

*Lesbian Temporality: 'Moments' as an Expression of
Lesbian Perception of Time in Fiction*

A senior thesis by Laura Sabatino '19

Advised by Professor Gabriel Mayora

Index

Introduction ~ Lesbian Temporality: Moments and Connections	2
Chapter One ~ Interconnected Stories and Lesbian Moments of the Women in Michael Cunningham's <i>The Hours</i>	9
Chapter Two ~ Time in Space in Patricia Highsmith's <i>The Price of Salt</i> 20	
Chapter Three ~ Epistolary Lesbian Moments and Female Relationships in Alice Walker's <i>The Color Purple</i>	29
Chapter Four ~ Body Count: Rita Mae Brown's Use of Sexual Partners as a Form of Lesbian Time in <i>Rubyfruit Jungle</i>	39
Conclusion ~ Lesbian Temporality: Now and Into the Future	46
Works Cited	50

Introduction ~ Lesbian Temporality: Moments and Connections

The term ‘queer,’ while originally a slur aimed at LGBTQ individuals, has more recently (around the early 1990s) become a broadly defined identity label for those same individuals (Stevens 2011). While this mode of categorization allows for much inclusivity it has also become an overdetermined monolith (Stevens 2011). It has the potential to omit any kind of specificity or internal differences within the fiction produced by different segments of the LGBTQ+ community. This often leads to the affirmation of fiction that fits within the generalized notion of the label “queer” at the expense of engaging with more specific categorizations of non-normative gender and sexual identifications, such as lesbians (Malavé and Manalansan 2002). This issue is present within queer literary studies as well. Similarly to Malavé and Manalansan, in *Queers Read This!*, authors Fawaz and Smalls explain that in regards to literature, “[There is a] tension between the actual attention we pay to the specificity of LGBTQ writing and culture and the production of a more capacious queer theory capable of identifying the sexual and gendered logics of a vast range of institutions, performances, and cultural productions provides one of the conditions of queer literary studies” (Fawaz and Smalls 171-172). “Queer” as a broad category has created “tension” within queer literary study. It allows for more broadness and because of that eliminates some specificity.

In the process of interrogating the political and intellectual erasures of “queer fiction” as a category, it is vital to discuss the potential of re-examining less broad modes of categorization. Notably, given its ties to female and feminist literary expressions, lesbian literature is a category that allows for a more nuanced critical discussion of narratives centered around certain forms of

queer female expression than the label “queer literature” can account for. Labeling these narratives as “lesbian literature” allows the reader to foreground the specificity and importance of literary traditions that are rooted in lesbian aesthetics and politics. I define lesbian texts for the purpose of my writing as one that has queer characters (specifically women who are romantically or sexually involved with other women) and lesbian structure or temporality. This kind of lesbian structure focuses the significance of moments rather than simply the narrative as one larger chronology.

One commonality that often connects and defines queer literature is the concept of ‘queer temporality.’ Jack Halberstam defines queer temporality as a mode of resistance against heteronormative conceptions of time and space: "Queer uses of time and space develop, at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction. They also develop according to other logics of location, movement, and identification" (Halberstam 1). Halberstam explains that queer temporality is a term used to describe the ways in which the identities, lifestyles, and choices that queer individuals make can conceive of time in a way that challenges or interrogates traditionally heteronormative institutions and practices, such as marriage and reproduction. So, while queer temporality comes out of the postmodern movement, it is different and more specific than a postmodern theory of temporality. Halberstam’s theory of temporality notably emerges from and expands postmodern approaches to time: "'Queer time' is a term for those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance" (Halberstam 6). For Halberstam, queer temporality points to the heteronormative

ideology of traditional postmodernism to incorporate a queer lens that challenges postmodern theory's emphasis on hegemonic institutions.

As a concept, queer temporality has often been studied in relation to the AIDS epidemic. As a result of this, many subgroups within the LGBTQIA community whose role in the epidemic has not been as fully explored as that of cis-gay men have not been incorporated into the notion of queer temporality. Halberstam explains, "While there is now a wealth of excellent work focused on the temporality of lives lived in direct relation to the HIV virus, we find far less work on the other part ... [of the] equation: those lives lived in the 'shadow of an epidemic' the lives of women, transgenders, and queers who partake of this temporal shift in less obvious ways" (Halberstam 3). In other words, scholars have not fully examined the ways in which queer people other than cis men interact with queer temporality. Halberstam makes the effort to lessen this gap in scholarship by writing about the ways in which queer temporality is present in the trans community.

I will argue that queer temporality functions differently among lesbians, specifically lesbians in fiction. The ways in which lesbian characters interact with queer temporality differs from the ways in which scholars traditionally define it (Halberstam 2005). Queer temporality often specifically refers to the rejection of the notions stated above: marriage, reproduction, etc.. Characters in lesbian fiction push this further. While there is somewhat a rejection of the hegemonic forms of marriage and reproduction, many of the characters still are mothers or have been in traditional heterosexual relationships. However, what is different about the ways in which they experience temporality is how they interact with moments - mundane or significant - and take control over them, defining the moments, not vice versa. These characters may visit

moments repeatedly in a way that moves them out of the past, making them ever present. They also provide them with their own significance, rather than simply ascribing them to the larger traditional chronology. Hence, lesbian literature is its own valued and specific literary genre. Viewing queer fiction through a lesbian lens rooted in lesbian literary traditions proves that lesbian fiction disrupts the homogenized label of queer literature.

Thus, for the purposes of this paper, when referring to the ways in which lesbians interact with queer temporality, I will use the term “lesbian temporality”, with the word “lesbian” acting as both a noun and a verb in the same way that the term “queer” does.¹ So, while lesbian temporality is inherently queer, I will use the term lesbian in a way that functions similarly to “queer” while also allowing for more specificity.

To develop this argument, I focus on four texts that I will argue are significant to engage with the critical value and potentiality of lesbian fiction, particularly in the way they engage with the concept of lesbian temporality. These texts are Michael Cunningham’s *The Hours* (1998), Patricia Highsmith’s *The Price of Salt* (1952), Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* (1982), and Rita Mae Brown’s *Rubyfruit Jungle* (1973). While some of these texts are certainly older, (and *The Hours* is even written by a cis-man) what connects all of them is the ways in which they treat temporality. Each of these texts take place during different time periods and contexts and yet their lesbian protagonists share lesbian temporality. Each text employs moments in a unique way via genre, writing style, plot, aesthetics et cetera that *lesbians* their temporalities.

The order in which I write about these four texts is purposeful and aligns with the concept of my thesis. Rather than arrange the chapters chronologically, I play with their temporality. I

¹ Occasionally, I will use ‘lesbian’ solely as a verb, similarly to the way scholars use the word ‘queer’ or ‘to queer’.

use *The Hours* (the most recent novel) in the first chapter, followed by *The Price of Salt* (the oldest novel), *The Color Purple* and then *Rubyfruit Jungle* as the last chapter. This lesbians the temporality in regards to the order of the texts. The time or historical context in which they are written does not dictate the order in which they appear in this thesis. Rather, what determines the order is their content and the ways in which they reveal lesbian temporality. This order also allows *Rubyfruit Jungle* to disrupt the notion that a committed relationship is a prerequisite for lesbian temporality. The novel serves as an example of the ways in which the individual can achieve lesbian temporality independently.

Yet, I begin with *The Hours*. Michael Cunningham connects the stories of three different women--a fictionalized real-life author and two fictional creations--in his novel *The Hours*. Virginia Woolf, Laura Brown, and Clarissa Vaughan have much in common with one another despite living years and places apart. They all share an uniquely erotic kiss which disrupts the hegemonic narrative prescribed to them. The novel interweaves each of their stories by emphasizing certain moments that each of the women share in the span of one day in Virginia's, Laura's, and Clarissa's lives. He reveals similarities that they share in regards to dissatisfaction with their familial relationships and how they use a particular moment to change and lesbian their perception of time.

Kate Haffey goes on to explain the importance that moments have in Cunningham's connections between his characters. She argues that these moments, specifically a kiss that each of the women have, allow the characters to exist apart from the context and normalcy of their daily lives (Haffey 2010). The moment or kiss that they experience exists in its own right rather than a part of a larger chronology. They are able to feel the shift in temporality and the

importance of moments, relating their stories to one another in a way unlike the other straight characters in the novel.

So, despite the fact that all three women experience a seemingly ordinary day faced with mundane tasks such as decorating a cake or buying flowers, focusing on certain moments grants more meaning to the characters because normalcy pauses for a moment. They exist in one moment in time and are able to see who they are outside of their ordinary lives. This leads each of them to experience and partially understand their lesbianism. A moment that Cunningham emphasizes is “the [queer and often forbidden] kiss” that all three women have at some point in their lives. While these kisses appear to be ordinary and non-significant in the context of the larger narrative, when looked at solely as moments they become quite significant to the characters lives and development of their sexualities. They do not view these kisses as simply another part of their lives or their days; they understand them as being important in their own right. Extracting these moments from the larger chronology of the text lesbians the novel’s temporality. Hence, I will expand upon Haffey’s theory on *The Hours* to include other lesbian texts. I will explain the ways in which they connect to one another transhistorically via individual moments and lesbianed temporalities, revealing that lesbian literature more broadly employs its own kind of lesbian temporality.

In chapter two, I will argue that Highsmith’s use of space in *The Price of Salt* alters the reader’s perception of time and thus spaces become her version of lesbian temporality. Set in the 1950s, the novel has two primary settings: the city and the country. In New York City the two main characters, Therese and Carol, are surrounded by a heteronormative society and outlook on life. For despite its contemporary reputation, New York City in the 1950s oppressed and

surveilled LGBT individuals (Long 2009). Scholar Kat Long explains that “...Times Square was also the headquarters of New York’s hustlers, who waited for other men under the brightly lit marquee of the movie theaters or in shadowed doorways” (Long 98). Clearly New York City was not the accepting place that it is known to be today. Homophobia was violent and rampant. Police officers were surveilling and imprisoning individuals engaging in homosexuality. This kind of surveillance created a tense and toxic environment for LGBT individuals. However, Carol and Therese are able to escape this heteronormative perspective when they travel and escape the city, allowing them to create their own lesbianed version of time. Hence, while Cunningham utilizes major shifts in time periods as a means of lesbianing time, Highsmith focuses on the physical space and setting of her novel to achieve the same effect.

