

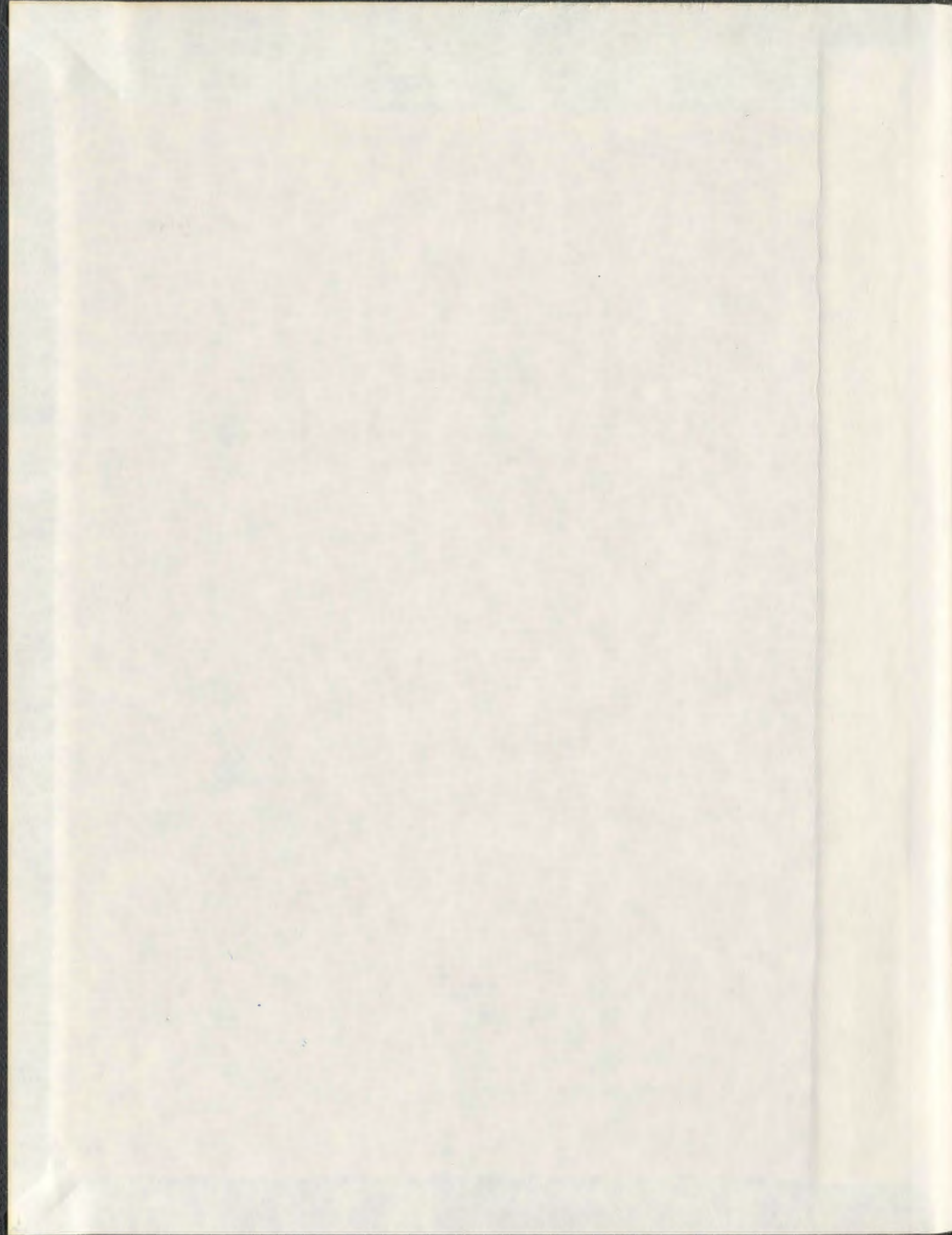
FOLKLORE OF SOUTHERN LITERATURE AS
FOLKLORISTIC PROCESS:
PORTRAYALS OF THE CANE RIVER REGION
IN THE SHORT STORIES OF
LOUISIANA'S ADA JACK CARVER

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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FOLKLORE OF SOUTHERN LITERATURE AS FOLKLORISTIC PROCESS:
PORTRAYALS OF THE CANE RIVER REGION IN THE SHORT STORIES OF
LOUISIANA'S ADA JACK CARVER

by

Martha Rachel Gholson

A thesis submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

Department of Folklore
Memorial University of Newfoundland

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Summary

This dissertation examines the short stories of north western Louisiana writer Ada Jack Carver (1880-1972), focussing on her portrayal of Louisiana's regional ethnicities. While situating Carver's writing within historical and cultural contexts, the discussion also describes the Melrose plantation literary group, examining this group in terms of theories concerning the uses of folklore in literature and theories that define folkgroups in occupational environments. The consideration of diverse classifications leads to a discussion of the links between theory concerning regional literature, folklore as process, and folklore in literature through the example of Carver's writing and association with the Melrose plantation literary group. How elements of the folklore corpus interact with literary manifestations of elite culture creating and propagating regional stereotypes, which become part and parcel of both regional concepts of ethnicity and the tourism trade in the 1990s, is the central focus of this dissertation.

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This dissertation is the direct result of familial support which introduced the possibilities that derive from ingraining an interest in other cultures and other lands into my experience. For a love of experiential learning, a value of persistence, and enduring support of my pursuit, I am particularly indebted to my parents and uncle.

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Introduction

This dissertation creates a historical context for the work of Ada Jack Carver (1880-1972), one of the group of writers and artists who received inspiration and support from visits to Melrose Plantation in Louisiana's northwestern corner. Carver published fourteen short stories and a one-act play that were set amongst the ethnic groups of Louisiana. Writing from a folklore studies perspective, I have used the short stories of Ada Jack Carver as a specific example of the role assumed by the Melrose Group in re-envisioning the Cane River region of northwest Louisiana during the first half of the twentieth-century. The Melrose Group is the proper name I have assigned the group of writers and preservationists who were linked through friendship and their experiences at Melrose, a Cane River plantation owned by the Henry family, whose benefactor was Lou Carmellite Garrett Henry.¹

The Cane River region, in northwestern Louisiana, extends south of Natchitoches² approximately fifteen miles to the confluence of the Red and Cane Rivers. Between these two rivers lies a fertile strip of land, Isle Brevelle, which has been an agricultural centre since before the Civil War. Here exist a people with a sense of history which differs from that held by many Americans. The region's people strongly identify with their French and Spanish heritage. Locals have a French Louisiana pronunciation unique to the area

¹ Lou Carmellite Garrett Henry was also known locally as Mrs. John Henry or by the southern honorifics Aunt Cammie and Miss Cammie. In this dissertation, she will be called Miss Cammie, unless mentioned in conjunction with her husband.

² Natchitoches is pronounced "Nack-i-tush."

and mark outsiders - even be they French or Cajun-- by their ineptitude where local pronunciations are concerned. Particularly relevant are the pronunciations of names tracing back to this heritage, names such as Rocque. Pronounced "rock" locally. And these regional characteristics are associated yet with the rivers of the region.

Rivers are central to the Louisiana experience. The Mississippi, "Father of All Waters" and third largest river in the world, forms the eastern boundary of the state and enters the Gulf of Mexico just southwest of New Orleans. The Mississippi has served as a highway for news and goods for much of Louisiana's history, and the connecting rivers as local thoroughfares upon which rest local communities like the Cane River Region.

The writings of Ada Jack Carver are one of several key elements that in the hands of the Melrose Group served as tools used to promote the Cane River region, the region's heritage and the social standing of the Henry family. I discuss these short stories and Carver's unpublished texts highlighting the stylistic reasons for her power as a popular author in Chapter Two. In Chapter Five, I outline the historic influences and stylistic choices that enabled Carver's own vision of her homeland in the Deep South³ and that region's women to reach a popular audience.

Elements of regional context important to Carver's literary production, the history of this island landscape and the landscape's relationship to Melrose Plantation in the

³ The Deep South is the core of the South. It is composed of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana, the more conservative states which were at the time of the Civil War the heart of the plantation system.

years preceding its ownership by the Henry family, are detailed in Chapter Three. From the late 1880s until 1970 Melrose Plantation was owned by Mr. and Mrs. John H. Henry. Under the guiding influence of Mr. Henry's wife, Miss Cammie, Melrose became a gathering place for the Melrose Group and other local men and women of letters. I will discuss this time period and the relationship of members of the Melrose Group to each other and Carver's writing in Chapters Five and Six.

The corpus of Carver's writings is important for the very reasons influencing its obscurity. The thirteen short stories lingered nearly forgotten by literary scholars for most of the latter half of the twentieth-century because her productions are popular texts. These short stories were written for popular magazines during the period spanning 1917 through 1949; and though not part of the literary canon, or even a prime example of Local Colour⁴ writing during its heyday, Carver's published and unpublished works reveal many relations that exist among amateur folklore collectors, popular literature, and regional mythology, such as: the role of creative re-interpreter, the desire for preservation, and the professional consequence of self-identification with a region or ethnic group.

Such a presentation of ideas is highly relevant to Ada Jack Carver's writing. The texts Carver published at the beginning of her career classify as Romantic due to a lack of

⁴ Local Color writing is a subdivision of Realism, a period that lasted from 1865 to 1900 in American literature. It lacked the serious focus of most Realism and was generally informative about the "surface peculiarities of special regions" by focusing on truthful images of regions without a concurrent focus on human nature (Holman and Harmon 280, 415).

regional focus. Her later work was of the Local Colour movement and places her within a large group of American writers, working from the 1880s through her own lifetime. Troublesome, for the scholar attempting to classify Carver's work, is her tendency to avoid the overt use of the techniques of Realism that were still in vogue in the 1920s, and her preference instead the antiquated form of Local Colour Writing.

Understanding Carver's place in the American literary canon requires consideration of reasons for Carver's seeming adherence to the outmoded literary style of the Local Colour movement when her writing course in New York and her friendship with Group colleague Lyle Saxon offered ample opportunities to learn of the Realism movement's more current stylistic trends. To gain insight into Carver's conservatism in this area one must consider her dislike of plot, her attention to the creation of tension, and her focus on the themes of both racial relations and definitions. What benefits, then, might an antiquated writing style offer a southern writer from 1920 to 1949? Detailing possible answers necessitates the following exercise in historic contextualism, focussing on how Carver's work indicates that authors writing during a time of conflicting regional perspectives and politics can employ antiquated literary forms to safely present controversial ideas.

Carver's Social and Philosophical Contexts

Carver lived in northwestern Louisiana, an area of the state known for its liberal

politics at the turn of the century, as it was the stronghold for the Populist political movement (1892-1928) in Louisiana during her parents' lifetime (Wall, et. al. 238-39). The Populist movement's strength resulted in a viable third party in Louisiana's two-party system of democratic government when John N. Pharr ran a fusion-ticket as the acknowledged candidate of both the Populist and the Republican parties and was elected governor of the State of Louisiana in 1896 (240). The Populist party, subsequently, grew into one of the strongest third party movements in United States history⁵ (238). The party's emphasis – on individual benefit as a proposed change in government responsibility to the common people – had the adverse effect of indirectly buttressing the South's segregated social structure. The Populists' emphasis on individuals benefiting from the government also advances the seemingly harmonious stance that it is each person's responsibility to create and advocate for change within his own life, to advocate for this change amongst his fellows and to build a popular support that will then take the change that he desires to legislative bodies. Theoretically, the Populist movement was a beneficial melding of democratic and socialist perspectives that allows every one to benefit from the majority's decisions. Practically, this melding of political philosophies allowed groups with electoral majorities to attain and retain their social and political objectives while "sugar coating" these objectives with rhetoric promising to alleviate the

⁵ Since the completion of Wall's history of Louisiana there has been a third party movement in the United States of similar size, the Reform Party. Rising out of his home state of Texas, Ross Perot led his Reform party through a presidential race in 1996.

difficulties facing groups largely composed of poor and vulnerable populations. This was certainly true in Louisiana where by 1894 the party declared that the interests of white and coloured races were not only the same, but deserving of equitable and fair treatment and that lynching should be stopped (239-40). Increasing numbers bolstered the party's attempts to win a gubernatorial election by resulting in a fusion ticket with Republicans in 1896. John N. Pharr, the Populist candidate, received the majority vote in all but the 12 race deciding parishes where Populist-Republicans, predominately an African-American voter base, were denied access to the polls. Despite such inequities for southern African-Americans and their fellow party members the Populist movement was a strong liberalizing influence on American politics that would be felt during America's Great Depression.

