ILLUSTRATING THE COLOR LINE: CHARLES W. CHESNUTT AND CLYDE O. DELAND

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May 2012

Submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

at the

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

DECEMBER 2016
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ABSTRACT

Charles Chesnutt’s 1899 collection of short stories *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line* examines the problematic issues of segregation during Jim Crow. His utilization of a satiric tone offers the reader lesson in how segregation divides the nation and communities resulting in individual emotional and physical harm. Critical readings of Chesnutt examine characters, tone, structure, and historical context. In many instances, critics discuss the ways in which the author subverts societal racial assumptions and legal restrictions created through segregation. Each critical intervention involving Chesnutt’s *The Wife of His Youth* neglects attending to the presence of four illustrations by the artist Clyde DeLand. Examining the content and placement of each illustration opens new areas of critical discussion.

This reading of Chesnutt’s collection performs an intermedia reading between the text and DeLand’s illustration. In each story, the image directs the reader towards critical moments of the narrative that demonstrate the social disruptions caused by segregation. Likewise, DeLand creates a visual interpretation of Chesnutt’s satire structure. Understanding DeLand’s participation in Chesnutt’s satiric stories requires “reading” the image as well as the text. Examining the visual structure of each panel includes discussion of contrast, manipulation of the gray tonal scale the artist uses, selection of scene, and the decision of how to depict characters. Although there are differences
between each story and each attending illustration, they share the common thread of disrupting binary racial definitions created through segregation.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE AUTHOR AND THE ARTIST

Charles Waddell Chesnutt’s birth in 1858 in Cleveland, Ohio positions him as an author of interest during the late 19th and opening of the 20th centuries. His childhood home in northern Ohio sheltered the young Chesnutt from the direct effects of slavery and the conflict of the Civil War. Following the close of the war the Chesnutt family moved back to their home town of Fayetteville, North Carolina. His time and education in the South, and eventual return to the North, provided Chesnutt with the personal experience of witnessing the rise and fall of Reconstruction and the evolution of de facto and de jure segregation. This experience formed Chesnutt into an author prepared to enter the national discussion regarding the “Negro Problem” and the legal, social, and political concept of the color line. In the introduction to their examination of segregation narratives Brian Norman and Piper Kendrix Williams remark that Chesnutt is “a key figure in accepting the challenge of representing newly forming and contested ideas about the bright line of race segregation and the institutionalization of Jim Crow practices” (8). As a light-skinned “mulatto,” Chesnutt observed how people crossed the color line
through both passing and having their bodies misread by society. Likewise, he experienced the consequences and humiliation created by the binary racial definition at the center of segregation. This position makes the author an important published racially mixed writer during the onset and escalation of Jim Crow.

Chesnutt’s 1899 collection of short stories titled *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line* utilizes a popular way of signifying segregation. Frederick Douglass introduced the phrase “color line” in his 1881 essay “The Color Line” published in the *North American Review*. In his essay, Douglass uses the phrase to explain the source of tension in race relations that rose during Reconstruction. According to Douglass, “The office of color in the Color Line is a very plain and subordinate one. It simply advertises the objects of oppression, insult, and persecution” (575). The function of color demarcates racial difference created a social barrier that restricted the progress of non-white citizens. As Jim Crow laws became prominent throughout the United States, the color line became a way of defining the prevention of social and economic mobility for people deemed non-white. Four years after Chesnutt’s short story collection W.E.B. DuBois introduced *The Souls of Black Folk* with Douglass’ phrase; “for the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line” (vii). For DuBois the color line defines “the strange meaning of being black” during Jim Crow (vii). Chesnutt’s use of the color line in the title for *The Wife of His Youth* signals that the stories demonstrate the effects and ramifications of racial division in the nation.

The first edition of *The Wife of His Youth* included four illustrations amongst the nine stories. Image alongside text introduces new ways for the audience to interact with the narrative. Charles Johanningsmeier addresses the importance of observing
illustrations found in periodic publications his discussion of the need for a better bibliographic record of Chesnutt’s fiction. He asserts that “the illustrations for a number of Chesnutt’s fictions are quite important in ascertaining readers’ reactions, for while Chesnutt’s avowed intent might have been to subtly subvert his audiences’ preconceived notions of African Americans, the illustrations frequently counteract this subversion” (93). For Johanningsmeier, the purpose of studying image alongside text is to ascertain where the image disrupts the intent of the text. Yet, he directs his focus to caricatures that appeared alongside Chesnutt’s fiction in periodicals such as Puck. The illustrations provided by DeLand for Houghton, Mifflin do not align with the caricatures that Johanningsmeier argues disrupts the intent of the fiction. Henry B. Wonham’s examination of printed images from 19th century periodicals clarifies the difference between caricature and illustration; “Realism, as the representational antithesis to mere caricature, according to this argument, performs the work of liberation, disentangling the human individual from the distorting grip of ethnic typology” (5). Both Wonham and Johanningsmeire emphasize the presence of caricature as a form of ethnic typology in Chesnutt’s periodical publication. Neither turns attention to the presence of the realist illustrations that Houghton, Mifflin published alongside Chesnutt’s color line stories. The importance of caricature introduces the necessity to examine how a realist illustration that reveals “the human individual” interacts with, and affects the text. Although not every edition of The Wife of His Youth included DeLand’s work the first edition, and subsequent printings such as The University of Michigan Press editions, do reproduce the original images. The continued use of DeLand’s illustrations creates the
need to examine how the paratext of image and editorial captions interacts with the author’s text.

Houghton, Mifflin included illustrations by the white illustrator Clyde O. DeLand in the original publication of the *Wife of His Youth*. Born in 1872 in Union City, Pennsylvania, DeLand was Chesnutt’s junior and a recent graduate of the Howard Pyle class at the Drexel Institute of Art, Science, and Industry. Although DeLand was a fresh graduate for *The Wife of His Youth* commission, the structure of Pyle’s class provided opportunities for publishers to reproduce his work prior to graduation. According to Jill P. May and Robert E. May, “The Drexel student exhibition of May 30—June 4, 1898 included *Harper’s Weekly* illustrations painted by Winfield Scott Lukens and Clyde DeLand. DeLand’s work had served for the cover of *Harper’s* January 22, 1898, issue” (84). Drexel student exhibitions and Pyle’s classroom environment encouraged competition between students for publishing contracts. DeLand’s experiences with illustration contracts while still a student contributed to his commission with Houghton, Mifflin upon graduation. A second important note involving DeLand’s education was his training in the popular reproduction format of photogravure. In 1897 Little, Brown and Company requested illustrations for a publication of Edward Bulwer-Lytton that conformed to the format required for reproduction (May and May, 78). Photogravure was an important advancement in reproducing illustrations for mass publication in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The reproduction method used copper plates coated in resin and dissolved by successively concentrated acid baths. This method allowed publishers to reproduce images with a more varied white, black, and gray tonal scales. DeLand’s knowledge of this reproduction method encourages viewing his work on *The Wife of His
Youth with careful observation of his illustrating white, black, and racially mixed bodies on the page.

In a collection where the title dedicates the nature of the stories to the color line, the racial politics for both author and illustrator are important. Chesnutt’s stance on the racial division in the nation he documented in both his journal and an important published essay leading up to the *The Wife of His Youth*. In an 1880 journal entry, he writes:

The object of my writings would be not so much the elevation of the colored people as the elevation of the white,—for I consider the unjust spirit of caste which is so insidious as to pervade a whole nation, and so powerful as to subject a whole race and all connected with it to scorn and social ostracism—I consider this a barrier to the moral progress of the American people; and I would be one of the first to head a determined, organized crusade against it. (139)

Chesnutt privately declares one motive for writing is to challenge the racial system of the nation through a white audience. Although he identifies white readers as the target for his future writing, he also positions the issue of “the unjust spirit of caste” as a national concern that concerns “the American people.” Chesnutt’s tone in his journal entry recognizes both the individual and social damages created by color line politics. His desire to elevate the white readership he connects to an “organized crusade” against racial divisions that negatively affects the perceived “moral progress” of the entire nation. The concern that Chesnutt has for racial politics extends beyond his private journals. In 1889, the *Independent* publishes his essay entitled “What Is A White Man?” Chesnutt’s essay discusses the legal definition of what defines a person as black throughout Northern and Southern states. His observation that there is not a national acceptance of racial definition subverts segregation laws and practices enacted on a state level. These private and public positions on racial politics during the rise of Jim Crow create a schism in defining
Che\n
Chesnutt’s fiction amongst critics. Tess Chakkalakal observes that “The didactic element found in most of Chesnutt’s fiction sets it apart, according to recent critics, from the school of American realism that marks Chesnutt’s contemporary era” (44). Chesnutt having a “didactic element” references his position on racial politics and his desired intent to elevate the perspective of those reading his work. His use of satire coupled with the often playful and judgmental tone of his narrators further encourages acknowledging that each story has a purpose beyond entertainment.

Documentation of DeLand’s view of race in the nation is more difficult to ascertain. Despite the lack of critical knowledge about his perspective, there is knowledge about the racial and political position of his instructor Howard Pyle. Aside from Pyle being a well-known and respected artist, illustrator, and educator his views of the racial and political discussion dominant in the late 19th century run counter to those espoused by Chesnutt. An example of projects he worked on include “Ab’m: A Glimpse of Modern Dixie” published in the September 1878 issue of Harper’s New Monthly Magazine. The article traces the narrator’s passage into the south and functions as a romantic view of slavery, condemnation of Reconstruction, and support of de facto segregation prior to the Plessy v Ferguson ruling of 1897. In an illustration titled “Then Came the Tug of War,” Pyle artistically renders a scene in which a black storeowner and his wife trick a man into purchasing shoes too small for his feet. Although the illustration appears mundane and arguably respectful, the scene is one that poses black Southern storeowners as tricksters caring only for a sale. During this period Pyle also pursued writing, creating a character based off Joel Chandler Harris’ Uncle Remus named “Uncle Benny” who would tell fond romantic stories of plantation life (May and May, 15). May and May also reveal Pyle’s
personal political beliefs during Reconstruction; “Privately, Pyle contended in letters home that the Republicans had no right to impose governments on white Southerners and declared that Democrats who supported white ‘home rule’ had the moral upper hand in a corrupt political system” (15). The emphasis on Pyle’s beliefs that “white” rule was proper and moral for the South during Reconstruction aligns the artist with the mentality that created the 1898 Wilmington race riots in North Carolina, a violent incident that inspires Chesnutt’s novel *The Marrow of Tradition*. Pyle’s racial and political stance creates curiosity regarding DeLand whose first major commission post-graduation is illustrating Houghton, Mifflin’s publication of Chesnutt’s *The Wife of His Youth*. Whether DeLand knew about Pyle’s stance on race relations and the political structure of the South during Reconstruction is difficult to say. However, DeLand’s work on a collection of stories that challenged his former instructor’s beliefs creates an interesting atmosphere for discussing the effect of his illustrations alongside Chesnutt’s text.