Additionally, I will analyze the ways in which *Price of Salt* lesbians the typical lesbian narrative during the context in which it was written. In the end of the novel, the two main characters end up staying in a relationship together. This is rare for novels that focused on lesbians during the 1950s; most often the women would revert back to heterosexuality like the protagonist in Valerie Taylor’s popular pulp novel, *Stranger on Lesbos* (1960). This was the safer and more accepted ending. Thus, Highsmith’s happy ending in which two lesbian characters remain together was certainly a risk. However, she refused to surrender to the commonly used heterosexist trope and ending.

In chapter three, I will explain the ways in which Alice Walker in her novel, *The Color Purple*, uses the structure of the epistolary novel in order to section her text apart into several lesbian moments via letters. In these moments the repeated theme of sisterhood or black women teaching and supporting other black women lesbians time. It allows for Celie, the main character,

to explore and embrace her identities as a black lesbian woman. I will look at the ways in which her racial identity intersects with her lesbian identity to lesbian time in a way that is specific to her experience as a black lesbian woman.

In the following chapter, I will argue that Rita Mae Brown uses different sexual partners to break apart time into lesbian moments in her novel, *Rubyfruit Jungle*. The main character in this novel, Molly, has sexual relations with many different individuals in varied contexts. Each one helps her learn more about herself. Thus, I will use this novel as an example of the ways in which lesbian texts can be focused on the individual and do not require a romantic or monogamous relationship. This is significant in that it prioritizes the lesbian identity, rather than only lesbian relationships. In order to do so, I will look at scholarship regarding the intersection of racial and lesbian identities and how they come together for the main character to lesbian her sense of time.

Each of these authors do not avoid normalcy in an effort to present a lesbian narrative; rather, they embrace it, revealing the ways in which moments within the normal allows one to recognize her agency and her lesbianism. As long as one takes control over her moments, making her time and her narrative her own, she lesbians temporality.

Chapter One ~ Interconnected Stories and Lesbian Moments of the Women in Michael

Cunningham's *The Hours*

Michael Cunningham connects the stories of three different women in his novel, *The Hours*. Virginia Woolf, Laura Brown, and Clarissa Vaughan live years and places apart and yet still have much in common with one another. Specifically, they share a kiss which becomes an important symbol of their multiple commonalities: their dissatisfaction with their domestic and semi-domestic lives along with other shared pieces of hope that they experience throughout the text. Unlike other straight characters in the novel (specifically, Virginia's and Laura's husbands) they are able to feel the shift in temporality and the importance of seemingly ordinary moments, which is revealed through their thoughts and use of memories. This shift in temporality allows for a pause in their everyday lives - in the mundane that is supposed to be important. Rather than thinking of each moment as part of a larger chronology, each can exist on its own, carrying its own significance. Cunningham explicitly opposes teleology, refusing to write time as linear; instead, he positions three protagonists who exist in a lesbian temporality in which transhistorical moments interconnect them. Ultimately, the sexual identities of these women allow them to experience temporality and moments in this way, where each one has its own importance; its existence is not solely to support a culminating climax. This shared experience of time connects the characters to one another as they seek through these moments survival, agency, and pleasure. Cunningham reveals the ways in which lesbian characters lesbian time in literature in a way that is unique to their specific sexual identities. The ways in which they focus on a particular moment, rather than how that moment is part of a larger chronology of their lives, is because of

their lesbian identities. Haffey explains, “Cunningham’s text is not merely a re-telling of *Mrs. Dalloway* or a rehearsing of its themes; instead the novel demonstrates exactly what these queer moments make possible - a different relation to the future” (Haffey 150). Because of their lesbianism, the protagonists of *The Hours* hold different possibilities for their futures. They do not have to subscribe to the future traditionally prescribed to women, which relies so heavily upon marriage and reproduction. These kinds of shared moments and experiences create a kind of transhistorical and transracial community among these protagonists, as well as other lesbian characters in fiction. Their stories are similar to one another’s because they recognize the importance that lies in the mundane moments of each of their lives.

The first woman that Cunningham introduces his reader to is Virginia Woolf, who is in the process of writing her novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. Following a series of suicide attempts, Cunningham’s Virginia² has recently moved out of London into the country per her doctor’s request. She does not encounter much stimulation in her country home. Although her husband is loving, he worries about her, not allowing her to leave the house without supervision. This ultimately imprisons her to a life of domesticity; she is unable to explore and live a deeply fulfilling life in the way that she desires.

Thus, she spends most of her time focused on her novel. She channels her energy into her novel’s main character, Clarissa Dalloway, who spends the whole plot planning a party. Thus, the entirety of the narrative exists within one day out of Clarissa Dalloway’s life. Cunningham uses this format and thus the stories of all the women in *The Hours* comprise of only one day. While mundane, Virginia’s living in the country and lack of stimulation effects her quite

² In order to differentiate Cunningham’s fictional Virginia Woolf and the actual Virginia Woolf, from here on I will refer to the fictional one as Virginia and the real one as Woolf.

significantly. It allows her to understand the underlying meaning within the mundane of one's everyday life. Moments that may seem trivial to an outsider are actually quite substantial to the one experiencing them.

Her experience and understanding of this dissonance emerges in the plot line of *Mrs. Dalloway*. Virginia chooses to value the ordinary in Clarissa Dalloway's life and use it as a means of exposing the unordinary. When constructing her characters, "Virginia imagines someone else, yes, someone strong of body but frail-minded; someone with a touch of genius, of poetry, ground under by the wheels of the world, ... a someone who is, technically speaking, insane, because that person sees meaning everywhere ... " (Cunningham 211). Virginia creates a character who is not dependant upon drama. They do not rely on traditional plot with an ultimate climax in order to tell their stories. Similarly, Cunningham lesbians the traditional narrative through his characters. Rather than creating some outlandish or dramatic plotline, his novel simply gives a glimpse into each of his characters' lives.

Virginia attempts to do the same. She wants her characters to find meaning in their lives around them. They would exist in a series of lesbian moments simply because of who they are and the ways in which she sees the world. Through the writing of her characters, Virginia reveals the ways in which she herself perceives temporality. Scholar Kate Haffey explains that Woolf focuses "on moments that have little effect on plot, a method in which progressive movement through life stages takes a backseat to a past that interpenetrates the present" (Haffey 160). Virginia's characters would focus on the smaller moments in life, understanding that each hold great significance and do not depend on a past moment, lesbianing the way her characters interact with time.

One moment that Virginia focuses on in her novel is a particular memory where Clarissa shares a romantic kiss with a female friend. This memory could be cast off as childish and meaningless; Clarissa ends up marrying a man and having children and so ultimately the same sex kiss does not affect her life's traditional progression. However, by singling out this past moment in Clarissa's present life, Virginia prioritizes it. She does not distinguish Clarissa's past youthful self from her current one. Her life's timeline is not linear or teleological. This past kiss is not simply a building block for Clarissa's future, it exists as a moment in its own right, a moment that still impacts Clarissa's present life.

Scholar Kate Haffey explains this kind of temporality further, she writes, "... within narrative, time often moves according to the progression through a set of normal life stages from childhood through adolescence to marriage and reproduction. In such a framework a kiss can hold little significance. And yet Mrs. Dalloway repeatedly insists on the significance of this moment. For this reason, I think it is important to investigate the moment of the kiss specifically as a moment, a moment that is counter to the normal flow of time in narrative" (Haffey 138). Focusing on this singular moment actually changes the chronology and structure of the novel. Rather than viewing that kiss as part of a progression towards marriage and reproduction, the kiss stands in its own right. It is its own moment with its own meaning; it does not depend on another moment coming before or afterwards, thus lesbianing the characters' traditional heterosexual lifestyle. Even though Clarissa Dalloway ends up marrying a man, this kiss does not exist in relation to that fact. Rather, this kiss is its own moment in time; it is not part of a teleological narrative. It seeps in and out of memory, living in the past, present, and future. Virginia takes this moment and places it within Clarissa's perception, a lesbian temporality. As

an author, Virginia uses her own sense of time to create unique characters with lesbian temporalities.

Virginia has a similar experience in *The Hours* as she and her sister share an intimate kiss during her sister's visit when saying their goodbyes: "... although it is not all their custom, Virginia leans forward and kisses Vanessa on the mouth. It is an innocent kiss, innocent enough, but just now, in this kitchen, ... it feels like the most delicious and forbidden of pleasures" (Cunningham 154). Rather than dismissing this kiss with her sister and relegating it to the past, Virginia recognizes the sensuality in it despite the fact that it is an isolated moment that does not culminate in anything else. This moment does not need to amount to anything else for it to be significant; time can stand still right here. It can serve as a symbol of hope for Virginia. For example, much later in the novel she suddenly remembers the kiss thinking it was "...innocent enough - but it was also full of something not unlike what Virginia wants from London, from life..." (Cunningham 209-210). This moment, this kiss, lesbians time for Virginia. She finds meaning in something that most would cast off (Haffey 2010). It provides a kind of reprieve from her stifling and oppressive life in the country. She can think of the kiss and imagine the life she would have loved to have had. It is so much more than a memory, but an everlingering symbol of hope in what could have happened for Virginia in past, present, and future.

Virginia lives on in another one of Cunningham's character through her text, *Mrs. Dalloway*. Laura Brown lives in a 1950s suburb and uses *Mrs. Dalloway* as a means of escape from her stifling life. Despite being more sexually repressed, she also shares an intimate lesbian kiss with her neighbor, Kitty. Laura's life revolves around her son and husband, which Cunningham makes clear in that she obligatorily spends her whole day baking a cake for her

husband's birthday and caring for her son. She feels "...trapped here forever, posing as a wife. She must get through this night, and then tomorrow morning, and then another night here, in these rooms, with nowhere else to go. She must please; she must continue" (Cunningham 205). Laura feels like she is living someone else's life. She feels that she must act as a wife and mother rather than being either naturally.

However, during this day she manages to share a moment and a kiss with another woman, which she later ponders: "She touches her lips, where Kitty's kiss briefly resided. She doesn't mind so much about the kiss, what it does and does not imply, except that it gives Kitty an edge. Love is deep, a mystery who wants to understand its every particular? Laura desires Kitty ... She can kiss Kitty in the kitchen and love her husband, too. She can anticipate the queasy pleasure of her husband's lips and fingers ... and still dream of kissing Kitty again someday ..." (Cunningham 143). Laura Brown takes this isolated moment and extends it, applying it to the other mundane moments in her daily life. She does not over analyze the kiss, but intends to use it as a tool; she will think of the kiss to make up for her lack of desire for her husband. This moment is not suspended in time; Laura will take it with her and use it to help her through her sexually unfulfilled present and dream of her potential future. Thus, Laura's function as a character lesbians time in that she connects to two other women across time, while also lesbianing her own personal temporality. She takes a moment and extends it beyond the time that it happened, allowing it to infiltrate other parts of her life as well.