This movement and its ideas were precursors to the government programs presented to Louisianians by their governor Huey Long, 1928 to 1932, and to America by the Franklin D. Roosevelt Administration beginning in 1932 and continuing after Roosevelt's death to 1947. The primary vehicle for this presentation was Roosevelt's introduction of several programs at the federal level in an effort to relieve the nation's economic difficulties. Roosevelt introduced several programs one of which was the Works Progress Administration (WPA). In brief, the WPA brought federal monies to the States and their unemployed through various means. Louisiana, like other states, benefited through the jobs created by building projects that created everything from new

bridges, hospitals and roads to swimming pools (Wall 293). Work was also created for writers, newspaper reporters, and others through the Writer's Project. These individuals created collections of materials about the people and sites within a state and then created from these collections works such as the WPA guides, the Federal Writers' Project documents, and folklore collections⁶. In the case of both Long's and Roosevelt's political philosophies, government money and programming brought various goods and social services to the average person in a time of great need.

There were other philosophies in this regional environment that were liberal in nature. This region has a historical tendency toward the liberal treatment of individuals other areas of the South would have considered Black, rather than Creole.⁷ In Louisiana's New Orleans and Cane River region being Creole was very different from being of mixed

⁶ Federal Writers' Project documents include works like *Gumbo Ya-Ya* produced from the Louisiana Writers' Project under Lyle Saxon and state guides like those of Idaho, Missouri, and North Carolina discussed by Bold in *The WPA Guides: Mapping America*. Private collections were created by folklife scholars such as John and Alan Lomax in the area of folksong (Dorson 1983 355), or Modie Boatwright and Frank J. Dobie in the area of Texas folk narrative during this period.

⁷ The term Creole is difficult to define even within the Louisiana context. Generally in both the New Orleans and Cane River areas the term refers to individuals who trace their ancestry to French-Euro-American, or Spanish-Euro-American progenitors living in the region before it came under American rule. In New Orleans, individuals who can similarly trace their heritage, but who also have African-American heritage are called Mulatto; individuals with this heritage would be identified as Creole, Creoles of Color, Black Creoles, or Mulattos in the Cane River region depending on the historical time period. In this dissertation, the term Creole will refer to those individuals alternately identified as Creoles, or Creoles of Color, in the popular parlance of the Cane River region. For further discussion of these racial distinctions see Chapter Three.

heritage in other parts of the nation, particularly other parts of the South. In most of the South, being of mixed heritage was the equivalent of being African-American⁸. However Louisianians due to their past Spanish and French rule, perceived mixed heritage differently, providing levels of social status based on the percentage of one's Euro-American heritage and one's physical characteristics. In fact among Cajuns of southern Louisiana, people still mention that one could possess the requisite percentage of Euro-American blood to hold that legal classification, but still be classified Negro due to head hair being curly enough to hold a pencil (Gholson Field Journal 1990). Such legal classification strategies were of import for many since higher percentages of Euro-American heritage and traits created better social and educational opportunities. Such social hierarchical organization offers opportunities for at least two regional interpretations of southern history. These two regional interpretations, one northern and one southern, differ due to their perceptions of this social hierarchy through the lenses of politics, region, and race.

Though an oversimplification of complex regional differences, the two views of this hierarchical society I wish to outline will be based in a broad interpretation of the

⁸ Within the body of this text, I will be using the term African-American to refer to individuals of African descent. It should be noted that Negro was, however, the politically and socially correct term of address for individuals of African descent during the first two-thirds of the twentieth-century, and will be found in the personal correspondence of the Melrose Group. Other racial appellations, currently deemed derogatory, found in quotes from the Melrose Group's personal correspondence have not been changed, in order to retain each individual's personal expression.

general philosophical views held in each region, views reliant on the basic philosophies which backed either region's forces during the Civil War, and the subsequent years of Reconstruction⁹ that lasted from 1865 until 1877 in Louisiana (Wall, et. al. 213). The views will serve further as a broad context for the discussion of the tensions and cultural influences which promoted Local Colour writing in Louisiana.

The northern view of the south incorporated assumptions of depravity, social inequity based on racial heritage and characteristics, and great economic disparity. For some, this view softened when confronted with the differing social structure of Louisiana. For Louisiana's treatment of African-Americans appeared less severe than the treatment of her southern sister states. After all, a large portion of the population in other states refused to educate anyone of African-American heritage while the Creoles of Colour in Louisiana generally went to private schools with, lived in and circulated among the elite social circles of New Orleans and the Red River region.

Sister-states of the southland generally supported a division of the races socially and economically, reinforcing this division through disproportionate education for non-Euro-American groups. For southerners living in other states Louisiana's educated and

⁹ Reconstruction, or Northern Occupation as some Southerners labelled the period, occurred from 1865 to 1877. This period was marked by the presence of Union troops in the South in the role of enforcement. Though Reconstruction did not topple white supremacy, it did challenge the system which supported white supremacy by allowing Blacks to participate in the political process, enforcing desegregation of public places, allowing the integrations of schools (in New Orleans), and offering minimal protection to Black churches and schools. It was also during this period that the economic systems of crop-liens and share-cropping came to be (Wall et. al. 203-216).

moneyed Creole class must have seemed alternately incongruous, dangerously liberal and foolhardy, as its very existence was antithetical to most of the southern states' implemented hierarchy of races.

Writing for individuals spanning the gamut of perspectives held in the northern and southern states represented by either end of the continuum of philosophies above, Carver needed to present topics for popular consumption that would be acceptable to both the northern and the southern reader, as did her peers. The adroit manipulation of the short story for such a diverse audience required Carver to refrain from participating in the prevalent writing style of Realism. Realism would require Carver to use plots which undertook controversial portrayals of inequitable race relations in Louisiana. Consequently Carver employed Romanticism to portray the Cane River Region, embedding the realistic elements of local colour writing within Romantic formats and story lines.

This approach was readily used by authors of the state, as evidenced by the collection of Romantic short stories edited by Ben Forkner in *Louisiana Stories*. Such short stories sometimes incorporated local colour to add descriptive depth. In contrast, Carver's blending of these approaches resulted in both descriptive and narrative depth. Romanticism's Local Colour style provided Carver with a forum that could not merely avoid current troublesome subjects and plots as they did for her peers, but result in a format which additionally focussed on accurate portrayals of regional life and the

regional landscape, primarily, through the use of imagery and dialect.

Outline of the Study

Echoing Local Colour writing's focus on the landscape surrounding a writer, I will frame Carver's writing geographically and historically, so that her work will be presented in context. Building on Richard Bauman's theoretical concept of framing, Carl Lindahl framed Chaucer's *Caunterbury Tales* within the traditions of Medieval folklore in his work *Ernest Games*. I will posit, in a manner similar to that used by Lindahl, an interpretation of Carver's short story corpus which is situated in and informed by traditional temporal, and cultural influences. The interpretation of these short stories will encompass consideration of frames forefronting literary and personal influences, points of regional tension and cultural settings, and will, subsequently, inform considerations of the driving aesthetic behind Carver's and the Melrose Group's reinterpretations of the South, and their remapping of the Southern myth based on the regional social structure of northwestern Louisiana. How these presentations of the South, in particular Carver's, attempt to authenticate the South's lifestyle and social structure before the Civil War will be the final contextual frame presented, and will consider the role of amateur collectors in supporting what Regina Bendix has termed Folklore Studies' "search for authenticity."

Bendix posits that Folklore Studies has risen from the desire to present, document, and collect examples of the authentic culture (e.g., the authentic oral narrative, folk song, or quilt). Building on this point, she defines the authentic as a discursive construct which

exists at the interstices of conscious "comparison between self and Other, as well as between external and internal states of being. Invocations of authenticity are admissions of vulnerability, filtering the self's longings into the shaping of the subject" (17).

Carver's short stories are admissions of vulnerability; for in their attempts to sketch an authentic image of the Cane River region, they admit to cultural, ethnic, and gendered tensions she perceived.

This dissertation contextualizes Carver's literary technique and resultant short stories by framing them historically and culturally chapter by chapter. Immediately following this introduction, Chapter One introduces Carver's area of Louisiana, as it exists today and delineates the research process which informed this work, including difficulties encountered. Chapter Two details the theoretical perspective informing this dissertation's consideration of Ada Jack Carver, her personal traditions and writing, as well as her relationship to regional culture and other representatives of the Cane River region. Chapter Three presents a short biography of Ada Jack Carver and her writing history. Chapter Four depicts the historic and cultural influences Carver was introduced to through visits to Melrose Plantation. Chapter Five portrays Carver's friends and colleagues: the Melrose Group, who met through visits to Melrose Plantation in the early 1900s, and their shared interests in the environments of Louisiana: cultural, historical, and botanical. In Chapter Six, Carver's writing is situated within historical contexts of literary and folklore studies, as well as the shared interests and relationships between

members of the Melrose Writers.

Chapter Seven focuses directly on the representation of the Cane River Carver created in her short stories. This chapter outlines events in the region which are reactionary extensions of the legend building done by the Melrose Group in their authorial and preservationist activities. Thus the following chapters will address the links and debts that Carver and her short stories owe to her friendships with members of the Melrose Group and the history surrounding Melrose Plantation while using the specific example of her writing to elucidate perceptions of regional race relations, the regional myth making process, and the cultural reactions to such myth making.

Chapter One

The Research Process: Sources, Methods, and Problems

I grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, since my parents had moved there from Memphis, Tennessee before my birth. As they moved into a new region, my parents found themselves, like all immigrants, pulled in opposite directions by the cultures of the two regions in their lives: their new home-place in the Midwest and the home-place of their heritage in the South. This cultural dialogue within my family shaped my ideas about the South and had long-term effects on my perceptions when I went to live, study and conduct research in that region. In this chapter, I discuss the ways in which I learned about myself in doing research for this dissertation, and how my experiences shaped the direction of my thoughts. Further consideration of these experiences required me to authenticate my findings by situating the South and subsequently situating myself within a multi regional heritage.

Sources and Methods

Ada Jack Carver's importance to Louisiana literature first came to my attention while taking a class in Modern American Literature at the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette. Mentioned in passing by the instructor, Carver was introduced as an author currently the subject of a Masters thesis at Northwestern State University and a prime candidate for a doctoral study.

At the time, I did not read the collection of Carver's short stories that has been in print since 1980. A little more than two years later in 1993, I was researching possible

topics for a dissertation proposal that would not only be situated in the American regions of the Mid- or Deep South, but also would require a knowledge of both literary and folklore studies. This search led me to the writings of several Missouri authors and the collected short stories of their fellow Missourian Kate Chopin.¹ While reading Chopin's stories based in Louisiana, I recalled mention of Carver, read her stories and her play *The Cajun*, and decided to focus on the role of her writings within a section of the Red River region that stretches from Northwestern Louisiana through an eastern portion of Texas and up into Southern Arkansas.

In researching the influences on the life and writings of Ada Jack Carver, I applied ethnographic methodology to interviews, fieldnotes, historical documents, and literature. This methodology will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two, and included the following documents. A personal journal began with the onset of this inquiry and continued throughout. Interviews and fieldnotes were primarily created while researching in Louisiana. A few interviews occurred after this by either phone or e-mail. Historical documents included primary texts of visitors to Melrose Plantation. These documents include items such as photographs, letters, personal diaries and scrapbooks. Literature included ethnographies focussing on groups reinterpreting their own culture and on cultures of the South. Additionally, newspaper articles about the Cane River region and

¹ The novels and short stories of Kate Chopin, a native St. Louisian of the state of Missouri who frequently wrote about northwestern Louisiana culture, generally focus thematically on the position of women in society and the spaces they create for self expression within society's strictures.

the visitors to Melrose, books by Lyle Saxon, Francois Mignon's newspaper column "Cane River Memo" and the short stories of Ada Jack Carver were read. Other texts included histories, theses and ethnographies on topics of regional interest such as the life and writings of Kate Chopin, the Works Progress Administration, and the role of technology in the patterns of settlement in the United States. I systematically applied ethnographic methodology² to these divergent sources in order delineate a preliminary concept of local cultural representations. Secondly, it allows for the comparison of varied cultural presentations -- individual, cultural, oral, written, photographic, etc. -- with one another as well as with ethnographies of the region, providing an extensive cross-generic, cross-disciplinary context for a specific inquiry.