Prior to 1899, Chesnutt’s fiction appeared in national and regional periodicals such as *Puck* and the *Independent*. In that year, Houghton, Mifflin published a collection of stories titled *The Conjure Woman* that responded to the growing popularity of plantation stories capitalized on by Joel Chandler Harris’ Uncle Remus. Small, Maynard then published Chesnutt’s biography *Frederick Douglass*. Near the end of the year, Houghton, Mifflin produced a second collection of short stories titled *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line*. Four out of nine stories have illustrations by DeLand, the title story, “The Sheriff’s Children,” “Uncle Wellington’s Wives,” and “The Bouquet.” Critical discussion has yet to address the presence of these illustrations and, in turn, their effect on how the reader approaches the text. Three of the four illustrated
stories Chesnutt published in periodicals lacking accompanying images, “The Sheriff’s Children” in The Independent in 1889, “The Wife of His Youth” in Atlantic Monthly in 1898, and “The Bouquet” in Atlantic Monthly in 1899. Many readers, from publication to present, experience these stories through the Houghton, Mifflin collection that presents illustration alongside text. Image provides a valuable insight to text. Likewise, illustrations alter how the reader engages with the text by creating different levels of meaning. An intermedia reading of both Chesnutt’s text with DeLand’s illustrations introduces interpretations about the contradiction of socially flattening stratified racial categories. The intermedia reading requires close observation of the author’s writing with the illustrator’s artistic depiction of a selected scene from the text. Although DeLand is not the author, he does maintain the liberty of visually interpreting Chesnutt’s stories. Each illustration affects the narrative through tonal scales, perspective, selection of characters and the scene the artistic chooses to depict. Reading how image and text operate together demonstrates the ramifications from flattening racial definitions during Jim Crow segregation. Chesnutt’s stories reveal the societal and individual humiliation and dangers that accompany the color line. DeLand’s illustrations accentuate the underlying theme of each satiric story.
CHAPTER II

“THE WIFE OF HIS YOUTH”: DELAND ILLUSTRATES INTRARACIAL ATTITUDES

Figure 1. Clyde O. DeLand, "This is the woman, and I am the man," frontispiece (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1899).
Chesnutt’s “The Wife of His Youth” is one of the three previously published short fictions in the 1899 Houghton, Mifflin collection. The story focuses on the characters of Mr. Ryder, an alias for a freeman prior to the war named Sam Taylor, and the freed woman ‘Liza Jane. Ryder is the conservative de facto head of a “society of colored persons” in Groveland, Chesnutt’s fictional Cleveland, whom the narrator titles the “Blue Veins” (1). The narrator naming the society the “Blue Veins” comes after commenting that the society possessed “a longer and more pretentious name” (2). Through tone, Chesnutt’s narrator begins the narrative as a satiric story about the intraracial divisions created by racial definitions. The plot of the story follows in that satiric and playful vein. Ryder desires to marry the young and widowed Mrs. Dixon who Chesnutt defines as being “whiter than he, and better educated” (5). To achieve his end, Ryder plans to host a ball for the society at his home where he intends to propose marriage. The day of the ball, ‘Liza Jane arrives and disrupts Ryder’s plan as he reads Tennyson’s “A Dream of Fair Women” to find appropriate quotations to delight both his guests and hopeful fiancée. Chesnutt’s narrator sets ‘Liza Jane as the immediate contrast to Tennyson’s verse; she is “a little woman,” her face “crossed and recrossed with a hundred wrinkles,” her visible hair is “a tuft of gray wool,” and she is “very black,—so black that her toothless gums, revealed when she opened her mouth to speak, were not red, but blue” (10). Her entrance disrupts the plot due to her search for Sam Taylor, her husband from her slave marriage before the war. Ryder dissembls his identity to his former wife until the ball where he repeats the story of her fidelity and search for her husband. With the encouragement of the society, the narrative culminates with Ryder revealing ‘Liza Jane as the wife of his youth.
DeLand’s illustration for the story presents a complication that the other reproduced images do not. In “The Sheriff’s Children,” “Uncle Wellington’s Wives,” and “The Bouquet” the illustrated panel occupies a single page within the story that interrupts the text. In contrast, Houghton, Mifflin used the image for “The Wife of His Youth” as the frontispiece for the collection. Records that show Chesnutt received the illustration prior to publication indicate that DeLand would not anticipate the placement of the image outside of the boundary of the text. Regardless, DeLand reveals the ending moments of the narrative through the illustration. The publisher’s decision for the presentation of the image is a venue for speculation. Chesnutt’s suggestion that the “drawings or oil sketches” would make “good stuff for window displays” indicates his thought that DeLand’s illustration should function as a marketing tool. During the onset of Jim Crow, an image that appears to display a white man addressing a crowd and presenting a black woman as “the wife of his youth” would draw curiosity and sales. Likewise, Houghton, Mifflin published works from both sides of the color line and “Negro problem” discussions. A provocative frontispiece would also create sales amongst the population. Whichever the reason for the publisher’s decision, DeLand’s illustration functioning as a frontispiece instead of an in-text image alters the way in which the image influences the reader’s experience of the text.

The illustration depicts the final moments of the story when Ryder reveals to his audience that ‘Liza Jane is his past wife. Beneath the image is a caption that quotes the final paragraph with, “This is the woman, and I am the man.” The panel, like each illustration, occupies its own page using the margins as a frame. To the left of DeLand’s illustration is an image of ‘Liza Jane and Ryder. The perspective positions Ryder behind
her with his head bowed as ‘Liza looks forward. The background depicts several rows of people in formal dress observing the pair to the left. Set across from ‘Liza and Ryder are two figures. One occupies the foreground and is a woman in a white dress who DeLand illustrates with a shaded skin tone. The rendering of the woman’s skin demonstrates the importance of tonal quality in illustrating a story about the color line. DeLand may have darkened her skin for the impression shadows and depth, or the artist could likewise be demonstrating the varying skin tones present in the Blue Vein society. The effect of the photogravure process allows for complex and rich black, gray, and white tonal scales evident in the panel. Directly behind the woman, standing on the same plane as ‘Liza and Ryder, is a man with his head canted slightly downward. The background setting clarifies the elaborate décor that Ryder designs for the engagement ball that ‘Liza Jane’s appearance disrupts. On the floor is a rich rug that provides weight to the bottom of the image. The darkness of rug DeLand balances against the white and light gray tones of the back wall. Above the heads of characters are garlands, flowers, paintings, and vases that demonstrate Ryder upper middle class décor. DeLand follows the narrator’s claim that the “ball must be worthy of the lady in whose honor it was to be given, and must, by the quality of its guests, set an example for the future” (7). DeLand’s interpretation paints the setting as elaborate; his illustration follows the implied décor of Chesnutt’s narrator.

Academic criticism approaches this story from multiple directions. Of all the stories in the collection, “The Wife of His Youth” receives the greatest attention. Eric Sundquist devotes a brief portion of his chapter on Chesnutt in To Wake the Nations on this story. Sundquist’s primary concern is how African and American cultures came together in forms of appropriated and reappropriated cultural performances that subverted
racial assumptions and white hegemony. His examination of Chesnutt’s narrative follows the common oversight of not attending to the existence of DeLand’s frontispiece. He claims that “Ryder’s wife, ‘Liza Jane, interrupts his idyllic visions of increased assimilation of European cultural standards and upward progress through a further lightening of his children’s dark skin” (299). Sundquist’s initial emphasis is that Ryder desires full assimilation into white society by marrying someone lighter skinned allowing future generations to cross the color line of segregation. ‘Liza Jane exists as an inescapable reminder of not only Ryder’s past, she also functions to force Ryder to choose between acknowledging the racial label of “black” along with the social and legal constraints of Jim Crow. Sundquist positions this argument within the cultural function of folklore and conjure through the narrator’s exclamation that ‘Liza Jane “looked like a bit of the old plantation life, summoned up from the past by the wave of a magician’s wand” (“Wife” 10). ‘Liza Jane operates as a form of conjure that encourages Ryder, and the Blue Vein society, to accept their own familial history and those who are darker in complexion than they are. In this reading, Chesnutt disrupts the social and racial pyramid that values lighter skin tones.

Sundquist’s argument, although seminal, is not without academic challengers. Anne Fleischmann positions a direct rebuttal of Sundquist’s claim that “The Wife of His Youth” is a story that ends in acceptance of a shared racial history. Fleischmann argues, “A closer look at biracial existence as a phenomenon separate and distinct from either ‘black’ or ‘white’ identity demonstrates that ‘The Wife of His Youth’ is not so much a racial romance as it is an allegory for the disappearance of the biracial person as a social and legal entity during the darkest days of Jim Crow” (463). Her argument attends to the
legal stratification of race prior to Jim Crow where both society and law recognized a broader definition that allowed for racially mixed identities. Post-Reconstruction, national racial definitions dissolved into a binary of “black” and “white.” To Fleishmann, “The Wife of His Youth” presents the problem of legal and social denial of mixed race identity. ‘Liza Jane’s appearance does not simply disrupt Ryder’s desire to marry Molly Dixon. Instead, her arrival signals that the racially mixed society must accept the binary vision of races that defines them as black under color line politics.

