the immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe, among others) attempted to recognize Indian military service to the United States by conferring US citizenship to Native Americans. Many view this Act, however, as an effort to force Indian assimilation by denying tribal sovereignty and replacing it with American citizenship (Jaimes).

By the end of the 1920s, it was clear that the assimilationist project of boarding schools had failed. Government funding ceased as a result, although non-governmental efforts continued and continue today with different goals and practices. Undeniably a destructive experience, the boarding school endeavor ironically led to the articulation of a collective Indian identity and laid the groundwork for a nationwide modern pan-Indian movement (Hertzberg; Warrior), which worked in part to counter the view that Indians were a vanishing people. Most of the individuals who launched this multi-tribal reform effort in the first half of the twentieth century were graduates of industrial and boarding schools.<sup>12</sup>

The pan-tribal movement of the early twentieth century developed, in part, because Indian students at off-reservation boarding

schools met, perhaps for the first time, Native Americans from other parts of the country and formed relationships that crossed tribal lines. Attendees found a diasporic connection with one another based on their negative experiences at boarding schools, their dispersion from homelands, and alienation from their communities. As historian Hazel Hertzberg argues, “Pan-Indian movements provided a psychological home, a place where they belonged” (18) to replace the physical home from which they had been removed.

Not only did this education provide a shared experience, it provided future Indian leaders with a shared diasporic language, English, that enabled them to communicate across different tribal and regional languages, and they gained the practical skills (most notably reading and writing) they needed to launch a mainstream reform movement. The irony here is apparent: Efforts to force Indians to assimilate resulted in creating a literate and educated class of Native Americans who used the colonizer’s tools against the colonizer. With the language and writing skills learned at the very schools intended to rid them of their Indianness, a significant number of attendees wrote about their experiences as Native Americans and rewrote mainstream misperceptions of Indian cultures. Many of the leaders in the pan-Indian reform movement in the early twentieth century wrote about their lives as Indians and of their boarding school experiences, and several became anthropologists who worked to correct the historical record about Indian cultures.<sup>13</sup>

Prior to the advent of the boarding schools, several Native Americans had written autobiographies and a few had published novels, but the boarding school education led to the beginnings of a renaissance in Native American writing. The boarding school period marks the first “coming together” of a generation of Native writers in a shared project (Warrior). While most scholars date this renaissance to the publication of N. Scott Momaday’s Pulitzer Prize winning novel *House Made of Dawn* in 1968,<sup>14</sup> its roots can be traced back earlier to the first half of the twentieth century, when Native Americans increasingly published their work, particularly essays and autobiographies, but fiction and poetry as well. The transition from oral to written expression and the ability to write in English became one of the most enduring effects of the boarding school experience. As Gerald Vizenor notes, “English, that coercive language of federal boarding schools, has carried some of the best stories of endurance” (106). Creative expression had long existed among Native Americans, but what changed in this period was that non-Indians in the United States

now had access to such creativity through texts written in English genres they could understand.<sup>15</sup>

With the increased visibility of Native-authored texts and the failure of assimilation policies, among other reasons, public perception of Indian cultures gradually changed. By the 1930s government officials, social scientists, and mass culture more generally began to acknowledge that Native Americans were not a vanishing people. While the vanishing American construct continues today and rears its head in a range of governmental and social policies toward Native Americans, as well as in literature and popular culture—see for example the popular film *Dances with Wolves* (1990)—the 1930s marked a crucial change in the mainstream view of Native Americans. The sense of Indians as a disappearing race gradually gave way to an awareness that multiple cultures existed (and continue to live) within the United States. Indian cultures became of interest to the general public, not because they were extinct but because they had survived the threat of extinction (Oaks).

The change in the public perception was mirrored by dramatic changes in federal policies toward tribes, most notably by the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act (IRA). Intended to replace the Dawes Act, the IRA ended the allotment policy and promoted autonomous tribal governments and economic development. Some 160 tribes responded to the effort to increase tribal sovereignty by adopting written constitutions. The IRA was far from ideal, however, and relied on Euro-American constitutions rather than on indigenous models of governance (Jaimes).<sup>16</sup> Most tragically, the federal government reversed this policy once again in the Eisenhower years and then again in the 1970s.<sup>17</sup> Yet the IRA did serve as a major change from previous efforts to force assimilation and ushered out the old effort to impose contemporaneous notions of modernity onto Native Americans.

Indian resistance to the denial of their past moved from the frontier to the press in this period. Many Native Americans rewrote on the printed page the negative and false portrayal of Native Americans as primitive, violent, and vanishing. On the one hand, the transition from tribal languages to English and from oral to written genres meant a loss of culture and a loss of tribal identity. On the other hand, writing in English became a tool for Indian survival. McNickle captures the idea of using the master's tools against the master when he writes, "The white man's weapon, the written word, was being wielded by the native Americans with enthusiasm, if not always with quality printing" (*Tribalism* xxi). Native American writers have

adopted and adapted writing as a mimetic response to forced cultural assimilation, as a discursive tool against colonialism. As Native American poet Simon Ortiz writes:

The indigenous peoples of the Americas have taken the languages of the colonialists and used them for their own purposes. Some would argue that this means that Indian people have succumbed or become educated into a different linguistic system and have forgotten or have been forced to forsake their native selves. This is simply not true. Along with their native languages, Indian women and men have carried on their lives and their expression through the use of the newer languages, particularly Spanish, French, and English, and they have used these languages on their own terms. This is the crucial item that has to be understood, that it is entirely possible for a people to retain and maintain their lives through the use of any language. There is not a question of authenticity here; rather it is the way that Indian people have creatively responded to forced colonization. And this response has been one of resistance; there is no clearer word for it than resistance. (66)

Native Americans have resisted the disruptive forces of colonialism through the syncretist use of the colonizer's language "creatively" and "on their own terms."

### MOURNING DOVE'S ALTERNATIVE TO THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL GAZE IN *COGEWEA*

Native American written literatures began their major emergence during the modernist period (Ruoff).<sup>18</sup> Faced with the threat of cultural extinction, Native American writers in this period worked to preserve tradition rather than to deny it. Mourning Dove (c. 1888–1936),<sup>19</sup> an Okanogan Indian from Washington State,<sup>20</sup> and D'Arcy McNickle (1904–77),<sup>21</sup> a Salish Indian from Montana,<sup>22</sup> turned to writing novels in this period as a means of addressing the radical upheaval of modernity, and each used fiction to challenge the image of Native American cultures as primitive and unchanging. Read in the context of the rapid changes of modernity, their works offer insight into the efforts of Native Americans to survive in the modern era, and they contribute to a newly emerging intellectual discourse on intercultural encounter and adaptation in which Indian cultures retain discrete identities even as they change.

Both McNickle and Mourning Dove come from the same language group, the Salish, and both come from the northwestern



region of the United States, just as Zora Neale Hurston and Chesnutt both come from the American South, and Abraham Cahan and Anzia Yezierska both emigrated from Eastern Europe and settled in the Lower East Side of New York City. I have chosen these two Native authors from the same language group in part because their similar cultural backgrounds allow for a more tribally specific approach.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the Salish experienced a greater degree of dispersal than many Indian groups in this period, separated by the United States-Canadian border in 1855, then further divided into many tribal nations, and now living dispersed on several different reservations throughout the northwestern United States (Swanton; Hill). While both authors set their novels in northwestern Montana in the early part of the twentieth century, they grew up on different reservations in different states, and in all likelihood they did not know one another and probably did not read one another's works (Parker, "D'Arcy McNickle" 5).

McNickle and Mourning Dove wrote novels as a mimetic response to the popular portrayal of Native Americans in mainstream fiction, yet each adapted the form with Native American elements, particularly in their use of Native American oral culture, although for different reasons and purposes. In her western romance novel *Cogewea, The Half-Blood* (1927), Mourning Dove added oral stories to illustrate thematic points of her novel and to adapt the novel form to fit the experience of Native Americans. McNickle melds oral genres with ethnographic and historical accounts to carve out a space for anthropology in the study of Native American cultures in his novel *The Surrounded* (1936). Mourning Dove sought to challenge scientific claims of truth and objectivity by portraying in a romance novel what many anthropologists had tried to capture in their scientific study of Native Americans. In his realist novel of return, McNickle sought to critique anthropological notions of Native American cultures as unchanging, while he also tried to preserve anthropology's project of cultural representation. In drawing on genres deemed archaic by the modernist compulsion to break from the past, Mourning Dove and McNickle not only filled "those forms with new content," as Rita Keresztesi argues (151), but simultaneously signaled their refusal to play the role of native informant and instead claimed their position as authors of artistic fiction.

Mourning Dove, one of the first Native American women to publish a novel,<sup>24</sup> lived a physically demanding existence as a migrant laborer, yet she desired from a young age to write a novel (Fisher). As



an adult, she moved back and forth across the US-Canadian border and served as a migrant worker in the Washington apple orchards, a cook for a migrant labor camp, a caregiver for her sisters' children, and a manager of a boardinghouse, among other jobs (Donovan), and she faced serious health problems on and off for many of those years. Through her migrations, she carried her typewriter with her. She probably composed her first draft of *Cogewea*, her only published novel, in 1912 while in Portland, Oregon, but did not see it published until 1927.<sup>25</sup> In a telling letter in 1921, she wrote, "When I get rich I am going to build me a typee of my own for a writing room where I can lock myself in and write each day for an hour, a sacred hour it will be. Where I can be alone to my hobbies" (qtd. in Donovan 102). Her desire for a teepee of her own, Kathleen Donovan notes, precedes Virginia Woolf's call for "a room of one's own" by eight years. Woolf's call for five hundred pounds a year, however, would have seemed very high to Mourning Dove: fewer than two hundred and fifty copies of Mourning Dove's novel were sold, and she made less than twenty-five dollars for the publication, which is less than the pay for four or five days of apple picking (Brown, "Mourning Dove"). Her letter suggests that she shares Woolf's project to carve out a space in which to write, but the material conditions she faced in modernity are markedly different from those of Woolf and other Modernist artists.

To speak of Mourning Dove's melodramatic western romance in the same breath as the Modernist literary movement seems a slippery and questionable endeavor. Thematically, *Cogewea* depicts a critical period of transition for Native Americans in modernity and portrays the everyday effects of modernity—seen in *Cogewea*'s graduation from the first Indian boarding school (Carlisle), her fondness of reading, the disappearance of the buffalo from the range, and her "allotment" (262) of land presumably through the Dawes Act.<sup>26</sup> But in terms of its formal elements, this text seems to fit none of the many canonical definitions of Modernism. *Cogewea* relies on vernacular and other local color literary conventions while simultaneously evoking common romantic character types of the region and resorting to a typical melodramatic ending. In a seemingly nostalgic move, *Cogewea* looks back to several popular genres of the nineteenth century, including the popular or "dime-store" novel, the western romance novel, and the sentimental novel made popular by Euro-American women.

In the development of the Native American literary tradition, *Cogewea* serves as a pivotal text, for it represents an early step to publish beyond the more generally used genres of autobiography,

“as-told-to” accounts, poetry, or to serve as the subject of ethnography or historical accounts. As Susan K. Bernardin argues, “A western romance by a Native American woman was a radical departure from the conventional reliance on autobiographical and ethnographic narrative forms to present ‘Indian’ experience to mainstream audiences” (488). Mourning Dove responds to the imposed rupture from the past not by rejecting Okanogan culture but by breaking with the genre expectations historically demanded of Native American writers. Her choice of fiction discursively transformed the forced dislocation that many Native Americans have faced into chosen travel across imposed genre boundaries. Fiction allowed Mourning Dove to do and imagine what other genres could not. As an alternative to the genres Native writers were expected to use, fiction serves as a kind of literary experimentalism, in which she makes writing “new” to reflect the different Okanogan ontological and epistemological paradigms. In an analogous move to the fragmentation in Modernist writing that parallels the fragmentation of the modern world, Mourning Dove’s genre movement discursively mirrors the physical and cultural migrations many Native Americans have experienced in modernity.

Despite Mourning Dove’s desire from a young age to write, as she puts it, “novels showing the Indian viewpoint” (Preface to *Tales* 14), she faced considerable resistance from editors, publishers, and readers, who wanted to consume her text not as fiction but as a “real” autobiographical or historical account of Indian life before it disappeared.<sup>27</sup> Her Euro-American male collaborator, anthropologist L.V. McWhorter, for example, claimed the novel’s factual basis and asserted Mourning Dove’s ethnographic authority as a native insider. He writes in his opening note to the reader that “her characters are from actual life” and that she “endeavored to picture the period as she actually saw it” (12).<sup>28</sup> To reinforce his claim, McWhorter added historical and ethnographic material and footnotes and included a portrait of Mourning Dove on the title page of the printed book. Mourning Dove at first refused, arguing that the use of her picture would be appropriate only for a historical work, which she insisted her novel was not. But eventually, the frontispiece, showing Mourning Dove in “traditional” Indian clothing of deer buckskin and fine beadwork, was published with the novel. By contrast, a portrait of Mourning Dove in 1916 taken while she was writing *Cogewea* but not published with the novel, shows Mourning Dove with mainstream American hairstyle and clothing; machine-produced fabric replaces the buckskin dress, a lace neckline replaces the beads, and a bun at the

back of her neck replaces the braids. The use of the photograph of Mourning Dove in buckskin, rather than in nontraditional clothing, gave the novel a stamp of authenticity by suggesting that a “real” Indian woman wrote it.<sup>29</sup>

For Mourning Dove, reliance on a collaborator was central to becoming one of the first Native American women to write a novel. Rather than see her relationship with McWhorter as a flaw or the text as inauthentic, readers should recognize that collaboration was, and still is, a fact and an integral part of the post-contact Native American literary tradition, particularly for Native American woman writers. For too long, such questions of identity and authenticity have dominated Native American studies, Robert Allen Warrior argues, to the exclusion of “the myriad critical issues crucial to an Indian future” (xix). Regardless of who authored which sections, *Cogewea* reflects the voice of a Native American woman who longed to write a novel as well as the voice of a Euro-American anthropologist who wanted to preserve the stories of what he saw as a dying culture. More significantly, it fuses them, not always successfully or seamlessly, into one double-voiced narrative that mirrors the novel’s thematic point about half-bloods living between two cultures.

Rather than focus on the issue of authorship and authenticity, literary scholars should accept Mourning Dove’s novel as polyphonic, an important discursive adaptation to modernity. Rather than see its linguistic and genre amalgamation as a fault of the text, scholars should recognize its multivocality as a form of literary experimentalism that reflects the dislocation Native Americans faced in the modern era. Just as the character Jim tells Cogewea that “sometimes you talk nice and fine, then next time maybe you go ramblin’ just like some preacher-woman or schoolmarm” (33), Mourning Dove’s text must travel between the European written and the Okanogan oral traditions and anthropological and literary discourses, yet she makes this journey while still maintaining the distinctiveness of Okanogan culture.

Despite McWhorter’s efforts “to obscure the fictionality of Mourning Dove’s narrative” (Bernardin 493), Mourning Dove’s genre choice resists anthropologization and other discourses that have attempted to get to the “real” of Indian culture. Her genre traveling dislocates the modern era’s fixed image of Native Americans as a traditional, primitive people. Of course, there are ethnographic and historical elements in her novel, and she violates the demarcation between fiction and anthropology by embedding ethnographic elements of Okanogan life in the novel. As Linda K. Karell characterizes

it, *Cogewea* “situates itself uncomfortably at the crossroads of fictional romance, ethnographic autobiography, and anthropological record” (451). But in her desire to write fiction, Mourning Dove makes different claims and has a different relationship to truth than a scientist would. While ethnography is accountable to the actual lived events observed by anthropologists during a particular experience at a specific moment in time, fiction rejects the connection to reality that ethnography must make (Narayan). The fictional account imparts to the reader certain semiotic expectations of a multiplicity of meanings that anthropological accounts do not because of their claim of scientific authenticity.

Mourning Dove’s sense that nonpositivist genres might provide an alternative understanding of Okanogan culture parallels Clifford Geertz’s view that anthropology must take an “interpretive approach” (*Interpretation* 29). Geertz’s work, beginning primarily in the 1970s, led to a vast revamping of the positivistic notions of anthropology posited by Boas and his disciples. Rather than view anthropology as “an experimental science in search of law,” Geertz argues that it is “an interpretive one in search of meaning” (5). The interpretive study of culture is not a positivistic search for the objectifiable truth but is analogous to the literary critic’s search for meaning (Geertz, *Local Knowledge*). The movement an anthropologist must make in understanding a culture is analogous to the unquantifiable, slippery process of understanding the polysemous meanings of a metaphor, a poem, or fiction. Rather than there being one truth, Mourning Dove’s genre choice suggests there are many truths, illustrating, in a sense, the Modernist notion that multiple narratives, not just a single truth, exist. She anticipates Geertz’s postmodern anthropology by doing what the Modernist writers of the teens and twenties were doing when they began to see scientific and other paradigms as master narratives rather than “the truth.” The Okanogan stories in the novel are “oral impartations of mind-stored truths” (129), as “true” (122; 165) as anthropological accounts and novels.

By using the genre signals of a nineteenth century romance novel—stock character types, a tragic romance, dangerous escapades resulting in high drama, and a thrilling rescue of the heroine—Mourning Dove sends a clear message that her text is fictional, not scientific or historical. While McWhorter wanted to change the novel’s ending to make it sad and thus reflect the tragic state of affairs he believed Indians faced (Bernardin), Mourning Dove insisted on keeping her ending in which the villain gets his due, the heroine is

rewarded with a monetary inheritance, and order is restored through marriage.<sup>30</sup> Like Yezierska's novel *Bread Givers*, which relies on a similar overly simplified resolution, Mourning Dove's invocation of a typical romance novel conclusion reminds readers of the text's genre and attempts to dictate how this text should (and should not) be read.

Mourning Dove relies heavily on these popular literary conventions that make the novel appear premodern not as a nostalgic move but rather as a form of literary resistance to the imposed genre expectations Native Americans faced. Her choice of a western romance novel, in particular, allows her to respond to the crisis of representation for Native Americans by invoking and then reformulating the very genre that helped foster it.<sup>31</sup> As Keresztesi suggests, Mourning Dove "utilizes traditional mimetic narratives in order to subvert the very genres that have historically denied [Native Americans] realistic and authentic subjectivity and self-representation in fiction" (113). *Cogewea* mimics popular genres while simultaneously unmooring them to force them to perform very different cultural work than they did in the nineteenth-century romance novel. Rather than use the western romance to express anxieties about miscegenation and national identity, as it was often used,<sup>32</sup> Mourning Dove draws upon this genre to dismantle stereotypes of Indians it had popularized. The caricatured Home on the Range life of the American cowboy in conflict with the savage Indian (the cowboys and Indians game children still play) is absent from Mourning Dove's western romance, for it is the Indians who are the cowboys.

By manipulating genre, Mourning Dove makes a deliberate break from the past, but the master narratives that she disrupts are not those of the Modernists. Mourning Dove uproots the externally imposed portrayal of the half-blood as cultural pariah and disarms the popularly held assumption that Indian peoples were a vanishing race. Early in Mourning Dove's novel, the protagonist Cogewea reads a romance novel, *The Brand*, and is furious at its depiction of Indian life.<sup>33</sup> While the character Cogewea can respond only by "consigning the maligning volumn to the kitchen stove" (96), Mourning Dove as author can rewrite *The Brand* by writing her own novel (a move similar to Yezierska's challenge to Torah scholars in *Bread Givers*). In Mourning Dove's version, the assimilation of Cogewea through marriage to a Euro-American man never occurs. Instead, at the end of the novel, she becomes engaged to another half-blood and comes into a small fortune. Mourning Dove portrays the Indians here as the unvanishing Americans, and by contrast, it is the Euro-American

man who disappears into oblivion. The conclusion of *Cogewea* depicts the Euro-American suitor Alfred Densmore sitting alone in a cheap boarding house, turning pale as he reads about Cogewea's monetary gain and marriage. The final pages describe Cogewea as "a graduate of Carlisle" and Jim La Grinder, Cogewea's mixed race fiancé, as the "Best Rider of the Flathead"—Cogewea's and Jim's stories live on through their remembered accomplishments. Densmore, however, is not named here; instead he is known only as "a young man with a selfish mouth" (284). The Euro-American representative of civilization is stripped of identity, the ultimate rewriting of the vanishing American narrative, for it is the white American who vanishes.

Fiction provides Mourning Dove with a discursive space to imagine what cannot occur in the real world—feminist literary critic Rachel Blau DuPlessis's notion of writing beyond the ending—but also to imagine what earlier popular romance novels were unable to imagine, that is to say, to write beyond the boundaries of genre. In the end, Cogewea remains on the range with Jim, and while confined to what was once reservation land, they are simultaneously embraced as central members of the tribe, despite their half-blood status.<sup>34</sup> Jim's belief in the old ways is affirmed when the wish he made earlier at the sweat house to marry Cogewea comes true, and Cogewea realigns herself to her "Indian Spirit" (253). Even the final image of the corral that Cogewea invokes to describe the life of the half-blood, read by most critics as an image of confinement,<sup>35</sup> can be interpreted as a literary conceit for sovereignty. As Jim says, "nothin' wrong with the corral fencin'" (284), for it enables them to maintain their Indian identities and "b'lieve in them there hot rock signs of the sweat-house." They preserve their "Indigenoussness," to borrow Daniel Heath Justice's term, even as that category adapts to include mixed-race Indians.

Despite the threat of assimilation or annihilation, Mourning Dove's half-bloods will preserve tribal ways for the future, not just as stories to be passed on but also as lived traditions. Cogewea's sister Mary, the most traditional of the three sisters, embraces this new role as a half-blood, regarding Jim "as one of her own kind" (241) because "He had not scorned the sweat house! He had not thrown aside the beliefs of his Indian forefathers, as had so many of the educated half-bloods. The books of the white man had not destroyed the earlier training of his mind" (241–42). Mary redefines kinship as acceptance of Okanogan beliefs, not as an amount of Indian blood. The novel ends with a sense of cultural regeneration, a "new awakening" (281) after the world seemed "dead" (279), countering the

imagery of many Modernist texts in this period, such as the barrenness of the modern world in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922).

Through her movement across genre boundaries, Mourning Dove engages in an intertextual conversation with the anthropological salvage discourse emerging in this period. While not formally trained as an anthropologist as Hurston was, Mourning Dove shares anthropology's projects of crosscultural understanding and cultural representation. She worked closely with scholars of Indian cultures, including McWhorter and journalist Heister Dean Guie, with whom she collected stories for *Coyote Stories* (1933), as well as other anthropologists, including native scholars (Batker). Writing a novel became a way for Mourning Dove to maintain oral tribal traditions in the wake of the radical changes of modernity, particularly at a time when the Okanogan population was declining and Okanogan culture was being incorporated into a larger consolidated Colville tribal identity. But her choice of the novel as the medium for her preservation effort resists the stasis of anthropological genres on a formal level. One of Mourning Dove's greatest literary achievements lies in imbuing the novel with the oral form as she transformed the genre by writing in English what she had heard in Salish. The novel captures the oral sounds of spoken Salish and of the slang spoken on the range. She incorporates several Okanogan stories in the novel, including some previously unrecorded tales, such as "Little Chipmunk and the Owl Woman" and "Coyote Kills Owl Woman," whose main character is Kots-se-we-ah. By including these stories and traditions in her novel, Mourning Dove shares anthropology's project of preserving tribal culture. The Stemteemä, Cogewea's grandmother, tells her granddaughters, "The story I am telling is true and I want you to keep it after I am gone" (165), thus articulating the widespread fear that the advent of modernity could mean the cultural extinction of the Okanogans, but her comment also describes the larger project of the novel itself.

In her efforts, however, Mourning Dove works to portray Indian cultures as living people adapting to modernity, not as objects of study or as relics of a passing era. The novel's focus on the European importations of horses and ranch life, rather than on seasonal hunting, emphasizes that Okanogan culture has adapted to European contact. The Horseshoe Bend Ranch in Montana is geographically removed from cosmopolitan centers such as New York or Chicago. Like Hurston's "muck" in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, however, the Ranch brings people from all over the United States and beyond in contact with one another: the full-blooded Stemteemä and her



mixed race granddaughters; Eugene La Fleur (Frenchy), an aristocrat from France; Jack Galvin (Rodeo Jack) from Texas; William Cameron (Celluloid Bill), who is half Cheyenne; and Robert Morgan (Silent Bob), originally from West Virginia (described as hailing from Monongahela, presumably referring to the Monongahela Basin). At the end of the novel, this gang of misplaced migrants unite together with the “breed” Jim to save Cogewea from Densmore, offering not only a revision of the tragic ending of the half-blood but a model of crosscultural solidarity that the migrants in Hurston’s *Their Eyes* failed to realize.

The text occasionally testifies to the intercultural contact that modernity has occasioned, including Silent Bob’s use of the term “hoodoo” (182) and Frenchy’s mispronunciation of bread as “blee-ad” (152) after learning the word from a waiter at a Chinese restaurant when he first arrived in the United States. The racism of this purportedly comic moment, further emphasized when Celluloid Bill accuses Frenchy of speaking like “a Chink” (198), reveals the negative consequences of the crosscultural contact that modernity has produced, not just the positive ones. Cogewea and Jim sprinkle their flirting with Chinook and Yakima vocabulary (see for example 201 and 202), highlighting that both English and Salish have changed through intercultural encounter.

While *Cogewea* includes traditional Okanogan elements, such as Cogewea’s story of “Swa-lah-kin: The Frog Woman” (159–60) to explain an Okanogan belief to the Euro-American Densmore and the transcription of an Okanogan song used in the sweat house (243), it also includes post-contact narratives, as McNickle does in his later novel. Paradoxically, the “centuries-old legends” (33) and stories that the most traditional character, the Stemteemä, tells reflect the diachronic nature of Okanogan culture. Each of the stories she tells is not a “traditional” Okanogan story as period anthropologists would have defined it but rather a contact story that comments on the impact of the European arrival, redefining “traditional” to include adaptation.<sup>36</sup> From the account of the coming of the first *Sho-hay-pee* (white man) and the acceptance of European religions to the account of the pain brought by mixed marriages, each of her stories, meant in some way to educate Cogewea and Densmore (and by extension, the reader), warns of the dangers of contact with Europeans. Each also relates the ways Okanogans have both incorporated and resisted change throughout history. The Stemteemä is unable to accept modernization, yet she has adapted; she recognizes the negative consequences of contact with whites but also approves her granddaughters’



marriages to non-Indians (Batker). She lives in a teepee and speaks Salish, but she knows how to speak English (104), although she only speaks it when “absolutely necessary” (118), as the narrator explains when relating a story of the Stemteemä’s youth in which she saved the lives of two white fishermen. The Stemteemä advocates adaptation when she tells Cogewea, “the wind changes its course and the hunter must regulate his steps accordingly” (249).

Mourning Dove, much like McNickle, weaves oral stories into her novel to illustrate how they might be told. For each of the Stemteemä’s stories, the novel includes a description of the setting in which it was told (the Stemteemä’s teepee), the audience to whom she tells the story, and the reason for telling the story, as well as the impact of the story on the listeners. More than items to be preserved or examples of interesting ethnographic material, as some of the folk elements are in Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Mourning Dove’s inclusion of the storytelling event itself replicates orality in a written form.<sup>37</sup> Rather than record the stories as isolated, separate, unique artifacts in a collection—as she would do later in *Coyote Stories* (1933) and *Tales of the Okanogan* (published posthumously in 1976) after facing much pressure from McWhorter and other anthropologists—Mourning Dove keeps the stories alive in *Cogewea* by relating them as a part of a larger story.

For example, the story “Green-Blanket Feet,” which closely mirrors Cogewea’s life, is used not only for its warning about marriage to Euro-Americans but also as a self-reflexive commentary on the role that stories play in teaching listeners. When Cogewea hears the story from the Stemteemä, she at first rejects it. But she continues to think about it for it “had impressed her deeply” (193), causing her to suspect her suitor has told her lies. She ignores the warnings of the story, however, and pays the consequence when Densmore nearly kills her, just as earlier Densmore had ignored the warnings of Cogewea’s story of the “Frog Woman” (159) and paid for it when he is caught in a rainstorm. While this story is not essential to the plot, as many of the stories are in McNickle’s novel, it does advance Mourning Dove’s thematic point about the need to listen to and learn from oral stories. As oral stories function in many Indian cultures (Ruoff *Literatures*), the novel’s written story simultaneously works to educate the reader about Okanogan traditions and demonstrates that “exemplification is just as important as abstraction” in the oral tradition (Womack 98). Readers of *Cogewea* learn the same lesson that the listener does, demonstrating Mourning Dove’s successful melding of the oral in the

written. Unlike the epigraphs McWhorter inserted at the beginning of each chapter (drawn from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha* and other romantic poetry), the stories Mourning Dove included serve a function in the larger narrative of the novel, one of the text's important contributions to the development of the Native American novel and one with which McNickle further experiments in *The Surrounded*. Instead of deliberately breaking from Victorian literary conventions as the Modernists called for, Mourning Dove both roots herself in traditional Okanogan culture and connects herself with modern culture on a formal level by revising the novel to include oral elements of Okanogan culture.