Tape recorded interviews have been a central aspect of folklore studies for fifty years and consequently they are a central factor differentiating the discipline from the study of literature. Over the past three and half decades or more, folklore studies' acceptance of the tape recorder and its role in the research process has, however, shifted. It has moved from a primary focus on the mechanical aspect of the collection process that

² Ethnographic methodology refers to my interpretation of Glassie's reference in *Passing the Time in Ballymenone* to the process as one that "begins in division, in the acceptance of traditional economies" (xiv). The current inquiry began this way by reading through the interpretations of the region and accepting the traditional scholarly definitions of the region, its social groups, and history. Then again mirroring Glassie's approach, this inquiry expanded to include definitions and histories of the region stated by the region's peoples, incorporating them and finding the area of understanding where divisions and scholastic approaches "melt away." The work then returned to focus on Carver's literary productions in order to "push beyond things to meanings, and grope through meanings to values" represented by the author in her short stories (xiv).

required technical knowledge of the equipment and its capabilities for preserving sound, toward a focus that embraced the effect of the machine on participants eventually shifted to a focus on the researcher and her products of record (Ives 6-32; Jackson 88-90; Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 9-10, 77-79). More recently in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Emerson, Fretz and Shaw proposed that the traditional fieldnotes written as contextual data for tape recordings and perceived as the researcher's focussed, and sometimes biased, construction of experience should be enlarged to include the framing and construction of experience in other texts or data forms: audio and video tape specifically, and photographs by extension.

The re-conceptualization of fieldwork's technically based representations of culture as interpretive records of events is central to the current discussion due to its emphasis on the medium of record as a creative frame for the representation of experience. For, perceiving both the technical production of text and the text itself as constitutive elements in the production of a creative representation of reality is very similar to understanding the work of fiction as a creative endeavour to represent reality. Plainly then, creative representation of life experience is a similarity between the products, the texts, of Literature and ethnography. The difference between the two consists of conscious intent and levels of imposed meaning. For the author of fiction uses symbolism and metaphor to distance her reader from the particulars of existence in an effort to construct a universal experience for the reader. In contrast, the ethnographer in

each medium of record separates, without excluding, her personal opinions and beliefs from the ethnographic description in an effort to compose as finite and particular an existence as possible for her reader. For the researcher using ethnographic inquiry to deconstruct both types of text, the literary tools of allusion, symbolism and metaphor become important only when they resonate with verifiable allusions to regional culture or cultural groups. Ethnographic methodology is applicable to historic and fictive texts because it allows the researcher to consider not only representations of traditional culture, but the manner in which these representations may coexist, interact and merge to reconstitute traditional and popular conceptions of groups, regions, and cultures within national boundaries and societal groups.

Approaching the previously mentioned literary texts created as individual interpretations of the landscape of the Cane River region, I amassed a preliminary concept of the South, which coalesced from reviewing these interpretations and subsequently assembling them into groups of similarly focussed viewpoints. The sources discussed below suggested this understanding of the South as a binary construction of reflective landscapes, one which is mythic yet one which is also based in personal experience.

The dichotomy of myth³ and experience is well suited to folklore and literature

³ Myth is used here to refer to the beliefs attributed to a group, region, or nation in literature. Consequently, the mythic is a belief that may be questioned throughout this work.

studies, as folklore methodology requires the collection of personal experience and knowledge while literary studies of fiction generally deal in the mythic, and the symbolic. The interstice between these visions of the South is that each relies on creative representation of the southern landscape.

Before visiting the landscape sketched by Carver in her short stories, I came to know northwestern Louisiana through the writings of this state's Local Colour writers. First and foremost, these authors focussed on creating authentic portrayals of regions, and regional living. Of necessity, their work draws on definitive elements of regional culture: accents, historical influences on a particular place or people, and the particular social milieu of an area as defined by the disparate groups existing at once in direct relation and contradiction to the region's cultural traits which here they share with one another. Louisiana's Local Colour writers had unique opportunities due to the region's historical connections to Spain and France; its southern accent, heavily spiced with French words and pronunciations; and its diverse populations, like the Cajuns and Creoles marked not only by differences in language, but also by religion and ethnicity since the northern part of the state is predominantly Protestant and Euro-American while the southern populations tend to be African-American or Catholic Franco-American.

I searched out and read secondary materials that reflected aspects and interactions of these regional elements: Fletcher's collection of Carver's short stories; Mignon's *Plantation Memo*; Saxon's *Gumbo Ya-Ya*, *Old Louisiana*, and *Children of Strangers*; Per

Seyersted's collection of Kate Chopin's short stories, and a collection of short stories by regional authors of Louisiana compiled by Forkner. These stories introduced me to a romanticized vision of a complex social structure that revolved around indigenous concepts of ethnicity. Recognizing that these fictional representations were produced predominantly by individuals of Euro-American extraction about the African-American and Creole communities of Louisiana, I found the works *The Forgotten People: Cane River's Creoles of Colour* by historian Gary B. Mills and *Creoles of Colour in the Bayou Country* by scholars Carl A. Brasseaux, Keith P. Fontenot and Claude F. Oubre well-balanced foils for these romantic sketches of the region and its ethnic cultures. Thus inspired by the contrasting visions of Louisiana's romanticized ethnicities of colour and Mill's fact-filled representation of the Cane River Creole Community's history, I began planning a trip to the region in order to gather primary sources.

Entering Carver's Red River Region

In November of 1995, I travelled to Natchitoches, Louisiana from St. John's, Newfoundland. After a brief layover in St. Louis that allowed for acclimation to the four and half hour time change and a temperature rise of 35 degrees, I began the drive south to warmer climes.

Following Interstate-55 south a sense of entering a different region begins just a few hours south of St. Louis near Sikeston, Missouri. Billboards spring up announcing

local truck stops with food bars offering hickory smoked pork steaks and sandwiches and a restaurant known as "home of the throwed rolls." Only the locals and experienced travellers know that the "throwed rolls" is a double entendre, since once inside the restaurant bread literally flies through the air to hungry diners. Here too, the Mississippi River bottom land flattens out and long stretches of farm land appear on either side of the highway. Crossing Arkansas on Interstate-30 into Little Rock provides more long stretches of flat farm land that southwest of Little Rock become endless stretches of pine woods covering slightly rolling red-clay hills.

Turning south into Louisiana along state highways the land begins to change as it nears sea level. There are deep ditches on either side of the two-lane highway that parallels railroad tracks nearly all the way into Natchitoches. Intersecting roads are more frequently covered with gravel than with pavement. The trees become less dense with moss covered oaks and a few other hardwoods interspersed between the pines. Farm land, grazed by cattle with their accompanying white egrets, begins to appear.

On first arrival to Natchitoches, several vistas greet the visitor creating conflicting impressions. At the outskirts of town, near the highway is Northwestern State University. As with most university towns there is a vibrancy of youth, learning and progressive thought that accompanies such an institution. Northwestern, as the university is termed in local parlance, exists in a geographic area that has been multicultural since before the United States existed. This area has dealt with race in unique and often liberal ways, as

the history of Cane River's Creole communities suggests. The town, Natchitoches, is the modern American city liberally portrayed in the novel and movie *Steel Magnolias* that (perhaps tellingly in retrospect) represents only the Euro-American culture of the area. Its historic district and Christmas Fair are realistically represented in *Steel Magnolias* and are no less tinged with historical romance in person.

The drive into town reinforces these contradicting images - of a youthful university town and a romantic southern river town. Passing the university's main entrance one must soon turn left into town or miss Natchitoches completely. Natchitoches sits near the northern confluence of the Cane and Red Rivers (Figure 1) bounded to the east by highway forty. Town centre stretches east from the river. Main street is still cobbled, while the buildings fronting the street sport ironwork reminiscent of New Orleans' fancy two story ironwork facades that encompass second story balconies. Surrounding buildings in downtown lack the iron work of Front Street and become less grand the further one goes from the river and town centre. If the visitor follows the river south out of town, she travels towards the second centre of the Cane River region, Isle Brevelle. Here a third image of the region, that of an agrarian stronghold, vies with Natchitoches' visages of youthful university town and romantic southern river town.

The Cane River region has a community of people who differentiate themselves from each other based on their historic and racial backgrounds. The length of time a family line has been in the region is as definitive of its status, as are the ethnic and



Figure 1. The Red River at Natchitoches



Figure 3. St. Augustine Church from the Road at Melrose



Figure 4. St. Augustine Church and Graveyard

national bloodlines to which the family can be traced. Each of these characteristics is closely entwined with a third definitive element, economic status. Some of these differences became known to me when I took Highway 1 out of town to visit the tourist site of Melrose plantation.

When Melrose grew from a gathering place for visiting artists and writers to a locale which promoted a welcoming environment for touring visitors in the 70s, several other important changes occurred in the Cane River region. Paramount was the Cane River community's change of focus from farming to tourism. One result of this interest was the formation of a nonprofit Cane River board, which promoted tourism of the members' various plantation homes situated along the Cane River Trail. This change in status affected Melrose by setting the stage for Melrose Plantation to become a central facade was enclosed by chain link fencing that held signs dictating that there is no parking in front of Melrose, no pictures to be taken inside, and the site's hours of operation. Once one is on the grounds, a tour begins which briefly relates the history of the main house, its creation and original ownership by descendants of Marie Thérèse Coincoin, its subsequent owners, and its structural changes under the Henry family ownership. I will present this history and what it meant to Carver in Chapter Three.

Tourists are introduced for the first time to the work of Ms. Clementine Hunter, an African-American folk artist who worked at Melrose, when they enter through the

northern garçonnière⁴ or two story tower. The circular room is filled with examples of her craft, but docents offer tourists a brief look only before quickly ushering them into the upstairs rooms of the main house, where the history of the Henry family becomes the focus of the tour. This emphasis on the Euro-American inhabitants of a plantation house, which in many ways is much more closely linked to the area's long time Creole and African-American inhabitants, continues throughout the tour. Even later, when tourists are shown the roof mural Hunter painted for the African House, her work is in part attributed to the encouragement of Francois Mignon, who is reputed to have been her discoverer, mentor and constant promoter. In the end, today's visitors to Melrose Plantation are introduced to the Cane River area through the foresight of the Henry family. According to Euro- Americans in the region, this foresight included Mrs. Henry's open door policy for visiting dignitaries, artists and writers; her willingness to provide certain authors and writers with abodes on the plantation's grounds; and the promotion of Clementine Hunter's painting by Miss Cammie and Francois Mignon. As a new scholar in the region, I was interested in how Melrose, an important symbol of the Cane River region, moved from being a family home open to visitors to a tourist venue fenced and protected from its public.

⁴ The term garçonnière is spelled throughout this work in accordance with *Webster's New World Dictionary*, second edition. It should be noted that local spelling (garçonnière) frequently varies from this format.

Melrose as the Twentieth-Century Ends

Melrose became something of a tourist venue under the influence of Mrs. Henry, Lyle Saxon, and Francois Mignon. Henry and Saxon came to be synonymous with Melrose. By the early 1920s, Melrose began opening its doors to the public more often as local scholars searched out Henry's scrapbooks that documented events in the area and as her frequent guest, Lyle Saxon, became known for his writing about the South and Cane River area. As Melrose's popularity grew through the nineteen-twenties under the guidance of Henry and Saxon, it was soon to be introduced to a more astute marketing agent.

In the nineteen-thirties, Francois Mignon came to live at Melrose. Shortly after, he began writing for local papers about the region, and its history. Prominent in his writing was Melrose plantation and visitors there. As attention to the area increased due to Henry's encouragement of Saxon and Mignon, more and more visitors came to see for themselves the region of which they had read. Mignon built further interest in Melrose through the promotion of one of Melrose's cooks as a primitive artist.

Mignon is reputed to have "discovered" that Clementine Hunter was an artist when she was fifty-three years old (Melrose Docent 335). Practically no information survives regarding the relationship between these two individuals, though they are described as being close friends during the Melrose tour. This does not seem an overstatement of their relationship, since they are buried next to each other in the St.

Augustine cemetery just up the road.

According to the Honourable Judge R. B. Williams, his wife Ora and three others "developed Clementine Hunter" (Williams Interview 146). Ora was a good friend of Francois Mignon. Her three colleagues included the Williams's daughter Anne, Tommy Whitehead and an acquaintance in New Orleans. Even for some time after being "discovered" by these four, Hunter lived across from Melrose and came to the plantation to paint instead of work in the kitchen. According to Ms. Mary Hunter Davis, Hunter's daughter, payments were infrequent bags of potatoes or onions (Gholson Field Journal 35). Further payment might also have occurred, according to Davis' words: "I tell you she didn't get nothing. What I thought she should have gotten; you know" (Davis Interview 43-48). Davis did say that her mother never received monetary payment from those who promoted her work, and that the family did not possess a single painting her mother had produced (Davis Interview 74-83). She did not, however, detail what else her mother might have received due to her friendship with Mignon and Miss Cammie, but was likely referring to the ride her mother would receive to and from Melrose each day once the family had moved into town. Cars were still unusual at that time, so a ride to and from the plantation was a matter of status, as welcoming white visitors to Melrose must also have been for Hunter, the new found 'primitive' artist, despite the difficult working conditions described to me by her daughter.

