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From *Uncle Remus* to *Song of the South*: Adapting American Plantation Fictions

by Daniel Stein

In *The Southern Plantation: A Study of the Development and the Accuracy of a Tradition* (1924), Francis Pendleton Gaines describes an image that remains etched into the American consciousness to this day:

The scene represented an old negro who sat on a little eminence and gazed wistfully across a valley. On the opposite hill the world of actuality merged into a cloud-like vision, the semblance of the ex-slave's dream: the old plantation; a great mansion; exquisitely groomed ladies and courtly gentlemen moving with easy grace upon the broad veranda behind stalwart columns; surrounding the yard an almost illimitable stretch of white cotton; darkies singing at work in the fields; negro quarters, off on one side, around which little pickaninnies tumbled in glad frolic. (qtd. in Wells 33)

To Gaines's early-twentieth-century readers, this scene would have been intimately familiar. It presented a site they had often visited in their imagination but had never actually seen, a site that only existed as a simulacrum of a simpler

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and happier past. Such fictions of the plantation had made their entrance into American literature with proslavery romances like John Pendleton Kennedy's *Swallow Barn; or, A Sojourn in the Old Dominion* (1832), and they had been contested by sentimental abolitionist novels like Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851–1852). Yet it was in the years after the Civil War, when slavery had been abolished, that the plantation became *the* emblem of the South as mythical space in American culture.¹

By the final decades of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth, “portraits of plantation life . . . filled the pages of the nation's periodicals and found their way into dozens of books, achieving . . . a form of cultural conquest of their own,” as Jeremy Wells argues (2). Think of novels like John DeForest's *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty* (1867), but especially of dialect story collections like Thomas Nelson Page's *In Ole Virginia; or, Marse Chan and Other Stories* (1887) or Charles Chesnut's African American revision of the plantation romance in *The Conjure Woman* (1899). Think also of Thomas Dixon Jr.'s racist novels about the Ku Klux Klan, which inspired D. W. Griffith's monumental *Birth of a Nation* (1915) as a tribute to an American Republic rebuilt on the ideology of white southern supremacy. Or skip forward a few decades to Margaret Mitchell's bestselling novel *Gone with the Wind* (1936) and David Selznick's movie adaptation (1939), which remain among the nation's most popular stories of southern resilience and grandeur.

As films like *Birth of a Nation* and *Gone with the Wind* illustrate, fictions of the southern plantation are not confined to the pages of American literature. They constitute a transmedia phenomenon that include nostalgic songs like those collected in Stephen Foster's *The Old Plantation Melodies* (1890), visual culture from postcards to coon illustrations, and food products like Aunt Jemima pancakes. Americans were so inundated with representations of the southern plantation that Francis Pendleton Gaines diagnosed “the penetration of the plantation concept . . . into the popular consciousness” (qtd. in Wells 33). In fact, as John Lowe notes, fictions of the southern plantation were “remediated” (Jay David Bolter and Richard A. Grusin's term) so many times that they have become “America's favorite mythology” (qtd. in Wells 38)—a mythology that has produced places as different as Tara in Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, Sutpen's Hundred in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), Sweet Home in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), and Candyland in Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* (2012). Examining such places can yield insights

into the entanglement of racial images, fictional spaces, and their “remediation” at crucial times in American history, especially if we follow Tara McPherson’s imperative to track the “popular and emotive legacy” (18) of the plantation South as a productive space in the American imagination.

I will do so in this essay by looking at Walt Disney’s controversial live-action–cartoon hybrid movie *Song of the South* (1946) as a racially significant adaptation of Joel Chandler Harris’s *Uncle Remus* folktales. As Linda Hutcheon notes in the second edition of *A Theory of Adaptation* (2013), adaptation studies has shifted from a preoccupation with questions of fidelity—how closely an adaptation replicates an original source (xxvi)—to an interest in adaptation as a pervasive mode of cultural production and reception. As part of this shift, she proposes, we should refocus our attention from “cinematic transpositions of literature” (xiv) to the larger cultural functions of adaptation. Instead of conducting “comparative case studies of particular works,” we should “theorize more broadly the phenomenon of adaptation” (xxvi).²

What Hutcheon’s advice to shift away from comparative case studies may obscure, however, is the fact that it is very much possible—and indeed necessary—to study individual adaptations within a broader cultural framework. Cinematic transpositions of plantation fictions like Disney’s adaptation of Harris’s *Uncle Remus* tales, as I will show, certainly speak to “the ubiquity and longevity of adaptation as a mode of retelling our favorite stories” (Hutcheon xx), and Hutcheon’s theory actually sanctions this assumption: All adaptations “have a context—a time and a place, a society and a culture,” she writes, and “when and where are the keywords for the exploration of what can happen when stories ‘travel’—when an adapted text migrates from its context of creation to the adaptation’s context of reception” (xviii). While Hutcheon speaks of the “constant oscillation” between an older source text and a new adaptation (xvii), I argue that an adaptation like *Song of the South* achieves much of its emotive power from a multitude of oscillations that include not just the literary source text but also the larger history of American plantation fictions and the film’s extension into television shows, children’s books, comic strips, and theme park rides.

