Uncle Remus and the Trickster Rabbit: On Joel Chandler Harris's *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings*

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I. Introduction: Opposing Views on Harris and His Racial Split

Critical responses to Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1908), a white Southern journalist and writer in the Reconstruction period, have been conflicting ever since his publication of the Uncle Remus stories. Most blacks, who tend to equate Uncle Remus with Uncle Tom reject the Uncle Remus books out of hand. They interpret Harris as a surreptitious white conspirator who wanted to return to "the Old South" or "the Old Plantation" by creating the character of Uncle Remus, an old-fashioned and unadulterated negro who is still dear to the heart of the South in the ideological conjuncture of bloodshed and violent Reconstruction. As Harris tells us in his introduction to *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings(1880)*, Remus has "nothing but pleasant memories of the discipline of slavery"(47). This fictional creation of a white Southerner was welcomed by white audience who wanted to believe Remus to be a representative figure of the black. When the Uncle Remus books were first published, the popularity of the character of Uncle Remus surpassed that of Brer(Brother) Rabbit. According to Robert Hemenway, few characters in American literature have held the popularity like Uncle Remus. White audiences have preferred Uncle Remus, a docile and comic old darky, to Brer Rabbit, a subversive black folkloric hero. Some severe black critics charge that Harris plagiarized black folk tale and contained its revolutionary power by creating the figure of Uncle Remus. For example, Alice Walker accuses Harris of "stealing a good part of our heritage" in a searing essay

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called "Unlce Remus, No Friend of Mine." Because of this cultural stealing and ideological containment, some black school libraries have gone so far as to ban the Uncle Remus volumes as offensive and harmful despite their presentation of Brer Rabbit stories.

Contrary to these negative views on Harris are sympathetic views that evaluate Harris as an inner critic of slavery who kept a critical distance from white ideology and even had an unconscious identification with blacks. In opposition to severe critics who charges Harris with contaminating and thus defusing the revolutionary power of black animal tales, sympathetic critics accept Harris's insistence on his fidelity to the originals: "Not one of them (the Uncle Remus stories) is cooked, and not one nor any part of one is an invention of mine. They are all genuine folk-tales." According to Louis D Rubin, "in the Uncle Remus stories Harris was indeed able to see the world as a black man did, and also to sense why the black looked at it in that fashion" (166). If Harris had not identified himself with blacks, Rubin argues, he could not have restored black folk tales as they were, and also could not have depicted society as it confronted the underdog (166). To be a faithful compiler of black legends required him to be more than just a cold observer and neutral collector of them. It demanded that he should see and feel the world as black people do, and this necessarily led him to have a strong emotional link with them. Writing about animals, Rubin argues, Harris transcended his white ideology and saw the world as the black people did. It is a kind of "triumph of realism" that took place despite the author's reactionary racist ideology.

Between these opposing views exists a more moderate view that interprets Harris as a specimen of a blackface minstrel, a white man performing the blacks, thereby being caught in the American who-am -I dilemma, one horn of which is white and the other is black. Harris is both black and white, and thus falls into an inner split. In this sense, Craig Werner thinks that Harris prefigures Faulknerian dilemma, that is to say, an unresolved and unresolvable dilemma in which "black and white begin all too hauntingly to look alike" (344). He sees in Harris a deconstruction of the binary opposition of black and white, and tries to reveal self-deconstructing aspects of Harris's text.

Even though we do not follow Craig Werner's deconstructive reading, it seems fair to see Harris as neither a simple white ideologist nor a full supporter of blackness

transcending his racial origin. Harris seems to have been a white man in permanent rebellion against his own race. In some cases his rebellion succeeded, and in others it failed. On the one hand he was certainly a conscientious ethnologist who faithfully presented "uncooked" black folk tales to the world, and on the other hand, he was a white supremacist who used Uncle Remus, in the columns of the *Atlanta Constitution*, a daily newspaper having served as a cultural means for propagating the New South ideology, as a counter in the white man's political game of Reconstruction. So deep was this fissure in his personality that it is not extravagant to say he was in permanent schizoid. As Brer Rabbit sings after deceiving Brer Fox "some goes up en some goes down" (98). Harris constantly repeated this movement of going up and down in his psyche; as his white self went up, his black self went down, and as his black self went up, his white self went down. In this essay I will try to read Harris's racial split in his overall writings including the Uncle Remus stories and his columns for the *Atlanta Constitution*, and to interpret what this split signifies in American racial drama, especially in its Southern version at the turn of the twentieth century.