Cunningham's third character, Clarissa Vaughan, unsurprisingly also focuses on the memory of a particular kiss. Clarissa lives in New York City in the 1990s. She is openly lesbian and lives with her daughter and her partner, Sally. She appears to be the antithesis of Laura

Brown (Chatman 2008). However, the two have much more in common in terms of their experiences in actuality. Throughout the novel she prepares for her lifelong friend, Richard's, party. She thinks back to a kiss they shared when they were younger: "What lives undimmed in Clarissa's mind more than three decades later is a kiss at dusk on a patch of dead grass, and a walk around a pond as mosquitoes droned in the darkening air. There is still that singular perfection, and it's perfect in part because it seemed, at the time, so clearly to promise more" (Cunningham 98). Clarissa's relationship with Richard is complex; it resides in both the present and past. She operates from this tender moment that she shared with him and thus it is ever present and affects their current relationship.

Their relationship is queer³ despite Clarissa identifying as a woman and Richard a man, for Clarissa also identifies as a lesbian and Richard a gay man. They are both queer individuals who feel an intense kind of attraction towards one another. Similarly to the way that Virginia's kiss with her sister is not explicitly sexual, there is a lesbian eroticism to it because of Virginia's, and in this case, Clarissa's perception of lesbian time. This qualifies the kiss as a queer lesbian moment, for the kiss and their relationship in of itself is queer in that Clarissa identifies as a lesbian. Their relationship ultimately does not end up being romantic or sexual; instead they become very good friends, with Clarissa almost providing a kind of maternal care to Richard. She cares for him out of love, but this obligation towards him somewhat stifles the rest of her life and even causes some problems in her relationship with her partner. She has much more in common with Laura Brown in regards to the men in her life than she appears to on the surface.

³ Here I use the term queer rather than lesbian because while Clarissa herself is lesbian, her relationship with Richard more generally is queer. So even though she uses the kiss between them to enhance her lesbian temporality, their relationship with one another is queer.

She sacrifices part of herself in order to care for a man. Yet, even though Clarissa's kiss is with this man, the focus in the novel is on her use of that kiss and memory and how it queers her sense of temporality; she looks back on that moment repeatedly in a way that contextualizes and affects her current relationship with Richard.

Despite all three of these women sharing a similar moment, they do live in different historical and personal contexts which affect the ways in which that moment materializes. Even though Virginia Woolf is confined to the country, she is able to write freely. Thus, she incorporates her memory of her kiss with her sister into *Mrs. Dalloway*. So, while her memory of the kiss does not really move beyond her country home, it enters into a completely different world through Virginia's creativity and intellect. Her novel eventually reaches people all across the world. She lesbians the moment in a way that allows her to enter different intellectual and creative spaces through her writing, which serves as a kind of escape for her.

On the other hand, while not as physically confined (she has access to a car and can travel to a certain degree), Laura Brown feels mentally suffocated. After she shares her kiss with her neighbor, she drives to a hotel room alone with her novel. However, she finds herself overwhelmed by her thoughts. She wonders how "... deeply comforting; it might feel so free: to simply go away. ... She loves life, loves it hopelessly, at least certain moments; ... It would punch a hole in the atmosphere, through which everything she's created - the orderly days, the lighted windows, the table laid for supper - would be sucked away" (Cunningham 151-152). Here, Laura Brown imagines what it would be like for her to take her life. What comes to mind is what she physically does for the other people in her life. Her entire identity is defined by her relationships with others, especially her husband and her son. Even though she may travel freely

and she has certain moments that make life bearable, her mind remains trapped in this “atmosphere”; she is not able to imagine herself outside of her role as wife and mother. So while there are specific moments like the kiss that she shares with her neighbor, Laura’s life as a whole oppresses her.

So, even though she and Woolf both share a romantic same sex kiss and Woolf lived decades before Laura, both are confined in their own right. Virginia must live in the country rather than in London where she would like and hence she is physically confined. Laura, on the other hand, is free to drive and travel. However, she is not able to use her kiss towards something productive, instead it remains ever trapped in her mind; she does not build relationships around it or invent something creative like Virginia. Rather, it leaves her paralyzed in an uncomfortable present. Thus, the shared narratives between these two women do not function neither chronologically nor teleologically. Their kisses do not culminate in one larger more significant moment (Haffey 2016). Each exists independently and affects different parts of Laura’s and Virginia’s lives, past, present, and future.

Clarissa Vaughan lives the life that Laura was not even capable of imagining in late twentieth century New York City. Laura’s mindset is trapped in the heterosexist context that she lives in. So, nothing comes from her moment, from her kiss, other than survival in her relationship with her husband. On the other hand, even though Clarissa’s kiss is with a man, she is still able to have a same sex relationship and enjoy her memory of the kiss at the same time. She is not bound to it or heterosexuality the same way that Laura is. The memory is significant for her, but it is not prescriptive. She identifies as a lesbian and yet can still think back on this moment, this kiss with a man, without it calling her identity into question. She lives as an openly

lesbian woman and so she does not depend upon on this memory to satisfy her lesbian desires. Instead, she uses it in a way that reminds her of past relationship with Richard, which affects the one she has with him presently.

Seymour Chatman explains in his article, *'Mrs Dalloway's' Progeny: 'The Hours' as Second-degree Narrative*,

“... Laura is frustrated by unrequited lesbian desires, ... as opposed to Clarissa Vaughan, who has acknowledged her lesbianism, achieved liberation, and enjoys a satisfying domestic relationship. The chronology here is relevant: the gray 1950s of the Mrs. Brown chapters is still closet-time, the time of repression, while the 1990s generally accepts more diverse roles for women and is witnessing a waning of homophobia” (Chatman 273).

The two women live in different time periods and historical contexts and therefore have different opportunities and experiences. However, their lives are not as distinct from one another as Chatman leads his reader to believe. As previously stated, Laura and Clarissa share intimate moments (albeit not with one another). They both choose specific kisses as important moments or reference points that affect the rest of their lives. Additionally, Laura makes a crucial decision that allows Clarissa to have the open and progressive life that she does. Thus, the context in which these women live effects how they are able to live their lives, but does not change the fact that both lesbian their sense of temporality.

The reader finds out towards the end of *The Hours* that Laura fled from her domestic life to become a librarian in Canada. While she does not necessarily find lesbian love, she rejects the life that was forced upon her. These kinds of rejections of heteronormativity opened pathways for women to choose differently later on (Abbandonato 1991). Chris Steyaert explains, Laura's “... decision to break out of the heteronormative logic of her life opens the possibilities for the

kind of queer life Clarissa Vaughan can live 40 years later” (Steyaert 170-171). Their stories are connected to one another, both in the similar moments they experience as well as across time. Without women like Laura Brown rejecting compulsory heterosexuality (Rich 1980; Sedgwick 1993), women like Clarissa Vaughan would not have the opportunity to live in an openly same-sex relationship in the late twentieth century, as Steyaert argues. They are connected to one another similarly to the way Cunningham’s characters are to their kisses: past, present, and future via moments and progress.

The Hours presents theory in fiction. Virginia Woolf, Laura Brown, and Clarissa Vaughan are connected to one another across time and space because of their sexuality, which allows each of them to experience time in similar ways and have similar lesbian moments. They all have a kiss which affects their lives and relationships. This novel reveals the ways in which lesbian characters in literature connect to one another in ways that is distinct to their sexual identity. Cunningham creates a superb example of this in one text. However, lesbian characters share these kinds of moments and lesbian temporality intertextually in other lesbian novels as well across both space and time.

Chapter Two ~ Time in Space in Patricia Highsmith's *The Price of Salt*

Obviously, lesbians in fiction extend far beyond *The Hours*. The queer movement in 1950s America was popularized by the homophile movement, partially led by the lesbian group, Daughters of Bilitis (Esterberg 1994). Founded in 1956, the Daughters of Bilitis fought for acceptance of lesbian individuals, frequently through representational politics. They tried to make lesbians appear more tolerable and therefore presented them as being similar to heterosexual people (Meeker 2005). Thus, novels about lesbians would have been of much concern to the Daughters of Bilitis. Lesbian novels during the 1950s in America consisted mostly of what are referred to as “lesbian pulp fiction”, which were popularly consumed paperbacks. Many of these novels’ representations of lesbians were not exactly what many of the members of the Daughters of Bilitis had in mind. Oftentimes, they were overly sexualized, written for the male reader rather than actual lesbian readers (Nealon 2000). Additionally the lesbian characters frequently ended up returning to heterosexuality by the end of the novel.

However, Patricia Highsmith took a different approach in her pulp novel, *The Price of Salt*. Published in 1952, *The Price of Salt* features two prominent female characters, Carol and Therese. Carol, a more experienced woman, meets Therese at her work and the two eventually spark an infamous romance. Though they first meet in New York City, they travel much throughout their story. Thus, the novel has two primary settings: the city and the country. Although seen as a liberal setting today, the city functions as the heteronormative space in which Therese and Carol live most of their lives. New York City during the 1950s was still subject to homophobia and violence against queer people (Long 2009). While Therese and Carol may not be subjects to explicit violence, their male partners live in the city along with the other reminders

of the expectation for them to lead “normal” heterosexual lives. Alternatively, the country offers Therese and Carol some reprieve from this environment. They get to go to spaces where no one knows them, allowing them to live more freely for some time. The city and the country serve as a dichotomy between heteronormative and non heteronormative spaces, which is a common distinction among queer theorists (Warner 1999). Highsmith pushes this theory further by making this distinction specifically a lesbian one by including lesbian moments.

Thus, Highsmith positions location as a way for the two main characters to separate lesbian space and time from heteronormative standards. The city functions as a “normal” facet of everyday heteronormative life, while the country serves as an escape for Carol and Therese. Allowing Carol and Therese to have two distinct environments in regards to their sexualities and relationship ultimately lesbians the traditional lesbian narrative of the 1950s by having the two main characters remain together. They are able to prepare themselves in an environment separate from homophobia, which allows them to interact with their lesbian identities differently than they would be able to in the city (Russell 2009; Breen and Kitsi-Mitakou 2018). This ultimately prepares them for their lives together in and out of the city.