Catherine Keyser attempts to bridge the divide between Sundquist and Fleishmann. She argues that Ryder, and Chesnutt, undergo a transformation that reveals an “investment in myth and storytelling tradition as a source of alternative knowledge about history” (210). Keyser’s claim explores the intersection between realism and romanticism in “The Wife of His Youth.” Doing so complicates the emphasis of racial assimilation, or annihilation, that Sundquist and Fleishmann contest. The story functions as a point of reimagining history in order to generate community (224). Mixed racial characters retain their identity while opening the potential to include a character who society views as black. Ryder does not destroy his fictional history as a self-made, mixed race, socially advancing character through the acknowledgement of ‘Liza Jane. Instead, Keyser’s argument encourages recognizing that the fusion of realism and romance creates a reimagined history in which racial boundaries are redrawn to allow for inclusion.

Tanfer Emin Tunc offers another perspective on reading the racial tension and struggle in Chesnutt’s “The Wife of His Youth.” Instead of emphasizing the binary distinction of acknowledging a black or white label, and avoiding the discussion of the dissolution of a mixed racial identity, Emin Tunc observes how Chesnutt deconstructs the
formation of the social hierarchy imposed by the *Plessy* verdict. He asserts, “mimicking the white hierarchy through black class and color consciousness is particularly problematic because it not only creates a ‘veil of forgetfulness’ that obscures the brutality that African Americans faced on the plantation, but also creates a new and artificial black social pyramid which is sustained by the oppression of darker-skinned individuals by their lighter skinned counterparts” (679). Chesnutt positions the Blue Vein society, with the attended demands of social upward mobility and lightness of skin, as the peak of the “artificial black social pyramid.” Ryder functioning as the conservative dean of the society identifies the intra-racial prejudices that Jim Crow segregation encourages in light-skinned social circles. The conclusion of the story, Emin Tunc argues, “suggest[s] that racial and class divides can be healed within the African American community with self-sacrifice, transparency, acceptance, and the mutual respect of difference” (682). Unlike Sundquist and Fleishmann, Emin Tunc observes that accepting “difference” within the stratified racial signifier of “black” offers “communal healing.” Ryder’s public acknowledgement of ‘Liza Jane as his past slave wife is a step towards ending the tacit intra-racial bias present amongst the light skinned elite.

“The Wife of His Youth” inspires critical discussion removed from emphasizing the racial issues that Jim Crow inspires. Cynthia Wachtell engages with the narrative structure of Chesnutt’s story; “Whether Charles Chesnutt intended it or not, ‘The Wife of His Youth’ can be read as a wonderful trickster tale” (159). Wachtell’s claim functions on the assumption that ‘Liza Jane presents a crafted story to Ryder. To accept her argument is also to accept that the character knows the identity of Ryder and manufactures a story of heightened sentiment in order to claim the prize of a comfortable
retirement (166). She predicates her reading of the story on the recognition that unless ‘Liza Jane is a trickster there is no discernable benefit to the ending of the narrative. Chesnutt denies the character closure if the reader accepts that ‘Liza Jane’s desire is the love and not the material benefit of Ryder (163). In her interpretation, Wachtell also inherits the common critical over-sight of DeLand’s illustration for the Houghton, Mifflin publication. Each reading neglects attending to the presence of the frontispiece and the effects that the image has on the narrative. This discussion explores the nuance that an intermedia reading of “The Wife of His Youth” offers to Chesnutt criticism.

The perspective used for the illustration informs how the reader-viewer engages with the image and the text. DeLand’s artistic design places the viewer as a participant in observing the scene. With the crowd set towards the background and wrapping about the right hand side of the panel the setting implies that ‘Liza and Ryder occupy a stage that is thrust into an audience. With the two main characters set to the left, the artist surrounds them with observers on their left and to the front of them. DeLand’s final group of participants are not illustrated, instead the individual viewing the image functions as a surrogate member of the society. This compels the reader to become part of the audience’s response that the narrator describes; “There were some present who had seen, and others who had heard their fathers and grandfathers tell, the wrongs and sufferings of this past generation, and all of them still felt, in their darker moments, the shadow hanging over them” (20). Although this line implies the light skinned, mixed race, members of the society DeLand’s illustration encourages the reader-viewer to become part of the narrator’s claim. The broadness of the narrator’s language coupled with the artistic rendering expands the telling of “the wrongs and sufferings of this past
generation” into white, black, and mixed racial audiences. DeLand places all readers, regardless of race, into the same position of experiencing the growing sentiment towards the abuse suffered under slavery and the rise of Jim Crow.

Tonal gradations in the illustration operate on two distinct levels. First, the function of the black, white, and gray scale is an artistic strategy that guides the reader through the image while balancing the visual weight of the panel. DeLand draws the viewer to the right side of the panel using the whiteness of the dress the woman is wearing. Her eye line, coupled with those in the crowd, direct attention to the opposing side where he depicts ‘Liza and Ryder side by side. By encouraging the viewer to start at the right and scan up and to the left, he makes the eye take in the entire scene instead of placing immediate emphasis on the two primary characters. Secondly, DeLand’s illustration reinforces Chesnutt’s satire of color line politics derived from social Jim Crow practices. His placement of the characters and the position of the viewer generate a spectacle similar to minstrel shows that rose to popularity throughout Reconstruction and segregation. Despite the caption for the image announcing, “This is the woman, and I am the man,” ‘Liza Jane operates as the distinct Other in the image in correlation with her character in the text. The rendering of her skin tone creates a barrier of difference in comparison to the other figures of the Blue Vein society.

DeLand’s black, gray, and white tonal scale provides important visual weight to the illustration. He dominates the bottom of the image with darker tones in the patterning of the rug. The wall at the top of the panel above the white archway balances the weight of bottom of the illustration. DeLand draws the viewer to the woman on the right hand side using the contrast between the gray tonal scale and the whiteness of her dress. Her
dress, in turn, creates a greater contrast and weight to the tone of her skin and hair, functioning as a break in light tones between her dress and the lighter, decorated, wall in the background. DeLand diminishes the urge to begin viewing the panel at the left and scanning right through his rendering of ‘Liza Jane and Ryder. He illustrates both in full body, near the center of the left side, but uses black and gray tones in their clothing, skin, and hair that does not contrast with the foreground rug nor the background. This allows for the woman in the white dress to dominate the panel when first observed. These aspects of visual weight function in conjunction with the artist guiding the eye through the panel. In an illustration that depicts so many figures, DeLand uses the balancing of weight to guide attention towards Ryder and ‘Liza along the left side.

The shading used to create the tonal quality of the character’s skin adheres, in many ways, to Chesnutt’s text. Chesnutt’s description of Ryder implies the physicality of the other members of the Blue Vein society; “While he was not as white as some of the Blue Veins, his appearance was such as to confer distinction upon them. His features were of a refined type, his hair was almost straight; he was always neatly dressed” (4). DeLand’s rendering of the final scene reveals not only the complexion of Ryder, his illustration also depicts the varying skin tones of the other members of the society. Along the back wall of the panel the six figures, five seated and one standing, are not uniform in their coloration. Instead, DeLand depicts the facial skin tones as varying between the highlights and shadows. The two women flanking the well-dressed man appear darker than both the seated and standing men who have similar shadows cast from the direction of the implied lighting. Likewise, the woman the artist positions in the foreground demonstrates a clear representation of the varying degrees of tone found in the society.
By placing her close to the viewer, DeLand makes the details of her features more apparent than those in the background. Her skin tone is darker than those seated behind Ryder, and the artist does not depict her hair as straighter than the figures to the rear of the image. Ryder, by contrast, does appear out of place from the narrator’s description. He is lighter than several of the presented figures are, though his hair DeLand does render as “almost straight.” The image of ‘Liza Jane does remain true to the description in most physical ways with the exception of one. Chesnutt’s narrator initially describes her as “a little woman, not five feet tall,” and as “very black” (9, 10). DeLand’s illustration plays on the textual descriptions by obscuring her facial features within the darkness of her skin tone. She exists as a visual contrast to the rest of the figures in the panel. Ryder bowing his head while maintaining a taller stature accentuates the description of her height. Where DeLand’s illustration falters is the physicality of ‘Liza Jane. The narrator describes her body language when Ryder reveals her to the society as “startled and trembling” (24). Instead of the nervousness and fear implied by Chesnutt, DeLand’s ‘Liza Jane appears stalwart and confident. Posing her with her head held high in contrast to the bowing of Ryder’s introduces a visual reading that Ryder, and not ‘Liza, is apprehensive of meeting the eyes of his guests during the reveal. Despite the alterations between textual description and image, Chesnutt’s comment that DeLand reproduced “the nature of the stories” encourages reading further into both illustration and story.

Gradation of skin tone in the image reinforces the satiric tone of Chesnutt’s narrator. In the opening of the narrative the narrator provides a brief historical explanation of the society; “The original Blue Veins were a little society of colored persons organized in a certain Northern city shortly after the war” (1). Chesnutt defines
the originating members of the Blue Veins as “colored persons.” Referring to the members as “colored” resists mixed racial definitions and situates the society within the confines of Jim Crow racial signifiers. A sentence later the narrator defines the evolution of the Blue Veins; “By accident, combined perhaps with some natural affinity, the society consisted of individuals who were, generally speaking, more white than black” (1). Tone indicates that the “little society of colored persons” demonstrated exclusiveness based on skin tone. This operates in conjunction to the narrator stating that membership was based on “social condition[s]” that assumed “unlimited room for improvement” (1). During Jim Crow, darker skin tones restricted the social mobility that Chesnutt indicates. DeLand’s illustration offers a unique visualization of the satiric foundation for the Blue Veins. Within the image ‘Liza Jane functions as a contrast to highlight her as the only visible “colored person” in a “little society of colored persons.” The illustration reinforces Chesnutt’s satire through positioning ‘Liza Jane. Her placement to the left and upon the rug creates the visual atmosphere of a stage ringed by an audience. In this context, Ryder’s visually reluctant acknowledgement of the character appears as a presentation of the Other that the society does not grant membership to. She is visually smaller, darker, and dressed in contrast to the fashion of the other women attending the ball. By using distance and darker tones for her flesh, DeLand restricts the viewer from observing her physical reaction to Ryder’s acknowledgement. ‘Liza Jane in the illustration correlates with the narrator’s description of her first appearance; “She looked like a bit of the old plantation life, summoned up from the past with the wave of a magician’s wand” (10). The image completes the satiric description. Sundquist’s claim that ‘Liza Jane functions as a form of conjure that creates greater acceptance within the Blue Vein society
dismisses the satire of the story. DeLand couples Ryder’s acknowledgement of their past relationship with presenting her as a historic artifact from the antebellum south. Regardless of his accepting her as his past wife, she stands both textually and visually as the Other. Both author and artist satirically cultivate her image as a dark skinned servant presented as the past relic of a legally unacknowledged slave marriage.

