Re(Making) the Folk: The Folk in Early African American Folklore Studies and Postbellum, Pre-Harlem Literature

Dissertation

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Abstract

The Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era is often overlooked in African American scholarship. My dissertation proposes a renewed investigation of this era by studying Postbellum, Pre-Harlem African American writers and their negotiation with a prominent discourse during this period: African American folklore. Since "the folk" were repeatedly equated to Black Americans and folklore was used as a measure of African Americans' post-emancipation "progress," nineteenth-century Black intellectuals, recognized nineteenth- and twentieth-century folklore as a key site in shaping Black representation. Moreover, they were "active participants" in fashioning the foundations of American folklore (Waters and Hampton 22-46; Lamothe 23-32; Moody-Turner 4, 89).

Thus, my dissertation explores the "sites of concern and negotiation" that Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers encountered while creating narratives that incorporated African American folklore (Moody-Turner 13); I seek to characterize and historicize the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem's "racialized regime of folk representation," discourses that intersected to create the representation of the folk. I conduct this analysis by using a three-pronged approach that combines insights from folklore theory, narrative theory, and African American literature. I call this methodology "positioning." Using this approach, I study how (1) African Americans were positioned as the folk in a racialized regime, (2) how African Americans (re)positioned themselves, and (3) how African Americans positioned other Black people as the folk. With this methodology, alongside

a history of the social construction of "Black folk" in early African American folklore studies and nineteenth-century popular discourse, I examine Charles Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition*, Anna Julia Cooper's *A Voice from the South*, Pauline Hopkins's *Contending Forces*, Alice Dunbar-Nelson's "The Goodness of St. Rocque," Frances E.W. Harper's *Iola Leroy*, and W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*. In these texts, I understand how the folk and folklore are narratively deployed by African American writers. As a result, my dissertation also reveals how these authors, in discussing the folk, employed several strategies such as positioning folk as minor characters, championing racial uplift plots, inserting female folk magic practitioners in romance plots, and crafting native ethnography narrators.

Dedication

Dedicated to the Bailey family

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Introduction

Several literary scholars have studied folklore in African American literature. Most notably, in *The Signifying Monkey* (1988), Henry Louis Gates Jr. connects folklore to literature by tracing how African American writers participate in the folk practice of signifyin(g), a practice of literary revision with a difference (Gates 123-35, 70). Additionally, Houston A. Baker, in his influential *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature* (1984), offers a folk-themed approach for understanding an African American literary tradition; he demonstrates that the blues constitutes a preexisting theory for evaluating African American literature (3). In addition to Baker and Gates, Marjorie Pyrse draws on an African American tradition, in this case conjuring, to describe Black women's writing as an intragroup, self-conscious practice between generations (5-7). Pyrse's, Baker's, and Gates's folk-centered theories are also joined by anthologies, such as Patricia Liggins Hill's, Trudier Harris's, and Bernard W. Bell's *Call and Response* (1998) and *The Afro-American Novel and its Tradition* (1987), which attempt to interpret folk practices (Bell) and/or apply Black folk traditions (Hill, Harris, and Bell) to a Black literary tradition.

However, while many African American literary scholars reference or productively engage Black folklore in their work, rarely do these literary critics cite African American folklorists or explicitly engage in the field of African American folklore studies. This neglect of African American folklore studies is problematic because several folklorists have contributed comprehensive works on African American folklore that could effectively deepen literary

scholars' analyses. John Roberts, Anand Prahlad, Patrick Mullen, William Wiggins, Daniel Waters, Patricia Turner, and Valerie Lee have closely studied African American folklore. In particular, Daniel Waters outlines a historicist analysis of African American folk genres and early folklore studies while John Roberts, Anand Prahlad, and Patrick Mullen contribute revisionist histories and critical studies of folklore theory, from examining the Eurocentric underpinnings of "the folk" (Roberts) to calling for an interdisciplinary study between fields such as folklore, critical race theory, and postcolonial theory (Prahlad, Mullen).

Yet, although these folklorists have contributed significantly to African American folklore, acknowledgement of their field and expertise does not appear as prominently as it should in African American literary scholarship. As Anand Prahlad points out in "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner," Gates's *The Signifying Monkey*, which explicitly grounds itself in the African American folk practice of signifyin(g), references folklorists such as Roger Abrahams. Yet, "nowhere in [Gates's] entire book does he acknowledge [the] field [of folklore]" (Prahlad 566). When literary scholars more directly engage with folklore scholars, like in Bernard W. Bell's *The Afro-American Tradition of the Novel* and *Call and Response*, these anthologies are not recent and, therefore, hard to find. More contemporary, explicit cross-disciplinary work between African American folklore and literature is thus far and few between.

What is missing is a direct conversation between folklorists and literary scholars – African American literary scholars need to more actively engage work from folklorists in order to break from conventional understandings of folklore in literary scholarship, which either view literature as a completely separate cultural sphere or employ an outdated understanding of the folk (Prahlad 565). Moreover, such cross-disciplinary work between African American folklore

studies and literature is important because folklore studies can supply comprehensive collections of African American folk traditions and their functions. Folklore studies can also provide important histories of early African American folklore and analyses of identity formation. As Amy Shuman and Charles L. Briggs argue in *Western Folklore,* folklore studies implements a self-critical approach that realizes folklore's integral creation of the "Other," which makes folklorists particularly positioned to comment on and critique the process of Othering: "Since folklorists were instrumental in the construction of the dominant's quintessential 'other,' they occupy a unique position from which to comment on this process" (111). They have approached this self-critical stance in a number of ways: producing revisionist histories (117), "historicizing" concepts (such as tradition) (116), revealing "institutional histories" (117), finding "strategies" for reading history (117), and examining how the folk and groups have been defined and used for "furthering articular agendas" (121).

In particular, folklore studies turned to revisionist histories to (1) de-romanticize those labeled as the folk and (2) generate critical practices for re-contextualizing histories of the folk (for example, documenting early African American folklore studies and Black intellectuals' roles in the founding of American Folklore Studies) (Shuman and Briggs 117). In African American folklore, Anand Prahlad and John Roberts have taken up revisionist histories, while also attending to how folk is a social category that informs identity.

Thus, by placing the fields of African American folklore and literature in direct conversation, African American folklore can recover two key considerations when researching the folk: historical context and folklore studies' influence on identity and group formation. Certainly, scholars who are interested in African American folk and folklore have already

identified the need for both historical context and identity formation in literary scholarship. Scholars such as Hazel Carby, J. Martin Favor, David Nicholls, Shirley Moody-Turner, Lawrence Levine, Eve Dunbar, and Daphne Lamothe all employ their own version of a historicist and/or cultural studies method to examine the folk. In *Reconstructing Womanhood* (1987), Carby creates a Black feminist/Marxist approach, which accounts for the intersectionality of Black womanhood by reviewing historical differences, material conditions, and debates over language (6) to understand folk in Frances E.W. Harper's *Iola Leroy* (1892) and, later in *Race Men* (1998), to critique Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) (Carby, *Race Men* 18).

Several critics also adopt a historicist-sensitive method to discuss folk in African American literature. Shirley Moody-Turner and Daphne Lamothe comprehensively historicize the influence of folklore studies and anthropology in the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era while Lawrence Levine traces the historical roots of several folk traditions, such as the blues. Dunbar synthesizes history and an analysis of form by arguing that mid-twentieth century African American authors like Zora Neale Hurston used common tropes from ethnographic writing to negotiate nationalism and globalism (Dunbar 16-57). Also, Baker and Gates research the roots of blues and signifying, respectively, to craft folklore-infused, literary approaches.

Other critics such as Nicholls and Favor focus on how folk constitutes a socially constructed idea, one that impacts identity formation and narrative strategies. For example, Nicholls contends that we must attend to formal and ideological aspects of folk in Harlem Renaissance texts to understand how these authors used the folk as a tool to seize political modernity (16). Additionally, while Favor marshals critical race theory and identity formation

theories to interrogate how Black authenticity is constructed through African American folklore and the folk (9, 14).

However, while these scholars' interdisciplinary studies are useful and productive investigations of the folk, they can still benefit from folklorists and folklore theory. Folklorists have methodically chronicled early African American folklore. Thus, their research not only expands collections of African American folklore, but also reveals the ideologies and methodologies that influenced the collectors of these Black folk traditions.

Additionally, folklorists have explored how African American "folk" function as a racialized, gendered, and classed category, an analytical move that Favor proposed should be adopted by African American literary scholarship (Favor 9, 14). Moreover, these folklorists also investigate how early folklore studies catalyzed this identity and group formation. Folklore studies, such as Patrick B. Mullen's *The Man Who Adores the Negro* (2008) and John Robert's "Afro-American Diversity and the Study of Folklore," interpret the creation of folk as a socially constructed process, a mechanism of power, and a method of identity formation. Roberts concludes that American folklore studies needs to reveal, critique, and abandon the Eurocentric underpinnings of the folk in order to recover African cultural creativity and diversity (169; 159-60). Mullen also advocates for an investigation of the intersection between race and folklore studies; he determines that folklorists, including himself, must reflexively critique how their subject positions and romanticization of racial groups affect their folklore collection practices (3-5).

Building on folklore studies' attention to folk as a social construction, this dissertation looks at how the folk was constructed and textually produced in late nineteenth-century and early

twentieth-century America; ultimately, this perspective helps us reexamine African American literature. For example, by recognizing folk as a social and literary construction, this research can diverge from African American scholars in the 1980s and 1990s who primarily viewed African American folk as a given or who focused on identifying Black folklore in literary works (see Gates and Baker above). Therefore, in this dissertation, I do not only evoke the sign of the folk – I also do not take the folk as a given. Instead, I examine how narratives produced the folk; I therefore offer a way to center narrative production in social production, viewing narrative acts as part of a social feedback loop of Black representation (i.e. literature creates and reinforces Black stereotypes). In addition to this concern, I investigate how both white folklorists and African American authors crafted the folk.

Ultimately, cross-disciplinary analyses between contemporary African American literary scholarship and contemporary African American folklore studies will create long-needed conversations between folk-centered theories in African American literature and folklore theory – since folklore studies has reconstructed how the folk were created as a social category, we can apply these insights to African American writing that includes the folk. This will also allow recent revisionist histories and analyses of the folk in folklore studies to inform and deepen African American literary scholarship; in other words, the historical timeline of folklore studies and its origins can inform the analysis of African American literature because nineteenth-century African American writers were aware of and involved in early African American folklore studies (Moody-Turner 4, 8-9).

Furthermore, not only can African American literary scholarship benefit from a cross-disciplinary study with folklore studies. Another field can also enrich analyses of folk and

folklore in African American literature: narrative theory. Not many African American literary scholars work with narrative theory – in fact, in general, ethnic studies and narrative theory rarely overlap (Kim, "Asian American Studies and Narrative Theory" 15). In looking at her own field, Asian American Literature, Sue J. Kim explains how Asian American literature and narrative theory can have diametrically opposed interests:

> The concerns of these two fields have been opposed, implicitly and explicitly. Asian American literary criticism is interpretive, contextualist, extrinsic, and praxis-oriented; narrative theory is concerned with articulating a formal poetics and is formalist, intrinsic, and abstract. (Kim, "Asian American Studies and Narrative Theory" 15).

Often there is one main reason for this lack of engagement: as narrative theorists themselves recognize, narrative theory often excludes relevant historical and social issues, leading to a division between history and form (McHale 63-4; Warhol 204-5; Kim, "Introduction" 237). As Warhol argues, "ahistorical structuralism seemed at first preclude" intersectional inventions such as "feminist or queer approach[es]" (Warhol, *Unbound*, 2).

These same concerns are present in the relationship between African American literature and narrative theory. Narrative theory's focus on textual elements has distanced narratology from African American literature. Contemporary narrative theorists themselves have recognized that narrative theory "still appears to be 'race/ethnicity-blind'" (Donhaue). Additionally, within the field of African American literature, the division between narratology and African American literature is rooted in a history of political placemaking in academia. Donald Matthews states that African American scholars in the 1980s and 1990s were justifiably wary of narrative theory's

Eurocentric foundations (Matthews 71-2). Twenty years to thirty years after the Civil Rights movement, African American scholars hoped to highlight Afro-centric theories – some critics, such as Joyce Ann Joyce, argued that using theory that was peopled with primarily European scholars would contradict these efforts, instead "widen[ing] the chasm between…[Black literary critics] and that of those masses of Blacks whose lives are still stifled by oppressive environmental, intellectual phenomena." In particular, Joyce critiqued structuralism itself; she pointed out that structuralism necessitates an individualistic mode of analysis, one that excludes external factors and looks at elements in isolation.

Thus, controversy surrounded texts such as Gates's *The Signifying Monkey* (1988) and Baker's *Blues, Ideology, and African American Literature* (1984); Gates uses Saussure, an early influence for structuralists in narrative theory, and Mikhail Bakhtin to explain the parodic nature and doublevoicedness of signifyin(g) (121); Baker employs Foucault's analytical methodology, the "archaeology of knowledge" (17). Gates's and Baker's employment of Western theorists touched on a common dilemma in white institutional spaces:

> Black literary critics have attempted to develop a view of black culture and language that satisfies the need to demonstrate the unique features of black literature and culture while developing an appropriate political stance for an oppressed people. This task is complicated by literary critics who also are concerned with maintaining or gaining status for black studies in the Western academic community. (71)

In other words, Matthews implies that Black scholars such as Gates and Baker used theorists such Bakhtin and Foucault to develop an interpretive framework that was recognized and

"accepted" in higher education institutions. This turning point in African American scholarship was an important one; it highlighted the double-edged sword of academia. On one hand, Gates and Baker believed that they were using theorists to recoup an Afro-centric literary criticism; on the other hand, other scholars, such as Joyce, pointed out that Gates' and Bakers' employment of a Western theorical tradition would, instead of centering Black theoretical production, privilege European literary theorists or white American standards (Joyce).

However, today, African American literature is more established as a discipline, and postcolonial literature has reexamined narrative theory, adding a rich bibliography of criticism that dismantles European narrative theories (Christian 37). Additionally, in recent scholarship, African American scholars have woven narrative concepts into their analyses: P. Gabrielle Foreman expands Julia Kristeva's concept of intertextuality into histotextuality (using historical allusions to "contextualize and radicalize" literature), Mae Henderson references Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva to propose a model of Black women's positionality and literary tradition, and Barbara Johnson dissects metaphor, metonymy, and voice in Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. These critics, as well as other scholars, have shown that we can understand how narrative theory and African American literature complement each other. Scholars such as Henry Louis Gates Jr., Mikhail Bakhtin, Edward Said, Peter Rabinowitz, Robyn Warhol, and others have demonstrated the ways in which narratological, historical, and social issues cannot be so easily separated.

In my dissertation, I value the insights from African American scholars who embraced *and* opposed narrative theory in the 1980s and 1990s while engaging with contemporary African American and narrative scholarship. Heeding the call to center Black theoretical production, I

work inductively to recover narrative techniques that African American authors themselves formulated. At the same time, I follow African American literary scholars such as Deborah McDowell, Cheryl Wall, and Mabhu Dubey who have challenged the presumed dichotomy between "art and ideology," and I acknowledge contemporary critics' call for a "critical race narratology," a "study of the ways sociohistorical content and racialized subjectivities impinge upon the formal and structural features of narrative" (Romagnolo). As James J. Donahue explains in *Narrative, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States* (2017), a recent comprehensive collection on intersections between race and narrative studies, scholars in this volume combine cultural studies and narrative theory in order to challenge and expand (rather than simply use) narratology:

> As some contributors to this volume demonstrate, by pointing the narratological lens at texts by nonwhite authors—authors working within literary and cultural traditions may be informed by non-European traditions of storytelling and aesthetics—the study of race and ethnicity as component parts of the narrative construct will force, in the words of Alber and Fludernik, a "reconceptualization of the theoretical models and even the discipline of narratology" (Introduction 3). (Donahue)

Therefore, recognizing Postbellum, Pre-Harlem authors as theorists, I scrutinize and criticize narrative theory's neglect of race and social issues (especially in Chapter Two) by demonstrating how examining African American history expands and complicates narrative theory.

Moreover, narrative theory is ideal for my specific investigation of African American folk because it diagrams how "Black folk" transform into textual aspects (plots, characters, etc.).

Thus, while folklore studies analyzes how the "folk" are socially created and details how history shaped this creation, narrative theory uncovers how the social creation of the folk pervaded writers' plots, characters, narrators, and more. Therefore, both narrative theory and folklore studies can help elucidate how the historically situated process of creating the folk *invented* the folk in narrative.[1] A cross-disciplinary approach with all three fields thus outlines how folk and folklore in literary texts and social contexts reinforce each other.

Significantly, I also apply narrative theory and African American folklore studies to African American literature to expand our understanding of the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, an oft overlooked era in African American literature. The Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, frequently called the "Decades of Disappointment" and the "Age of Accommodation," was judged as a period of self-effacement and decreased Black literary production (Gebhard and McCaskill 1-2; Foster and Andrews 510). However, literary scholars Caroline Gebhard, Barbara McCaskill, Koritha Mitchell, James Smethurst, and M. Guilia Fabi have shown that writers and activists during this period continued to establish important Black institutions and publish significant literary works.

During these years, newly emancipated African Americans lived under continual, nation-wide terror and were left in a quasi-state of citizenship by a government that would neither recognize nor protect their rights (McCaskill and Gebhard 2). In response, African Americans

[1] In Eric Hobsbawm's and Terrance Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition* (2012), Hobsbawm argues that "'traditions' [are] actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and dateable period – a matter of a few years perhaps – and establishing themselves with great rapidity" (1). He also contends that "'invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (1).

were active in anti-lynching campaigns (for example, Ida B. Wells' *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (1892) and *A Red Record* (1895)) and the Women's Era (a flourishing period of black women's poetry, fiction, and nonfiction) (3-5). This era also marked the development of several Black institutions, such as literary societies, women's organizations (the National Association of Colored Women), and schools (the Tuskegee Normal School) (4-5), as well as literary tropes and genres like lynching dramas, passing, the tragic mulatta, utopian fiction, and sentimental romance (Mitchell 29-30; Fabi 4-5).

In particular, during the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, defining and identifying the folk was a key political and social issue; it meant undertaking the politics of representation because images of the folk were so often used to assert racial "authenticity" or depict African American stereotypes. As Shirley Moody-Turner articulates in *Black Folklore and the Politics of Racial Representation*, several different discourses in the public and private sphere sought to categorize and represent African Americans in the late nineteenth century: politics, popular entertainment, science, history, folklore studies, and more (4-5). African Americans lived in a world where these discourses not only interacted but also could not be disentangled from each other. For example, Jim Crow segregation drew from public understandings of folk in minstrelsy and folklore studies to cast African Americans as racially and socially different (Moody-Turner 29, 41-44).

Furthermore, during the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, American folklore studies grew – significantly, Black representation was at the root of this growth. Before anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski used participant observation, folklore societies undertook the project of documenting traditions and shaping the representation of marginalized groups ("Malinowski,

Bronisław Kasper (1884-1942)"). The American Folklore Society (AFS), founded in 1888, declared that it would study, in addition to Native Americans and other regional or ethnic groups, "survivals among American negroes, including their traditional inheritance from Africa, and its modification in this continent" (Newell 231; Waters 33). In 1893, the Hampton Folklore Society (HFS) was established at the Hampton Institute, a historically Black college (Moody-Turner 64). Originally, Hampton's founder, Samuel Armstrong, collected African American folklore, like conjuring, from Hampton students and graduates in order to identify and eliminate "folk ignorance" (Moody-Turner 60). For "Armstrong nothing more clearly represented the intellectual and moral deficiencies created by the system of slavery than the foolish superstitions and old-fashioned preserved in black folklore" (Moody-Turner 57); in particular, he viewed conjuring as "wholly unacceptable black folklore" (59).

Armstrong did not expect, however, that this project would instead grow into efforts to record and preserve African American folklore – fifteen years after Armstrong's project, Alice Bacon founded the Hampton Folklore Society (HFS) with the mission to "collect and preserve all traditions and customs peculiar to the Negroes" (Bacon, "Folk-lore" 503). With this preservation, she hoped to mark African Americans' "progress" and gather "material for the future historian of the American Negro" (Bacon, "Folk-lore" 508). Bacon's goal, in fact, presaged Franz Boas' research. Franz Boas, while shaking up anthropology, would influence twentieth-century New Negro intellectuals like W.E.B. Du Bois; eventually, Boas' theories of cultural relativism and disagreements with racial difference theories would help New Negro intellectuals challenge racist arguments and reclaim African or Black cultural traditions, "harness[ing] the greatness of their African past" ("Boas, Franz Uri (1858 - 1942)"; Lamothe 36). Folklore societies, like HFS,

then served as precursors to Boas' contributions, recovering Black traditions as "useful" material instead of maligning these customs altogether.

However, African Americans were not simply material for a burgeoning American folklore studies – as Shirley Moody-Turner has comprehensively shown, African Americans were influential agents in shaping the beginnings of American folklore during the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era. They did not sit on the sidelines – they were active players. The Hampton Folklore Society is a prime example of such influence; it was recognized by white writers and black leaders alike: T.T. Fortune, Rev. Alex Crummell, Booker T. Washington, and George Washington Cable responded to Hampton's "folklore movement" (Lamothe 61; Bacon, "Folk-lore" 508-11).

In addition to being a disciplinary "movement," folklore studies was entwined with Postbellum, Pre-Harlem programs of education. For example, the Hampton Institute believed that their teachers were in a constant battle with Black traditions, beliefs that were associated with "ignorance" and "savagery" (Moody-Turner 57-61). For these teachers, folklore could not be ignored; instead, it became a vital topic of discussion when considering Black pasts and futures.

Additionally, within a Black writer and activist community, prominent figures such as Anna Julia Cooper, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Charles Chesnutt published articles in folklore studies outlets and/or spoke to folklore society members (Moody-Turner 7-8). Along with this direct engagement in American folklore studies, Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers were cognizant of the intersection between folklore studies and Black representation:

> In the post-Reconstruction era, for example, black writers' engagement with folklore had to negotiate the emerging formation of folklore studies and the dominant cultural and scientific identification of Southern, rural African Americans as folk. They had to navigate the tension between their representations of folklore and the awareness of representations for certain forms of folklore and certain folk groups were one measure used by white society in determining the authenticity of black writers' texts and reifying notions of blackness that circulated in the national imaginary. (Moody-Turner 13)

In other words, the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era was not a nadir of Black artistic production but rather a period of complex and tense navigation – Black writers travelled through a national imaginary that sought to eliminate, codify, and stereotype Blackness. Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers identified this tension—in fact, they were unequivocally in the midst of it—and they pinpointed folklore studies as a key discipline in deconstructing post-Reconstruction racial representation. The concept of the "Black folk," gaining steam and popularity within the emerging field of folklore studies, proliferated many nineteenth-century discourses, thus impacting the foundations of American folklore studies, stories of Black life in African American literature, and more.

Specifically, in the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, these ever-interacting, multiple definitions of the folk were, as Stuart Hall terms it, "racialized regimes of representation," "multiple discourses [which] intersect[ed] to construct representations of the 'Other'" (Moody-Turner 110). In other words, there was a "whole repertoire of imagery and visual effects through which 'difference' [was] represented at any one historical moment" (Hall 232). This regime or

confluence of Black stereotypes, a "result of a historical 'struggle around the [black] image,'" (Hall 257) was used to craft the "image of black people in the white imaginary" (Hall 250) as well as "consolidat[e], maint[ain], and exercise…power" (Moody-Turner 110). These regimes also naturalized difference, labeling African Americans as unable to deviate from supposed "natural" characteristics (Hall 245). During the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, depictions of the folk, particularly Black folk, operated as a "regime of representation," working to create and maintain racial difference, often in response to Black success; this creation and maintenance of racial difference through discourse about the folk was, as I term it, a "racialized regime of *folk* representation." Many overlapping discourses created racialized stereotypes of African American "folk" and thus Black representation.

Positioning Methodology

Yet, to fully analyze this Postbellum, Pre-Harlem regime of folk representation as manifested in African American literature, we need to use both folklore studies and narrative theory. I argue that understanding the racialized regime of folk representation in Post-Bellum, Pre-Harlem writing calls for a theoretical concept that brings all three disciplines together: "position."

The concept of position and positioning has been used in many disciplines to describe social and narrative conditions. Foucault concentrates on the social implications of position; a position can be a place from which discourses of power, status, and legitimate knowledge form one's subjecthood and identity (Depperman 2). In addition to Foucault's observations about position, anthropologists and folklorists have used "position" to express the concept of difference: du Gay argues that the "marking of 'difference,'" often through assigning things

different positions, “is thus the basis of that symbolic order which we call culture” (Hall 236). Moreover, as Claude Levi-Strauss argues, “social groups impose meaning on their world by ordering and organizing things into classificatory systems (Douglas, 1966)” (Hall 236). Thus, culture, and more specifically group formation, can be understood by how we assign and classify different positions.

Moreover, scholars have attempted to use the concept of positioning to detail the narrative implications of social concerns, particularly the intersection between identity and narrative. Michael Bamberg argues that “identity work” in narrative can be deconstructed by looking at three levels of positioning (i.e. how “people commit themselves practically, emotionally, and epistemically to identity-categories and discursive practices associated with them”): (1) positioning on the level of the story; (2) positioning on the level of interaction; and (3) positioning with respect to the “Who am I?” question” (Depperman 4-6). With these levels, Bamberg begins to explore how identity is formed through narrative, attending specifically to narrative situations, interactions, and agency (6).

Lastly, African American literary scholars have utilized position to read the narrative innerworkings of an African American literary tradition. Houston A. Baker, Michelle Burnham, and Miranda A. Green-Barteet have studied position in relation to African American authors, highlighting how African American artists have theorized and negotiated their struggle with their own positionality. As Gates and Baker have shown, authors exist in a relative position, shifting and (re)shifting due to several factors such as one’s knowledge of signifyin(g), the economies of slavery, etc. Additionally, African American artists themselves have shown that occupying a certain position within a system of oppressive forces is not fundamentally a place of

disempowerment; they have demonstrated how one, through her or his particular position, can challenge negative racial stereotypes or construct locales of resistance (Moody-Turner 110; Hall 270).[2] In fact, these artists and critics have shown how one's position is not simply a response to an encounter but instead a pose (one's poise), a frame of motion that is part of a life that has navigated the weather of Black representation (Bradley 60-62; Sharpe 102).

Building on the idea of position as a bridge between social and narrative interests, I develop a positioning methodology in an attempt to apply the insights of folklore studies and narrative theory to Postbellum, Pre-Harlem literature and its fascination with the folk, explaining how these writers were both influenced by and navigated their way through their era's racialized regime of folk representation.

My positioning methodology is broken down into two parts: (1) a historical/contextual approach and (2) a narrative analysis. Firstly, using revisionist histories about early African American folklore, I investigate how turn-of-the-century African Americans were, on one hand, positioned as the "Other," and, on the other hand, while attempting to challenge this process of "Othering," positioned other African Americans. Specifically, this attention to early African American folklore studies, among the other discourses such as popular literature and minstrelsy reveals how early folklorists contributed to the racialized regime of folk representation. This approach recognizes how Postbellum, Pre-Harlem African American folklorists and writers grappled with this regime. They did not simply respond to racialized regimes of folk

[2] For example, Michelle Burnham and Miranda A. Green-Barteet reveal how Harriet Ann Jacobs in *Incidents of the Slave Girl* takes a strategic position of resistance (Burham 279; Green-Barteet 54).

representation – they identified how the rhetoric of the folk functioned as a racialized regime and sought to question this regime through a critical attention to their own positionality.

Ultimately, this two-part attention to positionality is an essential methodology for studying Postbellum, Pre-Harlem's racialized regime of folk representation. It helps describe how African Americans in the nineteenth century lived amongst and maneuvered within a pervasive lexicon that rendered Black people as the folk; it also helps explain how such negotiation manifested in African American literature.

Additionally, to productively decipher Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers' paradoxes, we can adopt positioning as a methodological practice. Positioning addresses the process by which a racialized regime was produced in a particular time and discourse; it also encompasses how writers/intellectuals like Cooper declared agency over such representation. It asks important questions for the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era: what is the result of attempts to claim Black representation during this period? How does folklore inform a politics of representation? How did writers, not only thematically, but also structurally address and critique the connection between the folk and Black representation?

Moreover, this positioning methodology places African American literature, folklore studies, and narrative theory in conversation by considering how social forces affected narratives and narrative strategies during the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem period. Specifically, it pinpoints a narrative pattern of characters in Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writing (folk as minor characters) and shows us how this pattern manifests in narrative based on its historical context (how folk were represented at the time)—in other words, how folk were racialized in public discourse and invented in narrative.

Exploring the Tight Spaces

Therefore, in my dissertation, I argue we can use historical and narratological methodologies to uncover how and why the folk were invented in Postbellum, Pre-Harlem literature. Particularly, during the Postbellum Pre-Harlem era, while African American writers navigated the racialized regime of folk representation, they created various narrative strategies and characteristics (such as fashioning a network of minor folk characters, incorporating conjurers into romance plots, etc.). African Americans writers, in other words, existed in the "tight space" of the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, or, as Baker states, "'the always ambivalent cultural compromises of occupancy, differentially affected by contexts of situations'" (qtd. in Midgelow 4). Occupying the "tight space" of the racialized regime, writers crafted the folk, both as social themes and narrative techniques in various genres (short stories, novels, essays, folklore collections). How did these folk appear? What did they utter?

In the chapters, I employ the positioning methodology to travel through these "tight spaces." In Chapter One, I demonstrate how the folk were created in the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era. During this period, early American and African American folklore studies was a crucial factor in the regime of folk representation. American folklore societies, established during the late nineteenth century, were informed by and helped fuel Black representation in minstrelsy and plantation literature. I investigate these discourses and how they constructed the folk. Mainly, "the folk" acquired a racialized meaning, and African Americans were positioned as the folk. While folk representation grew during the late nineteenth century, African Americans also (re)positioned themselves – they subverted meanings of the folk. However, they often did so by espousing racial uplift narratives and classist assumptions of other African Americans.

Chapter Two applies Chapter One's historical analysis of narrative to determine how the folk manifested as minor characters in Postbellum, Pre-Harlem literature. I use Alex Woloch's concepts, "character-space" and "character-systems" (essentially how much space characters are allotted) to discover how Frances Harper and Charles Chesnutt represent the folk. Mainly, in Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition* and Harper's *Iola Leroy*, folk characters function as minor characters (have little "character space" and are subsumed in their minorness) to illustrate white Americans' hand in creating the folk (i.e. how white supremacy created plantation stereotypes of African Americans), promote a new vision of folk characters, or enact racial uplift narratives and classism. Thus, the racialized regime and its repositioning is legible in Chesnutt's and Harper's narrative structures, revealing how African American authors grappled with folk representation in their narratives.

Chapter Three focuses on how a specific type of folk, the Afro folk magic practitioner, was depicted and used as a narrative device in late nineteenth-century African American women's writing. The chapter traces the conjurer's popularization and move into more prominent character roles. Specifically, Pauline E. Hopkins and Alice Dunbar-Nelson deliberately (re)position conjuring and voodoo in order read it anew (in a different context). I find that both authors use folk magic to emphasize and revise the romance plot in their fiction, "The Goodness of St. Rocque" (1899) and *Contending Forces* (1900).

On one hand, in Dunbar-Nelson's "The Goodness of St. Rocque," she positions her voodoo woman as a key helper in the courtship plot, thereby representing Afro folk magic as a vital source of communal knowledge and an extension of female agency. On the other hand, in *Contending Forces*, Hopkins repositions her conjure woman by combining Euro-American

spiritualism and African American folklore and inserting her conjurer into the novel's courtship plot; as a result, her conjurer comes to symbolize the nation's legacy, repressed racial ideology, and sexual exploitation of Black women.

Lastly, Chapter Four investigates how narrators developed alongside folk characters in Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writing. In *Writing Culture*, James Clifford and George E. Marcus explain how modern ethnographic writing is a result of several representational modes that anthropologists developed. As the previous chapters illustrate, African Americans wanted to reposition themselves and claim authority over their representation. The narrator position is a manifestation of such desires for authority and differentiation. Importantly, white folklorists and African American writers in the *Journal of American Folklore* employed their narrators to position themselves as "insiders" of Black folk culture. First, I examine the narrator in nineteenth-century articles from the *Journal of American Folklore*. Then, I assess how African Americans often served as "native ethnographers," a troubled place that rested both within and outside a community (Lamothe 14). I dissect the native ethnographer narrator in Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and Anna Julia Cooper's *A Voice from the South* (1892), two Postbellum, Pre-Harlem political and social works that mention "the folk" and shape auto-ethnographic narrators.

Overall, these chapters underline the importance of understanding the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era through an interdisciplinary lens. Folklore studies, narrative theory, and African American Literature reveal the impact that American folklore studies had on African American writers and their narrative techniques. My dissertation, by blending textual and historical/folkloric interests, hopes to view the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era as another crucial

period of significant historical changes, encapsulating difficult social and narratological negotiations with Black representation. As the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem indicates, historical context and textual phenomena cannot be fully understood without the other. By studying their intersections, we can make legible the folk.

Chapter 1

Creating the Folk in the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem Era

As described in the introduction, literary history has neglected to fully account for negotiations with folk representation in the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era. To address this gap, in this chapter, I examine a significant contributor to folk representation during the late nineteenth century: early African American folklore studies. Using a positioning approach, I argue that early African American folklore studies in the Post-Bellum, Pre-Harlem era can be understood as (socio-cultural) positioning in three significant ways: (1) how a racialized regime of folk representation fitted and attempted to justify a low socio-cultural position for African Americans; (2) how African Americans repositioned themselves; and (3) how African Americans repositioned others within their own racial group. First, a racialized regime of folk representation functioned in early African American folklore studies and other discourses (such as popular entertainment and literature) to produce African American as the folk. As African Americans worked to reposition themselves in African American folklore studies, they assumed white-produced, racist stereotypes of African American folk culture. Specifically, African American critics, intellectuals, and collectors who fostered early African American folklore studies deployed a Herderian model of folk, along with white folklorists and collectors, to create an African American folk who represented Black authenticity.

However, ultimately, the European model of the folk, by its very Eurocentric focus and underpinnings of racist cultural arguments, could not depict African American folk culture. Thus, early African American folklore and African American intellectuals produced problematic, conflicting understandings of African American as folk, which often rivaled their intentions to counter racist depictions and, instead, evoked supposed intraracial divisions of class, region, and color within the Black community, perceiving the folk primarily as Southern, lower-class, darker-skinned African Americans and reinforcing a folk/modern binary and a racial uplift narrative.

In this chapter, the positioning approach shows us how Postbellum Pre-Harlem writers were in a "tight space," which generated conflicting, paradoxical, and problematic positions. For example, in her speech at an 1894 Hampton Folklore Society (HFS) conference, Anna Julia Cooper identified how African Americans were placed in a situation that coerced them to value European standards:

> I heard recently of a certain great painter, who before taking his brush always knelt down and prayed to be delivered from his model, and just here as it seems to me is the real need of deliverance for the American black man. His "model" is a civilization which his childlike admiration must seem overpowering…To write as a white man, to sing as a white man, to swagger as a white man, to bully as a white man—this is achievement, this is success. (Cooper, "Paper" 518)

Pinpointing folklore studies and its influence on Black representation, she implored folklorists, artists, and writers to reposition their outlook on Black representation and see it anew, as Black Americans must grasp their "homely inheritance" to achieve "emancipation from the [European]

model" (Cooper, "Paper" 518). Only a year prior to speaking at HFS, Cooper had made a similar argument in responding to Alice Bacon's establishment of HFS: to her, the "so-called educated Negro," who was "under the shadow of this over powering Anglo-Saxon civilization," should not be "ashamed of his own distinctive features," features which resided in African American folklore (Cooper, "More Letters" 510).

However, at the same time, Cooper's calls for repositioning were harrowed with internalized and class prejudices as well as the era's spread of scientific racism and eugenics. Even as she points out the cultural evolutionary model that African Americans romanticized and adopted, her perspective is also misaligned; she views Black folk and their folklore through stereotypes, reducing them to a "study" and placing their "simple truths" below African American artists (Cooper, "Paper" 518-19). In her depiction, the folk hold "simple, common, everyday things of man" and "untaught, spontaneous lispings of the child heart" – "The Negro" must "turn his camera on the fast receding views of this people and catch their simple truth and sympathetic meaning before it is all too late" (Cooper, "Paper" 518-19). Cooper, like her fellow Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers, exists in a "tight-space," both working to identify and create a folk to express a Black "authenticity" and, at the same time, positioning these Black folk on the margins of a postbellum future.

Section One: Historical Definitions of the Folk

In the following section, I implement the first part of my positioning methodology to understand the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem's racialized regime of folk representation. Drawing from histories of early African American folklore studies, I discuss the contemporaneous definitions

of the folk in nineteenth-century folklore societies and explore how these definitions influenced, and were influenced by, other discourses such as popular literature and minstrelsy.

Contemporary folklorists define "the folk" as "any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor" (Dundes 6-7, 9). Folk traditions are cultural expressions that are informal and passed on, a way to solidify group identification and membership (Sims and Stephens 1-29, 30-63; McNeill 1-19). By contrast, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century definitions of the folk operated by predominantly evoking the following binaries: peasant/elite, illiterate/literate, and rural/urban. Folk were primarily envisioned as European "illiterate" and "rural" "peasants," ultimately antithetical to a "literate" and "urban" "elite" (Dundes 2-5; Waters 24-33, 111).

Additionally, the folk were positioned in a class hierarchy and on a cultural evolutionary scale, which connected class, hierarchy, and region to notions of "civilization":

> The folk were understood to be a group of people who constituted the lower stratum, the so-called *vulgus in populo*—in contrast with the upper stratum or elite of that society. The folk were contrasted on the one hand with "civilization"—they were the uncivilized element in a civilized society—but on the other hand, they were also contrasted with the so-called savage or primitive society, which was considered even lower on the evolutionary ladder. (Dundes 2; his emphasis)

Thus, folk were placed on a cultural evolutionary scale that divided culture into three main groups (elite, folk, and savage) and associated "civilization" with each group differently. While

the elite epitomized civilization, a "so-called savage or primitive society" was seen as uncivilized. The folk, situated between elite and "savage primitive society," had not yet "attained civilization" (Dundes 2) and "lack[ed] the benefit of education and 'progress'" (Dundes 3, 5). As a result, the folk "retained survivals of savagery" (Dundes 2).

Furthermore, the folk were stereotyped as an obstacle to modernity, a population who would be left in the past and on the margins (Dundes 2-5; Waters 22-33). For example, William Wells Newell, founder of the American Folklore Society, defined folk as the teachers of lore, "'isolated'" and "'unlettered'" (Waters 24, 26). In a supposedly modern and urban world, this folk was said to not exist, or it was believed that their customs were in danger of rapidly disappearing (Dundes 6).