The novel form, in turn, enables Mourning Dove to critique the scientific assumption that the outsider's perspective provides a more accurate view of a culture. The newly emerging anthropological discipline in this period, while essential in its effort to dismantle notions of a racial hierarchy, was also essentializing in its effort to get to the "real" and gain an "authentic" understanding of the very cultures it sought to validate (Carr; Vine Deloria *Custer*). Cogewea offers an explicit critique of anthropological theories and methodologies that attempted to get at the essence of Native American cultures. As she tells Densmore and Jim, "The whites cannot authentically chronicle our habits and customs. They can hardly get at the truth" (94). The novel further calls into question the anthropological assumption that an outsider's perspective could more accurately understand Indian cultures. The narrator criticizes the white, female author of *The Brand* as "wholly ignorant of her subject" (88), while Jim and Cogewea reveal that the novel is filled with misinformation. The "tribal phrases" (93) that this author used to add local color to her novel, seemingly to make her novel more authentic, are actually "lies" (94). Rather than the Salish names of birds and animals, Jim and the other cowpunchers substitute inappropriate language that "would shock the public immeasurably," as Cogewea describes their trick on the white woman "investigator," who unquestioningly wrote them down. Jim's defense, "We didn't savey she was writin' a real book" (94), invokes the language of salvage anthropology and calls into question the meaning of "real." He also points out the privileging of information from a seemingly "real" Indian when he notes that "she took more to the full-blood talk" than what Jim, a half-blood, told her (94).

In *Cogewea*, the characters who believe in a false notion of the "real" find themselves alienated, the butt of all jokes, seen in the constant teasing of Frenchy and the nearly fatal game against Densmore,

both of whom tried to perform what they thought was the true image of the Indian cow-puncher. Densmore best reflects the myopic and essentializing anthropological gaze.<sup>38</sup> He is described often by his “cold, calculating eye” (43), and he comes to Montana “to see” (43) real Indians. But by the end of the novel, Densmore fails to understand anything of Indian cultures. Densmore is forever trying to catch a glimpse of “true” Indian culture, as he comes to the West in search of “the aborigine of history and romance” (44) but finds that no such entity exists. He vents his “vexation and disgust for the writers who had beguiled him to the ‘wild and woolly’” (44), making him believe such a vision existed. Densmore learns what the reader must: the movement from oral to written has, ironically, enabled the notion of a fixed “authentic” culture when in reality cultures never were static or pure. The narrator comments on the limitations of modern ways of seeing, describing a scene at the rounding up of the last buffalo when an over-eager photographer tried to “obtain a rare picture” of the stampeding buffaloes, but ended up having to run up a tree to escape with his life. An artist draws this image, and the narrator notes, “it was, perhaps, a more interesting picture than the camera could have secured” (147). The camera, despite its modern innovation, is unable to capture what the more telling drawing does.

Mourning Dove’s choice of the novel offers an alternative way of “seeing” American Indian society. As anthropologist Janet L. Finn argues, Mourning Dove’s novel “posed an alternative form for elucidating cultural knowledge” (344).<sup>39</sup> While McWhorter positioned Mourning Dove as a native informant, Mourning Dove, like Hurston, instead relies on a fictional character for this role. Cogewea translates and interprets the cultural traditions of the Okanogans and the stories of the Stemteemä for Densmore and, by inference, for the non-Okanogan reader. By fictionalizing this role, Mourning Dove limits the reliability of her informant’s knowledge and calls into question the ability of an informant to get to the “truth” of a culture. Mourning Dove’s choice of a female protagonist, like Hurston’s Janie, counteracts the male bias of many anthropologists of the period, who tended to focus on male accounts and assumed that men were more representative of their culture than women were.<sup>40</sup> While anthropological methods of the period did necessarily require the use of male native informants—indeed Boasian student Ella C. Deloria relied on women in representing Sioux cultural practices—the demand for a representative, “typical” informant meant that many anthropologists of the period turned to men rather than women. As

a half-blood, Cogewea further revises the informant position by presenting a view from the margins, the space between Euro-American and Okanogan cultures, not from its center. The novel suggests an alternative to the static gaze of anthropology, one that parallels more recent anthropological theory by depicting the ways that cultures have encountered one another and have changed rather than by trying to capture a pure, traditional Indian culture.<sup>41</sup>

Rather than the monologic anthropological gaze, the narrative eye of the novel reflects multiple gazes. At the beginning of the novel, the third-person limited narrator follows Cogewea, who focuses on the land, able only to see that “the world was receding” (18) and the old ways were disappearing. Jim is invisible to her as anything but another half-blood. Instead, she directs her attention solely to the Euro-American world, preferring “the white man’s way to that of the reservation Indian” (41). By the end of the novel, however, her perspective is not fixed but travels across the landscape. Ultimately, her eyes are not focused on the Euro-American or the Indian world, but rather she pauses, “gazing intensely at the grey skull” (284) of the buffalo and *hears* the “Voice” of her spirit as it comes “only to the Indian.” She presents the reader with an alternative to the gaze: she hears rather than sees.

The movement of the gaze from the specular to the aural challenges anthropological methodology of the period, which emphasized visual observation to assert its validity (Clifford, “Authority”). Cogewea’s focus has moved from the Euro-American world to return to the Indian and finally beyond to the spirit world, which can ultimately be seen only in a different way. At the end of the novel, it is the moon—not a human—that glances down and appears “to smile down on the dusky lovers” (284). By unmooring the narrative eye, Mourning Dove disrupts the monoperspective gaze of the anthropologist and instead offers a multiplicity of points of views from a multiplicity of subject positions. In a move that parallels Chesnutt’s experimentation with narrative voice, Mourning Dove found that the novel form allowed her to present a traveling, migratory gaze that reflected the migratory conditions of modernity.

## D’ARCY McNICKLE’S NOVEL ANTHROPOLOGY IN *THE SURROUNDED*

McNickle shares with Mourning Dove the longtime desire to write a novel about Native peoples. Both authors chose people of mixed

Indian and white descent as their protagonists in their efforts to counter mainstream representations of Indian cultures. Like Chesnutt, whose mixed-race protagonists Dr. and Janet Miller serve as a contrast to negative portrayals of the tragic mulatto figure, both McNickle and Mourning Dove sought to rewrite the image of the half-blood as a doomed figure. For McNickle, this revision meant portraying a mixed-blood protagonist who reinserts himself into his Native American community and reclaims his Indian identity; for Mourning Dove, it meant carving out a new role for the half-blood as a cultural mediator.<sup>42</sup>

McNickle's interest in writing and publishing a novel, like Mourning Dove's, stemmed from a similar effort to resist the essentialist gaze of anthropology in the period. McNickle's first novel, *The Surrounded*, however, goes a step further to experiment with different ways of representing the act of storytelling. *The Surrounded* was published just as McNickle made a major career change and became an activist for Indian rights and later an academic anthropologist. McNickle's life bookended the two major changes in anthropology in the twentieth century. He was born in 1904, just as the newly emerging field of anthropology ushered in a significant paradigm shift that redefined the concept of culture and made possible the notion of "cultures," and he died in 1977, as the field began to undergo a second radical transformation that challenged fundamental disciplinary assumptions of the early twentieth century. During his life McNickle was an important figure in these changes, first in his role at the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and later as a scholar of Native American history and cultures. McNickle did not have a doctoral degree in anthropology, but he came to be recognized as an expert in the field of cultural anthropology. He published several ethnohistories of Native Americans, served as professor and chair of the anthropology department at the University of Saskatchewan, and finally served as the director of the Newberry Library's Center for the History of the American Indians, which was posthumously named after him. Despite his successes, like Chesnutt, McNickle wanted to be a novelist throughout his life and tried unsuccessfully to make a career as a writer, producing two novels published during his lifetime and one posthumously.

As an enrolled member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, an anthropologist of Indian cultures, and a published novelist, McNickle occupied an odd and seemingly contradictory position in the borderlands between anthropology and literature. Historically each of these areas has had deep-seated conflicts with the others. Raised on the Flathead Reservation in Montana, McNickle knew the

harm anthropologists, often unaware of their Eurocentric assumptions, posed to Native American cultures. As an anthropologist, McNickle made his career in a field that valued outsider objectivity, shunned native anthropologists, and dismissed literary genres. As a novelist, he broke the taboo against anthropologists crossing genre boundaries in order to write fiction. Like Hurston, McNickle relied on both literary and anthropological methodologies in an era when the academic discipline of anthropology insisted on scientific objectivity while, conversely, the Modernist literary movement insisted on the inability of language to represent reality. His novels include moments where the narrator acts as an anthropologist, explaining Indian customs and culture to his reader. Similarly, his nonfiction ethnohistories rely on the narrative form, using dialogue and characters to render the history of Native American contact with Europeans.

McNickle's novel *The Surrounded* (1936) challenges anthropology through literature while simultaneously negotiating the projects of both. In *The Surrounded*, McNickle creates a narrative that links Salish and Euro-American cultures, mixes oral and written forms, commingles scientific and fictional representations, and crosses boundaries between anthropological and literary discourses while remaining distinctly Native. Subtending his genre mixing is his task of translating stories so they will survive in the modern era. His project is not simply preservation of an oral culture that many thought was disappearing but the effort to use stories he heard in his youth on the Flathead Indian Reservation and that he read in anthropological and historical accounts and adapt them to a written genre. By adapting Native American forms to Euro-American genres, McNickle implicitly demonstrates the survival and adaptability of American Indians in modernity, much like Mourning Dove's revisions of the novel form.

Categorized as a realist or naturalist novel,<sup>43</sup> *The Surrounded* thematically invokes a kind of Modernist despair, a central characteristic of Modernist texts (Perloff "Pound/Stevens") as well as "ethnic modernism" (Keresztesi). At the start of the novel, the protagonist Archilde is alone and adrift in the world, returning home to find "This, his home, was a strange country" (120). His sense of exile reflects the wanderings of the Modernist (anti) hero in Eliot's *The Waste Land* or James Joyce's Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses* (1922).<sup>44</sup> Beyond the shared thematic focus on alienation in the modern world, the text draws upon Modernist techniques on the formal level as well. But McNickle adapts the Modernist proclivity toward formal experimentation to fit the experience of Native Americans in modernity. *The*

*Surrounded* is on one level a novel whose plot is driven by the story of a half-blood's return home and the tragic events of a murder. Yet McNickle embeds oral stories from Salish traditions within the bildungsroman, a kind of literary experimentalism that revises the very definition of the written novel to include oral elements. McNickle constructs a collage-like form that travels between genres and disciplines, moving seamlessly between ethnography and fiction, historical document and novel, and oral and written expression, a kind of discursive movement that defies the entrapment Indians faced in modernity. The genre migration formally illustrates McNickle's thematic point about Native American survival in and adaptation to modernity, one of McNickle's lifelong goals, as several critics have noted.<sup>45</sup> His genre blurring also serves as a form of literary experimentalism, one that differs from that of the Modernists yet offers possible solutions to the crisis of representation that Native Americans faced. McNickle's novel simultaneously critiques Boasian-era methodologies and anticipates post-Boasian anthropological theories. As a fictionalized narrative, *The Surrounded* offers one possible solution to the decontextualizing effects of ethnographic accounts and folklore collections. And it anticipates the self-reflexive, dialogic meta-ethnography that current anthropologists are experimenting with in response to the postmodern skepticism about representation.

*The Surrounded* opens with a "Note," in which McNickle provides the bibliographic sources for some of the novel's historical and anthropological materials:

In this story of the Salish people are elements which will be recognized as belonging to the story of tribes from Hudson Bay southward. The particular facts may be found in the journals of Ross Cox, David Thompson, Alexander Henry the younger, John Work, Major John Owen; in the journals and other writings of Pierre J. De Smet, S.J., and Lawrence B. Palladino, S.J., and in later writers. Marius Barbeau has collected some fine stories of the Mountain Indians ("Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies"), and to him I am indebted for Big Raven's story of the wistful search for "The Thing That Was to Make Life Easy." The "Story of Flint" was told by Chief Charlot, the last of the Flatheads to leave the ancestral homeland when the government gave the order to move on. It was collected by Mrs. Helen Fitzgerald Sanders in her "Trails Through Western Woods," an excellent book.

This note, seemingly a dry bibliographic account of his sources, reads like a catalog of American Indian folklore collections. But a close

reading of this note suggests that more is at stake than proper citation format or a concern about copyright violation. The first line begins by dismissing the claims of all of the others: "In this story of the Salish people are elements which will be recognized as belonging to the story of tribes from Hudson Bay southward." The stories "belong" to the Indian peoples of the region, not to the folklorists he subsequently lists and who own the copyright under US law. In contrast to Chesnutt, who distanced himself from his ethnographic sources and instead asserted that all of his writings "have been of the imagination," McNickle gives credit to the original authors of these stories. Here McNickle challenges American notions of authorship by suggesting that his novel is only one small part of a larger story belonging not to the individual author or the copyright holder but to "tribes from Hudson Bay southward."

In offering a different definition of authorship, McNickle implicitly challenges ethnographic authority, the assumption that "being there" provides validation to the anthropologist-author's claims. The monograph, anthropology's favored genre in this period, constructed the ethnographer-author as the individual hero rescuing primitive cultures from extinction, or at least from obscurity. Similarly, in literature, the Modernists conceived of the author-artist figure as the individual genius who could offer coherence in a fragmented world, "make it new," as Ezra Pound called for, and shore "these fragments [. . .] against my ruins," as Eliot writes in *The Waste Land*. McNickle, conversely, posits the author not as the stable Cartesian individual but as the collective voice of the Indian peoples who tell these stories and share them with the collectors, explorers, and anthropologists. While the collaboration between McWhorter and Mourning Dove continues to be a critical sticking point, McNickle openly undermines his literary and ethnographic authority in his single-authored text.

Additionally, this "Note" indicates the importance of narrative, of "story," to an understanding of the Salish people. McNickle exhibits here a lifelong interest in telling the "story" of this continent's first human inhabitants and makes a claim for the importance of narrative in the survival of Native American cultures. The historical and anthropological sources he names provide "the particular facts"—the stories, the dates, the tribes—but McNickle seeks to do more than provide just the facts. He chooses instead to write a novel that will include the anthropological and historical facts "surrounded" by a narrative that will provide the larger context for these stories and portray the people to whom these stories belong. McNickle relies on the



narrative of a mixed-blood protagonist's return home as an organizing structure to combine traditional Native American oral stories with the conventions of the modern Euro-American novel of return. The novel form enabled McNickle to adapt the stories of earlier times for the modern era in order to depict what he saw as a dynamic culture continuing to survive in the modern era.

The Indians portrayed in *The Surrounded* illustrate McNickle's conception of survival through adaptation. As in Mourning Dove's portrayal, they are both Indian and modern, maintaining cultural practices while updating them for survival in modernity; Indian and modern are not contradictory terms. Late in the novel, for example, Archilde attends an Indian dance on the Fourth of July. Seeing the importance of the dance to his mother as a revival of the old ways, "for his mother this was a real thing" (215), Archilde momentarily feels connected to Indian culture: "For a moment, he was not an outsider, so close did he feel to those ministering hands" of his mother as she arranges her grandson's costume (215–16). But as he leaves his mother's lodge, the sight of Euro-American spectators overwhelms him. Their presence turns the event into a meaningless show, a simulacrum: "There was nothing real in the scene he came upon. The rows of carriages and wagons were bad enough, but that wasn't the worst. The idea was a spectacle, a kind of low-class circus where people came to buy peanuts and look at freaks" (216). For Archilde, the presence of white gawkers drains the celebration of meaning and turns the Indians into objects of a primitivizing gaze.

While Archilde sees the events through the eyes of the white spectators, he fails to see the response of the other Indians. Alongside the signs that scream of soda pop and ice cream for sale, announcing the commercialism of modernity, the drummers sing Salish chants and beat drums covered not with animal hides but with mass-produced red flannel (216). The modern and the traditional coexist here, blending a Native American ceremony with a Euro-American fair. While the Fourth of July celebration recognizes Euro-American colonization, the Indians have reappropriated it to celebrate the survival of their culture in an Indian feast and dance. McNickle ironizes Archilde's search for "pure" Indian roots by illustrating his failure to see the cultural blending that is occurring. While Archilde insists on seeing the event as a "circus" (217), a word the character repeatedly invokes, "the dancers, meanwhile, enacted their parts and showed no concern because of the staring eyes and the distractions beyond the pavilion" (217). The Indian participants maintain their culture and

adapt it to survive. The text notes, "In the pauses between dances bottles of soda water were passed around and old men told stories" (217); they drink mass-produced soda as they tell stories of long-ago events, preserving them for the future. Their actions contradict the popularly held image of a "traditional" Indian unable to adapt to the modern. They also challenge the assumption that modernization requires the abandonment of traditional ways.

While photographer Edward Curtis retouched photographs to remove modern elements such as American clothing (Lyman 71), the novel's inclusion of the soda pop cans suggests that they are not incongruent with Indian culture. It might be argued that these mass-produced artifacts highlight the infiltration of modern American commercialism into Salish culture, but they appear in this scene to be merely external objects that have not affected these Indians' internal cultural allegiances. The Indians here can drink soda pop while still telling Salish stories. This scene in *The Surrounded* illustrates the ubiquity of Euro-American culture, and McNickle suggests that any utopic, wholly Indian space without influence of Euro-Americans is no longer possible. But this scene also demonstrates the mimetic adaptations Native Americans have made in response to modernity by incorporating Euro-American elements into their Indian ways, paralleling Chesnutt's point about intercultural hybridity. Both Chesnutt and McNickle, in contrast to many postcolonial models, see intercultural encounter as more than the dominant imposing its culture on the colonized through force and assimilation. Unlike Chesnutt, however, whose vision of fusion hybridity suggests the creation of a new American culture through the blend of African American and Euro-American forms, McNickle offers a different conception, what Susan Stanford Friedman calls "interplay hybridity," in which Native American and Euro-American cultures continually interact yet remain recognizably distinct even as they inform one another (*Mappings*).<sup>46</sup> Rather than show the cross-cultural similarities between two cultures to disempower white supremacist claims of racial superiority, as Chesnutt's novel does, McNickle portrays crosscultural contact to reveal how Indian cultures are surviving as sovereign entities with discrete Indian identities despite efforts to eradicate them. McNickle's rejection of unidirectional influence parallels Womack's important caution that "it is just as likely that things European are Indianized rather than the anthropological assumption that things Indian are always swallowed up by European culture" (12).

Throughout the novel, McNickle embeds oral stories from Salish traditions, including pre- and post-contact oral stories taken from his childhood memories, historical accounts, and anthropological transcriptions, within the larger bildungsroman. The Salish stories function as “essential narrative elements” (Hans, Introduction xx), unlike many novels of the period that included folkloric elements to add local color or authenticity. In *Laughing Boy*, for example, La Farge includes details about Navajo life even when they do not relate to the plot in order to demonstrate his anthropological knowledge, to claim ethnographic authority. As McNickle wrote in his biography of La Farge, “The story is loaded with episodes, some deliberately introduced, that illustrate singularities of Navajo belief and custom. [. . .] He leaned on the ethnographer’s notebook as a pillar for inner security” (*Indian Man* 55). As much as La Farge claims to be an expert on Navajo lifestyle, his position as an outsider looking in on a culture alien to his own still limits his understanding, McNickle argues (*Indian Man* 57), a critique that parallels Mourning Dove’s lampoon of the outsider author of *The Brand*. McNickle analyzes the limitations of *Laughing Boy*, pointing out its exoticization of Navajo life and the projection of American feelings onto the character of Laughing Boy. For example, in reference to the scene where Laughing Boy and Slim Girl are described as having “a second honeymoon,” he writes, “The white reader has lived a Navajo life without straying too far from his own experiences—no matter that the honeymoon is not a Navajo social custom” (56).

By contrast, the stories in *The Surrounded* are crucial to the development of the novel’s plot, not simply used to reinforce thematic points, as they are in Mourning Dove’s novel. As the narrator in *The Surrounded* points out, “Nothing was ever done without telling a story” (210–11); so too with McNickle’s novel. By creating a novel that relies on orality to propel the plot, McNickle models how the modern novel can adapt to include Native American genres.

By embedding these stories in a novel, McNickle challenges ethnographic methods for collecting Native American oral texts.<sup>47</sup> Anthologies of Native American folklore in the first part of the twentieth century flourished and were invaluable in preserving these stories—indeed, McNickle relied on such collections, as his opening “Note” suggests. But the techniques folklorists used were problematic, if not outright harmful. For starters, folklore anthologies tended to include only certain types of stories: creation stories, which told of the beginning of the world; origin stories, which explained the way

the animals and plants developed the way they did; and animal stories, which detailed the adventures of tricksters and other events. As a result of anthropological transcription and classification in this era, these categories have come to be thought of as the only “traditional” or “authentic” Indian stories. McNickle includes examples of these types in *The Surrounded*. “The Story of Flint” (64–66) explains how coyote discovered flint for arrows, and “The Thing That Was to Make Life Easy” (66–69) tells about the discovery of iron.

Yet the “traditional” stories represent only a portion of Native American oral storytelling traditions (Womack). Political contact narratives from more recent events have long been a central part of Native American storytelling traditions, but anthropological preservation efforts have repressed them in favor of the stories of “time immemorial” and confined them to “the usual structural categories such as creation, hero, tricksters, and monster slayer tales, and so on,” Womack argues (63). By contrast, McNickle, more so than Mourning Dove, includes a variety of different story genres culled from different sources, including contact stories that detail the coming of Euro-American settlers, such as the elder Modeste’s story of the coming of the priests to the valley of Sniél-emen (70–75); stories of intercultural conflict and violence, such as the story of “Big Paul” and Modeste’s story (70); pre-contact origin stories, such as “The Story of Flint”; stories of journeys and searches, such as “The Thing That Was to Make Life Easy”; and biographical stories, such as Catharine’s account of her dream and Modeste’s story about his Somesh. It should also be noted that not all stories are told by Native Americans: Max, the Spanish father of the novel’s protagonist, tells stories, as does Father Grepilloux, a white Catholic priest, who also reads stories from his diary aloud to Max in a sort of hybrid of oral and written (48–49). By supplementing the ethnographic collections with a variety of stories, McNickle suggests that the storytelling tradition did not stop developing at the time of contact but evolved to include the stories of contact with European settlers and the experiences of contemporary Native Americans. McNickle’s genre mixing revises the understanding of “traditional” Indian culture and enables readers to see the oral storytelling practice as alive and adapting to the modern era.

Like Mourning Dove, McNickle reinserts the stories into the context in which they might have been told. Anthropological transcriptions of oral stories, particularly in the turn-of-the-century salvage efforts, failed to include the setting and situation of their telling. They preserved stories as isolated artifacts to collect, organize, and classify.

As Greg Sarris notes in his contemporary study of Pomo oral culture, *Keeping Slug Woman Alive*, “There is so much more than just the story and what was said that *is* the story” (45). An analogy from Sarris’s study helps to illustrate the dangers of decontextualization. Essie Parrish, a Pomo Indian woman in Sarris’s study, comments on a graduate student’s transcription technique: “He is from the university, that man. See how he does? I tell him things, stories. He picks them up like leaves in his machine and carries them back to his place. Then he listens and looks. Like at each leaf. Beauty is the whole tree. That’s the secret. That’s a story. Can this white man know that?” (1). In transcribing just the stories, anthropology runs the risk of failing to see the whole context, in this case, the stories as part of a larger story of the Pomo Indians. McNickle noted a similar problem in the folklore collections he used in writing *The Surrounded* and cites in his opening “Note.”

Instead of simply including oral stories as artifacts—seeing only individual leaves rather than the beauty of the whole tree, as Essie Parrish might say—McNickle reintegrates oral stories into the larger framework of the novel, which enables him (and the reader) to imagine the living context in which they were used and what meaning they might have had. Like Mourning Dove, McNickle includes not only the stories but the situation that spurred their telling, the storytellers’ preceding comments, and the listeners’ reactions. For example, “The Thing that was to make life easy” (66) appears as it might in a folklore collection, complete with its title. Yet McNickle also includes details about the storyteller, “an old man who had been born, they said, with a streak of white hair running through the black.” This description, it might also be noted, is a story itself. The novel includes the circumstances in which the stories are told and clues for understanding them. When an old woman tells “The Story of Flint” (64) at the communal feast to welcome home the wayward Archilde, the text discusses the occasion for telling the story and the storyteller herself, describing the sound of the storyteller’s voice and including the detail that her scarcity of teeth made her words sound “odd” (64). But the story, the narrator says, is so old and important, that “nothing was lost.” When she is finished, everyone laughs, revealing that the woman’s story is meant to both amuse and teach. Further, the text reveals the uses of her story: “It was a very old story, the kind grandmothers told to grandchildren” (66). Here, the elder leader Modeste recontextualizes the story for Archilde, a fitting synecdoche for McNickle’s own project in relation to anthropology.<sup>48</sup>

Just as Janie in Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* tells Pheoby a story that begins with her childhood to provide the context for her actions, Archilde tells his estranged father about his boarding school experience so that his father can come to understand him. Archilde provides "de understandin'" (*Their Eyes* 7) as Janie would say, to go along with his story, providing, as *The Surrounded* describes Archilde's story, "a long recital, giving the story of his dreams and desires, his notions about life, and how all this seemed to have come to an end" (159). And just as Janie's story changes her listener—as Pheoby remarks, "Ah done growed ten feet higher from jus' listenin' tuh you, Janie" (182)—Archilde's story changes his listener and leads to reconciliation between father and son. As Max says, "We'll make a new beginning!" (159). A metacommentary on the importance of narrative, this scene illustrates that stories can heal, make peace, even provide reconciliation between two cultures as it does between the Spanish-born Max and the mixed-race Archilde.<sup>49</sup>

McNickle includes the full text of the story but also the whole storytelling event, an occurrence happening at a specific time and a specific place told by a living person talking to another living person. For example, when Modeste retells the story of the Salish people, he interrupts the story to address Archilde and provide the context that Archilde, and by extension the reader, will need to incorporate the story into his life. The novel presents this story in the direct dialogue of Modeste, but then in the middle of its telling, the third-person indirect narrator interrupts: "At that point he [Modeste] paused and once more addressed himself to Archilde, for whom this story was intended" (72). Then the novel returns to Modeste and directly quotes his comment to Archilde: "Perhaps this talk of fighting and men dying means little to you. It is a little thing now, but when it was happening it seemed big" (72). Modeste's gloss on the story updates it for his listener in a way that can only be done if the context of the story's telling is included. Without the context, Womack argues in his study of Creek oral and written literatures, "The stories do not connect to a living human community. The tellings occur in a vacuum. They are artifacts" (98).

McNickle foregrounds not only the *telling* of the story but the *hearing* of the story, not only the story itself but its impact on the listener.<sup>50</sup> When Archilde first returns home, he sees the oral stories in much the way anthropologists might have, as if they were relics of a dying culture, "tiresome stories" (4), as Archilde calls them. But after the telling of "The Thing that was to make life easy" (66) at his

welcome-home feast, Archilde begins to think about the story: "He wondered at it. And the more he reflected on it the more wonderful it grew. A story like that, he realized, was full of meaning" (69). The organic imagery here is important. While earlier he could not understand "the old stories," now that he hears them again in a new context, they now take on new meaning. As the narrator comments, "He had heard the story many times, but he had not listened" (74). By portraying the relationship between the storyteller and the listener, McNickle recognizes that narrative is a transaction, what contemporary narrative theorist Ross Chambers calls an "exchange," that, in and of itself, produces meaning.<sup>51</sup> McNickle demonstrates Chambers's point about the relationship between text and context: "the 'same' story can have a quite different point when it is told in different situations" (3). A year later, and much later in the novel, Archilde still remembers the chief's story: "It was the first story about his people that he understood. He could not explain why he had listened and understood, but since it had happened he was continually thinking about the old chief" (194). By including the stories as they were told at a particular time and place to a particular audience in the larger form of the novel (which similarly focuses on "particular individuals having particular experiences at particular times and at particular places" [Watt 477]), the story is kept alive for Archilde and, by extension, for the reader.