II. Harris's "Other Fellow" and His Role as a Journalist

In a letter to his daughter, Harris acknowledged the two sides of his personality. When he took pen in his hand, he said, "the rust clears away and the 'other fellow' takes charges" (quoting from Hemenway 11). The other fellow who took over his writing is of course black. The other fellow seemed to remember things that he had forgotten long ago, leading him to the place where he dared not to go, or refused to go. Harris even said that his "other fellow" would do some damages if he didn't give him an opportunity to work off his energy in the way he liked (Hemenway 11). In a sober normal life his other fellow was dormant. Only when he made loose the censorship of his social self, did the other fellow appear and guide him.

According to Hemenway, Harris as a child started the game of "Gully Minstrels" with his white playmates; and later in life, whenever he felt blue and wanted to relax, he would jump up and exclaim, "Let's have some fun--let's play minstrels!" (11). Often, in letters and newspaper articles, and even in personal relations, it is said,

Harris would refer to himself as "Uncle Remus." Uncle Remus is, when viewed through the blinders of stereotype, the antithesis of Harris. Whereas Harris was shy, passive, stuttering, and self-conscious, Uncle Remus is open, socializing, never passive, and orally expressive. When Uncle Remus opened his mouth, he wrote effortlessly another novel repressed in Harris. There obviously seemed to be an element of the minstrel show in Harris. In mimicking black speech, often calling himself Uncle Remus, Harris assumed an identity suited to his "other fellow." By taking the voice of Uncle Remus, Harris was able to liberate a repressed part of his mind.

But was the Negro what Harris thought him to be? It is certainly open to question, for a white man actually does not know the Negro; he knows only the fictive image which he desires the Negro to be. It is the white man who constructs the Negro's image. The image reflects the looker, not the person looked at; it is born out of the looker's intense subjective desire and fear. Uncle Remus is the black face that Harris, a white man, found in himself and projected to the Negro. Uncle Remus is "his" other fellow, not the Negro himself.

But this "other fellow" had nothing to do with the editorials he wrote for public newspapers. As a journalist for the Atlanta Constitution, Harris joined the "New South" ideology formation project performed by the paper's chief editor Henry W. Grady. As Grady put it in his famous essay entitled "The New South," "the old South rested everything on slavery and agriculture, unconscious that these could neither give nor maintain its healthy growth. (However,) the New South presents a perfect democracy, the oligarchs leading in the popular movement. . . . a diversified industry that meets the complex need of this complex age" (91). Though making reluctant admission that the Old South built on slavery was wrong, Grady recalcitrantly adhered to the Confederate cause; in the above essay he still declared that "the South has nothing for which to apologize" and "nothing to take back" (91). Beneath his will to keep Southern identity seemed to lie his undeniable nostalgia for the romantic tradition of Southern plantation, a warm and mythic memory of the Old South. Grady's view was widely accepted by moderate Southerners who couldn't completely discard this romantic fantasy. Though the institution of slavery had been wrong, Grady and moderate Southern intellectuals claimed, the real relationships between slave owners and slaves had been close and mutually supporting, not cruel and exploiting. Harris also agreed to this idea. By referring to the romantic tradition of the plantation,

Harris reinforced a historical theory of slavery that began with the premise that the human relationships in slavery had been good and affectionate. There is little truth to this assertion, but it was a premise that was used to gain support for the cause of the New South. Harris wrote in an editorial for the Constitution that the greatest mistake of the Southern whites after the Civil War was in not "holding our hands to these poor, unfortunate people to renew the confidence and affection that had always existed between the white and colored races in the South" (quoting from Hemenway 21). As this statement shows, Harris believed the former slaves were so dependent on their white owners that only the latter's patriarchal guidance could lead them to a future. Harris saw no problem here, for he assumed the Southern whites would play once again their previous role as benevolent patriarchs. He paid little attention to the freedmen's rights; neither did he think of them as citizens equal to the white: they were just poor helpless children waiting for the sympathetic hands of their white fathers.