DeLand’s illustration also reinforces the didactic purpose of Chesnutt’s satire. Chakkalakal’s observation about Chesnutt’s fiction having a “didactic element” coupled with William and Hendrix asserting that the author’s color line work functions as a model for segregation era literature introduce the lesson within the satiric tone. “The Wife of His Youth” demonstrates the problem of Jim Crow laws creating a binary racial distinction. When Ryder tells the story of ‘Liza Jane to his audience through indirect discourse the narrator’s description underscores the problem of segregation; “There were some present who had seen, and others who had heard, their fathers and grandfathers tell, the wrongs and sufferings of this past generation, and all of them still felt, in their darker moments, the shadow hanging over them” (20). Chesnutt’s tone plays on the problem of racially mixed figures within a binary racial definition. The narrator’s use of “darker moments” operates in two different ways. First, the phrase indicates moments of anguish and despair for “wrongs and sufferings” of the emancipated generation. The narrator includes that “past generation” within Ryder’s audience by noting some bore witness to the abuses of slavery. That comment creates a division within the partygoers of emancipated slaves and freeborn men and women. Secondly, “darker moments” demonstrates Fleishmann’s observation of the dissolution of stratified racial categories. Jim Crow binary racial distinction prevents those in the Blue Vein society from
identifying as racially mixed. No matter how light-skinned they are, there is always the reminder that society does not define them as “white.” DeLand’s illustration creates a jarring visualization of the binary racial definition of Jim Crow segregation. The depiction of each character having a pale skin creates a stark contrast to ‘Liza Jane. She is the only illustrated figure who visually appears to have a personal connection to slavery. If viewing the image outside of the context of the narrative, the illustration appears to be a white man presenting a black woman dressed as a servant to his white audience. Within the context of the narrative, ‘Liza Jane’s physicality disrupts identifying all the figures as “black” members of a “society of colored persons.” The image encourages the reader to question the logic of binary racial identities. Textually, ‘Liza Jane functions as a stereotyped definition of blackness that contrasts with the neighborhood and society that Ryder exists in. DeLand’s illustration visually demonstrates that she is the only black character within the narrative. Ryder, Molly Dixon, and the other members of the society are black because of the arbitrary definition imposed by Jim Crow.
CHAPTER III

“THE SHERIFF’S CHILDREN”: ILLUSTRATING THE CHOICE OF TWO ROPES

Figure 2. Clyde O. DeLand, "We 'll bu's' the do' open" (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1899).
“The Sheriff’s Children,” originally published in *The Independent* in 1889 then republished in *The Wife of His Youth*, is the second story illustrated by DeLand. Chesnutt’s short fiction maintains a simple plot complicated by divergent critical readings. Set in Branson County, North Carolina, the story focuses on the character Sheriff Campbell and the revelation that the imprisoned mulatto, Tom, is his son whom he had sold prior to the Civil War. The narrator clarifies the sale of his son and his former slave mistress was due to “debts, mortgages, and bad crops” accompanied with having “quarreled with the mother” (85). For many critics this central problem is the core purpose of the story. Without Campbell’s past actions, Tom would not return to Branson County where the town accuses him of a murder he denies, and where ultimately his half-sister shoots him in defense of the father. Yet, DeLand’s illustration introduces another reading. He does not attribute focus to Tom, Campbell, nor Polly; instead, he renders the scene outside the jailhouse when the white lynch mob arrives to execute Tom before the law can place him on trial. DeLand’s image encourages reading the lynch mob as the pivotal point within the narrative where Tom recognizes that society and law allow him a choice between two forms of execution. The illustration signals that character’s final decision is the only way to maintain agency within the violent sphere of Jim Crow.

DeLand’s illustration for “The Sheriff’s Children” provides a contrast to the frontispiece for the collection. Whereas the frontispiece introduces the initial story, DeLand’s image now interrupts the narrative between Campbell talking with the lynch mob and the first moment that Tom speaks. The contrast of the image is greater than the panel for “The Wife of His Youth” from pronounced darker tones. Despite the increased visual weight, DeLand does balance the illustration. The darkness of the trees in the background he contrasts with the lighter tone of the sky. Balancing the tone of the sky are the light gray tones used to render the ground at the bottom
of the image. DeLand borders the image with a man on the lower left and right sides of the panel creating a space through which the viewer observes the lynch mob. The contrast between the first two illustrations is the setting and the emphasis. As opposed to using a scene that takes place inside of the jailhouse, DeLand selects an outdoor scene that reinforces the setting of the town. The visible ground appears unpaved, the jailhouse is a dark structure extending up the right side of the panel, and set in the background is a plantation styled home. Each portion of the image signals a rural Southern that contrasts with luxury of Ryder’s home in a “certain Northern city.” DeLand illustrating the lynch mob also provides emphasis to an all-white grouping of men. Tom, the mixed race character of the story, is not present. In addition, Sheriff Campbell appears as a shadowed, indistinct, image within the darkness of the opening in the jailhouse door. This artistic decision to render the scene of racial confrontation from a perspective not presented textually encourages reading the story in a way that departs from common critical interpretations.

Critical discussion focuses on Chesnutt’s two dominant characters, Sheriff Campbell and his son Tom. Gerald W. Haslam and Ronald Walcott both argue the moral center of the story as a parable. Haslam opens by claiming, “no other story from that period seems more apt a parable for America’s continuing racial crisis than does this tight, metaphorical tale of a good white man’s unconscious moral degeneration” (21). Chesnutt’s emphasis that Campbell “had sworn to do his duty faithfully, and he knew what his duty was” creates the moral center of the character (“Sheriff’s” 72). This sets the stage for Haslam’s reading that the “moral degeneration” of the character is “unconscious.” Performing the duty of protecting a prisoner from a lynch mob is the foundation of the character’s morality. The degeneration of Campbell’s morality begins when he realizes his prisoner is his son from before the war. Haslam asserts, “[Chesnutt] here captured the moral dilemma intrinsic to chattel slavery, demonstrating its tragic effect on two lives: The son’s
death is, in a sense, the moral death of the father whose opportunity for direct expiation of his crime dies with his son” (25). Campbell having sold his son and slave mistress creates the immediate necessity in the narrative to atone for the immorality of chattel slavery. The sheriff must morally degenerate after Tom allows himself to bleed to death due to the inability to correct an egregious act from his past. Walcott’s argument aligns with Campbell, claiming that “There is no such optimism in ‘The Sheriff’s Children,’ which is concerned with nothing less than those historical and moral traditions which led so inexorably to the Civil War and which, as traditions do, linger on still” (83). The historic and moral tradition that Walcott alludes to is chattel slavery and the attendant problematic relations created between slave and master. Campbell’s prior relationship with Cicely, Tom’s mother, and the subsequent selling of both lover and son is the epitome of Walcott’s claim of “historical and moral traditions.” This argument he arranges as an inverted version of Cain and Abel, but one where Tom as Cain dies instead of Polly as Able (85). For both critics morality is the center of the narrative, and the emphasis is upon Campbell to atone for his past transgression against his son. Discussion of the moral dilemma between father and son that Haslam and Walcott discuss lack attending to the position of the lynch mob that DeLand emphasizes through his illustration.

Mary Elene Wood contrasts the earlier arguments of Haslam and Walcott through a psychological perspective. Her position emphasizes the narrator asserting, “If the man [Tom] was not mad, he was in a state of mind akin to madness, and quite as dangerous” (81). This line acknowledges the psychological discussion during Jim Crow that “madness,” or insanity, was the natural state of free black people that slavery prevented. Wood claims “Chesnutt reveals through the sheriff’s unfolding perception of his biological connection to Tom that the prisoner has been brought to mental disintegration not by some racial ‘taint’ but by his own father’s disregard of
his human thoughts, feelings, and aspirations” (205). Her reading positions the narrator’s interjection that Tom “was in a state of mind akin to madness” as disrupting the late 19th century psychological discussions. The story hinging on the mental state of Tom, and not the moral state of Campbell, emphasizes that social and environmental realities affect the mental health of individuals in opposition to race based assumptions. Wood clarifies her position by asserting the effect of this line in a realist narrative; “Moments of madness appear as holes in the realist narrative that drop the reader into the realities of racism, violence, and injustice that have been suppressed within the ‘realist’ narrative of the dominant culture” (198). Although her argument indicates the reality of violence created by Jim Crow, she neglects how DeLand encourages the reader to recognize importance of the viciousness of lynch mob mentality. For Wood, Chesnutt’s story functions to disrupt the national discourse as opposed to demonstrating, in the words of Haslam, “a good white man’s unconscious moral degeneration.”

P. Jay Delmar demonstrates another way the critical discussion emphasizes the interplay between Sheriff Campbell and Tom. His reading utilizes the concept of the mask from DuBois in order to reveal why Chesnutt’s story requires a tragic ending. Delmar claims, “’The Sheriff’s Children’ uses both mask-theme and mask-structure. The Sheriff and his son fail because they cannot accept their true identities or, perhaps in the case of the mulatto, because he cannot achieve recognition for what he perceives to be a true identity” (371). Campbell’s identity as a moral man who follows the commandments of his position functions as a mask. The character’s inability to recognize himself as a product of his environment, demonstrated by his treatment of Cicely and his son prior to the Civil War, Chesnutt masks by elevating him above the citizens of Troy. Chesnutt’s narrator describes Campbell in terms that sets him apart from his peers; “He had graduated at the State University at Chapel Hill, and he had kept up some acquaintance with
the current literature and advanced thought” (“Sheriff’s” 72). Although Delmar claims that this functions to mask the character, in the narrative Campbell ignores the consequence of his decisions until confronted by Tom. Delmar also must qualify his claim about Tom’s “mask” preventing him from accepting his identity. Instead of being unable to identify himself, the character “cannot achieve recognition.” Campbell restricts his social and racial identity by not recognizing him as his son. Delmar’s argument circles around the fringe of the moment that brings these two characters into the same space. He neglects attending to the importance of the lynch mob that DeLand illustrates and visually interrupts the text.