Joel Chandler Harris’s collections of African American folklore constituted one of the most popular plantation fictions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings: The Folklore of the*

Old Plantation (1880), *Nights with Uncle Remus* (1883), *Uncle Remus and His Friends* (1892), *The Tar Baby and Other Rhymes of Uncle Remus* (1904), *Told by Uncle Remus* (1905), *Uncle Remus and Br’er Rabbit* (1907), *Uncle Remus and the Little Boy* (1910), *Uncle Remus Returns* (1918). Harris was a white journalist and hobby folklorist from Georgia,³ and he framed the folktales he recorded and initially published in the *Atlanta Constitution* with stories about Uncle Remus, a “venerable old darkey” (39) who has “nothing but pleasant memories of the discipline of slavery” (xxvii) and continues to live on the postbellum plantation with his former masters.⁴ Remus is the custodian of the animal fables that the slaves had related to each other and that he now tells to his master’s seven-year-old son after the Civil War. The boy visits Remus in his cabin to hear more about the pranks the trickster Brer Rabbit—“Brer” is black dialect for “Brother”—plays on the other creatures of the settlement. The fables are set at an indistinct time when animals could talk, and they have been interpreted as allegories of the slaves’ hatred for their masters. They question the plantation myth of the frame narrative by pointing toward the cruelties of the slave system and encapsulating the slaves’ symbolic revenge on their masters.⁵

As Hugh Keenan observes, Harris’s “books were bought by adults and read by them to [their] children” (“Joel Chandler Harris and the Legitimacy” 86). By reading the tales to their children, parents transformed themselves into Remus-like storytellers, intoning the stories in the black accent of the embedded narratives and enticing their young listeners to imaginatively place themselves into the former slave cabin to hear more about the exploits of Brer Rabbit. American stage performers blackened their faces in order to masquerade as southern slaves in the minstrel shows of the nineteenth century, and Harris was arguably performing an act of linguistic blackface when he transliterated the oral black tales into writing.⁶ But such imaginative “racechange” (Susan Gubar’s term) was particularly effective when it united parents and children in the intimate setting of bedtime reading.⁷

When Walt Disney decided in the wake of *Gone with the Wind*’s popular success to turn Harris’s books into a feature-length movie, he retained their nested structure: the frame narrative was shot as a live-action movie while the animal tales were adapted into cartoon animation. Disney Studios had established itself as the major American purveyor of children’s entertainment and foremost transformer of fairy tales into film with the fully animated retelling of

the Brothers Grimm's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in 1937. The company sought to replicate this success by adapting Harris's Remus stories—American fairy tales of sorts—to the movie screen. Yet transforming these stories into Disney's brand of family entertainment meant remediating the racially ambiguous source material into a format that reduced many of Uncle Remus's complexities, curbed the aggressive subtexts of the animal tales, and culminated in what has been described as "Disney's most notorious film."⁸

Song of the South is, in fact, a very peculiar adaptation: a hybrid film that remediates Harris's texts—themselves already adaptations of the oral folktales of the slaves—into a series of animated scenes and refashions Harris's literary frame into live-action narrative. This frame centers on the storytelling powers of the "quaint" Uncle Remus, whose tales of Brer Rabbit serve as spiritual support for his young white listener—a boy named Johnny who travels from postbellum Atlanta to the plantation with his mother because of his parents' looming divorce. Walt Disney insisted that *Song of the South* reworked Harris's stories "in the tradition of the author and without stepping outside the character or material," but he also promoted the film's major cinematic innovation when he informed viewers:

I always felt the Uncle Remus character—one of the great legendary figures of literature—should be played by a living actor. . . . The folktales themselves, however, could only be treated adequately in animation. . . . That, in turn, required a new screen story-telling device—a combination of action by a complete human cast and cartoon animation such as never before undertaken on such a scale. (qtd in Sperb 83)

Disney's statement is devoid of any sense that this "new screen story-telling device" may have brought more to the screen than the character and material of Harris's publications. By tapping into the "emotive legacy" (McPherson 18) of the South as a mythical space and the plantation as its central signifier, *Song of the South* presented an interracial utopia that was paradoxically rooted in an older regime of racial representation and irked many mid-twentieth-century viewers as a throwback to an earlier time when it first appeared on the nation's movie screens.