As a journalist, Harris's view on the freedman in America during the forty-three years he had lived after the Civil War was largely the ones held by moderate Southerners who were conservative in their racial attitude. Accepting the outcome of the Civil War, Harris spoke for the reunion between the South and the North. Recognizing that the sectionalism produced by slavery in the Old South and its aftermath in the New South caused a lot of ills and violence, he asked for tolerance and freedom from narrow sectional interests. He urged that literary authors be liberated from all requirements to support a sectional point of view and advocate the restoration of "the House divided," a phrase having acquired currency since Lincoln's use in his famous 1859 speech.

Believing that the ex-slaves would have basic rights as white American citizens, earlier in his life Harris urged that the Negros prepare themselves for citizenship and the whites accept them in their new status. Harris approved Booker T. Washington's program that the Negro should seek advancement in the areas open to them, while postponing until later the troublesome question of public rights. If we see through Harris's rhetorical blinders, his political position is quite simple, which is that black people are not citizens until they would be prepared enough to take public status, and they are certainly not now. Like Booker T. Washington's black job education, Harris did not accept the Negro's full participation in every occupation. He advised Negroes

to restrict the numbers entering the ministry and to forbid any to enter the field of law. It is undeniably contradictory to argue the importance of Christianity to Negroes while suggesting that fewer Negroes should be Christian ministers. But Harris failed to recognize this contradiction because his fantasy of the "old good days" in the antebellum South conveniently served to conceal it.

As legal restrictions were imposed on the rights of the Negro, most notably the state laws on segregation and voting qualifications passed in the 1890s, Harris accepted them. Since dissatisfactions with the new restrictions were voiced occasionally, and since there was still some possibility of national interference, Harris in effect reversed his previous position. Whereas he formerly exhorted white Southerners to accept the Negroes in their post-War role, he now justified the new policies of restriction and encouraged the Negro to accept the new dispensation and strive for the kind of improvement it envisioned. He did not want the threat of disruptive change, which had grown more and more distasteful to him as he grew older, and had driven him to look more and more into the past. His later editorials on the negro question became more and more conservative in both its content and its tone, and his nostalgia for the past became more and more strong. An editorial Harris wrote on "The Old Plantation" for the Atlanta Constitution of December 9, 1877 suggests the way in which the past of his youth remained with him. After recalling the days and the nights on the plantation, he concludes:

> But alas! all these are gone. The moon pursues her pathway as serenely as of old, but she no longer looks down upon the scenes that were familiar to your youth. The old homestead and the barn are given up to decay, and the songs of the negros have been hushed into silence by the necessities of a new dispensation. The old plantation itselfis gone. It has passed away, but the hand of time, inexorable, yet tender, has woven about it the sweet suggestions of poetry and romance, memorials that neither death nor decay can destroy. (Julia Harris 30)

We can find here neither any regret for the plantation period nor any traces of the other fellow whom Harris confessed to guide him when he wrote, but romantic nostalgia for the good old days.

III. Harris as a Writer of the Uncle Remus Stories

It is difficult to deny that Harris's nostalgia affected Uncle Remus stories, let alone his editorials. Even though we take at its face value his statement that when he wrote, the "other fellow" took over and guided him, the "other fellow" must have struggled with his sober self. The struggle between his conscious white self and unconscious black self could not help but leave traces in the Uncle Remus stories.

The most prominent trace of Harris's inner split and struggle is the narrative structure of Uncle Remus stories. The stories consist of the narrative frame and the framed. They are embedded in a two-tier or split-level structure; one is white and the other black; if one is steeped in fantasy and wish fulfillment, the other is immersed in the harsh realities of American slavery. Dramatically, the tales oscillate between the human and the animal plane: Uncle Remus and the little white boy and Brer Rabbit and the other woodland creatures. Linguistically, they oscillate between standard English and Negro dialect, so that the very texture of the prose reveals the vacillation between a white world and a Negro world.

The two fictive worlds of the Uncle Remus tales are in fact the divided worlds of the American South. They are the segregated and yet curiously interlocking worlds of the two races: the Big House and the slave quarters, Euro-American and Afro-American cultures. Their uneasy coexistence in the text reveals the irreconcilable contradiction of the two different worlds because the one is nostalgic and sentimental, and the other utterly harsh and subversive.