McNickle suggests that the community's stories are living things rather than artifacts of an extinct culture. Instead of representing a form of salvage anthropology, as may have been the case for Hurston, McNickle's inclusion of Salish stories serves to illustrate the continuing survival of Native American cultures. McNickle's novel works to avoid the problems that anthropological collections introduced and offers a model for contemporary anthropologists in their search for alternative methodologies. More recent experimentations in post-modern anthropology have sought ways of including the narrative context as well, suggesting that McNickle anticipated this challenge in his 1936 novel.<sup>52</sup>

Paradoxically, to counter the stasis of anthropological writing, McNickle relied on yet another genre of writing that risks replicating the very problems he sought to avoid. McNickle voiced this anxiety about translating oral stories into written form in a 1934 letter to William Gates:

I was perhaps contemplating doing the very thing which, in reading, I have distrusted and felt antagonized by: I mean those 'translations' one

finds of Indian poetry in which the ‘translator’ had made the Indian singer over into a kind of sonneteer or at worst a verse lyricist [last word smudged], and on top of that has asked us to admire the individuality of Indian poetry. (qtd. in Purdy 53)

In order to address this representational challenge, McNickle explicitly portrays the act of oral storytelling and replicates oral storytelling techniques in the written text. In the novel’s first presentation of an oral story, for example, Catharine remembers her tribe’s first contact with the European priests. The story, presented through free indirect discourse, begins when Catharine is four years old and explains how she came to be known as “Faithful Catharine”:

Her memory began on that day when she was but four years of age and when her father, who was the chief of his branch of the Salish people, went out to meet the black-gowned priests. And from that day to this she had been obedient to the fathers. She had been baptized as Catharine Le Loup, after father, who was known as Running Wolf (baptized Grégoire). The Fathers called her “Faithful Catharine” and by that name she was known to her people. (21)

But McNickle interrupts the indirect discourse narrative to include a direct quotation from the priests, followed by a return to indirect narrative:

“Friend!” They told her father, “we shall teach your child great happiness. She will be among the precious on earth.”

Those, too, were words which no longer lived in her ears, but she saw her father’s solemn face and felt his hand rest lightly on her shoulder as he turned her about and sent her to her mother. That night he gave a feast by way of expressing his gratitude. (21–22)

Even though the four-year-old Catharine could not understand the priests’ non-Indian words, they are recalled in the text in a direct quotation, imbuing the written text with an oral element. While those words “no longer lived in her ears,” they live on in the reader’s through the use of a direct quotation. Following this description, the narrator repeats the story’s main point, “From that day to this she had been ‘Faithful Catharine.’” Such repetition is distinctive to oral storytelling and no longer appears in written narratives (Ong). Dismantling the division between oral and written to some extent, McNickle opts to include the storyteller’s oral techniques, not simply



the oral retold within the written, and adapts them to the novel form through a blend of direct and indirect narrative discourse.

In the novel, McNickle experiments with different ways of adapting the oral to the written form.<sup>53</sup> The novel includes multiple retellings of one event, the arrival of the Black Robes (or Catholic priests) in what Robert Dale Parker calls “a palimpsest of competing stories of the same event, somewhat like another 1936 novel, *Absalom, Absalom!*” (911). In each version, a different speaker provides a different interpretation of events. Archilde’s Indian mother Catherine offers an autobiographical account, which provides a personal perspective of the priests’ promise for eternal happiness, similar to the tradition of early Native American autobiographies (21–22).<sup>54</sup> Father Grepilloux’s story remembers the willingness of the Indians to convert (46–48). The tribal elder Modeste’s telling laments the failure of the priests to protect the Indians (70–74). Modeste’s perspective markedly contrasts Father Grepilloux’s nostalgia for a period when Christianity successfully saved the Indians or Catherine’s personal memory of a more peaceful time when she was a young girl coming into consciousness.

McNickle enacts on a formal level the different versions of the same events by experimenting with a different narrative technique for each. Catharine delivers her story, an interior monologue told in the third person, through free indirect discourse, a similar form that earlier novelists, including Jane Austen, and many Modernist writers, as well as Hurston, employed. In contrast to Catharine’s internal thoughts, Father Grepilloux reads aloud to Max from his first-person written diary, negotiating an interstitial space between the written text and its oral performance. In the third telling, Modeste tells his story to an audience at Archilde’s feast. He interrupts his story to provide a running commentary for his listeners, disrupting the oral story as a complete and isolated unit, unlike Father Grepilloux, whose diary chapters are fixed in writing and read aloud as written with no interruption. Each story is transcribed in the text using a different methodology (interior monologue told through free indirect discourse, written account read aloud by a character, and oral story told by a character), allowing McNickle to experiment with methods of adapting Native American elements to modern forms. McNickle adopts and adapts the novel to include oral elements as a mimetic response to the conditions Native Americans faced in modernity, suggesting that the traditions and history of Native Americans continue to adapt and grow, not assimilate and die out. While Modeste warns

the tribal elders and Archilde, "When we speak in the old ways we are not heard" (73), McNickle heeds his character's warning and shows how the "old ways" can adapt to fit new forms and still be heard.

Of course, McNickle wrote *The Surrounded* before becoming a social scientist, but he carried literary techniques with him as he traveled into the genre of anthropological writing in a journey that reverses Hurston's path. As he became more deeply ensconced in the field of anthropology later in his life, he increasingly relied on narrative as a means of representing Native American cultures and the history of intercultural encounter. In *They Came Here First: The Epic of the American Indian* (1949), for example, he adapts narrative to tell the nonfictional "epic" of Indian peoples. McNickle's ethnohistory has a beginning—the migration of a few Indian people to "a new world" (16) of the American continent—and an end, the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act (300). He writes in the preface to *They Came Here First*, in order to tell the story of Indian peoples, "one had to start way back and explain the Indians. Where did they come from? and when? and how? What was it like when they first came into the land? Where did they make their homes?" (9). As in *The Surrounded*, narrative provided the historical context—where, when, and how they came—that the ethnographic monograph did not, "de understandin' to go 'long wid it" (Hurston, *Their Eyes* 7). Narrative allowed the reader to travel there with the Indians: "Perhaps, if one really tried, one could visualize something of what it was like. One ought to try. It was important" (9). McNickle's claim about visualization suggests that the narrative form gives the teller and the listener permission to speculate, imagine, even empathize in ways not permitted in the social sciences.

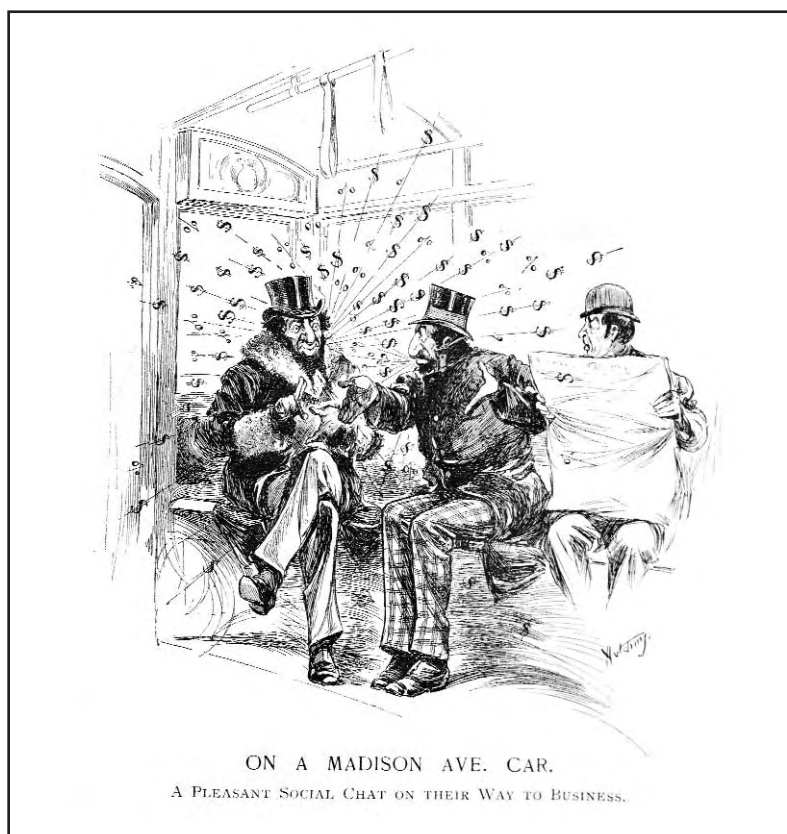
McNickle uses narrative not only to represent a dynamic culture continuing to survive and adapt in the modern era but also to imagine an alternative solution to the crisis of representation anthropology faced (and continues to face).<sup>55</sup> Until the 1960s, the legitimacy of salvage anthropology went virtually unchallenged, and the transparency of anthropological writing went unquestioned. In the past few decades, however, the field of anthropology has gained a new sensitivity to the difficulties of representing cultural differences (Marcus and Fischer). Today anthropology is undergoing an important self-critique, a recognition of the politics, the dangers, indeed, the violence of trying to represent another culture. Marc Manganaro notes that recent "insights gained into the nature of representation and power relations have made impossible the comfortable assumption

that other cultures can be grasped, categorized, and put on paper” (“Textual Play” 3). McNickle’s efforts in *The Surrounded* provides an early alternative to these disciplinary limitations. By recontextualizing cultural practices through narrative, McNickle salvages so-called salvage anthropology, or more precisely, he rescues anthropology’s important project of recognizing cultures from the misguided effort to preserve what anthropologists saw as a dying culture and instead finds a genre solution that enacts the survival of Native American cultures in the modern era.

## Jewish Americans: Moving from Exile to Authorship, Abraham Cahan and Anzia Yezierska

An 1893 cartoon published in the popular magazine *Puck* (Figure 4.1) pictures two Jewish men having “a pleasant social chat” about nothing but money, dollar signs emanating from their mouths as they ride the train. As in the cover art for “All Coons Look Alike to Me” (see Chapter 2), the drawing renders these men ludicrous in their failed imitation of proper American behavior and dress. Their large noses, bulging eyes, and dark unshaven faces look incongruous in comparison to the more refined features of the non-Jewish man sitting next to them with his small nose, barely detailed eyes and cleanly shaven face. Further marking them as outsiders, their strange clothing ridicules their inability to become modern. Their capitalist display of ostentatious fur coats renders them out of place in this train car, particularly in relation to the more dignified white American man, who does not wear a heavy coat. Similar to the clothing of Zip Coon and Dandy Jim, which showed African Americans unable to become modern, they wear gaudy evening top hats in contrast to his tasteful derby; one wears jarring plaid pants in contrast to the Euro-American’s under-stated light-colored pants. These Jews are both exoticized and debased: Their language is materialistic, speaking only in dollar signs, and foreign, portrayed in symbols of gibberish rather than intelligible English. Significantly, their dialogue threatens to take over the train car, a danger that the American man’s position on the edge of the cartoon and the Jewish men’s dominance of the scene emphasize. This cartoon constructs Jews as racially Other, notably un-American in language, clothing, physical features, and values, and as a threat to those American values.

Published in the midst of a massive influx of immigrants from Eastern Europe between 1880 and 1924, this cartoon reflects a widespread view in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that recent Jewish immigrants were unable to adapt appropriately to modern American values and culture. Because of their “old world ways,” Jewish immigrants were slotted into the same primitivist slot designated for African Americans and Native Americans (Torgovnick). Yet they were also portrayed as overly ambitious and profiting off the work of others, thus posing a threat to American culture because they were seen as violating the most fundamental



**Figure 4.1** “On a Madison Ave. Car. A Pleasant Social Chat on Their Way to Business,” cartoon by F.M. Huchins, *Puck*, 1893.

Photo by University of Michigan Photo Services.

of American values, the Puritan ethic of honest, hard work. Jewish Americans were seen as simultaneously traditional and the bearers of the ills of modernity, but in both portrayals, they were deemed unable to assimilate and a danger to modern American society.

Like African Americans and Native Americans, Jewish immigrants in the late nineteenth century experienced modernity as a time of tremendous upheaval, dislocation and loss of connection to the past, followed by efforts to (re)claim their cultural identity and history. Modernity from the perspective of Jewish immigrants fleeing Eastern Europe was profoundly turbulent, disrupting lives and forcing many to begin again in yet another country, a process of rediasporization, to use Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin's term. Already living in exile, Jewish immigrants escaping the antisemitism of Eastern Europe had no home to return to, if indeed they had ever had a home, and they experienced a kind of "homeless modernity" (Engel 58). Nostalgia is a longing for the past rooted (semantically) in a desire to return home. The nostalgia for the past that led many Modernists into exile was impossible, then, for Jews already living in exile with no home to which they could return.

In this sense, rather than a break with the past, modernity represented a continuation of the wandering that Jews had faced since the Biblical period. As an ethnic community the Jews have characterized themselves as a wandering people since their beginnings, and the experience of exile from their homeland is central to their self-conception, as Arnold Eisen argues in *Galut*, an exploration of the role of exile in the Jewish historical experience and the formation of Jewish identity. By the advent of the modern era, Jews had become dispersed throughout the world, with their highest numbers in Eastern Europe. They had migrated there in search of refuge after a wave of expulsions during the Middle Ages in Western Europe brought them to Turkey and then to Africa and Eastern Europe. (Jews were expelled from England in 1290, France in 1294, Germany in the 1350s, Spain in 1492, and Portugal in 1497.) By 1880 some six million Jews (about 75 percent of the world's Jews) lived in Eastern Europe, and nearly four million of them were confined to the Pale of Settlement, a region consisting of western Russia and Russian-held Poland.<sup>1</sup>

Modernity was ushered in for the Jews of Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century as a period of poverty, oppression, and government-sponsored persecution. Long-standing anti-Jewish decrees prohibited Jews from professions (such as law and medicine), guilds, and farming, and Jews were restricted from owning land, factories

and other capital investments. Limited to petty commerce, Jews became known as middlemen and peddlers; modern day stereotypes can be traced to such restrictions on Jewish work. Within the Pale, Jews were further ghettoized, confined to living in small towns or *shtetlekh* for two centuries. In the nineteenth century, laws expelled Jews from major cities in Russia, censored Hebrew and Yiddish literature, limited access to university education, and established military conscription of Jewish boys for twenty-five-year periods. Like Native Americans, Jews faced radical dislocation at the hands of government policies that focused on ensuring their disappearance through denial of their culture and threats of violence. Both Native Americans and Jews saw their access to land disappear as the US and Russian governments (respectively) forced them to leave their lands and confined them to smaller and smaller areas.

As the Russian economy worsened in the latter half of the nineteenth century, government and church leaders made a scapegoat of Jews. They promoted antisemitism by arguing that the Jews were the source of the economic instability in many rural areas. By 1881 government-sponsored, or at least government-sanctioned, violence against Jews had become “a matter of policy” (Sorin). Pogroms (a Yiddish word meaning an organized massacre, derived from the root word meaning to destroy) erupted in 225 cities and towns in 1881 and 1882. The capitalist reform that modernity brought to Eastern Europe resulted in heightened antisemitism, as many blamed Jews for economic problems. The government efforts to modernize harmed Jews in greater proportion than any other socioeconomic class. Their experience provides evidence for the claim that the project of modernity, from the Enlightenment to the Holocaust, has been complicit in imperialism and totalitarianism. As Homi K. Bhabha argues, “‘The Jew’ stands for that experience of a lethal modernity, shared by the histories of slavery and colonialism, where the racist desire for supremacy and domination turns the ideas of progress and sovereignty into demonic partners in a *danse macabre*” (Foreword xvi). Understanding the implications of modernity for Jews helps to dismantle positivistic and evolutionary narratives of the modern era.

Like African Americans, who faced racially motivated violence and virtual confinement in the American South, Jews in Eastern Europe faced heightened antisemitic violence and confinement for many in the ghettos of the Pale of Settlement. But also like African Americans, whose migration out of the South was an assertion of their agency, Jews chose to leave the poverty and prejudices of Eastern Europe for

a new start in other countries, primarily the United States. The decreasing economic opportunities and increasing antisemitism that modernity ushered in led to waves of Jewish emigration at the end of the nineteenth century. One-third of the Jews of Eastern Europe emigrated during this period, and more than 80 percent, or some two million of those, came to the United States between 1880 and 1924.

For Jewish immigrants coming to America from Eastern Europe, the experience of modernity literalized the break with the past (even as it was a continuation of the past as exile). The overseas journey signified not only a temporal break, as it was for the Modernists, but a physical break as well. The expressions “Old World” and “New World” implicitly suggest a temporal journey from the old to the new, but also geographic movement from the “Old World” of Eastern Europe to the “New World,” a literal break with the past that led to major psychological, sociological and economic ruptures for Jewish immigrants. This disjuncture meant that the past and the present “do not comport well,” as Abraham Cahan’s protagonist in *The Rise of David Levinsky* describes it (530). The massive dislocation disrupted the “old” way of life, including close-knit religious communities and a communal economic system, and led to a significant reordering of gender roles and family structure.<sup>2</sup> The physical journey, then, represented a significant cultural break from the past, as Jews were required to secularize, urbanize, modernize, and ultimately, to assimilate, the *de facto* price of admission to the United States. Jews in America feared they had no other option. As Hasia R. Diner shows, “by the early twentieth century they [Jewish Americans] were convinced that the fate of world Jewry was tied to the United States” (*Land* xvi).

While modernity meant that Jews were once again refugees dislocated from the place they had called home since their last exile, it also offered the possibility of finding a new home in the United States. Jewish American Emma Lazarus captures this duality in her sonnet “1492.” That “two-faced year” marks the expulsion of Jews from Spain and the opening of “a virgin world where doors of sunset part,” the place where the “abhorred” and “detested” Jews would be welcomed, America. Unlike many other immigrant groups in this period, Jewish immigrants, who represented a disproportionate number of the period’s immigrants, tended to stay in the United States, many believing they had no home to which they could return. Most came with families, unlike other immigrants (such as the Japanese and Italians) who brought far fewer wives and children to the United States. Jewish immigrants were here to stay, bringing families, even



entire villages and regions (Sorin; Takaki).<sup>3</sup> As was the case for African Americans and Native Americans, modernity also meant increased contact with other racial and ethnic groups. The move to the United States broadened their experiences, presenting, perhaps for the first time, encounters beyond the binary of Jew and Gentile. In America, they found a multicultural nexus in the ghettos of New York where African Americans and immigrants from all over the world lived. Modernity then meant heightened conflicts of assimilation, the hardships and hopes of immigration and exile.

The influx of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe fundamentally transformed what it meant to be Jewish in America. Jews had begun coming to America in very small numbers hundreds of years earlier, long before the American Revolution.<sup>4</sup> It was not until the 1830s that Jews, largely from German areas of Western and Central Europe, began arriving in substantial numbers to the United States. By the 1880s, the beginning of increased migrations from Eastern Europe, there were about a quarter of a million Jews in the United States (Diner). They generally saw themselves as Americans and worked hard to assimilate to their new country, having already asserted a break with the past as part of the effort to become American.<sup>5</sup>

The arrival of the large numbers of Eastern European immigrants inevitably and irrevocably altered the relatively comfortable life of the earlier Jewish immigrants. From 1881 to 1920, while the general US population grew by 112 percent, the Jewish population increased by 1,300 percent, mainly due to the influx of Eastern Europeans (Sorin, "Immigration" 277). Conflict existed at first between the two generations of Jewish immigrants. The newer immigrants—arriving from countries such as Poland, Russia, Romania, Galicia (Austria-Hungary), Silesia, Bohemia, and Slovakia, rather than the earlier migration from Western European countries—brought with them a new culture and their own styles of dress, types of food, musical traditions, and theological perspectives. The more established and acculturated Jews of German origin were at first "ambivalent" to the Eastern European Jewish immigrants (Glazier 8). But as the extreme antisemitism in Eastern Europe increased at the end of the nineteenth century, tensions between the two generations of Jews eased (Sorin; Glazier). Fearing that they too would be seen as part of the "immigrant problem," many established Jewish Americans of German descent took action to help the immigrants melt into the American melting pot (a term popularized by Jewish playwright Israel Zangwill's 1908 play *The Melting Pot*). They founded key Jewish aid

organizations in this period to help the newer immigrants settle in the United States, relocating many immigrants to the Midwest and educating them to American values.

The push to Americanize immigrants through dispersion, education, and employment illustrates an institutionalized effort to require Jewish immigrants to sever ties with the “Old World” and to force a break with the past. Assimilation, couched in terms of the discourse of Americanization and modernization, was the focus of most Jewish aid societies, as well as of public education and government policies in this period. For example, the Industrial Removal Office (IRO), founded in 1901 to help Jews resettle, helped some 80,000 immigrants in eastern cities resettle, find jobs, and build homes in more than 1,000 towns and cities in the Midwest (Glazier). Problematically called “removal,” the effort to resettle Jews invokes connections with the removal of Native Americans from homelands also occurring in this period under the Dawes Act (and earlier under Jacksonian efforts). Of course, Indian removal was vastly different in its implementation and lasting consequences. Jewish immigrants often chose resettlement, and there was no overt coercion on the part of Jewish aid organizations. By contrast, the US Government physically and violently forced Native Americans to leave Indian lands and forcibly removed children and enrolled them in government-funded boarding schools. But both removal efforts were predicated on the same assumption that inculcating modern American capitalist values would help sever these communities’ ties to their distinct cultures. These endeavors were part of the effort to make both groups American but also part of modernity’s project to make them modern.

Conversely, African Americans were denied the right to integrate into American culture in this period, most obviously through legalized segregation in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) in the midst of the influx of Jewish immigrants, but also through violence against African Americans who tried to leave the segregated conditions of the rural South. Jewish immigrants did not face such overt oppression, but acculturation became the means to survival for Jews living in exile with few other options, an “inevitable” necessity of life in America (Hyman 94). Whether the immigrants chose assimilation freely or were subtly required to accept it through inculcation of American values, most Americans, as well as Jewish immigrants, viewed assimilation as the norm for Jewish immigrants.

Racially, however, Jewish Americans came to be seen in this period as a distinct category, not quite black and not quite white (Brodtkin),

a racially ambivalent position that Bryan Cheyette calls the “racial slipperiness of ‘the Jew’” (“Neither” 39). Political cartoons and drawings, for example, represented Jews as having both white and black features with dark skin and exaggerated features, reinforcing the idea that Jews were not quite white and not quite black, yet both black and white, much in the way representations of African Americans at this time exaggerated their features to emphasize difference and distance from whites. In a racially segregated America, the newer immigrants were seen as not-quite-white in part because they filled the same lower rung on the economic hierarchy as other racialized groups, performing “unskilled” manual labor in cities alongside African American migrants from the South. As Karen Brodtkin notes, they “were constructed with stereotypes of blackness—stupid, shiftless, sexual, unable to defer gratification” (71), even if they were seen as different from people of African origin because of their European “white” origins.

While Americans had long made a racialized distinction between whites and nonwhites in order to justify enslavement of Africans and the genocide of Native Americans, the racialization among European immigrants had generally not occurred. As immigration increased significantly, however, divisions began to be made within the white race: those of Anglo-Saxon or Western European origin were seen as superior to those of non-Anglo-Saxon background coming from Eastern and Southern Europe. The dominant culture began to shift the category of “whiteness” in order to offer a rationale for excluding the newly arriving immigrants (Jacobson; Brodtkin).<sup>6</sup> The turn-of-the-century census included new racialized categories that enabled a distinction between those who had arrived in the earlier wave of immigration from Northwestern Europe (English, Germans, and Scandinavians) from the newer immigrants arriving primarily from Southern and Eastern Europe (Jews, Slavs, and Italians) and Asia.<sup>7</sup>

Jews were further categorized as a distinct race from not only native-born Anglo Saxons but from other new immigrant groups as well. With the advent of racialist theories of evolution in Europe and the rise of eugenics at the end of the nineteenth century in Europe and the United States, it became scientifically and popularly accepted that Jews were a semitic race of people. The term *antisemitism* (opposition to Jews based on race) was coined by Wilhelm Marr around 1879 as a racial justification for hostility and persecution of Jews.<sup>8</sup> Zygmunt Bauman notes that the modern term *antisemitism* “recast the object of hostility as ‘Jewishness’ instead of ‘Judaism’” (145). The

coining of the term *antisemitism* in the late nineteenth century signaled the change from thinking of Jews as a religious group to considering them a racial category.

Fixing immigrant groups into racialized categories was one way to make sense of a world that seemed to be spinning out of control in the wake of the dramatic economic, demographic, social, and epistemological changes of modernity. Rather than see the economic and social problems of the United States as outgrowths of the period's rapid urbanization and industrialization, many Americans blamed these social problems on the genetic makeup of the new immigrants (as well as African American migrants from the South), whose arrival was in part a result, not a cause, of such changes.

Political debate over immigration often capitalized on racist arguments in order to justify immigration restrictions (Ludmerer). Voicing a social Darwinist philosophy, nativists argued that the problems associated with immigrants, such as disease, poverty, and crime, illustrated immigrants' innate and unchanging racial inferiority, which justified preventing them from entering the country (Glazier). Finding validation in the newly emerging field of eugenics, many used pseudoscientific arguments of white racial superiority to support their claims that the new immigrants were genetically incapable of adapting to American values and to justify their anti-immigration policies. Among others, US Senator Henry Cabot Lodge and President Theodore Roosevelt invoked racist arguments.<sup>9</sup> Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race: Or the Racial Basis of European History* (1916) argued that the influx of biologically inferior "races" of Southern and Eastern Europe threatened the existence of the superior Nordic race. Ironically, Grant's argument also invoked the discourse of the vanishing American (used to justify the treatment of Native Americans), but in Grant's discussion, it was native-born Anglo Saxons who faced extinction.

In the years following World War I, racist arguments began to take center stage as America withdrew further into its isolationist cocoon. Arguments about the biological inferiority of Eastern and Southern European immigrants began to replace economic justifications. By this time, eugenics theories no longer represented a minority or fringe view but rather illustrated a widespread belief that the genetically inferior "new" immigrants would replace those of Nordic stock unless the federal government stopped immigration. President Calvin Coolidge represented the national fears when he wrote in *Good Housekeeping* in February 1921:

There are racial considerations too grave to be brushed aside for any sentimental reasons. Biological laws tell us that certain divergent people will not mix or blend. The Nordics propagate themselves successfully. With other races, the outcome shows deterioration on both sides. Quality of mind and body suggests that observance of ethnic law is as great a necessity to a nation as immigration law. (qtd. in Ludmerer 378)

Coolidge's article was entitled "Our labor shortage and immigration," but his argument was unmistakably rooted in racist rhetoric.

While the arguments of anthropologist Franz Boas began to emerge in this period to refute claims of a racial hierarchy,<sup>10</sup> pseudo-scientific arguments about the racial inferiority of the newer immigrants prevailed. A series of laws passed after World War I severely curtailed immigration from Southern and Eastern European countries. The federal government instituted a series of literacy tests for entrance to the United States after 1917, followed by the anti-immigration acts of 1921 and 1924, which severely reduced Eastern and Southern European immigration to the United States until the law was revised in 1965.<sup>11</sup> The passage of the Immigration Restriction Act (the Johnson-Reed Act) in 1924, notably the same year as the Indian Citizenship Act, reflected the widespread acceptance of racist thinking and was "a triumph of the eugenics movement," as Kenneth Ludmerer puts it (369). The law instituted quotas based on country of origin, with preference given to immigrants from Northern and Western Europe, that is to say, those presumably of Nordic origins. This preference was codified by requiring that annual immigration from each European nation not exceed 2 percent of the immigrants listed in the 1890 census, the last census when the proportion of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe was significantly smaller than that of immigrants from Western and Northern Europe (Jacobson).