According to Hutcheon, adaptation is a process of "repetition without replication" (xviii) whereby a text is refashioned into another text or medium. From the eight *Uncle Remus* books that appeared over the span of almost three

decades, Disney's scriptwriters selected four tales as the basis for the animated cartoon segments: "The Wonderful Tar-Baby Story," "How Mr. Rabbit Was Too Sharp for Mr. Fox," "Mr. Rabbit and Brer Bear," and "Brer Rabbit's Laughing-Place." (I discuss two of these stories in detail below.) While the first three of these tales were taken from Harris's *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings*, "Brer Rabbit's Laughing-Place" and much of the frame narrative were based on a later book, *Told by Uncle Remus*. Focusing the frame narrative on Harris's later works allowed Disney's filmmakers to appropriate Harris's growing antimodern sentiments against the corrupting powers of urban life and the alienation of young city boys from the lessons of plantation life: sentiments that supported the company's views of American childhood as a time of wonder and adventure.

If *Song of the South* adapted four of the *Uncle Remus* tales, it ignored the other 180 tales that Harris had produced in print. The majority of these tales were rather gruesome. In "The Sad Fate of Mr. Fox," for instance, Brer Rabbit kills Brer Fox, cuts off his head, and then tricks the Fox's wife and children into eating soup that contains their husband and father's remains. In addition, Harris's books feature black storytellers other than Remus, which reinforces the notion that storytelling was a cultural practice through which black Americans created communal associations and transmitted knowledge during and after slavery. When African Jake, Aunt Tempy, and Tildy visit Remus's cabin to swap stories, the little white boy ceases to occupy the center of Remus's attention as the focus shifts to the interpersonal dynamics among the black storytellers.

Disney's adaptation of Harris's texts unfolds according to a double dynamic. On the one hand, the company kept the myth of the plantation intact in the frame narrative by reproducing signifiers of the antebellum plantation: the white mansion of the former slave owners; the shacks of the black workers; field hands returning from picking cotton; as well as a character constellation that unites white authority figures like Miss Sally and Miss Dochy with submissive black characters like Uncle Remus, the mammy Aunt Tempy, and the pickaninny boy Toby. On the other hand, the film neglects many of the cultural specificities of the animal tales, including the lessons that self-interest overrides neighborliness, that the amorality of the animals trumps the false morality of the slaveholder, and that life on the plantation is one of terror rather than interracial harmony. While the tales originally presented the violent destruction of animal families as an allegory of the attack that slavery had launched on black families, *Song of the South* replicates the surface humor of the tales as a means

of bringing a dysfunctional white family back together: Johnny's father returns from Atlanta to rejoin his estranged wife and ailing son at the end of the movie.

Yet *Song of the South* is not just an adaptation of the *Uncle Remus* stories. It is also a remediation of the literary source material. In the opening sequence, the camera moves across the pages of an old book toward the words: "Based on the Tales of Uncle Remus by Joel Chandler Harris." This movement suggests a seamless historical continuity between the movie and Harris's publications; it remediates the aura of the printed book by evoking the literary status of *Uncle Remus*. Moreover, the opening sequence evokes the plantation South as an emotive space, American's prime pastoral fantasy, by presenting drawn illustrations of a big mansion, humble slave cabins, lush vegetation, and cotton fields. These illustrations cast a familiar glance at the antebellum South as a place of longing that only exists in story and song. The accompanying theme music leaves little doubt about the enduring powers of such plantation fictions. The lyrics speak of the "magic spell" and of "scenes I know so well": scenes of cotton and cabins that music can "bring . . . back once more . . . [o]ut of the long, long ago."