The figures of Uncle Remus and Miss Sally's little boy cling to one another in pastoral innocence and peace. The boy rests with his head against the old man's arm or sits on his knee as Uncle Remus strokes and caresses the child's hair. Uncle Remus tells the white boy black tales and in return the white boy gives tea cakes and an occasional piece of mince pie to Uncle Remus. It is a picture of utter confidence and trust, mutual tenderness and love, a racial utopia in which black and white love one another and share a childhood. Robert Hemenway calls this a "frozen moment of innocent childhood purity" (19) in which the paternal authority has retired to the Big house and the confusing world of racial caste and conflict disappears.

In the socio-political conjuncture of the bloodshed Reconstruction period, as Hemenway claims, the pastoral image of Uncle Remus and the white boy serves "as a signpost on America's road to reunion, . . . a uniting symbol for South and North" (20). Uncle Remus reassured Southern whites that free black people would still love white people without demanding retribution. At the same time he assured Northern whites that there would exist a mutual trust between blacks and whites in the new South, and thus, they would not have to meddle in the racial conflict there.

The world of the animal tales is quite different from the world of Uncle Remus and the white boy. Far from creating an atmosphere of love and trust, it reminds us of unrelieved hostility and danger, violence and cruelty, terror and revenge. In one tale, Brer Rabbit lures Brer Wolf into a large wooden chest, bores holes in the top, and scalds him to death with boiling water. In another, he persuades the animals whom he has robbed, to submit to an ordeal by fire, and as a consequence, the innocent Brer Possum is killed. In a third, having caused Brer Fox to be beaten to death, Brer Rabbit attempts to serve his enemy's head in a stew to his wife and children. The tales are full of beating, tortures, and savage assaults. They reproduce, in their images of violence, the universe of the Negro slave where there are no good neighbors, neither equality nor fraternity. The world is a battle without rules, a jungle where only the strong survive.

The one reality in this world is a survival, and the surest survival strategy is a trick. Thus, Brier Rabbit, the main hero in the animal stories, is a trickster outwitting his enemy. In one episode, the Rabbit falls down a well in a bucket. He can get back up only by enticing the Fox to climb into the other bucket. The fox is duped; he drops down and the Rabbit rises, singing as he passes his enemy:

> Good-by, Brer Fox, take keer yo' close
> Fer dis is de way de worril goes
> Some goes up en some goes down
> You'll git ter de bottom all safe en soun.' (98)

This is a theme song of the stories. In a tough world in which danger is everywhere, the weak can survive the strong only through his own cunning, wit and trick.

No fixed stable morality is possible because the world the slaves inhabit is one based on the most immoral principle, one in which only hostility and aggressiveness dominate. Brer Rabbit's code is what Robert Bone calls the "outlaw code." Living in the world of lash and gun, black slaves had no choice but to formulate an unlawful code. A master's sense of right and wrong was hardly suited to slaves. All moral considerations were discarded in a fierce effort to survive. Deceit and trickery, theft and betrayal, and murder and mayhem were endorsed as appropriate responses to the slave condition. Such are the ruthless expedients of Brer Rabbit, who can survive in the jungle by his wit and trickery.

However, trickery is not only a way of survival of the weak but also their covert subversive strategy. It is impossible for the slaves to overturn the dominant power structure in one stroke by a strong physical force. To express openly the resistant sentiments would invite instant retaliation from the Big House. The bitter truth of slaves' existence was too dangerous to acknowledge in the master's presence. If they were not to accept the world as it was, they needed to develop a covert subversive strategy both within, and against the dominant structure. Brer Rabbit exhibits the subversive consciousness necessary to survive in an oppressive system. He suggests that no order can last for very long, that there are no certainties, and that the weak can win the strong this week but if he is not on guard his victory can be turned down next week. By slyly deceiving the strong can he make a momentary rupture in the oppressive system and thus gain what he wants in a given situation, though he cannot overturn the overall power structure itself. In this sense, the trickster code is different from the code of Christianity that embodies the official morality to which the slaves formally subscribed.