During this period, America held polarized, highly contradictory views about Jews, particularly in relation to modernity. Jews in America were seen as having a fluid, unstable, continually changing and highly performative yet still essentially Jewish identity, what Daniel Itzkovitz calls the "definitional instability" of Jews (185).<sup>12</sup> On the one hand, Jewish immigrants were seen as traditional, anti-modern, and non-Christian who needed to be assimilated and civilized, while on the other hand, they were seen as the source of modern ills, including urbanization, the movement away from agrarian lifestyles, moneylending and banking, and runaway capitalism.<sup>13</sup> The American elite claimed that Jews were, as Brodtkin describes,

“unwashed, uncouth, unrefined, loud, and pushy” (30). On the other hand, Jews were seen as the quintessential parvenus, as Roger Fischer argues, “flaunting the fruits of ill-gotten gains with such ostentatious displays of furs, oversized diamonds, foreign cruises, and pushy forays into gentile seaside spas” (94). The Jew was seen as the immigrant, the foreign element, the alien. Yet in contrast to this perception, Jewish Americans of Eastern European descent helped create American culture, shaping the direction of the popular New York stage (Jerome Kern, George and Ira Gershwin, Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein, and Leonard Bernstein are examples of Jewish Americans who shaped Broadway), composing many of the most quintessentially American songs (for example, Irving Berlin, a Jewish immigrant born in Russia, composed what has often been thought of as an alternate national anthem, “God Bless America”), and creating the Hollywood film industry that has come to be identified worldwide as American.<sup>14</sup> The Jew then was seen paradoxically as un-American and as the ur-American.

Jews in America faced particular stereotypes that other immigrant and ethnic groups did not, in part because age-old stereotypes traveled with them from Europe and in part because of socioeconomic differences between Jews and other immigrants of the period. While stereotypes of Jews as aggressive and immoral businessmen had always been present in America, the Jews of German origin became an acculturated, well-to-do merchant class facing little overt oppression and outright violence in the United States until the period of major economic transition after the Civil War, when a more widespread backlash against Jewish economic and social success arose. Jews faced increasing exclusion by the end of the nineteenth century, in part because they rose up the economic ladder more rapidly than any other immigrant group in this period (Higham). Ironically, the more Jews tried to reach out and become a part of American culture, the more America closed the door on them, and in this way their experience may parallel that of African Americans, whose efforts to be accepted as American were often denied. The social discrimination that Jews faced reached new heights after World War I. Henry Ford’s antisemitic articles in his *Dearborn Independent* and the publication of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*—which purported to explain the historical origins of the Jewish conspiracy to take over the world—appeared in the postwar period, as did increased institutional discrimination against Jews (Sorin). The Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s began to target Jews in addition to African Americans, drawing upon old

Anglo-European folk myths of the Jews as Christ-killers and drinkers of Christian blood.

Political cartoons in popular magazines such as *Puck* (a satiric political weekly founded in 1876) and *Judge* (founded in 1881 by artists seceding from *Puck*) reflect the ambivalence about the position of Jews in American culture. While these popular magazines were filled with ethnic slurs, cartoons lampooning Jews far outnumbered those against other groups, particularly in *Puck* in the late 1880s and the 1890s.<sup>15</sup> Jews were often primitivized, as were African and Native Americans, yet Jews were also represented as overly ambitious in contrast to these two groups; while African and Native American cultures were often coveted as antidotes to modernity, Jews were often seen as carriers of modernization and its evils. Those seeking affirmation of their successful efforts to become modern depicted Jews and other recent immigrants as unable to assimilate to American culture. Unlike representations of other immigrants, however, anti-Jewish stereotypes also emphasized their threat to American culture because of their rapid social and economic mobility, portraying Jews as aggressively smart and threateningly successful.

These stereotypes highlight the backlash against Jews' greater economic mobility compared to that of other immigrant groups, but also represent a holdover of the centuries-old antisemitic stereotypes in Europe, which portrayed Jews as corrupt, exploitative, and dishonest, profiting off the work of others. In contrast to African Americans, who were often depicted as lazy and thus having no work ethic, and to Native Americans, who were forced to learn capitalist values and often depicted as unable to adapt to its work ethic, Jews were shown to demonstrate a perversion of those values with an innate aversion to honest labor (Fischer). Political caricatures often rendered Jews as idle, overweight and round from inaction and lack of manual labor, standing around and calculating how to profit off others' work or suffering, juxtaposed to the slender, lithe bodies of whites, generally depicted hard at work, rescuing others and improving the land. Jewish parents were often depicted as caring more about their money than about their children or even life itself. Such images implied that Jews need not worry about survival because of the never-ending supply of immigrants from Eastern Europe, in contrast to the image in cartoons of American Indians as a dying and vanishing race.

The fear that Jewish immigrants would inundate American culture spilled into newspaper accounts and photographs of the Lower East Side of New York, where most Jewish immigrants settled. Such



representations depicted the living conditions of Jewish immigrants as cluttered, lacking order, dirty and smelly, violating middle-class white codes of cleanliness. Most famously, Jacob A. Riis's 1890 photographic essay, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York*, shed light on the deplorable conditions of the overcrowded tenements, where most immigrants and migrants from the South had settled. Riis's work helped arouse public concern for the urban poor and the overcrowded, squalid conditions in which they lived, and his desire to reform immigrant housing and employment conditions motivated his efforts. Like the photographs of Native Americans by Edward Curtis in this period, Riis's photography documented rapid changes in the wake of modernization. And like Curtis, whose stylized, aesthetically beautiful images still merit admiration, Riis pioneered innovative techniques in the early stages of muckraker journalism, and his work is important because it is among the earliest photographic efforts to document the conditions of New York's urban poor. But also like Curtis's images, Riis's photographs served to "capture" the image of Jewish immigrants in the minds of mainstream America, ironically fixing Jews as disorderly and uncontrollable.

Jewish Americans helped perpetuate these stereotypes, particularly on stage and then with the advent of film. As a means to becoming accepted in American culture, Jewish entertainers invented and performed comic stock types, including the *griner* (the greenhorn or backward newcomer), the *allrightnik* (who adopts all the customs of the new country), the peddler, the butcher, the cantor, and the *schlemiel* husband with his domineering wife (Romeyn and Kugelmass 23). More so than any other group in the twentieth century, Jewish performers borrowed from a variety of ethnic humor in a kind of "ethnic pastiche," to borrow Ronald Sanders's term, including "German dialect routines, Irish imitations, Yiddish parodies, blackface, slapstick, sentimental ballads, standard hoofing, a little ragtime" (Howe 561).<sup>16</sup> Most visibly, Jewish entertainers dominated the performance of blackface minstrelsy and music, particularly by 1910 (Rogin; Sanders). To name a few of the best-known Jewish performers, Irving Berlin inserted Yiddish expressions into so-called coon songs, and his first success as a songwriter was a blackface tune, "Alexander's Ragtime Band"; George Gershwin blended Yiddish folk tunes and black melodies in a blues mixture; Al Jolson's blackface routines were the centerpiece of his career; Sophie Tucker was known as the "World-Renowned Coon Shouter" or the "Manipulator of Coon Melodies"; Eddie Cantor played Salome in blackface, combining racial impersonation with transvestite burlesque;



and George Burns imitated Jolson's blackface (Howe). Jewish performance of blackface first initiated Americans to talking pictures. Just as the first feature-length film on the American scene was the highly inflammatory blackface performance in D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915), the first major American film to use synchronized sound featured the blackface caricature of Jolson in *The Jazz Singer* (1927). Spreading blackface minstrelsy caricatures from the stage to an even larger mass audience, *The Jazz Singer* also sold the powerful narrative of assimilation, with its abandonment of "old world" values, to its largely immigrant audiences.

Several historians have tried to explain the racist performance of blackface by arguing that Jews shared a history of oppression with African Americans and that Jews were able to express sentiments in blackface that white Americans would not deem acceptable in any other form.<sup>17</sup> Such explanations, however, are inadequate justifications for a disturbing part of Jewish American history, because they belie the privilege Jewish Americans gained by appropriating African American songs and exploiting racist stereotypes. Just as African American writer Charles Chesnutt's novel *The Marrow of Tradition* portrayed movement back and forth across the color line to highlight its permeability and social construction, Jewish performers illustrated the fiction of racial categorization by wearing blackface. But unlike Chesnutt, whose novel sought to disprove the fixity of the color line, Jewish performers and later Hollywood directors and studio owners benefited from boundary crossing by fortifying the color line. Their movements back and forth between races highlighted that they were white, confirming the category of whiteness instead of dispelling it. Wearing blackface does not turn one black, it turns one American, Michael Rogin argues;<sup>18</sup> it allowed Eastern European immigrants living in exile to lay claim to an American past to which they never had claim. Jews used blackface to move from being Jewish to being American.

While this period was one of appropriation, in which Jews capitalized on African American musical innovations, it was also a time of heightened collaboration. For example, Billie Holiday's famous lament and protest of the lynching of African Americans, "Strange Fruit," first performed in 1939, was written by Abel Meeropol, son of Russian Jewish immigrants. The collaboration of Jewish and African American musicians greatly influenced the development of American music and theater, particularly on Broadway, in the first half of the twentieth century (Whitfield). The relationship of Jewish Americans to African Americans in this period, then, was one of both

appropriation and cross-fertilization, one of theft and cooperation (to modify Eric Lott's expression "love and theft," which he uses to describe Euro-Americans' relationship to African Americans in the nineteenth century).

The increasing presence of Jewish Americans on the American stage and then in film highlights the growing role of Jews in mainstream American culture. The gradual incorporation of Jews, coupled with the severe decline in their immigration after the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act and the continuing internal migration of African Americans to the North, led to changes in the racial alchemy of the nation by the 1930s. Whites of European descent (including newer European immigrants) were gradually "reconsolidated" into one group, largely in opposition to African Americans, as Matthew Frye Jacobson argues, but this recombination also resulted from the gradual dissolution of the nineteenth-century racial taxonomy and from the more gradual spread of Boasian notions of cultural pluralism. By the 1950s, as Jewish Americans experienced increasing economic success and assimilated into American culture, they too gradually came to be considered white, in part because of this racial reconsolidation and in part because most Americans sought to distance themselves from Adolph Hitler and his use of eugenics to justify the Holocaust (Brodkin; Jacobson). While modernity first led to the categorization of Jews as a racial group inferior to Nordic races, Jews were gradually deracialized, subsumed into mainstream culture, and seen as white Americans with many of the white privileges that this position confers. The modern experience for Jewish Americans came to mean that Jews could choose to be Jewish or, conversely, they could choose not to be Jewish at all (Whitfield 9); Jewish Americans had optional ethnicity. While deracialization did not occur everywhere, for Jews in America Jewish identity became a much more fluid category. As Stephen J. Whitfield writes, "The United States may be the site, however, that has most fully tested the category of Jew, where the definition is loose enough to embrace culture rather than religious belief or the identity of one's mother" (10). The imperatives of religion no longer determined Jewish identity (12).

## NEGOTIATING GENRE IN ABRAHAM CAHAN'S *THE RISE OF DAVID LEVINSKY*

In part because of their growing assimilation, but also because of the need to articulate a Jewish identity in America in the wake of this

assimilation, literature written by Jewish Americans greatly increased by the end of the nineteenth century. A handful of Jewish Americans published essays, speeches, and poetry in the early nineteenth century, but it was not until the 1850s that the first fiction by a Jewish American writer was published, despite the popularity of novels among Jewish American readers.<sup>19</sup> The number of novels by Jewish Americans began to increase significantly in the final two decades of the nineteenth century, in part because Jewish leaders began calling for a Jewish presence in American literature and in part because of the influx of Eastern European immigrants, although most early writings by immigrants were written in Yiddish (Harap). In some ways similar to Native American writers, who had to translate an oral culture to a written form and for some tribal languages to English, Jewish Americans had to translate their experiences from Yiddish to English and adapt Yiddish genres to American ones. Cahan's *Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto* (1896) is considered the first novella written by an Eastern European Jewish immigrant in English. Notably William Dean Howells praised this novella, like he praised Chesnutt's early fiction, as an important specimen of American realism.

An unusual number of Jewish immigrant women wrote about their experiences in this period, and Jewish women of German origin published several novels, particularly in the 1890s.<sup>20</sup> For many Jewish women immigrants, their social and economic power seemed diminished in America even though their civic freedom vastly improved (Burstein). In marked contrast with their experience in Eastern Europe, Jewish immigrants found sharp demarcations between the public and private spheres in America, with the gendering of the public sphere as male and the domestic, private sphere as female. Wives, who were generally expected to work alongside their husbands and support their families in the poverty-stricken ghettos and towns of Eastern Europe (or were sometimes the sole breadwinners in the family when their husbands were religious scholars), found themselves discouraged from working in a culture that expected, often mandated, that married women stay home. While Jewish women's access to education was expanded in the United States, Jewish women came to embody "tradition" and were seen as "the primary transmitters of Jewish culture" (Hyman 169), yet they were also responsible for acculturating their families to American values (114).

English gradually began to replace Yiddish as the literary language of Jewish immigrant writers. As David Martin Fine argues, "Writing fiction in English was an act of assimilation, an affirmation of one's

commitment to the New World, a demonstration, as Leslie Fiedler wrote, ‘that there is an American Jew . . . and that he feels at home!’” (17). No longer feeling confined to autobiographical writings, essays, or poetry as a form of expression, immigrant novelists tended to extol the benefits of assimilation, in part to demonstrate that Jewish immigrants *could* assimilate (Fine). Following World War I, however, novels by Jewish Americans moved from optimistically advocating assimilation as a means to finding a home to an assessment of the dilemmas posed by assimilation (Harap). Cahan’s *The Rise of David Levinsky*, considered one of the most important novels by a Jewish American, marks the shift away from blind embrace of assimilation (Fine). Like Chesnutt’s project in *The Marrow of Tradition*, Cahan’s efforts to show the difficulties along with the gains of assimilation would have been controversial in its time, a period of growing backlash against the masses of Jewish immigrants. Rather than make Chesnutt’s thematic point that “we are just like you,” however, Cahan’s novel attempts to show that “we can live alongside you.”<sup>21</sup>

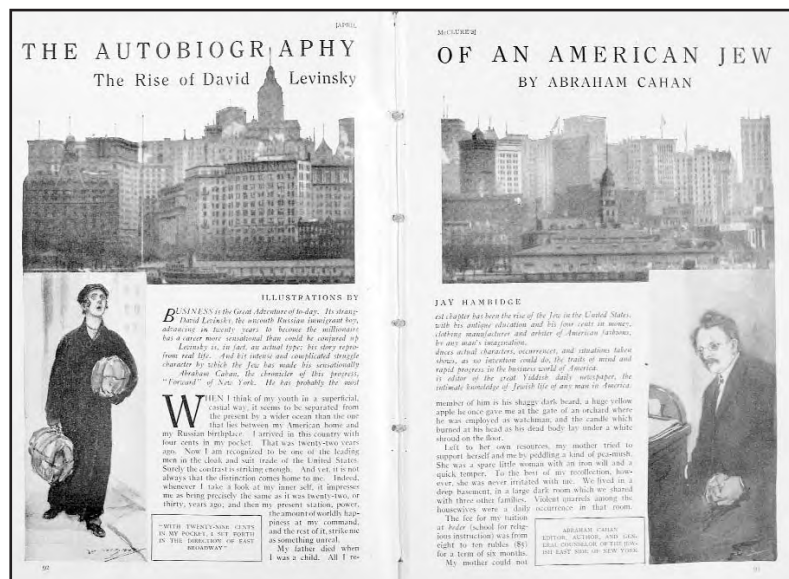
Cahan (1860–1951) immigrated to the United States in 1882, learning his first English words on the two-week trans-Atlantic journey from Eastern Europe. He is perhaps best known for his role as the editor of the Yiddish-language newspaper, the *Jewish Daily Forward*, a position he held from 1903 to 1946. Similar in some ways to D’Arcy McNickle, who moved between the oppositional disciplines of anthropology and fiction, Cahan mediated between disciplinary and linguistic worlds, traveling between journalism and fiction and between Yiddish and English in his efforts to translate Jewish immigrant life to American readers and to interpret American life for his Jewish readers.<sup>22</sup> Soon after he published *Yekl*, Cahan became a newspaper reporter for the *Commercial Advertiser* in 1897, covering the police beat, writing human interest stories about Jewish life in New York’s Lower East Side, and doing interviews with notable figures. He associated with noted intellectual figures, including Hutchins Hapgood; Cahan served as an informant for Hapgood’s *The Spirit of the Ghetto* (1902), a nonfictional exposé of Jewish life in the Lower East Side. He then became the leading force behind the transformation of the *Forward* from a socialist paper to a mass-circulation Yiddish daily that, by 1910, had become the largest Jewish daily in the world (Chametsky, *Ghetto*). In this period he wrote several short stories and published three novels, including *David Levinsky*, his last work of fiction written in English. During this time, he also had a regular column in the *Forward* entitled “The Hester Street Reporter,” in

which he reported on ordinary events on the East Side and provided character sketches of Jewish immigrant life. Interestingly, his genre choice also influenced his language of expression; he wrote most of his fiction in English, while he used Yiddish for his reporting and editing for the *Forward*. Unlike the other writers I examine in this book, fiction for Cahan could not solve a key dilemma of the crisis of representation, in his case the problem of how to represent the hybrid language of Jewish immigrants.

Cahan began writing *David Levinsky*, which chronicles the rise of capitalism through the lens of one exemplary man, not as a novel but as a series of short essays. Indeed, he had no great desire to write for the English-reading public after the publication of his novel *The White Terror and the Red: A Novel of Revolutionary Russia* in 1905 (Marovitz). But in 1912, *McClure's* magazine, a leading muckraking journal of the period,<sup>23</sup> approached Cahan, by then the editor of the *Forward*, to write a two-part series of articles on the rapid economic success of Jewish immigrants. While *McClure's* most likely saw these pieces as exposés, Cahan responded by writing a fictionalized autobiography of a multimillionaire, a sketch that he hoped would help educate the American public and provide a bridge between Jewish immigrants and mainstream Americans (Marovitz). When the first installment appeared in *McClure's* in April 1913, the magazine left its genre ambiguous, implying the piece was a nonfiction portrait, much like the treatment of Mourning Dove's novel, which her editor suggested was a historical document. The first installment of Cahan's story ran as the cover story with the all-caps tagline "THE CONFESSIONS OF A JEW" (indirectly referencing *The Confessions of St. Augustine*). The story itself was entitled "The Autobiography of an American Jew," a title that invokes James Weldon Johnson's problematically entitled novel, *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*" (1912).<sup>24</sup> The table of contents in this issue of *McClure's* billed Cahan's short story not as fiction but as "a remarkable history of the rise of an immigrant Russian Jew who arrived in America with a capital of twenty-nine cents." The editor's introduction to the first installment went further, treating the title character David Levinsky as if he were a historical person and describing his career as "more sensational than could be conjured up by any man's imagination." Ironically, of course, Cahan's imagination had conjured up Levinsky. If readers had doubts about the genre of Cahan's story, the editor insisted that "Levinsky is, in fact, an actual type; his story reproduces actual characters, occurrences, and situations taken from real life." The magazine

described Cahan's role not as the short story writer or even author but as "the chronicler," assuring Cahan's ethnographic authority by stating that Cahan "has probably the most intimate knowledge of Jewish life of any man in America." Much like the use of Mourning Dove's portrait to assure authenticity in the published *Cogewea*, *McClure's* layout attempts to confirm the historical factuality of Levinsky's story by including a drawing of the fictional Levinsky on the left side of the two-page spread balanced by a similar drawing of the actual author Cahan on the opposite page (April 92–93). Both figures face each other as if they were addressing one another (Figure 4.2).

Cahan in all likelihood could not have known how *McClure's* would have packaged his stories, nor could he have known that *McClure's* would run an article the preceding month about the "Jewish Invasion of America."<sup>25</sup> Jules Chametsky defends Cahan: "The writer cannot be held responsible for the slanting of his material and intentions, but the presentation by *McClure's* shows the distressing prevalence at the time of unquestioned anti-Semitic assumptions and stereotypes in the respectable mainstream of



**Figure 4.2** "The Autobiography of an American Jew," drawings by Jay Hambridge, *McClure's*, April 1913.

Photo by University of Michigan Photo Services.

American publishing" (Introduction xviii). Regardless, *McClure's* readers received the first two installments so well that the magazine invited Cahan to write two more, which ran in June and July. The last two installments continued the trend of blurring the line between fact and fiction and went further by including increasingly grotesque drawings of Jewish immigrants.<sup>26</sup>

The novel that was published four years later expanded and developed much of the *McClure's* material, with some notable additions that inevitably put Cahan in the center of the debate about how to represent ethnic minority groups.<sup>27</sup> Most clearly, the novel reiterates and amplifies the central theme that the past and the present "do not comport well" (530). By external appearances, Levinsky succeeds in making a break with the past that becoming modern demands, as evidenced by his successful assimilation and wealth, as many critics have noted.<sup>28</sup> But it is a "regretful success," as Allen Guttman puts it; by the end of the novel, Eric Homberger argues, Levinsky is a "wounded, failed human," highly ambivalent about assimilation, about his relationship to the Old World, and about his Jewish identity. Cahan's modern hero, an "orphan" (358) whose mother was killed by antisemitic violence, allegorically represents Jewish immigrants' loss of connection to their mother tongue in modernity—a move that evokes for present-day readers James Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, who is similarly in search of a mother tongue as a colonial subject in British-occupied Ireland. Like slave narrative authors Harriet Jacobs and Frederick Douglass, who in turn draw upon the conventions of nineteenth-century sentimental fiction, Cahan uses the loss of connection to one's mother to gain reader sympathy and appeal to the seemingly universal maternal bond in order to demand that readers understand the true depravity of modernity for Jewish immigrants living in exile.

The novel adds several minor characters absent from the *McClure's* installments to reiterate the theme of the discrepancy between the past and present. These characters reappear at strategic moments later in Levinsky's life to remind him how far he has come, but also how far removed he is from his past. Any attempt to reconcile the past with the present is represented as a failure and source of "sadness" (516). Perhaps most poignantly, near the end of the novel Levinsky sees one of his childhood teachers from Antomir, but he actively avoids reacquainting himself with the old man. When Levinsky first sees the old man, "the past suddenly sprang into life with detailed, colorful vividness" (503), suggesting a possible unification of the old with the new,



and Levinsky chases after him, hoping to help the recent immigrant. When “a tangle of wagons and trolley-cars” separates the men—metonymic for the modern urban landscape—Levinsky stops himself, realizing that efforts to bring together the past with the present would be to “court trouble.” Similarly, when he has lunch with his fellow shipmate to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of their arrival in America, Levinsky realizes he has “made a mistake” because “the chasm between him and me seemed to be too wide for us to celebrate as ship brothers in any place” (515). With its thematic focus on the incongruity between the past and the present, *David Levinsky* is “a novel richly descriptive of that situation of history and feeling we call modernity” (Engels 38), drawing parallels to Mourning Dove’s *Cogewea*, which similarly depicts a critical period of transition for Native Americans in modernity.

Purporting to be an autobiography, *David Levinsky* is told in the first person through the reminiscences of the now fifty-two-year-old multimillionaire David Levinsky.<sup>29</sup> As a bildungsroman, the novel relies on the past tense to relate the events of Levinsky’s rise, but it also includes self-consciously reflexive meditations set in the present tense, such as “As I write these words” (81), “as I now think of it” (178), and “The time I speak of” (201). These changes in verb tense call attention to the narrator reminiscing in the modern moment after he has made the irreversible break with the past. The novel begins with the phrase, “Sometimes, when I think of my past” (3), announcing its central theme. The wonderfully appropriate opening word “sometimes” (used in both the magazine article and the novel) suggests the perpetual, never-ending repetition of this recurring schism. The use of present tense indicative, “I think,” signals immediately to the reader that there will be two David Levinskys in this novel: the young David who is the subject of the novel’s plot, the boy who escaped the *shtetl* and rose out of poverty, and the middle-aged Levinsky who is the teller of this story, the successful but lonely man who is now reflecting on the past.

Cahan sprinkles deliberate lapses into present tense throughout the narrative to contextualize and interpret the events of the past. As happens with the frame-tale structure of Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the reader knows the end at the beginning but reads to understand how the narrator arrived at such a position in life, to gain “de understandin’ to go ’long wid it” (7), as Janie says in *Their Eyes*. Most commonly, the narrator highlights events that only later in life could he have known would be important in his development. For



example, when he meets Esrah Nodelman, the father of the man who will serve as a key figure in Levinsky's later economic success, he notes, "So I moved to that attic, a step for which, as I now think of it, I cannot but be thankful to fate, for it brought me in touch with a quaint, simple man who is my warm friend to this day, perhaps the dearest friend I have had in America" (178). The use of a retrospective narrative voice set in the present allows the limited first-person narrator to act as the omniscient narrative voice of the novel. Similarly, when Levinsky describes the secular poet he clandestinely read as a youth in Russia, he forewarns the reader that this fact was "destined to have a peculiar bearing on an important event in my life, on something that occurred many years later, when I was already a prosperous merchant in New York" (57), referring to the future meeting of the poet's American-born daughter, the love of Levinsky's life. In some cases, the narrator provides historical context, connecting events occurring in the time of the plot to later events that only a narrator situated in the future could know. After describing antisemitic riots in 1881, Levinsky notes, "This bit of history repeated itself, on a larger scale, twenty-two years later, when Russia was in the paroxysm of a real revolution" (60), calling attention to his own position safely located in a time long after both events have occurred.

Additionally, the change in verb tense positions the narrator as an objective anthropologist of sorts who explains and translates the actions of Jewish immigrants that his American readers might misinterpret. For example, the narrator addresses readers' questions about why the young David was not familiar with English phrases now common among Yiddish speakers: "Thanks to the many millions of letters that pass annually between the Jews of Russia and their relatives in the United States, a number of these words have by now come to be generally known among our people at home as well as here. In the eighties, however, one who had not visited any English-speaking country was utterly unfamiliar with them" (93–94). Here the narrator uses his position to enable the past to "comport well" with the present for his readers, even as it does not for the narrator. His positionality as an already assimilated man far removed from the immigrant boy he describes allows Levinsky to critique Eastern European Jewish culture from the outside. Describing Jewish orthodox culture in Eastern Europe when he was a boy, for example, he notes, "it is exactly the same as it was a thousand years ago" and "it is absolutely inflexible" (110). By distancing himself from the culture he describes, the narrator can address anxieties his readers might have

about Jewish immigrants, for example, concerns about the growing number of Jewish immigrant women entering the American workforce. Describing one incident at the factory (what today would be called sexual harassment), Levinsky lapses into present tense to offer a moral lesson on the inappropriateness of relationships between co-workers and then moves back into past tense to tell his own experience with women in the factory: "The young woman who had won his heart was not an employee of our shop. Indeed, love-affairs between working-men and working-girls who are employed in the same place are not quite so common as one might suppose. The factory is scarcely a proper setting for romance. [. . .] The girls of our shop [. . .] aroused my sympathy, but it was not the kind of reeling that stimulates romantic interest" (155). The present tense here works to assure the reader that his statement is a timeless truth. The use of present tense also rhetorically invokes the voice of the anthropological observer and serves to objectify the subject being described. After seeing the American-born daughter of immigrant friends, Levinsky lapses into present tense twice to assess the superior physical appearance, language, taste, and intellect of American children of immigrants. He notes:

For children of our immigrants to outgrow their parents, not only intellectually, but physically as well, is a common phenomenon. Perhaps it is due to their being fed far better than their parents were in their childhood and youth. (354)

The American children of the Ghetto are American not only in their language, tastes, and ambitions, but in outward appearance as well. Their bearing, gestures, the play of their features, and something in the very expression of their Semitic faces proclaim the land of their birth. (355)

Here the novel invokes a timeless present commonly invoked in ethnographic writing of the early twentieth century, in which the anthropologist depicted the Other as a vestige from another time, somehow removed from history. The consignment of the Other to a bygone era, anthropologist Johannes Fabian argues, is part of the larger project of modernity to differentiate the modern from the past. Cahan's narrative technique, in which the narrator reminds readers of himself in the present relating the story that has occurred in the past, formally enacts the novel's thematic point about the irreparable discrepancy between the past and the present, for it reminds the reader that Levinsky is somehow distinct from the time he recalls.

In Levinsky's failure to bring his two worlds together, the novel makes a related claim for the difficulty of blending Jewish and American cultures, a point that the *McClure's* pieces do not as explicitly address. While Levinsky fails to marry in both publications, the novel includes an additional plot element that did not appear in the original *McClure's* sketch, his failure to marry a non-Jewish woman, presented as his last attempt to marry and gain happiness (527–28). Levinsky claims that while he considered proposing to her, the idea “frightened” (527) him and he ultimately dismisses it because, despite this woman's fondness for Jews, the “medieval prejudice against our people” persists. Notwithstanding Levinsky's own success in breaking with the past, which ironically becomes the source of his ultimate unhappiness in life, here past stereotypes cannot be divorced from the present, suggesting the impossibility of marriage between Jewish and American cultures. Tangentially, Levinsky describes this potential wife as a “Gentile” woman, a word that is defined earlier in the novel as “a person of modern culture” (42), raising the point that he could never truly be comfortable in modernity.