There has been much research in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies regarding gendered spaces, meaning that the atmosphere of a space is subject to change depending on that space’s gendered history or the disproportionate gender dynamics in that environment. However, spaces also change or affect people based upon their sexual identities. Scholars Breen and Kitsi-Mitakou explain, “... our locatedness constructs our identities, and, on the other hand, with ways gendered subjects may queer or challenge the fixity of local or global spaces and invent new modes or relating with them” (Breen and Kitsi-Mitakou 2). In the same way that some

environments are masculine because of their histories, traditions, or the attitudes of the people that inhabit them, spaces can be heteronormative and homophobic as well. Because heteronormativity is dominant in society, logically, most spaces are heteronormative ones.

Thus, the settings of novels involving queer characters are vital; they affect the ways in which those characters engage in the space and how the people in the space engage with them. Highsmith skillfully utilizes the tensions between lesbian subjects and heteronormative spaces in a way that fundamentally shapes her novel. The two primary settings in *The Price of Salt* are the city and the country. Surrounded by people, the city is inherently filled with both prejudice and heteronormative standards. During the 1950s, there were consistent bar raids targeting LGBT individuals (Esterberg 1994). This furthered the stigma against them, putting more pressure on women like Carol and Therese to stay in hegemonic heterosexual relationships. On the other hand, the country is less crowded, allowing Carol and Therese to live by their own standards and act upon their same sex desires. While of course there is homophobia in the country, Therese and Carol do not know anyone there and so no one around them expects anything from them; they are not under the same kind of surveillance. However, eventually Therese and Carol can no longer separate their lives according to spaces or homophobia; their city lives catch up to them. They learn that the country may allow them a brief escape, but in the United States there is no true freedom from homophobia.

In the city the two main characters are surrounded by a heteronormative society and an outlook on life, which also infiltrates their personal lives. Therese's boyfriend, Richard, lives in the city. Highsmith uses his character as a symbol of the heteronormative expectations placed on Therese; he reminds her of everyone's assumptions that she will date, marry, and eventually have

children with Richard. Therese has no real attraction for Richard and yet, while in the city, it seems she cannot escape his presence. She expresses her disinterest to Richard several times, which he then rejects. While on her way to Carol's at one point he tells her, "You can't just give me marching orders out of your life" (Highsmith 105). Despite the fact that Therese has told Richard that she no longer wants to be in a relationship with him, he makes it very clear that she will have a hard time distancing herself and her life from him, especially while they are both living in New York City. Hence, Therese makes the logical decision to leave and go travel with Carol.

When Therese and Carol travel and escape the city, they are able to escape this heteronormative perspective as well, allowing them to create their own lesbianed version of time. When the two women go out of the city to Carol's vacation home, they are able to leave some of these heteronormative expectations and ways of thinking behind. They are not surrounded by as many people they know; they can exist with a certain level of anonymity. This is where they feel comfortable enough to be physically intimate with one another; it is where they share a romantic kiss: "They discovered a one-ring circus that night beside a railroad track in a town called Sioux Falls. ... It was a matter of the bag of popcorn they shared, the circus, and the kiss Carol gave her back of some booth in the performers' tent. It was a matter of that particular enchantment that came from Carol ..." (Highsmith 136-137). Therese takes great care to mention their location and describe their environment before telling the reader about the kiss. Both are significant and affect the way she feels during that moment. Carol can be so enchanting because she is outside of the city, outside of all the reminders of their obligations to a "normal" life.

However, the bliss that Therese experiences is disrupted by her anxieties over returning to the city, leading her to ask, ““What’s going to happen when we get back to New York? It can’t be the same, can it?” (Highsmith 137). She fears that they will be unable to take the emotional and physical intimacy that they share in the country to the city when they return. She preemptively senses that their relationship will change because of their location. Returning to their “normal” lives will inherently change the dynamics of their relationship. They will encounter many more obstacles than they would if they remained in the country, in a place where no one knows them. Location affects their relationship and their sense of time. It allows them to more freely be themselves and see time clearly through a lesbian perspective.

In the novel, Highsmith prioritizes space so much so in that it affects the ways in which Therese and Carol experience time. While in the city, Therese lacks control over her moments; her schedule is defined by her work and other people like Richard. The ways in which she exists in time is not natural, it is forced. For example, while walking home with Richard who asks to spend the night at her place, Therese becomes uncomfortable in that specific moment, as well as past moments and future moments: “She had known from his first step toward her that he was going to ask her that. Now she felt miserable and ashamed, sorry for herself and for him, because it was always so impossible, and so embarrassing because she didn’t want it” (Highsmith 36). At the beginning of their walk, Therese felt she knew that Richard would ask to sleep with her. This results in her looking back on the past and how she had always felt embarrassed, which led to even more awkwardness in this moment. Additionally, in the future, it would make it even more difficult to refuse Richard’s advances. Richard forces Therese to operate from a heteronormative and chronological way of thinking; she recalls the past only to predict the future. She thinks

about all the times Richard asked her to spend the night in order to better predict her current and potential future situation. She does not look back on them to simply remember, but instead utilizes them to assume Richard's (not her own) desires.

Contrarily, in Sioux Falls, Carol and Therese wander through the circus grounds without time restricting them. They enjoy each other without time being a worry. Rather than thinking about how each moment is dependent upon the previous, Therese enjoys the moment they are in without the worries of Richard or Carol's husband or the other people living in the city. She has moments where she does not even think about New York or the person that she is while she is there; she thinks to herself, "But at moments she felt like an actor, remembered only now and then her identity with a sense of surprise, as if she had been playing in these last days the part of someone else, someone else fabulously and excessively lucky" (Highsmith 137). While with Carol in the country, Therese literally feels like someone else, existing outside of her actual self's heteronormative sense of time and expectations. Being away from her work and Richard allows her to explore another side of herself. Thus, the way in which they lesbian time is location dependent. Breen and Kitsi-Mitakou write, location is a "...fluid signifier related to both roots and uprooting, ... the spaces we occupy ... build our subjectivities and the ways subjects engineer spaces" (Breen and Kitsi-Mitakou 4). Therese's sense of temporality is subjective depending upon the space that she is in. When in the country she experiences lesbian temporality much more freely than when in the heteronormative spaces of the city. Highsmith makes such a strong distinction between the city and the country that the reader can easily distinguish the ways that Therese's and Carol's relationship changes depending on which environment they are in.

However, as the novel continues their city lives eventually catch up with them, suggesting that homophobia is never truly escapable even though spaces change some aspects of the ways in which these characters interact with time and their own identities. Carol's husband sends a private investigator to follow Carol and Therese in order to prove they are in a same sex relationship and gain custody of his daughter. As Carol and Therese learn that they are being followed they realize that no matter where they are, prejudice will follow. Therese has a particular moment in which she experiences this revelation: "She had seen just now what she had only sensed before, that the world was ready to be their enemy, and suddenly what she and Carol had together seemed no longer love or anything happy but a monster between them, with each of them caught in a fist" (Highsmith 157). Once again, their relationship and the way that they experience it depends upon the context. When Therese sees how homophobia can actually affect her, her love for Carol fades behind that homophobia; the discrimination is all she is able to focus on. Space can no longer protect them in the way that it once did. They drive, looking for safety, but eventually that safe space becomes smaller and smaller, making an encounter like this unavoidable.

In terms of plot, Highsmith also lesbians time by subverting the common lesbian narrative of the 1950s and rejecting the main character's traditional return to heterosexuality. During the 1950s, narratives that featured lesbians typically ended in a heterosexual relationship. For example, Valarie Taylor's popular pulp fiction novel, *Stranger on Lesbos* (1960), tells the story of a married woman who has a romantic affair with a woman for over two years. She questions her identity and her life's purpose throughout this time. Yet, by the end of the novel she comes to the conclusion that this was simply a fall from grace and that she actually enjoys

her role of wife and mother, returning to her husband's house. This return to heterosexuality was a common trope among so called "lesbian" novels of the 1950s (Nealon 2000). This plot point undermines the lesbian identity and experience; it leaves the reader with the notion that women are ultimately dependent upon men for their own fulfillment and satisfaction. Highsmith allows Carol and Therese to remain together *as lovers* at the end of the narrative. A novel in which two women actually end up in a stable relationship together legitimizes lesbianism as a kind of identity and lifestyle; it recognizes lesbian temporality and way of being as a viable option.

Highsmith's initial structure is not unlike Taylor's. Therese, while not married, is in a committed relationship when she starts seeing Carol. For some time, she has difficulty deciding if she should end her relationship with Richard, who is very persistent in his pursuits of her. Additionally, Carol finds herself in a somewhat similar situation towards the end of the novel. Carol's husband tries to prove that she is unfit to be a mother because she is a lesbian. Ultimately, Carol must decide to either be true to her sexual identity or have a relationship with her daughter. She chooses herself, saying, "I refused to live by a list of silly promises they'd made up like a list of misdemeanors - even if it did mean that they'd lock [my daughter], Rindy, away from me as if I were an ogre" (Highsmith 190). Carol refuses to compromise in her identity, even if it means losing access to her daughter. She chooses to remain true to herself and her lesbian identity rather than sacrificing her own freedom and happiness as traditionally mothers would be expected to do. Even though both characters have much reason to abandon this lesbian relationship, they both decide to stay, despite homophobia and heteronormative pressures. Highsmith surprises the reader by changing the narrative typically assigned to lesbian

characters in fiction. She uses a traditional narrative and then undermines one of its fundamental tropes, lesbianing the temporality.

Carol and Therese as characters also explicitly choose to reject the traditional heterosexual narrative put upon them. Carol tells Therese, “And you have to live in the world. ... I mean responsibilities in the world that other people live in and that might not be yours. Just now it isn’t, and that’s why in New York I was exactly the wrong person for you to know...” (Highsmith 135). Carol recognizes that “responsibilities” change depending upon the location. She believes that she may be the right person for Therese in the country, but not when they are in the city. Therese rejects this idea, responding, “You’re exactly the right person for me to know” (Highsmith 135). Hence, Highsmith acknowledges that there are difficulties and differences that Carol and Therese encounter depending upon location, but rejects the notion that this should stop them from being together. Instead, Therese embraces these difficulties and chooses to accept Carol as her partner despite them.