Then, for what does Brer Rabbit compete and trick? Two objects underlying Brer Rabbit's struggle are food and sex. The tales both begin and end with failed food-sharing. In the first episode Brer Fox invites the Rabbit to supper, intending that his guest will be the main course in his "joint" dinner with the Bear. The Rabbit accepts the invitation, shows up, makes the fox look ridiculous, and blidely scampers off. The teller comments here: "En Brer Fox ain't kotch 'im yit, en w'at' mor. honey, he ain't gwine ter" (57). In the closing episode, the Fox makes a genuine food-sharing gesture-- he crawls inside the Cow with the Rabbit and shows him how to cut out all the beef he can carry. But this communal attempt fails. In a most malevolent

act, the Rabbit betrays his benefactor to the farmer and stands by, "making like he mighty sorry," while the Fox is beaten to death. And now the meal which aborted in the beginning almost does take place, with the Fox as the main course. The situation is completely reversed. Having brutally destroyed his enemy, the Rabbit tries to make Mrs. Fox cook a soup with her husband's head, and almost succeeds.

The other object for which Brer Rabbit competes with his rival animals is food, and this struggle for food reflects bitter realities of slavery. Chronic undernourishment was a common feature of the slave economy. The more a planter extracted from his slaves, the more money he could make. Brer Rabbit tales reflect the slaves' constant hunger and their obsession with food. In many of the tales, the action is devoted to the acquisition of a supplemental food supply, sometimes through hunting or fishing but more often through stealing. In one episode, Brer Rabbit steals what Fox hunted by feigning to be dead, and in other he steals Brer Wolf's fish.

Another tension that runs through the stories is "who gets the women?" Woman is one of the most important "objects" of the male animals' violent competition and struggle. The Rabbit, though married and having children, is engaged in competition with the Fox and the other animals for the favor of "Miss Meadows en de gals." In sex, Brer Rabbit is at his most aggressive and his most invisible. Brer Fox invites Brer Rabbit to a party, where he intends to humiliate him in front of "Miss Meadows en de gals." But Brer Rabbit, scenting trouble, insists that he is too sick to attend. But he soon changes his mind and decides, "I'll show Miss Meadows en de gals dat I'm de boss er Brer Fox."And he does; through the most elaborate trickery he persuades the Fox to put on a saddle, and then rides him past Miss Meadows' house.

At Miss Meadows' the feuds of the animals must be suspended, "kaze Misss Meadows, she done put her foot down, she did, en say dat w'en dey come ter her place dey hatter hand up a flag er truce at de front gate en 'bide by it" (127). This temporary truce is to the Rabbit's advantage because in the sexual contest the best man wins and the best man is none other than Brer Rabbit. Miss Meadows decides to get some peace by holding a contest and letting the winner pick the girls.

Robert Hemenway claims that "gals represent the order of the white world, which the Rabbit violates by trampling on the most sacred of white sexual taboos" (28-9). Craig Werner also argues that Miss Sally, "a curiously asexual figure" is refigured in

Miss Meadows. Actually it is Bernard Wolf who first set off this kind of interpretation of Miss Meadows. According to him, Brer Rabbit subverts the Southern sexual order by being an undisputed victor in sexual competition for getting "Miss Meadows en de gals," white men's women inaccessible to black men. But it seems far-fetched to directly equate Miss Meadow with white men's women. Miss Meadows always appears with "de gals." They live together in the same house. They are contrasted with the wives of the male animals not in their racial or class differences but in their position as women who don't belong to their husbands, as women who do communal sexual services. They seem to be prostitutes in the animal village. Brer Rabbit, though married, still does not give up his sexual contest for "Miss Meadows en de gals." Nor does he stick to the norm of monogamy. Brer Bear has his "gal" Miss Brindle in addition to his wife Miss Brune. There is no strict monogamy in the animal kingdom; all male animals try to acquire more women, and the more women they get, the more powerful they are. Miss Meadows and girls are the women publicly open to all men.

Then we can raise several questions. What is the role of women in the totally masculine animal jungle? Are they mere passive objects for which the white and the black contest and compete with each other? Are women no more than the objects of men's sexual aggression even in black folk tales? Is the sexual dichotomy of housewife and prostitute, and "ole 'oman" and "gal" still retained? It certainly is. Curiously enough, female animals never express their sexual voices while male animals constantly and obsessively reveal their sexual desires. When Brer Rabbit married old Miss Fox after Brer Fox's death, we heard no opinion of her, though she should be the wife of his former husband's cruel murderer. She is just a booty belonging to the victor. Uncle Remus hesitates in telling the "radical" marriage of the white man's woman and black man, and thus cannot give us a definitive version. He evades the trouble by telling two versions: "Some say dat Brer Rabbit's ole 'oman died fum eating some pizen-weed, en dat Brer Rabbit married ole Miss Fox, en some say not" (155). Whatever version Uncle Remus takes, "ole Miss Fox" cannot but be the object of exchange in the sexual struggle of the white man and the black man. Brer Rabbit's "ole 'oman" should die in order for her husband to take the white woman.