Davis mentions that her mother received guests in a small house, which today is

shown as her home on the Melrose estate. The house was never Hunter's home according to Davis; it was merely an artists' gallery where Hunter would retire after being driven to Melrose and she could paint the day away. She painted mainly during the summer, through the heat of the day, despite the fact that the little house had no air conditioning and Hunter was in her late eighties. Why Hunter undertook painting in such conditions is unknown since Hunter — like her daughter today — could not write. Hunter's only legacy is left to us through her family's narratives, and her numerous paintings. And her daughter, for one, refuses to speculate on why her mother remained connected to Melrose, painting under difficult conditions for so long (Davis Interview 37). Hunter was, however, in a unique position as the celebrated primitive artist of Melrose Plantation. She met people visiting from across the country, since her art was now recognized as valuable, becoming the central draw for visitors coming to Melrose in the 60s and 70s.

These historical events suggested several levels of inquiry for my subsequent research. How did Carver, even with the support of Henry, find success amongst such strong personalities as Francois Mignon and Saxon? How did these personalities view the region's ethnic groups and more importantly how did they portray them in their writing or promotion of Melrose? With new areas of inquiry to consider, I returned to Natchitoches and the remainder of my month and a half long research trip.

It was in this milieu that I undertook archival research and interviews. At

Northwestern State University's Watson Memorial Library, the Cammie G. Henry Research Centre contains archival records about the region. Central to the collection are the personal papers, scrapbooks and library of Cammie Henry. Also included in the archives holdings are personal letters of Saxon, Caroline Dormon, Carver, and written statements cataloguing the memories of individuals who knew these writers, or who visited Melrose Plantation. These items served as primary resource material as I endeavoured to reconstruct an image of the average day at Melrose, the relationships existing amongst members of the Melrose Cadre, and the cadre's familiarity with local ethnic groups. Having delineated the fictional South of Louisiana's Local Colourists and a historically accurate notion of Melrose and the surrounding region, I began to enter the community and plan my interviewing strategies.

I entered the community in five ways, during the second week of my fieldwork. First, I tried making contacts by phone with individuals recommended by University Archivist and Natchitoches native Mary Linn Wernet. Second, I visited the local tourist bureau, and museums, collecting interviews and contacts. Third, I visited several homes, including Melrose, along the Plantation Trail and the Bayou Folk Museum⁵ in Cloutierville, again conducting interviews. Fourth, I contacted the local retirement

⁵ The Bayou Folk Museum is not, as its name suggests, devoted to the ethnographic documentation through recorded interviews and oral history. The museum is housed in the Kate Chopin home and offers instead documentation of the Creole community's way of life on Cane River through newspapers and material objects donated from the homes of community members.

communities within Natchitoches, and was permitted to conduct interviews at one. These interviews with natives of the region focussed on gender relations and expectations with discussion prompted by descriptions of scenes from Carver's short stories. Fifth, I visited the local paper, *The Natchitoches Times*, and was interviewed for a piece concerning my work. From these forays I was able to make contacts and set dates for later interviews with members of the African-American and Creole communities.

Following these leads took the remaining weeks of my time in the field. My research and documentation continued through several other avenues: written correspondence; a request for research contacts in the newsletter Bayou Talk, which is privately distributed to individuals who trace their ancestry to Cane River's Creole community; a search for web pages about Cane River, the Plantation Trail, or the Creole Community; and finally, a transcription of interview tapes and archival sources was begun. I also created an e-mail questionnaire focussing on the definitive characteristics of the South and ethnic terminology of Louisiana's social structure. While I did not reference responses directly in the dissertation, responses did help me form a beginning index of currently held opinions about South.

The transcription process requires further consideration. Transcription of tapes and archival letters was undertaken conservatively following the prescriptions of Edward D. Ives in *The Tape Recorded Interview* (94-107). Any unclear words are enclosed in square brackets. Indecipherable words are indicated by square brackets enclosing blank

space. All underlining and other forms of emphasis are taken from the original, unless otherwise indicated in the dissertation text.

These research activities, both in the field and afterwards, provided valuable information, but also presented several problems which both affected my role as ethnographer, and challenged my concepts of the South. How these difficulties changed my perceptions and how they affected my ethnographic inquiry, will be the focus of the following discussion.

Research Problems

This discussion details the problems I encountered doing research in the Deep South. These problem areas are intrinsically tied to my own conceptions of the southern landscape, tensions which have governed my life long relationship with the South, and my own tendency to exoticize and stereotype southern Euro-American culture. These problem areas parallel the experiences of Louisiana Local Colour writers who highlighted cultural tensions, local landscape and ethnic cultures. Due to this similarity and the focus of this dissertation, I will present the following discussion in a format which imitates the stylistic features of this literary genre through a focus on the tensions which occur when differing cultures or cultural representatives interact.

The Southern Region: Cultural Preconceptions

Like many second generation immigrants, I viewed the South as the place where extended family resided, and saw little else of interest there. In my best visions of the South, I saw all the freedoms of the country: hunting, hiking through the wooded canyons and along old logging roads, climbing shale hills, shoe "skiing" slippery red clay slopes, learning the tracks and foods of animals, fishing, and swimming in lakes and creeks. This was the romantic portion of my southern landscape, the region where family resided, the antithesis of my up-bringing within restrictive boundaries dictated by nuclear-family in the predominantly African-American suburb of Berkeley, located north of the Midwestern City of St. Louis, Missouri.

My region, my South, was alternately challenging and morally repugnant. One finds freedom in the southern woods, but one also finds the seduction of heritage. Shirley Abbott, family historian, succinctly elucidates the seductive hold of the wilderness, the heritage of all southerners, in the following passage. The following passage encompasses a description of seduction as the freedom found in facing the hardships found in the southern woods. These woods,

even close to the towns, are still filled with croaking, hissing noises. You will be divebombed, chewed, punctured, torn, attacked, stung, or turned into a homestead by small creatures that make you ill, make you itch. In the space of an hour you may see anything from a wildcat to an armadillo. You will have to wear boots in case you step on a snake, and you will undoubtedly meet one or two. The most peaceful lake will harbour watermoccasins. And as

you beat your way through this aggregation of hostile species, the temperature will go up to 100 degrees. Going out in the woods on a summer day gives some idea what the South was like for the people who settled it. (27)

In short, enjoying freedom in the South creates a link to the past, and the romantic, inevitable acceptance of hardship.

Such depictions of the South as a land of hardship suggest a land, and consequently a regional culture, that both instills and values the characteristics of perseverance in hostile surroundings. Following from this, some creatures which bring a challenge to the southern landscape are two-legged, as my family's narratives often indicated.

The price of southern hardship for my uncle, Dr. Leslie Crocker, another immigrant from the South, was outlined in personal experience narratives. For him southern hardship was a personal event resulting from interactions in the social landscape:

I wasn't much involved in the Civil Rights movement, I was involved in rights for individuals. Race rights made no sense to me then, still don't in many ways, but the rights of individuals was a very personal thing. Memphis State University integrated with relatively little trouble, although there was a lot of hostility between both groups, but little action. Much of my concern was toward bigotry, not just racial bigotry, but the southern generic type. There was an old movie theatre on Highland Street near the Memphis State campus. Carol [his sister] and I sometimes went there on weekends as kids to see various films. The Normal Theater. In the early 60s it was reopened as an "art" theatre and showed mostly foreign films to college students. Some

of the local bigots made complaints against it and the ultra conservative city government closed it down. Not because of anything that was happening there, this was before drugs and even sex was invented, but because it was showing foreign films and blacks were sitting with whites in a movie theatre. I was protesting one afternoon, carrying a sign that said something about bigots and intolerance. Nothing radical but just several of us regular movie buffs complaining about the unfairness of it all.

It was late afternoon and a crowd gathered. More students showed up, some for some against. People began stopping their cars to see what was going on and first thing you know there was some shoving and somebody shoved back and things got out of hand. I ended up on the ground with some guy shouting at me and trying to kick my kidneys in. I knew the routine, protect your head, protect your crotch. All of a sudden I realized I knew the voice that was screaming at me. It was . . . our neighbour of twenty years or more. . . . He didn't know who he was kicking, he was well along into the irrational stage.

I never confronted him with it later, it didn't make much sense to discuss it. He was a frustrated . . . white bigot and I was a smart assed crew cut college student who needed to be taught a lesson. So far as I could tell he was just driving home from work and saw the crowd and stopped. If it had been a lynching he would have joined it. If it had been a gang rape he would have joined in. A man for all occasions. No need for a reason, it was happening and he was there. . . . That incident taught me a lot about blind rage, southern style. (Crocker Interview March 14-23, 1997)

In another narrative, Dr. Crocker elaborated on rage:

Not that I didn't have my own blind rage at times. When really pushed . . . Walking from class one spring afternoon . . . I found a circle of guys around a small black girl who I had seen around campus but didn't know. They were pushing her from one to another, wouldn't let her out of the

circle. Not hurting her really, but tormenting her like some animal. I went off the edge. If they had been tormenting a dog or goat I would probably have had the same reaction, it didn't have much to do with racial equality. I carried a briefcase in those days and it was loaded with books. I used both hands to swing it like a battle axe and hit the circle like something out of their worst nightmare. I never could remember the middle parts, I would move and then I would stop. What happened in between the beginning and end I never knew. But the circle was broken, they were all down or running but then I had to deal with this little black girl crying. I walked away. There was nothing I could say or do that would make any difference to what had happened to her. In my embarrassment for being a white male I could only walk away, ashamed of being part of the human race. (18 February 1997)

Narratives like these impressed on me the difference between the people and culture of the South, and the Southern countryside I could romanticize. Both elements of the region tested one's knowledge, mores and very self concept, revealing difficult truths and even more difficult ethical questions concerning the causes and consequences of violence. Yet of my southern experiences, only the cultural South offered up hardship rooted in blindly irrational beliefs and behaviours.

As a second generation internal immigrant, I grew-up in the North, the region my parents had lived in for several decades but never considered home. Home in St. Louis was a building where southern accents emphasized the importance of southern manners, attitudes and values. A respect for landscape and benefits of intimately knowing the land, plants and animals of a region - food when food is scarce - was inculcated. Meals were family times and bonding as non-traditional St. Louis foods were shared. Food marked

us daily: corn bread, fried catfish, skillet potatoes, fried grits, ham and red-eye gravy, sorghum, ribbon cane syrup, biscuits and gravy, and at celebratory times with items such as cornbread dressing in the Thanksgiving turkey, and buttermilk, pecan and Jeff Davis pies for desserts.

Despite the hardships inherent in the Southern landscape and the daily reminders that my household and home life evidenced both a foreign way of life and region to my northern peers, I found pleasure in traversing these two very different regions. Each offered opportunities and freedoms lacking in the other, creating two cultures that were home to me. St. Louis, Missouri was home to daily life and big city experiences, such as visiting the symphony, the zoo, the art museum, and having dreams of advanced education. However it was also home to fears of strangers. The south was a home away from home where hardships were faced in southern woods and appropriate lady-like behaviour expected even as one emerged from the woods. Slipping between the differing roles and expectations was as familiar and unconscious as slipping on a jacket in chilly weather, that is, until my fieldwork began in Louisiana. During my fieldwork stay in Natchitoches, I learned that crossing over regional and national boundaries was not always possible.

Returning to my research area in September of 1995 to collect interviews that would expand upon the archival information collected the previous year highlighted a previously unexpected set of events. On returning I had expected that my years spent in

the South and my family's southern roots would help me gain entrance to the Euro-American and Creole communities of the Natchitoches area. Similarly, I felt that the years spent growing up as the 3% or less minority in a predominantly African-American city outside St. Louis would help me open doors to the African-American community of the area. Hardly naive enough to rely solely on my own background and ingenuity, I began my research by seeking out individuals from the area who could offer me connections to possible respondents and subsequently, I hoped, helpful interviews.

Individuals suggested by local archivists and professors were contacted by phone, our shared acquaintance mentioned, and introductions made time after time only for me to be told in numerous polite ways that I should find someone else to speak with. These individuals were predominantly of Euro-American or Creole heritage and many were either associated with Melrose Plantation or closely associated with individuals relevant to my dissertation topic. Having failed in these contacts,⁶ and I must say feeling quite dejected over travelling 4,000 miles for this outcome, I began pursuing a two-pronged approach to the problem by visiting local sites of interest and having a newspaper article written up explaining my research and asking for individuals to contact me.