The Price of Salt exemplifies the ways in which space can be used in conjunction with time, lesbianing both. Despite starting out as a metaphor for a more free and lesbian space, homophobia eventually follows Carol and Therese into their country oasis. On the other hand, despite originally representing a traditionally heteronormative space, the city lesbians when the couple decides to continue their relationship after returning there. Highsmith is a pioneer in lesbianing the traditional lesbian narrative. She rejects enforced heteronormative standards by allowing her two female character to remain true to their identities by continuing their relationship with one another. She shatters the dominant heteronormative narrative and chronology that privileges marriage and reproduction, allowing for more types of stories to enter

into the American consciousness. It would not be possible for a novel like *The Hours* to feature an openly lesbian character living with her partner and her daughter without groundbreaking stories like *The Price of Salt*.

Chapter Three ~ Epistolary Lesbian Moments and Female Relationships in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

Alice Walker invokes lesbian time in her novel, *The Color Purple*, which foregrounds the intersections of gender, sexuality, community, and race as key components of her characters' narrative journey (Crenshaw 1989). This is most notably seen through the trajectory of Celie, the novel's protagonist and primary narrator. Celie's identity as an African American woman notably alters the ways in which she perceives time and space. While most certainly queer and lesbian, her temporality differs from the women in *The Hours* or *The Price of Salt* in that Celie's subjectivity as a lesbian woman is inextricably linked to her blackness. Walker skillfully illustrates the complexities of all of Celie's intersecting identities in this epistolary novel. She queers time in the context of *The Color Purple* by writing about an explicit and wholistic black lesbian experience through her use of the epistolary genre, which provides Celie with a sense of agency over her narrative (Bayindir 2009). Additionally, by foregrounding womanism, which Sanguan defines as "...inclusive notions of sisterhood and lesbian relations [which lead] to reformulation of power relations between men and women and engenders social and individual transformation" (Sanguan 176), Walker ultimately lesbians the traditional narrative ascribed to communities of black women in literature.

By writing *The Color Purple* as an epistolary novel, Walker physically breaks the narrative up into different moments, allowing the reader to comprehend their significance outside of the larger story. The novel begins after Celie's father rapes her, telling her that the only person she can tell is God and so she starts writing letters in a journal, addressing them to God. Eventually, she exchanges letters with her sister as well, but her impetus for her writing is to be

able to express herself to the only person she feels that she can tell at the time, God. While novels such as *The Hours* and *The Price of Salt* emphasize singular moments by stressing particular parts of the narrative and repeatedly referencing them, epistolary novels give the reader no choice other than to view the narrative through a series of independent moments. Each letter is able to stand as its own piece of literature. For instance, the letter where Celie and Shug, who serves as a catalyst in Celie's sexual awakening and journey towards finding and loving herself (hooks 1993), are physically intimate for the first time can stand on its own; one can read it for what it is. It impacts the larger narrative in that connects from one moment or letter to another, but it is not teleological. The one letter does not lead to the next and the one after that and so on. Rather, they serve as interconnected moments, which in turn collectively create a non-linear narrative of self discovery and finding agency. The letter regarding her sexual experience with Shug ends saying,

“She say, I love you, Miss Celie. And then she haul off and kiss me on the mouth. *Um*, she say, like she surprise. I kiss her back, say, *um*, too. Us kiss and kiss till us can't hardly kiss no more. Then us touch each other.
I don't know nothing about it, I say to Shug.
I don't know much, she say.
Then I feels something real soft and wet on my breast, feel like one of my little lost babies mouth.
Way after while, I act like a little lost baby too” (Walker 113).

Celie quite literally becomes “lost” in this sensual experience with Shug. She is not concerned about space or time, but instead only her physical and sexual experience with Shug. She truly exists in this moment, not a larger chronology, enacting lesbian temporality. Rather than continuing to discuss or over analyze this moment, Celie surrenders to it. She then begins her next letter discussing a completely different topic. This moment stands on its own. Celie does not feel the need to continuously write about it. While of course Celie's relationship with Shug is

integral and continues throughout the plot (Barker 1999; Colton 1999; Moore 2014), this specific moment is not simply a part of the larger plot. Rather, this letter is interconnected with the other moments throughout the novel in which Celie finds agency; from her first letter in which Celie finds the courage to write down her story, even if it is only to God, she is seeking and encountering her own agency. Robin Field explains, “For the first time we are placed within the victim’s consciousness, via the use of a first-person-narrative voice” (Field 160). Celie may be a victim of trauma, but she still finds agency in the telling of her story. Through her letter writing and first-person narrative voice, she ultimately discovers a deeper agency within herself (Kelly 2003). Writing about her relationship and her newly discovered eroticism with Shug is just one example of the ways in which Celie documents and takes ownership over her story.

The epistolary genre also gives Celie more agency than if Walker had used a traditional first person narrator. Scholar, Ping Zhou, explains: “The form of the epistolary novel enables the letter writer, as a first person narrator, to exercise more freedom to shift in space and time than a traditional first person narrator” (Zhou 303). Celie is the only one in control of how her story will be told. She decides the time, place, and manner in which to tell her story. Even if she were a first person narrator, without the letters she would still be subject to the traditional chronology of the plot of the novel. The narrator may explain it through her eyes, but she would still lack some control. In an epistolary novel, she is able to decide what about, how, and when to write. She does not depend upon anyone else to tell her story. Rather, she dictates how she will tell and interact with her own moments, lesbianing them.

Bell hooks explains, “If any female feels she needs anything beyond herself to legitimate and validate her existence, she is already giving away her power to be self-defining, her agency”

(hooks 95). In order to write her narrative, Celie does not need anyone else, only pen and paper. She does not rely on a third person narrator in order to convey what she experiences. She controls the way her narrative is told entirely; she will not give that source of power to anyone else. For example, in one letter, after Celie starts her own business designing and making pants, she signs a letter to her sister Nettie with the signature,

“Your Sister, Celie
Folkspants, Unlimited.
Sugar Avery Drive
Memphis, Tennessee” (Walker 214).

Rather than having a third person narrator explain that Celie founded her own business, Celie herself reveals this to the reader. More specifically, she does so in the form of a letter. If Celie functioned as a first person narrator she would still explain this fact directly, but it would not be as formative. By writing a letter, Celie physically writes out her new business address. She writes a letter with a date, physically setting this moment, the foundation of her new business, in time. It becomes a very empowering moment for her. Scholar Renée Hoogland, explains that Celie finds empowerment in a variety of places: "Her sexual orientation, her passionate investment in a female Other from whom she gradually begins to derive her sense of Self, structurally informs the story of her subjectivity, her empowerment as a subject of speech and writing, and eventually also as a social agent" (Hoogland 19). However, Hoogland is remiss in not including economic agency like other scholars do, such as Uplabdhii Sangwan. Celie finds empowerment through her economic independence. She gains a sense of identity in creating her own business and she no longer is dependent upon men or anyone for that matter to provide for her livelihood.

Thus, Walker gives Celie more agency through the epistolary genre and breaking up Celie's narrative into moments that she decides are significant. This control that Celie has over her own moments allows her to experience time in a specifically lesbian way. Similarly to the ways that the women in *The Hours* had control over how they interacted with their specific moments, constantly returning to particular memories so that they live on in their present, Celie has agency over her own narrative and temporality as well. As the first person epistolary writer, she gets to decide when and how to reveal important moments in her life the opening of her business. Celie's letter writing even lesbians the novel's structure in of itself. While on the surface the novel may seem to present a journey towards agency, by virtue of the fact that Celie decides to write about her story, she truly had agency all along - it was only a matter of realizing it. Thus, once again Celie exhibits a non chronological or teleological lesbian narrative.

However, Celie is not the only significant female character in *The Color Purple*. Other characters in the novel affect the ways in which Celie lives, identifies, and interacts with her own time. Walker focuses on moments that are seemingly ordinary or accepted parts of Celie's life, such as her abusive sexual experiences and her dependence upon men. Through sisterhood and strong bonds with other women, Walker makes Celie aware of their importance and her autonomy in regards to these moments. This autonomy that Celie gains creates positive change both for herself and her community. Turgay Bayindir poses that "Walker seems to suggest that the solution to patriarchal oppression is the formation of bonds between women - sexual or nonsexual" (215). Various women in the novel teach Celie how to discover and assert who she is through community with one another (Kelly 2003; Moore 2014). This ultimately provides Celie with a sense of self and agency and defies the patriarchal standards within her community.

The novel's epigraph presents this theme nicely. Walker quotes one of Stevie Wonder's songs, *Do Like You*: "Show me how to do like you / Show me how to do it" (Stevie Wonder). This novel is about a community of women learning from one another, teaching Celie which moments, although they may appear to be normal, are actually unacceptable. For instance, when Celie describes telling Shug about her father raping her, she notes Shug's reaction: "Oh, Miss Celie, she say," Celie writes, adding that "[Shug] put her arms around me" (Walker 112). Celie then begins to cry herself. Shug's expression of sympathy to Celie legitimizes the trauma that Celie experienced. Field argues that, "With Shug's affection and moral support, Celie begins to explore her feelings about her past. For the first time, she tells someone about the sexual abuse she suffered as an adolescent and mourns her experience with tears" (Field 165). Shug's sympathy helps Celie experience the emotions she disregarded for so long, teaching her that what her father did to her is not something that she has to tolerate simply because she is a black woman. She realizes that she gets to decide for herself what she will and will not tolerate.

This is significant in terms of Celie realizing her own identity as a black lesbian woman in relation to her community. Sangwan explains, "Walker proposes sisterhood and lesbian relationships as emotional and sexual alternatives that can also herald social and economic changes in the lives of black women" (Sangwan 182). Lesbianism as well as close relationships with women in general are means of building intimate relationships which ultimately create change in Celie's community. She and the women around her become financially independent from the men in their lives and demand the respect that they deserve. Thus, Walker's portrayal of lesbianism is wholistic. It emphasizes the importance of female relationships as a whole, rather than just the sexuality of the women in those relationships. While Shug teaches Celie about

sexuality and desire, she also teaches her how to live autonomously with respect for herself. These female relationships allow Celie to value and take control of her own life and time. She creates and dwells upon moments that are important to her, rather than letting men dictate the direction and emphases of her narrative, thus lesbianing temporality.