As we have examined so far, the world in the framed tale in which black men's violent struggle for food and woman takes place is dramatically contrasted with the pastoral framing tale in which white boy and old darky love one another. Thus, Harris

has been criticized for fitting black folk material into a white man's framework. The primary reason of such a criticism is due to the character of Uncle Remus. It is certainly difficult to deny that the image of Uncle Remus is the product of Harris's white ideology. However, as we pointed out earlier, "the other fellow" in Harris prevents Uncle Remus from being just a white figment. He is not just a "venerable sable patron" (146) "who had nothing but pleasant memories of the discipline of slavery," (47) as Harris describes. He has many different faces, not just a meek and docile one. Moreover, the character of Uncle Remus is not the same in each section of the book. While Uncle Remus in the section of "His Saying" is an irascible urban darky who brags in front of other negroes, comes into fight easily, complains about black people's laziness, and objects to the education of black people, he, in "A Story of the War," is a faithful loyal slave who rescues his white master in the Civil War, forgetting his own freedom. In the animal tales, he must be a wise, venerable old-time negro, but there are other aspects transcending this stereotype. Sometimes he steps out of his clown role to deliver unmistakable judgments on class, caste, and race, and in those judgments the aggression of this "white man's nigger surreptitiously erupts.

The tale entitled "Why the Negro Is Black" tells how the little boy makes the curious discovery that Uncle Remus's palms are white. The old man explains: "Dey wuz a time w'en all de w'te folks 'us black-- blacker dan me . . . Niggersis niggers now, but de time wuz w'en we 'uz all niggers tergedder, . . ." (151). How did some "niggers" get white? Simply by bathing in a pond which washed their pigmentation off and using up most of the waters, so that the late comers could only dabble their hands and feet in it. By imaginatively reconstructing the origin as black and making the skin color just a contingency, Uncle Remus comically reverses the order of white/black hierarchy.

In the tale "Plantation Witch," Remus, explaining that there are witches everywhere in the world that "comes en conjure fokes," hints that these witches may be Negroes who have slipped out of their skins, and these witches conjure white folks from all sides, taking the forms of owls, bats, dogs, cats and rabbits. The story frightens his young listener so much that Remus has to take him by the hand and lead him home to the big house and for a long time the boy lies awake, "expecting an unseemly visitation from some mysterious sources" (146). It gives the boy an uneasy night. For among the gifts that Uncle Remus gives to Miss Sally's little boy is a nightmare in

which whites were originally negroes, the weak tortures the strong, mere blackness becomes black magic and Negroes stroll with the supernatural power, taking their skin off and terrorizing the whites. In this respect Craig Werner finds in Uncle Remus's songs and speech the good example of Henry Louis Gates's "signifying monkey," a black people's manipulation of the "play of signifiers" without concern for a specific referential meaning. Before starting his story of "The End of Mr. Bear," which is about Brer Rabbit's life-long enemy, the Bear's terrible death, Uncle Remus sings a song. The song is "a senseless affairs so far as the words were concerned but sung to a melody almost thrilling in its sweetness" (133). It is a blues which rose and fell with the burden of the "curiously plaintive song" (133). After his quick ear detected the presence of the little boy, however, he allows his song to run into a recitation of nonsense. Werner interprets this shift from "senseless affairs" to "a recitation of nonsense" as a verbal manipulation in which the black voice signifies something unavailable to any white presence. Though the reasons for the shift or the difference between the two levels of non-signifying discourse are never stated in the text, Werner suggests, it is a linguistic strategy to express a black signification which cannot be decoded by white men's interpretive network. Though not referring to this scat, Robert Bone also claims that the song and speech of the Uncle Remus tales are quite different from black spirituals. While the spirituals embody the official morality to which the slaves subscribed, the folk tales embody the survival ethic and their multiple linguistic strategies they actually practiced.