⁶ Though notes pertaining to individuals called were kept in my field journal, specifics regarding individuals called at this time exist in piecemeal form from December 4th onward. Regretfully, earlier notes were disposed of when individuals were unresponsive to contacts made by this researcher. However surviving documentation does indicate that unsuccessful attempts were made to set interviews with Mrs. Maxine Sutherland of the Association for Historic Natchitoches, the Coopers who act as docents at Melrose, Carol Wells who worked for many years in the Louisiana Room at Northwestern State University, and local contacts Mrs. Raymond Christian and Janet Colsoun.

The newspaper article aided me in a second round of phone calls, for now people were familiar with my interests. The article, also, stimulated one letter from a local resident. Visiting local historical societies and museums of the area, I spoke with several individuals about my research topic and asked about individuals to whom they might direct me to for interviews. There was no help forthcoming from the Melrose Plantation organizers beyond allowing their docent to be taped. Other visits proved more fruitful, however. Stopping at the Museum of Historic Natchitoches, I met Curator Daniel Graves, who proved quite helpful and encouraged me to visit the Bayou Folk Museum. A visit to the Kate Chopin home that houses the Creole Historical Society's collections under the name of the Bayou Folk Museum, allowed me to interview both informally and formally the Society's docent who is a lifelong resident of the area. This interview clarified many questions I had concerning the worldview and history of Creole culture. A visit to the Natchitoches Tourist Centre led to my searching out Patsy J. Ward, the owner of a local religious bookstore, who the year before (1994) became the first African-American elected to public office in Natchitoches.

After a week of following up leads and introductions to likely Euro-American and Creole informants to no avail, I found that Ms. Patsy Ward proved to be more than helpful not only in getting to know the area, as well as the history of Melrose Plantation and its occupants, but in successfully linking me with respondents in the local Creole and African-American communities. She broadened my respondent base by personally

introducing me to several individuals who lived in the Melrose environs during its management by Miss Cammie. One of these was Ms. Rocque, who could tell me about the work available for her family at Melrose and about Creole perceptions of Melrose. Another was Mary Hunter Davis, the daughter of the well known folk painter Clementine Hunter. The influence of these women permeates this work, but it has also permeated my self image as individual, and ethnographer. How their willingness to speak with me has affected me and this work is the subject of the theoretical discussion to come. However before this discussion can commence, the causal factors leading to it must be further clarified.

In retrospect, it seems obvious that the newspaper article announcing interest of a Canadian scholar with U. S. citizenship in the local community greatly aided my work. This article was mentioned by Patsy Ward on our first meeting and by other contacts. Of particular import, I believe, was the acknowledgement that my work is linked to and would be published in Canada. In fact, the foreignness of Canada was often linked to myself as well; people frequently asked me why a Canadian was doing research in Louisiana.

Slanted perceptions of the *Natchitoches Times*' description of this researcher:

a United States citizen pursuing a doctorate at Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada, in folklore, is requesting information from local residents about Ada Jack Carver, Cammie Garrett

Henry and Lyle Saxon. ("Student" 4A)

and the fact that most of my respondents were not of Euro-American-descent emphasized the importance of how others viewed me, in the role of researcher.

I alluded earlier to the fact that I came to Louisiana expecting to be able to speak with individuals of Euro-heritage despite my Northern background. I was after all a member of the D. A. R. (Daughters of the American Revolution⁷), through both sides of the family, and a Magna Charta Dame⁸ whose recent ancestors were all from the South. I also had family ties to men active in law enforcement, some holding roles as sheriff and Texas Ranger. If that were not enough, my surviving grandfather had become a member of the United Sons of Confederate Veterans⁹ the year before. With this background and my years spent visiting the South to balance my Northern experience, I anticipated few

⁷ The Daughters of the American Revolution is a social organization founded in 1890, and incorporated by an act of Congress in 1896 composed of members who have one or more ancestors who gave "active aid in the establishment of American Independence" (*The Lincoln Library* 2049). The goals of the society include fostering "the memory of the spirit of those who fought for independence," "foster true patriotism," and to "extend the institutions of American freedom."

⁸ The Magna Charta Dames is a social society composed of women whose ancestry traces back to any one of the English barons who signed the Magna Charta in England during 1215.

⁹ The United Sons of Confederate Veterans is a social organization begun in 1896 whose membership "is confined to the male descendants of veterans who served actively in the Confederate causes." Its organizational mandate indicates the organization exists "for the purpose of cultivating friendship among its members, collecting material for an accurate history of Confederate activities, perpetuating the memories of Confederate veterans, and giving aid to their widows and orphans" (*The Lincoln Library* 2049).

problems finding respondents among the region's privileged Euro-Americans.

However the best laid suppositions often disintegrate, as did this one. By the end of my field research, I had not even had the chance to mention my acceptable heritage to any of Natchitoches' busy and uncommunicative upper class. In part this was due to my timing since I had arrived unknowingly for the three weeks before Natchitoches' Christmas celebration,¹⁰ and in part due to my obvious outsider status. This meant that my impression of Euro-American history in the area was formed primarily from previously recorded history. Thus towards the end of my fieldwork I felt my collected information would lean towards the other ethnicities of the area. Soon I was to be concerned that this tendency would be more of a landslide, as circumstances changed the last three days of my field research in town.

During this time Patsy Ward began discussing Natchitoches with me, as a mentor, and also introduced me to Mary Hunter. Through these two avenues I began to learn of a Natchitoches which made my Midwestern up-bringing seem extraordinarily liberal and foreign, as if St. Louis were a city only recently discovered on an alien planet. If I had

¹⁰ The Christmas Festival is one of the largest tourist events for Natchitoches area, as this description begins to show: "Christmas lights dazzle and dance upon Cane River Lake during the holiday season. A tradition marking its 67th year, the annual Christmas Festival welcomes more than 100,000 guests to the City of Lights. New events will carry the cheer throughout December as riverbank entertainment and fireworks enliven each weekend" ("Miracle on Front Street" 1A). Further events include candlelight tours and parties at the plantations along Cane River throughout the month. Many of these events are largely organized through volunteer work of the town's upper class women.

been living on Mars and mysteriously transferred to Earth in the reverse of Carter's journey¹¹ I could not have been more surprised by my surroundings that seemed to weave instantly, and without notice, between historical eras.

Unquestioning of the rights of individuals gained through protest for equal rights in the 1960s, I knew changes had occurred across the United States for the better. I knew, also, some areas had more to change than others and that change progresses at varying speeds depending on regional beliefs. Yet in 1995 the deepest truths of these facts suddenly became crystal clear in a little southern town of northern Louisiana.

Natchitoches offers on familiarity another face. For instance, Patsy Ward was proud to claim her place as the first African-American to hold public office in Natchitoches (Gholson 70). I learned further of this new place as Patsy and I went to meet various people for interviews, hearing and seeing inequity along the way. Mary Hunter told me of the inequities she believed present in the treatment of her mother who painted and worked at Melrose for many years. And I perceived that people were quite curious when Patsy and I would arrive by car together and walk to an interview in downtown Natchitoches. Though I was obviously in dress and ethnic heritage an outsider (though Euro-American, I had bright red hair--an unusual genetic trait in Louisiana) the attention that was often directed our way was lengthier than that for which mere curiosity

¹¹ John Carter is the main character of Edgar Rice Burrough's Mars Series. The series begins with Carter dying in the desert. He awakes confused, eventually realizing that he was somehow conveyed to Mars as he was dying.

would account. Conversations would cease across the street as individuals watched us walk two blocks to our destination, observing where we were going. Though such experiences were never overtly hostile, walking under watchful eyes for two blocks of silence was unnerving, rousing historic echoes of racial tension during the 60s. Before, such tension was only known to me through documentaries of the Civil Rights era, and the mild racism I had experienced from others while growing up in the mid-west. Neither was preparation for the visceral clutch of fear such penetrating stares of strangers at times elicited in me.

Separately these events were either expected or, at best, seemed quirks of the slightly odd; taken together they made me uncomfortable. My discomfort became greater when the night before I was to leave, a previously unknown individual offered me a video that presented a critical perspective of events and racial interactions in the region. The person who made the tape did not wish it to be viewed until her death and made this clear during the recorded session. Consequently it is unethical to comment on the contents here or, in hindsight, to have even viewed the tape. I spent a restless night that night, wondering how I could deal with the subject matter of the tape in a document that could ultimately be accessed in the States. In the end, I left town feeling less anxious for the donor since after a night of thought I decided the tape was not to leave with me.

Being relieved of the decision of whether to accept or leave the tape did not keep me from having to reconsider my role as ethnographer, or my new found unease in the

South; it was rather the catalyst of this inner search. I realized on reflection that my concern over accepting this videotaped information was due in large part to two things: my fear of upsetting racial relations which were perhaps tenuous for those involved, but foreign to me; and my fear of presenting a biased image of my research area and subject matter due to my informant base being heavily African-American. There was little I could do, but avoid obviously incendiary actions in the former case and carefully consider the information ultimately presented, in the latter.

Considering the possible influences of data collected from predominantly African-American and Creole respondents raised the issues of classism and exoticism. These respondents were also predominantly from middle and lower class backgrounds. This being the case, reports of Melrose and the individuals who gathered there reflected the background of the respondents narrating them, emphasizing how kindness could be perceived as indebtedness by those unable to reciprocate in a like manner or be a means through which items considered precious due to their historical and familial significance could be appropriated. Appertaining to perceptions of inequity based in economic differences is the portrayal of a region and its people as exotic due to emphasis on economic, racial and social differences. On leaving the field, I was to find these concerns balanced by first hand accounts left in journals and letters of the more affluent, Euro-Americans who visited Melrose and left records of their perceptions of shared kindnesses, cultural acquisitions, preservation and authorial activities. However the issue was one of

great concern and some trepidation while doing fieldwork in Louisiana.

Realizing that others were defining my role for themselves placed me at a point of confusion and tension. This confusion was increased when I realized that my self image was not true to my desires and experiences. At this point, I was no longer confident that I knew the South well enough that I might continue to feel comfortable in that region or with my family heritage. This, in turn, brought into question my reasons for doing the research which brought me to the South, as well as any lingering definition of myself which relied on a regional identification. But all these concerns centred around one question I never before had to ask myself: "What is the South?"

Answering this question was the greatest problem to arise during the research process. In the end, constructing a definitive answer to this question was unnecessary because I find myself daily engaged in answering that question. The answer is a journey, then, that can be laid out in experiential and narrative segments. To this point an inconclusive, experiential definition of southern culture will be offered. The delineation of the South as a traditional, regional culture will be accomplished through the historical contextualization of Carver's literary productions.

Conceptualizing a Region, a Traditional South

Assuming a link between Carver's South and the South of my experience not only presupposes a definition of the region that spans temporal and geographic changes

invoked by the forces of technology, immigration, and economy during the twentieth-century, but requires a consideration of what the South is, both geographically and culturally. The South, like any defined entity, is amorphous in that many, often contradictory, definitions of its boundaries exist based on historic influences of land exchanges and migrating peoples. An informed discussion of Carver's short stories requires an understanding of the similarities and differences that exist between these influences. As the following section will delineate, there are popular conceptions of the South that rely on knowledge of regional history and geography. These traditional conceptions of the South in turn inform traditional understandings of regions, such as Cane River, that exist within the Southern United States. The following discussion will delineate two definitions of the South, the South as American region and as home to subregions and cultures. The discussion will rely heavily on conceptualizations of boundaries, primarily on changing political borders.

Political boundary changes and migration influxes brought the existence of the South as a region into question as early as 1930. It was, largely, the absence of such boundaries, and the emergence of a distinct Southwestern regional culture which led Odum to declare there was no longer a South in his seminal work of 1930, *Southern Regions of the United States* (5). I refute this based on the fact that regions are composed of subregions and multiple traditional cultural groups. The South blends with the West to form a subregion, the Southwest, that shares demographic and cultural

influences with each region. Similarly subregions within the South share cultural, historic and political characteristics that blend with elements of traditional subcultures in the region. Thus Cajun, Creole, African-American and Euro-American cultures co-exist in the area of the South defined by the political boundaries of the State of Louisiana. Each culture has its own emphasis on local flora and fauna in their cuisine that melds with their ethnic heritage. Thus Cajun food includes shrimp boudin, fried alligator, and filé on top of gumbo. Creole food harkens to Spanish influences with locals vying to produce the best tamales. African-American and Euro-American household foods include sweet potato pie, greens, chitlins, and fried catfish. Crossing these differences of local food uses are traditions rarely seen outside the South where tea is always expected to be iced, Pepsi is drunk after a few boiled peanuts settle to the bottom of the bottle, barbecue is a sandwich or a plate with cole slaw as an accompanying condiment, and nearly anything fried, seasoned with bacon grease or sweetened to make the teeth ache is edible.