These interpretations center on the dynamic between father and son while neglecting a feature central to “The Sheriff’s Children.” Despite the story developing into the tragic willful death of Tom at the hands of his half-sister, Polly, the instigating moment is also the scene illustrated by DeLand. The arrival of a lynch mob seeking vigilante justice on the perceived murderer of Captain Walker is the point where the narrative brings Campbell and Tom into the same space. DeLand illustrating this moment underscores the importance of the scene in Chesnutt’s story. The rise of Jim Crow increased the number of violent and oppressive acts on the now broadened black community of the United States. In 1898, a year prior to the publication of The Wife of His Youth, the Wilmington race riots occurred in Wilmington, North Carolina. In the South, lynch mobs used accusations of rape and other violent crimes to justify the lynching of individuals regardless of guilt (Sundquist 410-11). Although Chesnutt returns to the incident of Wilmington in his novel The Marrow of Tradition, published in 1901, the presence of a lynch mob in “The Sheriff’s Children” calls attention to the increase of violent responses to the black body in the South. To further encourage recognizing the importance of the mob in the narrative Chesnutt first situates their act as racist, and then gives Tom agency in his declaration of
innocence. After arriving at the jailhouse one of the leaders of the lynch mob makes the reason for lynching clear; “and we’ve got to do something to teach the niggers their places, or white people won’t be able live in the country” (76). The claims of lynching for justice Chesnutt disrupts by revealing the underlying racist ideology behind the vigilante murder of accused black men. Those in crowd claim that lynching is to “teach niggers their place” in order to maintain white centralized power in the community. Chesnutt contrasts the superficial desire for justice with Tom’s declaration to Campbell in the jailhouse; “‘For God’s sake, Sheriff,’ he murmured hoarsely, ‘don’t let ‘em lynch me; I didn’t kill the old man’” (77). Tom demands his own innocence to the man he knows is his father. Chesnutt does not position Campbell’s interest in protecting Tom in a moral sphere; instead, Campbell’s reason for resisting the lynch mob is a combination of the need to support his family and a duty to his title as Sheriff. First the character claims, “I get seventy-five cents a day for keeping this prisoner, and he’s the only one in jail. I can’t have my family suffer just to please you fellows” (75). Then Campbell argues, “I’m sheriff of this county; I know my duty, and I mean to do it” (75). Potential innocence is not a concern for the character. Campbell’s resistance Chesnutt bases in financial and professional concerns underscoring the dismissive legal attitudes towards public lynching. This emphasis on the actions of the lynch mob DeLand highlights with an illustration that removes any overt depiction of the two central characters in favor of the group outside the jailhouse. The perspective used for the panel places the reader into the space of the lynch mob. By doing so, DeLand positions the viewer as both observer and member. This encourages reading the importance of both the lynch mob and the illustration within the text.

DeLand’s illustration heightens the role of the story’s lynch mob by denying focus to the primary characters. Contrasting the first illustration, which directed attention towards Mr. Ryder
and ‘Liza Jane, the layout of the panel focuses on the mob and the jail house. From the center to the left of the panel, DeLand depicts the gathered mob directing their attention to the jailhouse that extends from the middle of the right side to the top border. He dominates the center of the illustration with one of the leaders of the lynch mob, a mustached white man using a rifle for a walking stick and carrying a crooked wooden club. This figure draws the viewers’ attention and emphasizes the violence of lynching. DeLand imagining him armed with both a rifle and a bludgeoning weapon implies two levels of violence. His rifle functions as a form of impersonal threat; his club is a weapon that encourages the aggressor to be within the personal sphere of the victim. The figures surrounding the central character of the illustration DeLand depicts armed with, primarily, rifles. Those characters whose faces are illustrated direct their attention towards the jailhouse door where, behind the barred window, a shadowed face is visible. The face is presumably Sheriff Campbell given that the narrator later describes Tom imprisoned on the second floor. With all characters in the panel being white, DeLand implies the pivotal moment of the narrative being a problem with white social ordering. Tom’s imminent threat derives in part from the white lynch mob and in part from the white legal system. The character, Tom, correctly identifies the bias of social and legal order that DeLand directs attention to; “You saved my life, but for how long? When you came in, you said Court would sit next week. When the crowd went away they said I had not long to live. It is merely a choice of two ropes” (82). For Tom, Campbell’s choice of giving him over to the court or the lynch mob results in the same outcome. The division between the mob and jailhouse becomes indistinct for the racially mixed prisoner. DeLand’s illustration emphasizes this point by removing the character of Tom from the panel and presenting only white bodies that threaten the life of the perceived black character.
Comparing DeLand’s illustration for “The Wife of His Youth” to his rendering of the lynch mob in “The Sheriff’s Children” also visualizes the arbitrary nature of the color line. As previously discussed, the tonal quality of the characters in the frontispiece demonstrates varying degrees of skin tone and shading. ‘Liza Jane being the darkest in the image compels the viewer to recognize the lightness of the surrounding characters. DeLand’s rendering of the lynch mob grants a similar tonal quality to the white figures. The artist flattens the skin tone to a light gray, darkening for the indication of shadows cast by the direction of light and features such as the hats that each character wears. In many cases, such as the figure to the lower left, the characters appear as darker than their frontispiece counterparts do. The skin tone of the central figure holding the rifle and club has the contrasting feature of white facial hair that creates a darker appearance to the tonal quality of his flesh. DeLand illustrating both racially mixed and white characters with similar skin tones visually demonstrates Chesnutt’s views on racial amalgamation implied in his color line stories, and expressed directly in his essays published the following year. In “A Stream of Dark Blood in the Veins of the Southern Whites” Chesnutt asserts that

Slavery was a rich soil for the production of a mixed race, and one need only read the literature and laws of the past two generations to see how steadily, albeit slowly and insidiously, the stream of dark blood has insinuated itself into the veins of the dominant, or, as the Southern critic recently described it in a paragraph that came under my eye, the ‘domineering’ race. (“Essays and Speeches” 126)

Depicting skin tone as near identical between the light-skinned members of the Blue Vein society and the supposed white members of the lynch mob underscores a central thesis in Chesnutt’s writing. Although DeLand could not anticipate Chesnutt’s future essays, his illustration functions to connect the concept of an amalgamation of races.
The illustration offers the reader clarity about the destructive nature and arbitrary racial definitions that accompanies color line politics during Jim Crow. Criticism tending towards discussions about the fractured relationship between Campbell and Tom disregard the central issue of the story. Although the dynamic between father and son is of note, the relationship itself is incapable of repair and moral regeneration. This runs counter to the positions of Haslam and Walcott asserting the importance of morality and moral degeneration. Chesnutt provides Tom with the agency to clarify the irreparable nature of their filial relationship; “Other white men gave their colored sons freedom and money, and sent them to the free States. You sold me to the rice swamps” (85). The past actions of Campbell refute any discussions of morality. Chesnutt’s italicizing the character’s statement indicates that the act of selling is unforgivable. Tom’s returning to the hometown of his father does not function as a chance for the sheriff to redeem himself of profiting from selling both mother and son. Instead, the dysfunction of their relationship contrasts the reason for Campbell protecting Tom. He maintains an obligation to prevent the lynch mob from usurping the authority of the law. The lynch mob, who appear racially indistinguishable from the partygoers in “The Wife of His Youth,” define Tom as a black man through racial epithets. Such a definition resists the narrator’s consistent racial identification of Tom as a “mulatto.” The repeated difference between how to define the character racially demonstrates a schism created by Jim Crow segregation. Within the text, the lynch mob does not view Tom socially nor legally as a racially mixed individual. Instead, he exists within a binary racial identity that only considers his blackness in relation to the suspected crime. Flattening racial definitions strips the character of a stratified identity and places his body in danger. “The Wife of His Youth” demonstrates the problems of social mobility created by Jim Crow. In comparison, “The Sheriff’s Children” reveals the imminent physical threat that arbitrary binary...
racial distinctions create. DeLand’s illustration functions as both direct comparison to the frontispiece and as an image that reinforces the central issue of the text. Any individual defined as black under Jim Crow exists in a continual state of physical threat.
CHAPTER IV

“UNCLE WELLINGTON’S WIVES”: DELAND’S RENDERING OF SEGREGATED CLASS

Figure 2. Clyde O. DeLand, "Perhaps the house had been robbed" (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin 1899).
“Uncle Wellington’s Wives” is the one story that DeLand illustrates that Chesnutt had not previously published. This creates an important distinction from the other illustrated stories; audiences at the time of publication experienced the story with the visual interruption of the illustration. Houghton, Mifflin being the first to publish this story provides an important step in observing the effect of DeLand’s image within Chesnutt’s text. As with each story in the color line collection, “Uncle Wellington’s Wives” utilizes a satiric tone to undermine Jim Crow social and legal restrictions based on a binary racial distinction. Through the illustration, DeLand creates an assumption of inequality in Northern urban segregated living conditions. In doing so, DeLand creates a contrast between the upper middle class racially mixed neighborhood of “The Wife of His Youth” and the working class black neighborhood of Groveland.

Compared to the two previously illustrated stories, “Uncle Wellington’s Wives” is complex in both structure and length. Sixty-five pages long and divided into four sections, Chesnutt’s story develops a narrative about abandonment, migration, self-discovery, and reclamation. The narrative focuses on the character Wellington Braboy, a mulatto whose desire for a life in the North compels him to abandon his wife Milly. Wellington takes her money and squanders the funds, finds employment as a coachman, and then achieves his desire of marrying a white woman. Following his marriage to Katie Flannigan, the character loses his job due to drunkenness, his new wife leaves him upon discovering her first husband is still alive, and Wellington realizes that the North is not “a land flowing with milk and honey” (207). Like many of the color line stories, “Uncle Wellington’s Wives” emphasizes the social restraints placed on mixed race, and black, characters. Wellington’s decision to leave for the North begins after listening to a lecture given by the “tall, well-formed mulatto” Professor Patterson (201). The character imagines the North as “a land peopled by noble men and beautiful women, among
whom colored men and women moved with the ease and grace of acknowledged right” (207). Patterson’s description informing Wellington’s concept of northern social structure is important for understanding both the story and DeLand’s illustration. Both come before Chesnutt introduces Wellington’s physicality to the reader. The narrator provides an important physical description of the character; “a mulatto, and his features were those of his white father, though tinged with the hue of his mother’s race” (207). This encourages returning to Fleishmann’s argument about the “The Wife of His Youth” where “biracial existence [is] a phenomena separate and distinct from either ‘black’ or ‘white’ identity” (463). Wellington understands himself as racially mixed, though the social structure of the south views him as black. As a biracial character, Wellington desires the social fluidity that his imagination of the north offers. He believes the north to be a place where racially mixed and black individuals can socially ascend amidst their white neighbors. Of importance, the character must choose between a black or white identity. Similar to both Ryder from “The Wife of His Youth” and Tom from “The Sheriff’s Children,” the narrator recognizes Wellington’s mixed racial identity in contrast to legal and social definitions. DeLand’s illustration reinforces this problem by visually assuming the living conditions of working class black neighborhoods.