Because of their supposed antimodern ways, folk were often defined as a vessel of romantic nationalism (Wilson 832). Herderian thought, which was highly influential in the nineteenth and twentieth century, argued that each nation had a distinct "soul," and thus offered a contribution to humanity; in order to ensure a future that faithfully followed their national "soul," they had to preserve and draw on artefacts from the folk (Wilson 821-830). For Herder, "the folk" were German peasants and "custodians of the national character," those who kept the "traditions of the fathers" (Wilson 826, 832). The folk "remained the most unspoiled by foreign influences and…kept on their lips those songs created by folk poets in the days when German culture had rested on its own foundation" (Wilson 826). Rather than makers (this job belonged to artists who used folklore), they were simply suppliers of a national spirit and past (Wilson 824-832). Herder's concepts of the folk and stereotypes from early European antiquarians and bourgeoisie cultivated a romantic nationalism—a dangerous social hierarchy and

sentimentalization that pervaded the establishment of American folklore studies and set the stage for racializing the folk (Abrahams 3-4).

Section Two: African Americans and the Folk

In particular, the aforementioned definitions of the folk were conceived with a European population in mind, assuming that culture only existed for Europeans. As Dundes states,

> large parts of the world, deemed uncivilized by ethnocentric European intellectuals, had no folk and hence no folklore. North and South American Indians, Australian aborigines, native people of Africa, etc., were not civilized and therefore did not constitute folk in the strict sense of the term. In large measure then, the term folk in its initial meaning referred to European peasants and to them alone (4).

Moreover, some folklorists categorized the study of non-European culture as belonging to ethnography or anthropology rather than folklore studies (Dundes 5).

However, the term "folk" was still applied to African Americans, positioning them farther down on the scales of humanity and civilization. John Roberts articulates how African Americans, instead of being simply folk, were more precisely characterized as imitators of the folk, i.e. a degree removed. Roberts explains that "American folklorists perpetuate a discursive tradition in which the European folk are still seen as the original folk and all other folk are mere imitators" (160). As a result, non-European groups, such as Native Americans and African Americans, were labeled as "imitators" of an "original [European] folk" (Roberts 160). Black

people were set in a liminal space, labeled paradoxically as nonfolk (and thus not cultural producers) *and* subjects of study for American folklore.

Positioned as Subjects of Study in Early American Folklore

First, in the nineteenth century, culture was largely believed to be "unified, [and] vertically stratified," where different cultures were valued as "higher or lower" [3] (Lamothe 38, 32). Essentially, these different valuations of culture were fashioned by racist arguments that equated race with culture and thereby identified the body as a site of study, and most importantly, a sign of culture. Specifically, anthropology connected race and culture, and it used these associations to create racial difference. For a white population, anthropologists and ethnologists distinguished between culture and nature, envisioning them as opposites. In contrast, for Black people, anthropologists equated culture and nature, believing that white people had overcome nature with culture and African Americans had not (Hall 244).

These differing, inconsistent, and loose ties between culture and nature eventually blurred the line between biological explanations, making the body a site believed to account for culture difference. As David Green states, "Socio-cultural differences among human populations became subsumed within the identity of the individual human body. In the attempt to trace the line of determination between the biological and the social, the body became the totemic object, and its visibility the evident articulation of nature and culture" (Green qtd. in Hall 244). The body became a sign for culture. In fact, the "body itself and its differences were visible for all to see,

[3] African Americans would eventually challenge this concept of culture; for example, W.E.B. Du Bois and Zora Neale Hurston, influenced by anthropologist Franz Boaz's assertations of culture relativism, would adopt this concept in their work (Lamothe 32, 38).

and thus provided the 'inconvertible evidence' for a naturalization of racial difference. The representation of 'difference' through the body became the discursive site through which much of this 'racialized knowledge' was produced and circulated" (Hall 244). Therefore, anthropology and ethnology, which heavily influenced folklore studies, realized the body as a "discursive site" and an indicator of culture.

Folklore studies contributed to this union between body and culture *by literally seeking out bodies to evaluate cultural traditions*. Folklore studies allowed both social scientists (as well as writers and performers who drew from folklore studies) to apply notions of racial and cultural difference to the body. It also became a way for these social scientists to turn the presence of African Americans (bodies of people and individual bodies) into subjects for studying culture.

For example, in the late nineteenth century, early American folklorists identified African Americans, along with Native Americans and working-class people, as subjects of study (Morgan 9). In the American Folklore Society's circular letter, "Folk-Lore study and Folk-Lore Societies," William Wells Newell states that the American Folklore Society will collect and examine "survivals among American negroes, including their traditional inheritance from Africa, and its modification in this continent" (Newell 231; Waters 33). Throughout the American Folklore Society's nineteenth- and twentieth-century publications, African Americans, despite not fitting Eurocentric models and being presumed to have no culture, paradoxically became the folk, perceived as "African savages, ex-American slaves, rural southern peasants, and urban dwellers" (Wiggins 29).

In folklore studies, they were placed on a cultural evolutionary scale, associated with Africans (who were considered "savage") and below European folk (Lamothe 21-23). For

example, the cultural evolutionary scale in social Darwinism dominated popular and scientific thought in studying race, and thus affected how African Americans were categorized as the folk:

> Lewis Henry Morgan, a New York lawyer who became an ethnologist…concluded that the races were in different stages of physical and cultural evolution that could be linked to three stages of cultural achievement: savagery, barbarism, and civilization. Not surprisingly, he positioned the Aryan race at the apex of civilization and Africans "in the middle stage of barbarism" (Hovenkamp 654). (Lamothe 21).

In this popular cultural evolutionary model, Africans were positioned as "uncivilized" and Europeans were seen as "civilized," with African Americans repeatedly cast as a liminal class, in the midst of acculturating to white standards (Lamothe 22-23). American folklorists adopted and adapted these models in classifying minority groups as the folk. African Americans were incorporated into folklore studies as subjects who were relational to Africa, on one hand, and white European culture, on the other hand, only achieving civilization when fully integrated into European culture.

Additionally, African Americans were positioned as folk subjects in order to label them as examples of cultural inferiority. Particularly in the late nineteenth century, African traditions were studied because they were believed to better illuminate the "savage mind"; folklorists such as Newell thought that Black Americans retained "savage" African folk practices (Wiggins 29). Other works, such as Charles C. Jones's *Negro Myths from the Georgia Coast* (1888) and A.M.H. Christensen's *Afro-American Folklore* (1892), followed suit in categorizing African

Americans as a "culturally inferior group," adjacent to savagery; Black people were therefore positioned as subjects of study to "understand" their supposed inferiority (Wiggins 29).

These notions of cultural inferiority (especially as a mirror of racial inferiority) pervaded both disparaging and more "positive" views of African Americans. While folklorist Newell did not believe that African Americans were biologically inferior, his "understanding of cultural groups was still rendered through an evolutionary scheme that located groups at various stages of savagery, barbarism, semi-civilization, and civilization; in each case, white, Western culture being synonymous with civilization" (Moody-Turner 22-23). Ultimately, his "identification of certain groups as 'folk,' which he variously equates with savage and primitive, marked these groups as less evolved other to the mainstream, 'civilized,' white Western norm" (Moody-Turner 26-7). Thus, adhering to the assumptions of cultural evolution, Newell, one of his era's leading folklorists, viewed non-European groups as inherently the folk – African Americans fell into this category.

Newell claimed that folklore only constituted an oral tradition in what he considered to be "literate, civilized" societies – for him, these "literate, civilized" societies were European (Waters 25-6). For instance, in "Individual and Collective Characteristics in Folk-Lore" (1906), Newell designates European society as "civilized":

> Particular tales have wandered from one end of the continent to the other; while the rapid modification of aboriginal traditions under the influence of contact with civilized persons, the speedy absorption of European folk-lore, furnishes the most striking example of the law, according to which a superior neighbor remodels the ideas of an inferior with whom it comes into touch. (Newell 4)

Here, Newell sets European folklore as the "superior neighbor" in the spectrum of world cultures. However, wanting to study Africans and African Americans, who he believed came from "uncivilized" and "nonliterate" societies, he broadened his definition to include African Americans as subjects of study for folklore (Waters 25-6). Thus, when identifying his subjects of study, Newell used a formula of misconceptions and misrepresentations: he equated folk to notions of "savagery" and "primitiveness," and he felt that Africans and African American folk traditions were or retained "savagery."

African Americans were enclosed in folk definitions. This positioning, one of entrapment, leads us to the racialized regime of folk representation in the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era. During this period, with early American folklore studies, an influential discipline in creating folk definitions, African Americans were viewed as folk because they were supposedly "savage" and were cast as "savage" because they were folk, only contributing to society if they could imitate European folk or learn white European standards. Any expression of non-European culture threatened to assign them as the folk.

In the discourse around them, early American folklorists fit African Americans into a (Euro)folk/(Euro)nonfolk schema and labeled them as "Other" (Roberts 158). Black people were positioned both as the "Other within" and the "Other without" (Briggs and Bauman 127). On one hand, they were seen as an "uncultured" portion of American society who maintained "distressed survivals from the past," and, on the other hand, they constituted a "living embodiment" of the past (Briggs and Bauman 127). Embodying both meanings of the "Other," they were marginalized, a part of *and* "apart from" American society (Moody-Turner 38).

This racialized regime was enforced by a deliberate process of Othering, a move to designate modernity and scientific authority as elements exclusive to white American society. The process of "Othering" was one way that white folklorists, anthropologists, and writers reinforced white society as modern. Within a binary of "folk" vs. "modern," folk became synonymous with the "antimodern," "pre-modern," and "stories of unfilled development," and was used to authenticate the "modern" (Kelley qtd. in Nicholls 8, Nicholls 10). Using this binary, white Americans were already casting the folk as an "Other who was stuck in the past—in other words, traditional—to better define themselves as modern" (Mullen 11). At the turn of the century, when the folk was increasingly applied to African Americans (i.e. racialized),[4] Black people became the folk and thus antimodern "Others" for white Americans to define themselves against. Within the racialized regime of folk representation, African Americans were represented as and reduced to mediating devices between a European folk (imagined and romanticized peasants who demarcate the past) and modern European subjects (individuals who connote the present and future) (Briggs and Bauman 120-127).

The folk/nonfolk binary and Othering process was also used to support white folklorists claims on authority. Shirley Moody-Turner demonstrates how folklorist William Newell operated within these racist models while establishing authority for the American Folklore Society:

> linking folk to non-Anglo-American "races," and identifying African Americans and Native Americans as folk—but himself as non-folk—Newell renders folklore within a racialized evolutionary power structure in which he and his cohorts

[4] By "racialized," I mean associated with a particular race, such as African Americans.

> occupy the position of universal evolved/civilized authority, while the racialized others maintain lower positions on the evolutionary scale until they are able to shed their racially distinct (read: non-white) folklore and become "universal" (read: white).[5] (Moody-Turner 27)

African American folklore studies, therefore, supported and implemented Othering practices, intentionally classifying African Americans as the folk to validate their assertions of power. Black people became the folk, the subjects for study, and this representational label was maintained through the racialized regime. Such beliefs and arguments corresponded with postbellum arguments of African Americans, which declared them ill fit to adapt to the modern world (Roberts 161).

African Americans as Folk in the Popular Realm (Minstrelsy and Plantation Literature)

These definitions of folk in early African American folklore studies and their application to Black people importantly did not exist in a vacuum – the racialized regime of folk representation, molded by folklore studies, was also influenced by nineteenth-century popular culture. Blackface minstrelsy and plantation tradition literature, popular forms of entertainment that later impacted Black representation after the Civil War, affected folklore studies' outlook on African Americans as folk, deliberately Othering Black Americans, casting them as objects, identifying plantation lore as a subject of study, and depicting Black folk as childlike and living in the past.

[5] We will see in Chapter Four how white folklorists, Newell's contemporaries, tried to maintain a higher position of authority in folklore studies.

Although blackface minstrelsy was mainly performed between 1846 and 1854 (Daphne Brooks 25), its imagery continued to affect the Postbellum Pre-Harlem era, characterizing African Americans as grotesque, othered figures apart from society. By the late nineteenth century, these minstrel figures circulated prevalently in popular discourse, becoming akin to "national folklore" (Moody-Turner 34, 38). Significantly, early folklorists drew on minstrel images. While anthropology and scientific racism used minstrel shows as evidence for their racist theories (Lott 34), African American folklore studies was informed by blackface minstrelsy's caricatures of Black life (Moody-Turner 29).

For early African American folklore studies, blackface minstrelsy extended the philosophies of slavery to objectify African Americans. As Brooks explains, minstrelsy, a continual process of commodification and objectification, claimed that "blackness" was a skill that could be learned and dominated by white performers (Brooks 28) and created a "'relentless transformation of black people into things' (Lott, Love and Theft, 143)" (Brooks 27). Blackface minstrelsy objectified Black people, packaging and commercializing these representations of African Americans as folk (Moody-Turner 38). From blackface minstrelsy, American folklore adopted its othering and objectifying practices to designate African Americans as subjects for study and label Black behavior as an object to be collected.[6]

In addition to minstrelsy, plantation literature added to a post-Reconstruction racialized regime of folk representation. Foremost, plantation literature reinforced plantation life as a topic

[6] Granted, African Americans as folk in folklore studies sometimes markedly differed from blackface minstrelsy; some folklorists, such as Newell, did not define "progress" as inherently impossible for Black Americans (Moody-Turner 22-23). Yet, as mentioned above, folklore studies nevertheless placed African Americans on a cultural evolutionary scale.

of study, specifying Black folk as former slaves. For example, Joel Chandler Harris's popular book, a staple in plantation literature, *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* (1881), was a "major catalyst in promoting the study of African American folklore" (Moody-Turner 19). Numerous plantation literary writers such as Joel Chandler Harris, Mark Twain, and Lafcadio Hearn were members of the American Folklore Society (AFS) (Moody-Turner 19) and their literature prompted folklore studies' emphasis on plantation life. Newell himself highlights "plantation lore" as a possible source for folk material in AFS's 1895 circular letter (Moody-Turner 28). Thus, before founding their treatises, American folklorists already had a vision of the folk inflected by plantation literature; in these visions, plantation literature identified, romanticized, and stereotyped former slaves as folk and literary subjects.

Plantation literature affected how these former slaves, their descendants, and their traditions would be viewed and evoked in folklore studies. In its narratives, plantation tradition literature tried to infantilize African Americans. It also strictly positioned *and* romanticized them as past figures. Similarly, folklore studies represented Black folk as a group of former slaves who were confined to the past, quickly vanishing, and holding onto immature superstitions. This definition of the folk overlapped with plantation literature's concerted effort to place African Americans as a childlike group living in the past.

Consequently, images of African Americans in plantation literature, black minstrelsy, and early folklore studies *reinforced* each other, constructing a racialized regime of folk representation. Blackface minstrelsy othered and objectified African Americans. Plantation literature further characterized African Americans as former slaves, childlike, and unable to fully exist in the present because they belonged strictly to an antebellum life. Therefore, such

meanings indicate that Black folk were positioned as objects and reduced temporally, stuck at both a stage of intellectual development and a period of American history.

Furthermore, while plantation literature and minstrelsy informed the initial definitions of early African American folklore studies, these popular forms also drew from rhetoric in folklore studies and anthropology to stereotype African Americans (Moody-Turner 29). Most importantly, understandings of culture, objectivity, and authenticity in anthropology and folklore studies circulated in popular entertainment to compose the racialized regime of folk representation.

For example, drawing from folklore studies' and anthropology's equation of body and culture, plantation literature and minstrelsy popularized and publicized derogatory images of African Americans that typecast them and their traditions. Plantation literature rolled out a series of stereotyped black characters as "happy," "loyal," and "industrious" (Moody-Turner 38), while minstrelsy tried to embody blackness, parodying and ridiculing cultural traditions (Brooks 27). Both literature and minstrelsy portrayed African Americans as "rural," "farm works, usually content with this status, or pictured in more leisurely pastimes," "tattered, but carefree, banjo-playing, watermelon-eating" (Gaines 68). These representations propagated the belief that Black bodies were naturally inclined to wayward, rural, and outdated lifestyle.

Plantation literature and minstrelsy also drew from anthropology's and folklore studies' language of "objectivity" and "authenticity" to argue that their folk representations were "objective" and racially "authentic." Many plantation writers used folklore studies to evoke notions of objectivity and authenticity in their literature. Joel Chandler Harris, Mark Twain and Lafcadio Hearn often drew inspiration from folklore in their literature to develop notions of

objectivity and authenticity (Moody-Turner 19). In fact, in Harris's introduction to *Uncle Remus,* he attempts to categorize his work as authentic and objective by stating that his book was "perfectly serious," "melancholy," and "without embellishment" (xv). Also, he tries to style his folk character Uncle Remus as an objective account in order to claim authority over notions of authenticity and ignore the fact that his book rendered plantation life in a white, hierarchical, and romanticized society (Harris xv). Moreover, he claims authenticity and objectivity in order to position Southern white Americans as figures of authority on black folklife, arguing that African American legends and folktales "have become a part of the domestic history of every Southern family" (Harris xv). These claims of authenticity and objectivity ultimately were ways in which literary authors, who were also folklorists, contributed to the maintenance of power that defined the racialized regime.

Minstrelsy became another way that the racialized regime created and maintained racial difference; most notably, it deliberately drew on early African American folklore studies' belief that folk experiences were authentic portrayals of "blackness" (Lott 35; Moody-Turner 37-8). Blackface minstrelsy used Herderian theory, the belief that folk culture was important for strengthening nationalism, to problematically designate minstrelsy as an "authentic" experience of Black culture, and thus national culture (Lott 30). Minstrel shows also were presumed to be "ethnographic miniatures" and thus "authentic" folk experiences of Black plantation life. These shows publicized displays of supposed "authenticity," thereby adding to the racialized regime and circularly reinforcing these images to sustain power over Black representation.

Overall, the confluence between plantation literature, minstrelsy, and early African American folklore studies helps us further characterize the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem racialized

regime of folk representation. The term "folk" was vigorously applied to African Americans, constituting a racialized regime of folk representation – in other words, the term folk was "racialized." As William Wells Newell states in his address to the Hampton Folklore Society, "folk, as I shall here use the word means, race…The Folk-lore of Negroes in the United States then, is the learning or knowledge peculiar to the Negro race" (Waters 186). Tellingly, after stating this, Newell asks what race he belongs to, only to conclude "Am I then without a race?" (187). Newell affirms he is a part of the "human race," thereby allowing him to disregard his participation in the construction of race and then emphasize race for the Black folklorists he addresses (187).

As a racialized term, "the folk" confronted and adopted the paradoxical and irrational nature of racist assumptions. While some argued that African Americans had no culture (and therefore had no folk), African Americans were still chosen as subjects of study in anthropology and folklore studies. With both a desire to objectify and study African Americans but adhere to scientific racism, they positioned them as relative to European folk, "imitators" of European folk (Roberts 160).

At the same time, folklore studies and popular entertainment also positioned African Americans as folk, reinforcing them as a cultural Other on a cultural evolutionary scale. They were predominantly perceived as childlike former slaves who were beholden to the past. With these meanings, folk, as applied to African Americans, began to take on assumptions of objective and authentic racial representation, labeling the Black body as culture itself and thus folkness.

Section Three: Intraracial Definitions of the Folk

African American intellectuals and writers had to contend with this dominant racialized regime of folk representation. Significantly, they recognized that interrogating, applying, and/or redefining the term would have cultural capital. For example, for folklorists, folk was linked to mental capabilities; where there were folk, there was evidence of thought (Waters 23, 29-32).

Additionally, the concept of the folk often hinged on notions of "progress," thus coinciding with the Postbellum Pre-Harlem era's preoccupation with "The Negro Problem," a name given to the political and social debates concerning the present and future of emancipated African Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (McHenry 120-121). Almost immediately after the Civil War, several constituents regarded African Americans' new freedom as a national "problem." Social Darwinists presumed that emancipation would spell disaster for people of African descent and argued that they would "rever[t] to type," to "savagery" (Roberts 161). An old Southern plantation class, subscribing to a paternalistic view, felt that African Americans were doomed without the system of slavery. Former abolitionists postulated that African Americans' futures were predicated on an "acculturation of Euro-American norms" (Roberts 162).

For both black and white Americans who debated "The Negro Problem" in the late nineteenth century, folklore was often read as a sign of culture and as a measure of African Americans' post-emancipation "progress," a gauge of success of their postbellum social lives, education, and citizenry (Waters and Hampton 22-46; Lamothe 23-32). Thus, folk representation had a hand in depicting African Americans because it was a major factor in how African Americans' futures were conceived and read.

Therefore, African American intellectuals, recognizing folk as cultural capital and seeking to interrogate the racialized regime of folk representation, actively participated in contesting the concept of the folk to change Black representation. Nineteenth-century African American intellectuals, such as Anna Julia Cooper, Charles Chesnutt, and Robert Moton were "active participants" in shaping the foundations of American folklore (Moody-Turner 4, 89). For example, Anna Julia Cooper delivered an address in 1894 that challenged white folklorists at the American Folklore Society, a speech which was later published in the Hampton Folklore Society's *The Southern Workman* (Moody-Turner 3; Cooper, "Paper" 511). In addition to direct involvement in folklore studies, African American writers engaged with their era's use of the folk and the concepts associated with it (Moody-Turner 8).

Significantly, African Americans retheorized the folk and their own positionality. They sought to dispute a racialized regime of folk representation that deliberately marginalized and objectified African Americans as cultural Others – paradoxical, liminal figures who had no culture or simply imitated European culture. Most significantly, they pushed back on the entrapment of the folk definition and its racialization, which positioned all African Americans as unable to succeed, create, or contribute to a modern, post-Reconstruction American future.

Yet, while they critiqued this regime to contradict racist arguments of black inferiority, they also adopted a class hierarchy that placed assumptions of cultural inferiority and a nostalgic, outdated past primarily on a Southern, darker-skinned working class. In this way, while they intervened in notions of blackness and modernity, they also repositioned other African Americans, creating and reinforcing intraracial divisions such as region, class, and skin color.

Racial uplift was one of the predominant ways African Americans (re)shaped folk definitions, deliberately drawing on popular discourse, folk stereotypes, and early African American folklore studies and applying them to their political and social project. Racial uplift, as defined by Kevin K. Gaines, was a philosophy connected to both spiritual and social notions of uplift, which formed "an emphasis on self-help, racial solidarity, temperance, thrift, chastity, social purity, patriarchal authority, and the accumulation of wealth…[as well as] class differentiation as race progress" (Gaines 2). Moreover, racial uplift was a "struggle for a positive black identity," which often expressed itself through internalized racism, class division, and notions of respectability and assimilation (Gaines 3).

Racial uplift coincided with the folk's association with the notion of "progress," as racial uplift was a vehicle for Black elites to assert their cultural "progress" (Gaines 74). While African Americans pointedly diverged from biological models of race, which argued that African Americans were hereditarily incapable of achieving success, class status, educational achievements, and citizenship, they adopted an environmental model, which attributed African Americans' "lack of progress" (i.e. material gain and education) to environmental factors, in particular cultural ones such as folklore (Lamothe 22; Gaines 76).

In fact, African American intellectuals, to create their racial uplift narratives, drew on early African American studies and positioned the folk as a marker of African American progress. For example, organizations and institutes that followed a racial uplift philosophy often identified the folk as a population to uplift and used their folklore as a measure of progress. In fact, the impetus for the Hampton Folklore Society (an eventual site for folklore collection among African American intellectuals like Robert Moton, Charles Chesnutt, and Anna Julia

Cooper) was Samuel Armstrong's civilizing mission and the Hampton Institute's racial uplift philosophy. Hampton was interested in African American folklore because it served as way to designate their educational program as one of uplift (Waters 42; Moody-Turner 57-9, 64).

At the same time, while African Americans used the folk in their uplift philosophies, they also engaged with folklore studies' concept of romantic nationalism to craft a vision of racial unity despite the supposed differences between the "talented tenth" and the folk masses. Particularly, some African Americans adapted the Herderian model to support their racial uplift project. For instance, Cooper, drawing on Herder's and Newell's theories, contends that the folk are keepers of the "imagery of the past," people in the "fast receding views" of an artist's "camera," who should be studied for "their simple truth and sympathetic meaning" (133). Yet, they hold a racial knowledge that is "innate" and "unique" from other races (Glass 31-33, 52; Lamothe 29-30). Pointedly, it is not the folk who can recognize and mobilize the value of their racial knowledge. Folklorists and artists, the possible uplifters, hold this task (Cooper, "Paper by Mrs. Anna J. Cooper" 132-3). With these claims, Cooper's argument mirrors Herder's folk definition, adapting it to a racial imaginary of folk to affirm a collective vision of race while also distancing artists and folklorists from the folk.

Similarly, W.E.B. Du Bois uses folklore studies' emphasis on romantic nationalism to detail his racial uplift narratives in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). In *The Souls*, W.E.B. Du Bois adopts Herderian thought to define the folk as a Southern culture that represents a racial spirit, thereby seeking to affirm spiritual, affective ties to a Black community (Gaines 185; Williams 14). With the Southern folk firmly positioned as a resource for Black culture, Du Bois works to enact his racial uplift narrative, emphasizing that Black folk, "black, sturdy, uncouth country

folk," still need guidance from a select group of nonfolk Black elites (Du Bois 114). African American intellectuals after Du Bois, such as Alain Locke, used a similar prescription of racial uplift, Herderian thought, and the folk.

Postbellum, Pre-Harlem figures, such as Du Bois and Cooper, were not only aware of early African American folklore studies, but also deliberately drew from it to support a racial uplift project. In fact, as these figures redefined African American as folk, whether through racial uplift or other narratives, the concept of the folk collected regional, class, and skin color signifiers. This emphasis on region, class, and skin color was a result of several factors, which, of the many, predominantly include: (1) a symbolic and political focus on the South and the former slaves who remained there, (2) an anxiety to solidify Northern Black elites' leadership during mass migration, (3) an anxious desire for class differentiation in a society that offered few opportunities and defined success by white, bourgeois norms, and (4) internalized racism (as well as a plantation caste system) that categorized blackness, and the physical features attributed to it, as undesirable and culturally backward.

The section below works through the predominant signifiers usually attached to the folk: region, class, and colorism. Most significantly, while these signifiers were used by white and African American folklorists and writers alike, I focus on the more specific meanings they undertook in African American organizations and writing as African Americans attempted to (re)define the racialized regime of folk representation.

Folk and Region

African American leaders using the South to describe African American folk was no random move; it was deliberate, drawing on the fascination with the South in folklore studies and coinciding with several factors such as migration and postbellum political arguments. While white and black Southerners (as well as other regional groups) were depicted as folk, African Americans merged the South with the image of an ancestral ground because it was a former epicenter of slavery as well as a postbellum location for many former slaves, racial uplift agendas, and Freedom Bureau programs (Foster and Andrews 507-8; Foner).

This focus on the South coincided with early American folklorists' concentration on plantation lore, allowing for African American Southerners, particularly former Southern slaves, to be predominantly positioned as the folk. In fact, with the call for Northern Black elites to move to the South and teach, *depictions of former slaves became synonymous with Southern inhabitants*, a connection which was reinforced by folklore studies' link between the South and a preoccupation with plantation life as outdated, folkloric elements. In other words, like other discourses during the period, folklore studies conflated former slaves with the South; as a result, during the post-Reconstruction era, conceptions of African American folk largely ignored free African Americans and a postbellum generation in the North and West.

In Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writing, authors such Washington, Du Bois, Cooper, and several other Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers adopted this regional definition of African American folk in order to situate their postbellum projects as key solutions to saving a racial, ancestral homeland (Smethurst 106). Cooper deliberately foregrounds a Southern Black woman's voice as the spokesperson for her text (Cooper i, 9). In *Up from Slavery*, Booker T. Washington builds his industrial institution of racial uplift in Tuskegee, Alabama; Du Bois's *The*

Souls traverses the South, for example depicting racial uplifter John returning to Southeastern Georgia. In addition to these works, authors such as Charles Chesnutt and Frances Harper used fiction to critique a romanticized South in plantation tradition literature and to affirm racial uplift narratives that would salvage the folk. As a result of these postbellum projects that pinpointed the South, the folk became even more inseparable from Southern depictions, thereby positioning the folk regionally (spatially).

Folk and Class

In addition to region, for white and black scholars alike, class was a dominant signifier in defining African Americans as folk. As Patrick Mullen explains, white folklorists, like Newbell Niles Puckett, John Lomax, and Alan Lomax, and "black writers conceived of the folk as lower class" (14). Class was the primary way that Postbellum, Pre-Harlem African American intellectuals positioned other African Americans in an intraracial social schema; in this way, often a Black elite combined folk stereotypes (in early African American folklore) and class assumptions to distance themselves from their era's definitions of the folk.

In the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, African Americans confronted racial prejudice; yet, in doing so, they "emphasized class differentiation to show that their race could produce representative middle and upper classes distinguished from the uncultured figures who stood for black people in most Americans' imaginations" (Williams 2). Their turn to class differentiation can be partly explained by "class anxiety," an anxiousness over one's class status (Williams 3). In other words, postbellum Black elites were anxious over their own status within American society, a position continually compared to white, European standards.

In particular, after the Civil War, a burgeoning Black middle class grew, thereby shifting definitions of class and prompting an anxious reexamination of status in the Postbellum Pre-Harlem Black community. In the late nineteenth century, a postbellum "burgeoning middle class," which was "fostered by new or invigorated black institutions including colleges, businesses, and churches that trained rising professionals (Greenwood, Bittersweet Legacy, 6)," began to change antebellum and post-Civil War definitions of status (Williams 14). In contrast to Black elites and Reconstruction leaders, who usually established their class position through "freeborn families, mixed-race ancestry, or entrepreneurship supported by a white clientele" (Williams 14), the burgeoning middle class achieved economic and social status by being "'self-made men [*sic*] whose economic roots' depended on the consumer needs of 'the newly urbanized masses' (Meier, 'Negro Class Structure,' 266)" (Williams 14).

With the rise of a Black middle class, an older Black elite and a new Black middle class asserted class differentiation, positioning working class African Americans as the folk and as antithetical to gentility and respectability (Moody-Turner 12; Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color* 50). In fact, they drew on minstrelsy's close relationship with folk depictions to create these distinctions. For example, a "black leadership class" often turned to minstrel images "updated in coon songs, of the slick, licentious, and criminal urban black dandy" to paint migrating workers as susceptible to depravity and moral waywardness (Gaines 89). Therefore, this Black leadership, while it might have tried to contest racist arguments, often responded with classist views. Feeding into their era's racist philosophies, they believed that "lower class" African Americans were an obstacle to full citizenship (Gatewood 16).

While African Americans sought to differentiate themselves (both within their community and the nation), they also were concerned about deviating too far from a platform of racial unity. Williams defines this concern as a "fear of estrangement," an ethical problem that resulted from desiring an elevated socio-political position (19). At the same time that African Americans distanced themselves further from "the folk," such separation threatened to undermine their claims of "black solidarity as the basis for collective political mobilization" and "racial authenticity" (19). In other words, African American writers and intellectuals still tried to sustain "affective ties" to the concept of a unified racial community (19).

Thus, while distancing themselves from the folk, they paradoxically positioned the folk as a source of authentic blackness. Drawing on early African American folklore studies, they equated class and the folk, situating working-class African Americans as Black and folk authenticity. The Hampton Folklore Society and African American intellectuals drew on William Wells Newell early conceptions of African American folklore to name the folk as representatives of blackness. For Newell, folklore was "'the learning of knowledge peculiar to the Negro race. It is that mass of information which they brought with them from Africa, and which has subsequently been increased, remodeled, and Anglicized by their contact with the whites' (Waters 186)" (Lamothe 29). Hampton folklorists adopted and modified Newell's perspective, designating folklore—the potential contact point between the folk and a Black upper class—as "authentic" blackness (Moody-Turner 10, 64).

Folk and Colorism

In addition to class and region, skin color functioned as a factor in defining and identified the folk, serving as another way that African Americans deliberately positioned other African

Americans as the folk. In particular, African Americans applied folk definitions in early African American folklore studies to colorist assumptions. For example, for African Americans, color impacted how they had been viewed as humans, and thus their access to discourses of humanity. During slavery, the plantation system enacted a social hierarchy based on skin color. Slaves with lighter complexions, usually the children of the master, often received desired jobs and more opportunities such as education. Contrastingly, darker-skinned slaves, often relegated to field work, experienced more physically demanding labor (Keith and Herring, Peace-Doughlin, Hunter 176). Thus, their differential treatment indicated how American society and its system of slavery defined humanity as a scale of color, placing slaves who were viewed as closer to "whiteness" (and thus access to privileges and education it signified) to humanity and dark-skinned slaves further away from it.

After slavery, this power structure of oppression continued with classism, racial uplift narratives, and cultural evolutionary models. Postbellum African Americans internalized the colonial practice of valuing lighter skin over darker skin (Hunter 176-77; Pearce-Doughlin). In the nineteenth century, a Black aristocracy formed. Light skin was not the only requirement for these circles; in fact, some societies did not completely exclude darker-skinned individuals, and groups practiced exclusion also on the basis of genealogy, education, and notions of respectability. However, Black elites or the "blue veined society" were often lighter-skinned – usually a result of more opportunities afforded to lighter-skinned slaves and their descendants and society's social and material valuing of skin color, which these societies often internalized (Greenwood 6-7, 10, 252; Kerr xv; Graham, Our Kind of People).

In these societies, lighter-skinned individuals designed a particular vision of their status and relationship to American society. Some lighter-skinned elites maintained they were able to best represent and engage with a Black community; in other words, they embraced racial uplift, mixing elitism and skin color assumptions with the era's program of uplift (Gatewood 189). In order to claim their authority as uplifters, they looked for a population to uplift, one that fell under the purview of their race: the folk.

Additionally, colorism was a prominent factor in constructing the folk because it was used alongside cultural evolutionary models to identify "authentic" blackness (and thus Black traditions). As mentioned above, folklore studies not only adopted a cultural evolutionary scale, but it was also founded on it; white, Eurocentric societies were seen as "civilized" while African cultures were "childlike" and "uncivilized." With skin color and capability equated, those with darker skin were associated with "Africanness" and thus "savageness" or "uncivilized" traditions.

In early African American folklore studies, folklorists used these cultural evolutionary models to identify and "authenticate" their collection of African American folklore. African American traditions were predominantly traced by ancestry – in other words, there was an assumption that traditions associated with people of the "purest" African blood were more "authentic." For example, in the *Journal of American Folklore Studies* and the *Southern Workman*, the people who believed in superstitions were usually referred to as "negroes" with no exact skin color descriptions (they were more often described by time period, "plantation" or region "Southern"). But conjurers were often described as "very dark" (Bacon and Herron, 361).

Thus, while seekers of African American folklore varied in color, practitioners of folklore and thus the keepers of tradition were usually depicted as darker-skinned.[7]

Conclusion

Ultimately, while primarily Postbellum, Pre-Harlem intellectuals, who were often a part of Black elite circles, engaged in the racialized regime of folk representation, they had a desire to claim "blackness" and a dueling desire to renounce or denigrate it. Therefore, while blackness was a source of racial authenticity, it was also curtailed to mean a certain type of blackness. The folk served as assertions of colorism, class, and region; yet, they also signified a fear of estrangement. On one hand, the folk were distancing mechanisms for postbellum Black elites and a Black middle class to affirm their assumptions about color, class, and region. On the other hand, folk became a symbolic and spiritual metaphor to construct and affirm their relationship to a wider racial community, a community that included, but also stratified, many shades of "blackness."

Section Four: Folk, Modernity, and the Racial Uplift Narrative

Most notably, the folk, carrying these class, region, and color signifiers, began to gain increasing prominence in a Postbellum, Pre-Harlem Black community due to two major reasons: (1) African Americans' desire to define themselves as modern individuals, and (2) African Americans' implementation of the racial uplift narrative.

[7] Granted, in some cases, folklore studies slightly challenged racial assumptions – it documented how people of different races believed in superstitions (despite their skin tone). Additionally, folklore collection served as a revealing record of colorism, since traditions often reflected how colorism impacted perceptions of beauty and "value" within the Black community (Chireau, "The Uses" 182).

Foremost, African Americans used a folk/modern binary and cultural evolution models in early African American folklore to endorse claims of modernity. Like the white folklorists mentioned above, African Americans employed a binary to label folk as "antimodern" and themselves as "modern"—while the folk supposedly were past figures and "childlike," Black elites, who embraced European norms of respectability, were believed to be modern. Like the Othering process of white folklorists and writers, they turned to binaries to claim authority; as Stuart Hall reminds us, applying a particular value to a binary and trying to uphold this unequal, socially-constructed dichotomy in real-life is a move to grasp power and authority (235, 258). Their quests to solidify a Black leadership class came at the expense of the folk (working class, Southern, former slaves).

While Black leadership challenged the folk/modern binary within American folklore studies by arguing that African Americans could exist as modern individuals, it still worked within a binary. Similar to Newell, they argued that all African Americans were not modern until they acculturated into white American traditions and societal norms, which meant relinquishing African American folklore. The Hampton Folklore Society supported this view—although Alice Bacon, founder of the society, viewed African American folklore as salvageable racial history, she assumed that African Americans would lose these traditions because they were "rising so rapidly from the condition of ignorance and poverty in which slavery left them," moving to a "position among the cultivated and civilized people of the earth" (Bacon 503). Her assumption resulted in a view of working-class Southerners as folk (and thus "antimodern"), a perspective which was adopted by many of the African American figures mentioned above.

Additionally, African Americans tapped into the racial uplift narrative to reposition the folk. In fact, the rhetoric of the folk, which touched upon all region, class, and color signifiers, shaped the population that uplifters envisioned themselves rescuing. For example, the Hampton Folklore Society validated their establishment by arguing that their studies were in service of racial uplift (Moody-Turner 57, 64-67). By identifying and collecting folklore, HFS founder Bacon purported to salvage "childlike" traditions that were disappearing because of education; she contended that some traditions, especially conjuring, were best left in the past (Moody-Turner 67).

Through the folk, a Black middle class and a Black elite tried to authenticate their status as uplifters (Gaines 41). Specifically, the Hampton Institute used the concept of the folk and folklore to identify "obstacles" to "proper education," as folklore was often viewed as the material that would "drag [elites] down" (Gaines 41; Waters 43). By envisioning a Black mass as morally inadequate and associating folklore with these ways, Hampton students tried to

> establish their own identity as intelligent educators, the[y] made every effort to deny that they had any connection with the folk barriers to intelligence. They expressed a critical interest in black folklore only to emphasize the pervasive folly of rural blacks and, by contrast, their own wise and discriminating intelligence as educators. (Waters 43)

Thus, through the folk and folklore, they affirmed their position as uplifters.

Overall, the folk, used to champion racial uplift narratives, functioned in a circle; establishing itself by drawing on stereotypes of class, region, and skin color, it left those

primarily identified as the folk, usually darker-skinned, Southern, “lower class” African Americans, locked in an a priori state, another case of representational entrapment.

Conclusion

Postbellum, Pre-Harlem intellectuals utilized folk/modern binaries, cultural evolution scales, Othering practices, and assertations of the Black body as culture in early African American folklore studies. With historical events, such as the shift in migration and class relations between a Black elite, middle class, and working class, signifiers such as class, region, and skin color were further attached to African American folk. Despite challenging the racialized regime of folk representation, they were also heavily influenced by it and, in several cases, (re)positioned folk as an *antimodern Other within a Black community, a Black mass to be educated and uplifted.* The next chapter will discuss how this historical view of early African American folklore studies, and Postbellum, Pre-Harlem discourse in general, is important for Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers, figures who were often contributors to folklore studies, and their narratives.