Food is an element of traditional culture that is frequently prepared and consumed in the open, and so an easily identified marker of regional, subregional and group preferences. Less obvious are the characteristic elements of traditional culture that become part of traditional cultures' self definitions through local history. As mentioned earlier such characteristics include political boundaries, geographic features, economics, demographics and population migrations. The following discussion will outline many of

these influences that had a historical impact on the southern area of the United States, detail the states which compose this area and situate the Cane River subregion within this area.

Southern Boundaries: Economics, Politics and Geography

Assuming a link between Carver's South and the South of today presupposes a definition of the region that spans temporal and geographic changes invoked by the forces of technology, immigration, and economy during the twentieth-century. This requires a consideration of what the South is. The South, as any culturally defined entity, is amorphous in that many, often contradictory, definitions of its boundaries exist. An informed discussion of Carver's short stories requires an understanding of the similarities and differences that exist between these ideas.

In the nineteen-thirties, the South was still strongly identified with rural, agrarian, pro-Confederate states of poor socio-economic status. Interesting here is the term pro-Confederate. Confederate states, which left the union in 1860 and 1861, numbered eleven: Virginia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Texas, and Arkansas, but other states like Missouri were pro-Confederate as evidenced by actions such as the Dred Scott decision,¹² or as evidenced by

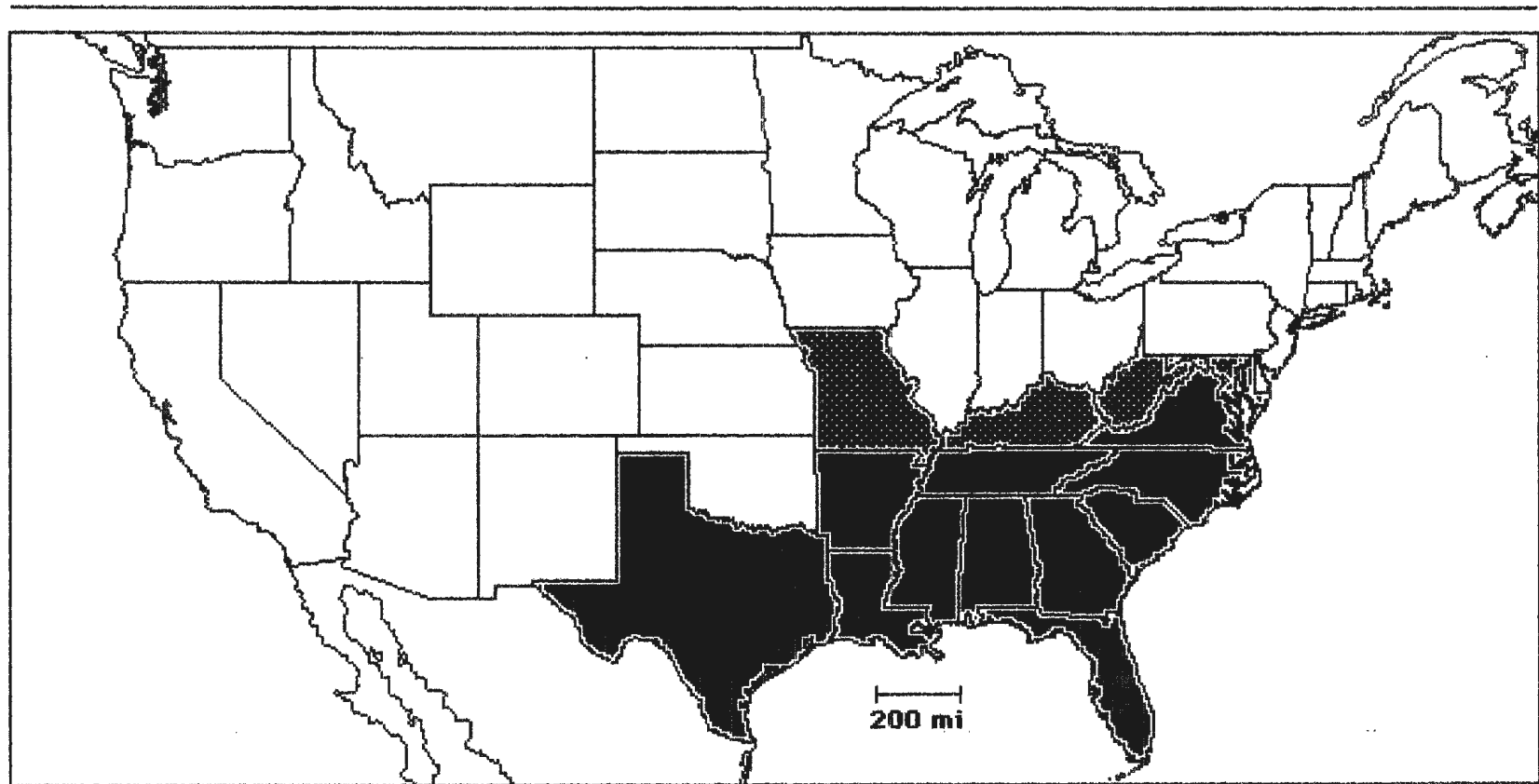
¹² The Dred Scott Case was decided by the United States' Supreme Court in 1857. The decision supported slavery by declaring that a slave who had lived in a free state (i.e., Missouri) with his master until his master's death could legally be sold back into slavery.

a profusion of lynchings in states such as Oklahoma, and Texas (Reed 23). More recent interpretations of the South's boundaries reflect these philosophic alliances.

Noted American historian John Shelton Reed has addressed the boundaries and cultural composition of the South in several treatises. Reed considers several factors in "The South: What is it? Where is it?," listing criteria ranging from kudzu growth, to regional demographics, to addresses for *Southern Living* subscribers. Reed's final definition of the South is only hampered by his adherence to state borders as boundary lines, a factor which disallows inclusion of areas such as the Missouri Ozarks, noted as distinctly southern by inhabitants of the area (Lawless 3-4).

Interestingly the questionnaires completed by 68 of Reed's University of North Carolina students suggest the South is composed of central and border or marginal states. The states less often chosen form a boundary between states deemed southern and non-southern (Figure 5). These are those states that students defined as not wholly, but regionally southern. In other words, these were states with regions or areas whose inhabitants would identify with the South--though the majority of the state's population generally would not. Reed's students identified as central to the south the states of

The ruling was further supported by the statement that no slave, descendent of a slave or person who had been a slave could claim the rights of citizenship (*Lincoln Library* 399).



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Figure 5. The Confederate (solid) and Border States (mottled).

Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, North Carolina and Tennessee (19).¹³ Peripherally southern were Florida, Kentucky, Texas, and Virginia. This was according to 50-89% of the students surveyed while 10-49% also included Missouri, Oklahoma and Arkansas. These responses are telling for they suggest that the geographic core of the South is still predominantly defined as those states found South of the Mason-Dixon line¹⁴ that historically were strongly based in plantation economies of tobacco, cotton and sugar cane.

A culture of the South is perhaps more difficult to define than the region's boundaries, but likewise it is not bounded by politically imposed state boundaries. In the simplest of definitions, the Old South has been described as a bi-racial (African-American and Euro-American) agrarian plantation culture that promoted slavery and, in large part, seceded from the Union, causing a Civil War from 1861 to 1865. There have of course been enclaves of other influences within the South, notably in Louisiana, Texas and more recently Florida.

Louisiana was, after the Louisiana Purchase (1803), the border between the United States and Mexico, for at this time Mexico still owned the area that was to become

¹³ Also included by 50-89% of those surveyed were Texas, Florida, Virginia and Kentucky. Peripherally southern states, included by 10-49% of those surveyed were West Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, Arkansas and Oklahoma.

¹⁴ The Mason-Dixon line is the boundary between Pennsylvania and Maryland that is commonly used as a means of indicating the literal geographic point of divergence between the North and the South within the United States.

the Republic of Texas. Louisiana was not only steeped in French culture, but was also home to a Cajun¹⁵ culture and a unique caste system that afforded Creoles a status somewhere between that held by Euro-Americans and free African-Americans. It wasn't until 1812 that the territory of Louisiana became a state of the Union.

In 1836 Texas won its freedom from Mexico and became an independent republic. The Republic remained independent until 1845 when annexed into the United States, causing the Mexican War (1846-48). The geographic closeness and influences of the years of cultural sharing between Texas and Mexico have created a culture in this state that is decidedly Hispanic, making the state's perception of Southern culture novel among her sister states.

More recently Florida, in the last three decades (1960-90), has developed a Hispanic influence. Migration from areas such as Cuba and the Dominican Republic have created within Florida another novel brand of Southern culture.

Perhaps the reason for Louisiana's appearing central to the South where Texas and Florida are at best periphery lies not only in the Hispanic cultural influences they share, which link Texas to the southwest and make Florida uncommon in today's South, but also in the history shared by these states. For from 1803 when the Louisiana Purchase became part of the United States, the area that was to become Louisiana became a buffer zone between the United States and areas of North America owned by Spain, Mexico,

¹⁵ In Louisiana, a Cajun is an individual of Acadian French descent.

and later the independent Republic of Texas. Louisiana was then the state nearest to the conflict with Britain in 1815's Battle of New Orleans, to the West Florida controversy that extended the state's area in 1819, and nearest, excepting Texas, to the Mexican War staging area. In other words, Louisiana was central to the expansionist policies of the Union from the time it became a territory, while Texas and Florida were more concretely linked to other nations. Thus historically as well as economically Louisiana, despite its strong ties to French culture, was strongly linked to the United States through a supportive role in the nation's military actions in the early nineteenth-century. These facts raise the question of how states identified as core members of the South might be culturally similar to more peripheral southern states like Texas and Missouri.

This perception of a South that geographically and culturally crosses state boundaries is upheld by scholars' definition of traditional culture. Elaine Lawless, researcher of traditional American religion, notes landmarks within the southern part of Missouri, such as Springfield, "which stands as the hallmark of the Bible Belt, the centre for the ever growing Assemblies of God and a profundity of Bible colleges" (Lawless 3). It is clear in a description of Monroe County by Lawless that the land of southern Missouri also has a distinctly southern flavour of agrarian life. Her Missouri is:

. . . a strange mixture of rural beauty and human poverty.
The dirt roads that thread their way through wooded lots
and over rolling hills suggest a countryside untouched by
modern American life—or concerns. Driving . . . one feels
the absolute quiet, the only sound the hum of the motor car
and an occasional jay or crow. Fences are in various stages

of disrepair; farm machinery stands forsaken in a muddy field, slowly rusting and crumbling into the already poor soil. A livestock chute stands with gaping mouth awaiting steers that have long ago gone to market. Weatherbeaten gates stand ajar and swing on their hinges, not needed to keep anything in, or anything out. A surly cur trots alongside the road ditch, left to scavenge or die (xv).

Such images are repeated throughout the Southland, with cattle chutes exchanged for deteriorating chicken coops and cotton gins; poor soil interchanging with red clay and marshy swamp land; weather-beaten gates protecting two room family homes, trailer-homes presiding over a slip of land, and family farm houses holding nothing but broken windows, while sheltering the odd squirrel's cache or feral family. The South today is not merely marked by poverty, but by the signs of whole families leaving farming, traditional homes and occupations for mass-produced module homes and blue collar factory jobs offering regular income, a migration that has been occurring since World War II. This southern migration led my own parents to the North and led to my own upbringing's spanning the cities of the Midwest and the small rural towns of my grandparents in the South. This dual existence clearly indicated to me that I was a Midwesterner, different from my Southern parents and family in out-look, experience, and of course accent. It also suggested a link between the South my family folklore had developed in my mind and the characteristic elements that had always linked part of Missouri to this South in my mind, as they did for Lawless during her drives along southern Missouri roads.

The connecting factor between a recognition of the attitudes and lifestyles of a culture and traditional narrative is that each is a personal identification with a region based on the creation of personally defined concepts that are not the result of having been born in the region. This conceptual South exists for individuals who on the one hand, like myself, primarily identify with their South intellectually, through acceptance of stereotype, oral tradition, or book learning. It also includes individuals who were not born in the geographic South, but who, based on personal experience, are proud to claim the South as their home. Ultimately what ties together the conceptualizations of the South for these two groups is the basis of their perceptions of the South in knowledge acquired through literature, hearsay, or personal experience.