Shug makes this point regarding decentering the men in her life even more explicitly to Celie as the novel continues. She tells her, “Man corrupt everything ... He on your box of grits, in your head, and all over the radio. He try to make you think he everywhere. Soon as you think he everywhere, you think he God. But he ain’t” (Walker 197). In the beginning part of this novel, Celie addresses all of her letters to God per the threats of her abusive father. So, Shug’s claim that when one allows men to dominate her life they eventually become God truly applies to Celie. Celie does not know any other way to live than for the purpose of a man. In terms of time, the men in her life define it. For example, Celie’s moving out of her home, away from her sister, Nettie was not her own decision. Her father decided that it was time for her to marry simply because Albert wanted a new wife. This major event in her life, which would alter the timeline of her life permanently was not her own choice and she does not question it, for she was never taught how.

Shug tries to get Celie to change all of that, to put herself first. This skill is one inherent within lesbianism. Choosing to not serve the man and prioritizing the self is a necessity. It is choice many lesbians and lesbian theorists feel is necessary to truly adopt the lesbian identity (Krebs 1987). Firstly, Celie unlearns the compulsory heterosexuality enforced upon her by her father as well as societal expectations more generally (Rich 1980). She learns to open herself up to both sexual and nonsexual relationships with other women. Through her interactions with

Shug and the other female characters in the novel, Celie learns how to stand up for herself and take charge of her own temporality. For instance, when her husband tells her that he does not permit her to leave and go live with Shug, she tells him, “It’s time to leave you and enter into the Creation. And your dead body just the welcome mat I need” (Walker 199). Celie tells her husband that she will no longer stand for his abuse and his control over her temporality or narrative. She tells him firmly that she will be the one in charge of her own narrative, her own chronology, her own moments.

Taking control over her own life changes the ways in which Celie perceives herself and understands her own identity. For instance, after Celie’s husband berates her, telling her that “You black, you pore, you ugly, you a woman”, Celie responds by saying, “I’m pore, I’m black, I may be ugly ... But I’m here” (Walker 206-207). Whereas at the beginning of the novel, Celie was submissive to her husband and the other men in her life, now she has gained enough confidence and feelings of self worth to stand up to her husband and tell him that he is wrong. She redefines her perception of herself. This eventually redefines her perception of time as well. Rather than viewing her time as being for men like her husband, with one letter after another describing her abuse and misery, she takes ownership and control over her time, writing about joyful moments in her life.

Thus, ultimately through observing and building relationships with other women, Celie learns to take charge of her own story and identity. Uplabdhī Sangwan explains that womanism, “through its inclusive notions of sisterhood and lesbian relations, leads to reformulation of power relations between men and women and engenders social and individual transformations” (Sangwan 176). This is exactly what happens to Celie in *The Color Purple*. In building

relationships (both sexual and not) with other women, she decenters the men in her life, transforming and putting herself first. The sexual awakening that Shug provides Celie is vital to Celie's growth in that it is the impetus for Celie to start putting herself, her desires, and her time first (Powers 1991). Once she puts herself first, Celie is able to discover her desires and love for other women, accepting her lesbian identity. As Audre Lorde states, "There are many kinds of power, used and unused, acknowledged or otherwise. The erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane..." (Lorde 53). Shug serves as Celie's catalyst in locating her eroticism and ultimately her power. Before Celie meets Shug she is unaware of her erotic power and it goes unused. However, once Celie begins to use her power, she builds strong relationships with the other women around her, creating sisterhood which helps her develop even further.

Celie slowly begins to realize that she is a sexual being with desires, albeit not towards men. She explains, "Only time I feel something stirring down there is when I think about Shug" (Walker 65). She starts to understand her own preferences in terms of her sexuality. She returns to memories or moments with Shug because they bring her joy and thus she gains some autonomy over her own temporality. Bell hooks documents this transition in ideology, this shift in thinking about female sexuality in *Sister Outsider*: "For as we begin to recognize our deepest feelings, we begin to give up, of necessity being satisfied with suffering and self-negation, and the numbness which so often seems like their only alternative in our society" (hooks 58). Through Shug, Celie gets in touch with her sense of eroticism, with her empowerment, and learns to no longer accept the violence that her husband enacts upon her. She will no longer tolerate it because she is in touch with her own sexual desires, her lesbian desires.

By the end, after all of the transformations that Celie and the other characters go through, they begin to value themselves and by extension their own community and everything that it offers. She realizes the strength within herself which allows her to take control of her own time and invest that time in her community, but in ways that serve her (Montelaro 1996; LaGrone 2009). Celie not only embraces herself as a lesbian woman, but a black lesbian woman. One who is proud of her identity and community and all that she contributes to it.

In transforming and embracing this community, like Patricia Highsmith does in *The Price of Salt*, Walker lesbians the traditional narrative by prioritizing her queer black female character's identity, sexuality, and desires over any patriarchal aspects within the Black community (hooks 1993). At the time that the novel was written this was a rarity. Black women during this time were often unable to explore their sexualities out of fear of bringing shame of judgement upon the black community (Lewis 2012). Celie feels this kind of pressure in the beginning of her story. When Shug first arrives she explains, "He love looking at Shug. I love looking at Shug. But Shug don't love looking at but one of us. Him. But that the way it spose to be. I know that. But if that so, why my heart hurt me so?" (Walker 73). Celie understands that heterosexuality is the norm. In fact, the question she poses at the end implies that she does not even consider or imagine homosexuality (Rich 1980).

Yet, by the end of the novel, Walker shatters that narrative, allowing Celie to fulfill her desires and curiosities through building a sexual relationship with Shug and other intimate relationships with female characters. She lesbians the traditional hegemonic heterosexual narrative. In the end Celie is not subject to any man. She is married and the stepmother to several children, but that is not what defines her or her destiny (Montelaro 1996). Her chronology is not

dependent upon those that she serves. In fact she ends the novel saying, "... I see they think me and Nettie and Shug ... real old and don't know much what going on. But I don't think us feel old at all. And us so happy. Matter of fact, I think this the youngest us ever felt" (Walker 287-288). Instead, Celie literally reinvents her own narrative and her own chronology. She decides how she feels; just because she is a mother and has grown children, does not mean that she is old. Her timeline is not teleological, rather it is lesbianed, meaning that she gets to determine the significance and order of the important moments of her life.

Thus, Walker uses several different tactics to incorporate lesbian temporality into *The Color Purple* including the epistolary genre, sisterhood or female relationships in which women educate one another, and transformations of the traditional black community. In turn, these elements lesbian the traditional narrative of the black woman in fiction at the time. All of these choices led Walker to writing an exemplary lesbian text, showcasing the possibilities for women to create change and take charge over their own temporalities.

Chapter Four ~ Body Count: Rita Mae Brown's Use of Sexual Partners as a Form of Lesbian Time in *Rubyfruit Jungle*

Written by Rita Mae Brown in the 1970s, *Rubyfruit Jungle* features a young female protagonist named Molly on a journey to search for her sexual, familial, and racial identities. Throughout this journey Molly engages in many different sexual relationships which are informed by her queer⁴ relationship with her mother. Each person that Molly meets helps her learn more about herself, empower her through her eroticism, and develop a lesbian perspective. Her queer relationship with her mother serves as the foundation for her lesbian relationships and lesbian temporality at large. It shows her that she can exist outside of hegemonic standards or institutions. She is as an example of the ways in which lesbian texts can focus on the individual and do not require a romantic or monogamous relationship, for lesbianism is not dependent upon any other person, but rather resides within the individual.

While Molly learns much about her lesbianism from her sexual relationships, her relationship with her mother is significant in the forming of her lesbian and racial identities which in turn then affects her future sexual relationships. Molly has a very contentious relationship with her mother (Day 2003). Her mother is constantly disappointed in her as a child for her boyish ways and eventually tells her in an argument that she is adopted. Later, when Molly is a teenager, her mother forces her out of the house and the two become estranged. Their relationship is queer from the beginning in that they break away from the traditional hegemonic notion of family because they are not biologically related, nor are they of the same race. In fact,

⁴ I use the term queer here rather than lesbian, because the ways in which their relationship differs from traditional hegemonic ones is more broad, like not being biologically related, that in this circumstance, queer is actually the more appropriate term.

Molly does not know what her race is, she only knows that she looks differently than the rest of her adopted family.

Molly and her mother certainly do not have the typically mother-daughter relationship; they are so different from one another, both physically and mentally. Molly often feels isolated within her own family because of these differences (Zitter 1987). She and her mother constantly fight and eventually Molly leaves and has to care for herself. Thus, from Molly's early childhood, her experiences of relationships (especially with women) are queer or non-hegemonic, which ultimately allow for her lesbian relationships and perspective on time to flourish later in life. Her maturing process is not teleological, she does not depend upon her mother or mature before she leaves the house. Rather, she learns about herself and matures throughout the entire novel. Hence, having a queer relationship with her mother provides Molly with a non-teleological lens towards life, which she then extends into specifically a lesbian lens.

However, towards the end of the novel the two begin to come to terms with their combative relationship. Molly's mother does not fully accept her identities, but she does tell Molly, "Course you didn't turn out like I expected but you're still mine. All I got in this world" (Brown 215). Although not the traditional mother-daughter relationship, Molly's relationship with her mother is still significant to her. Molly did not turn out the way that her mother wanted in that she is a lesbian, masculine, and does not look like her. She wished for a traditional relationship with her daughter and got the opposite. Yet, she decides that although Molly is not her daughter in the way that she expected, she still is her daughter, queering their relationship as mother and daughter. The temporality traditionally ascribed to mothers and daughters does not define their relationship. Molly's mother raised her, kicked her out, and only learned to truly

love her several years after. Molly learned from these experiences that relationships do not have to follow the traditional or prescribed path. Instead, she can build relationships from her own non-teleological and lesbian temporality.

Molly eventually realizes herself that she and her mother do not have to have a traditional mother-daughter relationship and thus learns to accept her mother for who she is as well. She thinks to herself towards the end of the novel, “Carrie, Carrie whose politics are to the right of Genghis Khan. Who believes that if the good Lord wanted us to live together he’d have made us all one color. Who believes a woman is only as good as the man she’s with. And I love her. Even when I hated her, I loved her” (Brown 217). Despite the fact that their love is not typical of a mother and daughter, Molly still chooses to love her mom. She decides that just because she cannot have a hegemonic type of relationship with her mother does not mean that she does not want one at all. Instead, she embraces the queer relationship that she and her mother share. This relationship eventually goes on to become the foundation for the lesbian relationships and lesbian sense of time that she experiences in the rest of the novel, for in her relationship with her mother, Molly begins to interconnect certain moments. She sees that because she presently loves her mother, that she truly always loved her mother, even when she did not actively feel that love. Her love for her mother does not progress teleologically, it exists within interconnected moments.