Chapter 2

The Space of Folk Characters in Charles Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition* and Frances E.W. Harper's *Iola Leroy*

As discussed in Chapter One, during the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem period, African Americans were positioned in a tight space. They faced a dilemma: do they embrace or ostracize the folk? As a result, African Americans both revalued the folk and adopted problematic models that propagated notions of black inferiority and classism. Postbellum, Pre-Harlem literature, a discourse informed and shaped by early African American folklore studies, is a prime example of these multifaceted representations of the folk.

Postbellum, Pre-Harlem narratives, one of the many discourses that African Americans used to reposition themselves, became a social production of competing desires to cherish and/or erase the folk. These views were particularly evident in character development and the relationship between a folk character's social position and narrative space: the folk in narrative, through the space they were allotted in relation to other characters, became symbols for intraracial interaction, products of a racist, Eurocentric lens, and marginal characters who began as (or slowly became) minor—as such, they vanished from imaginings of modern life.

Foremost, in Postbellum, Pre-Harlem literature, the folk pervaded novels, short stories, and more. For example, Paul Laurence Dunbar, labeled as the folk poet of his time, filled his stories with stereotypical folk characters; simultaneously, he used "masking" to subtly subvert

these representations (Braxton xx-xxii). Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois sketched "the folk" in different ways: Washington's industrial education in *Up from Slavery* (1901) placed folklore and respectability as oppositional cultural qualities; Du Bois's sociology in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) presented a romanticized vision of the folk. Frances E.W. Harper's *Iola Leroy* (1892) positioned folklore (spirituals and communal gatherings) as sites for family reunions and practices for understanding blackness as a social, rather than a biological, product (Fabi 56-8). In her poetry, Frances Harper also depicted Aunt Chloe, a folk character who exemplified accounts of slavery and Reconstruction, paved the way for Dunbar and Chesnutt (Fisher 56; Foster 137). Additionally, both Pauline Hopkins and Charles Chesnutt included conjure women in their fiction (*Contending Forces* (1900), *Hagar's Daughter* (1901-2), *The Conjure Woman* (1899), *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901)). In these texts, the representation of folk characters followed the racialized regime. Additionally, they conformed to the predominant signifiers of class, region, and skin color described earlier: they usually appeared as darker-skinned, Southern servants or former slaves.

Yet, it is not only folk characters' mere presence in Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writing that is significant—it is how they are positioned in the text. As shown above, as folk representations were racialized, postbellum African Americans were fixed in a certain position—they were restrained by national conceptions of the folk partly because they remained classified as childlike former slaves, situated between Africa and Europe. As a result, Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers were active in (re)positioning definitions of the folk, a type of negotiation that informed and affected how folk characters were positioned in novels.

Given this, we must scrutinize characters' placement or positionality in novels (when they enter, how much space they are allotted, when they reappear, and when they disappear) and their relation to other characters. In *One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (2003), Alex Woloch studies minor characters, "a host of subordinate figures who jostle for, and within, the limited space" in a narrative (2). These minor or secondary characters are often "flat" – flat characters, as E.M. Forester has described, are characters who have "predictable," "fixed" traits (Keen 77-8). In his study, Woloch investigates minor characters with two theories: "character-system" and "character-space." Woloch defines "character-space" as "that particular and charged encounter between an individual human personality and a determined space and position within the narrative as a whole" (Woloch 14). We can examine this space by attending to "how often and in what manner [a character] exits and enters the narrative; by the degree to which we sense her interior consciousness; through the kind of figurative language she motivates or is encased in" (Woloch 177).

Ultimately, this space is related to other character-spaces, functioning within a system. Thus, a "character-system" is "the arrangement of multiple and differentiated character-spaces—differential configurations and manipulations of the human figure—into a unified narrative structure" (Woloch 14). In this way, since "the emplacement of a character within the narrative form is largely comprised *by* his or her relative position vis-à-vis other characters," character-space is made legible through the character-system, i.e. relationships between other character-spaces (18; his emphasis). In other words, the "space of a particular character emerges only vis-à-vis the other characters who crowd him our or potentially revolve around him" (18). Moreover, the character-system, Woloch argues, does not simply signify connections between characters;

instead, it is how different character-spaces (the entrance and exit of characters, interior consciousness, etc.) are integrated and characterized (Woloch 32).

While scholars of Postbellum, Pre-Harlem literature have analyzed character and character pairings (Delmar 284-5), none have used Woloch's theory to understand how the folk figure into African American writing as characters. "Character-space" helps particularize how folk characters textually and culturally exist in a narrative. Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers gave folk characters a certain amount of space in their narratives. By studying this space (character's interiority, entrances, and exits), we can deepen our character analysis of the folk. In addition to discovering how Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers presented folk characters to their readers, we can discern how these authors designed character relationships, deliberately mapping social interactions between folk characters and other characters. Ultimately, by analyzing folk characters' positionality within an entire character system, we can also ascertain the ways in which Postbellum, Pre-Harlem authors valued the presence of folk characters (as negative or positive aspects of Black representation). As we will see below, an examination of character-systems and character-spaces demonstrates how the folk and their relationships could signify either a revaluing or rejection of the past.

We can also employ Woloch to compare a Postbellum, Pre-Harlem narrative's story space (according to the story, where characters exist in the narrative) and discourse space (how much space a character acquires in the telling or discourse). In other words, a character may exist in a scene; but the narrator may only use a sentence to describe her presence. Paying attention to both space in the story and discourse (and how they overlap with themes of space) will give us a richer sense of Postbellum, Pre-Harlem authors' depictions of folk characters.

However, although Woloch's Marxist framework shows how minor characters embody their social positions (Woloch thus demonstrates how history and narrative form are connected), he neither examines racial or ethnic difference nor parallel histories in which stereotypes and character types are not simply made but also challenged.[8] I apply character-space and character-system to ideas of racial and cultural difference, understanding how themes such as "the folk" and "racial uplift" surface as character traits, interactions, and relationships in the text.[9] I investigate the ways in which racialized or cultural difference arise from the textual structure itself and how form coalesces with larger themes and historical issues. I therefore expand on Woloch's dual historical and textual analysis by examining how race (in addition to class) outlines character systems in Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writing.

Furthermore, in delineating minor characters and the division of labor, Woloch ultimately concentrates on British authors and figures who wrote and theorized from a position of power. In order to show the overlap between class inequality and character, Woloch shows how Victorian views of labor and specialization depicted working-class poverty as either despondent or socially deviant (Woloch 163). I shift Woloch's lens of historicization to the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era in the United States. My analysis will attend to how those who had been typecast (African American writers) deliberately created, reinforced, *and* dismantled character types through minor characters.

[8] Jeremy Rosen's *Minor Characters Have Their Day: Genre and the Contemporary Literary Marketplace* (2016) examines how contemporary authors have subverted the minor position of some characters. He looks at how "minor-character elaboration" has become a way for contemporary writers to provide narratives for socially marginalized characters in canonical novels (2).

[9] While Woloch, in an effort to demonstrate the importance of character-space and character-systems, analyzes how a minor character may "become larger than—and stands out against—his instrumental role in the novel's 'theme, plot, and purpose," I focus on the intersection of theme and character (128).

Through this close examination of minor characters and "Black folk," I find that the process of stereotyping works alongside the creation of character types. Stereotyping is ultimately a process of categorization. As Stuart Hall explains,

> Stereotypes get a hold of the few 'simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized' characteristics about a person, *reduce* everything about the person to those traits, *exaggerate* and *simplify* them, and *fix* them without change or development to eternity….So the first point is – *stereotyping reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes 'difference.'*" (Hall 258; his emphasis)

Similarly, minor characters, due to their flatness, are reduced, exaggerated, and fixed in narratives. As Woloch has shown, a character's lack of narrative space can contribute to their flatness, and minor characters could become caricatures with "highly distinctive speech patterns," "eccentric gesture[s] or habit[s]," or "specific physical features or body parts" (Woloch 129). As caricatures, their complexity is ignored, and their presence personifies difference. Folk characters, in particular, were frequently walking stereotypes; in the act of producing folk caricatures, authors were participating in the process of stereotyping. Thus, the relationship between stereotyping and narrative is important since the act of narration itself supplies the conditions for stereotyping. Additionally, Hall argues that stereotyping actualizes, motivates, and maintains the racialized regime of representation (Hall 257). Therefore, by analyzing how and why folk characters were presented as flat, minor characters, we can also explore how authors participated in or potentially interrogated the racialized regime.

With this understanding, we can actually see how Postbellum, Pre-Harlem authors did not simply offer "positive representation" in place of "negative representation" (in fact, Stuart argues

that this is ultimately not an effective way of fixing bad representation) (Hall, "Representation & the Media," 20). Postbellum, Pre-Harlem authors formed categories (folk vs. nonfolk) and ascribed positive and negative values to them (folk as a revaluing or rejection of the past). Moreover, some authors confronted inaccurate Black representations by denaturalizing Black stereotypes and laying bare the process of stereotyping to the reader. Attending to minor characters (their space, their relationships, their flatness) thus details a map of how Postbellum, Pre-Harlem authors (de)naturalized and (re)valued the folk.

In Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writing, the folk are usually given a reduced "character-space," positioned in novels as secondary or minor, flat characters. As Fabi points out, mixed-race protagonists typically seek help from minor characters, a "large chorus of visibly black characters who surround and guide the passer" and "emerge as repositories of cultural and historical knowledge that [the protagonist] does not possess but wants to learn and share" (Fabi 4, 61). This pattern occurs in several Postbellum, Pre-Harlem texts such as Frances Harper's *Iola Leroy* (1892), Sutton E. Grigg's *Imperium in Imperio* (1899), and Hopkins's *Contending Forces* (1901) (Fabi 48). Additionally, as minor characters, the folk are often placed on the margins—they are people who will disappear as modernization treks on. Constrained by their allotted space and the narrative's progression, they disappear and reappear, ultimately "drowned out within the totality of the narrative" (Woloch 38).

Furthermore, the folk, who are spatially condensed due to their social positions, are repeatedly depicted as servants. As Woloch points out, servants commonly appear as minor characters, relegated to functionality—they become a representation of their labor. They exist at the periphery, restricted to a "purely exterior and physical plane or description"; they literally

serve as a narrative function and/or "human bridge from one subplot to another" (Woloch 120). For example, a protagonist's interiority is developed through her interaction with minor characters (Woloch 28-29). Additionally, servants are often aligned with material objects, listed alongside or associated with another character's wealth or status (Woloch 121). They thereby exist to depict another character's material condition, background, and/or setting. Especially in bildungsroman novels, the presence (and lack of presence) of servants alludes to how character-systems are structured around "social stratification"—in other words, character-spaces reflect social positions (Woloch 29-30; 119).

Most significantly, the folk, who are frequently depicted as servants, signify what happens when a group of people are stereotyped and negatively portrayed. The folk, rather than accurate portrayals of real people, are *dehumanized* (Woloch 27, 40, 97). These minor characters are effaced, boiled down to a few prominent characteristics; many, like flat characters, become fixed as a list of traits. Their minorness can be disconcerting because they exist in a "shadow-space between narrative position and human personality," "an implied human being who gets constricted into a delimited role, but who has enough resonance *with* a human being to make us aware of this constricted position *as* delimited" (Woloch 40). In fact, minor characters are "derealized," characters whose "humanness" is stripped away and who often parallel the social conditions that shape their narrative position (Woloch 97). Thus, a consequence of stereotyping is the undevelopedness of the folk's humanity – in representing folk as minor characters, Postbellum, Pre-Harlem authors risk dehumanizing the social groups they stand for: dark-skinned, Southern, and working-class African Americans.

The folk also embody the conflicting views of African American writers who, on one hand, sought a united racial community, and, on the other hand, reinforced stereotypes. In Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writing, "minor" characters are meant to stand for a majority (a Black folk mass). A Black elite (a minority within the Black community), usually functioning as a narrator or through dominant focalization, places this majority in a power dynamic. In this way, folk characters are akin to synecdoches – parts standing in for a whole Black population – and, they mirror the process by which a large Black population is condensed into a small space or a single feature. Moreover, minor characters reflect the process of stereotyping *and* African Americans writers' *ambivalence* about this process. As much as these writers try to confine folk characters to spaces or stereotypes, a desire to value blackness or salvage an African past pulls their minor characters back into the space, rivaling their flatness, and/or deepening their sparse appearances.

Section One: Frances E.W. Harper's *Iola Leroy* and Charles Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition*

In this chapter, I examine how the folk specifically manifest in two novels by Postbellum, Pre-Harlem authors: Frances E.W. Harper's *Iola Leroy* (1892) and Charles Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901). Written near the turn of the century, these texts stand as relevant examples that depict a chorus of folk characters and racial uplift narratives. Harper's *Iola Leroy* presents the plight of Iola Leroy, a light-skinned, blue-eyed heroine sold into slavery. After the Civil War, Iola travels both in the South and the North; she reunites with her family members (Marie Leroy, Henry Leroy, Robert Johnson, and Harriet Johnson) and meets a new generation

motivated by the project of racial uplift (Dr. Frank Latimer, a physician, and Lucianne Delany, an accomplished woman).

Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition* is a fictionalized account of the 1898 Wilmington riot, a violent white supremacist riot against the "Fusion" town government of Republicans and Populists (xiii). Dr. Miller, a Black physician, returns to the town of Wellington to reunite with his wife, Janet, and his son. Yet, little does he know, a plot of insurrection is brewing. White supremacists Major Philip Carteret, George McBane, and General Belmont, angered by an editorial that closely resembles Ida B. Wells' *A Red Record* (1895), plan to overthrow the town's government. During this scheme, several subplots occur: a family plot, romance plot, and mystery plot. Mrs. Carteret refuses to acknowledge her half-sister, Janet Miller; a love triangle forms between Tom Delamere, Lee Ellis, and the Carterets' niece, Clara Pemberton; and Tom Delamere frames his grandfather's former slave, Sandy, for murder. At the novel's end, the riot finally occurs, killing several characters such as the Carterets' servants (Mammy Jane and Jerry) and Miller's own son. During this time of grief, Carteret calls upon Miller to save his son, Dodie.

The Marrow of Tradition and *Iola Leroy*, although having distinctly different plots, both engage with the folk. On one hand, Harper and Chesnutt figure the folk as characters to challenge a racialized regime. On the other hand, they also reposition the folk as intraracial "Others" (in comparison to the main characters). As a result, Harper's and Chesnutt's characterizations (attributed traits and descriptions of characters), character-spaces, and character-systems recognize and mirror the paradoxical, conflicting nature of the folk.

Analyzing this network of character relations in Harper's and Chesnutt's texts ultimately contributes to the plethora of Chesnutt and Harper scholarship in African American literary

studies. While numerous critics concentrate on Chesnutt's *The Conjure Woman*, a popular book that garnered Chesnutt notoriety, I turn to Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition* because it serves as Chesnutt's metacommentary on American and African American folk life *and* folklore studies. As Werner Sollers explains, this more politically charged novel, a work that Chesnutt heralded as a "comprehensive study of racial conditions in the South," deconstructs the meanings and philosophies behind "civilization" and "tradition" (xi, xxv-xxix). Conducting his own research, Chesnutt not only interviewed his own family members who survived the riot (xviii); he also expressed that his book embodied the theme of tradition:

> Tradition made the white people masters, rulers, who absorbed all the power, the wealth, the honors of the community, and jealously guarded this monopoly, with which they claimed to be divinely endowed, by denying to those who were not of their caste the opportunity to acquire any of these desirable things.
>
> Tradition, on the other hand, made the Negro a slave, an underling, existing by favor and not by right, his place the lowest in the social scale, to which, by the same divine warrant, he was hopelessly confined. (Chesnutt xxxix)

Given Chesnutt's theme of tradition (and the fact that *Marrow* was published toward the end of Chesnutt's career), *The Marrow of Tradition* offers an insightful look into Chesnutt's commentary on *America's construction of tradition*, a process that occurred constantly in American folklore studies. While African American scholars such as Eric Sundquist, Joyce Pettis, and Jae H. Roe have studied Chesnutt's rumination on tradition and history, I connect Chesnutt's assessment of tradition directly to character analysis and nineteenth-century folklore studies (Sollers viii).

Furthermore, Woloch's "character-space" and "character-system" helps expand character analysis in Postbellum, Pre-Harlem texts, such as Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition*. For example, several African American scholars have debated over whether Chesnutt's character, Dr. Miller (a Black doctor), is the protagonist of the text (Delmar 285; Hamilton 50; Wilson qtd. in Hamilton 68; Byerman). While these character examinations are insightful, the main reason why it is difficult to pinpoint Miller as the protagonist is character-space – although Chesnutt positions him as a future Black leader, he does not enter the narrative until chapter five, and most of his scenes actually occur toward the end of the novel. By attending to character-systems and character-spaces, instead of solely focusing on the protagonist, we can instead investigate the relations between Dr. Miller and other characters. This outlook allows us to recover and examine characters who exist *beside* main characters, such as folk characters, in both Chesnutt's and Harper's texts.

As for Harper's *Iola Leroy*, this chapter aligns with insights from African American feminist scholarship from the 1980s (Elizabeth Ammons, Mary Helen Washington), criticism which recovered Harper's writing for the literary field (Cali and Moody). Like Frances Smith Foster, I argue that, rather than placating white readers, Harper was invested in detailing connections between Black people (recognizing race as a social construction shepherded by intergenerational contact); this interest in intraracial issues resides in the structure of *Iola Leroy* itself, thereby adding to insights by scholars, such as Koritha Mitchell, who discuss Harper's experimentation with heteroglossia and narrative form (Cali and Moody; Mitchell 30).

Section Two: The Folk in *Iola Leroy* and *The Marrow of Tradition*

In their respective texts, Chesnutt and Harper create their own representations of the folk. Firstly, both Harper's and Chesnutt's characterizations mirror their era's racialized regime of folk representation: their folk characters are (1) survivals of a fixed antebellum past and (2) depicted as darker-skinned and working class. The first characterization draws on illustrations of the folk in folklore studies and plantation literature. As mentioned in Chapter One, these two discourses portrayed the folk as former slaves, childlike, and unable to fully exist in the present. In *Iola Leroy*, Iola encounters these depictions of the folk; she meets folk characters Aunt Linda, Tom Anderson, and Uncle Daniel, former slaves who worked on the same plantation as Iola's uncle, Robert Johnson. Tom, Linda, and Daniel constitute significant minor folk characters. They are the first to appear, situated in plantation life during the Civil War and thereby fixed in the past.

Robert's mother, Harriet Johnson, also falls within this "folk" category. Throughout the narrative, Harriet, a former slave, has more in common with an older Black generation (for example, Linda and Daniel) than a new one (Iola, Harry). Through her lack of space in the narrative, Harriet comes to symbolize long sought-after but absent ancestral roots. She is the link between Robert and Iola but her presence does not appear until later in the novel, and then after she is found, she does not take up a lot of space in the story; she like, Tom, Linda, and Daniel, are figments on the past.

However, while Robert is a former slave, he is distinguished from folk characters such as Tom, Linda, and Daniel. Iola's appearance, Robert's status on the plantation, and Robert's absent father implies that Robert may be lighter-skinned, thereby having privileges not accessible to his folk counterparts. For example, the mistress teaches Robert how to read. In this way, Harper may

associate Robert's skin color with status and, due to such "status," he is positioned as a leader on the plantation, distanced from Tom, Linda, and Daniel.

In *The Marrow of Tradition*, Chesnutt provides a similar characterization of the folk; his folk are fixtures of an antebellum past. They include Mammy Jane, Jerry, and Sandy, who are all former slaves. Josh Green, a militant "great black figure," may also be considered a folk character since the narrator uses folk stereotypes to describe Green as an "ordinarily good-natured…pleasure-loving negro" (39). In depicting Jane, Jerry, and Sandy, Chesnutt uses frequent terms in folklore studies, such as "relics," "survivals," and imitation[s]" (Chesnutt 29, 184; 81). For example, Sandy is a "survival of an interesting type" whose manners were "formed upon those of old Mr. Delamere, and were not a bad imitation; for in the man, as in the master, they were the harmonious reflection of a mental state" (Chesnutt 81). Sandy is a mimic man, exemplifying the happy-go-lucky slave stereotype. Additionally, Chesnutt's folk are usually darker-skinned, and they are a part of a servant or working class.

Section Three: Recognition of the Racialized Regime

Harper's and Chesnutt's folk stem from each writer's recognition of their era's racialized regime of folk representation. Aware of a regime that constricts Black representation, Chesnutt deliberately crafts a folk that echoes white fantasies – therefore, no redeeming qualities can be found in them. On the other hand, Harper revalues the folk, offering a different representation of them.

Specifically, Chesnutt's folk serve as metacommentary on the racialized regime of folk representation. Chesnutt's character-system creates a relationship between visibility, character-

space, and white characters to show how folk characters are dehumanized images of African Americans, stereotypes created by white American society (see fig. 1). In *The Marrow of Tradition*, character-space is most significantly defined by (in)visibility; in other words, how a character sees (or does not see) another character determines a character's narrative space and thus her minorness (Woloch 150). In Chesnutt's novel, white characters, despite their claims of objectiveness and observation, refuse to truly see Black characters (Chesnutt 48); as a result, these minor characters are placed out of sight of other characters *and* the reader (i.e. characters, and therefore readers, may be unable to recognize the presence of folk characters).

Most significantly, Chesnutt emphasizes how *folk* minor characters' narrative spaces are primarily structured by the visual field of white characters (Woloch 150). As Woloch states, descriptions of characters "shape a visual field in which human beings themselves emerge only partially, substantializing the way that subordinate characters, in their intrinsically submerged narrative position, are half-visible" (Woloch 151). Such limited visibility ultimately affects minor characters' "completeness" on a textual level: "incomplete seeing turns into the distorted 'sight'; briefly seen persons become 'brief, fixed appearances'" (Woloch 156).

This transformation into "brief, fixed appearances" aligns with how Mammy Jane, Sandy, Jerry, and Josh Green emerge in the novel. Yet, while several folk characters' spaces (Jane's, Sandy's, and Jerry's) are generated by white gazes, Josh Green's visibility and thus character space is created by Miller, a Black character. Given Mammy Jane's, Jerry's, and Sandy's similarities, for this section, I will focus on these folk characters and their relation to white characters; later in the chapter, I will explore Josh Green's character-space and his relation to Black characters.

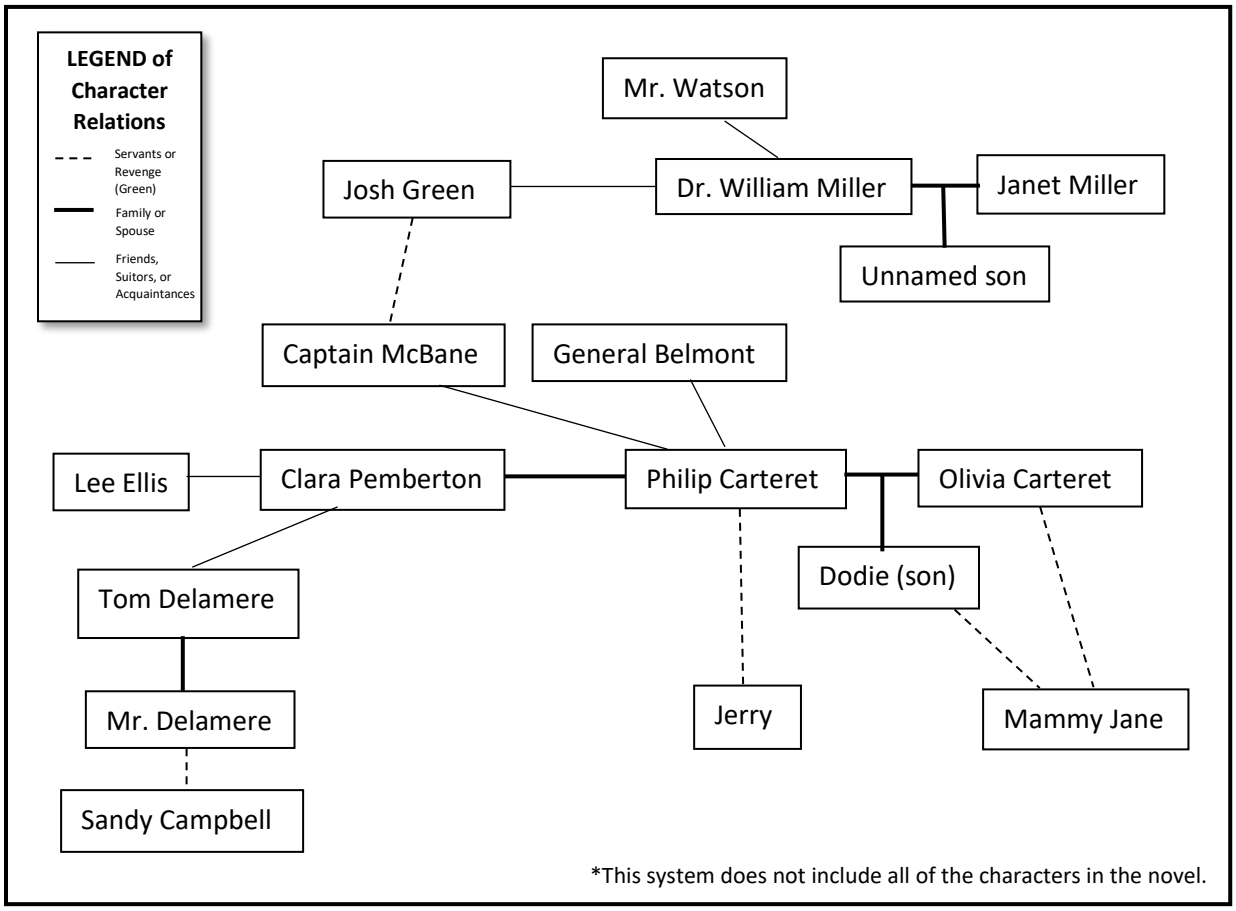

Figure 1. Character System of Charles Chesnutt's The Marrow of Tradition

Folk characters Mammy Jane, Jerry, and Sandy have little character-space, a textual phenomenon which is often tied to the visual field of white characters. When these folk characters enter and exit a scene, they are understood through their connections to white characters. For instance, Mammy Jane enters the narrative as a stereotypical mammy, described as an "old black woman, dressed in a gingham frock, with a red bandana handkerchief coiled

around her head by way of turban" (6). Her presence in the Carteret household is explained by her need to care for Olivia, the daughter of her former mistress. In other words, her presence, is understood in relation to the Carterets. Similarly, Jerry and Sandy are relegated to associations with white characters. Jerry first appears briefly at the Carterets' christening party, presented as Mammy Jane's grandson and a "porter at the Morning Chronicle office" (11-12). Sandy enters on page 12, assisting Mr. Delamere from a carriage (12).

Within the novel itself, Sandy and Jerry often reenter narrative spaces when called or noticed by a white character, or they are equated to objects. Several times, Sandy returns to the narrative as a source of money for Tom's gambling addiction. Jerry's presence is even more explicitly objectified and tied to the visual field of white characters. While the white supremacist conspirators plan, he enters the room with chairs and drinks, thus always reentering in service to Carteret, McBane, and Belmont. Through his frequent tasks, Jerry becomes associated with objects, such as furniture and beverages.

Additionally, there are times when the reader sees Jerry while McBane, Carteret, and Belmont do not. For instance, Carteret, "pass[es] Jerry in the hall without a word or a nod. The major wore a rapt look, which Jerry observed with a vague uneasiness" (27). These moments heighten Jerry's invisibility—he is unseen by white characters even if he is present in the narrative. Thus, while his character-space is constructed by white characters' sight, his presence is ignored by these same white characters.

Conversely, there are also times when characters *think* they see Sandy, when they actually do not (including Sandy himself). Yet, Sandy's character-space has not changed. Both white and black characters mistake Tom for Sandy—Sandy's congregation and Sandy himself

misidentify him (Chesnutt 75-6, 101-4). But, in an extended scene with Ellis (the love interest for Carteret's niece), the narrator does not state Tom's name. Instead, through Ellis's focalization (i.e. perception), Tom is described as "a comical type of negro" and then "the body-servant of old Mr. Delamere" (75). Ellis's lack of perception becomes a misidentification of character; the reader must follow the narrator's clues to understand that the minstrel is in fact Tom, and not Sandy, and therefore attribute this character-space to Tom. In other words, the reader must question a white character's perception and sight in order to make sense of *Sandy's lack of presence* (and how it has been substituted with the existence of another).

In addition to folk characters' sparse and unclear appearances in the novel, their narrative exits also occur in relation to the Carterets and Delameres; their exits center around (in)visibility. Once Mr. Delamere dies, Sandy is nowhere to be seen, even during the riot itself. His last line of the novel is in reference to his return to his Methodist church and his new employment as Mr. Carteret's butler (141). Yet, Mammy Jane and Jerry have the most dramatic exits, where Chesnutt dramatizes the connection between their subservience for white people and their ultimate end. Mammy Jane dies in the riot calling out to her former mistress, thereby underscoring her subservience and invisibility until the end. Tellingly, at first, Mammy Jane's last moments are almost overlooked by the main character, Dr. Miller. While rushing to find his wife and son, he "come[s] upon the body of a woman lying upon the sidewalk" (177). The anonymity of Jane's form builds suspense—the "body of a woman" could have been Miller's wife. But Jane's anonymity also demonstrates how she is no longer seen; her final presence is not even registered *until four sentences after* Miller stumbles upon her body. Thus, in her departing scene, she takes up little character-space and *readers do not fully recognize her*

narrative space until Miller identifies her. In this case, the Jane's body exists in the story for an unspecified amount of time; with the narration focalized through Miller, the space of the telling is centered instead on Miller's moment of realization. Then, after Jane is identified in the discourse, she quickly disappears from the story – with words of fealty to whiteness, she is gone from the narrative entirely (Chesnutt 177).

Similarly, Jerry's final scene is structured around sight, or rather Mr. Carteret's visual field and lack of recognition. In the novel's final chapters, Jerry is unwittingly pressed into Josh Green's crew of militant defenders of a Black hospital. Jerry reenters the novel for the final time while the hospital is set ablaze, and Carteret's lack of sight leads to Jerry's death. Yelling at Carteret to save him from the burning building, Jerry waves a white flag, but Carteret had already "turned away with Ellis" (183). The reader is left with Carteret turning his back on and denigrating African Americans, not Jerry's final words or thoughts. Thus, Mr. Carteret's withdrawal of sight also withdraws Jerry from the reader's view.

Therefore, the narrator shows us that white characters' visibility often has a hand in reducing folk's character-space. This reduction is significant. With minorness serving as a textual result of dehumanization, white characters' participation in this compression textually exemplifies how white readers dehumanize African Americans and "folkify" them. Jane, Jerry, and Sandy not only embody stereotypes; they are also characters who are actually dehumanized despite their existing humanity.

They have been objectified and stereotyped until they cannot recognize themselves. Moreover, Sandy, Jane, and Jerry are literarily effaced textually, socially, and psychologically (Woloch 129). For example, they have little interior thoughts – when they do, their thoughts are

voiced externally through their dialect, rather than rendered through free indirect discourse or the narrator's thought reports. Therefore, when these folk characters depart from the narrative, an exit created by white characters' lack of sight, they no longer contribute speech and therefore thought.

Folk characters' half-visible character space, and their transfiguration into minorness, ultimately reinforces Chesnutt's critique of the racialized regime of folk representation. Folk characters are not only produced by the distorted vision of white characters but are also erased through this social process. *Sandy himself voices his own physical erasure and how it is connected to his social position*. After an inebriated Sandy believes he saw his own "haunt," he asks Tom Delamere a question: "'ef I wuz in yo' place, an' you wuz in my place, an' we wuz bofe in de same place, whar would I be?" (Chesnutt 103). With this question, Sandy may be questioning his social standing, voicing a desire to switch social roles with Tom, and/or referring to Tom embodying and trespassing on his physical space.

Yet, Sandy's question ultimately leads him to a fear of displacement and disembodiment: "whar would I be?" This moment, though subtle, underlines how Sandy's space/place is tied to Tom's (a white character) and, as a result, Sandy's room for self-recognition and existence are delimited, to the point that "I" (in this case, self-consciousness) is nowhere to be found – in other words, Sandy is unable to identify his own existence (both physical and psychological), thus making it impossible for him to achieve self-consciousness. This fate, Chesnutt shows us, is a consequence of the racialized regime (a regime constructed to dehumanize, study, and fit African Americans into models). Significantly, Chesnutt both thematizes this message *and* embeds it in his novel's character-system. Sandy is beholden to white standards and stereotypes—so much so

that he mistakes Tom's minstrel act as himself. The result is a lack of character-space and interior consciousness, a dilemma which all of Chesnutt's folk characters unwittingly face.

While Chesnutt's character-system shows how the folk manifest (and disappear) through white gazes, Harper's character-system challenges the racialized regime by revaluing the folk as pivotal foundations to and interactions in the Black community (see fig. 2). Foremost, the difference in Chesnutt's and Harper's character systems (and thus their approaches to confronting the racialized regime) lie in their different representations of the folk. Ultimately, Harper has a different outlook on the folk. Similar to Chesnutt, Harper's folk fit the three main signifiers of the folk (Southern, working class, and darker skinned); however, Harper's characterizations diverge from some common folk stereotypes.

Using notions of literacy, Harper represents the folk as guides who are aware of the future, situating them as active participants (Foreman 332). These folk characters, consciously aware and protest driven, expand notions of literacy, a subject that Harper saw as a significant element in post-Emancipation life (Chandler 41; Robbins 157-194). Although Aunt Linda does not want to learn how to read, Harper depicts Linda's, Tom's, Daniel's, and other former slaves' different literacies. In the beginning of the novel, slaves use "market speech" and "phraseology," a secret communication system, to pass news about the war along. Linda also states that she can "read" her mistress's face. These characters are also able to "read" the future—Daniel and Linda, for example, have visions. In fact, Linda contends that she saw the Civil War and its outcome in a vision (Harper 16).

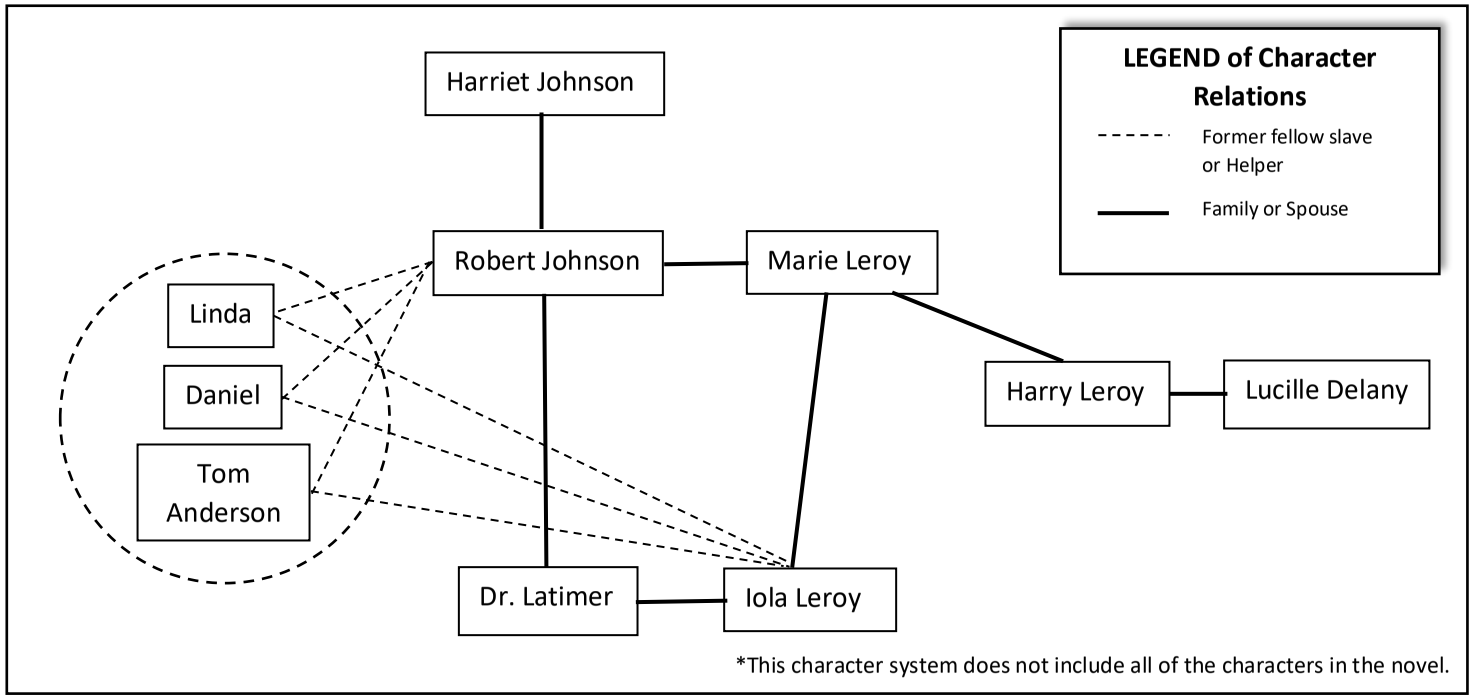

Figure 2. Character System of Frances Harper's Iola Leroy

In addition to seeing the future, Harper's folk are also active participants in slave resistance and Iola's cultural education (Fabi 48, 58, 61). Before the war, Linda, Tom, and Daniel covertly discussed Civil War news; after the war, Linda shelters and welcomes Robert and Iola to the former Gundover plantation, a now thriving, postbellum Black community. Moreover, with the exception of Tom, who dies during the Civil War, Daniel and Linda survive until the end. By depicting her folk in this way, as culturally literate, active, and future-looking survivors, Harper refigures the racialized regime of folk representation. She revalues the folk, transforming them from "ignorant" relics to self-aware cornerstones of postbellum African American life.

Harper's revaluing the folk ultimately begets different relationships between folk characters and other characters, and thus produces a character-system that adopts a different approach to subverting the racialized regime: whereas Chesnutt demonstrates the white supremacist underpinnings of folk stereotypes that threaten self-consciousness and racial unity, Harper reclaims the folk for a Black community, uncovering their importance to communal resistance and identity formation. Significantly, Harper's character-system and character-spaces highlight the relationship between the folk and other Black characters (thus, Harper amplifies a condition of narrative—characters are made legible through their relationship to other characters—to create a different valuation of the folk).

Harper's character-system is largely defined by interactions between Iola and her family (who are categorized as the uplifters) and minor folk characters (usually former slaves who are identified as the uplifted). In other words, "folk" and "nonfolk" character-spaces depend on each other. These character-spaces depend on each other because the character-system is dialogue

driven—characters mainly gain narrative space by participating in conversations.[10] Instead of an overt narrator or long pages of description, readers become familiar with characters through several conversations—as such, dialogue helps mark character space and one's participation in the novel itself.

Most notably, folk dialect is given space and contrasted alongside "standard" speech. As Christmann demonstrates, in *Iola Leroy*, the

> dialect voice generally locates a speaker in folk culture and measures a distance from the essentially middle-class qualities that whites promoted as the badges of full humanity: "refined" deportment, economic independence, education, and white skin. The voices of standard-English-speaking black characters, on the other hand, implicitly claim a range of attributes approximately bourgeois ideals. (5-6)

Thus, these different voices interact and structure the novel as a communal interaction. As Christmann also notes, the novel is structured through voice-realms, "plac[ing] them in antiphonal relations that suggest community" (9). In call-and-response format, the "early pages offer a dialect call, 'standard' voices respond, and the concluding section brings them together in a series of dialogues, most which concern prospects for the black future" (Christmann 9). Thus, space is portioned largely according to voice or interaction between (different) voices. Since voice composes character-space, Harper shows how interactions between regional dialect-speaking folk and national dialect-speaking nonfolk create space for each other.