Cane River: A Traditional Sub-Region

The Cane River region follows the Red and Cane Rivers and includes Natchitoches at their divergence, and Isle Brevelle and Cloutierville just south of the Rivers' confluence, as shown in Figure 2. Gary B. Mills, revisionist Louisiana historian, has traced the history of this community that is located just south of the Red River, a major water-artery that is linked to the Mississippi and New Orleans, and the Cane River divergence. Isle Brevelle lies between the northern divergence, at the edge of Natchitoches, and the southern confluence, located north of Cloutierville, of the Cane River and what is known locally as the Old River, the former bed of the Cane River (55). It is an island,

approximately 37 miles long and 7 ½ or 8 miles across at its widest point (du Chenault Interview 012). Historically, this area has been home to three races, according to Ms. Amanda du Chenault, a European Creole who works at the Bayou Folk Museum in Cloutierville, Louisiana. Each of these three races might simply be termed Creole. However local culture, according to Mrs. du Chenault, defines these three races further:

[European] Creoles born in what is now the state of Louisiana prior to 1803 of European born parents and their descendants; and essentially, what this means is we speak French, we eat Spanish and everyone is Catholic. (020)

Now there are German Creoles, the Hertzogs at Magnolia [plantation] who married into the Laconte family; and a large group of German Creoles in New Orleans. (026)

Creoles of Colour. Creoles with Black blood. These people are not and have never been considered Black people here. They owned plantations and slaves. (048)

Also part of the make-up of this region were African-Americans who for much of the region's history were slaves, the workers who actually laboured for the plantations of the Isle Brevelle community (058). It was the Creoles of Colour who at other times in history have been labelled by the terms Negro and mulatto, which they consider derogatory, but who against incredible odds created a thriving community on Isle Brevelle (Mills ¹⁶ xix).

¹⁶ Mills' history of Melrose and the role of Marie Thérèse in its creation first appeared as a series of articles in the *Natchitoches Times*.

The founding matriarch of this community was named Marie Thérèse. Marie Thérèse or Coincoin¹⁷ was born a slave, one of three children of two African born slaves, born to François and Marie Françoise (Mills 3). According to oral history, Marie Thérèse not only spoke French and Spanish, but inherited from her parents their African language and their knowledge of herbal medicine (Mills 4). Later in life Marie Thérèse, a favourite of her mistress, was hired out to Claude Thomas Pierre Metoyer, who was a Frenchman by birth, and became the father of several children by Marie Thérèse (Mills 12). Eventually Metoyer also freed Marie Thérèse in 1783 when she was thirty-eight. At this time Marie Thérèse remained in the Metoyer home.

Marie Thérèse gained greatly from her relationship with Metoyer. Freed slaves received, generally, two options: the choice to remain on the plantation and work as they had for their housing and basic needs, or to leave whatever protection and life they had known on the plantation to make their way as they could. In 1783 when Metoyer freed Marie Thérèse and provided land for their children in his will, Marie Thérèse was being provided for much more liberally than most freed slaves of the time (Mills 24).

Later during Marie Thérèse's fifties, she and Metoyer broke off their living arrangement¹⁸ and he gave to her the land that he'd promised their children in his will,

¹⁷ Marie Thérèse are the Baptismal names given to the African-American slave Coincoin. The names are used interchangeably and sometimes combined with Coincoin surviving as the surname (Mills 4).

¹⁸ The couple broke off their relationship in 1786.

land that became Yucca plantation and today is known as Melrose (Mills 26). On this land,

Marie Thérèse erected her home and auxiliary plantation buildings . . . supposedly in African style, adapted to Louisiana conditions and native materials. (Mills xxvii).

Yucca was a single plot of land in rich river bottom lands (Mills 26). And eventually from this original plot, the labours of family,¹⁹ and the family's slaves, Marie Thérèse,

left her children . . . A 'comfortable' estate . . . consisting of over one thousand *arpents* of land and at least sixteen slaves. If landownership maps of the period may be used as an acceptable guideline, Marie Thérèse's holdings compared well with those of the white inhabitants of the parish and certainly exceeded those of other free people of colour. (Mills 49)

As the family and their lands grew, the Creole inhabitants of Cane River under the favour of certain well-to-do white families became among the richest families in Natchitoches (Mills 54-57, 66, 107-09, 131). Marie Thérèse helped her ten children by Metoyer and many of her African-American children become free and self-sufficient.

Part of self-sufficiency also included finding spouses for her grown children. Wives and husbands came from two sources: they were found among Creole slaves which were bought and liberated, as well as among a few free Creole populations in south Louisiana

¹⁹ During the years which Marie Thérèse lived with Metoyer, and for several after that, most of her children were bought and freed either by her or Metoyer. The last of her children was freed shortly after her death.

(Mills 102, 157). The most successful of the ten children Marie Thérèse provided for was Nicolas Augustin Metoyer, who became patriarch of the colony after his mother's death. Under Marie Thérèse's leadership and later Augustin's, the extended family lived as a colony or community within the larger, prestigious and white planter's community. Predominantly isolated by race, but also by difficulties of travel, this Creole colony relied upon folk medicine and traditional crafts since despite the community's wealth, self-sufficiency was imperative where day-to-day living was concerned.

From the beginning, the colony had strong ties to folk tradition in Marie Thérèse's folk medicine, but later also through the occupational work in the fields, and subsistence crafts such as pottery.²⁰ Despite the need for self reliance, the Cane River community was nonetheless profitably linked to local white society by agrarian economics, and bloodlines. As Mills details,

In spite of the racial limbo into which their origins placed them, the men of the family were accepted and accorded equality in many ways by the white planters. It was not uncommon to find prominent white men at dinner in Metoyer homes, and the hospitality was returned. (xxviii)

Also although several members of the community worked and profited in other occupations, such as potting,

the most significant fortunes were amassed by those who were full time planters. . . . all of the

²⁰ "Tradition holds that one member of the family, Marie Adélaïde Mariotte, was skilled in pottery and provided plates, pots, and vases for the community" (Mills 135).

earlier generations of the colony gave plantations, slaves, or money to each child upon his or her marriage, yet some of the children of Marie Thérèse Coincoin left sizable fortunes. When Pierre Metoyer died in 1834, his remaining estate was inventoried at \$19,969. His sister, Marie Suzanne, was worth \$61,600 when she died in 1838, and her nephew Jean Baptiste Louis died the same year leaving an estate valued at \$112,761. Dominique, who had supported seventeen children and generously assisted all of those who married before his death in 1839, left property that was inventoried at \$42,405. His older brother, Augustin possessed an estate of \$140,958 at the time his wife died in 1840, despite the depression which had bankrupted countless Americans during the three preceding years. (Mills 137)

Such wealth aided the community while helping to create and preserve the group's history. Two architectural landmarks of the community, still extant today, are a testament to this. In the hands of Augustin, the first church for worship by people of colour was built by free people of colour (Mills 153). And by the hands of Louis Metoyer, the third child of Metoyer and Marie Thérèse, "the best known of the large Metoyer plantation homes that survived into the 20th century" was built. The house, now called Melrose, was constructed in 1833 (Mills 132-33, Louisiana Writers' Project 637). Melrose's original construction, "is of the simple Louisiana raised cottage type (Figure 6), the first floor of brick and the second of wood" (Louisiana Writers' Project 637). Further the first floor at this time was wall-less, serving as a storage area for carriages and raised cottage accompanying equipment (Melrose Docent 469).

These buildings were built during the height of Isle Brevelle's economic growth. Subsequent monuments to the community were not to be created for almost one hundred years; for not long after in the mid-1800s,

A nationwide economic depression and increasingly restrictive legislation began to curtail the economic activities of the colony. . . . Several of their plantations were lost, one of which was the one known as Yucca. . . . Cane River's gens de Couleur libre, like other southern planters, supported the doomed cause of the Confederacy. . . . Unlike their white neighbours, however, they found that after Reconstruction their ruin was complete, since the reactionary political climate of the Redeemer period throttled their economic opportunities. The "liberation of all men" shackled the people of Isle Brevelle with anonymity; the equality proclaimed by the Union lost for them their special prestige. (Mills xxix)

As the Metoyer ownership of Melrose ended, the plantation was purchased in the 1840s and owned for approximately thirty years by the Hertzog family (Gallien July 5, 1970, Mills 51). The Hertzog family made few changes to the main house, but did enclose the ground floor of the main house during their ownership (Melrose Docent tape 469).

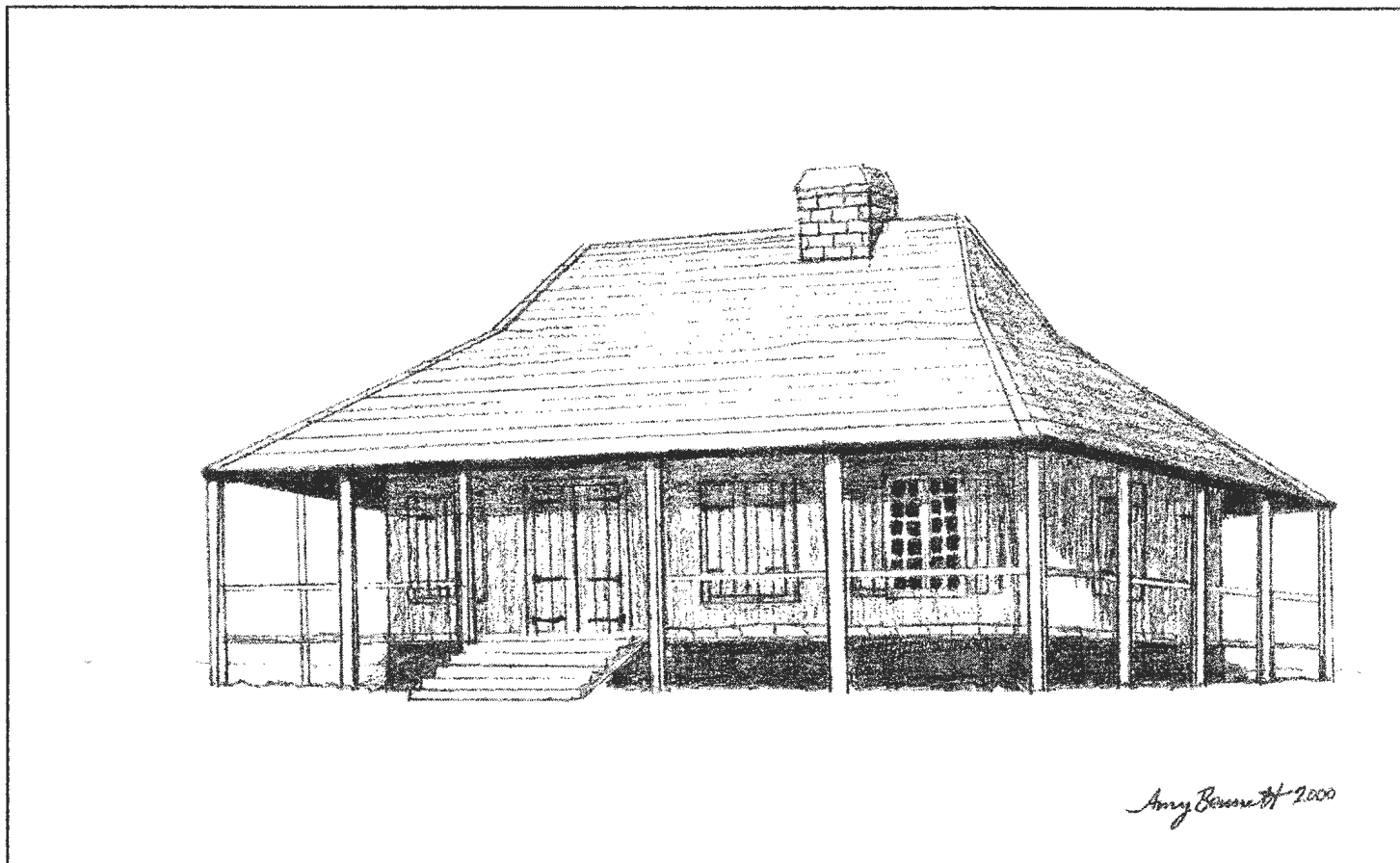


Figure 6. A Simple Raised Louisiana Cottage.

Drawing of the Badin-Rocque House in Natchitoches, Louisiana by Amy Bennet.