Despite Cahan's efforts to write a fictional portrait rather than a sensationalized insider's view of the forbidden and exotic world of Jewish economic corruption, *David Levinsky* inevitably contributes to the view that *McClure's* hoped to sell to its readers. The account the novel offers of a Jewish businessman's ruthless rise to power risks confirming a prevalent stereotype of Jews that they brought on the problems of modernization. As one critic wrote of *David Levinsky* when it was published in 1917, “Had the book been published anonymously, we might have taken it for cruel caricature of a hated race by some anti-Semite.”<sup>30</sup> Avoiding such stereotypes proved challenging for Cahan, whose fiction, like that of other immigrant writers, was generally confined to the category of dialect or local color tales. Non-Jewish readers consumed such genres to gain a quaint account of a world unlike their own, leading to a rise in the popularity of “slum fiction” among middle-class Americans at the turn of the century.<sup>31</sup>

The novel, not just *McClure's* editorial interventions, perpetuates the misreading of ethnic fiction as insider account by repeatedly blurring the genre distinction between fiction and ethnography. It includes long digressions to explain a Jewish custom or religious practice, even when these anthropological lessons are not essential to the novel's plot,<sup>32</sup> occasional parenthetical references or footnotes to translate foreign-language terms,<sup>33</sup> and almost pedantic interventions to explain the clothing manufacturing industry, again, even when the

plot does not require them.<sup>34</sup> Explaining and demystifying ethnic customs paradoxically highlights the difference between Jewish immigrant culture and the readers', creating distance between the two worlds, as Susan K. Harris argues. While Harris focuses on the third-person narrator in Cahan's "The Imported Bridegroom," the first-person narrator in *David Levinsky* functions similarly when he invokes the rhetorical moves of a native informant. He offers the reader insider information about the practices of Jewish culture—such as briefly glossing *matzoh* as "thin, flat cakes of unleavened bread" (494)—occasionally addressing the reader as "you" (38) to didactically explain a custom. He attempts to translate (and thus desemiticize) some of these foreign practices into American terms, comparing a childhood game in Russia to the American "Eeny, meeny, miny, moe" (11), the Russian Jewish arrangements for Talmud students to New England teachers (27), and the Jewish holiday of Purim to the celebration of the American Revolution (51). By assigning his first-person narrator to the informant role, Cahan, the immigrant author, establishes his own ethnographic authority and distances himself from the very culture his narrator seeks to reveal.<sup>35</sup> As Phillip Barrish argues, "An intimate knowledge of Eastern European Jewish immigrant life could enable an immigrant intellectual to figure as an 'expert,' while, conversely, his status as expert could help him to seem safely distinct from the immigrant world his writing elaborated" (644).

Levinsky indicates his awareness of his role as native informant, describing his discussion of Russian Jewish immigrants with a potential business client as one "of an ethnographic character" (337)—and, in typical Levinsky fashion, he uses his insider positionality for economic gain. When Cahan employs standard American English, not only for his narrator but also in his representation of dialogue, he also gains, not economically, as his character does, but rhetorically. In demonstrating his knowledge of both Jewish and American cultures and his command of immigrant and English languages, Cahan places himself in a superior position over other immigrants, at once an insider to that community but also one who has escaped its trappings. If Cahan's use of dialect in *Yekl* signals his success at becoming American by emphasizing his protagonist's failure to do so, as Hana Wirth-Nesher argues, then Cahan similarly signals his Americanization by using standard English for his narrator's explanations of Jewish customs in *David Levinsky*. In one case, when Levinsky explains a teaching from the Talmud, he does not include the passage but instead describes it as "an equivalent to the saying

that one must do in Rome as the Romans do" (101). This American saying reveals Levinsky's assimilation, but it also highlights Cahan's command of both Jewish and American cultures while allowing him to keep the actual Jewish text hidden from his readers and reveal only what he wants his readers to see. In a similar linguistic joke, Levinsky describes his inability to understand a menu at an upper-class restaurant by noting that it appeared as "Chinese to me" (259), again indicating his initial unfamiliarity with American culture by emphasizing his, as well as Cahan's, current command of its clichés.

On the linguistic level, the novel further emphasizes the impossibility of moving between these two cultural worlds by adopting only standard English and rejecting the possibility of incorporating Yiddish, Hebrew, or even Yiddish-inflected English. While his earlier English writing included Yiddish (for example, *Yekl* and *The Imported Bridegroom*), it is conspicuously absent from *David Levinsky*. The *McClure's* pieces include far fewer characters and very little dialogue to develop the narrative, relying primarily on the narrator's reminiscence. The increase in the number of characters and the amount of dialogue in the novel is easily explained by the difference in genre and length between the two media of publication, but these additions also introduce new problems of representation for Cahan. Levinsky's Yiddish-speaking mother, for example, makes a brief appearance in the first installment of the *McClure's* pieces, speaking three lines of dialogue in all, before she is murdered, the victim of antisemitic violence in Russia. In the novel, however, she lives for fifty pages, and her interactions with her son David and other residents of Antomir are portrayed in detail to offer a more realistic and comprehensive glimpse into the poverty of *shtetl* life, orthodox Jewish culture, and traditional gender roles. The novel's depth of verisimilitude presents a problem for Cahan, one that other realist and ethnic writers in this period faced, namely, how to transcribe the spoken language of his characters, most of whom did not speak standard American English. Cahan's solution is to represent several dialects—including Eastern European *shtetl* Yiddish, Russian, immigrant Yiddish interspersed with English mispronunciations, Yiddish-inflected English of more established immigrants, and native-born American English of different classes—all with the same standardized, formal written English. While the grammar, word choice and content of these dialects differ, Cahan represents them all as identical on the level of syntax. *David Levinsky* employs what Wirth-Nesher describes in her discussion of *Yekl* as "an English translation of an absent Yiddish original" (42).

The narrative voice is written in standard English prose (while Anzia Yezierska's *Bread Givers* is not). Levinsky describes the painstaking efforts he took to learn American slang (241) and gesticulations (328) in reserved English devoid of any ethnic markers, a narrative voice that enables the reader to forget that the characters' struggles are the result of their immigrant situation. Even more significantly, the dialogue is also absent of any ethnic signals, a move that parallels Levinsky's occasional desemiticization of Jewish customs. Only infrequently does the first-person narrator describe the type of language being spoken, such as his own "wretched English" (134) in comparison to his English teacher's American-born language, but then the two Englishes appear the same on the written page, or the reader is simply told "she said in Yiddish" (368) in the midst of paragraphs of standard, fluent English dialogue. The reader is aware of such struggles only occasionally when Levinsky mentions it, such as the rare case when he describes his own dialogue as "dropping into the Talmudic singsong, which usually comes back to me when my words assume an argumentative character" (203). The scarcity of such descriptions leaves the reader wondering how many other times similar linguistic slips had occurred but were not revealed.

In contrast to Hurston, who includes African American vernacular in her novel's dialogue, and Mourning Dove, who incorporates the sounds of spoken Salish and the slang spoken on the range, Cahan divulges the language his characters speak only in occasional passing references, usually after the dialogue has already been presented. In one case, for example, after Levinsky speaks with the poet Abraham Tevkin for several minutes—represented by two pages of standard English dialogue—readers learn that "He quoted Hebrew, he spoke partly in Yiddish and partly in English" (458). Still more occasionally, the novel includes a non-English word with its English translation. For example, "Reb" is included but also translated as Rabbi (29). Even more rarely, the narrator parenthetically notes a mispronounced English word by an immigrant speaker (although never himself), even as it is presented in standard English. For example, Meyer Nodelman, the prosperous son of a Jewish immigrant, asks Levinsky, "And what will you do after you finish (he pronounced it 'fiendish') college?" (180). The reader hears his mother's Eastern European Yiddish accent only late in the novel; when the reader first sees her interacting with her son in Russia, the dialogue suggests she calls him "Davie" (19), an Americanized version of David, but when he is a grown man in America and meets a childhood crush, he reintroduces himself first

as “David” and then as “Dovid” (385) when she doesn’t recognize him, indicating the Yiddish/Hebrew pronunciation of his name.

Levinsky’s disdain for immigrant English is evident when he describes the language spoken at the Catskills resort: “There was a hubbub of broken English, the gibberish being mostly spoken with self-confidence and ease. Indeed, many of these people had some difficulty in speaking their native tongue. Bad English replete with literal translations from untranslatable Yiddish idioms had become their natural speech” (426). These erasures of nonstandard dialects and accents indicate Levinsky’s efforts to distance himself from his past, but they also reveal Cahan’s perhaps unintended endeavor to distinguish himself from his immigrant subjects. In a metacommentary on Cahan’s own project, Levinsky proclaims his disdain for immigrant writers, of which Cahan himself is obviously one: “I regarded everything that was written for the East Side with contempt, and ‘East Side writer’ was synonymous with ‘greenhorn’ and ‘tramp’” (410). Included to distance Cahan the author from his materialistic character Levinsky, this comment also serves to create a gap between Cahan and his immigrant subject matter because the reader is aware that Cahan’s writing is far superior to the “gibberish” and “hubbub of broken English” of other immigrants. Cahan achieves a similar effect when he employs stilted diction in the novel’s nonspoken prose. For example, when Levinsky describes the feeling he gained from his new knowledge of geography, he says he was “overborne by a sense of my growing perspicacity” (169), a word that many of his native-born American readers might not know without looking up. Levinsky demonstrates his linguistic superiority but so does Cahan.

Conversely, *Yekl*, written two decades before *David Levinsky*, reproduces Yiddish-speaking characters’ mispronunciations and misunderstandings of English and highlights them in italics. Admittedly difficult to read—Louis Harap describes Cahan’s efforts in *Yekl* as “an extremely ugly dialect” (495)—this typographic notation at least requires the American reader to encounter immigrant English, only for a brief moment and only on the textual level, but there nevertheless. Wanting to reclaim Cahan’s use of Yiddish dialect in *Yekl* as a kind of modernist collage, Sara Blair similarly argues that “Cahan’s American readers inhabit—briefly, experientially—a space of encounter not unlike the Lower East Side: a place of estrangement from secure reference where a definitively modern identity is being forged” (264). Likewise, Philip Joseph suggests that Cahan’s inclusion of Yiddish-English dialect in his early fiction enables him to portray

Jewish immigrant culture as dynamic and adapting to modernity. Cahan, however, stopped using dialect soon after he published his first fiction and vowed never to use dialect in his English stories because of the danger of invoking Jewish stereotypes (Harap 494). The “constant hybridity” (Joseph 30n7), the language Cahan uses for his immigrant characters in his earlier fiction, has virtually vanished in *David Levinsky*.

Cahan attempts to capture the hybrid English spoken by most Jewish immigrants only once in the novel, near its conclusion when Levinsky’s ex-lover Dora returns to warn him about her husband’s financial schemes (491). She speaks first about her American-born daughter and then about her son:

“I don’t care what it is. A girl should be a girl. She ought to think of love, of real happiness.” (Her glance seemed to be the least bit unsteady.) “But I ain’t ‘practical,’ don’t you know. Exactly what my mother—peace upon her [this in Hebrew]—used to say. She, too, did not think it was necessary to be in love with the man you marry. But then she did not go to college, not even to school. Of what good is education, then?” [. . .]

“He’s all right,” she continued. And in Yiddish, “He is my only consolation.” And again in English, “If it wasn’t for him life wouldn’t be worth living. Good-by,” she said, as we paused in front of the elevator door.

Atypical of the rest of the novel, this brief moment reminds the reader that this character moves seamlessly between Yiddish, Hebrew, and American English, even using the American slang “ain’t.”

The sole instance when the novel acknowledges the translation of foreign languages to English occurs with samples of Hebrew poetry that have been translated into what Levinsky calls “prosaic English” (452). The reader is told that the poet, most probably Cahan’s fictional creation (Chametsky), writes “truly marvelous” poetry, but if the reader finds the words written by Cahan less than stunning, Levinsky’s self-deprecating comments excuse his failure: he notes (in the present tense) that their rhythm is “lost in my translation” and their vigor and beauty “elude the English at my command.” Here Cahan himself can attempt to write poetry through the pen of an invented character and hide behind the crass materialistic language of his narrator to excuse his own lack of poetic skill.

The only dialect transcribed in the novel is working-class American English, including “ain’t” (394; 432), usually spoken by American-born characters, and phonetic “eye” dialect, such as American-born



Mrs. Nodelman's speech: "'Glad to meechye,' Mrs. Nodelman welcomed me. 'Meyer should have broughchye up long ago. Why did you keep Mr. Levinsky away, Meyer? Was you afraid you might have reason to be jealous?'" This eye dialect is followed by her husband's broken immigrant English, antithetically written in standard English (361). Ironically, Levinsky sees Mrs. Nodelman's ungrammatical English as more authentic, noting, "That she was American-born was clear from the way she spoke her unpolished English" (362). The reader equates the working-class speech of the nonimmigrant American with the quaint dialect used in local color writing of the nineteenth century, most famously in Mark Twain's fiction but also as a hallmark of American realism. For his Jewish immigrant characters, however, Cahan refused to cater to the constraints of local color writing, as Joseph argues: "In relation to an American audience intent on a literary tour of 'the Jewish colony,' Cahan works to present Jewish immigrants as rapidly developing people, contemporary urban figures irreducible to souvenirs" (28).

While he did not use realism's characteristic dialect by the time he wrote *David Levinsky*, Cahan saw himself as part of the realist literary tradition, sharing its view of literature as a tool for political change. He modeled himself after Russian authors Tolstoy and Chekhov, as well as American writers Howells (whose novel *The Rise of Silas Lapham* [1885] provided the inspiration for the title of Cahan's final novel) and Stephen Crane (Harap). In an 1889 article "Realism," Cahan wrote that the purpose of art is "the pleasure we derive from recognizing the truth as it is mirrored in art" (qtd. in Chametsky, *Ghetto* 38). As Chametsky puts it, "In literary matters Cahan was from first to last a Realist" (*Ghetto* 29). Thematically *David Levinsky* occupies itself with the modern, but formally it draws on the realist literary conventions from which Modernist writers were breaking. The novel represents Cahan's final attempt to mimetically represent the Real of Jewish immigrant experience; it presents an almost epic portrait of life in the Lower East Side of New York, including seamy descriptions of Yiddish theater in America (159–63), the poverty of the Lower East Side, and lengthy examples of prostitution.

Yet in his refusal to represent Jewish immigrant life on the linguistic level, Cahan inadvertently contributes to the burial of the realist novel. Coming at the tail end of the golden age of American realism, *David Levinsky* serves as an elegy to that tradition, at least for Jewish writers seeking to represent Jewish immigrants living in exile. The novel unintentionally bolsters the Modernist critique of realism that

language cannot transparently represent reality, demonstrated by Cahan's failure to find a formal means of representing Jewish-immigrant English, itself a hybrid product of the modern era's changes that led to the challenge of representation. Cahan's fictional poet Tevkin decries his inability to write while living in "exile" (458) in the "strange land" of America. Similarly, Cahan, perhaps inadvertently, suggests that the realist novel cannot represent the hybrid and commodified language of modern America, despite Levinsky's proto-postmodern claim that Tevkin has in fact written poetry (a poem about not being able to write poetry) and Cahan's parallel effort to produce a realist novel.

On the one hand, thematically *David Levinsky* illustrates the impact Eastern European Jews have had on America, transforming American culture itself to reflect its immigrant influences. As Levinsky argues, "Foreigners ourselves, and mostly unable to speak English, we had Americanized" America (443). On a formal level, however, his novel fails to transform the genre of the novel to include Jewish contributions, in contrast to what McNickle and Mourning Dove more successfully do to signal the adaptation of Native American cultures to modernity. While the novel includes translated bits of religious text (40; 101), Hebrew poetry (452), and rabbinical teachings (359), it does not experiment with language and discounts the mutual borrowings and crosscultural mediations that define the modern era.

In his representation of language, Cahan's approach erases Jewish immigrant culture even as the novel works to chronicle that very culture. Perhaps he used standard English to appease anxieties that immigrants were irrevocably changing American English, a charge Henry James made vocally in this period (Chametsky). Some, like Howells, celebrated Cahan's work as successfully giving up ties to a foreign culture and language rooted in the past (*Ghetto* 72–74). The lack of Yiddish in the novel enacts the novel's theme that the past has no role in the present and thus provides a neat and tidy marriage of form and theme from a new critical perspective. But the cultural work performed by capitulating to such aesthetic demands and using only standard English represents a lost chance for Cahan to perform the function of mediator in his English-language writing, a role that he so greatly desired throughout his life. By only rarely transcribing Yiddish words and only occasionally including mispronunciations of English words by Yiddish-speaking immigrants, Cahan never asks his readers to travel linguistically to the immigrants' world; instead, by translating the many dialects of Eastern European Jews to the middle-class

native-born Americans' English, Cahan as novelist performs all the labor required in intercultural encounter. In effect he releases American readers of any obligation to accommodate or adapt to the radical changes occasioned by the influx of Eastern European immigrants to the United States in this period. American readers can continue to see themselves as immune from making accommodations to modernity, for the immigrant (character and author) has already made the necessary changes for American readers. Cahan further misses the opportunity to reform the realist novel and demonstrate its viability in the modern era.

### ANZIA YEZIERSKA'S HYBRID AESTHETIC IN *BREAD GIVERS*

Anzia Yeziarska (c. 1880–1970), who immigrated to the United States about a decade after Cahan to flee the antisemitism and poverty of Eastern Europe,<sup>36</sup> offers an alternative in her fiction to the challenge she and Cahan faced in representing Jewish immigrant culture and dialect. Speaking only Yiddish when she and her family arrived and settled in the overcrowded ghetto of the Lower East Side of New York, Yeziarska decided soon after her arrival to become a writer, eventually publishing dozens of short stories in the 1910s and four novels in the 1920s, all in English. In choosing a career as a writer, Yeziarska defied traditional roles for Eastern European Jewish women and resisted the genre pressure that immigrants faced to write “real” accounts of their experiences, a path that Cahan helped forge before her.

Yeziarska, much like Hurston and McNickle, occupied an interstitial space, writing about the very community she had to leave in order to become a writer, even capitalizing on her status as an insider to Jewish immigrant life in order to rise out of the ghetto that readers believed they were getting access to in her fiction.<sup>37</sup> When Hollywood turned Yeziarska's first short story collection *Hungry Hearts* (1920) into a highly successful silent film in 1922, it also turned Yeziarska herself into an overnight sensation. Headlines around the country anointed Yeziarska the “Cinderella of the Sweatshops,” the “Queen of the Ghetto,” and “The Immigrant Cinderella” (Yeziarska, *Red Ribbon* 61). Like her fiction, Yeziarska herself became a narrative to be consumed; as one Hollywood writer reportedly told her, she *was* “the personification of the happy ending that Hollywood has been turning out” (54). Ironically, while Yeziarska was coveted for her exotic Jewish immigrant status, the film adaptation of *Hungry Hearts*

desemitized Yeziarska's stories. Studio head Samuel Goldwyn, a Jewish immigrant from Russia himself, insisted that all Jewish elements be removed in order to portray a more generic immigrant American story (Rivo). The movie starred Sara Ferguson, an Irish American actress, who played the daughter of an ethnically ambiguous woman, played by a veteran of the Yiddish stage, and it replaced the hardship and poverty of life in the Jewish tenements of New York with images of American success and upward mobility. As Sharon Pucker Rivo notes, "The film rendition sanitizes the anguish of many of Yeziarska's downtrodden characters" (38).

Yet even while the film adaptation of *Hungry Hearts* and its publicity campaign functioned to reassure Americans that immigrants could assimilate (Botshon; Rivo), Yeziarska was already at work on her second novel, *Bread Givers*, which would contradict this claim by instead suggesting immigrants can never successfully break from the past.<sup>38</sup> Published in 1925, *Bread Givers* is a bildungsroman that seems to fit both the linear pattern of the American Dream story and the nineteenth-century marriage plot for its first-person narrator, Sara Smolinsky. Similar to Mourning Dove's *Cogewea*, which ends with the intended marriage between the two mixed race characters and the punishment of the villain, *Bread Giver* ends with Sara's plans to marry another Jewish immigrant and to reunite with her estranged father. The promise that order will be restored—even as neither marriage is actually portrayed and thus perpetually deferred—indicates a romance novel rather than the true documentary account that many readers sought in ethnic writing. *Bread Giver*'s reliance on one-dimensional character types—Zalmon the fish vendor is overly repulsive, her father is extremely oppressive, and Moe Mirsky is the worst possible swindler imaginable—signals sentimental, even melodramatic, fiction and not an autobiography of a real person, again similar to *Cogewea*'s use of stock characters. These genre signals indicate Yeziarska's efforts to resist the anthropologization of her writing, even as readers continue to ignore her efforts.<sup>39</sup> Just as Rachel Blau DuPlessis suggests that women writers have used the romance novel as a subversive narrative technique, I am making an analogous claim that Yeziarska, like Mourning Dove, used the romance genre to destabilize reader expectations for an insider's account of the immigrant experience.

Yeziarska's fiction enabled her to address stereotypes of Jews widely circulated by the time she arrived in the United States<sup>40</sup> and to preserve the hybrid immigrant culture she saw disappearing in the midst of nativist efforts to halt Eastern European immigration.

Thematically, *Bread Givers* provides a feminist corrective to David Levinsky's view of women as trophies; when Max Goldstein courts Sara, he recounts his rise to wealth in a story reminiscent of *David Levinsky*, but Sara rejects his marriage proposal when she realizes that a wife to him "would only be another piece of property" (199), just as Levinsky viewed women and marriage. On the formal level as well, *Bread Givers* offers an alternative to Cahan's representation of Jewish immigrant culture and language.

While it was published less than a decade after Cahan's *David Levinsky*, *Bread Givers*, written at the height of Yeziarska's career, represents the influences of Modernist avant gardism, while *David Levinsky*, the last novel Cahan was to publish, reflects the American realist tradition of the late nineteenth century. Perhaps the earliest example of experimentalism in Jewish immigrant writing in American literature,<sup>41</sup> *Bread Givers* engages in an intertextual dialogue with Modernist writers of the period, both in the novel's thematic focus on nostalgia for a lost past and in the formal experimentation in which Yeziarska engaged. While she was not a direct participant in Ezra Pound's Modernist circle, Yeziarska engages in yet simultaneously revises the modernist project in order to expand the meaning of modernity to include the experiences of Jewish immigrant women.<sup>42</sup> Her genre blending and use of a hybrid Yiddish-English suggest that the experiences of Jewish immigrants in the modern era demanded new forms of representation, that the language to depict these new experiences needed to be made new, or perhaps more aptly remade new. As Yeziarska once told an interviewer after her first stories had gained critical attention, she rejected convention and traditional form in her writing: "If the method I evolved is unconventional, lacking in form, so much the better" (qtd. in Henriksen 120). Lkening these literary conventions to the mass-produced clothing she herself had helped produce in her earlier factory work, Yeziarska earnestly proclaimed her defiance of traditional writing forms, telling the interviewer, "I care nothing for the ready-made mental garments of the writer who has been fitted by colleges and short story classes." Not ignoring the critique of class and formal education implicit in her statement, I also note that Yeziarska's comment reveals her desire to break free from previous literary traditions, a discursive move associated with Modernism.

The advent of Modernism enabled immigrant writers (just as it did American-born writers) to experiment with representational strategies and narrative forms that could move beyond the dialect stereotypes

with which Cahan and other earlier immigrant writers were shackled (Harris). Of late there has been an increasing awareness of the need to examine Jewish interventions in Modernism. Maren Linett, for example, argues that Jewishness “played a pivotal role in the creation of modernist fiction” (250). Yet recent work on Jews and Modernism has ignored formal experimentalism as an important element of Jewish writing in this period, emphasizing thematic concerns that link it to Modernism or focusing on representations of Jews by non-Jewish canonical Modernists. Literary critics (e.g., Ferraro, “Avant-garde Ethnic”; Harris) date the genesis of formalist experimentation by Jewish American writers to the 1930s, specifically to the writings of Henry Roth and Michael Gold, after Yeziarska had largely disappeared from public view.

But Yeziarska also benefited from Modernist experimentation with literary form because it enabled her to break out of the strictures of vernacular fiction and realism. Yeziarska began writing *Bread Givers* immediately after she found herself ensconced in the New York literary scene, meeting Edward Dahlberg, Waldo Frank, William Lyons Phelps; lunching at the Algonquin and attending parties with noted writers; and befriending novelists Zona Gale, Mary Austin, and Fannie Hurst, among others, in 1922 and 1923.<sup>43</sup> During this time she took an overseas journey to Europe (akin to McNickle’s), “where she made the usual literary rounds” (Dearborn, *Love* 151), meeting Joseph Conrad, George Bernard Shaw, Israel Zangwill, H.G. Wells, and John Galsworthy (head of PEN) in England and visiting Gertrude Stein in Paris. Upon her return from her proto-modernist excursion, she settled in New York and established a strict writing schedule that led to the writing of *Bread Givers*, her first major publication since her rise to popular fame in Hollywood in the early 1920s.

In *Bread Givers*, Yeziarska blends multiple genres, negotiating between realist and modernist forms, autobiography and fiction, religious and secular discourses, oral and written expression, and Yiddish and English syntax. Through her genre and linguistic destabilization, Yeziarska experiments with the formal elements of the novel. A different model than that of the Modernists, Yeziarska’s experimentalism reflects the dislocation as well as the cultural hybridity that Jewish immigrants experienced in this period. Billed as the archetypal struggle between a father of the Old World and a daughter of the New World, invoking generational clashes as well as gender battles in the modern’s effort to forge a break with the past, *Bread Givers* offers nothing experimental in its plot, which now seems clichéd. Yet the

novel addresses many of the central challenges that Modernists faced but offers different solutions. Thematically, the novel insists that the break with the past many Modernists craved is impossible for Jewish immigrants. Formally, it similarly denies the possibility of breaking with the past by incorporating elements of the Old World in its narrative voice and structure, an adaptation that registers as its own kind of formalist experimentation. As Yeziarska wrote in *Red Ribbon*, her first writing teacher warned her that she should not “discard the rules and create [her] own form” (78), but Yeziarska did just that, creating her own form by blending old and new genres as well as Yiddish and English syntax “in defiance of the teacher’s advice,” publishing her first short story soon after his chastisement.

On one level, *Bread Givers* seems to embrace the Modernist desire to break with the past, to awake from the nightmare of history, as Stephen Dedalus says in *Ulysses* (1922). Sara, it would seem, successfully sheds her ties to her father, metonymic for her severed connection to the Old World. Her purchase of a new dark blue suit (most likely factory-made by the Lower East side Jewish immigrants she thought she was escaping [238–39]) and her subsequent refusal to tear the garment at her mother’s funeral in observance of Jewish laws of mourning (255) symbolize her efforts to sever her ties with the past. But *Bread Givers* suggests that the deliberate rupture from the past is ultimately unattainable for Sara and, by analogy, for Jewish immigrants in America. While at college, Sara first realizes the possibility that she will forever be tied to the past. Flinging herself to the ground in despair, she thinks, “Even in college I had not escaped from the ghetto. [. . .] Was there no escape? Will I never lift myself to be a person among people?” (220). Invoking the imagery of racial uplift, “lift myself to be a person,” Sara, at this point of the novel, sees her ties to the past as dehumanizing and alienating. Her project will not be to escape from the past but to see herself as “a person among people” while still maintaining those ties.

*Bread Givers* challenges New York’s status as the quintessential modern city by reconfiguring it as the past from which its narrator must break. In other words, Sara’s past is not the *Old World* but *New York*. After Sara’s three older sisters have been married off to men of her father’s choosing, Sara and her parents leave New York to run a grocery store. Sara expresses nostalgia for what has been defined as characteristically modern: “I wanted back the mornings going to work. And the evenings from work. The crowds sweeping you on, like waves of a beating sea. The shop. The roar of the rushing



machines. The drive and the thrill of doing things faster and faster” (129). Sara’s lament for New York invokes the modern conditions that David Harvey has since called the “time-space compression” of the early twentieth century, a transformation that led many to feel as if time had accelerated and space had collapsed through technological innovations and an increase in production. Sara voices nostalgia for the rapid and dizzying changes of modernity, the very conditions that many Modernists despaired.