[10] Given Harper's career, her dialogue-driven character system is perhaps unsurprising. Harper was an influential professional orator and travelling lecturer (Cali and Moody).

For example, through conversations, Aunt Linda, Tom, and Uncle Daniel function as "helpers," and "map social relations" (Woloch 127); through their voices, and thus their character-spaces, Linda, Tom, and Daniel set the stage for other characters and shepherd Robert and Iola along their journeys. Significantly, Tom's voice is the first one in the novel – therefore, his character-space begins the narrative. His disembodied voice asks Robert a question in "market speech": "'GOOD mornin', Bob; how's butter dis morning'?" (7). Tom, rather than inquiring about butter, is actually asking Robert for updates about the Civil War. With Tom's coded question, we enter into the inner world of slaves' ingenuity and communication; at the same time, Tom's character-space serves as a way to introduce Robert, who responds: "Fresh; just as fresh, as fresh can be" (7). With this question-and-answer format, Harper draws attention to the relationship between these two characters, Tom and Robert. Additionally, this format, in which a folk's character-space becomes an activator or initiator of another Black character's space, becomes a pattern in *Iola Leroy*. For example, Tom gives Robert Union intel and secures Iola's release. Aunt Linda leads Robert and Iola to a prayer meeting; as a result, she facilitates a family reunion between Robert, Harriet, and Iola. With Linda's help, Iola and Robert are able to find their ancestry, a parental voice that extends back to the folk and emphasizes their racial roots (Woloch 59). Thus, Harper builds interactions that emphasize how folk characters and other Black characters create space for each other.

Moreover, as the novel progresses, voice-realms increasingly intermingle, creating spaces where nonfolk and folk characters converse to affirm a postbellum vision of racial unity (Christmann 9). Near the middle of the narrative, Robert participates in the call-and-response format of a prayer meeting: while he tells his story, a chorus of "moans" respond to his narrative

– this fragmented, nameless crowd of folk affirm his sorrow and connection to a broader Black community (Harper 184). In fact, although this chorus receives a small moment of character-space, they represent a larger community of "broken families" who are in conversation with Robert (182). Thus, Robert's character-space in this scene is supported by and aligned with a larger Black community. Ultimately, his participation in a communal conversation is rewarded with a reunion. He finds his mother (Iola's grandmother), Harriet Johnson; then, Robert, Harriet, and Iola joyfully embrace.

Lastly, Iola forms her identity through her interactions and relationships with folk characters. Iola's character traits are developed through comparisons, in which her personal qualities are "built in-and-through a social comparison" (Woloch 52). For instance, through Tom's dialogue, the reader receives the first mention of Iola in the narrative – he describes Iola as a "mighty putty young gal" and a "reg'lar spitfire" (Harper 87). Thus, it is Tom who provides Iola's first character description, even before she acquires space in the novel. Tom eventually falls in love with the fair-skinned main character, and even his exit from the narrative becomes a moment where the reader learns more about Iola's character traits. After heroically sacrificing himself to save Union soldiers from Rebel forces, Iola cares for his wounded body. She watches over Tom with "tender devotion" and sings him a series of "parting hymns" (97-98). Through this interaction, the reader realizes Iola's caring and tender nature.

While Tom broadcasts Iola's entrance and shapes her character traits, Iola's interactions with other folk characters initiate her into Black spaces. Pointedly, after attending the prayer meeting (a polyvocal space where many different Black voices interact), Iola converses with Aunt Linda. Their discussions serve as Iola's "resocialization." Iola's stilted, formal dialect

shows that “she does not yet possess enough black cultural knowledge to master a variety of linguistic registers with ease” (Fabi 61). However, she initiates a conversation with Linda to gain “black cultural knowledge” (since Linda’s dialect is equated to “blackness”) and therefore inhabit a space with multiple registers.

Section Four: Repositioning the Folk through Racial Uplift

As discussed in Chapter One, African Americans not only repositioned the folk by challenging a racialized regime. They also implemented problematic models: many times, Postbellum, Pre-Harlem authors embraced racial uplift. Harper’s and Chesnutt’s character systems demonstrate a racial uplift narrative—both authors, in the very structure their novels, call for racial unity *and* create an intraracial division between “folk” and “nonfolk.” In other words, character relations grapple with both a dependency and a desire for distance/differentiation. While dependency characterizes Harper’s and Chesnutt’s character-systems (Black characters are legible because they are read against each other), a desire for distance shapes folk characters’ character-space (characters have reduced space, fixed traits, and a tangential relationship to the plot or conclusion).

On one hand, in *Iola Leroy*, Harper’s character-system emphasizes racial uplift’s need for racial unity. As mentioned above, Harper’s accentuation of dialogue highlights the relationship between folk characters and other characters (such as Iola and Robert); this emphasis, along with the theme of family in the novel, ultimately communicates a connection between individuals and a larger racial group. Chesnutt’s character-system also implies racial commonality, if only to endorse Chesnutt’s particular vision of Black representation. Chesnutt contrasts the old representations (folk characters Jerry, Mammy Jane, Sandy) with new representations (the

unnamed maid, Dr. Miller, and Janet), granting a degree of interiority to the new representations. By using foils (Mammy Jane vs. young nurse), Chesnutt underscores a dependent relationship between old and new representations for redefining and creating racial representation.

However, racial uplift also entails imposed social hierarchies and, therefore, what Woloch calls, "narrative asymmetry." Woloch describes "narrative asymmetry" as the "dynamic narrative subordination of potentially full human beings" (44). In referring to the nineteenth-century bildungsroman, Woloch explains that asymmetrical character-systems can foster self-development of a main character:

> The asymmetric character-system allows the novel to juxtapose this development with the conjoined process of social stratification. Structures of characterization that lock together protagonist and minor character allow the realist novel to comprehend a relationship between the full, interior individual (the "ideal of humanism") and social disjunction. (Woloch 29-30)

In other words, asymmetry is often intertwined with notions of a protagonist's development; in order to show that a protagonist has fully integrated into society and achieved self-realization, other characters are not simply placed on the margins – they are placed in the narrative to bolster the protagonist's character development. Similarly, racial uplift embodies social asymmetry (literally a few individuals leading a mass) but *substitutes individual development with group development* – some characters are subordinated while others are privileged in the belief that these few chosen main characters will pave the way for all African Americans. Thus, while Chesnutt and Harper's systems draw attention to the structural dependency of characters, they also use space to indicate a difference (mainly class) between the folk and other characters by

compressing folk characters' spaces (either in response to other characters' spaces or the novel's progression).

First, although folk and nonfolk occasionally exist in the same space, Harper uses a racial uplift narrative to construct "difference" between these characters. As Harper's activist work and her book's subtitle ("Shadows Uplifted") show (Ernest 502, 505), she endorses an uplift vision (Christmann 16). Harper's protagonist Iola follows this racial uplift narrative, planning to uplift "the colored people of the South" (Harper 178) and become "the leader of a race to higher planes of thought and action, to teach men clearer views of life and duty, and to inspire their souls with loftier aims" (Harper 166). Expectedly, at the end of the novel, Iola becomes a Sunday-school teacher and a national symbol and healer, leading the advance in social reform to a "greater influence for freedom" (213). Iola's racial uplift mission is joined by Frank, Lucille, and Harry. At the novel's end, Lucille and Harry run a school which "uplifts" the folk's domestic lives, with Harry rewarded in his choice of racial identification (213-4).

Pointedly, Harper enacts her racial uplift narrative (and thus her asymmetrical character system) through character-space compression (i.e. supposed social "difference" becomes spatial "difference"). In *Iola Leroy*, while Iola has a late entrance, she, expectedly, gathers more space and thus more centrality as the novel progresses, until folk characters such as Aunt Linda and Uncle Daniel only receive a brief mention in the last pages, signaling the fulfillment of Harper's racial uplift narrative. Folks' character-spaces are compressed until characters become encapsulated in their class division and label: those to be uplifted. These characters, through their minorness, are positioned within an intraracial definition of the folk that follows a racial uplift narrative.

Furthermore, folk characters are marked as different by their dialect. Linda's dialect is not valued as much as Iola's standard speech. With their dialect, they are defined by their "eccentricity" – in fact, Iola is "amused and interested in the quaintness of [Linda's] speech" (Chesnutt 180). Thus, while Harper has subverted racist assumptions of dialect and intellect (Harper's characters use their speech as a strategic maneuver), she designates this dialect as a relic of the past and a component of folk characters' minorness and flatness. Thus, while they can change, Aunt Linda, Tom, and Uncle Daniel are ultimately limited to their minorness (Woloch 155).

Therefore, folk characters' disappearances (especially toward the novel's end) remove what their speech represented in the eyes of Harper, a rejection of a "certain way of being or of speaking" (Woloch 88). With this removal of dialect from the narrative, Iola does not simply enter a polyvocal space – she enacts a supposed hierarchy within it. Iola ultimately seems to talk "to" rather than "with" folk characters (Christmann 15). For instance, in a chapter tellingly called "Stark Contrasts," Iola and Robert warn Aunt Linda against alcohol and encourage her to sign a temperance pledge (142). Their voices, while in conversation with Aunt Linda, take precedence over her opinions. Similarly, during Robert's reunion with his mother, the folk ("a chorus") only receive a couple of lines. Given this important moment for Robert, the narrator expectedly focuses on Robert's interiority rather than providing the reader with precise descriptions of those attending the prayer meeting. However, due to Robert's priority, this polyvocal space, a place that is supposed to hold a large amount of people and represent a spatial gathering, only allows for the discourse space of a Black leader/representative (or, rather, a person positioned above other former slaves).

Folk characters eventually leave the narrative by either explicitly supporting a racial uplift narrative or by building characterization of another character. Although Tom is given the first line in the novel, the narrative moves away from Tom and focuses on Robert. His death becomes sacrificial, not only because he saves Union soldiers but also because his passing sets the stage for the narrator's portrayal of Iola's virtues and character. Other folk characters even endorse their own eventual exit from the narrative. Linda, toward the end of the novel, welcomes Iola by saying, "I seed it in a vision dat somebody fair war comin' to help us" (247). Linda also states, "I allers wanted some nice lady to come down yere and larn our gals some sense. I can't read myself, but I likes ter yere den dat can" (247). If Linda's dialogue is mostly her presence, then what does it mean that her penultimate words are left for endorsing the *presence and arrival* of another character? Lastly, Uncle Daniel's decision to not leave the plantation during the Civil War ultimately mirrors his character-space. When explaining his decision to stay, he says that "we old ones will die out, but it will set you youngsters all up" (75). Although Daniel appears at the end, he is given little dialogue throughout the novel, and the narrator, in the last pages, positions Daniel as a lingering character: he "still lingers on the shores of time, a cheery, lovable old man, loved and respected by all; a welcome guest in every home" (250). Significantly, all the folk characters are old, and those who are younger (such as Tom Anderson) have passed during the war.

Therefore, while Harper shows how character-spaces depend on each other—voices answering other voices akin to call-and-response—they are not devoid of a social hierarchy; her racial uplift narrative allocates disproportionate room for folk voices (Christmann 6). In this way, readers can "see the process of [these folk] characters becoming minor" to create social and class

boundaries between the folk and their uplifters (Woloch 129). In this sense, Daniel, Linda, and Tom *become* minor through their interactions with Iola and Robert. Iola and Robert, eventual uplifters, dominate the character-space and thus the conversation. As mentioned before, Linda's voice becomes increasingly less prominent as the novel progresses; when her voice arises toward the end of the novel, it defers judgment to Iola and Robert (Christmann 13). Tom leaves the narrative early, before experiencing freedom. Additionally, folk characters, such as the chorus at the conference meeting, become minor because they are "merged together" – even as their voices serve as a chorus of affirmation, in order to represent multiplicity, they become minor (Woloch 76).

In contrast to Harper, Chesnutt emphasizes intraracial division by spatially distancing the folk and other characters as well as eliminating his folk altogether – they are ultimately subsumed by their minorness. Chesnutt uses visibility and character-space (entrances, exits, interior spaces) to also argue that there is a division between a postbellum generation and (other) folk characters. Through minor characters, the narrator literally maps the space between Miller and the folk, seeking to create a class-inflected distance (Sampson 200). Miller lives in a world with other minor characters who are reduced to minorness because they represent multiplicity (perhaps a multiple fragmented folk: i.e. train passengers, Green's followers), repressed rage (John Green), and an emerging postbellum servant class (a young nurse who is fired).

For example, Chesnutt creates a class-inflected distance between Miller and his fellow Black passengers en route to Wellington. This scene of a Jim Crow car introduces us to Miller. Noticeably, the narrator reserves interiority for Miller alone, rather than highlighting the experience of others in the "colored" car as well. In the car, Miller is joined by a "party of farm

laborers" (40). Miller's character-space is drastically different from this group, a group who seem to embody the folk. These laborers, described as "a jolly, good-natured…free from the embarrassing presence of white people" (40), represent multiplicity. It is unclear how many people enter the train and a few individuals are selected out of the crowd—"an amorous fellow sat with his arm around a buxom girl's waist" and "a musically inclined individual…struck up a tune, to which a limber-legged boy danced in the aisle" (40). When minor characters are in a group, fragmentation often occurs as there "is not enough space for a full person here: each individual instead gets compressed" into parts (Woloch 186). Thus, in contrast to Miller, this folk group is fragmented and reduced to stereotypes—spontaneous, musical, dancing entertainers.

Significantly, Miller places himself above this folk group in terms of class, and *the character-space/textual phenomena reinforce Chesnutt's assertion of class difference*. Even as the narrator describes the Black passengers as Miller's "people," the narrator also states that Miller must excuse their "obvious shortcomings" (40). Only "racial sympathy" keeps him from dismissing them entirely; for him, "these people were just as offensive to him as to the whites in the other end of the train" (41).

Most tellingly, the folk's presence makes Miller claustrophobic, as next to them "the air became too close" and Miller retreats to the platform (40). *Thus, the narrator describes Miller's racial uplift narrative through the theme of space.* With this theme of space, the narrator aligns Miller's desire for spatial distance with a desire for social distance while also drawing attention to how Jim Crow segregation affects the characters' daily lives (Sampson 194). At the same time, the narrative structure itself follows this spatial symbolization—Chesnutt closes off the

character development of the folk and limits their character-space. Therefore, when the narrator uses the "bed of Procrustes" to describe Miller's social position, a man of distinction who is cut down because of his race, it also signals Miller's ill fit with the folk; instead, he serves as their racial uplifter (41). As such, the folk's presence is literally cut from the narrative; there is not enough character-space for them—at the next station, they leave, and then Miller is able to breathe "more freely" (41). As a result, Chesnutt further divides the folk from a postbellum (middle) class, not only through description but also through character-space.

One person also exits the train after the folk and Miller: Josh Green. Josh Green is a unique figure in *The Marrow of Tradition* because he aligns with folk stereotypes but, unlike the other folk characters, his (in)visibility is shaped by a Black character's gaze: Miller. African American scholars have noticed how Green surfaces in the text as a Miller's foil, a repressed "psycho-political" element of Miller's potential leadership (George and Pressman 413-4). I extend this observation by examining Green's character-space. Although Green serves as a leader for the Black characters around him, he has a shadowy existence and appears primarily through the gaze of Miller.

Green enters the narrative through a series of gazes that mirror the novel's character relations. During the train ride that introduces Miller (and spatially separates him from the folk), Green also appears:

> As the train came to a standstill, a huge negro, covered thickly with dust, crawled off one of the rear trucks observed, and ran round the rear end of the car to the watering-trough by a neighboring well…Miller, who had seen this man from the car window, had noticed a very singular thing. As the dusty tramp passed the rear

> coach, he cast toward it a glance of intense ferocity. Up to that moment the man's face, which Miller had recognized under its grimy coating, had been that of an ordinarily good-natured, somewhat reckless, pleasure-loving negro, at present rather the worse for wear. The change now came over it suggested a concentrated hatred almost uncanny in its murderousness. With awakened curiosity Miller followed the direction of the negro's glance, and saw that it rested upon the window where Captain McBane sat looking out. When Miller looked back, the negro had disappeared. (39-40)

With this entrance, Green surfaces as an unnamed, unsettling figure – tellingly, he arrives and gives McBane a hateful glance; some minutes before, McBane had "swept Miller for an instant with a scornful glance" (36). With Green's entrance, Chesnutt creates a triangle of gazes: McBane looks at Miller, Miller looks at Green, and Green looks at McBane. Significantly, with this triangular visual field, McBane does not notice Green. McBane's failure to see Green eventually becomes a reality in the text; Green's presence lingers on the edge of the narrative, seen primarily by Miller and other Black characters. When Green does confront McBane, he is ultimately ejected from the text altogether.

After the train ride is over and everyone deboards, Green appears once more, but this time without Miller's recognition (Miller does not notice Green exit the car): "Simultaneously with Miller's exit from the train, a great black figure crawled off the trucks of the rear car, on the side opposite the station platform" (42). Here, Green is "great black figure" – although he should be observable due to his great size, he leaves the station "unobserved" (42). With this description, Green mirrors compression: while he takes up space in the story, his large stature is

compressed in the discourse. Thus, Green enters paradoxically, as a massive phantom who, although noticeable because of his big size, is not recognized by Miller or even fully rendered by the narrator. About twenty pages later, Miller meets Green again and identifies him as a "black giant" who "had worked on the docks for [his] father" (68). Chesnutt devotes an entire chapter to a conversation between Miller and Green; through their discussion, Miller learns that Green's father was killed by McBane and other Ku Klux Klan members, a violent, heart-breaking story that, unfortunately, reflected many African Americans' realities. Yet, even as Chesnutt allots space to Green's dialogue, Miller's thoughts explain to the reader that, despite imaginable tragedies, African Americans are humans who are "not vindictive people" (70). Thus, while Green receives more character-space in this chapter, he primarily serves as a figure to voice the folk's devastating losses; Miller, in a move of racial uplift, interprets such losses for his audience.

Ultimately, Green's militancy proves too much for the space of the novel. Like the folk on the train, Green is eventually removed from the narrative because he is a rejection of certain type of social being (Woloch 55-56). Green could be categorized as a type of minor character: an "eccentric—as outcast, criminal, madman, or troublemaker" (Woloch 139). In particular, the "eccentric" minor character is one whose "'singular' personality cannot be stably aligned with external social norms or a fixed social position" (Woloch 139). Green's disappearance demonstrates Chesnutt's endorsement of Miller's leadership. Thus, the triangle of gazes that introduces Green comes true in the space of the novel: McBane creates Green's need for vengeance – but, in a postbellum world, Green can only exist on the edges, compressed by McBane's racism and Miller's desire to present an "acceptable" Black leadership (Black rage is

cornered and confined, in this text, by both). Though Green finally enacts his revenge (thus ending McBane's character-space in the novel), he is cast out of the narrative. Green is not a part of Chesnutt's postbellum future – it is racial uplift that directs Green's departure as Miller, though "ill fit" beside the folk, is the one left at the novel's end.

Conclusion

In most novels, a protagonist takes center stage and, as a result, there is less room for other characters. Of course, when focusing on a protagonist, other characters, consequently, cannot have more room – that is the nature of narrative. However, as Harper's and Chesnutt's character-systems have shown, we must analyze *how and why* a certain protagonist catches the spotlight. *More precisely, what characters are chosen to be minor characters?* And what becomes of these marginal characters, especially when those tangential characters are overwhelming the folk? As Harper and Chesnutt indicate, they usually disappear from the story and discourse space.

The folk themselves represent a conundrum, as the author must incorporate them to build racial unity and signify "blackness" but ultimately keep them at arm's length in order to promote their New Negro generation. This chapter demonstrates how Postbellum, Pre-Harlem authors such as Chesnutt and Harper grappled with this dilemma on a narratological level. Both authors' character-systems and character-spaces speak to their direct and indirect engagement with their era's obsession with folk representation, especially as applied to African Americans. Aware of the discourses that sought to construct blackness, they intervened to offer their own critiques. Additionally, their texts show how folk creation and minorness are parallel processes – their

minor characters challenge stereotypes and, through their character-space compression, become stereotypes.

In fact, Chesnutt's and Harper's character-systems demonstrate that folk characters were minor not only for the little space they took up in the narrative, but also for their minority position within American society as Black people *and* for their exclusion from a nineteenth-century Black bourgeois definition of blackness; the folk were exclusion (minorness) doubled. Since character-space points to sociopolitical space, folk characters are important to study to understand how they become minor and how such minorness is connected to social representation.

In *The Marrow of Tradition* and *Iola Leroy*, Chesnutt's and Harper's claims about the folk are not only social themes; they are also significant parts of the narrative structure, structural elements that Harper and Chesnutt highlight themselves. Chesnutt and Harper use distinct narrative techniques to both critique the racialized regime and to enact a racial uplift narrative. Thus, in addition to examining character foils, we also must investigate how character networks and spaces are created in Postbellum, Pre-Harlem narratives. Caught in a tight space, Postbellum, Pre-Harlem authors were highly aware of their folk characters' social *and* textual positions.

Chapter 3

Folk Magic and Romance Plots in Pauline Hopkins's *Contending Forces* and Alice Dunbar-Nelson's "The Goodness of St. Rocque"

As discussed in the last chapter, minor characters, through their positioning, encapsulate and actualize many Postbellum, Pre-Harlem topics such as racial uplift and folk creation (i.e. the creation and racialization of the folk). Through character-systems and spaces, the folk are made visible; but, in these Postbellum, Pre-Harlem narratives, they mainly function to make others visible. Postbellum, Pre-Harlem authors were aware of how their minor characters, the folk, were created, and the functions they served in their narratives. Thus, in understanding the folk (as a social theme and narrative device), our analysis of character is very important.

However, folk characters, of course, are not simply defined by their characterization. Occasionally, if they are not extremely minor, they have a distinct relationship with the plot. For example, in *Contending Forces* (1900) and "The Goodness of St. Rocque" (1899), Pauline Hopkins and Alice Dunbar-Nelson introduce folk characters who, while similar to Chesnutt's and Harper's minor characters discussed in Chapter Two, are distinctly different – overall, they have more character-space and involvement in the plot. Hopkins introduces a minor character, Madam Frances, in *Contending Forces,* a story of lost familial relationships and political reform; in her titular short story, "The Goodness of St. Rocque," Dunbar-Nelson includes the Wizened One, a powerful figure in her New Orleans story of forlorn love and desire. Madam Frances's and the Wizened One's entrances and exits in the narrative meaningfully impact Hopkins's and

Dunbar-Nelson's plots – Madam Frances and the Wizened One enter at pivotal moments in each female protagonist's life (and exit when their functionality is done).

Hopkins's and Dunbar-Nelson's female folk characters are connected to the plot and related to particular type of folk: the conjurer. During slavery, conjurers were not seen as socially "acceptable" figures even though they were well-known, significant parts of slave culture. Yet, during the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, in an attempt to assert postbellum "progress," conjurers were uniquely positioned as signs to recognize *and* denounce. Situated on the precipice of both recognition and omission, the female folk magic practitioners in Hopkins's and Dunbar-Nelson's fictions move from the margins of the narrative to interact with the plot.

This chapter tries to understand how Afro folk magic specialists, specifically women, were used for both characterization and plot in Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writing. Concentrating on writing by African American women, I investigate how Hopkins and Dunbar-Nelson activated female folk magic practitioners in their courtship plots. Love, passion, and desire could not be explicitly voiced by Black female characters – they confronted a painful legacy of sexual exploitation and never-ending Jezebel stereotypes. Thus, Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers, especially when depicting love stories, faced an obstacle – how does one illustrate love when passion is unspeakable? Conjurers, mysterious, marginal individuals who often embodied social taboo, became a vehicle for some authors to shepherd their romance plots and its hidden passion along.

Ultimately, by focusing our analytical lens on female folk magic practitioners, we can bolster contemporary research on Alice Dunbar-Nelson and Pauline Hopkins, particularly scholarship that investigates race and gender in their narratives. While some scholars viewed

Alice Dunbar-Nelson as a writer who avoided racial topics, Caroline Gebhard, Katherine Adams, and Sandra A. Zagarell have pointed out that Dunbar-Nelson, rather than ignoring race, was invested in deconstructing and complicating it (Nixon; West 4; Gebhard et al. 386). In fact, recent research has found that Dunbar-Nelson revised "The Praline Woman" (1897), later published in *The Goodness of St. Rocque,* by taking out obvious racial identifiers like the word "dark-hued" – she instead lets dialect and traditions speak as signs of ethnic or regional communities (386). Therefore, by paying attention to the detailed traditions and folklore in "The Goodness of St. Rocque" (customs that were guarded by and circulated amongst women), we can also tap into Dunbar-Nelson's subtle, but intentional, investigations of gender and ethnicity. Her text, rather than casting folklore as a general sign of Blackness, complicates her era's equation of Blackness and folk by incorporating folk references that signify a specific folklore community.

Hopkins's magical woman in *Contending Forces* is also more than a minor character. When examining *Contending Forces*, few critics dissect the role that Madam Frances plays in the plot;[11] however, as I demonstrate in Chapter Two, since folk existed as minor characters, we must turn to the narrative's margins to understand the subtle functions that minor characters, such as Madam Frances, may have served in Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writing. In this chapter, I hope to demonstrate the importance of acknowledging Madam Frances's presence, as it uncovers another form of syncretization in Hopkins's work: her combination of Euro-American spiritualism and conjuring. Hopkins's efforts to mix (rather than Dunbar-Nelson's intention to

[11] Critics such as Colleen O'Brien and Jill Bergman discuss Madam Frances and her presence in the narrative.

particularize) cultural traditions coincides with scholarship that has noted Hopkins's penchant for syncretism.[12]

Overall, in this chapter, to research both the historical context of conjurers and their manifestation in narrative, I employ the positioning methodology, using the first half of the chapter to uncover conjurers in the racialized regime and the second half to evaluate how Afro folk magic figures were positioned in narratives (i.e. characterization and impact on plot).

Section One: How Folk Magic Practitioners Were Positioned in the Racialized Regime of Representation

Terms

Contemporary scholars have found that voodoo, conjure, and hoodoo can be distinguished by region. "Conjure" was a name given to magical practices in the Anglo-Cultural Zone, a region in North America on the Atlantic coast from northern Florida to Maryland (Anderson 39). Given the English origins of its name, "conjure" was usually not used in the Mississippi River Valley (which was ruled by the French and Spanish) (Anderson 47, 17). By contrast, voodoo was mainly located in the Mississippi River Valley and was often identified with New Orleans (Anderson 14, 24, 39). In comparison to voodoo and conjure, hoodoo, although it was "originally conceived as a part of Voodoo," was "a form of African American folk magic that operat[ed] independent of the gods, communal ceremonies, and other religious trappings of Voodoo" (Anderson 42). Hoodoo, most likely a name used in the nineteenth century, first appeared in print to describe Tennessee practitioners; the term later became popular

[12] For example, while Thomas J. Otten examines Hopkins's incorporation of psychology in *Of One Blood*, Susan Gillman investigates the occultism in Hopkins's literature.

and began to describe practitioners outside of the Mississippi River Valley (Anderson 42). Hence, conjure, voodoo, and hoodoo are not exact synonyms; they can signify different regional and cultural practices.

Yet, in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century, hoodoo, voodoo, and conjure were often confused. In fact, these three terms frequently overlapped in usage during the nineteenth century:

> Throughout Louisiana and Mississippi, black Conjure specialists were variously called "Voodoos," "wangateurs," and "horses." (Chireau 21)
>
> in the African American vernacular, Voodoo was often applied, as were tricking and Hoodoo, to describe any exercise of spiritual powers for malevolent purposes, the so-called practice of black magic, or maleficia. (Chireau 77)

Historical documents and literature therefore demonstrate that these terms, though broadly distinguishable, were also variously applied in the nineteenth century. Significantly, the Black women writers in this chapter either forgo specific monikers or combine several Afro folk magic practices. While Pauline Hopkins mixes both voodoo and conjure references in her literature to create an Afro spiritual legacy, Alice Dunbar-Nelson never even uses the words "voodoo," "hoodoo," or "conjure" in her short story, "The Goodness of St. Rocque" – she instead lets the reader detect the Wizened One's connection to voodoo.

In my chapter, I mirror nineteenth-century African American vernacular by using the term "conjurer," a name that became popular for describing African American folk magic practitioners, to generally discuss Black folk magic in antebellum accounts and Postbellum, Pre-

Harlem literature (Chireau 21). In this way, I follow Yvonne Chireau's use of the term "conjurer" in her often-cited study of Afro-American religious practices, *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition* (2006). While Chireau defines the particularities of hoodoo, conjure, and Voodoo, she notes the "widespread affinities…[that] manifested in black folk traditions" (6-7). Like Chireau, I hope to capture the fluid use of folk magic terms ("conjure," "hoodoo," and "voodoo") in the nineteenth century while highlighting significant nuances between Afro folk magic traditions. Therefore, while I focus on the term "conjurer" when discussing literature before the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem period, I still draw attention to Dunbar-Nelson's and Hopkins's particular references to voodoo and conjure.

Figures of Black Folk Magic

During and after slavery, conjurers were enigmatic people who performed several functions in African American communities – most notably, they were respected, and sometimes feared, individuals who created assurance in everyday life and catalyzed slave resistance. Intragroup understandings of conjurers show that conjuring was also associated with mistrust, as one had to guard oneself against enemies and jealousies within the community (Chireau, *A Mighty Baptism* 182-3). However, it is important to note that conjuring in the Black community also became a crucial resource for slaves. For example, slaves sought conjurers to receive fortunes and locate lost items, but they also turned to conjurers as a viable source of "healing, protection, and self defense" (Chireau 20). Conjurers, similar to traditional healers in African societies, were sought to cure illnesses (Chireau 8); slaves also visited conjurers to receive charms in order to evade patrollers and protect themselves against violence by slave masters or overseers (Chireau, Murray). In addition to providing healing and protection, conjurers led slave

revolts. For example, the "insurrections of Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner all involved supernatural inspiration to help at some points, though this is quite varied" (Murray 37; Anderson).

While conjurers were important social figures, they also operated on the margins of society – they were usually depicted as "outsiders, inhabitants of the fringes, dwelling within a cultural demimonde" (Chireau 23). Yet, at times, this marginality gave them social power. With people seeking out and paying for their services, conjurers could acquire financial capital in addition to social/cultural capital (Anderson, *African American Folklore* 79-80).

Both Black men and women were conjurers, thereby making it an accessible source of communal power for men and women. In fact, both men and women were called "witches" (Chireau 184) and slave narratives mention enigmatic conjure men and women. While more research can reveal how gender affected conjurers' communal perceptions and notoriety, Chireau does note that "black women empowered by supernatural forces might have been seen as a threat to males' domination of sacred space, as well as an embodiment of the dangers of female spirituality, witchcraft, and maleficence within the larger society" (Chireau, "The Uses of the Supernatural" 186). Yet, as for female clients of conjurers, Chireau points out that conjure worked as "important protective uses of black women," from shielding oneself from violence to "healing broken relationships," thereby ensuring "safety" and "security" in interpersonal relationships (Chireau, "The Uses of the Supernatural," 181, 184).

However, despite conjure women's and men's communal importance, Europeans and Americans, from the seventeenth century and on, positioned conjurers as the Other, in a racialized regime of folk representation (Chireau 21). This positioning resulted from a "brew of

darkness, otherness, alarm, and desire" that America concocted – in other words, Eurocentric discourse sought to form an "Other" (Morrison qtd. in Lee 12). Conjurers were a significant part of constructing blackness as otherness. These practitioners were also cast in gender-specific stereotypes – while conjure men were morally bereft men given to vice, conjure women were described as everything from "sinister, decrepit hag[s]" to "dangerous, bewitching mulatta[s]" (Chireau 22). Particularly, conjure women merged with European beliefs of witchcraft, which popularized the association between witches and women (Anderson 186).

In the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, popular discourse and literature painted Afro folk magic as archaic, savage, and sacrilegious, thereby positioning practitioners as bearers of superstitious treatments rather than communal practices. Like the folk in general, conjurers were Othered, objectified, and racialized – bound to a cultural evolutionary model and an antebellum past. As David Murray points out, these depictions of conjurers were a part of a white supremacist system – they were attacks on Black success, power structures, support systems, and resistance. Most notably, after Reconstruction, the depiction of conjurers, and African American folklore in general, were often a "rehearsal" of white supremacist beliefs, a "reassuring act of placement" (Murray 48). In other words, in the late nineteenth century, with the founding of folklore

> What interested so many whites about the world of black folklore seems to be, in varying degrees, an arm's length fascination with the exoticism of magic, the satisfaction of rehearsing the simple and reliable qualities of black people fixed in a premodern stance of protective subservience, and the pleasures of a vernacular

> form that reassuringly underlined and fixed difference and inferiority. (Murray 48)

Therefore, during the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, many white Americans created and sought out representations of Black people to feed notions of social hierarchies and "inferiority" that existed during slavery. In this way, depictions of Afro folk magic functioned as an arm of white supremacy, formulated to support local terrorism and caricature Black success (Murray 49).

Particularly, American literature became an outlet for these representations, rehearsing conjurers as embodiments of maleficent forces. For example, in *K.K.K. Sketches, Humorous, and Didactic* (1877), James Melville Beard paints the KKK as innocuous and African Americans as superstitious and irrational; he argues that "Voodooism" is "'the world of shadows,'" "'to the imagination of the black man a thing of gloom'" (qtd. in Murray 49). Thus, in weaving his own fantasy of white superiority, Beard claims that African Americans are filled with superstitious imaginings and fears. Additionally, plantation literature became another source that created and supported these depictions of Afro-American folk practices. In *Red Rock: A Chronicle of Reconstruction* (1898), Thomas Nelson Page depicts his conjurer, Moses, as an evil and grotesque man who wants to rape the white heroine. Page thus produces a narrative of Reconstruction and postbellum life that combines black stereotypes and conjuring to create representations that fuel nationwide acts of white supremacy, such as lynching (Anderson 58).

Furthermore, if conjurers were not fully castigated during the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, they were often portrayed as relics of antebellum slave life. For instance, Thomas Nelson Page's *Uncle Remus: Songs and Sayings* (1880), one of the era's most popular books of plantation literature, depicts conjurers as antebellum figures that Uncle Remus, a slave stereotype

himself, foolishly believes in. Although Uncle Remus tells stories of conjure men and women, his narratives are ultimately relegated to "children stories," superstitious tales to amuse his former master's son. Given how Page characterizes Uncle Remus and his stories, conjurers can only appear as "atavistic" figures, remnants of antebellum life (Murray 52-6). Additionally, George Washington Cable's "Creole Slave Songs" (1886), the most well-known journalistic account of Voodoo during the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, categorizes Voodoo as an antebellum leftover. In Cable's article, Voodoo is interesting, but it is ultimately absurd and "repulsive"; it is a superstition that embodies a slave past (hence, Cable's emphasis on "Slave Songs" in his title).

American folklore studies markedly contributed to these portrayals of conjurers – white folklorists disavowed conjure, sensationalized accounts of conjurers, and employed prevalent black stereotypes to portray conjurers. In 1887, folklorist William Owens describes conjure as a mix of "black 'American-born superstitions'" with "'so-called religious beliefs'"; conjure therefore signified "'a horrible debasement of some of the highest and noblest doctrines of the Christian faith'" (Chireau 14). While folklorists like Owens framed conjure as sacrilegious, other folklorists presented conjure and voodoo as sensationalized and stereotyped representations of blackness. Mary Owen, author of *Ole Rabbit, the Voodoo and Other Sorcerers and Voodoo Tales* (1893), created a "'sensation'" at international folklore meetings with her conjure stories (Chireau 137). Owen's voodoo tales became a drama of black stereotypes, staged and circulated in a venue that purported to uphold scientific and empirical research – she described a conjure man as an "ancient, ill-smelling, half-naked black sinner'" (Murray 58). In her book, his description is accompanied by an illustration entitled "The King of the Voodoos"; the artist draws him holding a whiskey bottle. As Murray points out, Owen's conjure man is therefore

"represented visually as a stock Negro" (58). Thus, American folklore studies, as described in the last chapter, impacted portrayals of conjurers by circulating stereotypes and sensationalizing them.

Overall, these depictions of conjurers, in both mainstream discourse, popular literature, and folklore studies, marginalized Afro folk magic practitioners as grotesque and evil figures or quaint memories of a romanticized plantation life. These representations solidified a view held by many white Americans: "black spirituality was at best distasteful or defective, a product of slave immorality, and at its worst, an outgrowth of African idolatry and heathenism, the result of forces that the elevating power of Christianity had failed to check" (Chireau 126). These views of Afro-religious practices circulated in folklore journals, such as the *Journal of American Folklore*, and popular journals, like *Popular Science Monthly*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and *Harper's*, categorizing conjurers as evil superstitions and thereby influencing white readers' views of Black folk practices (Chireau 159; Anderson 148). Therefore, in the racialized regime of folk representation, conjurers were positioned as menaces to modern American society, and everything from depictions of conjurers as horrifying nightmares to plantation stereotypes operated as prevailing discourse in the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era.

Section Two: How Afro Folk Magic Practitioners Were (Re)positioned by African Americans

For African Americans themselves, conjurers were in a murky, ambivalent, and complex place. Much like "the folk" as a whole, conjurers were both a sign of African authenticity and an obstacle to modernity and racial uplift. In antebellum literature, conjurers often appeared in slave narratives, both as helpful and powerful figures *and* as deceptive swindlers. In *My Southern*

Home; or, The South and Its People (1880), William Wells Brown emphasizes that conjurers were prevalent on slave plantations ("'Nearly every large plantation…had at least one who laid claim to be a fortune teller'"), and these conjurers were "powerful," "significant," and "respected" by other slaves (Chireau 13). Brown, along with other writers of slave narratives such as Henry Bibb and Henry Clay Bruce, described how these conjurers became sources of protection for slaves. Bibb, Bruce, and Brown recount how conjurers challenged slave drivers and offered folk practices to prevent beatings and deportations to other plantations (Chireau 15-16).

Yet, on the other hand, in Frederick Douglass's famous slave narrative, he is skeptical about conjurer Sandy Jenkins. Before Douglass's infamous struggle with slave driver Covey, Sandy gives Douglass a root; Sandy insists that the root, which is supposed to be worn at one's side, will protect Douglass from Covey. Although Douglass describes Sandy as an "old advisor," Douglass only accepts the root to "please him." Douglass carries the root, and although Covey's behavior changes, Douglass implies that this conduct is due to other causes, such as abiding by Sunday's rules of worship. Thus, while Douglass does not deny that Sandy's root could be mentally reassuring, he suggests that it does not have governing power over the physical world. Instead, Douglass implies that his display of manhood defeats Covey. In fact, in later versions of Douglass's autobiography, Douglass heightens this distinction by expanding his degree of skepticism and assertion of free will (Murray 37). This narrative move is emblematic of Douglass's *awareness of the racialized regime of folk representation*, where conjurers were seen

as figures that would discredit your competency or intelligence.[13] Such awareness foreshadows how African American authors represented conjurers during the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem period – a superstitious figure to ultimately leave in the past.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, perceptions of conjurers changed as their depictions merged with notions of racial uplift, modernity, and the Negro Problem. Conjurers, as many white folklorists depicted them, were perceived as a mistrustful group whose practices should be disbanded; the Hampton Folklore Society and African American leaders often agreed with these views in order to challenge assumptions of black inferiority. In the 1870s, as racial uplifters moved to the South to enact Reconstruction programs, they brought with them notions of education and civilization; notably, educators and clergy labeled conjurers as symbols of "degradation, ignorance, and the demoralizing experience of bondage" (Chireau 122-3). Foremost, conjuring was discussed as a holdover from a "premodern" Africa. In this way, conjuring "embodied peculiar mystical traits, an unrefined spirituality, a racial and religious sensibility," and "the essence of the primitive vision" (Chireau 123). As such, conjuring could not be allowed to exist in the present, and, if such beliefs were held, they were an indication of "backwardness" and "barbarism." In other words, they were markers of "civilization," culture, and class (Chireau 126).