Throughout the novel, Molly has sex with many different characters, both men and women. Each interaction relates to one another in Molly’s journey of discovering herself and her sexuality. One of her first sexual experiences is with her (adopted) cousin, Leroy. While Molly knows that she does not have sexual or romantic feelings towards Leroy, they both decide that

that does not matter to the two of them. She says, “But Leroy I don’t think I feel, uh - romantic about you”, to which he replies, ““That don’t matter. We’re best friends and that’s better than all that mush”” (Brown 60). Even though there is not the traditional feelings of romance or even sexual attraction between Molly and Leroy, they both feel that they are comfortable enough with one another to explore their sexualities. Audre Lorde explains the power in seeking and exploring one’s sexuality in her theory on eroticism: “Our erotic knowledge empowers us, becomes a lens through which we scrutinize all aspects of our existence, forcing us to evaluate those aspects honestly in terms of their relative meaning within our lives” (Lorde 57). Having sex with her cousin allows Molly to explore her sexuality and then access her eroticism or empowerment. She was curious and wanted to learn more about her desires and so she did. This choice informs her decision that she is a lesbian and ultimately empowers her (Richardson 2013). Thus, even though in this scenario Molly has sex with a man, the experience is still a lesbian one because it teaches her about her sexuality and how she does not have to define her relationships by hegemonic or heteronormative standards. Sex does not always equate to love, romance, commitment, or even physical attraction. Molly chooses to define what eroticism means for herself, be it exploration or true sexual attraction.

This allows her to see relationships outside hegemonic institutions or teleology at large. Rather than seeking out relationships for some kind of future culmination or climax, either marriage, children, or even simply a committed long term relationship, Molly follows her desires and looks for people who she would be happy to be with in the present moment, regardless of who they are or what others would think of their relationship (Roof 1991). Ultimately listening to

her instincts and having sex with her cousin results in Molly discovering her more exclusive sexual attraction towards women.

Eventually, Molly becomes more secure in her sexual identity. She is confident not only in the fact that she is attracted to women, but that she does not have to subject herself to any kind of heteronormative standards. She says to Leota, a friend that she shared a kiss with during childhood, “Let’s stop this shit. I love women. I’ll never marry a man and I’ll never marry a woman either. That’s not my way. I’m a devil-may-care lesbian” (Brown 198). Molly will not subject herself to any kind of heteronormativity. She loves women, but she does not want to conform her love for women to try to fit it into hegemonic or even homonormative standards like marriage (Halberstam 2005). Rather, she takes control of her own narrative, her own chronology, not depending on teleology or any kind of heteronormativity. She does not see relationships as having to culminate in something like marriage. Her relationships do not only progress in order to reach the next milestone be it marriage or children. Rather, she values the present moment in of itself, viewing her relationships through lesbian temporality.

Molly asks Leota if she remembers the night that they spent together as teenagers. Leota tells her, “I don’t think about those things. I’m a mother”, to which Molly replies, “What does that do, shut down the part of your brain that remembers the past?” (Brown 196). Molly encourages Leota to question her way of thinking about her identity as a mother and about the ways in which she views time in relation to her own narrative. Simply because she is a mother does not mean that she has to ascribe to a traditional or hegemonic way of life. She can still follow her desires and recognize the fact that she had feelings towards Molly at a certain moment in time; she can still have a lesbianed temporality.

Ultimately these experiences and relationships provide Molly with a lesbian perspective and outlook on her life. In the beginning of her story, she knows that she is attracted to women, but she still thinks in terms of heteronormative temporality. She says as a child, “I began to wonder if girls could marry girls, because I was sure I wanted to marry Leota and look in her green eyes forever” (Brown 39). She felt her attraction to her friend, and yet the only way in which she knows how to express it is marriage, a heteronormative institution. As she continues throughout her life and goes through a series of different relationships, she learns that this is not the kind of future that she wants for herself. She eventually explains that, “I didn’t want a husband or any man for that matter. I wanted to go my own way. That’s all I think I ever wanted, to go my own way and maybe find some love here and there. Love, but not the now and forever kind with chains around your vagina and a short circuit in your brain. I’d rather be alone” (Brown 78). Molly does not want the kind of relationship where she feels that she is obligated to another person permanently. This heteronormative view of relationships does not align with Molly’s lesbian perspective. She no longer wants a relationship where she feels obligated to another person, man or woman. Cheryl Clarke explains this kind of lesbian ideology in her text, *Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance*. She says, “... the lesbian ... has succeeded in resisting the slave master’s imperialism in that one sphere of her life” (Clarke 128). Molly is not simply attracted to women, but attracted to the idea of freedom which she finds through eroticism and lesbianism. She will not enter into a relationship with another woman simply to be bound by the same chains that she would encounter in a relationship with a man. She refuses to participate in the patriarchy in this way. She is a lesbian and in order to truly experience lesbian temporality she must reject these kinds of heteronormative standards.

This lesbian perception not only affects her relationships, but also the ways in which she views and interacts with the world. At one point, she explains that women can sleep with other women and still not be lesbian, in fact, many of the women that she slept with were straight women. It was not really about sex, but how the individuals were living their lives. At one point, while talking to Polina, an older married woman that she pursues, Molly says, “If you want to see blatant propaganda then look at the ads in the subways, magazines, t.v, everywhere. The big pigs use heterosexuality and women’s bodies to sell everything in this country...”, to which the woman replies, ‘I never thought of it that way, I mean about advertising and all’ (Brown 179). Molly then answers, “Well I sure have. You don’t see ads of women kissing to get you to buy Salem cigarettes, do you?”, to which the woman replies, “That’s funny, that’s truly funny. Why the entire world must look different to you” (Brown 179). What Polina perceives here is Molly’s lesbian perception of time. Molly understands that she lives in a heteronormative world that does not prioritize her identity or way of conceiving time. While of course there are no women kissing in advertisement, at large there are no examples of non-heteronormative or non-teleological temporalities. Her world at large is built to uphold these kind of institutions. Society reinforces the kinds of committed relationships that typically result in marriage and children. Molly pushes against these norms, rejecting teleologically founded relationships. This has nothing to do with whom she has sex with, but rather of how acutely aware she is of heteronormativity as well as the way in which she perceives temporality as being non-linear.

Hence, Molly proves that a romantic relationship is not a requirement for a lesbian text. Molly still experiences lesbian temporality in her multiple sexual and maternal relationships and in her perception of the world. She does not let hegemony nor teleology define how she interacts

in her own relationships or how she participates in larger society. She unapologetically views the world through the lens of lesbian temporality.

Conclusion ~ Lesbian Temporality: Now and Into the Future

So how does lesbian temporality function outside of these specific texts? How does it apply to more contemporary lesbian fiction? Is it inclusive enough to productively engage with ongoing and increasingly relevant questions and concerns related to intersectional and multiple heterogeneous subjectivities within queer literary studies?

While these questions open up various avenues for future scholarship, through my work I have argued that lesbian temporality provides a more specific lens through which we can study lesbian literature and reframe the significant relevance of the legacy and traditions that constitute lesbian literary aesthetics. A critical lens that foregrounds lesbian fiction provides more specificity than the more broadly defined label of queer literature, allowing one to see specifically the ways in which lesbian women interact with non-normative notions of time and with other lesbians through literature in a way that defies geographical and temporal boundaries. At the same time, it is imperative to point out that such an approach does not seek to negate other equally significant modes of identification, such as race, ethnicity, transness, and disability, to name a few, that are part of a character's or author's subjectivity. Rather, this approach embraces intersectionality while foregrounding specifically lesbian modes of fostering agency and traditions.

I chose to look at older canonical lesbian texts in order to situate lesbian temporality in historical lesbian texts and theory, clearly rooting them in a long legacy of lesbian fiction. This focus certainly does not limit lesbian temporality to *The Hours*, *The Price of Salt*, *The Color Purple*, and *Rubyfruit Jungle* or the time periods in which each text was written. Lesbian temporality clearly applies to lesbian literature today, making it a transhistorical and contextual

term in of itself. The legacy of the lesbian aesthetics of the novels I analyze here can be seen in Alison Bechdel's renowned contemporary graphic novel *Funhome: A Family Tragicomic*. In her novel, Bechdel constantly shifts temporality, operating from different ages and including multiple versions of the protagonist (a fictionalized version of the author) in order to tell her story about coming to terms with her lesbianism and her father's homosexuality and eventual suicide. The graphic novel is not unlike *The Hours* in that it shifts from different time periods between three different women (albeit all of them in this case are Alison). Clearly lesbian temporality plays a key role in this text. The three different Alisons share moments transhistorically, connecting them to one another without attempting to situate their shared experiences through a teleological lens. Rather, Alison--all three versions of the character--looks at the ways in which moments in various parts of her life interconnect in a way that helps her understand her own story. The novel is much more modern, especially considering its being a graphic novel, yet lesbian temporality most definitely shapes and *lesbians* the narrative.

Lesbian temporality functions both intertextually and transtemporally. These characteristics can be seen in Sapphire's novel *Push*, which clearly deals with lesbian themes and temporalities, and is also a part of a larger legacy of black lesbian novels that connects Sapphire's work to the womanist lesbian literary aesthetics of *The Color Purple*. *Push* tells the story of a young, illiterate, larger-sized woman called Precious, whose education is stunted due to her multiple pregnancies as a result of the sexual assault to which she is subjected by her father. Eventually when she returns to school she begins to write down her own story. There are clear and explicit parallels between *Push* and *The Color Purple*. The ways in which Celie finds agency through her letter writing and first person narrative voice similarly apply to Precious. Analyzing

the ways in which lesbian temporality functions within *Push* would be a productive way to see how lesbian temporality functions in contemporary black lesbian texts while also remaining rooted in a historical text such as *The Color Purple*.

Therefore using the term ‘lesbian’ rather than ‘queer’ in this instance is not a form of regression. It provides a sense of specificity while also providing space for other intersecting identities. It is a part of what Uplabdhī Sangwan’s “cross-cultural reading [which] enables the viewing of sisterhood and lesbianism ... as being more than merely emotional or sexual positioning but as an effective counter-discourse to the dominant ideas of race and gender relations” (190). Sangwan positions lesbianism and race as being inherently intertwined. In novels like *Push* or *The Color Purple*, one cannot look at the protagonist’s sexuality without also analyzing her blackness. Lesbian temporality allows for this kind of “cross-cultural reading”, embracing characters’ different identities.