The illustration for “Uncle Wellington’s Wives” is the first of the four images that features a single character. DeLand positions the character off-center towards the right side of the panel. He depicts the character in loose fitting clothing carrying a collection of fish and a note while scratching his head. At his feet, DeLand illustrates a pile of unorganized clothing. Compared to the previous illustrations the foreground and background are less visually complex. The floor lacks any furnishing beyond the pile of clothes and the wall of the background appears cracked, dirty, and plain. Similar to the other illustrations, DeLand creates visual balance within
the panel. The weight of Wellington Braboy’s darker clothing and skin tone the artist balances with the darkness of the window that occupies the upper left corner. Preventing the panel from becoming top heavy, DeLand uses darker tones for the flooring in the fore and middle ground. By creating a contrast between the darkness of the floor and the lighter tones for the background wall he emphasizes the character. This emphasis attracts the viewer’s attention to the character allowing Wellington Braboy to be the focus of the image. In “The Wife of His Youth” and “The Sheriff’s Children” DeLand creates signals that direct the viewer’s observation towards specific points. For “Uncle Wellington’s Wives” the initial simplicity of the image allows for the character of the narrative to dominate the panel. DeLand accentuates the importance of the visual rendition of textual descriptions of both the character and his living space. In doing so, the artist reinforces central issues of Chesnutt’s satiric view of race, class, and marriage under Jim Crow. Contrasting the title story, Wellington’s status as a racially mixed working class husband of an Irish woman does not allow for upward class nor social mobility.

Unlike “The Wife of His Youth” and “The Sheriff’s Children,” “Uncle Wellington’s Wives” generates less critical attention. Earle V. Bryant argues that Chesnutt structured the narrative as a parable; “Chesnutt adopts the parable of the prodigal son as a model for his tale of ethnic treason, repentance, and familial reunion” (47). Similar to the prodigal son, Wellington takes money that is not rightfully his own, squanders his wealth, accepts socially humiliating work by helping Katie wash clothing, realizes the error of his ways and returns home to find acceptance. Although the structure does align, as Bryant recognizes, his assessment errs in an important way. His claim that Milly “represents blackness—the culture, the ethnic family to which Wellington belongs” ignores the biracial status of the character (52). As Fleishmann observes in her reading of “The Wife of His Youth,” critics fall into the trap of the “one-drop
rule” established by the *Plessy* ruling. Bryant does temper his argument about “racial treason” by qualifying that “Chesnutt’s objection therefore is not to miscegenation but to Wellington’s motives for wanting to marry Katie Flannigan” (53). While his argument assumes that the character abandoning Milly is also abandoning “the ethnic family” that he belongs to, the issue of motive is what defines the problematic marriage between Wellington and Katie. Wellington’s motive is not romantic love; instead, he desires the social status of being married to a white woman (Bryant 53). Yet, “Uncle Wellington’s Wives” creates an inversion of the darker and lighter skinned spouses from “The Wife of His Youth.” Chesnutt cautions against reading Wellington’s marriage to Katie as legally more legitimate than his slave marriage to Milly. The lawyer Mr. Brown clarifies this when he explains, “It was unlawful to make such a marriage, but it was a good marriage when once made” (254). Acknowledging that the marriage itself was an unlawful act introduces the potential for legal ramifications in regards to miscegenation as far north as Groveland. Bryant’s argument is problematic in both his assumptions of “ethnic treason” and his lack of acknowledging the legality of either of the character’s marriages. More so, by framing Chesnutt’s story as parable, he denies both the narrative’s satiric tone and how DeLand’s illustration gestures towards the existence of class inequality on the color line.

Although the character is the emphasis of the illustration, the panel also visualizes the lack of social mobility Wellington Braboy discovers in the North. DeLand’s illustration recalls a contrast in living conditions when compared to the narrator’s description of Wellington’s home with Milly; “Under her careful hand [the cottage] was always neat and clean” (213). Artist and author demonstrate Wellington’s mistake in assuming that the North provided unlimited social mobility. The character abandons life in a clean “modest cottage” for a single floor home that is in a state of uncleanliness and disarray. Surrounding Wellington are dirty walls, floors, and a
window that is broken. DeLand depicting an empty bottle on the windowsill also gestures towards Katie Flanningan’s drinking habits and subsequent marital problems. Chesnutt’s narrator and the lawyer Mr. Brown create narrative interjections about Katie’s alcohol indulgence. First the narrator remarks, “In order to relieve her loneliness, she should occasionally have recourse to a glass of beer, and, as the habit grew upon her, to still stronger stimulants” (248). The second interjection from the narrator comes describing Wellington’s growing desire to return to Patesville, “… or when too frequent applications to the bottle had loosened her tongue” (251). Finally, when Wellington discusses the legality of divorcing Katie to Mr. Brown the character states; “An’ den she gits drunk, an’ wuss’n dat, she lays vi’lent han’s on me” (253). DeLand illustrating the single empty bottle alongside the broken windowpane directs the reader-viewer to the growing tension created by the escalating use of alcohol. The character begins to use “stronger stimulants” that begin to “loosen her tongue” and then evolve into laying “vi’lent han’s” on Wellington. This development resists Bryant’s urging that Wellington is a character who commits ethnic or racial treason. Wellington’s unhappiness is not because he has abandoned a racial culture embodied by Milly, instead his living conditions inform his desire to return to Patesville. The character lives in an apartment marked by squalor with a wife who drinks to the point of excess, ridicules and physically abuses him. DeLand’s illustration positions the character within an environment that creates a negative contrast to the environment that he abandoned.

Wellington’s surroundings in the illustration also serve to reinforce concepts of racial segregation found in the North. The image creates a tacit gesture to the apartment that the newlyweds rent. In the opening of the third section, the narrator states that Katie “rented the upper floor of a small house in an Irish neighborhood” (246). Although lacking description beyond the size of the home, the narrator explicitly defines the ethnicity of the neighborhood. A
paragraph later the narrator gestures towards the effects of Jim Crow segregation as far north as Groveland; “When it became known that [Wellington] was colored, the landlord, Mr. Dennis O’Flaherty, felt he had been imposed upon, and, at the end of the first month, served notice upon his tenants to leave the premises” (247). O’Flaherty arrives at his decision to evict Wellington and Katie due to racial prejudice. Chesnutt’s reinforces the segregationist mentality of the character by providing O’Flaherty with brief moment of agency. In the paragraph dominated by the satiric tone of the narrator the character interjects; “When Mrs. Braboy, with characteristic impetuosity, inquired the meaning of this proceeding, she was informed by Mr. O’Flaherty that he did not care to live in the same house ‘wid naygurs’” (247). Similar to Tom from “The Sheriff’s Children,” O’Flaherty refuses to allow for a mixed racial status. Through an eviction based on race, the couple moves “to a small house on Hackman Street, a favorite locality with colored people” (247). This introduces the setting that DeLand illustrates for the narrative. Chesnutt provides little textual description of the home beyond it having two rooms, a kitchen and a second room that “served as bedroom and sitting room” (257). DeLand’s illustration creates an assumption about the inside of a home in a predominately-black community. This is the second option afforded to the characters. Segregationist attitudes restrict Wellington and Katie from their initial home in an Irish neighborhood. Pushed out of an all-white neighborhood they move to a black section of the city. DeLand illustrating the undefined setting as dilapidated and neglected assumes the conditions that non-white residents reside in. Importantly, the text redefines the racial assumption that the image presents. Wellington does not reside in a squalor-marked home alone; he exists within the space with an Irish woman. Within the story, segregated communities negatively affect both sides of the color line.
DeLand’s representation of Wellington Braboy is of equal importance to the surroundings. The narrator defines Wellington as a “mulatto” whose facial features he inherited from “his white father” with his skin tone “tinged with the hue of his mother’s race” (207). Several lines later, the narrator reveals the character’s thoughts about his physicality through a moment of indirect discourse; “he said to himself that he was a very good-looking man, and could have adorned a much higher sphere in life than that in which the accident of birth had placed him” (207). Part of what informs the character’s assumption that he “could have adorned a much higher sphere in life” is the limitation of binary racial definitions. Despite the narrator describing Wellington as a “mulatto,” his community identifies him as “black.” Although the narrator does not overtly claim the signifier of “black,” the limitation on the character’s “sphere in life” is a tacit indication of his skin “tinged with the hue of his mother’s race.” Wellington’s interactions with Katie at first assume a broader understanding of race in Groveland; “Some people might have objected to his complexion; but then, Mrs. Flannigan argued, he was at least half white; and, this being the case, there was no good reason to why he should be regarded as black” (242). Katie’s interpretation about Wellington’s race sharply contrasts with Bryant’s assertion that the character abandons his racial identity and community. Claiming the character to be black ignores the different racial status of bi-racial individuals prior to the “one-drop ruling” established by Plessy, an interpretation that Woods articulates in her reading of Mr. Ryder. DeLand’s illustration further complicates how to read the race and physical body of Wellington. At first, his rendering of the character’s skin tone appears darker than the narrator’s claim that Wellington’s mother “tinged” him with her “race.” Considering the environment for the character alters the visual interpretation. DeLand places Wellington inside of the single floor home during a point of the narrative where he returns from a day of fishing. Evening has begun
and the inside of the unlit home is dim. Shadowing creates a darker tone than the narrative description assumes. The shortness of the character’s hair and beard also prevents racialized assumptions about “straightness” that functioned as a descriptive feature in “The Wife of His Youth.” Most telling are the facial features that DeLand attributes to the character. Wellington has a sharp angled nose and, from the perspective, a thin mouth. The artistic rendering adheres to the description of the character having the features of “his white father.” When acknowledging the implied light-source of the environment his skin tone aligns with the “tinge” inherited from his mother. DeLand illustrating the character in alignment with Chesnutt’s textual description encourages recognizing Wellington as bi-racial. Acknowledging the mixed racial status of Wellington not only resists one of Bryant’s core claims, the character being a mulatto shifts the story from being about a wayward husband failing to acclimate to the north into a narrative about the inability for the character to cross the social and legal boundary of the color line. Wellington does not commit “racial treason.” Instead, he attempts to navigate an arbitrary line based on color that is appears less overt than in Patesville yet still present and restrictive.