Postbellum, Pre-Harlem African American leaders, particularly elites, positioned conjuring as a sign of intraracial division, thus stereotyping Black folk who believed in conjuring. As discussed in Chapter One, Black elites suggested that "Uncivilized Blacks were

[13] Although Douglass's narrative was published in 1845, the regime of racialized folk representation already existed, creating and circulating ideas of the folk.

the ones who believed in conjure doctors, told the animal stories, sang the work songs, and gyrate[d] their bodies in the ring shouts and jook joints…Moreover, many Negro elites found the main culprit of their neighbors' cultural degradation in African cultural patterns ('Research' 52)" (Baker qtd. in Lamothe 26). They reinforced these beliefs through depictions of conjurers and folk beliefs, marking them as unacceptable and "uncultured" practices.

These views of conjuring, and African American folklore in general, often appeared in work by African American authors, such as Charles Chesnutt, and in the philosophies of Black institutions, like the Hampton Institute. As Chesnutt's early journals indicate, he traveled to the South to teach, and while there, he distanced himself from African American folklore. In an 1875 journal entry, he states "Well! uneducated people, are the most bigoted, superstitious, hardest headed people in the world! Those folks down stairs believe in ghosts, luck, horse shoes, cloud signs, and all other kinds of nonsense, and all the argument in the world couldn't get it out of them" (Journals 81-2). Thus, Chesnutt equates superstitions with a lack of "social mobility" and education, yielding a harsh and prejudiced representation of Southern African Americans.

Along with Chesnutt's private views of African American folklore, public African American institutions held these opinions; the Hampton Institute was a prime example. While Hampton offered educational opportunities for many African Americans, its founder, Samuel Armstrong was intent on eradicating African American folk traditions such as conjuring. He believed that it constituted "deadly superstition[s]" and "evil tendencies," which educators had to identify and eliminate in order to "lift" their students (Moody-Turner 59-60). While a handful of students voiced their belief in conjuring, many graduates stated that it was a "vile" and deceptive

practice, one that needed to be rooted out for future generations of African Americans (Chireau 130).

Yet, as early African American folklore began to establish itself in the 1880s and 1890s, conjurers also became folk subjects of study; they merged with folklore theories to signify African survivals that were disappearing in the wake of modernity (Moody-Turner 24). Conjuring was still not seen as socially acceptable for postbellum African Americans, but it was preserved, like a time capsule of African ancestry and racial memory. Thus, in 1897, Alice Bacon views African (American) traditions as valuable to collect. They are traditions that, while not the "correct" form of knowledge," are slowly disappearing due to "proper" education, and thus merit preservation. Conjurers are certainly "disliked," "feared," and gruesome" "imposters" but they are a record of the past to learn from (and avoid). Therefore, Hampton folklorists were encouraged to "preserve a record of customs and beliefs *now happily passing away*, but which connect the Negro's African and American past with his present" (my emphasis, Bacon 152).

Therefore, collecting African American folklore transformed into an act of gathering and curating a "repository of cultural memory and communal values" (Lamothe 24). Hampton Folklore Society emerged around this time, thus coinciding with Newell's views of African American folklore. In 1894, white folklorist William Newell stated that African American folklore was an indication of the past—i.e. distinctly linked to Africa—and African Americans could collect folklore to retain their racial "memory" (Lamothe 29). The Hampton folklore society adopted a similar argument; Bacon explains that one mission of the society is to collect the "reasoning philosophy of a race" through traditions (Bacon, "Folk-lore" 504). Thus, they

treated African American folk traditions as both cultural memories of a race and signs of an "uncivilized" past.

Ultimately, folklorists' late nineteenth-century attitudes toward African American folklore dovetailed with African Americans' long history and investment in African societies, arguments of racial unity, and programs that sought to evaluate African Americans' post-emancipation "progress." In addition to references to African roots in slave narratives, African Americans formed literary and historical societies during antebellum and postbellum periods (McHenry 23-83). During the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, African American intellectuals who were involved in African American folklore continued this work, using their era's interest in African American folklore to inject these traditions with cultural memories and values, which would manifest more pervasively in the Harlem Renaissance.

For example, Anna Julia Cooper, in *A Voice from the South*, argues that African Americans must preserve African American folklore in order challenge Black representation in literature (222-227). In a circular letter, she also directly responds to the Hampton Folklore Society's call for African American folklorists; she agrees with Hampton's goal and argues that African American folklore is a "distinctive" "racial inheritance" (Cooper, "More Letters" 510). Du Bois would later echo Cooper's perspective, combining it more directly with Hegelian theory, to contend that folklore was a cultural repository; particularly, in "Of the Faith of the Fathers," Du Bois believes that conjuring as both "heathenism" and Africa's "'deep emotional nature'" (Murray 59). Therefore, for him, the conjurer becomes a symbol of affect, particular to

African Americans' struggle in America; the conjurer "'rudely but picturesquely expressed the longing, disappointment, and resentment of a stolen and oppressed people'" (Murray 59).[14]

Conjuring also became salvageable as literary and sociological fodder. While conjuring transitioned from a malignant sign to a distinct memory of an African past, it also became a popular sensation – entertainment venues, such as popular literature, used conjuring and its meaning as a mysterious social taboo to sensationalize stories.[15] Simply, it was a subject that drew readers in. In fact, several Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers incorporated conjurers into their narratives as local color writing flourished and American folklore studies was established. Compared to their predecessors, like Douglass, Bruce, and Brigg, Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers, such as Paul Laurence Dunbar, Charles Chesnutt, and Alice Dunbar-Nelson employed Afro folk magic as governing themes in their literature. Dunbar features conjurers in "The Conjuring Contest" (1903). Most famously, Charles Chesnutt parodies Thomas Nelson Page's Uncle Remus with his trickster-like figure Uncle Julius in *The Conjure Women* (1899). Conjuring appears once more in Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901) and Alice Dunbar-Nelson's "The Goodness of St. Rocque," a short story which details Creole traditions and features a voodoo woman.

Additionally, conjurers surface repeatedly in Pauline Hopkins's serialized novels – elderly conjure women guide Hopkins's female protagonists in *Contending Forces* (1900), *Hagar's Daughter* (1901), and *Of One Blood* (1901-2). Significantly, while slave narrators and

[14] Later, notable anthropologist Franz Boas would also affect Du Bois's perception of Africa, and thus his understanding of African American folklore (Appiah 101, 121-122).
[15] However, this does not mean that conjuring was not longer seen as a malignant sign. Instead, here, I point out the additional narratives/significations of conjuring that developed in the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era.

white writers had depicted conjurers in American literature, Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers, authors who were publishing at the end of the century, imbued their narratives with Black magic, deliberately crafting an African American past to reflect a post-emancipation present and future.

Section Three: Narrative Analysis of Characterization, Courtship Plots, and Afro Folk Magic in Pauline Hopkins's *Contending Forces* and Alice Dunbar-Nelson's "The Goodness of St. Rocque"

Contending Forces and "The Goodness of St. Rocque"

Although several Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers incorporated Afro folk magic practitioners in their writing, I want to focus on Alice Dunbar-Nelson's and Pauline Hopkins's use of folk magic in their fiction. While Paul Laurence Dunbar's and Charles Chesnutt's incorporation of African American folklore has been extensively researched, little has been written about Pauline Hopkins's and Alice Dunbar-Nelson's use of folk magic practitioners, especially as it relates to the domestic novel, a popular genre employed by several African American women writers. While one could argue that Hopkins and Dunbar-Nelson were capitalizing on the popularity of Afro folk magic in their era, this explanation does not fully consider the substantial narrative impact and social commentary their inclusion of folk magic created. At a time when conjurers were positioned by a racialized regime as signs of black "inferiority," and then repositioned by African Americans as distinct African relics dying in the face of a modern New Negro-ness, Hopkins and Dunbar-Nelson deliberately chose to include female folk magic practitioners in *Contending Forces* and *The Goodness of St. Rocque*.

Hopkins's *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South* (1900) spans antebellum and postbellum life for African Americans. The novel begins with John and Grace Montfort and their two boys on a North Carolina plantation. Suspecting Grace of having African ancestry, John Pollock marshals his lackeys to kill John and brutally whip Grace. Their two boys are separated, and one, Jesse Montfort, escapes to a Black household in the North. Several years later, the narrative reopens with Jesse's descendants: Ma Smith, Dora Smith, and Will Smith, who have settled in Boston. Sappho Clark, a mysterious mulatta arrives at the Smith's boarding house. Her beauty catches the attention of Will Smith and John Langley, Dora's fiancé and John Pollock's descendant; while Will has pure intentions, John longs to "possess" Sappho. Sappho and Will are drawn to each other, and after a friendship and courtship, they fall in love. But their romance is thwarted. As we find out later, Sappho conceals a tragedy – as a child, she was raped by her half-uncle and gave birth to a child, Alphonse. Her great aunt Madam Frances, a well-known fortuneteller, secretly cares for Alphonse. Langley discovers Sappho's secret and threatens to expose it unless Sappho enters into a sexual relationship with him. Sappho flees, returning to New Orleans and deciding to publicly care for Alphonse as a mother. Resolution comes when Sappho and Will marry; Langley dies in the wilderness. Will and Dora discover their English ancestry, and thus inheritance, and everyone happily moves to England.

Published one year earlier, "The Goodness of St. Rocque, and Other Stories" (1899) also features a love story. The narrative begins with Manuela, a "tall," "slender" and "graceful" Creole girl. She enters the narrative distraught because her lover, Theophile, has been courting another woman, "blonde and petite" Claralie. A desperate Manuela seeks the help of the

Wizened One, a voodoo practitioner. After her visit, she performs the Wizened One's instructions; she prays to St. Rocque at the chapel, lights a candle, and carries a charm. Her efforts eventually prevail. On Manuela's sister's birthday party, Theophile and Manuela dance together. After a private conversation, Theophile leads Manuela "to the head of the table, at the right of the maman," implying that the two will marry.

In "The Goodness of St. Rocque" and *Contending Forces*, Dunbar-Nelson and Hopkins offer two different accounts of folk magic practitioners; the Wizened One in "Goodness" and Madam Frances in *Contending Forces* both align with and diverge from their era's spectrum of Afro folk magic representation. Significantly, while creating these practitioners and incorporating them in their narratives, Hopkins and Dunbar-Nelson also deploy distinct narrative strategies. In the titular "The Goodness of St. Rocque," Dunbar-Nelson creates a different representation of a voodoo woman through character and plot. Dunbar-Nelson's Wizened One becomes a significant "helper" in Manuela's courtship plot, thereby repositioning Afro folk magic as a source of community knowledge and female agency. Contrastingly, Hopkins syncretizes Euro-American spiritualism and conjuring, and she positions Madam Frances in Sappho's courtship plot to voice the America's legacy of racism and exploitation of Black women (Kucich 143). As such, Madam Frances becomes metacommentary on Hopkins's plot, prepping the reader to approve of their union and politicize the novel's domestic space.

Afro Folk Magic and Characterization

Specifically, I want to explore how Hopkins's and Dunbar-Nelson's characterizations of their folk magic practitioners dovetail with their era's racialized regime of folk representation and African Americans' repositioning of folk magic. On one hand, both Dunbar-Nelson and

Hopkins align with the portrayals of conjurers mentioned above. Yet, at the same time, Dunbar-Nelson's characterization contrasts the racialized regime. Also, Hopkins's use of Euro-American spiritualism in Madam Frances's characterization provides an ironic twist on the racialized regime while still performing a denouncement and skepticism of Afro folk magic.

While I mention character-spaces and systems in Chapter Two, I focus on characterization in this chapter. Madam Frances and the Wizened One certainly have less character-space than the protagonists, but they have more character-space than the folk in Chapter Two. Instead of concentrating on these practitioners' character-spaces, I analyze characterization because it sheds light on how specific writers, such as Hopkins and Dunbar-Nelson, contributed their individual views of Afro folk magic.

Foremost, Dunbar-Nelson and Hopkins craft characterizations of folk magic practitioners that both fit and contrast iterations of conjurers in the racialized regime. First, they align with the racialized regime by depicting their practitioners as signs of an antebellum past – they are elderly figures, near the end of their time on earth. In "Goodness," the Wizened One is a "little, wizened yellow woman, who, black-robed, turbaned, and stern" (Dunbar-Nelson). "Little" and "stern," her old "croaking" voice invites Manuela to enter. Similarly, Madam Frances emerges as a hoary character: she appears as if "cut from the purest ebony, albeit somewhat thin and spare" (200). She is one with a "rare mind," "past the meridian of life and now upon the road leading downward into the shadows of the last valley through which we all must pass on our outward

journey toward the spheres of celestial light" (200). Thus, Madam Frances's and the Wizened One's appearances and voices imbibe the past.[16]

Moreover, these elderly figures are othered, representing popular black stereotypes about Afro folk magic. They are described as supernatural creatures, existing outside of the world, *and* stereotypes, parodying a Black generation in a postbellum world. For example, the Wizened One is likened to a creature. To perform her reading, the Wizened One uses her "long grimy talons" to shuffle her "greasy cards" (Dunbar-Nelson). During her readings, Madam Frances's eyes are unsettlingly "sightless," "impress[ing] one as being able to pierce the secrets of the soul" (282-3).

Yet, these practitioners are not only described as otherworldly beings; they also represent popular caricatures. Madam Frances, for instance, most evidently fits into a plantation stereotype, the mammy. A 1872 poem by Sarah Piatt, "The Black Princess: A True Fable of My Old Kentucky Nurse," describes Madam Frances's features as "old, crisp-haired, flat-featured," with a face "like the Sphinx's face," which seems "touched with vast patience, desert grace, and lonesome, brooding mystery" (200). Piatt's poem aligns Madam Frances with a mammy figure. The poem is, in fact, Piatt's homage to her former nurse – the narrator of the poem, a child of a plantation owner, tells the story of an escaped enslaved woman by using the framework of a fairytale, damsel-in-distress narrative (Bennett xxiii). Significantly, the narrator does not focus on the enslaved woman's possible freedom. Instead, in the full poem, the narrator depicts the

[16] Hopkins also references hoodoo in *Contending Forces*, aligning it with Christianity and medical sciences in the form of Doctor Peter's, the "magnetic physician" (131). Here, she also tries to bridge Afro-American spiritualism with current popular, supernatural discourses. But she significantly frames this combination with an antebellum slave character.

Kentucky nurse, "the Black Princess," as an obedient caretaker who, even after escaping slavery, longingly remembers the master's child (Piatt 39). Thus, by using this poem to describe Madam Frances, Hopkins associates her with a mammy, an obedient, loyal servant.[17] This mammy stereotyping continues in the novel; later, John Langley visits Madam Frances for a consult; here, Madam Frances becomes even more like a stock character, as her descriptors only focus on her age, her dark complexion, and her wrapped head (traits that were often combined to depict mammy figures) – in the narrative, Madam Frances has a "wrinkly, black face, and gaudily turbaned head" (282).[18]

Furthermore, Madam Frances and the Wizened One are depicted like folk characters, static figures who are often equated with environments or landscapes. As Mary Rose Kasraie explains, a key feature of local color writing was emphasizing the characters' relationship with the setting:

> the setting—typically rural, often inaccessible, and isolated from encroaching urbanization—plays an essential role in the story and may even be a character itself (stories usually orbit around the village or similarly circumscribed locale and focus on the traditional practices of the community).

Both Hopkins's and Dunbar-Nelson's practitioners are uniquely situated within the community. Manuela must secretly journey down Marais Street, "'two blocks to the river and one below'" to

[17] Notably, Piatt's "The Black Princess" was also published under the title "My Old Kentucky Nurse." (See John Greenleaf Whittier's popular collection, *Songs of Three Centuries* (1877).) Therefore, some readers may have known Hopkins's quotation as a section from "My Old Kentucky Nurse." This title emphasizes the mammy image even more.

[18] Piatt's "The Black Princess" was also printed with an illustration of a Black woman (supposedly the speaker's childhood nurse) in John Piatt's *The Union of American Poetry and Art* (1882). In this illustration, an older Black woman in a plain dress and headscarf stares at the reader.

reach the Wizened One; similarly, when Langley visits Madam Frances, he must walk over to "the Negro quarter," known as "the Hill," where Madam Frances lives in a "small ten-foot wooden building" (275).

In both cases, segregation and communal knowledge are maps for finding folk magic specialists. Though, once found, the Wizened One and Madam Frances are equated with their immediate surroundings. Dunbar-Nelson devotes a paragraph to describe the Wizened One's house – like the conjurers mentioned above, it too is a symbol of the past, overgrown and secluded. The yard is "little and old and weather-beaten." The house itself is a "one story frame [which] had once had been painted," but now is "a memory remote and traditional." Yet, this house is hidden: "straggling morning-glory strove to conceal its time-ravaged face." Like the folk, the setting, and thus Afro folk magic, are "remote and traditional" relics. Similarly, when Langley consults Madam Frances, Hopkins describes the conjurer's setting in-depth, as the narrator insists that "surroundings influence our lives and characters as much as fate, destiny or any supernatural agency" (282). Hopkins, therefore, like Dunbar-Nelson, places importance on Madam Frances's surroundings. Ultimately, like the folk in general, these descriptions of folk magic practitioners add to their marginality even as it fixes them in a particular place.

In addition to mirroring black stereotypes and local color writing expectations, Hopkins's conjurer reflects African Americans' repositioning of conjurers. Specifically, Hopkins's characterization of Madam Frances is close to Cooper's description of African American folklore as "racial inheritance." Hopkins frames conjurers within a cultural evolutionary model, a model which overlays family (Hopkins's tool for character relations and metaphor for human biology). For Hopkins, Madam Frances represents a "racial inheritance" for Sappho; both Sappho and

Madam Frances are from New Orleans, the voodoo epicenter of America. New Orleans is ultimately where Sappho seeks sanctuary after Langley threatens to expose her secret; it is also where Will and Sappho reunite. Given Sappho's genealogical roots in New Orleans, Hopkins draws on the city's rich voodoo history to associate Madam Frances, a seer, with these traditions.[19] Furthermore, with Hopkins's emphasis on Sappho's ancestry (mixed race), Madam Frances comes to stand for an "Africanness" that connects Sappho to her "blackness."

In this way, Madam Frances's presence is similar to descriptions of African American folklore as "racial memory." Madam Frances is a specialist in the "occult arts which were once the glory of the freshly imported African" (199). She represents "superstition," a "racial characteristic" (199), which is "supposed to be a part of the Negro's heritage" (Hopkins 198). The narrator says that Black people "have brought much of it from their native Africa. It gives color, picturesque – light and shade we may say – to the darkness of life and complexion which so far marked the Negro for its own" (198). Since Afro folk magic became a sign of blackness, Madam Frances becomes the "racial memory" of the text, and she, like several mammy characters, holds family secrets – this is the memory that Sappho wants to leave behind. In this way, Hopkins uses Madam Frances as a sign of "blackness," choosing to insert Madam Frances not because she champions or believes in conjuring or voodoo, but because these traditions are shorthand for "blackness."

Additionally, while Madam Frances becomes a metaphor for "blackness," Hopkins adopts her era's conviction that conjuring is a disappearing tradition. Hopkins frames the belief

[19] Madam Frances's practices and readings, however, do not seem to overlap with specific Voodoo rituals or traditions. I therefore broadly refer to Madam Frances as a conjurer, as her "magic" seems to draw on general depictions with Afro folk magic.

in the disappearance of Black folk traditions as an unsettling reflection of white American's perception of African Americans – Hopkins points out that white Americans participate in supernaturalism similar to conjuring, even as they denigrate African Americans. In this way, Hopkins equates cultural similarities to miscegenation; as Sappho and Alphonse embody mixed-racedness through violence, belief in the supernatural reflects a cultural mixture within an uneven power structure. Afro folk magic is believed to be dwindling – African "superstitions" were "transplant[ed]" on American soil (199) and, as a result, "much of [Africans'] supposed power vanish[ed]" (198). While their power disappears, white Americans partake in superstitions, causing the narrator to ask "who shall say that the Negro has not lost his monopoly of one great racial characteristic?" (199). As Murray states, Hopkins's description of superstition

> may be seen as a general lament about the spread of superstition, but the theme of the book is the persistent but unacknowledged mixing of the races, and the slipperiness of the syntax ("who shall say the Negro has not lost"—meaning that he has lost the monopoly over superstition) suggests a sort of ironic revenge. It is as if the power of magic itself has not traveled, but the belief in magic has, and it has infected whites as well. (64)

Therefore, conjuring remains, like the descriptions of conjuring above, as a transient tradition, destined to vanish – Hopkins, however, politicizes this disappearance, framing it as an indication of African Americans' lack of power in America.

While Dunbar-Nelson's and Hopkins's characterizations are similar to Postbellum, Pre-Harlem depictions of Afro folk magic, they also significantly differ. Dunbar-Nelson meaningfully differs from her era's accounts of folk magic by communicating an insider,

communal view of voodoo women. Most notably, she uses references that a Creole audience, or those familiar with voodoo, would recognize. The setting, for example, demonstrates the "belief system among Creoles of color," "combin[ing] the voodoo traditions of the Caribbean with Roman Catholicism, which had been established as the official religion of Louisiana by the Code Noir" (Nagel 98). As scholar James Nagel notes, upon entering the Wizened One's house, Manuela must step over "the customary crushed brick on the front stoop as protection against evil spells, for example, supported by the 'yellow-washed' sidewalk" (Nagel 98). Additionally, inside the house, which has a distinct "Caribbean influence," the Wizened One sits beside "such artifacts of Catholicism as an altar, a portrait of St. Joseph, and a crucifix coexisting with Tarot cards and emblems of voodoo" (Nagel 98). This combination of Catholicism and voodoo was prevalent in New Orleans.

Secondly, Dunbar-Nelson diverges from her era's view of Afro folk magic by portraying voodoo figures as communally trusted (as opposed to deceptive). Although the Wizened One's house is "remote," Manuela knows how it find it. Also, upon receiving the voodoo woman's instructions, Manuela prays to St. Roch (Dunbar-Nelson spells it "Rocque"), a patron saint of bachelors who was well-known in New Orleans folklore; women often prayed to him to help with their love affairs (Nagel 99). Manuela's offering also demonstrates that voodoo is a part of her local community; by seeking the Wizened One out, Manuela is participating in a community of women. When she arrives at the St. Rocque chapel, she places her candle next to several other "wish candles" from other young women (Nagel 99). Manuela's trust in these actions differ significantly from descriptions of folk magic practitioners as deceptive. For example, Daniel Webster Davis, in his description of a conjurer, implies that a conjurer's room of "semi-

darkness" is poorly illuminated to "better impress visitors with its mysteriousness, as well as to save the necessity of too much cleaning" (308). Thus, for Davis, the conjurer's setting is indicative of deception. Contrastingly, Dunbar-Nelson situates the Wizened One as a trusted source, and her surroundings reflect communal knowledge of voodoo practices, which, to those familiar with voodoo, *would engender trust* in the Wizened One's expertise.

Contrastingly, while Dunbar-Nelson leaves clues for a specific audience, Hopkins frames conjuring within a Eurocentric discourse. Hopkins weaves Euro-American spiritualism into her description of Madam Frances. Spiritualism was a religious movement popular in America during the nineteenth century (Ellwood). It began in 1848 with the Fox sisters, two young women who believed that they heard rappings – this story, sensationalized and circulated by the media, gained wide notoriety, and spiritualism grew into a belief in spirits and mediums (Ellwood). Additionally, spiritualism was often associated with abolitionism and women's rights because it "saw itself as a new kind of religion, appropriate to the new republic. Spiritualists claimed that theirs was the most democratic of faiths; anyone, whether clerical elite or not, could become a medium" (Ellwood). Thus, spiritualists often supported movements such as "feminism, penal reform, dress reform, and sometimes utopian communes" (Ellwood). Spiritualism also gave women mediums a platform. As Braude states, "'While not all feminists were Spiritualists, all Spiritualists advocated women's rights" (qtd. in Kucich 7).

Hopkins modifies her depiction of conjuring with Euro-American spiritualism for several reasons – foremost, it allowed to engage her long-standing interest in mesmerism and insert her novel into a discourse familiar to her readers. Hopkins was interested in spiritualism as well as "mesmerism, spiritualistic performances, mysticism," which was a significant part of the New

England intellectual circles that Hopkins was familiar with; she also incorporated spiritualists such as Harriet Martineau and Lizzie Doten into her work (Brown 393). For example, in *Contending Forces,* John Langley's entry into Madam Frances's house is described much like visits to Madame Blatvasky, a well-known Russian medium and "mother" of modern spirituality (Gillman 154). Second, Hopkins may have incorporated Euro-American spiritualism to appeal to her white female bourgeois audience (Kucich 102). While Hopkins had a Black readership (she, for example, read a draft of *Contending Forces* to Boston's Woman's Era Club, an African American women's organization), African American writers, like Hopkins, sought "to make their own cultures recognizable to an audience trained to see non-European cultures as demonstrably inferior" (Kucich 93; Brown 194). These Black writers "found their respective spiritualist traditions a useful means of establishing common ground in the mainstream press" (Brown 194). Thus, Hopkins, recognizing her readership, may have used spiritualism to appeal to a white popular, mainstream discourse.

Yet, Hopkins also included Euro-American spiritualism in order to politicize the domestic space and convince her readership of invisible phenomena, a move which opened the door to critique unspoken elements of American society, the shadows of American history. For example, Langley consults Madam Frances and experiences a séance, a common occurrence in spiritualism that charged the domestic space with communal importance. During seances in the late nineteenth century, people would gather in parlors to contact spirits; in fact, they became "favorite after-dinner pastime[s] among the middle class, and mediums and other experts—for example the many 'investigators' who set up 'scientific' experiments to test spirits or record them on film or cylinder—made fortunes" ("Spiritualism," Bloomsbury). Though, these seances

were not mere experiments; they also represented alternative power structures: seances "mimicked domesticity while at the same time contesting the authority of patriarchal institutions like the church and the university in spiritual and philosophical matters" (Kucich 26-7). Thus, by synthesizing conjuring and spiritualism, Hopkins uses this mixture to frame Madam Frances's readings as a recognition of a racialized and gendered space.

Additionally, Hopkins's introduction of Euro-American spiritualism reinforces Hopkins's political message: like spiritualism, "intangible" and hidden aspects of American history have a real impact on present-day life. Tellingly, when Langley consults Madam Frances, he discovers Sappho's secret – that she has a child. In that same chapter, he, a skeptic of otherworldly insights, also ponders his belief in the spirit world: "all his reasoning…could not convince himself that there was not an intelligence—invisible and intangible—that had presented him those soul-disturbing manifestations" (286). While this statement refers to Madam Frances's reading, Hopkins uses Langley's skepticism, and then realization, to create a parallel between conjuring and racial histories. People failed to acknowledge how white men sexual exploited Black women; yet, it was ever-present and real. Moreover, like Madam Frances's contact with the spirit world, racial ancestry was supposedly "invisible" but could be revealed.

Ultimately, Hopkins's Madam Frances is like her era's stock conjurers – antebellum, elderly, sensationalized, mammy-like and a genealogical and metaphorical connection to African roots; but Madam Frances is also purposefully different. Similarly, Dunbar-Nelson voodoo woman is a traditional folk character, but she is read through a lens of an insider, communal audience.

Afro Folk Magic and Courtship Plots

At the same time, Hopkins and Dunbar-Nelson use these magical women in conjunction with their courtship or marriage plots. The courtship plot usually involves a series of events that describe "the entrance of a young woman into adult society and her subsequent choice among competing suitors" (Hinnant 294). A courtship plot overlaps with and may result in the ever-present marriage plot, which

> refers to a fictional formula that foregrounds romantic relationships, focuses on courtship (wanting, wooing, and winning, one might say), and generally culminates in marriage or at least betrothal. In perhaps the most traditional versions of the formula, white woman meets white man, sparks fly of one kind or another, and after several hundred pages of overcoming obstacles, hero and heroine marry and presumably live happily ever after. (duCille 13-14)

In this plot, which is often heterosexual, characters follow the stages of courtship (initial meeting, romantic interest, and perhaps problems or misunderstandings), usually ending with a particular resolution: marriage.

As for the marriage plot, African American domestic novels primarily joined marriage with racial duty. The marriage plot became "a theorized utopian [union] in which the empowered black heroines archive parity with the men they marry and actively participate in the public sphere, usually through social welfare and racial uplift work" (duCille 31). African American authors who employed these coupling conventions emphasized the right for African Americans to marry, recouping marriage as a "sacred obligation" that could not be destroyed by white men's sexual abuse (duCille 22).

For this chapter, I chose the term "courtship plot" for my narrative analysis because the folk magic practitioner, in both Dunbar-Nelson's and Hopkins's works, is significant in the protagonist's process of dating. While marriage is a definite expectation and driving force, the narrative tension is created in part by the fact that African American women were not guaranteed marriage during slavery. Courtship then not only becomes a road to marriage, and its connotations of social capital and citizenship, but also a path for African American women to signify their virtue and reconstruct their Black womanhood. These displays of Black womanhood then, due to their character, result in marriage. Therefore, "courtship" is a more specific term to outline the narrative tension of the plot progression in Hopkins's and Dunbar-Nelson's texts (whereas "marriage" more so signifies the plot's end). Additionally, while both Hopkins's and Dunbar-Nelson's plots constitute a marriage plot, I focus on courtship acts and how female folk magic practitioners become pivotal helpers in these acts, which eventually lead to marriage.

By using the courtship plot, Hopkins and Dunbar-Nelson had to confront a significant obstacle for female characters: "passionlessness." As Ann duCille explains, passionlessness, or "the idea that (white) women who lacked carnal ardor," was a Victorian ideology (32). Yet, in nineteenth-century fiction, passionlessness

> took on perhaps an even great ideological force when the so-called passionless subjects were black women whom the dominant culture continued to construct as inherently licentious and 'always already sexual.'…For early black women writers, literary passionlessness negated a negative; it endowed virtue to the historically virtueless. (32)

In other words, in African American literature, to combat the "'always already sexual,'" passionlessness became a critical character trait in depicting the often mulatta female protagonists in courtship or marriage plots.

However, this passionlessness presented a problem for texts that wanted to emphasize a woman's piety but also actualize her own agency or racial activism. Passionlessness often meant that every display of passion, lust, or love was crafted to emphasize the women's piety; this often resulted in female protagonists enacting passive roles in their quests for love. Some African American women authors sought to balance passionlessness and political reform by translating "passion" or desire into passion for political activism (Tate 104-5, 107-8). In other words, passion became racial political duty – for example, Mrs. Willis, in her sewing circle with Sappho and other women, transfers passion to racial duty and marriage. Stating that Black women should not be held responsible for the sexual violence they endured, she contends that

> Passion, my dear Miss Clark, is a state is in which the will lies dormant, and all other desires become subservient to one. Enthusiasm for any one object or duty may become a passion. I believe that in some degree passion may be beneficial, but we must guard ourselves against a sinful growth of any appetite. (Hopkins 154-5)

As a result, true love becomes political freedom, a formula that is actualized by Will's and Sappho's eventual union. They marry and epitomize a unified front who, in Hopkins's view, will achieve freedom in another country, England: "United by love, chastened by sorrow and self-sacrifice, he and she planned to work together to bring joy to hearts crushed by despair" (401). Therefore, in *Contending Forces* and other sentimental novels, passion does not completely

disappear, but, as Ann duCille reminds us, is instead "encoded," "regulated, submerged, and insinuated" in the narrative (duCille 45).

Dunbar-Nelson and Hopkins address the conundrum of passionlessness vs. agency by "encoding" passion in their folk magic practitioners. In other words, intervening in courtship, Dunbar-Nelson and Hopkins's practitioners represent the protagonist's indirect agency, guide the female protagonists in their courtship, and sanction the resulting union.

In *Contending Forces,* Sappho expresses passionlessness, particularly at the beginning of the novel, and slowly begins to return Will's gestures as the novel progresses. Sappho's past and her child are a constant cloud, an ever-present obstacle to Sappho's hopes for true love. Thus, it affects her courtship and tempers her expression of passion toward Will. Described as careful and reserved, Sappho is a "cold," "quiet," "self-suppressed," and "self-possessed woman" (227, 97, 114); for her, passionlessness is not only a character trait (an expression of her morality), but also a result of the sexual violence and social ostracism she has experienced. Consequently, during Will's and Sappho's courtship, Sappho is mostly passive (the receiver of Will's affections). For example, on a walk home from choir practice, "Will [takes] her hand in his" (140). Her response is to "let it stay for a moment while she made incoherent little speech clouds and trees" (140). Additionally, at a dance, "A long-stemmed rose that Will wore in his button-hole had been transferred to Sappho's corsage" (163). The indirect language here removes the agency from both Will and Sappho – Hopkins describes Sappho as passive in order to heighten her passionlessness (and thus her piety) and demonstrate her fear of social exclusion.

Consequently, due to Sappho's passionlessness and the passive role it relegates her to, she is unable to be an "active 'subject of her own desire" (42). Sappho wants to marry Will and

she sees a legitimate future with him. After all, their courtship slowly progresses through acts that symbolize domesticity: for example, Sappho and Will's courtship changes from subtle flirting to desires for commitment when Will starts to prepare a daily fire for Sappho. In this way, Hopkins encodes Will's passion in domestic work – and their repartee about "making fire" doubles both as signs of sexual desire and domestic commitment (172-3). However, Sappho still cannot fully express her wish to accept Will's gestures. In fact, "until she marries Will [she is] a fugitive from that desire and a continuing victim of the patriarchal social order that first defiled her and then imposed upon her a sexual standard that condemns her for that defilement" (duCille 42).

However, when Madam Frances enters the text, she functions as a figure to sanction Sappho's expression of passion. Significantly, after realizing her feelings toward Will, Sappho desperately prays because she feels that she cannot receive his love; at this pivotal juncture, Madam Frances makes her first appearance. After Sappho's lament, the next chapter begins with Madam Frances, a conjurer who can reveal "long delayed questions" and "unknown feelings," "who could tell what might happen through her agency" (197-8). In this way, Madam Frances not only becomes a helper in the plot but also a figure who symbolizes a legacy of Black womanhood and significantly opens a space for Sappho's agency. It is at the fair that Sappho decides to "abandon herself so completely to the influence of [Will's] passion" (205). For

> tonight she laid aside her coldness and seemed ready to accept the homage which he was longing to lay at her feet. The girl felt it…The more she thought the stronger became her resolve not to fight against fate, but to accept the goods the gods provided without question. She would arise above maddening fears, penance

> for involuntary wrongs, the sackcloth and ashes of her life, and be as other women, who loved and were beloved. (205)

Sappho's acceptance highlights norms of passionlessness – Sappho is placed in a passive role (she must receive the gift of Will's "longing" which is "la[id] at her feet") and, rather than hot with passion, Sappho is "cold." Yet, while the wording still signals Sappho's passionlessness and passive role, the narrator signals a marked change in her behavior and outlook, and thus her involvement in courtship. Here, she lays down her "coldness," and her feelings are translated into an observance of Christian values – along with Will's love, she will accept God's plan, a shield that will guard her against oversexed portrayals of Black women and a society that blames Black women for their own trauma. Importantly, this acceptance transforms into action:

> So, she smiled on Will bewitchingly; sallies of wit and fun flashed from her pretty lips in a way which was as fascinating as bewildering. Will knew her to be well educated, but had never supposed that she possessed the exquisite art of repartee. Tonight he caught glimpses of an ideal woman and wife, and the glimpse intoxicated him. (205-6)

This change in her behavior represents a desire, however subtle, to express her passion for Will, and these actions, significantly, affirm for Will her possible role as a wife. Interestingly, this decision comes shortly after Madam Frances's arrival.

Moreover, Sappho receives a fortune from Madam Frances, which reads "'The mysterious stars bespeak for you better luck than you have already had. Harassed and perplexed by fickle Fortune, love shall find a way" (209). This fortune supports Sappho's choice and

therefore validates Sappho's and Will's future union. As such, Hopkins uses Madam Frances in the narrative to open a space for Sappho's agency (a more active expression of her passion), that works alongside her passionlessness, and validates her choices by drawing on the authority of mediumship.

Similar to *Contending Forces*, the Wizened One in "Goodness" also enters the narrative at a critical moment, functioning as a helper to address Manuela's passionlessness and shepherd Manuela's agency. While Manuela does not follow the racial duty marriage plot, she is, like Sappho, under the constraint of passionlessness. She arrives at the Wizened One's door in a veil, shedding tears. Yet, the most revealing moment about her passionlessness appears in her lack of dialogue – dialogue that is strategically cut short and shrouded in unspoken understanding. Sitting in front of the Wizened One, Manuela "faintly" begins "I want," "but the Mistress of the Cards understood; she had had much experience. The cards were shuffled in her long grimy talons and stacked before Manuela." Here, the Wizened One is vital – she is a function of the plot (she helps the female protagonist achieve her goal and therefore build tension and resolution). But she also becomes a minor character who symbolizes or encloses the "unnarratability" of Manuela's desires, desires which are unspoken but recognizable by a community of women. "I want," a phrase of longing and desire, hangs in the air but Manuela does not need to complete it. At the same time, since Manuela is able to go to the Wizened One for her love troubles, Manuela then is able to actionalize (i.e. in relation to plot action) her passion (instead of vocalize it). In other words, instead of stating her desire, she instead follows the Wizened One's directives (lighting a candle, wearing a charm, etc.) to enact her own agency.

Both the Wizened One and Madam Frances not only validate the female protagonists' desires but also serve as a metalevel and symbolic realm to confront social issues that restrict Black women's passion. For *Contending Forces,* Hopkins creates a confrontation between two characters that epitomize oppositional forces: African matrilineality (Madam Frances) vs. white patriarchy (John Langley). In the chapter, "Langley Consults Madam Frances," Madam Frances gives Langley a reading. He arrives at Madam Frances's expecting to seek the conjurer's consul to determine a way to "bend [Sappho] to his will" (274). Whereas Will desires Sappho as his wife (i.e. he wants to offer Sappho a future that explicitly contrasts the legacy of kept and sexually abused mulattas during slavery), Langley represents an obstacle to Sappho's marriage and "patriarchy at its worst" (duCille 41). Langley is "an example of the ideology of the father (or uncle) being visited upon the son, who in turn visits upon innocent men and women" (duCille 40). Moreover, he is a threat because his lust is explicitly not intended for marriage, and, he is drawn to Sappho *because* she is "passionless" toward him, thereby demonstrating the continual threat for Black women by white oppressors.