Unlike many of Yeziarska’s characters in her other fiction, Sara does not stay confined to the Lower East Side but rather leaves home to escape the gender oppression of her traditional Jewish father. Sara refuses her father’s efforts to marry her off and instead leaves New York to attend college in the Midwest against her father’s wishes. She likens her choice to leave New York to “Columbus starting out for the other end of the earth” (209), positing New York as the Old World and the Midwest as the New: “I felt like the pilgrim fathers who had left their homeland and all their kin behind them and trailed out in search of the New World” (209). She dubs the Midwest college town “this New America” (210) and “this new world” (211) and seeks to break from her New York past, what she calls “the hunger and the turmoil of my ghetto years” (211). Notably, Sara depicts her decision to defy her father *not* as the feminist move of the New Woman but rather as a return to “the old, old story,” the Biblical story of Jacob and Esau. Unlike Esau—who is tricked out of his birthright for a mess of pottage—Sara follows her father’s teachings not to “take the mess of pottage” (202), ironically, by pursuing her dream of becoming a writer rather than accepting marriage to a husband of her father’s choosing.

At the end of the novel, Sara realizes that she must invite her old world father to live in her new home with her new husband. Sara comments, “Just as I was beginning to feel safe and free to go on to a new life with Hugo, the old burden dragged me back by the hair” (295). The “old burden,” as she describes her obligation to her father, invokes the persistence of old world values in the modern world. “I suddenly realized that I had come back to where I had started twenty years ago when I began my fight for freedom. But in my rebellious youth, I thought I could escape by running away. And I realized that the shadow of the burden was always following me, and here I stood face to face with it again” (295). The “shadow” of the past cannot be completely overshadowed by the present, she realizes, and the Old cannot be completely supplanted with the New.



The past haunts Sara as it does Joyce's Dedalus, but her past is not a nightmare from which she is trying to awake but a reality that she cannot escape as a Jewish immigrant living in exile with no home to which she can return. *Bread Givers* puts forth a syncretic model of the Old melding with the New, perhaps not painlessly or comfortably, but nonetheless both co-existing. In her first job out of college Sara becomes part of the broader national effort to Americanize and modernize immigrants, teaching English to immigrants in New York and helping these young newcomers rid themselves of their old world customs. Her fiancé Hugo, who is himself the principal of an assimilationist school, seeks to learn Hebrew from her old world father, undoing in a sense the process of breaking with tradition that Sara had begun. The final lines of the book reiterate this poignant realization: "Still we lingered for the mere music of the fading chant. Then Hugo's grip tightened on my arm and we walked on. But I felt the shadow still there, over me. It wasn't just my father, but the generations who made my father whose weight was still upon me" (297). Not only is Sara unable to escape her ties to her father, but even more broadly she cannot escape her ties to "the generations who made my father." Sara's recognition that the past forever haunts the present echoes David Levinsky's closing lament, and both contrast to Hurston's Janie, who draws in the past and wraps it around herself, and to Mourning Dove's Cogewea, who embraces the past through her vision of the buffalo skull.

In an ending "laden with ambiguity and compromise" (Von Rosk 331), Sara's inability to break with the past, however, is not necessarily a self-chastising critique of her failure to do so. Nor is it a disturbing containment of Sara's early feminist efforts to be independent and have a room of her own, as literary critics often read it;<sup>44</sup> nor is it an essentialist argument that she will always be a Jew wherever she lives. And neither is it a failure of Yeziarska to write beyond the ending of marriage, particularly when compared to Cahan's protagonist Levinsky, who laments his failure to marry despite his material success.

Rather, Yeziarska, like Mourning Dove and Hurston, suggests that the very project of modernity to force a chasm between the old and the new is flawed. The past always remains in the present, and in an argument that parallels Paul de Man's point in *Blindness and Insight*, the present depends on the past to define itself as new. This revised understanding of modernity registers on two levels. As a gender critique, Yeziarska indicates that Sara cannot ultimately break from the patriarchal system of her Eastern European Jewish past because it still

exists in the present in modern America. As a cultural critique, Yeziarska suggests that exiled Jews in America cannot emulate the Modernist choice to break with tradition.

While Sara laments her inability to escape the burden of the past, Yeziarska's novel, like McNickle's and Hurston's, makes a case for the value of forging such hybrid ties. On a formal level, Yeziarska interjects the popular rags-to-riches story of American culture with Jewish folklore, creating a hybrid novel infused with Yiddish proverbs and American expressions, Jewish customs and American practices, old world traditions and new world values, a move about which Cahan's *David Levinsky* only hints. Yeziarska's formal hybridity is seen most notably in her experimentation with the first-person narrative voice, which modulates between the patterns of spoken Yiddish and written standard Americanized English, in contrast to Cahan's narrator.<sup>45</sup> Yeziarska was the first Jewish American writer to employ a first-person narrator who uses an immigrant Yiddish-English dialect (Drucker).<sup>46</sup> Yiddish vocabulary and grammar inflect her written English, not just in the spoken dialogue of immigrant characters, as writers had done before her, but also in the written prose of the narrator. As Delia Konzett notes, "The hybrid culture of the Lower East Side had to be articulated in its own language" ("Administered Identities" 613).<sup>47</sup>

In the opening of the novel, for example, the narrator Sara recalls her childhood anxieties about money:

But from always it was heavy on my heart the worries for the house as if I was mother. I knew that the landlord came that morning hollering for the rent. And the whole family were hanging on Bessie's neck for her wages. Unless she got work soon, we'd be thrown in the street to shame and to laughter for the whole world. (1)

The word order here is changed for emphasis to emulate spoken Yiddish. "But from always it was heavy on my heart the worries for the house as if I was mother" (1). Grammar errors are included: "And the whole family were hanging on Bessie's neck for her wages" (1). Yeziarska includes non-standard English not to ridicule the immigrant dialect, as earlier writers (both Jewish and non-Jewish) often did, but rather to emphasize Sara's concern for all of the members of her family. In this example, Sara puts "the whole family" first in her sentence to reflect that her family is first in her thoughts. Yeziarska represents the exaggeration and emotionalism characteristic of spoken

immigrant Yiddish: “Unless she got work soon, we’d be thrown in the street to shame and to laughter for the whole world” (1). Again, this inclusion serves not to mock but to preserve, even celebrate, a cultural mannerism.<sup>48</sup> Yeziarska’s infusion of emotional expressivity might be seen as a reversion to the emotionalism of Victorian literature from which the Modernists were trying to escape, yet it could also be seen as a break from Modernist writing. Some of her contemporary reviewers coveted the expressionism of her writing because it offered a refreshing (paradoxically new) old world alternative to the extreme emotional austerity of modern American culture, even as other contemporaries criticized her writing as a relic of the past. Yeziarska’s experimentation with Yiddish, for example, led the *New York Herald Tribune* to remark, “Miss Yeziarska has accomplished for the Yiddish what John Synge has done for the Gaelic. [. . .] She has rendered its beauty in English without losing any of the color of the original” (qtd. in Henriksen 217).

Yeziarska simultaneously faced strong criticism from some Jewish critics for portraying Yiddish-speaking immigrants as infantile and comical.<sup>49</sup> Despite these attacks, Yeziarska’s linguistic hybridity offers not only a solution for Cahan’s desemiticized narrative voice but an alternative poetic aesthetic to Pound’s “make it new,” with its implicit suggestion that the past has nothing to offer the present. By incorporating spoken Yiddish in the written English form, Yeziarska reforms the very language of the modern novel itself. Rather than T. S. Eliot’s goal of shoring “these fragments [. . .] against my ruins” and creating order in the modern world, Yeziarska revises literary form to carve out a home for Jewish immigrants and reshape American culture itself to include Jewish Americans, much like the efforts of Mourning Dove, McNickle, and Hurston to add orality to the novel form. As Yeziarska described her writing process, “I gather these fragments, words, phrases, sentences, and I paste them together with my own blood” (qtd. in Wexler 158). Drawing upon the early twentieth-century meaning of “blood,” Yeziarska suggests that her ethnic identity, her Jewishness, shores the fragments of her thoughts to produce her art. Her linguistic hybridity represents a new cultural form produced out of the blending and clashing of Yiddish and English—what Susan Stanford Friedman calls “fusion hybridity” (*Mappings*)—a model of intercultural contact in which both cultures adapt to form a new one rather than an understanding of crosscultural encounter in which both participants lose out, as Cahan’s *David Levinsky* suggests. Yeziarska’s experimentalism with narrative voice provides readers with

an opportunity to live, at least on a discursive level, in another culture, to experience, at least while reading, what it is like to be an outsider. While readers should not expect to gain factual information about another culture, as they might expect from an ethnographic account or historical document, the novel's hybrid language requires readers to acquire communication skills needed to survive crosscultural encounters. By contrast Cahan's standard-English-only narrator denies readers the opportunity for linguistic immersion in a Jewish immigrant community.

While both Yeziarska's and Cahan's novels are told in the first person, *Bread Givers* offers a unified character as its narrator and is told sequentially, in the past tense, with no sense of a present-day narrator looking back and reflecting on her life, while Cahan's novel portrays two distinct characters, the present-day narrator and the young immigrant character. *David Levinsky* formally enacts the schism its protagonist experiences in modernity, while *Bread Giver's* narrative voice develops over the course of the novel from a hybrid Yiddish-English language to a more asceticized standard American English grammar that reflects the acculturation of its protagonist, a development to be expected in a bildungsroman. Yet its use of both forms of English also serves to enact the novel's thematic point about cultural hybridity. Near the end of the novel, Sara reminds the reader of her appropriation of standard English by disparaging the immigrant English of her elementary-school students, much in the way Levinsky criticizes immigrant English. She notes, "My children used to murder the language as I did when I was a child of Hester Street. And I wanted to give them that better speech that the teachers in college had tried to knock into me" (271). Not only does she point out that she is no longer "a child of Hester Street" and not only does she remind the reader of her college education, but she also uses standard written English to explain her pedagogical strategies for teaching English. She describes several examples of grammar and pronunciation lessons, further emphasizing her distance from these immigrant children, as Levinsky similarly does. The narrative voice of the novel has moved from hybrid immigrant English to standard American English, enacting its narrator's linguistic assimilation.

In an interesting twist, however, the novel calls further attention to Sara's linguistic development by highlighting her potential to regress into immigrant English. Sara first corrects one student when the student says "sing-gha" (271) by correcting it to "sing," but a moment later the school's principal (her future fiancé Hugo) corrects Sara

when she says, “The birds sing-gg.” Horrified by her mimetic lapse, Sara notes:

I was slipping back into the vernacular myself. In my embarrassment, I tried again and failed. He watched me as I blundered on. The next moment he was close behind me, the tips of his cool fingers on my throat. ‘Keep those muscles still until you have stopped. Now say it again,’ he commanded. And I turned pupil myself and pronounced the word correctly. (272)

Perhaps the reader’s first glimpse of Sara’s sexual attraction to Hugo (seen in the description of “his cool fingers on my throat”), this scene also reminds the reader of Sara’s linguistic assimilation by contrasting her vernacular self to her American self. While she is horrified at how easily she slips “back” into her old speech patterns, the reader also sees how quickly she recovers her American speech with just a simple command from the principal (rendered fittingly in standard English). Sara’s use of the word “vernacular,” in particular, calls attention to her sophisticated linguistic knowledge. By incorporating both narrative voices in the course of the novel, even juxtaposing them so immediately in this scene, Yeziarska demonstrates not only the character’s Americanization but also her own continuing bilingualism as a writer, effectively refuting Sara’s complete assimilation by showing her own ability to write in both standard English and hybrid Yiddish-infused English, just as Hurston and Mourning Dove demonstrate. Paradoxically, Yeziarska’s linguistic experimentalism functions as an inherently conservative act to preserve the hybrid dialect of Jewish immigrants, even as she makes the language of the novel “new” by infusing it with both Yiddish and English.

In Yeziarska’s endeavor to “make it new,” she makes the secular novel include Talmudic lore, much like McNickle makes the modern novel include traditional stories. Yeziarska as author defies the Judaic prohibition against women reading the Talmud. She depicts Sara’s father, Reb Smolinsky, telling Talmudic parables, making Biblical analogies, performing daily prayers traditionally recited only by men (15), and teaching from the Torah (63). But in a kind of trickster move, it is Yeziarska herself writing about these religious teachings, taking over the role of the male Torah scholar. Yeziarska turns Reb Smolinsky’s warning that they live in “a Torah-made world that’s made only for men” (95) into an ironic metacommentary on Yeziarska’s resistance to the gender prohibition by writing the very novel in which these lines are spoken. While some critics argue that

Yeziarska includes pieces of Jewish folk culture to appease popular audiences' demands for authenticity and a bit of local color, her infusion of such oral elements also provides evidence of her defiance of Jewish tradition and Modernist experimentalism. Additionally, for readers of both *David Levinsky* and *Bread Givers*, Yeziarska's inclusion of Torah excerpts highlights their absence from Cahan's novel.

Yeziarska offers a revision to modern values by including the so-called old world values of displaced Jewish immigrants, not by nostalgically holding on to them but by incorporating the old and new world economic systems. In *Bread Givers*, the young Sara gains entrance into the American capitalist system by blending the old world economic ethos with that of the new. Needing money for the family's food and rent, the ten-year-old Sara sells old herring while her father stays home and studies Torah. She buys twenty-five substandard herring from Muhmenkeh, a neighbor, with the very quarter that Muhmenkeh had given the family earlier that day to help pay their rent after her father had assaulted the landlord. Sara in turn sells these herring at two cents apiece, doubling her initial capital input and making a 100 percent profit. Her success is the result of a mixture of American capitalism and old world communal economics: she relies on the help of the community to begin her business, but she adds her individual hard work to turn the small capital input into a profit. What motivates her is not profit or greed, hallmarks of American capitalism, but "the hunger in our house" (22), her concern for her family. When she sells all twenty-five herring by the end of the day and turns a profit of twenty-five cents, she declares herself "richer than Rockefeller" (22). *Bread Givers*, whose title challenges the American expression "bread winner,"<sup>50</sup> portrays a compelling blend of immigrant communitarianism and individualist capitalism in which both economic models depend on the other.

Yeziarska insists on the possibility of blending American and immigrant Jewish cultures, even the interdependence of both. Such cross-cultural exchange would have held particular political significance in the wake of dramatic changes in national immigration policy in the 1920s. By the time *Bread Givers* was published, the Immigration Act of 1924 had virtually halted new immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe. Yeziarska feared the loss of the Jewish immigrant hybrid culture that preserved ties to the Old World while it embraced the New. She saw in this immigrant community not the antithesis to modernity but rather a new American culture. As she wrote in

“America and I,” an essay published in 1922, “I began to build a bridge of understanding between the American-born and myself. Since their life was shut out from such as me, I began to open my life and the lives of my people to them. [. . .] Writing about the Ghetto, I found America” (153). In response to the period’s dramatic policy changes, she sought to preserve Jewish immigrant culture in the hybrid language and form of *Bread Givers*, and in the process, she demonstrated that the American novel could transform to include Jewish elements.

By inference, her literary experimentalism suggests that American culture can adapt to include Jewish American culture, and the modern can become new by imbricating the old. In *Red Ribbon*, she writes about her relationship with an American man (most likely John Dewey), “My Old World was so fresh and new to him it became fresh and new to me” (109). Metaphorically, so too might the world come to see that Yezierska’s old world Jewish culture could bring something new to modern American literature. In reading Yezierska’s work in a new way as a kind of modernist experimentalism, scholars might similarly recognize that including Jewish immigrant writing will add to, not detract from, the understanding of 1920s modernism.

## Conclusion

Since the days immediately following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, scholars, journalists, and everyday pundits have frequently invoked the term “modernity” in their speculations about the underlying causes of that day’s violence.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of the merits to their arguments, “modernity,” a word that was once restricted to scholarly debate, has now infiltrated mainstream parlance. The growing usage of this word, as in the case of another neologism, “globalization,”<sup>2</sup> requires a more nuanced, multilocal, and transtemporal understanding of the term’s meaning. This book provides one piece in the constellation of efforts to understand modernity from different vantage points. Viewing the modern era from the locations of those labeled traditional and primitive reveals that conventional understandings of modernity, whose relational meaning relies on its opposition to the traditional, have been selective and myopic.

In this project, I have insisted that African, Native, and Jewish American literatures be included in the conversation about Modernism and modernity, for it is in the Modernist era when such voices established themselves in the American literary canon. In the modern effort to define itself as new, these three ethnic groups, among others, were deemed unable to adapt to modernity. Yet an examination of their literary responses to the changes of the modern era reveals that they *have* adapted by transforming the very genres that labeled them traditional and primitive. Focusing on their literary solutions to the rhetorical contexts that have depicted them as not modern changes the shape of Modernism both descriptively and prescriptively.

African, Native and Jewish Americans, three groups not often studied in tandem, share a long history of interaction and interconnection, to which several recent novels testify (including Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon* (1977), Philip Roth’s *The Human Stain* (2002), Sherman Alexie’s *Reservation Blues* (1995), and his film *The*



*Business of Fancydancing* (2002), among others). The three ethnic groups examined here had all experienced great upheaval and physical dislocation by the end of the nineteenth century. The temporal disruption of modernity manifested itself as a spatial dislocation, exemplified by the significant internal demographic shift of the Great Migration, the increasing dispersal of Native Americans from tribally held lands, and the massive influx of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. Including these historical experiences revises the relational understanding of the modern as a temporal break with the past; many in these groups experienced the break literally as a geographic one.

Seeing modernity as a diasporic phenomenon positions scholars to recognize that a central aspect of the modern is unprecedented intercultural encounter. As W. E. B. Du Bois writes in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), “The world-old phenomenon of the contact of diverse races of men is to have new exemplification during the new century. Indeed, the characteristic of our age is the contact of European civilization with the world’s undeveloped peoples” (475). Du Bois’s prediction that heightened crosscultural contact represents a constitutive feature of modernity has proved accurate—even if the scholarly discussion of Modernism and modernity has been slow to recognize it. (Ironically, Du Bois’s comment invokes the primitivizing language that marginalized diverse ethnic voices, calling them “undeveloped peoples,” for example.)

Focusing on the early twentieth-century historical experiences of these three groups in conjunction with one another helps deconstruct a still prevalent belief in racial purity and cultural isolation. Rather than create an additive model that appends seemingly discrete ethnic groups to the existing definition of modernity, a comparative standpoint allows the overlaps and interactions in these groups’ experiences to come into view. Gloria Anzaldúa’s call in “La Conciencia de la Mestiza” continues to have relevance: “Our role is to link people with each other—the Blacks with Jews with Indians with Asians with whites with extraterrestrials. It is to transfer ideas and information from one culture to another” (84).

Each of the novels examined here relies on a racially mixed or a culturally hybrid protagonist, an unintended but fortuitous byproduct of bringing the literatures of African, Native, and Jewish Americans into conversation with one another. In choosing such a protagonist, each author not only carves out a new space for the often-alienated mixed-race character but also speaks to the cultural creolization that modernity has fostered. Not all of their main characters find

acceptance. Mourning Dove's "half-breed" Cogewea finds protection and connection to others in the racial and cultural mixing she comes to accept, similar to Anzia Yezierska's Sara Smolinsky, represented in both texts by the promise of marriage. By contrast, D'Arcy McNickle's mixed-race Archilde is imprisoned in the racial categories of the modern era. Charles Chesnutt's light-skinned Dr. Miller teeters precariously on the precipice of acceptance into mainstream American society, while Zora Neale Hurston's biracial Janie draws inward to accept her newly found "self." Most disturbingly, Abraham Cahan's David Levinsky explicitly rejects the possibility of intermarriage in his failure to connect his past to his present. Each protagonist, however, illustrates the central role that intercultural contact plays in the modern period and demonstrates the profound racial and cultural mixing that modernity represents.

The increased contact among racial and ethnic groups occasioned significant changes, not only for these specific communities but also to the broader meaning of modernity itself. Du Bois laments in *Souls*, "Whatever we may say of the results of such contact in the past, it certainly forms a chapter in human action not pleasant to look back upon. War, murder, slavery, extermination, and debauchery—this has again and again been the result of carrying civilization and the blessed gospel to the isles of the sea and the heathen without the law" (475). Du Bois's comment highlights the painful realization that the heightened intercultural encounter so central to the meaning of modernity also carries with it destructive results. Understanding the pernicious elements of modernity requires the admission that the antisemitism Jews have experienced and the racism African Americans and Native Americans have faced are consequences of the same historical phenomenon. In addition to fostering a more nuanced understanding of the modern experience, placing those deemed not modern at the center of study offers an important self-critique of the modern project and ultimately of one's self. Anthropologist Margaret Mead's observation in *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) fits here: "As the traveler who has once been from home is wiser than he who has never left his own doorstep, so a knowledge of one other culture should sharpen our ability to scrutinize more steadily, to appreciate more lovingly, our own."

For the communities examined here, modernity represents contradictory oppressions and freedoms, confrontation and interaction, forced assimilation and assertions of autonomy, cultural suppression and cultural revival. The modern era ushered in the negative experiences of disruption from homelands, dispersal, and

racial categorization, but also the positive experiences of cultural renaissances, the construction of diasporic identities, and the formation of pan-cultural movements that crossed geographic, ethnic, and tribal lines. In one sense, the antisemitism Jewish Americans faced and the racism African Americans and Native Americans experienced are products of the modern effort to deny the past and force a break with tradition. But the cultural revivals all three groups fostered in response are also outgrowths of modernity, seen in the explosion of literary, artistic, and scholarly expressions produced by members of these three groups in the twentieth century. Modernity for these communities, then, was ushered in as a period of dislocation but was also marked with efforts to declare their shared humanity.

Literary movement became one important response to the literal movements these ethnic groups faced. Like the Modernist writers of the period, African, Native, and Jewish American writers faced a crisis of representation, but one that resulted from the historical fact of massive geographic dislocations and an already existing rhetorical context that negatively and nostalgically constructed them as unable to adapt to modernity. In response, members of these three cultural groups increasingly resisted demands that they write “real” accounts and that they act as spokespersons for their communities; instead, they chose literary representation as the means to explore the contradictory aspects of modernity. Their choice to write fiction offered new representational strategies that simultaneously draw on mainstream literary forms and culturally specific linguistic traditions, serving as examples of literary experimentalism in response to the crises of representation that African, Native, and Jewish American writers faced.

By claiming their new role as fiction writers, these novelists implicitly reject the role of *de facto* native informant and instead forge new literary forms that not only add to the cadre of literary expression but also expand the form of the modern novel itself. These novelists insist that the cultures from which they write cannot be confined to the pages of the history book, nor located in the dusty stacks of the library, nor captured in the aestheticized displays of the museum—that is to say, they cannot be spoken of only in the past tense. Instead, these writers provide exemplary models of how the modern novel can change to include the experiences of those excluded from the modern project. The writers examined here transform the novel to include the orality of Native American cultures, the hybrid language of Yiddish-English, and the African influences in American culture. In revising the modern novel, they illustrate how the modern world can

adapt to include those whose past has been negated, and they demonstrate that the very definition of the modern can adjust to include those defined as traditional. Recognizing their genre manipulations as formal experimentalism demands the recognition that modernity is not only a relational term that names itself in opposition to the past, but that it is also constructed out of the hybrid contradictions that arise when the past and the present collide. These writers' experimentalism suggests that the modern experience is better understood not as a break with the past, but rather as the yoking together of the old with the new.

The very project to adapt the modern novel form enacts the survival of these ethnic communities in the modern era. The writers examined here use the narrative form to represent cultures that continue to survive and adapt. Through the novel these writers interrogate and reconstruct a sense of home in their fiction and re-establish a connection to the past that the prevailing definition of modernity as something new disrupts. They invoke what Modernists called the "traditional" but also meld it with the modern in order to illustrate their continuing survival. Literature is remade new by including the old.

On the one hand, these novelists participate in the important project of early anthropology. They attempt to preserve a past denied by the modern effort to define itself as new, and they celebrate distinct cultural practices in the face of rapid modernization and homogenization. The act of writing a novel, in this sense, is a conservative one with the goal of preservation in the face of feared annihilation. On the other hand, these novelists also offer new modes of representation to counter the stasis of anthropological representation and the assumed transparency of scientific writing. Fiction further provides these authors with a space to imagine discursive solutions to the crisis of representation other fields are now facing, such as the heated debates occurring since the 1960s in anthropology over the ability of writing to represent reality.<sup>3</sup> The novel, and particularly the formal experimentation of the writers examined here, could provide an alternative genre solution to the disciplinary limitations of scientific writing. It remains to be seen whether the field of anthropology, and the human sciences more broadly, will cross disciplinary boundaries to explore creative answers to the scientific community's current uncertainty about how to represent social reality.

The experimentalism in which these early ethnic novelists engaged has come to fruition in more recent literary works by authors in these three communities. The recent American Indian "renaissance,"

as Kenneth Lincoln describes the growth in literary production by Native American authors since the late 1960s, can trace its roots back to the thematic and genre experimentation of earlier twentieth century fiction by Native writers. For example, Leslie Marmon Silko's insistence in *Ceremony* (1977) that the novel can adapt to include oral elements owes its blend of oral and written genres in part to Mourning Dove and D'Arcy McNickle's earlier novels. Similarly, N. Scott Momaday's formal experimentation with the autobiographical form in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969), which includes the collective oral stories of a people alongside the memories of the individual, finds early articulation in McNickle and Mourning Dove's writings. Charles Chesnutt's desire to claim a place in the American literary tradition finds its realization in the reception of Toni Morrison as both an American and an African American author, epitomized by her Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993. The recent growth in novels by African American women who explore and celebrate the lives of everyday African American women (most visibly, Terry McMillan) can trace a maternal lineage to Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, as Alice Walker notes in her 1973 *Ms.* article, which follows her journey to find her literary grandmother's grave. Anzia Yezierska's effort to preserve the Yiddish-English of Eastern European immigrants, a project for which Abraham Cahan earlier failed to find a discursive solution, has seen renewed interest in the writings of contemporary "Generation J," as Lisa Schiffman has named young Jewish Americans, a group that has recreated ties to a Yiddish tradition its members may never have known firsthand.

In rethinking modernity and modern literature, I intend for this project to contextualize recent multicultural literature within a broader crosscultural literary tradition. While the multicultural literary canon might appear to have begun in the 1970s—often taught as if it dropped mysteriously out of the sky—remapping modernism reveals that recent multicultural writers can trace their literary experimentalism and genre blending to their early twentieth-century ethnic progenitors. Silko writes in *Storyteller* (1981) that "it is together—all of us remembering what we have heard together— / that creates the whole story / the long story of the people" (7). The novels of early twentieth-century ethnic writers deepen the whole story of the modern novel and broaden the long story of humanity.

# Notes

## CHAPTER 1

1. Recognizing the futility of establishing fixed meanings for these terms, as Susan Stanford Friedman points out in "Definitional Excursions," in this work I will use "Modernism" with a capital *M* to denote the specific artistic movement in the early twentieth century often referred to as "high modernism" and now associated with writers such as James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, H. D., William Carlos Williams, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Virginia Woolf. I will use a lower case *m* to refer to the broader issues of representation that this group raised but that others also addressed. Singal's conception of modernism as a *culture*, "a constellation of related ideas, beliefs, values, and modes of perception" (7) in the early twentieth century, proves useful here. For a sampling of conventional definitions of Modernism, see also Bradbury and McFarlane; Ellmann and Feidelson; Eysteinsson; Susan Stanford Friedman; Kenner; Nicholls; Perloff; Raymond Williams.
2. Such revisionist critics include Baker, De Jongh, Douglas, North, Pavlić, and Rampersad in African American studies; Benstock, Burke, Felski, Susan Stanford Friedman, Rado, and Scott in feminist studies; Boone in gay studies/queer theory; Gikandi in postcolonial studies. See also Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, for a diasporic conception of modernity in which he places African American history in the larger context of African migrations and exiles.
3. Charles Baudelaire's definition of modernity as "the transient, the fleeting, the contingent" (qtd. in Harvey 10) in his 1863 essay "The Painter of Modern Life" provides the foundation for scholarly explorations of the word's meaning. Also useful for this project is Paul De Man's essay "Literary History and Literary Modernity" in *Blindness and Insight*. For similar definitions of modernity as "a desire to wipe out whatever came earlier" (De Man 148) and a deliberate break with the past, see also Appadurai; Berman; Susan Stanford Friedman, "Definitional Excursions"; Harvey; Hoffman and Murphy.
4. In using the term "hybridity," I am aware of its racial overtones and dangerous uses in nineteenth-century racial theories. As Young warns, the

use of this term inevitably reinvoles and repeats the racialized debates of Victorian thinkers who sought to prove the inferiority of nonwhite, non-Western cultures. Yet, as Young himself shows, this term has been reappropriated to signify the blending of cultures that results from cultural interaction. See Friedman's *Mappings*, especially pp. 82–93, for discussion of different definitions and models of hybridity with varying degrees of cultural preservation and blending.