Lesbian temporality in fiction specifically expresses the ways in which fictional lesbian characters experience a different form of temporality, beyond that of queer temporality. It prioritizes lesbian women in fiction rather than queer characters at large. It is specific in its subject and yet does not negate any other intersecting identities. For instance, in *Push* and *The Color Purple*, both protagonists are black lesbian women. Their blackness is a part of their lesbian temporality, incorporating it into the ways in which each perceives time. Hence, lesbian temporality allows one to speak with more specificity without being exclusionary. It allows one to prioritize a group of individuals with the lesbian identity without dismissing other identities an individual may have be it their race, gender, class, religion, et cetera.

Lesbian temporality encompasses more identities beyond sexuality and race. Gender identity plays an important role as well. For instance, in S.T Lynn's 2016 novel, *Cinder Ella*, which serves as a modern twist on the traditional titular fairytale, the protagonist and main character is a black transgender lesbian woman. She goes to the royal ball for an hour where she meets a princess and love interest. She lives what feels like a dream for about an hour before returning to her usual life and her intolerant family. Ella feels isolated from her family because of her transgender identity. She is different from the rest of them in that way. In that way she is both like and unlike Molly in *Rubyfruit Jungle*. Similarly, she feels different from the rest of her family, but that is because of her gender identity rather than her racial identity or phenotype.

Yet she and Molly both cope by using lesbian moments. Ella reflects upon that one hour, that one moment, in an effort to gain some semblance of that experience in her actual life. Thus, the ways in which space functions in this novel is not unlike Patricia Highsmith's usage of it in *The Price of Salt*. Ella feels much safer and accepted as a trans lesbian woman while at the royal ball. Her experiences are distinctly different depending upon whether she is at the ball or not, similarly to the ways in which Highsmith employs the country as a safe space as a means of using lesbian temporality. Like in *The Price of Salt*, Ella must find a way to extend that safe space beyond the royal ball in order to allow for more happiness and authenticity in her life. Ella's trans identity does not eradicate or diminish her lesbian identity, nor does it keep her from being able to engage with lesbian temporality as a character. Her transness intersects with her lesbianism and her blackness, producing a unique type of lesbian temporality within the text.

Push, *Funhome*, and *Cinder Ella* serve as just some examples of the ways in which lesbian temporality applies to contemporary lesbian literature. It is a theory that one can root in

more historical texts and also apply to modern ones. It allows for a multiplicity of identities while still offering more specificity than the label queer literature can provide while also prioritizing lesbian women, granting them their own genre within queer literature so that they are not disregarded or forgotten.

Works Cited

- Abbandonato, Linda. "A View from 'Elsewhere' ": Subversive Sexuality and the Rewriting of the Heroine's Story in *The Color Purple*." *PMLA*, vol. 106, no. 5, 1991, pp. 1106–1115. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/462683.
- Barker, Ellen E. "Creating Generations: The Relationship Between Celie and Shug in Alice Walker's 'The Color Purple.'" *Critical Essays on Alice Walker*, by Ikenna Dieke, Greenwood Press, 1999, pp. 55-66.
- Bayindir, Turgay. "A House of Her Own: Alice Walker's Readjustment of Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own in *The Color Purple*." *Alice Walker's The Color Purple*, edited by Kheven LaGrone and Michael J. Meyer, Rodopi, 2009. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2009381175&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
- Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home : A Family Tragicomic*. Houghton Mifflin, 2007.
- Breen, Margaret Sonser, and Katerina Kitsi-Mitakou. "An Introduction to 'The Politics of Location': Feminist and Queer Spaces within Global Contexts." *Journal of Theory and Criticism*, vol. 25, 2018, pp. 2–8.
- Brown, Rita Mae. *Rubyfruit Jungle*. Bantam Books, 2015.
- Chatman, Seymour. "Mrs. Dalloway's Progeny: The Hours as a Second-Degree Narrative." *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, edited by James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz, Blackwell, 2005, pp. 269-81. *EBSCOhost*.

- Clarke, Cheryl. "Lesbianism: an Act of Resistance ." *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981, pp. 128–137.
- Colton, Catherine A. "Alice Walker's Womanist Magic: The Conjure Woman as Rhetor." *Critical Essays on Alice Walker*, by Ikenna Dieke, Greenwood Press, 1999, pp. 33–44.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, vol. 1989, no. 1, 1989, pp. 139-167.
- Cruz, Arnaldo, and Martin F Manalansan. *Queer Globalizations : Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*. New York University Press, 2002.
- Cunningham, Michael. *The Hours*. Harrap's-Larousse, 2015.
- Day, Frances Ann. "Molly Bolts and Lifelines: Rita Mae Brown's 'Rubyfruit Jungle'." *Women in Literature: Reading Through the Lens of Gender*, by Jerilyn Fisher and Ellen S. Silber, Greenwood Press, 2003, pp. 253-255.
- Esterberg, Kristin G. "From Accommodation to Liberation: A Social Movement Analysis of Lesbians in the Homophile Movement." *Gender and Society*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1994, pp. 424–443. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/189714.
- Fawaz, Ramzi, and Smalls Shanté Paradigm. "Queers Read This! Lgbtq Literature Now." *Glq: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2018, pp. 169–187.
- Field, Robin E. "Alice Walker's Revisionary Politics of Rape." 2009, pp. 141–171.

Haffey, Kate. "Exquisite Moments and the Temporality of the Kiss in 'Mrs. Dalloway' and 'The Hours.'" *Narrative*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2010, pp. 137–162. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/40856405.

Haffey, Kate. "'People Must Marry': Queer Temporality in Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield." *Virginia Woolf and Her Female Contemporaries: Selected Papers from the 25th Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf*, edited by Julie Vandivere and Megan Hicks, Liverpool University Press, 2016, pp. 157-162. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1g0b8st.27.

Halberstam, Jack. "Queer Temporality and Postmodern Geographies ." *In a Queer Time & Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* , by Judith Halberstam, New York University Press, 2005, pp. 1–21.

Highsmith, Patricia. *The Price of Salt*. Dover, 1952.

Hoogland Renée C. *Lesbian Configurations / Lesbian Configurations*. Columbia University Press, 1997.

hooks, bell. *Feminism is For Everybody: Passionate Politics*. Routledge, 2015.

hooks, bell. "Reading and Resistance: 'The Color Purple'." *Alice Walker: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*, by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and K. A. Appaih, Amistad Press Inc., 1993, pp. 284-295.

Kelly, Ernece B. "Paths to Liberation in Alice Walker's 'The Color Purple (1982)'" . *Women in Literature: Reading Through the Lens of Gender*, by Jerilyn Fisher and Ellen S. Silber, Greenwood Press, 2003, pp. 75-78.

LaGrone, Kheven. *Alice Walker's The Color Purple*. Brill | Rodopi, 2009. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=271392&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Lewis, Christopher S. "Cultivating Black Lesbian Shamelessness: Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*." *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, vol. 66 no. 2, 2012, pp. 167-184. Project MUSE, [doi:10.1353/rmr.2012.0027](https://doi.org/10.1353/rmr.2012.0027)

Long, Kat. *The Forbidden Apple: A Century of Sex & Sin in New York City*. Ig Pub, 2009.

Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider : Essays and Speeches*. Crossing Press, 1984.

Lynn, S.T. *Cinder Ella* . Edited by Tami Veldura, 2016.

Meeker, Martin. "A Queer and Contested Medium: The Emergence of Representational Politics in the "Golden Age" of Lesbian Paperbacks, 1955-1963." *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 17 no. 1, 2005, pp. 165-188. Project MUSE, [doi:10.1353/jowh.2005.0010](https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2005.0010)

Moore, Marlon Rachquel. *In the Life and in the Spirit : Homoerotic Spirituality in African American Literature*. SUNY Press, 2014. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=891363&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Montelaro, Janet J. *Producing a Womanist Text: The Maternal as Signifier in Alice Walker's 'The Color Purple'*. English Literary Studies, University of Victoria, 1996.

Nealon, Christopher. "Invert-History: The Ambivalence of Lesbian Pulp Fiction." *New Literary History*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2000, pp. 745-764. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/20057634.

Powers, Meredith A. *The Heroine in Western Literature : The Archetype and Her Reemergence in Modern Prose*. McFarland, 1991.

Rich, Adrienne Cecile. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence (1980)." *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 15 no. 3, 2003, pp. 11-48. *Project MUSE*,
[doi:10.1353/jowh.2003.0079](https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2003.0079)

Richardson, Matt. *The Queer Limit of Black Memory : Black Lesbian Literature and Irresolution*. Ohio State University Press, 2013.

Roof, Judith. *A Lure of Knowledge : Lesbian Sexuality and Theory*. Columbia University Press, 1991.

Russell, Danielle. "Homeward Bound: Transformative Spaces in The Color Purple." *Alice Walker's The Color Purple*, edited by Kheven LaGrone and Michael J. Meyer, Rodopi, 2009. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2009381174&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Sangwan, Uplabdh. "Significance of Sisterhood and Lesbianism in Fiction of Women of Color." *Alice Walker's 'The Color Purple'*, by Kheven LaGrone, Rodopi, 2009, pp. 173–192.

Sapphire. *Push : A Novel*. 1st ed., Alfred A. Knopf, 1996.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Tendencies*. Duke University Press, 1993.

Stevens, Hugh. *The Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian Writing*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Steyaert, Chris. "Three Women. A Kiss. A Life. On the Queer Writing of Time in Organization." *Gender, Work, and Organization*, vol. 22 no. 2, 2015, pp. 163-178. doi:10.1111/gwao.12075

Taylor, Valerie. *Stranger on Lesbos*. Fawcett, 1960.

Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2017.

Warner, Michael. *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. Harvard University Press, 2000.

Zhou, Ping. "Focalization Theory and the Epistolary Novel: A Narrative Analysis of 'The Color Purple'." *Alice Walker's 'The Color Purple'*, by Kheven LaGrone, Rodopi, 2009, pp. 287–304.

Zitter, Sherry. "Coming Out to Mom: Theoretical Aspects of the Mother-Daughter Process." *Lesbian Psychologies: Explorations and Challenges*, by The Boston Lesbian Psychologies Collective, University of Illinois Press, 1987, pp. 177-194.