Yet, in Madam Frances's parlor, a domestic space, she holds a séance and reads Langley's future. In this way, she enacts the symbolic space often used in Euro-American spiritualism to destabilize institutions such as patriarchy. Through this séance, Madam Frances becomes an authority by using the spirits to foreshadow John's fate. With "sightless" eyes, she predicts that "You will be defeated, and you will not enjoy the wealth that is about you" (284). Moreover, because Langley decides to not abide by Madam Frances's advice, he will perish alone in a "field of ice and snow, vast and unbroken" (284-6). Thus, as John poses a threat to

Will's and Sappho's courtship, Madam Frances's fortune assures the reader that all will not end well for John and, Will's and Sappho's union, true love, will be achieved.

In a "doubled" space (a domestic space situated within a Black, antislavery community), Madam Frances presages that John's lust will not come to fruition, as it has earlier in the narrative and in American history. Instead, in her doubled space, Madam France declares that John's mindset of possession will not carry into the future. Thus, Madam Frances upholds Sappho's choice to accept Will's love.

In staging this séance, Hopkins also attempts to connect Madam Frances to two aspects: the current popularity of Euro-American folklore/spiritualism and an African and slave legacy. John enters the space to seek a means of control, such as the mesmeric mind-control Hopkins uses in *Of One Blood* and "The Mystery Within Us," but, in a twist of fate/irony, he is undermined by a truth that speaks from beyond (moreover, through a voice that symbolizes an African legacy). Additionally, Hopkins's white female readers may have recognized this séance, framed in the resistance narrative of Euro-American spiritualism and female mediums, as opposition to white patriarchy.

While John's threat does separate Will and Sappho, in the last steps of the courtship plot, Madam Frances and her fortunes arise once again to serve three functions: (1) to help Sappho return to New Orleans, (2) to confirm the punishment of John (and the legacy he represents), and (3) to solidify Sappho's and Will's romantic choices and thus the plot's ending. Madam Frances helps Sappho and Alphonse move to New Orleans. But she also validates Sappho's integrity and her marriage – she confers the title of martyr on Sappho and, even after Madam Frances passes away in New Orleans, her vision of Sappho's and Will's marriage and their following move to

England comes true. Additionally, her premonition of John's future also becomes a reality. In the pursuit of wealth, he perishes alone: "He told himself that the old fortuneteller had been right in her prediction: the field of ice and snow which had been shown to him stretched before him in dreary, unbroken silence" (400). His end is one of silence and regret – thus, as Sappho's love is shielded and sanctioned by a matrilineal conjurer, John's abuse leaves him family-less and mother-less, lacking his genealogical connection to African ancestry.

Contrastingly, in "Goodness," Dunbar-Nelson uses her folk magic practitioner to subtly grapple with the caste and racial obstacles to fulfilling one's love. As James Nagel points out, Manuela, "dark eyed" and of Spanish or Caribbean descent, is caught in a love triangle with a girl of a lighter complexion who is "blond and petite" (Nagel 97). Manuela's dilemma, as Nagel implies, is not simply love; she is faced with a world where Black heritage is "valued" less. In other words, a hurdle in her courtship is class and race based. So, while "The Goodness of St. Rocque" may seem "race-free," it is actually "racially and class coded" (Tate 118), and the Wizened One aides Manuela in achieving "the assertion of self-willed success" over potential regional or caste boundaries (Tate 122). With the help of a voodoo woman, Manuela wears a charm and a Catholic veil to fortify her love.

Overall, both the Wizened One and Madam Frances become vehicles to address the invisible shadows of American society and capture the contradictory and intersubjective nature of being a Black American woman (Kucich 120-1). These magical women, who serve as foundations for families or communities, identify what is believed to be invisible. In this case, their powers of perception reveal both the supernatural *and* racial and social issues. For Madam Frances, she represents a portrait of a Black female legacy, an "African mother," who can use

her powers to condemn America and sanction a new future (Bergman 44). As such, Madam Frances also becomes an "opportunity to consider the explosive connections between women's abuse and the trauma resulting from acts of sexual aggression" (Brown 393). In a different vein, the Wizened One uses her powers to connect Manuela with the actions and desires of an entire community of Creole women.

Ultimately, in Dunbar-Nelson's and Hopkins's fiction, these female folk magic practitioners open up space for agency and passion while creating a matrilineal and racial legacy for postbellum African Americans. At the same time, they validate new modes of Black womanhood and virtue, confront sexual abuse and white male power systems, enclose the unnarratability of passion, and allow women to actualize their passion.

Conclusion

This narrative exploration of plot, character, and Afro folk magic has opened up readings of folk magic in African American literature, reminding us to think about how it functions as action and process (in conjunction with its vocal power). Whereas other critics have highlighted folk magic's vocal power, this emphasis may have silenced other actions in Postbellum, Pre-Harlem works. As such, this chapter sought to recover how Hopkins and Dunbar-Nelson devise a different valence for their practitioners, one that relies on characters' physical actions or behavior (rather than solely on their dialogue).

Before and after slavery, conjurers were manifestations of communal resistance, a continual reminder that outside, invisible forces ruled the world, not slaveowners. White Americans' responded by folding conjurers into their fears and fantasies. During the Postbellum,

Pre-Harlem era, while many African Americans avoided or denounced conjurers because of their association with black inferiority, there was a significant shift in Afro folk magic representation. With this turn, African American authors did not simply use conjurers as sensational fodder – they integrated them into their textual designs to comment on American society or create different stories of people in the African diaspora.

While most critics focus on Charles Chesnutt's conjure women, it is also important to understand how Chesnutt's female contemporaries envisioned folk magic specialists. Dunbar-Nelson and Hopkins begin to invest their practitioners with a Black female tradition, a call back to a matrilineal or communal knowledge protected by Black women, a resource that postbellum generations could mine when navigating obstacles to their love and passion. In doing so, Dunbar-Nelson and Hopkins, with their conjurers, presage the extensive use of conjure in Black women's writing in the twentieth century. Their magical Black women are not simply minor characters. They represent a power to be reckoned with, helping female protagonists who could not afford to be swept up in romance. Appealing to charms and apparitions, they added dimension to apparent passivity.

Chapter 4

The Narrator in Early African American Folklore, Anna Julia Cooper's *A Voice from the South*, and W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*

In the Postbellum, Pre-Harem era, Black bodies, groups, and voices were at stake – in folklore collections Black bodies danced, Black communities gathered, and Black voices sang. As mentioned in Chapter One, the Black body, both in public discourse and early African American folklore studies, was a site of study and a sign of cultural difference. Folklorists sought to record African American traditions (cultural customs created by a body of people). In popular and national discourse, it was a quest to quickly document and authenticate "versions of the black subject, the black body, the black voice" (Smethurst 16). However, as this dissertation tries to demonstrate, many times these representations tried to recall, manifest, and animate the "black body and voice" for the reader "while somehow eliding or eliminating black people," especially their history, citizenship, humanity, and diversity (Smethurst 21). Similarly, early African American folklore studies tried to create visual and audio representations of Black "folk" and connect these representations to authority and realism without acknowledging African American voices, differing viewpoints, and postbellum progress.

In fact, creating an image of Black people (while ignoring their voices) was an enterprise for both nineteenth-century folklore collectors and ethnographers. While collection entailed gathering and documenting cultural traditions, ethnography was usually associated with

attending to the voices of research subjects – for example, in addressing the Smithsonian Institution Board of Regents, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft uses the term "ethnography" for the "'duty of observation in the field'" (qtd. in Bauman and Briggs 253).[20] During the nineteenth-century, as we will see below, ethnographic practices and folklore collections often overlapped; but ethnographers and folklorists harnessed two assumptions in their works: (1) by offering visual descriptions, folklorist and ethnographers could demonstrate and pass on their knowledge of Black folk (i.e. seeing is equivalent to knowing) and (2) by portraying dialect, folklorists and ethnographers could accurately and authentically represent Black voices.

The first assumption harnesses a prominent presumption of the time period: "seeing" equals "knowing." As many scholars have noted, the modernist gaze foregrounded and promoted the presumed link between seeing and knowing: "The gaze, from the perspective of Anglo-American modernism, is an attribute that connotes consciousness and the powers to reason, universalize, and objectify that which the viewer surveys" (Lamothe 4). Thus, observation was a reflection of both the viewer and the subject: by taking note of her surroundings, the gazer displayed consciousness, and therefore had the power to "reason, universalize, and objectify" the subjects that fell within her visual field. Some folklorists, such as Mary A. Owen, provided their readers with captioned illustrations or long visual descriptions of their informants; thus, folklorists like Owen used the pretext of observation to imply that the folklorist (and the audience for the text) could "know" the folk.

[20] In this chapter, I am using "collector" to refer a person collecting stories, songs, superstitions, etc. in a literary format (rather than a museum collector of cultural artifacts).

As for the second assumption, folklorists often operated under the presumption that rendering dialect could accurately capture a folk informant's voice. Several folklorists in the *Journal of American Folklore* and folklore collections regularly appropriated an informant's voice (and, in doing so, obscured the narrator's voice). Many literary scholars have extensive studies on dialect during the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era. With the rise of local color literature and regionalism, several American writers tried to capture different regional dialects, from Irish to Southern dialects (Campbell, "Regionalism and Local Color Fiction"). Using dialect to represent Black voices was popular as well. Famously, Paul Dunbar was caught in his era's fascination with Black dialects as he tried to create his own path as a nationally recognized writer. Despite his desire to be known for his non-dialect poems (*Selected Poems* iv), William Howells, American critic and vocal prominent of realism, praised Dunbar's dialect poems as authentic depictions of Black culture in his 1896 *Harper's Weekly* review of Dunbar's *Majors and Minors* (1895) (Howells 630).

Yet, with this plethora of supposed Black images and sounds, a question arises. Who exactly guides the reader through these sights and sounds? Who is at the helm of Black folk representation? In this chapter, I approach these questions at a narrative level. Folklorists, writers, and African American spokespeople employed the powerful figure of the narrator. In the following pages, I analyze the narrator in both nonfictional works (folklore articles in the *Journal of American Folklore*) and genre-bending works, and I examine how folklorists and African Americans used the narrator role to establish authority over Black folk representation—their visual depiction and speech, as well as their thoughts and cultural outlooks.

Significantly, as we will see, folklore articles and collections, which were influenced by ethnographic practices, are not exempt from narrative analysis because of their nonfictional content. In fact, as James Clifford and George Marcus point out in their groundbreaking work, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (1986), anthropologists such as Bronislaw Malinowski, Franz Boas, Margaret Mead, Edward Sapir, and Ruth Benedict were influenced by literary authors (3). Importantly, ethnographic writing (writing that supplanted missionaries and observers' accounts) is still a literary enterprise, with narrators, metaphors, literary devices, and more.[21] These twentieth-century anthropologists used "literary processes—metaphors, figuration, narrative" in their work; in other words, "literariness" is inherent in fieldnotes and interpretations, "affect[ing] the ways cultural phenomena are registered, from the first jotted 'observations,' to the completed book, to the ways these configurations 'make sense' in determined acts of reading" (Clifford and Marcus 4).[22] Thus, the nonfictional works of anthropology and ethnography are not exempt from literary analysis because anthropologists and ethnographers express their viewpoints by using literary techniques. Or, to put it in narrative theory terms, anthropological and ethnographic texts have flesh-and-blood authors – but, we must remember that they also have implied authors, narrators, and characters (i.e. their subjects).

Given the historical overlap between ethnography and folklore studies, the "literariness" of ethnographic writing is highly applicable to the nineteenth century and its fascination with

[21] Several anthropologists have noted this as well: Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner, Mary Douglas, Claude Levi-Strauss, Jean Duvignaud, and Edmund Leach. Clifford and Marcus state that "Margaret Mead, Edward Sapir, and Ruth Benedict saw themselves as both anthropologists and literary artists" (Clifford and Marcus 3).
[22] As Clifford, Marcus, and several other scholars have observed, anthropologists and ethnographers also use recurring narrative patterns in their writing. For example, some of the most prominent techniques include the arrival narrative (Dunbar 4), free indirect discourse (Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority" 137), and subjectification (Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority" 132).

early African American folklore. During the mid- and late nineteenth century, ethnography and anthropology began to form, creating the emergence of "scientific" ethnographic writing. In 1851, Lewis Henry Morgan offered the reportedly first ethnography, a text that tries to describe Iroquois life from the perspective of Iroquois culture (Sanjek). Franz Boas, Vice President of the *American Folklore Society*, adopted an outlook on research that would align with folklore studies – he enacted the "'salvage ethnography' of memory cultures'" ("Eighth Annual Meeting" 58; Sanjek). Frank Cushing, with his work in the 1880s, and Bronislaw Malinowski, with his research in the 1910s, began to move toward participant observation – Cushing learned Zuni while studying the Zuni Indians, and Malinowski participated in informants' daily lives in the Trobriand Islands (Sanjek).

Around the same time, folklore studies was emerging as a discipline. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, a predecessor of folklore studies, collected Native American narratives in 1839, viewing himself primarily as a collector who gathered the "fossils" of a disappearing culture (McNeil 2). John Wesley Powell, head of the Bureau of Ethnology, was a major figure in shepherding collections of Native American folklore; Powell prescribed to an evolutionary view of culture and oversaw folklore works by nineteenth-century students such as Frank Cushing, Erminnie A. Smith, and James Owen Dorsey (3). In terms of African American folklore, collections of African American folk songs grew in the late nineteenth century; in 1867, William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, Lucy McKim, and other collectors published *Slave Songs of the United States* (4). In the 1800s, George Washington Cable and Joel Chandler Harris, American writers, published influential collections in folklore studies (4-5). In 1888, the

American Folklore Society was founded, and, by the 1893 Chicago's World Fair, folklore was deemed the "'subject of the day'" (Zumwalt 8; Bronner 6).

Folklorists, like anthropologists and ethnographers, had to substantiate and justify their knowledge of a particular subject; many folklorists were also influenced by literature – several folklorists were writers. For folk material to be considered "authentic," it had to be in an original, unchanged form (rather than displayed as an adulterated version). Thus, folklorists sought to convince readers that they were presenting material as close as possible to its original form. Yet, with the era's blend of fictional and nonfictional genres, authenticity was tested, and folklorists worked to detail their relation to these "original forms" through the narrator position. Folklorists had to narratively perform authority over representation, a performance that was informed by and fed into the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem's racialized regime of folk representation. These narrative performances produced recurring narrative roles and techniques.

Drawing from anthropological and ethnographic writing, white folklorists and writers such as Joel Chandler Harris, Mary A. Owens, Charles Leland, and more, generated narrators with certain attributes and roles, and therefore give us a glimpse of the authorial hand and narrator behind representations of the folk. Therefore, in Postbellum, Pre-Harlem works, the narrator, in both fiction and nonfiction, is an important agent to analyze. By surveying the narrators of folklore articles, folklore collections, and African American literature that referenced the folk, we can understand how the narrator wielded control and authority over Black folk representation. Additionally, we can examine how the narrator affected folk representation, especially during a time when there were unstable boundaries between nonfiction and fiction in folklore studies and popular literature (McNeil 5). In this chapter, I also demonstrate how the

folk were constructed through the narrator in Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writing, especially as it manifests in early African American folklore studies and postbellum plantation literature.

Firstly, in folklore collections by white folklorists (and African American authors alike), the narrator often claimed authority over representation through the anthropological concept of "thereness." As James Clifford elucidates in "On Ethnographic Authority," "the predominant mode of modern fieldwork authority is signaled" by the following implicit claim: "'You are there, because I was there'" (118). In other words, the reader can assume the text's veracity, and thus accurately learn about the described culture, because, at one point, the anthropologist or ethnographer experienced that culture. Moreover, ethnographers imply that if the reader had been there as well, she "should have seen what they saw, felt what they felt, [and] concluded what they concluded" (Geertz 16). While Clifford describes "thereness" in the context of Malinowski's twentieth-century research, nineteenth-century folklorists and writers also conveyed the same claim in their writing. Below, I discuss how these folklorists and writers created "thereness" through first-person narration, overt narrators, and situations of happenstance.

However, especially in the pages of the *Journal of American Folklore*, white folklorists also constituted "thereness" and a sense of ethnographic authority by creating a type of narrator who I am calling an "unwarranted insider," a narrator who claims to have grown up in Black culture and, therefore, be extensively aware of Black folk traditions, but whose claims, upon

further examination, are rooted in racist plantation myths or presumptions about community access.[23]

Certainly, some white folklorists could remember traditions that align with African American folklore, or Black informants could have trusted and even accepted white folklorists into their communities. However, I identify the "unwarranted insider" role in an effort to demonstrate white folklorists' complex processes of identification with Black folk groups during the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era. Under the contemporary definition of "folk group," someone can be a part of folk group through "regular contact (proximity) and shared experience (interaction)" (Sims). Thus, it is no surprise that white folklorists attempted to convey to readers that they had extensive knowledge of Black folk groups, especially due to their repertoire of certain traditions or folktales (which were circulated and shared widely). Yet, importantly, their "proximity" and "interaction" were significantly shaped by power structures. Some folklorists wanted their readers to believe that they had unmediated access to Black culture; in reality, their relationship with their chosen folk community was complicated (some were former masters or employers of their informants), or their perceived connection to the community was unfounded altogether because it was based on the plantation myth.

Thus, I argue that white folklorists and writers who evoked the "unwarranted insider" narrator in the *Journal of American Folklore* used the era's prevalent plantation myth to position themselves as cultural insiders of a Black folk culture. They worked to validate their descriptions of Black folk traditions by emphasizing their perceived proximity to blackness. Specifically, they

[23] For the term "unwarranted insider," I use "unwarranted" to signify those who attempt adopt the role of "insider," but whose claim is, in reality, unfounded or "[un]justified or [un]authorized" because it is rooted in the plantation myth ("unwarranted").

suggested that they were insiders of Black culture (1) due to their perceived level of intimacy with Black former slaves and postbellum workers and/or (2) because Black folk traditions, in their eyes, belonged to all Southern traditions and culture. The first claim indicates a view of the world solely through a white gaze (it understands race relations through a one-sided view without taking into account former slaves' or current postbellum workers' possible perspectives). The second claim seeks to erase Black people's claims on their own culture and place Black representation, and thus authority, in the hands of white Americans (especially white Southern Americans). I examine several articles from the *Journal of American Folklore* to understand how folklorists created the "unwarranted insider" to gain authority and a sense of "authenticity" in their writing.

Then, I look at Anna Julia Cooper's *A Voice from the South* (1892) and W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). I study these late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century texts because they are in dialogue with each other. In fact, it is noted that Du Bois's *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (1920) draws from Cooper's "Womanhood: A Vital Element in the Regeneration and Progress of a Race" without citing the author (Gines). While most scholars focus on Du Bois's *The Souls* (or at least Du Bois and Cooper separately), I attempt to place these texts in conversation with each other. By comparing Cooper's and Du Bois's texts, we can note how these Postbellum, Pre-Harlem authors narratively handled the ethnographic white gaze and created the persona of the native ethnographer.

Additionally, by focusing on the narrator in Cooper's *A Voice from the South*, this chapter coincides with criticism on Cooper's Black feminist thought.[24] In particular, this chapter aligns with literary and rhetorical examinations of the intersection between Black women subjectivity and Cooper's pronoun use, audience, and style of argumentation[25] (Moody-Turner, "Anna Julia Cooper"). However, I connect my textual analysis to nineteenth-century folklore studies specifically, viewing Cooper's engagement with folklore as an extension of her political and cultural work.

Section One: How White Folklorists and Writers Positioned Themselves in Early African American Folklore Studies

"Thereness" and Narrators in Early African American Folklore Studies

In this section, I expand James Clifford's and Clifford Geertz's explanation of "thereness" by arguing that, in order to convince readers of their knowledge, folklorists employed the common practice of asserting "thereness" (a spatial or temporal presence at a chosen site) in nineteenth-century folklore studies. In other words, to validate the accuracy of their collected material and interpretations, folklorists often strove to persuade their readers that they had listened to songs or stories or had seen traditions and superstitions in person. Yet, with this authorial intention in mind, how did folklorists evoke such thereness in their writing? How did it manifest as specific narrative techniques and roles?

[24] See Paula Giddings's *When and Where I Enter* (2007), Sharon Harley's "Anna J. Cooper: A Voice for Black Women," and Mary Helen Washington's "Anna Julia Cooper."
[25] Scholars such as Elizabeth Alexander, Stephanie Athey, Shirley Logan, and Todd Vogel have investigated the literary and rhetorical elements of Cooper's work.

White folklorists in the pages of the *Journal of American Folklore* and collections by folklorists such as Joel Chandler Harris and Mary A. Owen attempted to narrativize the claim, "I was there," by using first-person narration and/or an overt narrator (a narrator who "seems to have a distinct personality, someone who makes his or her opinions known" ("Narrators and Narrative Situation"). The narrator also comments on the material or delivers exposition on how she/he obtained folk traditions. For instance, in folklorist Charles Godfrey Leland's introduction to Mary Owen's *Old Rabbit, The Voodoo, and Other Sorcerers* (1893), he uses first-person narration and an overt narrator to attempt to authenticate Owen's volume. First, the narrator tries to establish that Owen "was there," or in other words, she had intimate contact with Voodoo customs and culture: "Miss Owen…has been initiated sufficiently into its mysteries to divine and grasp its full scope and nature, has carefully recorded, and will at some time publish, her very extensive knowledge of the subject" (vi). Here, the first-person narrator draws on his relationship with Owen to present an explicit statement for his reader: Miss Owen is a methodical and knowledgeable researcher because she has been "initiated sufficiently" into Black folk culture.

Leland takes a step further; his narrator's claims also illustrate the concept of "thereness." As mentioned previously, anthropologists and ethnographers implied that the reader, if she/he had been there, would have concluded the same interpretations and felt the same experiences. Similarly, the narrator in Leland's introduction also attempts to convince the reader that, because Owen's material is valid and authentic, the reader will come to the same conclusions and observations as Owen:

> …the reader will understand and detect for himself the predominant elements of the folk-lore in these tales. And doing this he cannot fail to observe that there is in

> this collection, and on almost every page, items of true folk-lore, earnest, clear, and well-defined, while, at the same time, ancient, mysterious, and strange. (Owens vi)

In addition to the narrator's claims of Owen's cultural initiation, the narrator insists that the reader will identify and "detect for himself" the clarity and earnestness of Owen's folk items.

In creating a sense of thereness, folklorists in the *Journal of American Folklore* also presented a specific type of collector: white folklorists often created a narrator who not only was "there" but also *happened* to be there, a variation of the eighteenth-century "man on the spot." The "man on the spot" was known as the "missionary, the administrator, the trader, and the traveller" who would record their views, often through a colonizer lens, on the cultures they came into contact with on their travels (Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority" 122). However, during the late nineteenth century, an "intermediate generation" of anthropologists emerged, fieldworkers who were working to differentiate themselves from the "men on the spot"; these early anthropologists argued that the knowledge of the "men on the spot" "was not informed by the best scientific hypotheses or a sufficient neutrality" (Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority" 122). Instead, they suggested that anthropologists differed from the "men on the spot" by offering "scientific hypotheses" and "sufficient neutrality."

Contrastingly, late nineteenth-century folklore studies still relied on the "man on the spot"; in fact, the stance that some folklorists took could be described as the "man/woman who happened to be on the spot." In other words, narrators in folklore articles and collections expressed how they coincidentally happened to hear or see African diasporic folklore on their travels. For example, in the *Journal of American Folklore Studies (JAF)*, folklorists often did not

use traditional accounts of fieldwork; they instead described folklore from their trips. In his article "Decoration of Graves of Negroes in South Carolina" (1891), Henry Carrington Bolton conducted his collection during "a recent sojourn in Columbia, S.C.," where his "attention was directed to the cemetery for the poorer negroes" (214). Similarly, Charles Peabody in "Notes on Negro Music" (1903), tries to establish his familiarity with African American music by describing how he did not intend to collect African American songs; instead, his collection was a fortunate byproduct of his archeological research.

> During May and June of 1901 and 1902 I was engaged in excavating for the Peabody Museum of Harvard University a mound in Coahoma County, northern Mississippi. At these times we had some opportunity of observing the Negroes and their ways at close range, as we lived in [a] tent or cabin very much as do the rest of the small farmers and laborers, white and black, of the district. Busy archaeologically, we had not very much time left for folk-lore, in itself of not easy excavation, but *willy-nilly* our ears were beset with an abundance of ethnological material in song,-- words and music. (Peabody 148; my emphasis)

For Peabody, he was not simply "there" experiencing African Americans' songs. Instead, he states that he was able to observe African Americans "and their ways at a close range." In fact, he aligns his temporally limited trip with the daily experiences of Mississippi's local workers ("small farmers and laborers, white and black") and mentions that, due to his situated presence and living habits, he just happened to hear these songs—"willy-nilly [his] ears were beset with an abundance of ethnographical material in song" (148). Here, rather than the "thereness" in

ethnography, which usually involves entry into a site for a specific research purpose, Peabody asserts his "thereness" as a collector, a person who *happened* to be there and hear these songs.

Certainly, there were exceptions to or variations of the "thereness" assumption in early African American folklore studies, exceptions that importantly diverged from ethnography. As opposed to ethnographers who grounded their research in the field, there were folklorists in *JAF* who claimed authority over folk representation in place of or in complement to the "I was there" assumption. For example, some folklorists, instead of evoking "thereness," simply cited other scholars, thereby participating in a common literary practice. In fact, in the early *JAF* articles, recording folklore in a physical location was not a necessary requirement for this research. Folklorists often cited articles to support their arguments or copied folk items from magazines and newspapers. Two articles in *JAF* ("Conjuring in Arkansas" (1888) and "Negro Dances in Arkansas" (1888)) include quotes from the *Boston Herald*. William W. Newell's "Myths of Voodoo Worship and Child Sacrifice in Hayti" (1888) employs several citations, seeming to reference more historians and merchants than contemporaneous fieldwork. An 1890 article, "Concerning Negro Sorcery in the United States," includes a collection of newspaper clippings from the *Atlanta Constitution* and the *Philadelphia Evening Telegram*.

Additionally, in George Washington Cable's "Creole Slave Songs" (1886) (this article was published in *Century Magazine*), Cable's narrator, in addition to emphasizing his "thereness" (he obtained some of these songs "direct[ly] from former Creole negro slaves"), frames himself as a fortunate treasure hunter. As a collector, he, in fact, has received the treasures of Creole folklore: "From the treasures of the old chest already mentioned comes to my hand, from the last century most likely, on a ragged yellow sheet of paper, written with a green

ink, one of these old songs" (821) With this statement, the narrator employs a metaphor of treasure-hunting to describe his relation to the material. Although the narrator uses figurative language, he makes a very real claim: he implies that he is a recipient of folklore material. By taking on this role, he suggests that he does not have to be "there," or even in direct contact with the folk, in order to collect and interpret their material. He uses overt narration to confirm that he was, in fact, chosen to receive these "old songs."

The "Unwarranted Insider" Narrator and the Plantation Myth

In the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, some folklorists in the *Journal of American Folklore* and authors of popular folklore collections not only tried to convey a sense of "thereness"; folklorists also tried to position themselves specifically as cultural "insiders" [26] – when in actuality, they created narrators who were "unwarranted insiders." As mentioned above, some white folklorists used the plantation myth to create a type of narrator, the "unwarranted insider," who claimed to be "there" and have authority over her or his subject matter. These narrators implied that rather than being simply "there," they also intimately understood the culture that they documented.

For the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era specifically, white folklorists' and writers' creation of the "unwarranted insider" narrator was often fueled by a national illusion: the plantation myth. The plantation myth was a popularized depiction of slavery that presented plantation life as a harmonious social order of eternally loyal slaves and benevolent masters (Tindell 4-6).

[26] Scholars have pointed out how the native ethnographer or native anthropologist is, at least, a "constantly shifting positionality" that cannot be simplified and, at most, unattainable given such complex positionality (Tsuda 14). However, I focus on how authors attempt to construct its role.

Significantly, the plantation myth, a social construct and often a literary theme, frequently appeared in *JAF* articles. For example, E.M. Backus, in "Negro Ghost Stories," sets the scene of her ghost story by evoking a common plantation stereotype: the mammy. With a "fat, shining face," Aunt Pattie "sleeps on a pallet beside the bed" and "sit[s] in front of the fire and relate[s] ghostly tales" to little children (228). Backus's narrator pointedly focuses on the children's responses rather than on Pattie's hardships – she, like every stereotypical mammy, lives mainly to "comfort" her designated charges. With Backus's description, she frames her African American folk material (ghost stories) with aspects of the plantation myth: its hierarchical social system and the happy and loyal mammy figure.[27]

When the plantation myth blended with anthropological conventions, it created a narrative similar to the "insider researcher." These folklorists claim that, opposed to the arrival narrative of the travelling anthropologist or ethnographer, they never "arrived" at their field site to collect research and then leave[28] -- they designated their "field site" *and* "home" as a plantation (a place that, in their telling, was a space characterized by the harmonious sharing of folk traditions), and they argue that they therefore grew up learning Black folk culture and thus were well-equipped to speak about it.

[27] Emma Morse Backus was originally from New England, rather than the South. In the 1880s, she moved to the South – thus, it seems that she did not live on a plantation during slavery ("Writers of the Day" 5).

[28] This distinction between home and a field site arrives out of a Malinowskian fieldwork tradition where it instates a "radical separation between 'home' and the 'field'" (Bunzl 435). This framework suggests that "'real' fieldwork is conducted in a remote site, a notion that—along with the colonially veiled constitution of center and periphery—constructs the archetypical fieldworker as a 'Euro-American, white, middle-class male (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:12, 16). Fieldwork thus becomes synonymous with a 'heroized journey into Otherness,' the trip that engendered and cemented Malinowski's mythopoetic charter of modern ethnography (Stocking 1992; cf. Clifford 1988)" (Bunzl 435).

Therefore, with this particular narrative, these folklorists tended to position themselves as "insiders" of Black folk culture. Qualitative research designates between two types of researchers: "insider" and "outsider." While ethnography does not use terms such as "insider researcher," the term "insider" serves as a useful way to describe a position a researcher might acquire. An "insider researcher" is "used to describe a situation where the researcher is part of the topic being investigated" (Sherry 433). Importantly, while "insider researchers" may include "native ethnographers," a researcher does not have to be "native." Thus "insider" status is not equivocal to native ethnography, but it can be a component of it. Many scholars have discussed the potential benefits of being an insider researcher. They may include "relatively easy…access to people and resources"; insiders also may be more trusted by their informants (Sherry 435). Significantly, while outsider researchers may have "exact dates when their research will begin and end, insiders are usually expected to have an ongoing connection with the research participants" (Sherry 435). With this premise of an "ongoing connection," insiders may also hold themselves accountable for illustrating and supporting community concerns. Insiders are expected to "be more aware of community sensibilities, and to use more appropriate language, compared with outsiders who might not be aware of established cultural practices" (Sherry 435).

However, although "unwarranted insider" narrators may try to evoke "insider status" by recalling plantation experiences, their claims were built on shaky ground. In attempting to demonstrate their "insider status," they drew on memories that were highly influenced (and depicted according to the principles of) the plantation myth (a romanticized version of the past that elided African Americans' hardships, disenfranchisement, and lack of freedom during slavery). Thus, the insider status itself is invalidated because the culture they have joined, is, in

fact, imaginary; or it is not accessible because of their actual outsider status, a status which was often shaped by power relations. I will discuss the folklorists in the *Journal of American Folklore* and other publications who claim to have insider status when, in fact, they are actually drawing on the plantation myth.

Furthermore, the "unwarranted insider" narrator is different from, but in conversation with, another anthropological/ethnographical role: the "native ethnographer." A "native ethnographer" is an ethnographer who is both an "insider and outsider" of the culture they describe (Lamothe 15). The *International Encyclopedia of Housing and Home* provides a more in-depth definition: "Native ethnographies are developed by the very people about whom the accounts are written. At times they are instructed in ethnographic methods by a university-trained ethnographer, or they may simply take up the project on their own, or the formally trained ethnographer may focus on a community to which he or she belongs" ("Ethnographic Approaches"). Additionally, native ethnographers hold a subject position with two, at times, competing roles. Several anthropologists note how the native ethnographer "moves, more or less uneasily, between two fixed positions or 'worlds'" (Weston 168).

Importantly, while "unwarranted insiders" stress their insider knowledge, they, as opposed to native ethnographers, often do not self-identify with Black folk groups. As we will see below, African American writers fit more into the description of "native ethnographer" than the white *JAF* folklorists below because these Black writers self-identified with Black people (a racial category which was often conflated with folkness). Moreover, like most native ethnographers, they were concerned with "an improvement in the life and conditions of their 'own' people (Jones 2008)" (Baskin 3).

Furthermore, the "unwarranted insider" was also different from folklorists who openly and explicitly recognized their outsiderness. In *A Man Who Adores the Negro* (2008), Patrick Mullen explains how white folklorist Newell Niles Puckett, who collected Southern African American folk beliefs in the 1930s, "recognized that as an outsider, he could never have complete knowledge of African American culture, but he also thought he had more insights than most whites" (Mullen 52). Certainly, Puckett's recognition of his outsiderness does not make him anti-racist, or even more consciously aware of his privilege than the nineteenth-century folklorists in *JAF*. Instead, these different stances of "outsider" and "insider" status illustrate the different ways in which white folklorists tried to gain access to Black folk culture – in other words, we can better understand how race factored into early African American folklore studies by looking at how white folklorists positioned themselves in relation to their Black informants.

To convince their readers of their capabilities as trusted observers (especially during the establishment of the fledging field of early African American folklore studies), some folklorists crafted the role of "unwarranted insider," and used their era's predominant tool of Black suppression, the plantation myth, to do it. By attempting to connect claims of representational authority to the plantation myth, they also implied that a romanticized, plantation past was a self-evident truth, *a place from which their research could be validated.* Narratively, these assumptions about reality and authority often manifested as an overt narrator making a statement (usually in first person) about their affiliation with a Black person or recalling their so-called pleasant memories of a plantation past; these perceived affiliations or memories were then connected to their perceived knowledge of the subject.

For instance, many narrators in *JAF* articles present their memories as evidence of their cultural insider status. However, quite expectedly, they do not point out that their memories are actually romanticized depictions of a plantation past, one that foregrounds their version of the past and ignores power structures that consequently impact their collection practices. Many narrators evoke the backdrop of a plantation South, as seen through their own romanticized memories. Mrs. William Preston Johnston insists that she provides "Two Negro Tales" for audiences who are reading the 1896 issue of *Journal of American Folklore*. However, she does more than simply record tales; she frames them against her particular memory of slave life. In first person, Johnston pointedly describes picturesque summers, days that involved listening to her nurse:

> When we were little children we went for part of every summer, or for the sugar-making season, to Avery's Island, our plantation home in southwestern Louisiana. I distinctly remember being one of a happy group seated in the long grass, on the west side of "Hymettus Hill," watching the shadows lengthen…Seated in the midst of us, and speaking as the voice of the Delphic oracle, was our young nurse, the daughter of Mammy Harriet, now grown too old to follow our restless feet… (194)

Johnston thus sets a scene that erases slaves' hardships, livelihoods, desires, and humanity. While the "sugar-making" season usually connotes even more grueling conditions for slaves, Johnston's narrator simply recounts it as a relaxing summer with a "happy group," "watching the shadows lengthen." It is Mammy Harriet's daughter who entertains them during these summer days. Tellingly, the narrator uses this scene to demonstrate her knowledge of African American

folktales (and thus her insiderness). She presents her memories as evidence of "thereness," and, implicitly, evidence for why she can speak about "negro tales." She styles her romanticized memories as fact, grounding her connection to "negro tales" in a plantation myth.

Johnston uses her narrative to weave the illusion of a serene and socially harmonious plantation past as the "field site" of African American folktales and ghost stories – she evokes the unwarranted insider narrator by placing herself within this illusion, suggesting that her experiences of a "happy" summer at her "plantation home" make her equipped to collect and discuss folktales. Other folklorists such as George Washington Cable and Louis Pendleton try to claim the role of "unwarranted insider" by leaning on the belief that African American customs are a part of white Southern culture, and thus white Americans could accurately collect, present, and interpret these customs. In "Notes on Negro Folk-Lore and Witchcraft in the South" (1890), Louis Pendleton uses first-person narration to argue that both black and white Southern Americans were familiar with his referenced stories ("related to the children of both races even as late as several years after the war" (201)), and he includes himself in this interracial audience. While, unlike some of his fellow folklorists, he does not sketch a particularly romanticized vision of plantation life, Pendleton's narrator does recollect his personal memories to claim authority over representation and imply his cultural insiderness. He asserts that some "of Uncle Remus's tales, when [he] first read them, were already as familiar to [him] as the commonest nursery stories" (201). Similar to the African American folklorists of the Hampton Folklore Society, he connects his personal memory to his authority – because he was "there" in the past, and heard these stories, he can accurately present and interpret them.

On the other hand, Pendleton's contemporary George Washington Cable emerges as a different kind of writer in his articles. Cable both contributes to the plantation myth while slightly undercutting it. In "Creole Slave Songs" (published in the *Century Magazine*), Cable's narrator shows the classic signs of the plantation myth: he envisions "black or tawny nurse 'mammies'" singing these Creole songs and inserts the master's children into these stories ("Now and then the song would find its way through some master's growing child of musical ear") (809). He also assumes the task of interpreting these songs and their potential personal meanings for slaves. While he occasionally admits that his translations could be later corrected by a Creole reader, he proceeds to take a similar native ethnographer role as Frederick Douglass does in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845) and interpret the true feelings by the songs sung by slaves. In other words, Cable's narrator attempts to situate himself as an insider of Black folk culture.

Cable's narrator also offers readings of Creole songs, which seem to slightly undercut the happy, nostalgic picture of the plantation myth; however, in order to do so, he appears to take on the authoritative role of the "unwarranted insider." Seeming to take a page out of Douglass's book, he describes how these slaves had a "faint and gentle melancholy" look, and he frames the songs as a way for slaves to take power away from their master: "But love was his, and toil, and anger, and superstition, and malady" (Cable 810). Nevertheless, Cable's presumptiveness overtakes his subtle subversion as he also deems these songs as "not often contemplative," uses stereotypes to describe slaves' pleasures (rum and dance), and attempts to voice slaves' hardships.

For example, in a rhetorical moment, Cable's narrator asks his reader several questions: "Did the slave feel so painfully that the beauties of the natural earth were not for him? Was it because the overseer's eye was on him that his was not lifted upon them?" (810). Shortly after, the narrator is the one who answers: "It may have been in part" (810). Yet, how precisely does the narrator know this? And, how is the narrator qualified to answer these questions? The answer to these questions guides us back to the unwarranted insider. By interpreting the personal meaning behind these songs and responding with answers to these questions (even if it is a slight answer), Cable implies that he is in a position similar to Douglass, a cultural insider who can explain the cultural and personal significance of these songs to his readers. In other words, his narrator provides interpretations of songs and rhetorical questions from the stance of a "unwarranted insider" (while his interpretations and rhetorical questions also convey this assumed position to his reader).