Unlike Bone's view, however, it seems to me that the code of the spirituals and the code of folk tales coexist unevenly in the character of Uncle Remus. In one story he makes a final aggressive comment on the fate of Brer Bear whose head is stung by the swarm of bees: "But dar ole Brer B'ar hung, en ef his head ain't swunk, I speck he handin' dar yit-- dat w'at I speck" (136). But in another story he relieves es the fear of the little white boy by singing a spiritual. It soothes the little boy, however, to hear the strong musical voice of his sable patron not very far away and to this accompaniment he drops asleep:

Hit's eighteen hunder'd, forty-en-eight,
Christ done made dat crooked way straight--
En I don't wanter stay here no longer;

Hit's eighteen hunder'd, forty-en-nine,
Christ done turn dat water inter wine--
En I don't wanter stay here no longer. (146)

The unstable coexistence of the two codes of spiritual and folk tale in Uncle Remus is the sign that he is not just a stereotype but a complex character, though not a full rounded one. We can see in the complex presentation of Uncle Remus Harris's racial split in which no clear-cut division between white and black is made, and which prefigures racial dilemma that the later generation of Southern whites would face in a more haunting way.

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〈요약문〉

엉클 레머스와 속임수꾼 토끼: 조엘 챈들러 해리스의 『엉클 레머스: 그의 노래와 이야기』

이 명 호

이 논문은 조엘 챈들러 해리스의 흑인 민담 모음집인 엉클 레머스 이야기를 작가의 분열된 인종의식에 초점을 맞추어 읽어내고 있다. 흑백간의 인종적 갈등이 격화된 재건기 동안 남부사회에서는 '신 남부' 건설운동이라 불리는 새로운 사회운동이 일어나게 된다. 이 운동은 북부의 자본주의적 힘을 빌려 남부를 근대 자본주의사회로 재편하면서도 구 남부에 존재했던 것으로 가정되는 백인 가부장제를 부활하려는 움직임이다. 남부의 온건한 백인지식인들 사이에서 광범한 지지를 얻었던 이 운동은 구 남부에 존재했던 인종적 모순은 외면한 채 백인 지배를 정당화하는 이데올로기적 향수에서 벗어나지 못했다고 할 수 있다. 조지아 주 애틀란타의 유력한 신문 기자이자 흑인민담 채록자였던 해리스는 신 남부 이데올로기의 주요 주창자 가운데 한 사람이었다. 이 논문은 해리스의 다양한 글들을 추적하여 인종문제에 대한 그의 분열된 입장을 분석하고 있다. 특히 그의 신문사설에 직접적으로 표명되고 있는 입장과 엉클 래머스 이야기를 통해 간접적으로 드러나는 입장을 종합적으로 살펴봄으로써 해리스의 인종의식에 대한 총괄적 평가를 시도하고자 한다. 신문 사설에서 해리스는 흑인이 여전히 백인의 지도가 필요한 낮은 수준에 있기 때문에 백인과 동등한 시민적 권리를 주장하면 안 된다는 보수적 입장을 취하고 있지만, 엉클 래머스 이야기에서는 이 입장에 일정 정도 균열이 일어나고 있다. 해리스는 흑인들 사이에서 광범위하게 유포되던 동물이야기를 채록하면서 흑인과 무의식적 동일시를 하게 된다. 백인의 인종적 코드로 순치시킬 수 없는 흑인 동물이야기를 엉클 래머스라는 순응적 모습의 화자를 통해 말하게 함으로써 어느 정도 길들이고 있지만, 완전히 순치되지 않은 전복적 에너지는 동물이야기의 주인공인 토끼를 통해 분출되고 있다. "Brer Rabbit"이라 불리는 토끼는 음식과 여자를 얻기 위해 잔인한 술수도 마다하지 않는 속임수꾼이다. 야생의 정글에서 속임수꾼 토끼가 엮어가는 생존의 서사는 이 이야기를 들려주는 화자 엉클 래머스의 모습과 갈등을 일으키고 있다. 이 갈등에서 우리는 미국사회를 괴롭히는 인

종적 모순이 재연되고 있음을 보게 된다.

주제어: Joel Chandler Harris(조엘 챈들러 해리스), Uncle Remus(엉클 레머스), Brer Rabbit(토끼형제), Trickster(속임수꾼), Racial split(인종적 분열), the New South ideology(신남부 이데올로기), Minstrel show(민스트럴 쇼)