The images of the nostalgic South in the opening sequence differ substantially from the illustrations in Harris's books. In the portrait on the title page of Harris's first book, *Uncle Remus's* physiognomy recalls contemporary racist caricatures that depicted blacks as animalistic creatures who depended on the patronage of American's white citizens to become fully civilized. Yet this image also suggests a racial otherness that remains mysterious and cannot be easily decoded by white observers, Harris included. And indeed, Harris's books contain many romantic gestures toward the medial limitations of literature: "cannot be reproduced in print" (42), "[n]o typographical device could adequately describe" (333), and "will give a faint idea of . . . his intonation" (423) are only three examples of a topos of inexpressibility that runs throughout the books. In Disney's opening sequence, by contrast, Remus appears in the distance while the focus is on Brer Rabbit and the other animals that will be featured in the cartoons. Moreover, the many later close-ups of Remus emphasize his subservient and comical nature rather than the intriguing impenetrability of his literary precursor.

When Disney's animators remediated Harris's folktales into a cartoon, they did not tap into the repertoire of blackface images that had populated American animation from its inception.⁹ Instead, they transformed the anthropomorphic

tricksters of Harris's tales into graphically flattened and generally harmless cartoon creatures. Brer Rabbit is the most childlike of the bunch; with his big eyes, fluffy ears, and stubby nose, he is the "cute and sassy" hero of the tales and intended figure of viewer identification. Brer Fox is sharp-toothed, "sly but not very smart" while Brer Bear is a slow-witted klutz and bully (Russo 25). The terror of the folktales—the atrocities to which the animals subject each other and the allegorized realities of the slave plantation—is displaced into cartoony slapstick action where nobody is ever seriously hurt and nobody will ever die. Moreover, the brightly colored scenery and magnolia blossoms of Disney's tales evoke the plantation myth but ignore the marginal areas of Harris's geography: particularly the swamp as a liminal space of murky morality where black conjure women like Aunt Mammy-Bammy Big-Money reside.

The Remus of the movie describes Brer Rabbit as "the most outdoingest, most bodacious creetur in the whole wide world." By contrast, Harris's Remus portrays Brer Rabbit as a trickster figure: a "deceitful" (169) creature who tortures others for his own amusement and spends much time "a-kicking up de devilment en terrifyin' de neighborhoods" (225). Most of Harris's illustrators, from Arthur Burdette Frost to Frederick Stuart Church and Edward Windsor Kemble, sought to capture the fact that the animals were allegorical and anthropomorphic—human and nonhuman—at the same time.¹⁰ In Disney's animated scenes, however, the degree of cartoonish simplification is much greater, and it turns the trickster rabbit into a more or less infantilized bunny. In the process, Brer Fox's and Brer Bear's motivation for chasing Brer Rabbit changes as well. While the Fox and Bear of the movie simply want to pummel and cook the rabbit, the animals of the folktales are driven by complex, powerful desires: greed, lust, vanity, pride, arrogance, complacency, envy, jealousy, malice, and most often hunger.

Thus far, I have focused on the visual track of adaptation, but *Song of the South* also remediates Harris's written description of voices and music into the movie's soundtrack—after all, it is a musical film structured around numbers like "Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah" and "How Do You Do?" There is much to be said about the process of sonic remediation in *Song of the South*, but I want to concentrate on the way in which the film reconfigures the sound of black laughter. Black laughter is a central element in the books and in the movie, but it performs different functions in each medium. In *Song of the South*, Remus's

laughter is the first sound audiences hear after the opening credits—even before they get to see Remus himself. Throughout the film, laughter figures as an expression of the carefree happiness of the black folk on the plantation, but it is largely absent from the life of a white city-bred boy like Johnny. Remus's job is to make Johnny laugh again, and he manages to do so by telling him funny tales about Brer Rabbit. One of these tales, based on Harris's "Brer Rabbit's Laughing-Place," deals explicitly with the liberating powers of laughter: In the version in *Song of the South*, Brer Fox and Brer Bear are about to roast Brer Rabbit. Facing his imminent demise, Brer Rabbit breaks out into laughter and, when asked about why he is laughing so hard, explains that he has been thinking about his secret laughing place. Enticed by the promise of a place that can induce laughter, Brer Fox and Brer Bear demand that Brer Rabbit show them the location of this laughing place. Brer Rabbit then tricks the Fox and Bear into believing that his laughing place is hidden behind a set of bushes—Fox and Bear fall for the trap and stumble into a wasp's nests, getting stung miserably by the agitated insects. Accused of deception, Brer Rabbit exclaims: "I didn't say it was *your* laughin' place, I said it was *my* laughin' place."