“Uncle Wellington’s Wives” is a satiric story where Chesnutt exposes the fallacy of the North existing as a land of limitless opportunity during Jim Crow. Wellington’s belief that Groveland is a place where he can find success and social status he cannot fulfill. In large part his inability to attain his Northern dreams are due to his education; “Uncle Wellington found a great many privileges open to him at the North, but he had not been educated to the point where he could appreciate them of take advantage of them” (251). Yet, buried beneath the surface of the “great many privileges” is a consistent reminder of Jim Crow redefining racial definitions throughout the North. Much like in the South, Wellington discovers restriction derived from referring to him as black. O’Flaherty provides the most direct point of reference by refusing
housing to the newlywed couple based on Wellington’s race. DeLand plays to this underlying subtext of the satire through both his illustration of the character and his home in the predominately-black neighborhood. Through creating a darker setting, Wellington’s race visually appears darker and complicates the narrative description of the character. By not rendering a scene with Katie and Wellington, he removes any ethnic portrayal of the Irish. This allows the panel to focus on the living conditions in a working class black neighborhood in the north. The dilapidated nature of the setting plays to the inability for the character to achieve upward social mobility during a period marked by rising segregation laws.
CHAPTER V

"THE BOUQUET": SEGREGATION SIGNAGE BECOMES A PHYSICAL BARRIER

Figure 4. Clyde O. DeLand, "For white people only. Others please keep out" (Boston: Houston, Mifflin 1899).
“The Bouquet” is the final story illustrated by DeLand in the *The Wife of His Youth*. As the last story that DeLand illustrates in the collection, it shares a common thread with “Uncle Wellington’s Wives.” The illustrations for both stories emphasize a single character. In “Uncle Wellington’s Wives,” DeLand depicts the confused figure of Wellington Braboy as the only character within the panel. “The Bouquet,” likewise, features the young character Sophy Tucker as the singular subject of the illustration. Although he does include the silhouette of mourners in the distance, Sophy is the focus for DeLand’s interpretation. Similar to the previous illustration the visual setting reinforces problematic divisions of space created by the rise of Jim Crow segregation.

Like many of the stories in *The Wife of His Youth*, “The Bouquet” utilizes a satiric tone to introduce individual injury created by Jim Crow. Unlike the three other stories that DeLand illustrated, the story of Mary Myrover and Sophy Tucker depicts the relationship between a white schoolteacher and her young black student. This focus departs from the emphasis on racially mixed characters that “The Wife of His Youth,” “The Sheriff’s Children,” and “Uncle Wellington’s Wives” highlight. The story begins with Mary Myrover accepting a teaching position at an all-black school in a North Carolina town. Mary’s acceptance of the job causes surprise in public opinion. This wonder is not due to her race but the former position of her family. Chesnutt’s narrator states “that up to this time no woman of just her quality had taken up such work” (270). The Myrover family “constituted the aristocracy of the old regime,” a southern aristocratic status lost by the end of the Civil War (270). Mary’s position places her in contact with racially mixed and black students, of which Sophy becomes her favorite. Their relationship revolves around Sophy’s “intense devotion” to Mary that she displays through helping during class and bringing the teacher flowers (275). The irony of Sophy’s devotion
comes through the single rival she has for her teacher’s affection; “Sophy had a rival in her attachment to the teacher, but the rivalry was altogether friendly. Miss Myrover had a little dog, a white spaniel, answering to the name of Prince” (277). After a brief period of teaching, Mary contracts an illness and suddenly dies causing a narrative shift from the teacher to the student. The ending half of “The Bouquet” charts Sophy’s attempt to place yellow roses on Mary’s grave. Mrs. Myrover, Mary’s mother, continually thwarts her attempts. First, she restricts Sophy from attending the wake at the family’s home. Then she prevents anyone who is not white from participating in the funeral at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church. The story ends with Sophy summoning Prince to deliver the flowers to Mary’s grave in a segregated cemetery. Although Chesnutt’s narrative follows what appears to be a simple arc the switch between focusing on the character of Mary to Sophy presents complications that DeLand signals. The scene that the artist illustrates is when Sophy finds herself restricted from the cemetery due to segregation signage.

DeLand’s final illustration for The Wife of His Youth demonstrates artistic techniques that draw the reader’s attention to the important figure in the panel. He creates visual balance at the top and bottom of the image by utilizing foliage and flowers that are several shades darker than the sky. The fence that extends through the center of the panel is important in creating a contrast with the lightness of the character’s dress. This contrast allows the character to dominate the image despite the close match between the tone of her skin and the wooden boards of the fence. Along the hilltop, the mourners within the cemetery DeLand renders as silhouettes that stand out against the sky. By creating this second contrast, the artist encourages the viewer’s attention to progress from Sophy to the crowd beyond the fence. The perspective for the panel positions the viewer behind the primary figure. Such perspective encourages the individual viewer to become an observer of the funeral, segregated from the cemetery in a similar way to the central character.
“The Bouquet” shares underwhelming critical attention with “Uncle Wellington’s Wives” despite the fact that it is one of the few stories to focus on a black and not expressly racially mixed character. Peter Taylor offers an important reading of Chesnutt’s story that, like each other interpretation from The Wife of His Youth, lacks attending to DeLand’s illustration. Taylor asserts that “If the teacher was a contradictory model for her students, she was an incriminating one for readers, and all hope for recovery is lost when her agency is suddenly, finally, extinguished” (4). This argument assumes that the reader identifies with Mary Myrover’s whiteness and her slowly evolving progressive attitude towards her students. The reader realizes the loss of hope for Mary becoming a racially progressive figure when comparing the character’s attitude with the overt racism of her mother. In doing so, Taylor claims that Chesnutt “baited” the reader “to identify with Mary” due to her being “young, once upon a time well to do, willing to work, sympathetic, and not obviously racist” (4). The assertion requires accepting that Chesnutt directs the story towards a white audience who will identify with the character. This assumption of Taylor’s Chesnutt indicates in an 1880 journal entry, “The object of my writings would be not so much the elevation of the colored people as the elevation of the whites” (Journals 139). Taylor’s argument becomes more complicated when he handles the narrative shift from Mary to Sophy after the teacher’s death:

A seemingly perfect proxy, she invites emotional investment, but identification with Mary leads to a dead end … The bait and switch from Mary to Sophy, from white to black, was neither simplistic nor automatic in 1899, but the reader has been studiously prepared for this shift of sympathies. Sophy’s ignorance and dialect accent her innocence; she is young, vulnerable, sensitive (4).

The narrative performs a “bait and switch” for the reader, beginning by introducing a character that a white audience will identify with only to replace her with a character that accentuates underlying oppressive ideologies within the audience. A black child supplants a white woman in
the sympathy of the reader. Taylor underscores his reading by observing Sophy’s inability to attend the mourning ceremonies for her teacher. He argues that the segregation sign on the gate “effectively codifies the tension between past and future by projecting legal, yet morally bankrupt, values of a past and present life into a future one for both the living and the dead … This is, arguably, characteristic of most public notices that restrict or prohibit behavior” (5). Although this reading of segregation signage is, on one level, correct in that it does project legal enforcement it is also limited. First, Taylor’s assertion only attends a single aspect of the function of segregation signs. Elizabeth Abel’s observation about signage clarifies the limitation of Taylor’s argument; “Through a variety of tonal and tangible inflections, the signage sought not only to command, but also to persuade, solicit, ingratiate, and humiliate” (18). The legal force of the sign in “The Bouquet,” which reads, “This cemetery is for white people only,” is one level of meaning (“Bouquet” 287). Chesnutt directing attention to the sign also attends to the humiliation of the character restricted from locations that Mary’s dog freely occupies. Likewise, the sign offers the tacit reason for Mrs. Myrover having her daughter buried in that location. The signage solicits proponents of segregation to bury their family members in a cemetery that is exclusive to the white population. The second limitation in this reading of the signage, and the limitation of the “bait and switch” claim, is neglecting the illustration provided by DeLand.

As mentioned above, the perspective that DeLand uses for the illustration creates an important position for the viewer. Illustrating the character from behind encourages the individual to become an active observer of the scene. For “The Bouquet,” DeLand’s artistic decision removes the viewer from a position that privileges whiteness and places the observer into the position similar to that of Sophy. This functions in coordination with Chesnutt switching the reader’s sympathies from white to black. The observer of the illustration is behind the
character, removed from the proceedings within the cemetery and held at a distance. Whereas segregation signage restrains Sophy, DeLand uses perspective to restrict the viewer. For a white audience, the image compels the viewer to acknowledge the legal command and humiliation of the sign that the caption reinforces. DeLand positioning the mourners on the horizon requires a dark tonal shift to transform them into silhouettes. They become figures who are darker than the segregated character demonstrating what Taylor declares as a “morally bankrupt” value system. The artist flattens the concept of skin tone within the panel; doing so eliminates the visual identification of difference in race and brings into question the moral and social validity of Jim Crow segregation. Understanding the influence of perspective within the image aids Taylor’s reading of Chesnutt using a “bait and switch” structure for the narrative. Sympathy from the white audience switches from Mary to Sophy, while in the same moment DeLand segregates the audience to Sophy’s side of the color line.