5. For more detailed discussions and examples of the historical changes in this period, see Berman; Harvey; Painter, *Standing*; Susman; Trachtenberg. Harvey is particularly important for this project's understanding of modernity. He defines the fundamental changes in Americans' relationship to time and space in this period as a "time-space compression," in which time was accelerated through the increased organization of production (Henry Ford's assembly line) and space was collapsed with the arrival of radio and the widespread use of automobiles.
6. This scholarship has tended to focus on the literature of a single group in relation to mainstream American culture but not in relation to other ethnic communities as this book does. For important examples of this tendency, see Baker; Douglas; Doyle; Gilroy; Hutchinson; Michaels; North; Sundquist. Other crosscultural approaches to modernity in literary studies include Batker; Keresztesi; Konzett, *Ethnic Modernisms*; Schedler. Batker deploys a broad historical overview and thematic analysis of journalistic and literary writing by African, Native, and Jewish American women writers in the early twentieth century. Keresztesi explores thematic issues of alienation, modernization, and industrialization in literature by African Americans, Native Americans, Eastern European Jewish immigrants, and Mexican immigrants, focusing on how ethnic writers appropriate the trope of the stranger in different ways than Modernist writers do. Konzett rethinks modernism in terms of ethnicity and displacement in her author study of Anzia Yezierska, Zora Neale Hurston, and Jean Rhys. Schedler focuses on Mexican, Native American, and Chicano writers, those "outside the metropolis" as he puts it (xii), and compares them to European and Anglo American Modernists in his examination of what he calls "border modernism." While the individual essays in Boelhower's edited collection focus on single ethnic groups or authors, when taken as a whole *The Future of American Modernism* offers a multiethnic portrait of modernism.
7. On African American modernity, see Baker; Rampersad. On Jewish modernity, see Cheyette and Marcus. While a public discussion of Native American modernity has not fully emerged, see Krupat, *Ethnocriticism*, for the beginnings of one. See also Warrior, who, in his project to trace the roots of an American Indian intellectual tradition, marks this period as the first "coming together" of a generation of Native writers.
8. For connections between modernism and anthropology: in the field of anthropology, see Fox's edited collection *Recapturing Anthropology* and

Clifford's *The Predicament of Culture*; in literary studies, see Manganaro; in American culture studies, see Hegeman. See also Elliott, who links anthropology and its project of constructing cultural difference to the earlier literary movement of late-nineteenth-century American realism.

9. According to the then popularly accepted thesis by Frederick Jackson Turner, who argued that the frontier molded a distinctly American character, 1890 marked the end of an era with the closing of the frontier. As the open spaces of the American West were settled and Indian populations were "removed," America was no longer seen as a land of endless possibilities. As Dippie argues, the closing of the frontier ended the possibility that the frontier could continue to serve as an "escape valve," an open space to send immigrants and a place of refuge for others to escape the confines of the growing cities.
10. For examples of important thematic studies of migration in African American literature, see Griffin; Rodgers; Scruggs.
11. Pound's demand to "make it new," the title of a collection of his essays in 1934 that has now become the slogan most associated with the Modernist writers, has come to serve as a synecdoche for the Modernist project. Many poets and editors, however, articulated this view earlier in the century, including e. e. cummings, who dubbed Modernist art "the New Art" in an essay in the *Harvard Advocate* in 1915, and Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson, whose collection *The New Poetry: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Verse in English* was published in 1917. See Hoffman and Murphy. See also Bernstein on Pound.
12. Nostalgia, whose Greek root *nóstos* means to return home, suggests not only a desire to return to the past but also, more fundamentally, a desire to return home, as Engel discusses. See also Konzett, *Ethnic Modernisms*, for a discussion of similar challenges to the meanings of home by ethnic writers in this period.
13. These changes include Charles Darwin's earlier theories about evolution, which radically changed many people's relationship to God; Karl Marx's economic theories, which altered many people's view of class relations and economic systems (even as religion and class hierarchies remained enduring paradigms); Sigmund Freud's and William James's work about the human psyche, which led to new ideas about the self; and Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, which occasioned a new relationship to the larger universe.
14. Boas's work on cultural pluralism first appeared in the 1890s, while his most influential writings began in the 1910s and '20s. Boasian notions of cultural relativism and pluralism did not become more widely accepted until the 1930s (Susman). For information about the anthropological theories and contributions of Boas, see Stocking; Herbert Lewis; Rohner and Rohner; Vernon Williams; Boas's own writings and lectures (in particular, *Race, Language, and Culture*). For discussions of the changing view of culture in this period and on Boas's role in this change, also see Dippie;



- Elliott; Hegeman; Hutchinson; Kroeber and Kluckhoh; Manganaro, *Culture*. German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) and later sociologists played key roles in this discussion as well. German immigrant Horace M. Kallen (1882–1974) coined the term “cultural pluralism” in 1925. For a discussion about the etymology of this term, as well as “ethnic” and “ethnicity,” see Sollors’s “Foreword” to *Theories of Ethnicity* and the essays in that volume, which provide a sampling of key voices, including Weber and Kallen’s “Democracy Versus the Melting-Pot.”
15. See Haenni for a study of the increasing popularity of “slum fiction,” film, and photographs of the New York ghetto in this turn-of-the-century period among middle-class readers and viewers.
  16. For further arguments about the racialization of Jews in this period, see Brodtkin; Cheyette; Garb; Jacobson; Nochlin.
  17. Aristotle did not delineate a hierarchy within humanity on the Great Chain. During the Enlightenment, Aristotle’s concept was used to justify a racial hierarchy among humans. See Graves for a history of the concept of race.
  18. See also Cohen for a historical overview and definitions of the term diaspora. The modern definition of diaspora is rooted in the experience of Jews living in exile throughout much of history, Cohen notes.
  19. For discussions of American realism, see Elliott; Amy Kaplan; Wald, *Constituting Americans*.
  20. For a study of ethnic writers’ varying responses to readers’ quest for authenticity in their texts, see Karem.
  21. See Marcus and Fischer for a discussion of this recent trend in anthropology.

## CHAPTER 2

1. See Levine, who traces the development of African American culture and argues for its African origins.
2. For a discussion of the economic changes occurring after the Civil War and their inseparable relationship to Reconstruction in the South, see Franklin and Moss, especially pp. 220–46.
3. Painter’s landmark study *Exodusters* traces the earliest roots of the Great Migration to the 1870s when some six thousand formerly enslaved people migrated to Kansas.
4. Many scholars note that migration continued long after the 1920s. Both Rodgers and Lemann, for example, suggest that the Great Migration ended as late as 1970, after which time more African Americans returned to the South than migrated out of it. For a discussion of narratives focusing on the return to the South, what she calls “countermigration” narratives (146), see Griffin, especially pp. 142–97.
5. See Hine for a look at the Great Migration from the perspective of its female migrants.

6. See McKay. While several studies have examined the thematic importance of the Great Migration and migration more generally to African American literature, in this project, rather than a thematic approach, I am interested in migration as a central material condition of African American modernity and the crisis of representation it occasioned. For examples of thematic approaches, see especially Griffin; Rodgers. Stepto uses the trope of migration as the basis for his foundational study of African American literature.
7. Songbook cover artists Bert Cobb and Edgar Keller designed this cover for Tin Pan Alley song publishers M. Witmark & Sons. See Pro-Culture Editions for publication history. Popular minstrelsy performer Ernest Hogan wrote and performed the hit song, although he did not draw the cover art. Hogan, who was African American, reportedly regretted his role in contributing to the popularity of the “coon” songs, as they came to be called (Huggins). This particular song focuses on a black-faced female character who must choose between two black-faced suitors.
8. For a contrasting approach to Lott, see Lhamon, who argues that black-face minstrelsy began as proletarian youth rebellions against bourgeois, middle-class depictions of slaves.
9. By “folk” culture, I mean elements of African American daily life that have been a part of the diasporic experience of African Americans in America. See Bethel for a useful definition in which she describes African American folk culture as “the musical, oral, and visual artistic expressions of black identity that have been handed down from generation to generation” (11). See also Torgovnick for a study of the primitive and its function in this turn-of-the-century period, especially pp. 42–72, where she discusses tropes of African Americans as primitive. Also see Rubin, “Modernist Primitivism: An Introduction” and other essays in *Primitivism in 20th Century Art*.
10. For a survey of African American writers, see Gates and McKay. The first known piece of writing by a person of African descent living in what is now the United States was a poem, “Bars Flight,” written by Lucy Terry (1730–1821) in 1746 and published posthumously in 1855. Before the poem’s publication, a volume of poetry by Phillis Wheatley (c. 1753–84) was published in England in 1773. The earliest known published work of African American fiction was by Victor Séjour (1817–74), whose “Le Mulâtre” was published in 1837. The first known novel written by an African American was William Wells Brown’s *Clotel* (published in London in 1853), followed by Harriet A. Wilson’s *Our Nig; or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black, in a Two-Story White House* (1859), the first novel published in the United States by an African American. *The Bondwoman’s Narrative* (thought to have been written in the 1850s but not published until 2002), by Hannah Crafts, is among the first novels written by an African American and is the only known novel written by an enslaved woman in the United States.

11. Other contemporaneous African American novelists include Frances E.W. Harper (1825–1911), whose most famous novel, *Iola Leroy* (1892), attempts to combat stereotypes of the plantation school. Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906), today known more for his poetry, also published short stories and novels beginning in 1898. Pauline E. Hopkins (1859–1930) published her best known work, *Contending Forces: A Romance of Negro Life North and South*, in 1900. Less widely read today, Sutton Griggs was also an African American contemporary novelist of Chesnutt, having published *Overshadowed* (1900) and *The Hindered Hand* (1905).
12. For biographical information on Chesnutt, see Andrews, *Literary Career*. See also Helen M. Chesnutt, Chesnutt's daughter, who wrote the first biography of Chesnutt. See also Heermance; Keller.
13. That Chesnutt fulfilled Du Bois's vision is evident when Du Bois called Chesnutt a "genial American gentleman and dean of Negro literature in this land" upon his death ("Chesnutt" 1234).
14. Chesnutt did publish one anthropological essay, "Superstitions and Folklore of the South" (1901), in which he presented stories of conjure he had gathered. See Sundquist, especially pp. 294–98.
15. "The Future American," a three-part series published in 1900 in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, openly called for racial mixing through legalized marriage—a message that stood in stark contrast to Booker T. Washington's stance of social segregation. See also Andrews, "Miscegenation in the Late Nineteenth Century Novel" for a discussion of these articles. For an argument that Boas supported similar assimilationist views, see Hutchinson, 73–75.
16. See Prather for a thorough historical account of the massacre in Wilmington, North Carolina; see also Yarborough. See Sundquist for a detailed discussion of *Marrow's* changes to the historical events.
17. See McElrath, "W.D. Howells and Race," for a discussion of Chesnutt's disappointed response to Howells's review of *Marrow* and Chesnutt's desire to write an objective account of the Wilmington Race Riot (498).
18. In the 1920s, Chesnutt's work, especially *The House Behind the Cedars*, did enjoy some revived interest on the part of African American filmmaker Oscar Micheaux and the *Chicago Defender*, among others. But his few literary efforts in the final three decades of his life, including a handful of short stories and a four-act play in 1906 entitled "Mrs. Darcy's Daughter," failed to gain him the kind of literary attention he sought. See Gillman, "Micheaux's Chesnutt" for a discussion of the similarities between *The Marrow of Tradition* and Micheaux's silent film *Within Our Gates* (1919–20), which was rediscovered in the 1970s in Spain.
19. Mary Louise Pratt's notion of the "contact zone" fundamentally informs my discussion of intercultural contact throughout this study. For other discussions of Chesnutt's project to blur the color line, see De Santis; Ianovici; Knadler; Robinson; Sundquist. While much of this criticism

- focuses on Chesnutt's interest in race and its social construction, my argument goes beyond these to examine Chesnutt's interest in cultural borrowing, blending, and blurring back and forth across the color line.
20. Gates has claimed that Hurston was the first African American to employ free indirect discourse (214). Chesnutt employs this literary technique over thirty years before Hurston.
  21. For example, see Chesnutt's letter to Walter Page, editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, on November 10, 1898 (reprinted in Helen M. Chesnutt 104).
  22. Since Howell's denouncement, much of the critical debate surrounding *Marrow* has disproportionately focused on whether Chesnutt's response to the violence is accommodationist or militant. Critics have largely focused on the racial massacre that occupies the last third of the book and have predominantly focused on the nature of Chesnutt's political message. They debate whether the novel endorses African American rebellion—seen in the character of Josh Greene—or whether it preaches Booker T. Washington's accommodationism and a go-slowly doctrine—seen in the character of Dr. Miller. See for example Andrews, *Literary Career*; Helen M. Chesnutt; Delmar; De Santis; Gleason; Pickens; Robinson; Roe; Wagner; Yarbrough. For an example of a critic who moves beyond this binary, see Knadler, who discusses the dependence of whites on African Americans in the novel. Taking this point a step further, my argument focuses not only the one-way dependence of one race on the other but on the interconnections between the two. See also Kawash, whose discussion of twinning in the novel moves beyond the issue of violence. While Sundquist, with his focus on the hybrid roots of the cakewalk, also transcends this debate, even he suggests that Chesnutt struggles between the discourses of cultural assimilation and resistance (301).
  23. The derogatory term *miscegenation*, referring to procreation by members of two races, was the word used for racial mixing when Chesnutt published his novel. For discussion of the word's political origins, see Hodes. For a historical discussion of Southerners' fears of racial mixing, see Andrews, "Miscegenation in the Late Nineteenth Century Novel."
  24. See Ramsey for a discussion of the trope of family in Chesnutt's fiction. He argues that Chesnutt saw the human race as one family that transcends race and that his fiction illustrates the point that all humans share "a common racial destiny" (38).
  25. See also Knadler, who discusses the dependence of Euro-Americans on African Americans in the novel. Taking this point a step further, my argument focuses on the interconnections between the two cultures, not only the one-way dependence of Euro-Americans on African Americans.
  26. For a discussion of alleged African American violence to justify Euro-American violence, see Gunning, 62–74.
  27. See Sundquist for a detailed history of the cakewalk and discussion of its use in *Marrow*. Huggins resists the idea that the popularized version of the cakewalk has any connections to African American culture (273).

- Sundquist argues otherwise, noting that even as a parody, the cakewalk also incorporated elements of African dance (281).
28. See Chesnutt's journal entry on October 16, 1878, for an example of his desire to leave the South (qtd. in Helen M. Chesnutt 16–17). See his journal entry on April 23, 1879, for an example of his hopes for the North (qtd. in Helen M. Chesnutt 17).
  29. Much has already been written about the role of the Harlem Renaissance in celebrating African American culture and exploring its relationship to Modernism. For example, see Baker; De Jongh; Douglas; Huggins; Hutchinson; Pavlić; Rampersad.
  30. Despite her claims that she was born in Eatonville, Florida, Hurston was born in Notasulga, Alabama, in 1891. She spent her childhood in the all-black town of Eatonville. For biographical information on Hurston, see Bordelon; Boyd; Hemenway. See also Kaplan's collection of Hurston's letters and Hurston's autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road*. Hurston describes herself in *Dust Tracks* as a migrant: "My vagrancy had begun in reality. I knew that. There was an end to my journey and it had happiness in it for me. It was certain and sure. But the way! Its agony was equally certain. It was before me, and no one could spare me my pilgrimage" (86–87).
  31. See also Du Bois's essay, "Criteria of Negro Art" (1926). The different philosophies about the role of the folk led in part to Hughes, Hurston, and Wallace Thurman's creation of their own magazine *Fire!!* in 1926 in reaction to the publication of *The New Negro*.
  32. Recent critics maintain Wright's argument about Hurston. Most notable is Carby, who argues that Hurston offers a romanticized celebration of the rural folk while Wright provides a realistic portrayal of grim and violent urban conditions. For a comparison of Wright and Hurston, see Sollors's "Modernization as Adultery."
  33. See Boas's commencement address at Atlanta University on May 31, 1906, for example, in *Shaping*. See also Hutchinson for discussion of the historical and ideological links between Harlem Renaissance leaders and Boas, especially pp. 62–77.
  34. Hurston first mentions this project in a 1926 letter to benefactor Annie Nathan Meyer. In several letters to anthropologists Ruth Benedict and Melville Herskovits, she asked for calipers to measure head sizes during folklore collection trips to New Orleans, Jamaica, and Haiti.
  35. For further discussions of how Boasian methodology influenced Hurston, see Elliott; Hemenway; Jacobs; Manganaro; Pavloska.
  36. See Gordon for a comparison of Margaret Mead's success in anthropological publication to Hurston, whose anthropological writings failed to win public and academic support.
  37. Hurston makes a similar move in her anthropological collection, *Mules and Men*, in which she incorporates the stories she collected in a broader narrative structure. Several critics in the social sciences and in

literary studies read *Mules and Men* not as an ethnographic monograph but as a fictionalized narrative. See, for example, Dolby-Stahl, who calls *Mules and Men* “one of the finest examples of such reflexive, literary ethnography ever written” (52). By contrast, Lawrence problematically reads *Their Eyes* as an ethnography.

38. By postmodern anthropological theory, I am referring to work in the last three decades that has challenged Boasian scientific objectivity, including Clifford; Geertz; essays in Fox’s *Recapturing Anthropology*; Marcus and Fischer; and Trouillot. For a response to these revisionist efforts, see Herbert Lewis, who provides a useful defense and historical contextualization of Boas’s work.
39. Much of the critical attention on *Their Eyes* has focused on the question of female voice. See Mary Helen Washington’s foreword to *Their Eyes* for an overview of this debate. For collections of key essays on *Their Eyes*, see Awkward; Bloom; Gates and Appiah. Carla Kaplan argues against this central critical thread and instead suggests that Janie is in search of the “ideal listener” (*Erotics* 104) to whom she can reveal her story. More recently, critics have begun to explore Hurston’s anthropological theories and critique of Boasian methodology but have focused primarily on Hurston’s anthropological writings, particularly *Mules and Men* and *Tell My Horse*; for examples, see Boxwell; Dolby-Stahl; Gordon; Harrison; Hernández; Hoefel; Jirousek; Konzett; Manganaro; Mikell; Pavloska. This criticism convincingly demonstrates that Hurston was postmodern before her time, anticipating many challenges to representation, scientific objectivity, ethnographic authority, and the meaning of the term *culture*. But these latter critics do not examine Hurston’s works of fiction for their use of anthropology; instead, critics tend to focus on her ethnographies, with Jacobs and Elliott as notable exceptions. In a compelling argument, Jacobs illustrates that *Their Eyes* revises Boasian methodology to counter its objectifying and primitivizing gaze. Elliott explores how Hurston’s use of free indirect discourse allows her to move beyond Boas to position the reader as a participant in the lives of its subjects rather than as an outsider, as anthropology did.
40. Several critics have criticized *Their Eyes* for ignoring the Great Migration and offering a romanticized, ahistorical, and apolitical portrait of the period. See Carby; see also Rodgers, who describes *Their Eyes* as “Hurston’s fictional erasure of the Great Migration” (94).
41. The gender politics of anthropology have become a central question in the last two decades as the discipline has faced both the postmodern crisis of representation and the feminist movement. See Stacey; Abu-Lughod. See also Behar and Gordon, whose aim is “to examine the poetics and politics of feminist ethnography as a way of rethinking anthropology’s purpose in multicultural America” (22). Boas was known for his support for female as well as male graduate students and anthropologists. As early as 1902, he argued that introductory anthropology

courses should be offered to undergraduates at Barnard College, the newly founded women's college affiliated with Columbia where Boas was a professor (*Shaping* 293). There are many Boasian "daughters," as feminist anthropologist Ruth Behar calls women trained by Boas, including Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead. Ella C. Deloria served as a research specialist in Boas's studies of Sioux culture from 1927 to 1942. Boas encouraged Deloria to translate and write Sioux texts, of which she published several, and she went on to write a novel about the Sioux, *Waterlily*, completed in 1944 but not published until 1988.

42. See Clifford, "Authority," which traces the historical development of ethnography from 1900 to 1960. He notes that the normative standards for the professional ethnographer in the 1920s included: "the field-worker was to live in the native village, use the vernacular, stay a sufficient (but seldom specified) length of time, investigate certain classic subjects, and so on" (124).
43. See Manganaro for a similar argument about *Mules and Men*. While Manganaro's compelling study of the modern concept of culture does not examine *Their Eyes*, he does suggest that *Mules and Men* portrays culture as "porous, as fluid, as mobile, and as less than tidy and wholly synecdochic" (*Culture* 198).
44. For examples, see Baker; Kubitschek; McKay; Meese. By contrast, Kaplan argues in *Erotics* that the novel illustrates the failure of community.
45. While Bahamians had migrated to Florida since the seventeenth century, the greatest influx occurred during the period of 1880–1920, when there was a net emigration of Bahamians to foreign countries, primarily to Florida (just 50 miles away). In 1920, when 4,815 Bahamians lived in Miami (comprising 50 percent of the black population and 16 percent of the total population), the US Government halted this migration by enacting immigration restrictions. For a demographic study of Bahamian migration to Florida from 1880 to 1920, see Howard Johnson. See also Dunn for a detailed history of the multicultural settlement of southern Florida (especially pp. 13–19 and 95–100). For information about the restriction of Bahamians, see also Bucuvalas, Bulger, and Kennedy.
46. See *Go Gator*, a compilation of Hurston's writings and folklore collections during the Federal Writers' Project in the 1930s, for examples of Bahamian texts that Hurston collected, especially pp. 89–93, "Other Negro Influences." For a different perspective on the novel's ties to Africa, see Pavlić, who connects the narrative voice in *Their Eyes* to Yorùbá cultural underpinnings.
47. Hurston has received much criticism for what critics have called a lack of white presence in the novel. See for example Griffin; Carby; Wright. It should be noted that there is a heightened focus on whites in the courtroom scene as Janie faces a jury of all white men and receives sympathy from the gallery of white women (*Their Eyes* 176–80).

## CHAPTER 3

1. The number of schools located on reservations actually exceeded the number of off-reservation boarding schools. In 1887, some fourteen thousand Indian children attended 227 schools, of which 163 were operated by the BIA and the rest were operated by private agencies and missionary groups (O'Brien 76). By 1887 there were eight off-reservation government boarding schools, plus Hampton (not solely an Indian school). After 1890, the focus was on reservation day schools (Hertzberg 15).
2. See Nabokov's anthology for examples of firsthand accounts.
3. The boarding-school experience remains a central theme in contemporary writing by American Indians, even as many of the authors themselves are too young to have experienced forced removal to boarding schools. In fiction, see for example, Erdrich's *Tracks* and *Love Medicine* and Broker's *Night Flying Woman*. Giago's collection of poems, *The Aboriginal Sin*, Silko's autobiographical pastiche of poetry and prose, *Storyteller*, and Mankiller's autobiography *Mankiller* also detail this crucial issue in American history. For a collection of writings by Native Americans about child custody and education, including the effects of boarding school, see Bensen's anthology.
4. See for example Sun Elk's account in Nabokov.
5. See Mooney's firsthand account published in 1896; see also Dee Brown for a historical account of the battle and its long-term ramifications.
6. See Thornton, who argues that the Indian population in the United States reached its lowest point in 1890 and then steadily began to grow, an increase that continues today.
7. For a more detailed analysis of the socially constructed tradition of the vanishing American, see Dippie.
8. See Krupat, who argues that the period from 1887 to 1934 represents the time when anthropologists have exerted the most concentrated effort to rescue what they saw as a vanishing culture and the period when the dominant culture began to recognize and consume Native American literatures ("Approach").
9. For more on Boas, in addition to his own writings and lectures, see Stocking; Herbert Lewis; Rohner and Rohner; Vernon Williams. See also Chapter 1 and the discussion of Zora Neale Hurston in Chapter 2 of this book.
10. For an additional discussion of late-nineteenth-century racial views, see Dippie's study of popular attitudes toward Native Americans, particularly the discussion of Lewis Henry Morgan and evolutionary progress (pp. 95–106).
11. For a cultural analysis of Curtis's work, see Lyman; see also Vine Deloria's Introduction to Lyman's study.
12. For example, the membership of the Society of American Indians (founded in 1911) was comprised primarily of graduates from Carlisle and other boarding schools. While the Society supported assimilation



and discouraged tribalism, values espoused by Carlisle, it promoted Indian education, citizenship, and a federal department to handle Indian court cases. It also successfully fought segregation of Indian troops in World War I. See Nabokov for information about the Society of American Indians (276–81). See Dippie for criticism of the organization's assimilationist rhetoric.

13. Among the leaders of the Society of American Indians who attended boarding schools and wrote of their experiences were Dr. Charles A. Eastman, who detailed his boarding school experiences in his best-selling autobiographies, *Indian Boyhood* (1902) and *The Soul of the Indian* (1911); Angela Decora, who was sent to Hampton School and later went on to teach at Carlisle; Gertrude Bonnin (Zitkala-<sup>ʼ</sup>a), a journalist and writer, who wrote of her experiences in *American Indian Stories*; Francis La Flesche, an Omaha writer who published his autobiographical memoir *The Middle Five*; Standing Bear, who wrote of his experience at Carlisle in his well known *My People, the Sioux*; Carlos Montezuma; and John M. Oskison. See Nabokov. See also Peyer for examples of these early writings. Boarding school graduates who became anthropologists active in pan-Indian efforts include Francis La Flesche, Arthur C. Parker, and J. N. B. Hewitt. See Hertzberg.
14. Lincoln coined the term "Native American renaissance" in his 1983 study. Warrior demarks 1890 to 1925 (the boarding school period) and 1961 to 1973 as crucial periods in which Native writers increasingly interacted with one another, while he defines 1925 to 1961 and 1973 to the present as periods with much less "associative cohesion" among Native writers (3).
15. See Krupat, "Literature," which traces the history of the American academy's acceptance of Native American literature into the literary canon, a process that began, Krupat argues, after World War I. In *Those*, Krupat argues that writing among Native Americans is a post-contact phenomenon. Sequoyah (Cherokee) developed a written syllabary for the Cherokee language in the early 1800s, which was adopted by the Cherokee Nation in 1825. The first novel published by a Native American was *Poor Sarah; or the Indian Woman* (1833), written in Cherokee by Elias Boudinot, editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, the first tribal newspaper to print in both a Native language and English. The first English-language novel published by a Native American was *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta* (1854) by John Rollin Ridge (Cherokee). His novel is a fictionalized biography about the California and Mexico conflict (perhaps allegorical for Cherokee-white conflict, but it does not explicitly discuss Indian issues).
16. For a view that opposes Jaimes's, see Duran and Duran, who argue that the IRA removed the political authority of tribal chiefs and led to the separation of the political and spiritual leadership of the tribe (137).