Other folklorists evoke the "unwarranted insider" narrator by highlighting their proximity to Black workers or storytellers without taking into account power structures that would affect their collection. As mentioned before, folklorists reference their children's nurses, their nurses, or workers. For instance, Mary Olmstead Clarke in "Song-Games of Negro Children in Virginia" (1890) differentiates herself from her Northern audience by claiming that while these songs for the "ear of a New Englander have a strangely foreign sound," she is intimately familiar with these songs because she "heard [them] repeated to [her] children by their colored nurse" (288). In addition to referencing informants such as former nurses, other folklorists reference collections centered around the mammy figure: William C. Bates, when describing Anansi African folktales,

cites tales from collections such as Miss Mary Pamela Milne-Home's "Mamma's Black Nurse Stories" (126).

While some folklorists reference the mammy figure, other folklorists emphasize their relation to Black workers or storytellers. In a 1891 *Journal of American Folklore* article, Joseph A. Haskell's narrator states that "At the expiration of [his] term of service in the army [he] was for several years engaged in cotton-planting in North Carolina, where [he] had good opportunities for observing the peculiar characteristics of the then recently freed slaves" (267). With this sentence, the narrator conjures a postbellum power structure in his report of "sacrificial offerings among North Carolina Negroes." As such, he does not acknowledge how this postbellum power structure (overseeing Black workers) questions rather than validates his collected material; his position, at best, complicates and, at worst, invalidates/blocks his relation to his informants and/or subjects. If these workers are treated as his observed subjects, Haskell's narrator is very similar to the colonizing eye of the white traveler/"explorer," and, if these workers are seen as his informants, the narrator nevertheless assumes that he has access to their culture. Yet, Haskell's unwarranted insider narrator precisely includes his experience "cotton-planting in North Carolina," as if he has entry to, rather than complicated relationships with, Black folk culture. Ultimately, Haskell and Clarke do not recognize that their planters, foremen, and nurses are culture-brokers, people who move between a Black community and a Southern white society (Kedia 179). The "aunts" and "uncles" they record may alter their stories and traditions in front of Clarke and Haskell – Haskell's and Clarke's relation to their informants, however, is left unquestioned by their narrators.

These plantation myth patterns carried over into longer, popular African American folklore collections by white folklorists and writers. Folklorists Joel Chandler Harris and Mary A. Owen produced two popular collections, which deliberately teetered between fictional entertainment and recorded folklore; these collections were circulated and lauded in both popular discourse and folklore societies, thereby informing late nineteenth-century American folklorists. Owen even presented a paper on "Missouri-Negro traditions…before the Folk-Lore Congress in 1891," which "received the great honour of a distinguishing complimentary notice in an editorial article in the London Times" (ix).

Significantly, in their collections, Harris and Owen used the plantation myth to assert not only their "thereness," but also their access to and acculturation into Black folk culture. First, their narrators insist that they witnessed the telling of their collected tales and that they have specialized knowledge of their subjects because they grew up in Black culture. For example, like the folklorists above, Leland suggests that Owen is able to reliably narrate these stories because of her cultural insiderness and proximity to blackness: "Mary A. Owen was not only born and brought up, as her writings indicate, among the most 'superstitious,' race conceivable, but had from infancy an intense desire, aided by a marvelous memory, to collect and remember all that she learned" (Owen viii). Owen spent her childhood among Black Americans (in Leland's estimation the "most 'superstitious' race conceivable") and therefore, he implies, she is well-versed in these tales and able to be a reliable and trusted folklorist.

In his famous *Uncle Remus: Songs and Sayings* (1881), Joel Chandler Harris's narrator uses a different technique to claim authority over Black folk representation. He attempts to align his folk depictions, in this case "dialect," with both a white and Black Southern audience: Harris

argues that he includes legends that "have become a part of the domestic history of every Southern family." With this assertion, Harris's narrator subtly tries to justify his collection of these stories by implying that they belong to "every Southern family," both Black and white. Thus, he implies that he can collect, represent, and comment on the African American tales in his popular collection because these tales belong to a wider Southern audience, regardless of race. However, as mentioned above, this assumption places ownership of African American folklore in the hands of white Southern Americans – Harris assumes that the reader must believe that he can present these tales because he, like "every Southern family," experienced them. Thus, Harris's narrator takes up the stance of an unwarranted insider – he subtly suggests that he can collect and present these African American folktales *due to plantation life* (and the interactions it forced between black and white Southern Americans).

Moreover, Harris's narrator attempts to authenticate his role as a cultural insider (as well as a folklorist) by describing how he used participant-observation to be accepted into Black folk storytelling culture: "Curiously enough, I have found few negroes who will acknowledge to a stranger that they know anything of these legends; and yet to relate one of the stories is the surest road to their confidence and esteem. In this way, and in this way only, I have been enabled to collect and verify the folklore included in this volume." Harris's narrator attempts to authenticate his reliability and veracity by claiming that he is knowledgeable enough about folktales, so much so that he was accepted by his informants. It could be argued that, based on Harris's account, he was considered an insider by some of his informants, since those within a community expect insiders to "be more aware of community sensibilities, and to use more appropriate language, compared with outsiders who might not be aware of established cultural practices" (Sherry 435).

However, while the narrator notes his difficulty in gaining trust (thus signaling his outsiderness as well as his potential insiderness), he does not acknowledge that information about a subject does not necessarily mean access to a particular community. While he notes his informants' apprehensions in telling their tales, he is ultimately surprised that informants are not willing to disclose these legends in the first place (even though folklore studies itself implied that these superstitions and stories were "ignorant"). Instead of dissecting his informants' reservations, Harris's narrator works to persuade his reader that he has truly gained his informants' "confidence and esteem" and suggests that he is able to "verify the folklore" through his proximity to blackness (i.e. his Black informants). Thus, Harris's narrator, uses a two-pronged approach to position himself as a unwarranted insider: he can document these tales because he is both personally familiar with the culture (he, like other Southern families, have heard these stories) and because of his participation in Black folk storytelling.

Yet, most importantly, in addition to establishing authority by drawing on memories, generalized claims, and participant-observation, Harris and Owen employ the unwarranted insider by evoking the plantation myth to frame their (supposed) nonfictional material (while still attempting to maintain notions of objectiveness and anthropological/folkloric collection practices). Harris significantly instates a plantation myth framework in his introduction and, despite his claims that his book is less like a "humorous publication" and more like an "ethnological" account, he uses a fictional setting between a slave and a master's child. In his introduction, he opens his collection by directly addressing the reader, informing him of how he must read this material: *through a plantation myth lens*. He states that

> If the reader not familiar with plantation life will imagine that the *myth*—stories of Uncle Remus are told night after night to a little boy by an old negro who appears to be venerable enough to have lived during the period which he describes—who has nothing but pleasant memories of the discipline of slavery—and who has all the prejudices of caste and pride of family that were the natural results of the system; if the reader can imagine all this, he will find little difficulty in appreciating and sympathizing with the air of affectionate superiority which Uncle Remus assumes as he proceeds to unfold the mysteries of plantation lore to a little child who is the product of that practical reconstruction which has been going on to some extent since the war in spite of the politicians. (my emphasis)

Here, the narrator actually instructs his reader to use plantation stereotypes to imagine a frame of reference for his collection. In fact, he argues that his reader must conjure the master-slave relation between the two recurring characters in the collection, Uncle Remus (the stereotypical, old, caring slave) and a little boy to "appreciate" and "sympathize" with his book. With this plantation myth frame, Harris's narrator squarely sets a romanticized plantation past as his "field site" and his "home," and thus illustrates the process of the unwarranted insider narrator: declaring an insider status in a Black folk community while actually speaking from the imagined "site" of a plantation myth. Moreover, he encourages his readers to start from the location of the plantation myth as well – he enacts a move similar to the concept of "thereness," persuading his readers that if they also employ this plantation myth framework, they can be "there" as well.

In *Old Rabbit, the Voodoo, and Other Sorcerers* (1893), Mary Owen uses a similar narrative frame as Harris. In fact, Owen depicts herself as a child (a young girl named "Tow

Head") surrounded by Granny and Granny's friends. At the 1891 Second International Folklore Congress, Owen even discusses how her nurse, "Aunt Mymme Whitehead," was a conjurer (Olson 19).[29] In presenting her childhood memories, Owen uses several plantation stereotypes of the mammy to characterize Black women throughout the volume. In fact, in the volume's introduction, folklorist Charles Leland even indorses these stereotypes by recalling his own memories: "The separate characters of the old Aunties, who tell the tales in it, are admirally [sic] described and clearly presented. The 'real old Guinea nigger,' who had been a slave, was not unknown to me in my boyhood, and I well remember one who was more than a hundred years old, who could speak only Dutch and African" (viii). He evokes a black stereotype in order to, he believes, validate Owen's collection.

At the beginning of the collection, the narrator adds to these plantation myth stereotypes by inserting statements that confer judgement on antebellum life. Specifically, when describing the mammy characters, the narrator tries to persuade the reader that plantation life was filled with now longed-for memories. The narrator, in fact, draws on a modern vs. folk dichotomy to depict Aunt Emily's past as a simpler and purer time:

> she trudged the two miles between the cabins to visit Granny and smoke her tobacco, and talk of the good old times, the like of which they should never see again—those times when the thriving city, growing so rapidly towards their

[29] Interestingly, Owen's collection lies on an uneasy line between fiction and nonfiction. Some portrayals may be based on real people. But, it is difficult to discern how much was fictionalized: "While it is difficult to know the degree of artistic license Owen employed when writing Old Rabbit, it appears that her portraits of Mymee Whitehead and Aunt Mary were based on actual residents of St. Joseph…Because slave records included in the 1850 census do not list the Cargills' slaves by name, there is no way to verify that either one of the women worked in the household or belonged to the family" (Olson 19-20).

> country cabins, had been only a cluster of shanties…in the good old times, when the heart of Mother Nature beat in unison with her children's, and she did not in the depths of her scarred bosom and sapped arteries feel herself a Lear despised of the children she had enriched. (8-9)

The narrator eventually connects this romanticization of country life, which appears continuously in local color fiction, and applies it to the other women's memories: "The good old times! the good told times! others besides Aunt Em'ly look back on them with regret and longing" (9). In the narrator's rendering, the mammies, despite being oppressed by slavery, fondly reminisce about the past. In Owen's portrayal, her informants themselves become symbols of the plantation myth, nostalgically recounting the past as a purely pleasant one.

In Owen's collection, we therefore have the unwarranted insider narrator occurring in both the introduction and the chapters. First, Leland tries to depict Owen as an insider of Black folk culture by aligning his memories with Owen's stereotypical mammy figures, and he assures his readers that Owen has lived among African Americans (i.e. proximity to blackness). Second, Owen's narrator, through plantation stereotypes and reimagined pasts, tries to use the plantation myth as a legitimate frame of reference for ethnographic research. As a result, even as Owen and Leland try to convince the reader of Owen's cultural insiderness, the narrator uses a lens that leads knowledgeable readers to question (if not negate) such claims of insiderness.

However, as opposed to using the plantation myth to create a sense of "cultural insiderness" (like Johnston, Owen, and Harris's unwarranted insider narrators), some folklorists go even farther by arguing that plantation life was beneficial for African American folk – Alcée Fortier's evocation of the plantation myth in the *Journal of American Folklore* is a prime

example. In the article "Customs and Superstitions in Louisiana" (1888), the narrator includes the plantation myth (benevolent masters and grateful slaves) while describing Louisianan customs. He insists that slaves "were, as a rule, well treated by their masters, and, in spite of their slavery, they were contented and happy. Not having any of the responsibilities of life, they were less serious than the present freedmen, and more inclined to take advantage of all opportunities to amuse themselves" (136). Moreover, he ardently refutes literary representations of slave life that contradict this image. He, for example, exclaims that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was not an accurate portrayal: "Very different is the scene from those described in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' for the slaves were certainly not unhappy on the plantations" (137). In Fortier's article, his narrator, like all plantation myth tales, tries to argue that slaves were happy and cared for.

Significantly, in an article that is supposed to verify and authenticate traditions, Fortier's narrator places this racist argument beside to his recorded customs and superstitions, thereby veiling his folk material in a plantation myth. The plantation myth becomes a tool: the narrator uses the genre of folklore studies to contend that the plantation myth is the correct view of the past. At the same time, having grounded his article in the plantation myth (i.e. his particular perception of the past), he then positions this myth as historical fact and constitutes it as a feasible frame of reference for his recorded folk material.

Narrators, Seeing is Knowing, and Appropriating Voices

Once establishing thereness, folklorists, whether they used an unwarranted insider narrator or not, continued to claim authority over Black representation by evoking the "seeing is knowing" equation or by appropriating Black voices. In fact, we will see how the narrator affects, shapes, and attempts to take control of Black folk bodies and voices.

In terms of early American folklore studies, the assumption of "seeing is knowing" meant that folklorists could assert their knowledge about a group of people (such as African Americans) through visual description. As such, the narrator, a key agent in providing visual description and narrative perception (focalization), became another way that folklorists could implement the "seeing is knowing" equation, and therefore assert their authority over their view of African American people and African American folklore.

For example, in Mary Owen's collection, her narrator evokes the "seeing is knowing" equation by devoting the first pages of the collection to a series of visual descriptions and illustrations about the different Black women who recur in the volume.[30] These descriptions, quite expectedly, are laden with stereotypes – "Big Angy" is a "primitive type" of a "supposedly very modern business method, the commercial traveller" (5), "Aunt Em'ly" has "round eyes [that look] on the world with childlike content, in spite of her hard labours" (8), and "Aunt Mary" is a "typical darkey" with "a snowy turban," "great eyeballs," and "polished teeth" (9). Yet, in Owen's introduction, Charles Leland argues that these "old Aunties" "are admirally [sic] described and clearly presented" (viii). With this abundant visual description and accompanying illustrations, the narrator echoes Leland's assertion, though this time using Barthes's reality effect (an abundance of specific details to create the illusion of reality) to suggest that the author truly "knows" women like Aunt Emily and Aunt Mary (Bensmaia 928-9). African American folklorists and writers ultimately confront this "seeing is knowing" equation, as we will see with

[30] In her collection, Owen has several illustrations drawn by Juliette A. Owen and Louis Wain. The collection's cover has a picture of a Black woman in a turban with wide, surprised eyes. Particularly, in the first chapter, there is an illustration titled "The Aunties and Tow Head" (illustrated by Juliette A. Owen) (7). All of the Black women are gathered around a fire – two women have turbans on. One woman, who has short braids sticking out of the top of her head, lovingly cradles a small white girl. A black cat sits at their feet.

W.E.B. Du Bois's and Anna Julia Cooper's texts (and as we saw with Charles Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition* in Chapter Two).

Additionally, in early African American folklore, white folklorists' narrators (through aspects such as word choice and description of their characters/informants) also employed "subjectification," a concept that works in conjunction with the "knowing" part of the "seeing is knowing" equation. Subjectification concentrates more on the informants themselves and how they are objectified and subjectified. Subjectification occurs when "texts become evidences of an englobing context, a 'cultural' reality. Moreover, as specific authors and actors are severed from their productions, a generalized 'author' must be invented to account for the world or context within which the texts are fictionally relocated" (Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority" 132). It was heavily used in anthropological and ethnographic writing. Anthropologist James Clifford, who explains this technique, offers the following examples: "The Nuer think…" and "The Nuer sense of time" (Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority" 137). In folklore articles, subjectification was a way for folklorists to fit their folk informants into subjecthood – in describing their culture, the folk became a large mass that served as a stand-in for a certain worldview (and, often, this worldview was labeled as superstitious, uneducated, arcane, and childlike). Thus, by reading these folklore articles, it is implied that the reader can "know" not only the individual subject but also the cultural view of the subject's entire community.

In the *Journal of American Folklore*, folklorists employ subjectification. In some cases, these moments of subjectification are more expected and subtle, such as ascribing a viewpoint to an entire regional group ("as told by the negroes inhabiting [southern Georgia]" (Pendleton 201)). Other moments are more overt, as the narrator speaks for (rather than about) the subject:

"[Black people] are passionately fond of music; and although as an art it has not been developed in any extent among them, yet it forms a great feature in their lives" (Trowbridge 279). With this statement, "negroes" are placed as the subject; what follows are their supposed feelings about music (additionally, the narrator applies the term "negro" to Black Jamaican inhabitants). Here, the narrator makes Black people into a subject and aligns them with a generalized view. Narrators may use subjectification in tandem with visual description or on its own (as commentary about the folk they just visually described).

Moreover, in addition to emphasizing visual information or employing subjectification, folklorists wielded authority over Black representation by (1) obfuscating the narrator's voice (and the authorial hand) and/or (2) obfuscating/appropriating an informant's voice. When discussing voice in the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, many scholars focus on dialect. Given the era's connection between authenticity/realism and dialect, it is unsurprising that many folklorists rendered their informants' stories or information in dialect; or, folklorists made claims of authenticity about the dialects they presented to their readers. For example, several *JAF* articles that record African diasporic tales are presented in dialect, such as works by Marcia McLennan, William C. Bates, Mrs. William Preston Johnston, and Pamela Coleman Smith. Additionally, Joel Chandler Harris discusses his efforts to render their writing in dialect. Harris states that his "purpose has been to preserve the legends themselves in their original simplicity, and to wed them permanently to the quaint dialect—if, indeed, it can be called dialect." With this sentence, Harris not only assumes that he can accurately "preserve" African American folklore; he also denigrates it, removing complexity from African American traditions and condescendingly questioning whether African American vernacular qualifies as a form of expression. In Mary

Owen's introduction, Leland evaluates the dialect that Owen uses throughout her volume: "the dialect is really correctly given, [which] is shown by the consistency of the spelling" (ix). With these statements, folklorists like Harris and Owen suggest that they were "not only there," but that they are also versed in their informants' speech patterns – in actuality, they capture, instead of their informants' voices, their own romanticized rendering of dialect.

However, it is also important to recognize the connotations behind the narrator's voice (as well as the folk's voice), and how voice operated on a narrative level. Quite expectedly, not many nineteenth-century folklorists self-reflexively point out their narrating voice (and its subjectivity) (as opposed to contemporary folklorists). Instead, the narrator is taken as truthful and objective. Particularly, George Washington Cable's description of folklore collectors highlights how the expected role of the folklorist may obscure a significant reality: the narrator's voice is subjective. In *The Century Magazine*, Cable suggests that folklorists are "miners" or "sappers" who collect folk traditions (823); while Cable does openly recognize his potential shortcomings as an author (such as translation), I believe it is important to note Cable's word choice because it underlines a critical distinction among folklorists: he rhetorically positions himself as a collector rather than an interpreter. As a collector, he presents his collection as if his translations are the "real" voices of the people. By foregrounding collection (such as documenting stories or quoting informants), it obscures the fact that the narrator still provides opinions about these materials (and that the implied author curates the material's presentation). In this way, some nineteenth-century folklorists fail to note the narrator's presence or voice (and thus the biased interpretation it provides for its readers). Therefore, there is a need to analyze

how the implied author presents the narrator's voice vs. the informant's voice (and how, often, they mistakenly cast these voices as one-in-the-same).

Specifically, folklorists in the *Journal of American Folklore* often blended their narrators' voices with their informants' supposed voices, thereby making it hard to distinguish between the two. This blurring of informants' and narrator's voices usually occurred under two circumstances: (1) since folklorists regularly referenced other articles or quoted informants in their articles, a double-voicedness could occur, where it became unclear whether the narrator, the informant, or another referenced writer was speaking; and/or (2) the narrator blurred their voice with the informant's by openly stating or alluding to the fact that they were choosing to speak for their informant. In the first case, several folklorists either supplemented or replaced "thereness" with referenced material; in other words, rather than having to physically be at a field site or experience traditions first-hand, folklorists could reference other articles. For example, as mentioned above, some JAF articles quote pieces from the *Boston Herald*, the *Atlanta Constitution*, the *Philadelphia Evening Telegram,* and more. As such, their articles could be filled with multiple voices *other than their informants'*. The result is a polyvocality that, at times, obscures the ownership of a particular voice.

As for the second case, some folklorists drew the reader's attention to their appropriation of voice. In her *JAF* article, Mrs. William Preston Johnston directly tells her reader that she appropriates her former nurse's voice: "I tell the stories in the language of our nurse, the language of a house servant, widely different from that of field hands" (Johnston 194). After this statement, Johnston then presents two stories, "Mr. Deer's My Riding Horse" and "Trouble, Trouble, Brer Alligator!" in first-person dialect (supposedly as told from the perspective of her

late nurse). Johnston believes that she takes on "the language of [her] nurse" in these stories, implying that the reader can trust her dialect representation because she has intimate knowledge of plantation life, thereby making her an expert in even distinguishing between the "language" of house servants and field hands. Yet, Johnston appropriates her nurse's voice. Significantly, Johnston tells her reader about her act of performance; as opposed to ethnographic accounts, which seek to record (instead of necessarily perform) their informants' speech, Johnston places herself as a performer. The fact that this kind of positionality is presented in a folklore studies journal demonstrates the era's wavy line between minstrelsy, plantation literature, and early African American folklore studies in the late nineteenth century.

Similarly, in Mary Owen's collection, readers receive stories through characters' long paragraphs of dialect and the narrator's voice. In Chapter Two, Aunt Emily tells the story of a goose, and her dialogue takes up several long paragraphs as she finishes the tale and converses with the other Black women (30). In this case, the implied author is rendering Emily's story *and* voice in order to create a sense of "authenticity," a fact which may be less readily apparent due to the quoted dialogue. At the same time, when Owen does not use quotation marks, a question becomes even more prominent: why does the narrator's voice take over for the character's voice? Certainly, the narrator, as in the introduction, narrates her characters' potential thoughts – when describing antebellum times, the narrator tells her readers that Aunt Emily and the other women enjoyed them: "The good old times! The good old times! others besides Aunt Em'ly look back on them with regret and longing" (9). Yet, in some chapters, the narrator does not only potentially voice the characters' thoughts but also takes over the telling of a story in "standard" English: "after Aunt Mary had handed round generous lumps of prawleens, Big Aungy told this:-

-In the old time there was…" (44). Significantly, after the dialogue tag, the narrator, without using quotation marks, continues to tell Mary's story. This transition is significant because, in other parts of the collection, the characters tell the stories; yet, here, in the scene of a storytelling session, the narrator picks up the story's thread. With the implied author switching between the character's and narrator's voice to tell tales, does she expect her reader to trust the reliability or accuracy of both voices equally? With one voice taking over for another, the implied author could be suggesting that both the character and the narrator are familiar with the storytelling process, and they both present valid ways of representing African American folklore. Such an implication is deceptive – it obscures the fact that both Mary's dialect and the narrator's voice are Owen's plantation myth reconstruction of a storytelling session. Mary's real, quoted dialogue may not exist in the narrative at all.

In fact, when the narrator takes over the telling, the reader is experiencing the character's focalization and the narrator's voice – in other words, the narrator uses her own words to speak for the character's perception. However, since Owen's volume is nonfictional and fictional (a fictional work with nonfictional elements), this distinction between focalization and voice is even more important: it demonstrates how Owen's presumed stance as an "insider" can, fact, be challenged. In other words, the real Big Aungy (the flesh-and-blood character who may serve as Owen's character inspiration) is not the same as the character in Owen's book. Therefore, when the narrator continues telling Big Aungy's story, the reader is actually perceiving the story through Owen's voice *and* Owen's imagined version of her nurse; at the same time, the reader is led to believe, by the narrator, that she or he is experiencing this story through the eyes of a flesh-and-blood informant.

On the other hand, while Mary Owen tries to obscure her perception in the narrative, George Washington Cable acknowledges that he is a key agent in representing Creole slave songs. Though he offers translations, he envisions a Creole reader who "will give us translations of these things" (811). Nevertheless, Cable's goal is to convince the reader that he is at least in conversation with people familiar with Creole traditions, and he subtly aligns his narrating voice with their voices. On the first page, the narrator mentions that a "'Creole lady writes me almost as I write this, 'It takes a whole life to speak such a language [Creole dialect] in form'" (807). Here, the narrator places emphasis on time (he could have simply stated that a "Creole lady" wrote him). The Creole woman's voice is introduced and quoted, and it is aligned with the narrator's voice, and even the act of narration, implying that her voice is informing his article and his representations of Creole dialect (i.e. other informants' voices).

Narrators, Informants, and the Creation of Social Hierarchies

Lastly, some narrators would try to place themselves above their Black folk subjects. These narrators asserted their authority by creating a hierarchy between themselves and their informants. In other words, folklorists used a number of techniques (for example, rhetorical questions and representations of informants/subjects) to assert their "social distance" from their informants (Lamothe 7) – they argued that they could accurately describe folk traditions, but they were more sophisticated and educated than the folk who shared their superstitions, songs, and folktales. By separating themselves from the folk, these folklorists suggested a degree of "social distance" (and placed value on that perceived distance), even as the same folklorists claimed to be cultural insiders (Lamothe 7).

Narratively, folklorists professed social distance through several methods such as (1) rhetorical questions, (2) word choice (in describing informants), and (3) comparisons. These methods focus on the narrator's tone and style. First, some narrators in *The Journal of American Folklore* convey their attitudes toward the narrated (Margolin 653) by using rhetorical questions; these questions, of course, are not looking for an answer, but instead are used to engage the reader. Importantly, they already have a predetermined answer; they suppose that the narrator is more educated and modern than her/his informants. For example, an overt presumption about Africans and African Americans guides Heli Chatelain's essay, "Some Causes of the Retardation of African Progress." Unsurprisingly, Chatelain asks "How is it, that with such a bright intellect, backed by such a hardy physique, the African negro should have remained in such a low state of culture?" (178). Chatelain uses this rhetorical question to further draw cultural lines between African diasporic people and other races.

Throughout folklore articles, narrators also separate themselves from their informants by using words that paint their subjects as oddities to be observed, sometimes without empathy. In Ada Trowbridge's "Negro Customs and Folk-Stories of Jamaica," she displays an insensitivity to observing wakes, expressing gleeful voyeurism by calling it "thrilling" to watch: "Among the many curious and interesting native customs there is none more interesting, one might say thrilling, to the foreigner than the 'sit up,' so called by them, or wake, held around the hut of a dead or dying friend" (279). Lastly, one narrator uses the old figure of the colonist to place herself above her informants. Comparing her work to the historically loaded genre of colonialist narratives, she states that "In reading her letters I have often been reminded of the title of an imaginary work called 'Travels among the Savages, by one of their Chiefs'" (viii). Thus, with

the sentence, the writer uses an old equation (non-white people are "savages" to be observed) and applies it to the folk. But, instead, the folklorist is the observing traveler.

Section Two: How African Americans (Re)positioned Themselves in Early African American Folklore Studies

Section One uncovers the narrative tools that white folklorists used to depict Black folk and present themselves as trustworthy and culturally aware collectors. White folklorists in *The Journal of American Folklore* and other publications (i.e. Cable's article in the *Century Magazine* and Owen's and Harris's collections) also sought authority by creating the unwarranted insider narrator and the plantation myth in their writing. This section dissects how African Americans were immersed in these conversations.

As demonstrated throughout my dissertation, African Americans did not simply and silently accept white folklorists' representations of African Americans and their folklore; instead, they were heavily involved in these nineteenth-century discussions – at times, repeating white folklorists' assumptions about their Black informants and, at other times, challenging white folklorists' claims on authority and creating different representations of Black Americans, especially as grounded in postbellum political issues.

Particularly, Postbellum Pre-Harlem writers grappled with two interconnected issues: authority over representation and the plantation myth. In other words, these writers worked to regain ownership over Black representation and overturn their era's prevailing plantation myth. Specifically, the narrator was a useful narrative role for accomplishing both of these goals; the narrator was a lens for the reader to understand social hierarchies (character/informant relations),

descriptions of Black subjects (characterization), perspective (seeing and perceiving), and voice. By experimenting with the role of the narrator, Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers could subvert the plantation myth by repositioning Black folk in time (along a timeline of Black history and a trajectory of Black futures) and/or take ownership of Black folk representation.

African Americans fought to regain authority over Black folk representation by designing narrators who adopted ethnographer roles such as the "native ethnographer." As mentioned above, the native ethnographer is an insider researcher who belongs to the same community that she/he is studying; given her "native" status, her contributions are frequently associated with authenticity. Additionally, as Daphne Lamothe points out, the native ethnographer is a "liminal" subject position that has "dual sites of identification, 'native' and ethnographer (in some cases the assumption of such a guise is more figurative than literal)" (Lamothe 179). With these "dual sites of identification," the native ethnographer "would be someone who moves, more or less uneasily, between [these] two fixed positions or 'worlds'" (Weston 168). While some scholars argue that the native ethnographer's dual roles result in a conflicting split, others view it as a hybrid position that "collapses the subject/object distinction" (Weston 168).

In African American literary history, Zora Neale Hurston is a prime example of a native ethnographer.[31] Blending both literary and anthropological methods in her texts, she used her narrator to negotiate the multiple roles she undertook in her research. In *Mules and Men* (1935), she famously states her role as an insider and outsider:

[31] For critics who discuss Hurston and native ethnographer/anthropologist, see Oneka LaBennett.

> When I pitched headforemost into the world I landed in the crib of negroism. From the earliest rocking of cradle, I had known about the capers Brer Rabbit is apt to cut and what the Squinch Owl says from the house top. But it was fitting me like a tight chemise. I couldn't see it for wearing it. It was only when I was off in college, away from my native surroundings, that I could see myself like somebody else and stand off and look at my garment. Then I had to have the spy-glass of Anthropology to look at that. (1)

Hurston's "tight chemise" was her immersion in Black folk culture, and she uses her "spy-glass of Anthropology" to study it – she encompasses "dual sites of identification," "native" and "anthropologist." Later in the introduction, she further affirms her native ethnographer role by using first-person, overt narration, first-person plural, and second person. She explains to the reader ("you") that she identifies with her subjects: "You see we are a polite people and we do not say to our questioner, 'Get out of here!' We smile and tell him or her something that satisfies the white person because, knowing so little about us, he doesn't know what he is missing…Negro offers a feather-bed resistance. That is, we let the probe enter, but it never comes out" (2). Here, Hurston is "we," a part of the same Black community that Joel Chandler Harris tries to relate to in his introduction. Due to her positionality, she implies that she can enter a space that may be guarded *and* analyze it with an anthropological lens.

Though, in the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, African Americans also generated a native ethnographer role. They used their childhood memories of folklore and their subject positions to become native ethnographers. As the "native ethnographer" became an "emblem of black intelligentsia" (Lamothe 63), some African American writers distinguished themselves as native

ethnographers by suggesting (or, in some cases, explicitly stating) that they had a unique access to Black culture because they ***lived*** with the ***same racial identity***.[32] In terms of early African American folklore, a stance that married racial identity with ethnographic practices granted African Americans several advantages:

> African American documenters of Black culture were in the position to demonstrate both detachment from the culture and an authentic identification with it. A shared racial identity provided them with easier access to their subjects, and gave them an affinity with the experiences and feelings of those they observed, apparently allowing them to render folk culture more realistically and truthfully to their audience. (Lamothe 15)[33]

For example, in "Superstitions & Folklore of the South," Charles Chesnutt discusses how the process of collection allowed him to access his own memories of folklore. He states, "for I discovered that the brilliant touches [in *The Conjure Woman*], due, I had thought, to my own imagination, were after all but dormant ideas, lodged in my childish mind by old Aunt This and old Uncle That" (372). Thus, Chesnutt suggests that, due to his racial identity and childhood memories, he was able to potentially tap into the cultural context and significance of his folk material.

[32] As we will see below, class disrupts this vision of group unity.
[33] I am treating Lamothe's use of the term "authentic identification" as a representation of a stance native ethnographers may have taken to try to convince their readers of their accuracy and reliability (because of their "native" status, readers may have assumed that they could "authentically" identify with their subjects). However, of course, "authenticity" is a fallacy in itself – one's individual subject position complicates cultural identification and, as Regina Bendix has shown, "authenticity" has a historical and rhetorical legacy (8).

However, African Americans, quite unsurprisingly, were often barred from the "scientific" role of native ethnography – such was the case in early African American folklore studies. Even Alice Bacon, founder of the Hampton Folklore Society (HFS), believed that HFS did not have a "'single scientific folk-lorist" (Moody-Turner 80). Particularly, when African Americans entered spaces with other folklorists, they were seen as informants and performers rather than as folklorists in their own right. Robert Moton, a major contributor to HFS, confronted such assumptions when he was asked to present at the annual Folklore Society meeting (1895) (Moody-Turner 79). Along with Frank Banks, William Daggs, and J.H. Wainwright, Moton "'delivered a paper on Negro Folk-Songs made of material contributed by the club, and compiled by one of its secretaries'" (Moody-Turner 79). They also proceeded to perform these folk songs. While presenting, Moton used first-person plural pronouns to establish "his authority as [a] guide and purveyor on the subject," and move "his position from that of folk performer to trained researcher and expert" (Moody-Turner 79). Moton was aware that white folklorists often operated under the belief that "natives, 'obey[ed] the forces and commands of the tribal code' but [could] never 'comprehend' them (1984[1922]:11)" (Bunzl 438). Moton, along with many other African Americans, sought to dispute these assumptions.

Creating the Native Ethnographer Narrator in Anna Julia Cooper's A Voice of the South *and W.E.B. Du Bois's* The Souls of Black Folk

For the remainder of the chapter, I will concentrate on two influential African American writers who figured prominently into these conversations of native ethnography, Black representation, and authority: Anna Julia Cooper and W.E.B. Du Bois. Both Cooper and Du Bois understood the conflicted, tight space of their time period. Anna Julia Cooper, an activist and

writer, published *A Voice from the South: By a Black Woman of the South* (1892). Divided into two sections that reference musical notation, Cooper begins with Black women's education, and then she moves to a conversation about colonization and women's suffrage (Carby 96). This first section is called "Soprano Obligato," which means "essential material," or a musical piece that serves as an "accompaniment to [a] voice" ("Obbligato"). In the section "Tutti ad Libitum" ("a passage that may be performed freely" or "an instrument in a score [that] may be omitted"), Cooper ends by discussing the depiction of Black people in literature ("Italian Music Terms"; Leiter; Lemert and Bhan 46-7). Significantly, throughout *A Voice,* Cooper identifies and explains the postbellum predicaments facing African Americans, and specifically illuminates the intersubjective positions of African American women. Overall, she aligns African Americans' present-day conditions with America's welfare, describing African Americans as the "sombre crux, the perplexing *cul de sac* of the nation" (Cooper i, her emphasis; Carby 97).

A Voice is most famously known for Cooper's discussion of women's contributions to both Black political movements and American society at large; it critiques white feminism, and it elucidates the gendered and raced oppression of Black women. Along with these criticisms, Cooper highlights Black men's exclusion of Black women from institutions (specifically education) (Carby 98-9; Leiter). One of her most famous quotes argues that Black women are vital for affecting change in African Americans' civil rights: "Only the BLACK WOMAN can say 'when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole Negro race enters with me'" (Cooper 31). Cooper's powerful quote, and her collection at large, called for the

recognition of Black women's voices and pinpointed their important role in battles for racial justice.

Eleven years after Cooper's *A Voice*, Du Bois published his infamous work, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). *The Souls*, a collection of nonfictional and fictional essays, is a sociological and lyrical investigation of Black Americans' postbellum social and political conditions. Using the metaphor of the "soul" and the "veil," Du Bois promises to guide his readers through the deepest angst and affective expressions of Black Americans. Fittingly, each chapter begins with a spiritual, and Du Bois includes histories of reconstruction, critiques of Booker T. Washington, parables of wealth and greed, stories of his late son, accounts of voodoo, essays about teaching in the South, and fictional stories about racial uplift. With *Souls*, Du Bois attempts to address and historicize the social, political, and religious changes from slavery to the early nineteenth century, while also diving into the spiritual, psychological, and economical effects of oppression on Black Americans, challenging the notion of the "Negro Problem," and positioning Black folk culture as an essential part of American history.

Both Du Bois's *Souls* and Cooper's *A Voice* contribute to my discussion of early African American folklore studies and Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writing because Cooper and Du Bois were aware of and/or involved in nineteenth-century folklore studies and the theories it embraced. Cooper was an active contributor to the Hampton Folklore Society (HFS); she published works in Hampton's *The Southern Workman*, corresponded with HFS members, and served as the interim editor for *The Southern Workman* (particularly, she managed the society's "Folklore and "Ethnology" column) (Moody-Turner 89). Also, in 1894, Cooper directly addressed Hampton folklorists; her speech used the "folk" to critique the concept of

"civilization" (Moody-Turner 89). Cooper's interest in folklore also appeared in her writing; in *A Voice*, she advocates for African American writers' use of Black folk culture.

Along with Cooper's close involvement in folklore studies, Du Bois became a trailblazer in sociology; as such, he critiqued a discourse that, like folklore studies, characterized and described Black social and cultural life ("Du Bois, W. E. B. (1868-1963)"). Through works such as *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), Du Bois presented sociological analyses that used empirical data and historical approaches to examine social justice issues (Lamothe 45). In addition to Du Bois's sociological work, Du Bois contributed *The Souls,* a book that draws directly from African American folk traditions and songs. *The Souls* also aligns with early African American folklore studies because it was greatly influenced by Johann Gottfried van Herder's concept of Volkegeist. As we discussed in Chapter One, Herder popularized the belief in a "national soul"; folklorists, by collecting folk material, enacted Herder's vision of identifying and strengthening a nation's "distinct character" (Appiah 474). For Du Bois, African American folk songs (and other cultural productions) constituted the "soul" of America (Appiah 485).

Therefore, while Cooper and Du Bois may not have directly responded to the articles in the *Journal of American Folklore*, they maneuvered within the racialized regime of folk representation and produced texts that were in dialogue with nineteenth- and twentieth-century folklore collections and theories. Moreover, African American figures such as Cooper and Du Bois had to not only assert their space in these folkloric and popular conversations but also constitute their "thereness" (and their existence in American society altogether) in order to claim authority over Black representation. Several African Americans' efforts of repositioning hinged on finding creative ways to align their positionality with authority (as folklorists had created a

figure that maligned blackness) and connect an antebellum Black folk to a postbellum generation.

This section of the chapter investigates how Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers such as Cooper and Du Bois formed a native ethnographer narrator to express their authority over Black representation. Pointedly, Cooper and Du Bois create their native ethnographer narrators through a series of important rhetorical moves. They establish themselves as homodiegetic narrators, narrators "who [are] present as…character[s] in the story" (Tian, Yin), but also employ third-person pronouns and specific proper nouns ("The Black Woman of the South," "The Negro") to associate themselves with the community they are speaking about and establish themselves as both subjects and observers, "natives" and ethnographers (and thus, due to their subject position, more apt and reliable than their white contemporaries in viewing Black culture).

In *A Voice from the South,* even before the text officially begins, Cooper establishes herself as a "native" as well as a witness and thus a potential narrator of the essays throughout the volume. For example, the text's subtitle itself positions Cooper as both an author and a "native" or community insider: *A Voice* is written by "A Black Woman of the South." By applying this proper noun to herself, Cooper signals to her reader that she is part of a southern Black community (with this self-identification, comes the assumptions of authenticity that such positionality implies). Moreover, in Cooper's introduction, Tawawa Chimney Corner assures the reader that Cooper will speak for the "voiceless Black Woman of America" – with Cooper's text, "*this* Voice by a Black Woman of the South will not have been raised in vain" (iii; her emphasis). In other words, Cooper's individual voice can speak for a multitude. Thus, before the text even begins, the reader is primed to view Cooper's narrator as homodiegetic (since the

collection will be about a southern Black community) and "native," a cultural insider of the community in the collection.