Referencing signage through the text and image is a vital point in Chesnutt’s story. The satiric structure of “The Bouquet” continually gestures to the individual, legal, and social levels of segregation. Chesnutt provides a subtle signal at the end of the opening paragraph, “The colored people of the town had been for some time agitating their right to teach their own schools, but as yet the claim had not been conceded” (269). Segregation in school systems extends only to the student body. The narrator underscores this concept earlier in the paragraph with the claim that “there were several” “colored schools” in the unidentified “Southern town” (269). Likewise, each school employed only white teachers. For Chesnutt the satiric irony of his narrative was both personal and not lost on students in segregated Southern schools. His own experience at the Howard School in Fayetteville placed the young Chesnutt in contact with the black educator Cicero Harris. In 1877 Chesnutt became the assistant to Robert Harris, the older
brother of Cicero, at the State Colored Normal School in Fayetteville. There he acquired training as an educator and taught at Southern segregated schools. For the author to create an educational system that employs only white schoolteachers for black and mixed race students reveals the illogical structure of segregation.

Socially, Chesnutt makes public effects of segregation more pronounced than the irony of “The Bouquets” school system. The narrator’s explanation of Mary’s public treatment of her students interjects the social acceptance of Jim Crow mentality within the social dynamics of the town,

Miss Myrover taught the colored children, but she could not be seen with them in public. If they occasionally met her on the street, they did not expect her to speak to them, unless she happened to be alone and no other white person was in sight. If any of the children felt slighted, she was not aware of it, for she intended no slight; she had not been brought up to speak to negroes on the street, and she could not act differently from other people.

(278)

Mary’s relationship with her students that she builds in the public space of the classroom does not extend to the segregated public sphere. Both the white population and black students maintain the socially expected distance and separation. Chesnutt directs the reader’s attention to this fact by first claiming, “they did not expect her to speak to them.” “They” indicates the expectation of the black students. Mary’s lack of public acknowledgement of her students the narrator poses as the expected social dynamic of the town. The second important signal is that Mary “could not act differently from other people.” White expectation of social performance dictated that the character could not publically speak with her non-white students. This moment acts a signpost for the growth of socially accepted segregation norms within the narrative.

These signals of segregation build into the moment that Chesnutt employs the legal function of signage negatively affecting the individual. When Sophy encounters the “small sign
in white letters on a black background” that demands obedience for “Others please keep out” he creates a schism in segregation logic (287). Society allows white teachers to mingle with black students in the confines of the schoolhouse. Social expectation dictates that these white teachers disavow the relationships created with their students in public spaces. Although society allows white teachers to share space with black students, signage legally restricts Sophy from attending the private burial of her white teacher. Normative social practice does not prevent the character from entering the cemetery despite those in mourning being white. Instead, the legal ramification of violating the segregated space that the sign indicates creates an impassable color line.

DeLand’s illustration functions as a visual reminder of the central position of segregation in Chesnutt’s satire. Using the scene of Sophy’s restriction from the cemetery reinforces the effect of racially discriminatory laws on the individual. Curiously, DeLand’s decision where to place the character removes her from the physical location of the sign on the front gate. Despite neglecting to depict the signage, his artistic decision in how he illustrates the fence visualizes the meaning. Chesnutt’s narrator describes the fence as an “iron fence,” a structure that allows the character to observe the funeral from a distance (289). DeLand alters the cemetery fence from iron to wood. By doing so, he creates a solid and impassable edifice that gestures towards the inability for the character to participate due to the declaration of the sign. He restricts Sophy to a single spot where the character observes through a loose board. That he renders the wood so dark that the character’s hand blends with the surface of the fence likewise creates a black boundary through which the black body cannot pass. The fence becomes a visual “color line.” Within the context of the narrative, the viewer of the panel is acutely aware that within the silhouetted group of mourners Mary Myrover’s dog is present where Sophy cannot be.
The illustration likewise reinforces the satiric switch that Taylor’s reading articulates. When viewing the panel the observer must acknowledge the position of the perspective. Sophy as a character within the image is the only figure on the segregated sign of the fence. Yet she is not alone, DeLand structures the illustration to have each individual viewer participate in the frustration and humiliation created by segregation. He also reinforces the sympathetic transfer between characters in how he positions Sophy. A common facet of ethnic caricature that existed alongside minstrel performances was the placement of the character. In order for caricature to be successful, the artist must visually present the facial features to the audience. DeLand resists allowing the one character that he illustrates as black to become an ethnic caricature by turning her away from the viewer. The back her head, hand, and the context of the image are the ways to discern her as the character. Finally, the editorial inclusion of the text beneath the image creates a contrast in how to read the transfer of sympathy. The text references the signage that Sophy encounters; “FOR WHITE PEOPLE ONLY. OTHERS PLEASE KEEP OUT.” Using all capital lettering and a shortened version of the original text creates a startling divide for the viewer. Regardless of the individual reader’s race, any who are annexed to Sophy’s side of the fence becomes Other. This encourages sympathizing with the humiliation that confronts the character as her only recourse to deliver the bouquet of mourning flowers is through Prince.

Unlike the previously illustrated stories in *The Wife of His Youth*, “The Bouquet” uses satire to focus on the social humiliation that Jim Crow creates. DeLand’s illustration offers a powerful reinforcing of this effect through subtle artistic decisions. The perspective used for the panel creates a way to transfer that individual ramification to a broader audience. For a moment, the reader becomes subject to the signage regardless of racial categorization. By resisting the potential for Sophy to become a caricature, DeLand encourages the audience to recognize her as
a child in mourning for her teacher. This does create a contrast to the satiric tone of the narrator. Yet within that contrast, the artist further develops the didactic core of the author’s narrative. The illogical legal and social structure of segregation creates individual frustration and humiliation framed in the context of restricting a student from her teacher’s funeral.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: ILLUSTRATING THE COLOR LINE

Clyde O. DeLand’s illustrations provide an important visual interpretation of Charles Chesnutt’s narratives. Each panel encourages discussing the importance of the selected scene. Across the four stories that DeLand illustrates for Houghton, Mifflin a pattern emerges that many critical arguments neglect to observe. In each, the author defines the way the color line of Jim Crow negatively affects both communities and individuals. DeLand’s artistic style complements Chesnutt’s satiric tone by presenting characters through illustration and not caricature. Each narrative humanizes the characters struggling with different facets of segregation. In turn, the function of illustration visually humanizes the characters as opposed caricature reducing the figures to ethnic types. This allows the reader to observe the importance of the color line indicated in the title *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line*.

“The Wife of His Youth” and “Uncle Wellington’s Wives” are stories that demonstrate how *Plessy versus Ferguson* created a binary racial definition that restricted racially mixed identities. Ryder and the Blue Vein society attempt to create a social ordering that denies their own heritage in order to attain upwards social mobility. ‘Liza Jane’s appearance disrupts Ryder’s “Dream of Fair Women” and compels the whole of the society to realize that they tacitly
embraced segregation ideals. DeLand’s illustration cements ‘Liza Jane as the Other when set amongst the rest of the society. He reinforces the satiric tone of the “The Wife of His Youth” by revealing the Blue Vein’s acceptance of racially discriminatory practices. In comparison, “Uncle Wellington’s Wives” explores the problems of an uneducated individual struggling with racial definitions created by segregation. Wellington’s dreams of the North providing unlimited opportunity for upward social and racial mobility fall in line with the ideals Ryder and the Blue Vein society. Yet, when the character abandons his wife from slavery and moves north, he discovers that society is neither inclusive nor fluid. Although Wellington does succeed in marrying a white woman, he likewise discovers racial restrictions on where they can live. DeLand’s illustration reinforces understanding the social implications of racial segregation through his depiction of Wellington’s northern home. He creates a telling assumption about the housing in the predominately-black neighborhood in Groveland. The dilapidated environment indicates the struggle for economic mobility in segregated urban areas. In both stories, DeLand exposes the underlying didactic message of Chesnutt’s satire. Binary racial definitions create a dissolution of a racially mixed identity while legitimizing a racial social hierarchy based on the color line.

Chesnutt’s “The Sheriff’s Children” contrasts with the two previous illustrated stories. Segregation racial definitions do not restrict class and social mobility for Tom. Instead, the racially mixed character faces imminent physical threat due to violence generated by Jim Crow. DeLand’s preference to illustrate the lynch mob foregrounds the character’s social reality. In contrast to the other three panels, he does not use a central character as the focal point. Likewise, he creates a visual perspective that Chesnutt does not describe. His focus highlights the role of the lynch mob over Campbell or Tom. This artistic decision encourages recognizing the
imminent violence that the character faces in the racially segregated south. Chesnutt creates
dissonance between the narrator’s description of Tom as racially mixed and the lynch mobs
binary racial definition of the character. DeLand illustrating the mob references physical threat
that diluted definitions of race create. White society views Tom as black preventing the character
from proving his innocence to the society as well as the court system. His choice, as the
character articulates, is a decision between two ropes due to the underlying violence and
prejudice of Jim Crow.

Finally, DeLand illustrates a story that confronts the individual humiliation created by
segregation. In “The Bouquet,” Chesnutt satirically gestures towards the personal effect of
segregation on the individual. At first, segregation limits social interaction in both public and
private spaces. Mary restricts her students from public acknowledgement while her mother does
not allow them on her property. These socially accepted restrictions continue to escalate after
Mary’s death and culminate into the legal acknowledgement of segregation. DeLand’s decision
to illustrate the final moments of the story heightens the humiliation of legal signage. The
perspective used in the image bars both the character and the viewer from entering the cemetery.
DeLand does not recreate the sign within the image, yet he does reference the effect of signage
through his alteration of the fence. By illustrating the fence as wood, he creates solid dark barrier
that becomes a color line. The ending of the story aids the humiliation that the story revolves
around. Segregation restricts Sophy from public and private spaces that allow for dogs but not
her.

In The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line, Chesnutt targets the
ramifications of Jim Crow segregation. The title announces that the color line is the central
theme of the collection. Through a satiric tone, he reveals the social and individual dangers that
accompany binary racial identities. DeLand visually accentuates Chesnutt’s satiric point. The illustrations provide the reader with a moment in each narrative to explore and consider. In each panel, he signals the result of segregationist practices. Illustrations alter how the reader interacts with the text. DeLand illustrates the color line and offers signals for readers to follow in the narrative. Each signal guides the reader to common thread that runs through each story, the problematic results of legally and socially accepted segregation.