The story of the laughing place exemplifies Brer Rabbit's capacity to outsmart his competitors and to do so in a way that amuses Uncle Remus's young listeners, who share in the rabbit's laughter. Remus tells Johnny and his girlfriend, Ginny, that "everybody has a laughing place," and Johnny eventually realizes that his laughing place—the place where all his troubles go away—is Remus's cabin: "my laughing place is right here." In Harris's version of the tale, however, the laughing place is conceived as a psychological disposition rather than an actual place: a disposition that retains the ability to laugh despite the rigid strictures of the slave system. Harris's laughing animals are thus indicative of the conflicted feelings that many Americans had about what Ralph Ellison called the "hoot-and-cackle" of the slave and the "extravagance of laughter" (653) through which the free black folk confounded their fellow white citizens once slavery had been abolished. Black laughter is the most central sound and activity in Harris's books, and its ambiguity is never fully resolved. Brer Rabbit enjoys the pain he causes others, and his frequent laughter is as humiliating as it is vicious: "laughter fit to kill," as Remus calls it many times throughout the books.¹¹

Racially ambiguous laughter is part of what Tara McPherson calls America's "cultural schizophrenia" about the South as at "once the site of the trauma of

slavery and also the mythic location of a vast nostalgia industry," as a space where the brutalities of slavery and Jim Crow "remain disassociated from . . . representations of the material site of those atrocities, the plantation home" (3). This schizophrenia, McPherson argues, is "fixat[ed] on sameness *or* difference without allowing productive overlap or connection" (27) despite "more than two and a half centuries of incredible cross-racial intimacy and contact around landscapes and spaces" (29).

In Harris's frame narrative, such intimacy informs the interaction between Remus and the boy. In the stories themselves, however, such intimacy is revealed as a false sense of friendship that the animals exploit for personal gain and to the detriment of those who get robbed, cheated, humiliated, injured, or killed. Thus, the *Uncle Remus* books acknowledge *and* undermine the perception of the plantation as a social idyll disassociated from its atrocities. *Song of the South* seeks to account for the split between the plantation as traumatic site and idyllic home through its hybrid structure. While the live-action frame presents the plantation as a wholesome space of cross-racial intimacy in which former slave owners live amiably with their ex-slaves, the violence of the animal fables is repressed in the cartoons. Slave allegory becomes children's entertainment, and the trickster animals are refigured into slapstick antagonists. But what do we make of the fact that the Remus of the movie can shift from the sphere of the diegetic "real world" of the frame narrative into the imaginary sphere of the cartoons? His stories have such a powerful effect on his young listeners that the children overcome the formal separation of live-action and cartoon image as well: Remus, Johnny, Ginny, and Toby wander hand in hand into the sunset. They are accompanied by the cartoon animals, and the scenery turns into a cartoon landscape in the final shot.

It is difficult to say whether this ending affected any substantial cross-racial connection or whether it merely worked to satisfy fantasies of black-and-white understanding at a time—just after World War II—when concerted efforts to end racial discrimination were looming large on the horizon. Harris's literary frame, so much is certain, registered the schism between racial fictions and race relations in the world of actual social contact at the turn of the century. In *Uncle Remus Returns*, we read: "[T]he little boy was as much interested in Uncle Remus himself as he was in the stories he told, for the old man had already developed into a tradition. His name was as much a part of the family as that of any member thereof, and if the child had any hero, such as dwell in

the realm of mystery and romance, it was Uncle Remus himself, with . . . his air of belonging to some other place and some other time" (759). As a children's hero, Remus is a *vanishing Negro*: part of a literary tradition that seeks to freeze the image of the black storyteller into plantation scenes and offer a sense of stability in times of social change. But this image refused to stay frozen. As Jason Sperb has aptly documented, before deciding to stop re-releasing the film in the 1980s because of its controversial treatment of race, Disney remediated *Song of the South* countless times and with increasing popular success: rescreening the animated scenes as part of the *Disneyland* television series, publishing illustrated children's books and comic strips, issuing recordings of popular tunes, and creating a theme-park ride (Splash Mountain) connected with the movie.¹²

For those who study American literature, culture, and media, however, and who are interested in the "*when and where*" (Hutcheon) of adaptation, the story does not end with recognizing the movie's "transmediated ubiquity" (Sperb 24): the sense that *Song of the South* has largely supplanted Harris's and other versions of the folktales since the 1950s. There is a more complex lesson to be learned here, and "The Wonderful Tar-Baby Story" is a case in point. The story begins with Brer Fox's plan to kill Brer Rabbit: "You bin cuttin' up yo' capers en bouncin' in dis neighborhood ontwel you come ter b'lieve yo'se'f de boss er de whole gang," the Fox complains (12). Brer Fox decides to trap the Rabbit with a sticky decoy made from tar. Sure enough, the Tar Baby doesn't respond to the Rabbit's greetings, and the Rabbit smacks it in the face, then kicks it, and finally gets stuck. When the Fox ponders different ways of killing him—barbecuing, hanging, drowning, skinning—Brer Rabbit pleads: "I don't care w'at you do wid me, so you don't fling me in dat briar-patch" (12). Falling for Brer Rabbit's verbal trickery, the Fox flings him into the briar patch, and Brer Rabbit escapes with the words: "Bred en bawn in a briar-patch, Brer Fox . . . !" (13).