17. I am referring to policies of termination and relocation aimed at getting rid of Indian nations within the United States. In the 1950s, the federal government attempted “to get out of the Indian business” and terminate its relationship with and responsibilities to tribes. Congress approved termination policies (Resolution 108) in 1953, and for more than 100 tribes, the government-to-government relationship was ended and reservations were disbanded and sold. Through relocation efforts, Congress also passed policies aimed at integrating Indians into urban communities, furthering efforts to assimilate Indians and to end recognition of tribes. Like the boarding schools, these efforts, it could be argued, also unintentionally spawned pan-Indian movements in the 1960s.
18. While Ridge is credited with writing the first English-language novel, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta* does not focus on Indian life. The first novel by a Native American that focuses on Indian life is *O-gi-maw-kwe Mit-i-gwa-ki (Queen of the Woods)*, written by Simon Pokagon (Potawatomi) in 1899. See Ruoff, “American Indian Authors, 1774–1899” and *Literatures*.
19. Mourning Dove’s name at birth was Christal Quintasket, although official documents sometimes list her as Christine Quintasket. The original title page of *Cogewea* lists the author as *Hum-Ishu-Ma*, the Salish word for Mourning Dove, followed by “Mourning Dove” in quotation marks. For biographical information, see Alanna Kathleen Brown; Donovan; Fisher. Also see Mourning Dove’s posthumously published *Autobiography*.
20. The Okanogan, considered part of the Plains and Plateau Indians, are also known as the Interior Salish because they belong to the Salish language family of north-central Washington and British Columbia. Before confinement to a reservation, they were seminomadic, moving seasonally between winter villages along the Columbia River and summer camps inland. In 1855 the fixing of the US-Canadian international border divided the Okanogan people into two bands, the American or River southern Okanogans and the Canadian or Lake Okanogans, a division enacted without tribal consent or approval. A US presidential edict in 1872 established the Colville Reservation, which included the southern Okanogan, Colville, Coeur d’Alene, Spokane, and other area tribes from a variety of language groups. The reservation in Washington, just over 1 million acres today, represents a greatly reduced area in relation to the land these groups occupied before contact with Euro-Americans. Despite federal efforts to terminate the confederation of tribes, today the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation collectively owns much of the reservation land, and the population has increased. By 1990, the membership of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation had increased to more than 7,000, including descendants of the Okanogan. See Deward Walker.
21. McNickle, born William D’Arcy McNickle in Saint Ignatius, Montana, to a Euro-American father and a mixed-race mother, grew up on the

Flathead Reservation in Montana. He was an enrolled member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes but as an adult also aligned himself with a pan-Indian identity. He was one of the founders of the National Congress of American Indians in 1944, for example. His maternal grandfather was a Métis (Cree) of mixed background who fled Canada in 1885 after the failed Riel Rebellion in Saskatchewan and later settled on the Flathead Reservation. McNickle's mother, McNickle, and his siblings were adopted into the Flathead tribe in 1905. For biographical information about McNickle, see Hans, "D'Arcy McNickle"; Dorothy Parker; Purdy; Ruppert, *D'Arcy McNickle*.

22. Before American expansion westward, the Salish—also known as the Flathead, a name given by early European and American explorers—lived in the Pacific Northwest, including the State of Washington, Idaho, and Montana. The Hellgate Treaty of 1855 confined the Salish, Kootenai, and Upper Pend d'Oreille to reservation land in northwestern Montana. Under the Dawes Act, over half a million acres passed out of tribal ownership through land allotment, which began in 1904 (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes Web site). The Salish and Kootenai passed a constitution under the IRA and created the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. While the federal government attempted termination of the Confederated Tribes in 1954, these efforts failed. Today the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Reservation in northwestern Montana is 1.2 million acres in size (1.317 million, according to the Tribes' official Web site), although only 57 percent of the reservation land belongs to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes due to non-Indian settlement following the Dawes Act (Hill). The population on the reservation is 22,000, with 5,400 of Indian descent, of which 3,100 are enrolled members of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (Hill). In all, there are approximately 6,000 members enrolled in the confederated tribes (Hill).
23. See Womack for an argument about the importance of culturally- and tribally-specific studies of Native literatures rather than studies of a pan-Indian identity, the latter clearly the approach of my discussion of federal policy toward and mainstream representations of Native Americans because these policies and images tended to lump Indian peoples together.
24. *Cogewea* was long considered the first novel by a Native American woman from the United States. *Wynema* (1891) by S. Alice Callahan (1868–94) is now considered the first known novel written by a woman of American Indian descent. Callahan was of Muscogee descent and became a Methodist teacher for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation in Oklahoma. *Wynema* was her first and only published novel and has been recently republished. See Ruoff's essay on Callahan, "Justice."
25. Following the publication of *Cogewea*, Mourning Dove collected and transcribed "traditional" Okanogan tales. Her collection of Okanogan stories, *Coyote Stories*, was published in 1934. She also began work on a

new novel, one designed to be made into a film script, an interest she had in common with Hurston. Mourning Dove spent the final eight years of her life engaged in political activism for her tribe and for the Confederated Tribes, aligning herself less with the nationwide pan-Indian movement developing in this period and focusing more on issues on the Colville Reservation. In 1935 she was elected to the Colville Confederated Tribes of Eastern Washington Tribal Council, the first woman to hold the office. She died soon after at about the age of 48, exhausted and probably abused by her second husband (Brown, "Mourning Dove"), just as the far-reaching changes in US policy toward American Indians began to take effect. Mourning Dove also drafted an autobiography that was published posthumously in 1990. Her stories were also collected and published posthumously in 1976 and 1991.

26. For discussion of the text's thematic portrayal of this transitional period, see Brown, "Mourning Dove's Voice," as well as my article, which represents an earlier version of my argument here. See also Fisher, who has done extensive primary research in recovering Mourning Dove's work. In early literary criticism, *Cogewea* is seen as a marginal text of poor literary quality, "valued primarily as an artifact," as Dorothy Parker writes in her bibliographic essay on D'Arcy McNickle (5). More recently, critics have emphasized issues of authorship and the "authenticity" of the text. Several critics have argued that the editor's intrusive position in the text makes it less authentically Native American and seriously detracts from the aesthetic qualities of the text. See for example Larson, who relegates Mourning Dove's novel to an appendix, calling it "the curious little novel" (5). While Larson, along with Fisher and Alanna Kathleen Brown, was in fact one of the first critics to "rediscover" Mourning Dove's novel, his dismissal has had a long-term impact on its reception. See Bernardin for an example of an article that not only addresses this issue but also moves beyond it to examine Mourning Dove's use of the western romance genre.
27. Since the novel's publication, readers and literary critics have continued to see this novel as ethnographic or autobiographical. For example, in her foundational study of ethnic women's fiction, Dearborn reads *Cogewea* as an "autobiographical novel" (*Pocahontas' Daughters* 9). Brown, who has worked closely with Mourning Dove's surviving family, suggests that *Cogewea* is Mourning Dove's "alter ego" ("Mourning Dove's Voice" 6).
28. Most critics agree that McWhorter exerted a great amount of control over the draft, and Mourning Dove complained in letters to McWhorter about his heavy-handed involvement. See Bernardin; Fisher; Jay Miller. McWhorter's role as collaborator has been a serious issue of contention for critics ever since. For a range of views on the impact of McWhorter (and evidence of how powerfully this issue has dominated the field), see also Allen; Alanna Kathleen Brown; Donovan; Finn; Karell; Larson; Owens. My argument that collaboration is part of the Native American literary tradition most closely parallels Bernardin's.

29. See Finn, who argues that McWhorter saw Mourning Dove's work as historical, autobiographical, and anthropological because he was intent on preserving "ethnographic facts" (342) about American Indian cultures. By contrast, Mourning Dove "challenged the very premises of his notion of truth." See Donovan for a discussion of the pressure McWhorter put on Mourning Dove to wear traditional clothing and Mourning Dove's resistance to that. Photographs of Mourning Dove are housed at the Lucullus V. McWhorter Collection, Washington State University Libraries.
30. Critics offer widely different characterizations of the novel's ending. Owens argues that the novel "ends on a note of stasis, nothing resolved, none of the many questions answered" (48). See also Larson; Hans, "Rethinking History" for arguments that the ending is pessimistic or tragic. By contrast, see Lukens, who calls the ending happy (419) and argues that Mourning Dove challenges the trope of the tragic half-blood.
31. See Bernardin for a more thorough discussion of Mourning Dove's genre reformulation, particularly Mourning Dove's rewriting of the tragic half-blood narrative. See also Viehmann for discussions of Mourning Dove's revision of this plot line.
32. For discussions of perceptions and portrayals of the half-blood in this period, see Dippie; Scheick. In the popular literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, people of mixed Indian and white descent were seen as social outcasts who fit into neither world, parallel to the tragic mulatto figure in popular representations of mixed-race African Americans. To many Native Americans, those of mixed descent represented painful reminders of the destructive effects of European colonization.
33. For a detailed discussion of this scene, see Beidler, who points out that this scene "contains some of the first literary criticism by a Native American" (45). For a comparison of Mourning Dove's plot to that of *The Brand*, see also Keresztesi.
34. For a more thorough discussion of the novel's endorsement of a bicultural identity, see Lukens, who argues that the novel's recuperation of the half-blood figure is mirrored in Mourning Dove's creation of a crosscultural genre, what Lukens calls a "half-blood aesthetic."
35. As Bernardin puts it, the corral is "an ambivalent space of self-containment" (503), a refuge but also a trap. Batker reads the corral trope as a critique of reservation confinement, while Holton sees it as an image of protection, which he reads in contrast to McNickle's novel, which ends in a sense of confinement.
36. The Stemteemä's stories include: "The Dead Man's Vision" (122), a medicine man's prediction of the coming of the white priests (the Black Robes) and destruction of Indian peoples; "The Story of Green-Blanket Feet" (165), a warning against marrying white men; and "The Second Coming of the Shoyahpee" (217), about a white man's abandonment of his Indian wife.

37. See Tedlock for a discussion of the limitations of writing in transcribing oral literatures. Tedlock creates a method of transcription that attempts to preserve elements of orality in written form.
38. It is interesting to note the choice of surname for Mourning Dove's villain. Frances Densmore (1867–1957) was one of the first and most prolific recorders of Indian music in the early twentieth century. Her interest in Native American music began in the 1890s. She started working for the Bureau of Ethnology in 1907 and published her first collections of music by Chippewas from Minnesota from 1910 to 1913.
39. Finn's article compares the lives of Mourning Dove and Ella Deloria, their relationships to their mentors and anthropology, and briefly their novels. Finn analyzes their novels through an anthropological lens, and to her approach I add the techniques of genre and textual analysis.
40. In the last two decades, this gender bias has received increasing attention. See Carr for a discussion of this unintentional bias in anthropology in this period. See also Stacey; Abu-Lughod; Behar and Gordon. For more on Ella Deloria, who served as a research specialist to Boas from 1927 to 1942, see Hoefel; Ruoff, *Literatures*. Deloria published several studies of Sioux culture and wrote a novel about the Sioux, *Waterlily*, completed in 1944, but not published until 1988. For a critique of the relationship between Boas and Deloria, see Finn.
41. While scholars often trace this recent change in anthropology to Clifford's "Traveling Cultures" (originally published in 1992; republished in *Routes*) and other important works, they tend to ignore that Vine Deloria made this point earlier in *Custer* (1969).
42. For discussions of Mourning Dove's role as cultural mediator, see Finn; Fisher; Jay Miller; Owens. Jay Miller suggests that the choice of the pen name of Mourning Dove also implies the role of cultural mediator, as the mourning dove in Okanogan oral tradition is the messenger who brings the message of a season of plenty ("Cultural Mediator" 160).
43. See Ruppert (*D'Arcy McNickle*), who argues that the novel finds its roots in the naturalism of Theodore Dreiser and Frank Norris. While *The Surrounded* is not as outspoken in its protest of American racial relations as is Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940), both texts explore the sociological processes that entrap their protagonists and deny them the opportunity to articulate their situations. For a discussion of the novel's fatalist overtones, see also Evans; Keresztesi; Owens. In its detailed descriptions of the landscape, *The Surrounded* also invokes western regional texts of the period such as Willa Cather's portrayal of the American frontier (Hans, Introduction). Critics, including Purdy and Dorothy Parker (*Singing*), have noted McNickle's Hemingway-esque style in his crisp descriptions of the landscape.
44. As a young man, McNickle hoped to join the Modernist circle of writers in Europe. Like Yeziarska, he traveled to Europe to follow the path of key Modernist expatriates, although Yeziarska only visited and did not live

there. After a short time at Oxford, he lived briefly in Paris, mingling with American expatriates of “the lost generation.” In an earlier manuscript of *The Surrounded*, “The Hungry Generation” (a title that invokes Gertrude Stein’s “The Lost Generation,” which in turn refers to John Keats’s term), Archilde participates in this expatriate lifestyle. In the final version of *The Surrounded*, the sudden death of Archilde’s father makes this cultural script unavailable to Archilde, who must remain on the reservation to translate the encroaching modern world for his mother. For comparisons of the manuscript and the published novel, see Hans, “Because”; Parker, *Singing*.

45. See McNickle’s nonfiction works *The Changing Indian* and *Native American Tribalism* for portraits of Indian cultures as changing and adapting. See also Purdy, who writes, “McNickle intended his works to be statements of the ability of Native cultures to endure despite consistent, and sometimes violent, efforts to destroy them” (xiii); Iverson’s introduction to *Native American Tribalism*, in which he makes an argument similar to Purdy’s; Alfonso Ortiz’s obituary of McNickle. By contrast, Evans sees McNickle’s use of English as a failure signaling the end of Indian culture.
46. See also Womack, who challenges anthropological and postcolonial theoretical assumptions “that things Indian are always swallowed up by European culture” (12) and instead suggests that Indian cultures have, in turn, altered European cultures.
47. The novel includes ten points when a character tells a story (including moments where the text refers to a storytelling event but the text of the story is not included).
48. For comparisons of McNickle’s telling of “The Story of Flint” to its anthropological sources, see Purdy; William Brown.
49. Using a different methodology than mine, Ruppert also makes an argument for the transformative cultural work of this novel. In “Textual Perspectives,” Ruppert uses reader response theory to demonstrate how the text brings about a change in the reader’s view.
50. For helpful strategies of oral transcription, see Sarris, who self-reflexively portrays the hearing of his grandmother’s stories rather than attempting to transcribe the stories themselves. For discussions of the oral narrative in Indian literature, see Hymes; Roemer.
51. While structuralist narratology, which examines the way that narrative discourse develops a story into an organized structure or plot, has tended to decontextualize narrative and ignore the circumstance of the storytelling event, Ross Chambers argues that what is missing is “recognition of the significance of situational phenomena—of the social fact that narrative mediates human relationships and derives its ‘meaning’ from them; that, consequently, it depends on social agreements, implicit pacts or contracts, in order to produce exchanges that themselves are a function of desires, purposes, and constraints” (4). Chambers insists on

seeing narrative as “a transactional phenomenon” that is produced within a historical context and, in turn, produces historical change. By contrast, the work of Russian formalist Vladimir Propp and of structuralist narratologist Roland Barthes focus on the way language systems rather than context construct meaning.

52. See Marcus and Fischer for a discussion of the current move in anthropology to question the ethnographic monograph and for examples of experimental ethnographies.
53. See Doss’s argument, which focuses on McNickle’s use of orality and oral tradition in the text. He argues that McNickle uses both written and oral forms to express his ideas about the adaptability of Native Americans.
54. See for example the first known autobiography written by an Indian, William Apess’s *A Son of the Forest* (1829). These spiritual accounts were in turn adapting early colonial American autobiographies (e.g., Cotton Mather’s).
55. For discussions of the current challenges to anthropology, see Clifford; Fox; Geertz; Manganaro, “Textual Play”; Marcus and Fischer.

#### CHAPTER 4

1. Information about Jews in the modern era and Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe comes primarily from Sorin; Howe. See also Bauman for a discussion of antisemitism in Eastern Europe.
2. For discussions of the role of immigrant women, see Antler; Brodtkin; Burstein. For more gender-aware discussions of Jewish American history than Howe’s classic study, see Baskin; Glenn; Hyman; Weinberg.
3. Between 1899 and 1924 nearly all the Chinese, about half the Italians and Greeks, and about twelve percent of the Irish immigrants returned home, but only 5 percent of the Jews returned (Painter, *Standing* xxxiii). In contrast to the Japanese immigrants, who were largely men with plans to return home, Jewish immigration was a movement of families (Sorin; Takaki). Jewish immigrants tended to bring wives and daughters; females comprised 43 percent of the Jewish immigrant population, compared to 20 percent of the Italian immigrants, and children under fourteen comprised 25 percent.
4. The first European to set foot on the first island to be reached by Columbus was Luis de Torres, his interpreter, a Spaniard of Jewish origin (Kurtz). Torres settled on the island that was to later become Cuba. The first group of Jews to settle in the area that was to become the United States were a group of Brazilian Marranos (Spanish Jews who converted to Christianity and hid their Jewish identity to escape persecution in the Middle Ages during the Inquisition) who settled in the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam, later to become the city of New York.
5. See Kramer, who makes this argument by examining the writings of nineteenth century Jewish Americans, including the founder of American



- Reform Judaism, Isaac Mayer Wise, and poet Emma Lazarus. See also Hyman, who offers an account of assimilation that considers gender.
6. It should be noted that beginning in the 1850s, the Irish were often cast as inferior, a distinction that was based on earlier European racialized constructions (Brodkin).
  7. In 1880, 29 percent of the foreign-born had come from Germany, 28 percent from Ireland, and 25 percent from elsewhere in Northwestern Europe. Only 4 percent came from Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe, and 1.6 percent came from China and Japan. In 1920, 45 percent came from Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe, 20 percent from Northwestern Europe (excluding Ireland and Germany), 12 percent from Germany, 7 percent from Ireland, and less than 1 percent from China and Japan. See Painter, *Standing*.
  8. The word *semitic* originally meant the descendants of Shem, the oldest son of Noah. Before this period, the term came to refer to peoples living in the Middle East and did not distinguish between Jews and Arabs. See Gilman for a discussion of the origins of this term.
  9. See Michaels for a discussion of Roosevelt's fears of "racial suicide" and a more thorough discussion of the complicity of 1920s writings in the nativist project.
  10. Several scholars have recently offered important studies of the changing notion of culture in the early twentieth century, including Hegeman; Manganaro; Susman. See also Elliott, who locates this change a few decades earlier to the late nineteenth century and the height of American literary realism.
  11. The use of the "national origins principle" stood as the basic rule of immigration law in the United States until 1965, when the law was rewritten to admit immigrants based on the order in which they applied for entrance. While the 1965 law still limited entrance by country and region, it marked a change in the way that restrictions were defined. In 1977, an amendment to immigration law changed the quota to 20,000 for any country and to 290,000 immigrants worldwide.
  12. For related discussions about representations of Jews in British culture, see Cheyette, *Constructions*; Garb.
  13. For discussion of this contradiction, see Sorin, *Time*; Garb; Nochlin.
  14. For the role of Jewish immigrants in founding Hollywood, see Gabler. See Lester Friedman, Randall Miller for the portrayal of Jews in American film and Rivo for work on the portrayal of Jewish women in American film.
  15. See Fischer's study of American political cartoons. During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, political cartoons focused primarily on negative and grotesquely exaggerated portrayals of African Americans, Irish Americans, and Jewish Americans. Chinese Americans were seldom portrayed in these cartoons, American Indians became targets only when the general news carried stories of frontier conflict, and only a few cartoons about Italian Americans appeared at the end of the century.

Instead, during this period “The staples of such humor throughout the period were comical black Americans, the shanty Irish, and coarsely conning Jewish Shylocks” (71).

16. See also Pajaczkowska and Curtis, who describe this effort to embody characteristics of multiple ethnic groups as interstitial ethnicity. See Romeyn and Kugelmass for a discussion of Jewish performer Eddie Cantor, a particularly good example of ethnic borrowing. See also Rogin for an analysis of Cantor’s film *Whoopie!* (1930), in which Cantor played “a Jewish Indian,” performing a caricatured Indian accent with Yiddish immigrant peddler mannerisms.
17. For differing explanations of the Jewish American turn to blackface, see Howe; Romeyn and Kugelmass; Sanders; Whitfield.
18. For an interesting twist on this argument, see Diner (*Land*), who argues that Jewish Americans fostered political solidarity with African Americans in the early twentieth century in order to assure their own position as Americans.
19. See Harap for a history of writing by Jews in America. The first published writing by a Jewish writer in the United States was a political essay by Reverend Gershom Mendes Seixas in 1798. Early poets included Peninah Moise (1797–1880), whose volume of verse, *Fancy’s Sketch Book* (1833), was the first book of poetry by a Jew to be published in America; Adah Isaacs Menken (1835–68); and Emma Lazarus (1849–87). The 1850s saw the emergence of the first periodicals by and about Jewish Americans. Isaac Mayer Wise, founder of Reform Judaism’s *The Israelite*, is considered the first Jewish American novelist. Wise published the first installment of his novel, *The Convert*, in its first issue in 1854. He published 27 novels in English during his lifetime. Emma Lazarus may be the first Jewish American woman to publish a novel (*Alide*, 1874).
20. For discussions of the rise in Jewish women’s writing, see Antler’s introduction to *Talking Back*; Sochen. Lichtenstein provides a history of Jewish women’s writing in the nineteenth century.
21. Also like *Marrow*, Cahan’s novel was criticized by literary critic Howells, who objected to Cahan’s inclusion of prostitution and sex. For further discussions of Howells’s relationship with Cahan, see Chametsky; Marovitz. For a comparison of Chesnutt and Cahan’s short stories, see Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity* 156–65.
22. For examples of his efforts to mediate between these two communities, see Chametsky; Marovitz; Walden.
23. *McClure’s* was first published in 1893. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the magazine began to focus on muckraker journalism. Its last issue was published in 1929.
24. See Sollors’s *Beyond Ethnicity* for a comparison of Cahan’s and Johnson’s novels, both of which follow the successful integration of these ethnically marginal characters into American society but end with the protagonist feeling unhappy. Sollors argues that both Johnson and Cahan construct

- an ironic narrative voice that undermines the first-person narrator. See 168–73.
25. This article ran in March, 1913, and was written by Burton J. Hendrick, an associate editor at *McClure's* and a respected muckraker. Hendrick later went on to publish an anti-immigration book in 1923 entitled *The Jews in America*. See Chametsky's introduction for discussion of this *McClure's* article.
  26. See Chametsky for a careful analysis of what he calls "egregious" drawings that pander "to images of a lustful and salacious Jew" (Introduction xvi). Chametsky praises Cahan's efforts to resist *McClure's* sensationalism (xviii).
  27. *David Levinsky* sold well at the time of its publication. It was the first book about Jewish immigrants to be reviewed on the front page of the *New York Times Book Review*. Some 8,000 copies sold in 1917 and 1918, and it continued to sell well until it went out of print ten years later (Marovitz). See Chametsky, Marovitz for a discussion of other changes between the *McClure's* pieces and the published novel.
  28. For examples of such critics, see Barrish; Chametsky; Engel; Foote; Homberger; Joseph; Lyons; Pressman; Von Rosk.
  29. For examples of critics who focus on narrative point of view and other formal elements of Cahan's fiction, see Harris; Barrish, who looks at the retrospective narrator, what he terms the narrator's "self-consciousness" (653).
  30. The novel was generally well received by reviewers when first published, although many Jewish Americans of German descent objected to its portrait of Jewish life and culture. For a discussion of the novel's reception at the time of publication, see Chametsky; Marovitz.
  31. For discussion of "slum fiction," see Haenni. See also Harris for a useful discussion of the limitations immigrant writers faced in this period as a legacy of the vernacular short story and the American realist tradition.
  32. See for example the definition and explanation on the Talmud (27–28), notably written as if it were a didactic religious school lesson itself.
  33. One such footnote appears on page 75.
  34. See for example the lecture on "an important and interesting chapter in the history of the American cloak business" (201).
  35. See also Harris as well as Chametsky for discussions of the distance created by Cahan's narrators, who are simultaneously insiders and outsiders to the culture they describe. For an opposing argument, see Haenni, who argues that realist ethnic fiction creates a sense of intimacy that renders the difference of immigrants acceptable to middle-class readers.
  36. Some date Yezierska's birth to 1885; Schoen dates it to c. 1883. Yezierska reported it as 1890. For biographical information, see Dearborn, *Love*; Ferraro, *Ethnic Passages*; Goodman; Henriksen; Schoen; as well as Yezierska's autobiography, *Red Ribbon*.
  37. For discussions of Yezierska's efforts to exploit her ethnic immigrant status, see Botshon; Ferraro, *Ethnic Passages*. Also note that in constructing

- themselves as exotic ethnic Others, both Yeziarska and Hurston billed themselves as ten years younger than they actually were. I have not found evidence that Hurston and Yeziarska knew one another, although they were both friends with novelist Fannie Hurst (1889–1968), most known for her novel *Imitation of Life* (1933), and both took classes at Columbia.
38. After the success of the film adaptation of *Hungry Hearts*, Yeziarska rejected Hollywood's extravagance and materialism and returned to New York. By 1932 she had published four novels and another collection of short fiction. She lost all of her wealth during the Depression, published only one other book, her autobiography in 1950, and died in relative obscurity in 1970. After her death, her work has been rediscovered as part of the feminist literary recovery of texts by women. The parallels to Hurston's career and feminist recovery of her work are striking.
  39. While not necessarily receiving praise for its literary merit, Yeziarska's writing has been recognized for its historical and documentary import, valued for its portrait of the ghetto from an immigrant woman's perspective, and reclaimed for providing voice to the thousands of immigrant women working in America's sweatshops and factories. For examples of this use of Yeziarska's fiction by historians, see Howe; Hyman. For important contributions to moving beyond this kind of analysis, see Ferraro, "Avant-garde Ethnicities" and *Ethnic Passages*; Konzett; Dearborn. My project seeks to answer these scholars' calls to understand Yeziarska's work not only for its sociological or historical contributions but also for its aesthetic implications. Henriksen (Yeziarska's daughter) suggests that Yeziarska's work should not be taken as "literally true." She writes, "Although most of her writing was autobiographical, she was incapable of telling the plain truth" (255).
  40. See Ebest for a discussion of Yeziarska's efforts in her short stories to address representations of Jews as greedy. See also *Ethnic Modernisms*, in which Konzett argues that Yeziarska invokes ethnic stereotypes "with an ironic self-awareness" (168).
  41. Scholars generally trace the genesis of formal experimentalism in Jewish immigrant writing to the 1930s. See, for example, Ferraro "Avant-garde Ethnicities"; Harris.
  42. Here Scott's "tangled mesh of Modernists" is a useful metaphor for recognizing the complex interactions and influences that shaped writing in this period. Scott's foundational work examines gender and modernism, but her trope is also useful in understanding the complex relationship of ethnicity and modernism.
  43. On Yeziarska's involvement in political and intellectual changes of the period, see Dearborn, *Love*. She argues that Yeziarska was inevitably exposed to innovative views of the period through her friendship with women involved in Heterodoxy, a club whose membership included some of the most radical women of the period (70), as well as through her intense relationship with sociologist John Dewey, the subject of

- Dearborn's book. See also Henriksen, who notes that with the publication of *Salome of the Tenants* (1922), Yeziarska entered a literary circle that included Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis, Willa Cather, and F. Scott Fitzgerald, although it is not clear that she personally knew these writers. See Harrison-Kahan for a discussion of Yeziarska's allusion to the Harlem Renaissance through her portrayal of cabaret bars and jazz performers in her novels.
44. For examples of this critique, see Keresztesi; Levinson; Muir; Schoen; Wilentz; Zaborowska. See also Batker, who reads Sara's efforts to return to her immigrant life as a failure and claims that her assimilation efforts are analogous to middle-class immigrant aid workers and reformers, whose paternalism Yeziarska critiques in much of her fiction (120).
  45. For a comparison of *David Levinsky* and *Bread Givers*, see Von Rosk, who suggests that Yeziarska's real life story more closely parallels Cahan's fictional Levinsky's, while Cahan's real life story is more like Yeziarska's protagonist's (317).
  46. While Harrison-Kahan suggests that most critics examine Yeziarska's linguistic hybridity, these critics, with the notable exception of Konzett, largely look at hybridity as a theme but stop short of formalist analysis of her use of Yiddish.
  47. Konzett, "Administered Identities" examines Yeziarska's hybrid language to demonstrate Yeziarska's critique of assimilationist models. In a different but not contradictory approach, I argue that Yeziarska's use of hybrid immigrant English registers as a kind of literary experimentalism that is necessary in order to represent the Jewish immigrant's negotiation of modernity. See also Codde, who mentions Yeziarska's linguistic hybridity but focuses largely on the novel's thematic representation of cultural hybridity and examines her blend of Biblical tropes with American narratives.
  48. See Pavletich for arguments about Yeziarska's deliberate use of emotionality; see also Drucker.
  49. For discussions of the way mainstream audiences coveted Yeziarska's writing, see Botshon; Pavletich. See Ferraro, *Ethnic Passages* for a detailed overview of Yeziarska's reception in the 1920s, as well as her more recent rediscovery since the 1970s, especially pp. 53–56. Sales of *Bread Givers* were disappointing; it was out of print by the time the Depression began and was largely forgotten until ten years after Yeziarska's death.
  50. "Bread givers" is a translation of the Yiddish term, *broit gibbers*, referring to "the women who make both physical and metaphorical 'bread' for the home" (Wilentz 34). Henriksen suggests that Yeziarska drew upon three of her own sisters, who supported her father and family.

## CHAPTER 5

1. See, for example, Middle East historian Bernard Lewis's bestselling *What Went Wrong?* (2002).
2. See recent work by Jameson, such as "Globalization and Political Strategy."
3. For discussions of the current challenges to anthropology, see Marcus and Fischer; Manganaro, "Textual Play."

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