Significantly, in the chapter "Women Versus the Indian," Cooper strategically moves from individualism ("a Black woman") to collectivism ("the Black woman"). In this chapter, Cooper demonstrates the complexity of travel and mobility for African Americans, especially African American women. Black women cannot simply take a casual trip to the countryside—Jim Crow segregation and passengers' racism make travel a humiliating and difficult task. In describing Black women's travel in the United States, Cooper makes two important rhetorical moves: (1) she refers to herself as "the Black Woman of the South" but (2) switches to third-person to describe a series of travel experiences (therefore, these experiences could be hers or a collection of experiences by several people). For example, after describing the influence that women have on American society, the narrator continues with the following sentence: "It was the good fortune of the Black Wo- [sic] of the South to spend some weeks, not long since, in a land over which floated the Union Jack" (88). While the narrator uses "Black Woman of the South," the reader can infer that the narrator is most likely discussing her own trip to the UK. Moreover, by placing herself as a character within her own narrative, Cooper encourages the reader to attend to subtle clues; despite Cooper's lack of first-person pronouns, the reader must to understand that Cooper is this "Black Woman of the South." Therefore, with this reference (along with her subtitle), Cooper labels herself as a "native" of a Black southern female community.

Yet, Cooper's narrator also embodies the native ethnographer role, and her access to community knowledge, by blurring the line between herself and her community. At the same

time that Cooper's narrator labels herself as a "Black Woman of the South," Cooper presents the "the Black Woman of the South" as a character type who comes to stand for a larger group of people. Shortly after the narrator describes her trip to the UK, she references "The Black Woman of the South" again. The narrator's previous reference to "the Black Woman" could arguably be associated with her personal experience – the narrator uses past tense, referring to a specific trip at a definite time in the past ("not long since"). Yet, with the narrator's next reference, she uses present tense and a more general statement: "The Black Woman of the South has to do considerable travelling in this country, often unattended" (89). With this sentence, it is less clear who the narrator refers to: herself, all Black women, or (as the narrator guides us to realize) both.

Then, by using third-person pronouns to describe "The Black Woman of the South" and her travel encounters, the narrator develops "the Black Woman of the South" into a character – or, a character who stands for a theme or "exist[s] to fulfill social roles [and] to represent ideas" (Keen 78-9). The narrator devotes an entire paragraph to describing the Black woman's trip:

> She thinks she is quiet and unobtrusive in her manner, simple and inconspicuous in her dress, and can see no reason why in any chance assemblage of *ladies*, or even a promiscuous gathering of ordinarily well-bred and dignified individuals, she should be signaled out for any marked consideration. And yet she has seen these same "gentlemanly and efficient" railroad conductors…deliberately fold their arms and turn round when the Black Woman's turn came to alight—bearing her satchel, and bearing besides another unnamable burden inside the heaving bosom and tightly compressed lips. The feeling of slighted womanhood is unlike every other emotion of the soul…But when the keen sting comes through the finer

> sensibilities, from a hand which, by all known traditions and ideals of propriety, should have been trained to reverence and respect them, the condemnation of man's inhumanity to woman is increased and embittered by the knowledge of personal identity with a race of beings so fallen. (Cooper 90-1)

In this detailed paragraph, "the Black Woman" stands in for an entire racial and gender community, thereby enlivening and concretizing for the reader experiences that speak to and for an entire group. This communal meaning behind "the Black Woman" is further strengthened by the paragraph's focalization or perception. With Cooper having established herself as "the Black Woman of the South," thereby including herself in a racial and gendered community, the paragraph becomes a potential moment of dual focalization – a paragraph written in third-person actually signifies an experience that is focalized (i.e. perceived) through the narrator (Cooper) *and* a character (an unspecified Black woman – i.e. this paragraph could apply to any Black woman) (Phelan 118-9). Such experimentation with focalization is powerful; it implies that Cooper's perception is more than a singular lens – it encompasses the perception of an entire community.

As a result, Cooper's text shows signs of a "singular" communal narrator, narrators who are "'constructed through subtle but important departures from autodiegetic practices, for while the narrators retain the syntax of 'first person' narrative, their texts avoid the markers of individuality that characterize personal voice and thereby resist the equation of narrator and protagonist. Rather, the narrator's identity becomes communal" (Lanser qtd. in Richardson 39). Similarly, Cooper shows how her narrator represents both an individual and communal voice – rather than offering an typical autodiegetic account, Cooper's narrator "avoid[s] the markers of

individuality" by using the proper noun "The Black Woman" and third-person pronouns to represent both singular experiences and communal realities.

As other scholars such as Elizabeth Alexander have noted, Cooper's deliberate rhetorical moves, particularly shifting between singular and plural pronouns, allows her to combine a "received notion of political theory with the particulars of an African-American and female life," creating a text that "stand[s] in a new space between the first-person confessional of the slave narrative or spiritual autobiography and the third-person imperative of political essays" (Alexander 338). Thus, Cooper does not simply navigate between first and third person, she withholds markers of individuality, builds the communal presence/character of the "Black Woman of the South," doubles focalization (i.e. perception of events), and pushes the boundaries of nonfiction genres (such as political essays and confessionals).

Furthermore, by placing these narrative techniques in conversation with folklore studies and insider/outsider status, Cooper asserts an "insider" status and a "native" position. As opposed to naming proximity to blackness (as the unwarranted insider narrator does), Cooper is not simply beside "blackness" but incorporated within it, so much so that the reader, at times, is unable to distinguish whether Cooper is speaking individually or generally. This narrative method is a clever rhetorical way for Cooper to establish her native ethnographer status by not only telling her reader (I am a "native") but also by designing her narrative structure around the role itself (showing).

Additionally, the narrator highlights her "ethnographer role" by aligning herself and her observations with a scientific lens, thereby claiming authority over the representations she provides. Significantly, after using third-person narration to characterize a racial and gendered

community ("The Black Woman of the South"), the narrator applies an important analogy to the Black woman's intersubjective position. As if she is signifying on scientific/ethnographic language and discourse, the narrator equates the Black woman's travel to the scientific method: "There can be no true test of national courtesy without travel" (93). Also, she directly links Black women's lack of political and social power to the accuracy and authenticity of representation:

> Moreover, the weaker and less influential the experimenter, the more exact and scientific the deductions….as the chemist prefers distilled H2O in testing solutions to avoid complications and unwarranted reactions, so the Black Woman holds that her femineity [sic] linked with the impossibility of popular affinity or unexpected attraction through position and influence in her case makes her a touchstone of American courtesy exceptionally pure and singularly free from extraneous modifiers. The man who is courteous to her is so, not because of anything he hopes or fears or sees, but because *he is a gentleman*. (93-94, Cooper's emphasis)

Pointedly this positions the Black woman (who represents both the narrator and an entire racial community) as the perfect test case. The narrator's personal experiences then come to incapsulate the situatedness of the native ethnographer: since the treatment of Black women is an appropriate and accurate gauge of American society, the narrator's identity is in position to be both subject and ethnographer, able to offer an appropriate and accurate reading of American life through her own memories. In this swift move, the narrator makes herself both subject and scientist, both participant and observer, both folklorist and the folk. Through the analogy of

chemistry, the narrator implies that such a liminal and/or hybrid position will grant the reader a detailed and accurate look at (and thus representation of) Black womanhood.

Like Cooper, Du Bois casts himself as a native ethnographer; in "Forethought" and the first chapter, Du Bois identifies with his subjects of study and employs the "veil" metaphor to illustrate his positionality as a native ethnographer. Du Bois signals that he is both folklorist and the folk, even using *Genesis 2:23* to associate himself with the folk and their spiritual yearnings: "I who speak here am bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of them that live within the Veil." At the same time, Du Bois uses the metaphor of a "veil" to describe his authorial intention:

> Leaving, then, the white world, I have stepped within the Veil, raising it that you may view faintly its deeper recesses,--the meaning of its religion, the passion of its human sorrow, and its struggle of its greater souls. (Forethought)

Significantly, with this metaphor, he highlights the exclusivity of the Black community (unlike white scientists and folklorists who believe they have access, entry into a "Black world" is difficult) while also claiming authority over Black representation by embracing the role of native ethnographer, a competent and insightful insider researcher who will guide his readers. As Daphne Lamothe discusses, the veil then comes to embody native ethnography and its liminal, position: it "can function as a metaphor for the native ethnographers' privileged perspective" (Lamothe 49; 14). Du Bois is able to observe the "white world"; but, like a native ethnographer, he will return to his home/field site to study its culture.

However, in addition to these more overt evocations of the native ethnographer, Du Bois uses subtle references to convey his dual roles as subject and observer; these references place

him in conversation with both Black folk *and* contemporaneous folklorists. Pointedly, Du Bois explains that, by being able to see both the Black and white world (and thus how he is perceived by others), he is granted the "second-sight" of "double-consciousness":

> After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,--a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,--an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

With this paragraph, Du Bois explains how, as an African American man moving through American society, he is aware of himself *and* the stereotypes that are applied to him – he is doubly conscious of his presence in the world. While "double consciousness" is an insightful term for describing African American life, we can also see how it aptly applies to native ethnography and early African American folklore studies. Daphne Lamothe argues that, for New Negro figures such as Du Bois, "doubled-consciousness also offered them the ideal vantage point from which to survey, critique, and complicate the terms used to categorize humans and the societies they lived in" (Lamothe 49; 14). In *The Souls*, Du Bois is able to combine African American folklore terms and folklore studies theories, and therefore he is able to "survey" and "complicate" perceived notions of representational authority.

Significantly, in describing double consciousness, Du Bois references conjuring. Several conjurers were believed to have gained their powers by "being the 'seventh son of a seventh son,' and having been 'born with seven cauls over [their] face[s]" (Herron and Bacon 360). Du Bois uses this origin of conjuring powers to elucidate his concept of double-consciousness – another type of "second-sight" that allows one, like a conjurer, to perceive aspects that may be unreadable to others. At the same time that Du Bois draws on his knowledge of African American folk practices, he also speaks the language of folklorists. As mentioned above, Du Bois drew on Herder's Volkgeist concept, a popular and important theory in folklore studies, to situate African American folklore as the nation's "soul." Therefore, by participating in both "insider" and "folklorist" discourses, Du Bois places himself at an "ideal vantage point," a native ethnographer who understands the "double-consciousness" of African American life.

Additionally, similar to Cooper, Du Bois creates his native ethnographer role by employing a homodiegetic narrator who uses third-person pronouns and specific proper nouns; these techniques further associate Du Bois with his racial community. *The Souls* begins with Du Bois's personal narrative and thus becomes a text with a homodiegetic narrator. At the same time, Du Bois bridges the individual and the collective by transitioning from his first-person narration to a general description of African American life. Pointedly, like Cooper, Du Bois does not choose a grammatically plural subject (such as African Americans), but employs the proper noun "The Negro" and devotes a paragraph to describing his reality (similar to a character description): "After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world" (5). The collective noun (grammatical singularity yet plural meaning) of "The Negro"

allows Du Bois to describe his individual experience while also acting as a guide within a larger Black community. Moving from Du Bois's first-person narration, the reader is encouraged to associate Du Bois with an insider status; at the same time, the narrator performs the act of interpreter by "looking at one's self through the eyes of others," a narrator who enacts his "double consciousness" through the act of narration itself (5).

Breaking the Plantation Myth Frame: Experimenting with Visual Language, Time, and Narration

Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers like Du Bois and Cooper also had to confront the plantation myth. With the plantation myth frame, Black folk and their traditions were continually placed "out of time" (Lamothe 49). The "folk," as explained in Chapter One, were already seen as inherently antimodern, static, and arcane; thus, when folklorists began to define "Black folk," they were equated with a romanticized, plantation past (rather than a postbellum present). Through white folklorists' collections and articles, we have seen how the plantation myth was put into narrative motion to create a Black folk who could only exist in the past. In fact, some folklorists, like several Southern spokespeople during their time, downplayed African Americans' postbellum accomplishments by referencing the plantation myth. In early African American folklore studies, a field that styled itself as an authentic and ethnographic-like snapshot of African Americans, some folklorists—using the unwarranted insider narrator—also claimed authority through the plantation myth.

By contrast, Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers used several narrative techniques to place Black folk back in time. In their texts, Cooper and Du Bois outline the historical connections between slavery and postbellum life. Also, to rupture the nostalgic perception of the plantation

myth, Cooper's and Du Bois's use their narrators to demonstrate that postbellum conditions were "socially mediated" (Lamothe 1). In addition to explicitly connecting Black history to present postbellum conditions, Cooper's and Du Bois's narrators play with time, metaphors, and narration to enact a view that understands the world as "socially mediated" (instead of, as some white folklorists would propose, a product of the plantation myth). Just as some white folklorists created a perceptional frame to curate and interpret African American folklore, so were Cooper and Du Bois challenging white gazes by guiding their readers through a different way of looking at Black people.

First, Du Bois and Cooper confront the idea of perception itself – Cooper does so through her discussion of Black representation and folklore, and Du Bois tackles perception through his metaphor of the veil. In *The Souls*, Du Bois's veil metaphor functions as a way to challenge the plantation myth and its skewed perception of reality. Between Du Bois and the "white world" there was "a vast veil" that he had to "tear down" – and, through this dual sight of both the Black and white world, he can act as a "seer" and interpreter; in fact, by equating the veil with race, Du Bois's metaphor embodies the view that perception is "socially mediated," allowing him to challenge the plantation myth, a myth that only allows for a "certain type of Negro,--the faithful, courteous slave of other days, with his incorruptible honesty and dignified humility" (Du Bois). Similarly, in *A Voice*, Cooper uses several visual analogies and metaphors to disrupt the white gaze. Particularly, in her chapter "One Phase of Literature," Cooper asserts that we must revisit Black representation in order to achieve "unclouded perception" (177). In this chapter, Cooper reviews the representation of African Americans in literature by white writers such as Albion W. Tourgee, George Washington Cable, William Howells, and Maurice Thompson.

In doing so, Cooper points out that white writers and social "scientists" have not produced "candid and careful stud[ies]" of Black Americans because of their "ready formulated theories" or "flippant indifference" (186). She argues that even writers with "kind intentions and a sincere desire for information have approached the subject [just] as a clumsy microscopist, not quite at home with his instrument, might study a new order of beetle or bug" (186). With these visual references, Cooper directly confronts the "seeing is knowing" equation – regardless of intention, observation, especially by white writers, does not equal knowledge. Throughout the chapter, she asserts this argument through a series of statements that question white writers' supposed powers of perception:

> I would say it seems an *Anglo Saxon characteristic* to have such overweening confidence in his own power of induction that there is no equation which he would acknowledge to be indeterminate, however many unknown quantities it may possess. (Cooper 203-4; her emphasis)

> …but we do claim that [Mr. Howells'] acquaintanceship is so slight that he cannot even discern diversities of individuality, has no right or authority to hawk "the only true and authentic" pictures of a race of human beings. Mr. Howells' *point of view* is precisely that of a white man who sees colored people at *long range* or only in certain capacities. (Cooper 206; my emphasis)

> I wish to do Mr. Howells the justice to admit, however, that one feels his blunders to be wholly unintentional and due to the fact that he has studied his subject *merely from the outside*. (Cooper 209; my emphasis)

Cooper confronts the presumption that white observers have the "power of induction." She also uses visual language ("point of view," "long range") to explain that such perception is unreliable, and that observation does not equal access, since there are white writers who have only seen Black people "merely from the outside."[34] The result of such unclear awareness is an incorrect view of Black Americans. In fact, she argues that "not having focused closely enough to obtain a *clear-cut view*, they begin by telling you that all colored people look exactly alike and end by noting down every chance contortion or idiosyncrasy as a race characteristic" (186; my emphasis). Cooper instead creates her own "clear-cut view" – one that recognizes how generalizations of race hinge on a false belief: that white writers can truly see, and then know Black people.

Moreover, Cooper turns the looking glass onto white writers themselves, noting that white writers' texts are more a reflection of themselves than of African Americans. In reviewing Maurice Thompson's poem "A Voodoo Prophecy," she concludes that his poem, instead of being a sketch of an African American person, exists "merely as a revelation of the white man. Maurice Thompson in penning this portrait of the Negro, has, unconsciously it may be, laid bare his own soul-- its secret dread and horrible fear. And this, it seems to me, is the key to the Southern situation" (216-17). While Cooper says that the "Southerner is not a cold-blooded villain," she pinpoints Black representation as a psychological blueprint of Southern racism. Here, Cooper figures the white population as subjects; later, she goes on to diagnose Southerners and their lack of perception:

[34] Cooper's critique of white writers' perception is even more poignant since she criticizes William Dean Howells's portrayals. Howells was known as an advocate for and an influential agent in literary realism (Goodman).

> What is most needed is a sedative for the excited nerves, and then a mental tonic, to stimulate the power of *clear perception and truthful cerebration*. The Southern patient needs to be *brought to see,* by the careful and cautious injection of cold facts and by the presentation of well selected object lessons that so far as concerns his first named horror of black supremacy politically, the usual safeguards of democracy are in the hands of intelligence and wealth in the South as elsewhere. (Cooper 219-20; my emphasis)

Cooper's subversion, and then reversion, of the white gaze mirrors her view of early African American folklore studies. Later, in addressing the Hampton Folklore Society, she encourages African Americans to "turn [their] camera[s] on the fast receding views" of the folk in order to break the supposed link between "civilization" and European standards (Cooper, "Paper" 519). In *A Voice*, she also calls on Black writers to use African American folklore, the "folk-lore and folk songs of native growth," in their writing in order to correct misrepresentation (224): "With this platform to stand on we can with clear eye weigh what is written and estimate what is done and ourselves paint what is true with the calm spirit of those who know their cause is right and who believe there is a God who judgeth the nations" (226-7). As such, Cooper suggests that Black writers and folklorists, by investing in African American folklore, can create a looking glass to oppose the ill perception of the plantation myth.

Second, to destabilize the plantation myth and its suspension of time, Du Bois's and Cooper's narrators play with verb tense (and therefore time) and pronouns to enact a different view of African American life. In *A Voice*, Cooper does not simply detail Black women's dangerous experiences while travelling through a segregated America. In her telling, she

connects past and present, creating a sense of ongoing action. First, Cooper strategically uses the subjunctive mood to recount her previous experiences of travelling on a Jim Crow car: "If, therefore, I found myself in that compartment of a train designated by the sovereign law of the state for presumable Caucasians…" (94). For the rest of the paragraph, the reader must interpret this train ride as a reality of the past for not only Cooper (whose eyes the scene is focalized through), but, in fact, all Black Americans. Interestingly, with "if," the narrator constructs a hypothetical situation in the past – as such, the narrator runs through a past scenario with different actions, implying that if she had not abided by the law, she would have further felt how her life was valued less than others. To fully grasp the narrator's point, the reader must also revisit the past as well, understanding that the scene is not just a hypothetical reimagining of the past but instead an illustration of the discrimination and prejudice that oppress Black Americans' pasts, presents, and futures. Tellingly, after using the past tense, the narrator employs present tense to describe the situation ("I see," "I notice," "I make a note," he "growls at me"). With these cues, ones that mark the past and the present, the narrator conveys how racism for Black women is a past reality and a present condition. The narrator thus details a different kind of witnessing, one that indicates that Black representation cannot be halted or enclosed in slavery, as the plantation myth would have readers believe.

In *The Souls*, Du Bois's narrator also plays with verb tense and forms of narration in order to direct the reader through the act of seeing, critiquing white sociologists' observations along the way. In "Of the Black Belt," the narrator acts as a guide for the reader, traversing Georgia and giving character and community portraits of Black people in the Black Belt. Yet, the narrator does not simply give an account; he shows how the Black Belt is mired in past, present,

and future economic and social issues. During this journey, the narrator uses "we," supposedly addressing the reader and himself. These "we" statements usually are placed at the beginning of paragraphs to mark a change in location:

> But we must hasten on our journey.
>
> We rumble south in quite a business-like way.
>
> We plunge even now into great groves of oak and towering pine, with an undergrowth of myrtle and shrubbery.
>
> Here and there we meet distinct characters quite out of the ordinary.

Thus, these present tense "we" statements move the reader from location to location. By contrast, the paragraphs that describe the people in the Black Belt are in past tense. Therefore, by using past tense, present tense, and first-person plural, the narrator attempts to engage the reader in the (present) act of looking in order to correctly read past events.

Du Bois's narrator use of "we" narration is important. Brian Richardson dissects the unconventional form of "we" narration in his study, arguing that it is "an essentially dialectical perspective that typically (and most successfully) plays with its own boundaries" (Richardson 58). Several postcolonial writers use "we" as a "narrative presence [that is] emblematic of a unity between characters, implied author, and authorial audience, rather than a verisimilar depiction of a group of people who were literally there" (Richardson 49). I argue that Du Bois uses the

pronoun "we" to create a unified perspective between his narrator and authorial audience, hoping to align his actual audience with his ideal audience.[35]

With the use of "we," Du Bois's narrator takes his readers along with him on his trip, while also making them aware of the *project of seeing and knowing*. In fact, the reader, with the use of "we," is encouraged to add another component to her observation toolkit: feeling. For example, when passing the "remnants of the vast plantations," the narrator states that a "resistless feeling of depression falls slowly upon *us*, despite the gaudy sunshine and green cottonfields. This, then, is the Cotton Kingdom,--the shadow of a marvellous [sic] dream. And where is the King? Perhaps this is he,--the sweating ploughman" (my emphasis). Importantly, given the narrator's emphasis on the difference between black stereotypes and actual economic conditions throughout the chapter, the narrator suggests that he and the ideal audience are aligned in their feelings (as well as their view) – therefore, their lens is affective in addition to being visual. Here, the narrator and the ideal audience are not depressed about an idyllic past. They are disheartened by African Americans' present conditions – in this new day, African Americans still have not received the fruits of their labor.

In "Of the Black Belt," Du Bois's narrator also displays a type of narration that contrasts what Du Bois calls the "car-window sociologist." For Du Bois, the "car-window sociologist," similar to the folklorists discussed above, is a "the man who seeks to understand and know the South by devoting the few leisure hours of a holiday trip to unraveling the snarl of centuries" (79). Du Bois's narrator, while simulating a train ride through the Black Belt, offers a different

[35] An ideal and/or authorial audience is an audience that is "assumed by the author as he or she makes rhetorical choices" (Rabinowitz, "Audience," 108).

trip than the "car-window sociologist." By drawing attention to the present act of interpreting past events, his narrator challenges the time-bounded endeavors of the "car-window sociologist." Du Bois's narrator takes his reader on a literal present view(ing) of the past to read it anew.

Du Bois's and Cooper's experimentation with time and narration ultimately allows for a decontextualization and recontextualization of Black representation through narrative form itself. The act of decontextualization is the "objectification of discursive forms in order to extract them from the situational contexts of use in which we consider them to be rooted" (Bauman, "The Nationalization" 249). Additionally, "every act of decontextualization is simultaneously an act of recontextualization (Shuman 1986:117-118; Bauman and Briggs 1990)—and reentextualization" (Bauman 249). Du Bois's and Cooper's narrators, through shifts in verb tense and first-person plural narration, perform the act of detangling African Americans from the plantation myth lens, instead resituating them in the present.

In "One Phase of Literature," Cooper performs the act of decontextualization and recontextualization herself by closely reviewing a series of Black representations in white writers' texts, and she recontextualizes these representations as reflections of white writers, rather than as authentic snapshots of Black people. Likewise, in Du Bois's "Sorrow Songs," the last chapter in *The Souls*, Du Bois re-contextualizes African American folklore; this chapter therefore serves as a contrast to the plethora of African American song collections by white writers and folklorists. In *The Souls*, Du Bois uses Negro spirituals as epigraphs for each chapter. But pointedly these songs are not labeled, differing from the labeling system and song-and-then-explanation format in folklore collections and African American song articles (Cable 822-28). If the reader is unaware of these spirituals, she or he must wait until the end of the book, in the

chapter “Sorrow Songs,” for their names and meanings to be revealed. It is Du Bois, who remembers how these “songs have stirred [him] strangely,” who can reliably “articulate [the] message of the slave to the world” (126). Du Bois, importantly, sets himself apart from song collections by white folklorists, as he suggests that he curates songs based on his spiritual connection to his own race, rather than by “more [supposedly] scientific principles” (130). Thus, while claiming authority over Black cultural representation, Du Bois offers a different practice of “ethnographic” writing than his folklorist contemporaries. His native ethnographer role comes to fruition in the last chapter, allowing him to decontextualize and recontextualize Negro songs throughout *The Souls*.

Despite challenging perception and the plantation myth, Cooper and Du Bois, due to their racial uplift program, classism, and the “native ethnographer” role also ossify and classify the folk. In her analysis of New Negro figures and ethnography, Daphne Lamothe discusses the dangers of the native ethnographer role: “..it emphasized the Black intellectual’s position of superiority and detachment in relation to people who suffered the same political disenfranchisement as they and to whom they thus field politically and culturally allied…class, regional, and national differences could result in mutual incomprehension and distrust” (Lamothe 15). Although Du Bois and Cooper produce narrators who defy racist assumptions, they also enact classist views in their desire to rival the generalization of Black Americans. These Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers apply notions of static-ness, romanization, and anti-modernity to the Black folk.

In *Souls*, these stereotypes are, for example, evident in the narrator’s descriptions and treatment of the folk. In “Of the Black Belt,” although the narrator critiques white racist

inhabitants and underlines the economic and social conditions that oppress southern Black Americans, he still romanticizes and stereotypes the folk. Upon arriving in Albany, the narrator provides a long description of the folk, equating them to "peasantry":

> a perfect flood of black peasantry pours through the streets…They are black, sturdy, uncouth country folk, good-natured and simple, talkative to a degree, and yet far more silent and brooding than the crowds of the Rhine-pflaz, or Naples, or Cracow. They drink considerable quantities of whiskey, but do not get very drunk; they talk and laugh loudly at times, but seldom quarrel or fight. They walk up and down the streets, meet and gossip with friends, stare at the shop windows, but coffee, cheap candy, and clothes, and at dusk drive home—happy? well no, not exactly happy, but much happier than as though they had not come.

Here, even as the narrator undercuts the happy-go-lucky stereotypes and racist visions of drunk and violent Black people, he nevertheless typecasts these folk as "uncouth," "good-natured" and "simple." Significantly, the narrator in this chapter, who takes the reader on a journey through the Black Belt, associates the folk with the land – their character portraits ("distinct characters quite out of the ordinary") are scenes that are equated to the setting, a common assumption about the folk.

At the same time, the folk are temporally positioned in a distant African or plantation past. In "Of the Black Belt," the narrator views these "country folk" as "forlorn," "forsaken," and "forgotten," a population to soon be threatened by modernity's fast approach. At the end of the book, in "The Sorrow Songs," the people who made and sing these songs are arcane markers:

> Some [songs], like "Near the lake where drooped the willow," passed into current airs and their source forgotten; others were caricatured on the "minstrel" stage and their memory died away…The Sea Islands of the Carolinas, where [the North and South] met, were filled with a black folk of primitive type, touched and moulded [sic] less by the world about them than any others outside the Black Belt. Their appearance was uncouth, their language funny, but their hears were human and their singing stirred men with a mighty power.

The narrator positions the folk "as a primitive type," isolated from society. From "ancient forests," a "primitive folk" captured the sorrow of these songs. They, like the folk in the Black Belt, "stood near to Nature's heart." Even Du Bois's grandmother is labelled as singing "primitive African music." Therefore, just as the narrator grasps authority by locating comprehension of these songs in spiritual and racial connections, he also distances himself from his ancestors.

Furthermore, Du Bois's narrator still uses a cultural evolutionary model, valuing spirituals and shunning conjuring. In "Of the Faith of the Fathers," the narrator, a "country schoolteacher…fresh from the East," upon seeing a Southern Negro revival, is taken aback by the "intense excitement that possessed that mass of black people," the "pythian madness, a demonic possession" – separating himself from the passion at hand, the narrator outlines his own parameters of "civilized" behavior. Interestingly, though in a book based on impassioned spiritual feelings, the narrator identifies these forms of spirituality as "madness." Moreover, Voodoo and conjuring are deemed remnants of Black spirituality:

> All the hateful powers of the Underworld were striving against [the Negro], and a spirit of revolt and revenge filled his heart. He called up all the resources of heathenism to aid,--exorcism and witch-craft, the mysterious Obi worship with its barbarous rites, spells, and blood-sacrifice even, now and then, of human victims. Weird midnight orgies and mystic conjurations were invoked, the witch-woman and the voodoo-priest became the centre [sic] of Negro group life, and that vein of vague superstition which characterizes the unlettered Negro even to-day was deepened and strengthened.

Here, the narrator does not differentiate between practices but instead characterizes all of "Obi worship" as superstitious and detrimental – as Yvonne Chireau has shown, in Afro spirituality, there were healing rites as well as supernatural harming practices (59-60). Spirituals, on the other hand, are seen as topics of study and spiritual life forces for the Black community *and* the nation. Though Du Bois uses his native ethnographer role to usurp white folklorists' power, he also uses his insider position to delineate, define, and (negatively) value some elements of Black folk culture.[36]

Cooper's folk also embody stereotypes – as she tells Hampton folklorists in her 1894 address, the folk hold the "simple, common, everyday things of man" and the "untaught, spontaneous lispings of the child heart" (Cooper, "Paper" 518). While labelling the folk as childlike and common, she also enacts an intraracial hierarchy among the Hampton graduates and the folk – the graduates must distance themselves from the folk in order to truly see them

[36] To learn more about Du Bois and the folk, see Daphne Lamothe's *Inventing the New Negro* (2013), Andrew J. Scheiber's "The Folk, the School, and the Marketplace: Locations of Culture in The Souls of Black Folk" (2006), and Dolan Hubbard's *The Souls of Black Folk: One Hundred Years Later* (2007).

(Cooper, "Paper" 519). Additionally, Cooper's characterization of the folk leaves them as static beings, stuck in an early developmental stage and unable to comprehend their own value.

Cooper carries this intraracial hierarchy into "One Phase of American Literature," her chapter on racial representation in *A Voice from the South*. In criticizing Maurice Thompson's "The Voodoo Prophecy," the problem is not Thompson's fetishization or his depiction of voodooism as savagery; instead, Cooper argues that the poem does not recognize how African Americans are "utterly uncapable of such vindictiveness" (215). Thompson's poem depicts the Black slave as an African, voodoo, "heathen," and "savage" in a fervent rage (212). While Cooper does critique the image of Black people as violent, she does not separate voodooism from this association. Certainly, this twenty-first critique of Cooper's reading may place too much pressure on a nineteenth-century text. Yet, it does point to Cooper's act of valuation that ultimately casts the folk as "lowly folk" (210) and aspects of Black folk culture as not worthy of recuperation.

At the same time, Cooper creates intraracial divisions; her disagreements with white writers' Black representations are inflected with classism. Cooper argues that William Howells does not "present *the best colored society*," the "quiet, self-respected, dignified class of easy life and manners…of cultivated tastes and habits, and with no more in common with the class of his acquaintance than the accident of complexion" (207; her emphasis). With this statement, Cooper establishes a perceived hierarchy among African Americans, insisting that a group of Black people will "'elevate'" the race (208). The folk are, once again, (re)positioned – but, they are also transfigured as a black mass, trapped as the uplifted.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to show how both white folklorists and African American writers situated themselves through the narrator position. Folklore collections are not merely recorded tales – they are blueprints of folklorists' attempts to substantiate themselves as cultural insiders or, even to hold power over the image of Black folk. Some folklorists, like Mary A. Owen and Joel Chandler Harris, even went as far as to openly blend nonfictional and fictional boundaries; in their collections, the plantation myth traversed generic borders. By dissecting the role of the narrator in these works, we have begun to uncover the rhetorical methods folklorists used relate their own subject positions to Black folk, and how the plantation myth, as both a belief and narrative frame, worked in conjunction with early African American folklore studies. Cooper and Du Bois, on the other hand, serve as useful examples of the ways in which African Americans also commanded authority over Black folk representation. Their narrators undertook the native ethnographer position, questioning the myopic and romanticized vision of white folklorists, their contemporaries. Yet, as we have seen in the other chapters, as these Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers recalibrated the looking glass back on the Black folk, they came away with a different but still problematic visual field. The folk were still a conflicting category, one that could treasure Black folk culture and/or stereotype a subset group of African American people.

Conclusion

In the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, folklore collections, minstrelsy, folklore articles, plantation literature, and African American literature created many definitions of the folk. During this time, American folklore studies was establishing its own discipline. This field began with unclear lines between fiction and nonfiction – the plantation myth shuttled between both fiction and nonfiction, taking a plantation past and fictionalizing it. Through this matrix of multiple discourses and genre blending, the folk took shape.

Its shape was fluid and multivalent – it existed in numerous nineteenth-century conversations. Therefore, in order to evaluate the sign and signified of the folk, and understand how it ended up at the intersection of so many turn-of-the-century discussions, I have attempted to combine insights from African American literature, folklore studies, and narrative theory. In this dissertation, I have employed a multidisciplinary approach to assess how "Black folk" (as a social category and subject of study) was invented in the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era.

With this cross-disciplinary scholarship, I hope to add to African American literature, folklore studies, and narrative theory. In terms of African American literature, this dissertation deepens our historical and textual readings of African American literary history, adding to the rich, complicated picture of the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era. Building off of the work of Caroline Gebhard and Barbara McCaskill, these chapters discover how African American writers moved between various roles, such as folklorist, writer, and political activist, while creating works

during an period that was previously believed to be bereft of literary production. For folklore studies, this dissertation contributes to John Roberts's argument that Black people were "folkified," a group placed below an European folk, and it addresses the need for critical race investigations in the field of folklore studies, as Patrick Mullen and Anand Prahlad call for in their works. Additionally, while Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman reconstruct a thoughtful and methodical portrait of pre- and early American folklore studies in their influential book *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (2003), this dissertation may serve as a way to chronicle a period that fits between (and overlaps with) Henry Lowe Schoolcraft's collection of Native American narratives (early to mid-eighteenth century) and Franz Boas' school of cultural relativism (late eighteenth century to nineteenth century) (226-254, 255-298).

Finally, this paper was an effort to join the mainly contextual approach of U.S. Ethnic literature and folklore studies with the textual methodology of narrative theory. Continuing Houston Baker's, Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s, and Barbara Johnson's interest in narratology and form, I have similarly insisted that context is ingrained in, and gives life to, form. In other words, we can revisit Postbellum, Pre-Harlem texts as insightful experimentations with form, narrative structures that embody historical Black philosophies such as racial uplift. In the future, I want to explore more nineteenth-century and early twentieth- century narrative patterns that resonate with social issues. For example, examining embedded texts can shed more light on intersectionality (and a network or repertoire of African American folklore), and a more in-depth analysis of focalization will enrich our understanding of identity creation (for the narrator) and

empathy (from the audience, i.e. attempts by the narrator to have her reader empathize with her opinions).

As for my methodology, positioning, I have used it to make sense of the "tight space" of postbellum Black representation. This methodology, while serving as a useful way to join multiple disciplines, became a helpful framework for pinpointing how "the folk" were situated at intersections of social positioning and narrative positioning. Through this approach, I found that Black people were not simply positioned by a racialized regime – they also (re)positioned themselves in order to strategically criticize racist arguments. African American literature, moreover, bore the imprint of the racialized regime, as Postbellum, Pre-Harlem authors simultaneously harnessed folk stereotypes to perpetuate class divisions and disrupt equations of "blackness," "folk," and "cultural inferiority."

Yet, in these texts, the folk, in addition to being palimpsests for postbellum Black representation, were significant mechanisms in the racialized regime of folk representation. Never completely erasable, we have seen *African American writers' efforts to initiate a different kind of representation*. Their (narrative) actions and layers show us that the folk had to be "born" to be "erased" – they gave bodies to the folk (characters), mobilized them in service of agendas (plots), and erased them from the setting (character compression). On the page, African Americans writers worked out their own, at times fraught, relation to the folk, as a piece of an African past to revalue, reassess or shun.

Significantly, these African American writers were a part of a discursive system, *existing beside folklorists*. When looking at their writings alongside a national conversation about "the folk" and a Black postbellum generation, we find that African Americans writers did not take a

backseat. Heavily involved in American folklore studies, they formed "poses" within their subject positions – though faced with the dehumanizing trappings of the regime, they took a deliberate stance, a pose. Yet, their arguments and definitions of the folk, still being made with the master's tools, placed the folk on problematic ground (Lorde). This paradox of the folk gathered momentum at the turn of the century.

In the early and mid-twentieth century, the famous works and treatises of the Harlem Renaissance would further ignite the folk (and the debates of Black representation that it embodied). Whereas in the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, folk were on the outskirts of character-systems, they often took center stage (or at least a more prominent role) in several Harlem Renaissance texts: Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923), Rudolph Fisher's *The Conjure Man Dies* (1932), Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1932), Langston Hughes's *The Weary Blues* (1926), Sterling Brown's *The Southern Road* (1932), James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* (1912, 1927) (which was anonymously published during the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era), and more.

While writers such as Langton Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston would embrace the folk, others such as George Schuyler would critique folklore as a source of racial identification. During this time, W.E.B. Du Bois would revisit his native ethnographer role in *Darkwater* (1920), turning his gaze on himself, and reversing the white gaze in his chapter "The Souls of White Folk:"

> Of [white folk] I am singularly clairvoyant. I see in and through them. I view them from unusual points of vantage. Not as a foreigner do I come, for I am native, not foreign, bone of their thought and flesh of their language. Mine is not

> the knowledge of the traveler or the colonial composite of dear memories, words and wonder. Nor yet is my knowledge that which servants have of masters, or mass of class, or capitalist of artisan. Rather I see these souls undressed and from the back and side. I see the working of their entrails. I know their know. This knowledge makes them now. (25-6)

Here, Du Bois extends Cooper's revelation in *A Voice of the South* – that depictions of Black people are instead reflections of the white people who create them. Du Bois, travelling between white and black worlds in *The Souls of Black Folk*, returns to his own positionality to emphasize his vantage point – he is a surveyor who, due to his "second-sight," can understand how white folklorists, sociologists, and writers work to sustain their supposed cultural superiority and authority *through* Black people.

Six years later, the folk would appear once again in Alain Locke *The New Negro* (1926) and become "'migrating peasant[s]" who were travelling to cities, only to eventually give way to the New "modern" Negro (7). In Zora Neale Hurston's *Mules and Men* (1935), Cooper's folklore studies "camera," a lens that zoomed into the "receding views of this people" (Cooper, "Paper" 519), transformed into Hurston's "spyglass of Anthropology," an outlook Hurston used to assess a Black culture that fit her "like a tight chemise" (1). Like the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era, the folk would remain a contested, complex, and rife idea within the Black community.

Given these connections between Postbellum, Pre-Harlem writers and Harlem Renaissance authors, a future project would continue to flesh out the link between a nineteenth-century generation and the Harlem Renaissance, specifically through studies of the folk and narrative techniques. However, I hope that this dissertation has shown that the Postbellum, Pre-

Harlem era is simply not the title page to the Harlem Renaissance. It is the activator, a hotbed and “tight space” of ideas about Black Americans’ existence in American society and, significantly, their transition from slavery to a twentieth-century future. The folk, in all of its contradictory glory, was being fashioned in the Postbellum, Pre-Harlem era. To peer into its construction is to venture into a battle over Black representation, one that followed slave narratives and continued into the Harlem Renaissance.

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