This tale exemplifies Brer Rabbit "using his head instead of using his foots," as Uncle Remus puts it in *Song of the South*—of utilizing trickster techniques to secure the objectives of the oppressed against those in power.¹³ But the animation of Tar Baby in the cartoon allows for yet another reading. The sticky substance that serves as Tar Baby's disguise evokes the practice of blackface: coloring one's face with burnt cork in order to entertain fictions of black plantation slaves. As Brer Rabbit tries to free himself from the sticky tar and, on a metaphorical level, from the blackface inscription of American plantation

fictions, the black liquid almost fully envelops him. With only his white bulging eyes and the white soles of his feet sticking out, Brer Rabbit becomes a blackface minstrel. And indeed, one could argue that the animals of Harris's publications and Disney's cartoons were exactly that: fantasies of displaced blackness through which Americans negotiated the ironies of the color line. In that sense, we can learn much from such seemingly innocent transformations: That twentieth-century plantation fictions like *Song of the South* adapted a whole cultural mythology rather than merely individual source texts, for one, and also that images of races and spaces can migrate from one century to another through the chain of remediation from folktales to literature to film. But what I take to be the most significant lesson of *Uncle Remus* and *Song of the South* is that American plantation fictions, and perhaps even American culture at large, thrive on practices of make-believe and masquerade, role-playing and tricksterism, performing identities and staging illusions. From this perspective, adaptation and remediation are indeed ubiquitous practices of national making and remaking that urge us to view *America* as a fiction that has, for better or worse, returned again and again to the southern plantation.

NOTES

1. On American plantation fictions, see Adams; Bibler; Costello; Cowan; Faisst; and Russ.
2. Adaptation studies has been an immensely productive field of scholarly investigation in recent years. For a useful overview of major developments, see Balestrini.
3. Harris was not a trained folklorist but saw himself as a faithful recorder of African American folklore. See Light and Montenyohl.
4. All citations from Harris's texts refer to Richard Chase's edition of *The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus*.
5. Harris's *Uncle Remus Tales* have been studied quite extensively. See Baer; Bickley, *Critical Essays*; Cochran; Pamplin; and Ritterhouse. Among the most vocal critics of Harris's racial politics are Alice Walker and Bernard Wolfe. See Walker, "Dummy," and "Uncle Remus"; and Wolfe. For biographical information, see Bickley, *Joel Chandler Harris*; and Brasch.
6. Such acts of linguistic blackface, or forms of ethnic ventriloquism, were indeed common in the nineteenth century. For further analysis, see Banerjee and Lhamon.
7. Racial behaviors and attitudes are often learned at a young age through the vicarious experience of racial others in children's literature and other genres or media. See R. Bernstein; Keenan, "Joel Chandler Harris' Tales," and "Twisted Tales"; and Sammon.

8. Sperb's *Disney's Most Notorious Film*, an exhaustive study of *Song of the South* from its production history to different screenings, spin-off products, and reception cycles, offers further context and analysis. See also M. Bernstein; Inge, "Walt Disney's Racial Dilemma," and "Walt Disney's *Song of the South*"; Kodat; Miller and Rode; Snead; and Terry.

9. On the vexed histories and regimes of racial representation in American cartoon animation, see Cohen and Lehman; see also King, Bloodworth-Lugo, and Lugo-Lugo.

10. For analysis of the illustrations that accompanied the Uncle Remus tales in different books and editions, see Davis.

11. On the powers of black laughter and the functions of humor in American negotiations of race, see Carpio; see also the chapter "'What Do You Know About That?' Final Thoughts on 'Laughin' Louie'" in Stein.

12. In the 1990s, Julius Lester retold Harris's *Uncle Remus Tales* for a new generation of young readers. Most significantly, Lester dropped the frame narrative and curbed some of the more racially insensitive language from the slave tales. See Lester and Pickney. Lester explains his rationale in "Storyteller's Voice."

13. Several critics have associated Brer Rabbit with the African American trickster tradition. See Evans and Hedin.

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