Yucca Plantation and the Cane River's Civil War Period

The Civil War period was marked by great hopes, unimaginable economic loss, and social upheaval for Isle Brevelle and its surrounding populations. Isle Brevelle's Creoles of Colour entered the Civil War on the side of the Confederacy, and "during the War Between the States,²¹ they made up two companies" (du Chenault interview 53). When the war came to the Cane River region with the Red River Campaign, Confederate troops and locals burned cotton stores so they would not be taken by the enemy (Mills 237). What fires did not accidentally catch nearby buildings on fire were kept under control to little avail; for when the Union troops came to Cane River they continued the burning while ravaging the area of food. The Union troops were particularly vengeful in their retreat, creating a devastation deplored for its viciousness in both Union and Confederate records (238). Mills' history of the region corroborates such accounts with a summary of the treatment described in the narratives of Cane River's Creoles of Colour,

Dishes and household utensils were smashed, stolen or scattered. Food was taken and thrown on the ground, even the milk for babies. Livestock was butchered or stolen, saddles and harnesses burned. Horses were appropriated, plantation machinery, buildings and homes were destroyed, and many slaves were driven off or enticed away. . . . One resident of Cane River, Barthelemy LeCour, saved his last barrel of

²¹ This is a Southern synonym for the Civil War. Another applied to the war is "The War of Yankee Aggression" (du Chenault 430).

syrup by rolling it three miles to hide it on Little River.

A portion of the Church of St. Augustine was destroyed, reportedly, even as part of the "eleven room mansion house" of Emmanuel and Marguerite Dupre. Even the portrait of Augustine did not escape the vindictiveness of northern troops. One officer, tradition holds, queried the descendant in whose house the portrait proudly hung: "Was he a slave owner?" When the Creole lady replied "*Oui, Monsieur*," the officer drew his sword and slashed the portrait from top to bottom. (239)

Such was the fate of the lower portion of this Cane River region. Due to a local individual showing the retreating Union troops a short cut to Cloutierville, the upper portion of the Cane River community was virtually unscathed since the short cut passed by this section of the main road from Shreveport to Cloutierville.

Local tradition adds to these facts. Legend holds that when these troops reached Cloutierville, the town did not get burned as other areas for three reasons. First, the Yankee General was ordered by his commanders to not burn the area because the people were French. Second, "it's because there were very close ties to our French families across the ocean and the burning would have caused great unrest" (du Chenault 33). Third, the fires in Natchitoches were reportedly being fought by the Texas Rangers; so, the troops thought the Natchitoches Rangers were free of encumbrances and on their tail when, in fact, there were not enough Rangers to fight (du Chenault 69). Whatever the

reason for the troops' sudden change of action, Cloutierville was spared when they arrived and Melrose was spared, according to local tradition, "due to its being a hospital" (Melrose Docent 154-61).

Following the Civil War the Isle Brevelle community and Cane River region faced hard economic times, as did communities across the South. Only a few escaped the Civil War with their wealth relatively intact. Even these families saw their land and savings dwindle as they stretched and divided land to provide for future generations. Families divided their land until,

many families owned no more than narrow strips of land. Large plantation homes were lost along with the land on which they stood. Those members of the community who managed to hold on to their land but could not afford the upkeep on their large houses moved into the cabins formerly occupied by slaves. The "mansion houses" were torn down, and the bricks and lumber sold for whatever they would bring. The expensive furniture and other heirlooms were the last to be parted with. The huge four poster beds and ceiling-high armoires literally filled the rooms of the little cabins, but not until all other resources were exhausted did people succumb to the clamour of eager collectors who coveted these items. (247)

It was in this climate during the years of Reconstruction that the plantation land originally known as Yucca, and later as Melrose, passed through many hands. Eventually Melrose came under ownership of the Henry family, who were to frequently welcome Ada Jack

Carver for visits and were to encourage her desire to write.

Summary

Applying ethnographic methodology to a folklore and literature inquiry is a three-part process that begins with identifying and fore-fronting an author's representation of a culture or region. Subsequent steps in the process include: placing the author and her productions within social contexts and intellectual movements of the period, identifying authentic representations of the author's region in ethnographic and other scholarly texts, and contrasting the author's fictional representation of region with these authentic representations.

As in the search for a definitive region within an author's texts, the search for authentic representation of a culture or region also relies on the multiple previous searches for authenticity that exist in textual, authorial and historic understandings of a region. Consequently, the following chapter will detail scholarly presentations and definitions of region.

Writers, like Carver, are also through their works an avenue through which a better understanding of the Southern region, its sub-regions and its traditions may occur. Since writers, particularly Local Colour writers, are steeped in regional identification, so are their life experiences, their works, and subsequent interpretations of those works. Building on this theory, Chapter Three will discuss Carver and her life in the deep South,

situating her experiences and knowledge of the South in relationship to items, events and themes that influenced her writing--her fictional ethnography--of the Cane River region.

These contextual influences are touchstones for an understanding of the similarity between fiction and ethnography that is rooted in the traditional cultures of America's regions, a search for authentic cultural representation. Chapters Five and Six will outline Carver's particular presentation of the South and its Cane River Region through a feminist textual analysis, situating Carver's regional presentation within a gendered perspective that reflects each of the contextual influences outlined. The concluding chapters will discuss reasons for Carver's particular presentation of the South in this manner from the 1920s through the 1930s and her subsequent diminishing literary output.

Chapter Two

Fictional Places and Regional Study

In this chapter, I discuss the duality of the local colour writing style situating it theoretically. The theory presented in this chapter is folkloristic, taking a folklore and literature approach. The folklore and literature methodology outlined is a blending of two methodological categories—"the study of style" and "the structure and narrative strategy"—detailed by folklorist Sandra Stahl in "Studying Folklore and American Literature" (425, 429). According to Stahl "the study of style" entails identifying within the literary text "an element of content, or an aspect of traditional technique—something that cannot be abstracted from the work nor described apart from the work" (425). Subsequent consideration of how such a technique is used to structure either the literary text or its narrative is the focus of Stahl's "structure and narrative strategy" method. The blending of these methods identifies both folklore content and the stylistic use of folklore by Carver to promote a narrative strategy within a selection of short stories, leaving their context (i.e., the relations between region, folk group and literature) for consideration.

Following the essence of Glassie's approach to folklore studies, this chapter builds from the theoretical context provided by Stahl to define context through a consideration of folk group theory. This contextual approach is broadened in later chapters through consideration of regional texts—legendary narratives—historical data and interviews. Finally the current chapter outlines the importance of the role of authenticity, as defined by Regina Bendix, in the identification, research, and promotion of regional culture and folk groups. Consequently, this chapter and the associated contextualization process

provides the underpinnings for an understanding of one woman's vision of the Cane River region's folk groups as well as the nexus existing between the region's folklore and Carver's short stories.

Literature and Tradition

When local colour writing produces a text, the text creates a nexus between real and fictional representations of region that relies on the human predisposition to conceptualize, define and redefine space. Central to discussion of the nexuses between any literary text and the culture it represents are considerations familiar to scholars of culture, though rarely addressed in literary theory. Scholars of traditional culture, such as folklorists and ethnologists, recognize that multifaceted images of space may exist among members of different groups who live in the same region. Thus groups and their beliefs influence perceptions of region. According to folklorist MacEdward Leach in "Folklore in American Regional Literature," the related fact, that the geomorphology, biodiversity and environment of a region affect human culture, is also commonly understood (378-81).

Building from the precept that culture and environment are mutually affective forces, folklorists have created classifications such as Swedish, folklorist Carl von Sydow's folk tale category, oikotype. Oikotypes are subtypes of international folk tales that vary from an international folk tale due to influence from "local historical and

cultural factors" (Dorson *Folklore and Folklife* 9). Similarly the traditional groups folklorists study are categorized in two ways based on cultural and environmental influences.

Historically folk groups have been identified as groups possessing a link, a heritage, or tradition strongly associated with a particular geographical region as documented in ethnographies like Henry Glassie's *Passing the Time in Ballymenone*. Glassie poetically describes the difference between his approach and the general approach of historians and social scientists respectively,

I do not begin with floating wisps of fact which blow in our breathe too easily, or with a preconceived, trim and bounded entity, subdivided by firm categories into which illustrative anecdotes can be crammed. I begin study with sturdy, fecund totalities created by the people themselves, whole statements, whole songs, or house or events, away from which life expands, towards which life orients in seeking maturity. I begin with texts, then weave contexts around them to make them meaningful, to make life comprehensible. (xvi)

This approach of documenting solid elements of a culture, or examples of tradition and adding layers of context is integral to the study of folk groups that have a long-term association with a geographic region.

More recently the concept of folk group has expanded to include groups of at least three individuals or groups whose members "share at least one common factor" (Ben-Amos 1971: 13, Dundes 1980: 6). This dissertation employs both accepted definitions of folk groups in its exploration of Carver's short stories and their relationship

to the traditional cultures of the Cane River region.

Working from these commonly accepted parameters leads scholars who interpret the nexus between traditional culture and the literate productions of culture to address "not only how region and place impact literature, but also how literary texts impact region and place" (Hufford 11). Such interpretations must, then, address both the traditional and literate representations of space, region and traditional culture co-existing with the representation created by a particular author. Additionally these interpretations address two closely associated issues, as I do in Chapter Seven: ownership of tradition and authenticity of cultural representation.

Representations of Place

Folk groups who live in close relationship to the surrounding countryside are not unfamiliar with the creative interpretation of space. In the 1990 book *Sense of Place*, Barbara Allen outlines four definitive elements of regional culture central to the work of regionalists. The first of these is place:

region is at its heart a geographical entity. What makes a region more than an arbitrarily designated spot on earth is its human dimension. . . . Thus, the second element of a region is the *people* who live there and organize their lives within the context of the environmental conditions and natural resources of that place. Because the relationship between a place and its residents evolves through time, the third component of a region is *the history* of residents' shared experiences in and of that place. . . . The final element of a region is *distinctiveness*, both from the areas surrounding it and from the whole (e.g., the nation) of which the

region is a part. (2)

Texts such as Glassie's *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States* as well as ethnographies like his *Passing the Time in Ballymenone*, Gerald Pocius' *A Place To Belong*: and Mary Hufford's *One Space, Many Places* have extensively detailed the elements described by Allen.

Pocius and Hufford build on the sense of place as a concept defined by one group's long time association with a geographical area. They suggest regional definition is dependent on uses applied to places and items within the local landscape by various folk groups existing within a regional culture. Pocius details this association as indivisible from social norms and socializing practices within a Newfoundland community,

The crisscrossing of paths, the finishes of rooms, the appropriate locations to harvest resources— these and more are part of the socially constructed interrelations that constitute Calvert space. . . . space is constructed so that socializing takes precedence over almost anything else The woods, the fields, the yards, the houses—all of Calvert's spaces are used in different ways by different groups. Some regions are gender specific, some connected to a certain neighborhood, others related to particular family groups. Yet inspite of these connections, community space is a shared experience. (272)

Hufford expands this definition of place noting its dependence on and interaction with folk groups of a subregion,

Within each subregion there are many places, all competing for visibility with the popular image . . . each space is potentially

many places, depending upon the point of view of its users.
(13)

Thus as the title of Hufford's work suggests, one space may be creatively interpreted by different folk groups. And, each group's interpretation suggests a different sense of place, subregion, or region within the one space.

Literary scholar Leonard Lutwack considers the interpretation of place in his book *The Role of Place in Literature*. He notes that the creation of fictional place based on actual regional environments written by authors who belong to those environments is — though obviously different due to its fictional nature — akin to the process of groups interpreting one place in divergent manners (Lutwack 2). Representative of fiction based on actual regional environment is the writing of Ada Jack Carver in her short stories that portray the Cane River region. This dissertation posits that one interpretation of traditional place — or region — can occur within literature when that literature is written by a member of the region and one of the traditional cultures represented therein. How an author's interpretation may present an authentic interpretation of region within a fictional text is the focus of the following discussion, since literary production is one way that a regional sense of place is promulgated. It is one of "the experiential and expressive ways places are known, imagined, yearned for, held, remembered, voiced, lived, contested, and struggled over" (Feld and Basso 11).

Authenticity and Literate Cultural Depictions

Appraisal of the impacts resulting from the nexus of traditional culture and literary portrayal entails the consideration of both literary depictions and interactions with traditional culture through the lens of authenticity — "an emotional and moral quest . . . [that arises] from the probing comparison between self and Other, as well as between external and internal states of being" (Bendix 7, 17). Authenticity as lens allows the author — as in the previous chapter of this dissertation— to compare self and the respondent, as well as states of being during the research process, in an effort to identify motivational influences or interactions. In the analysis of literature, authenticity becomes a multifaceted a lens. This is due in part to "the history of American regional literature [being] the history of the adaption of American folklore materials" (Leach 384). Inherent in the categorizing of American folklore used in literary texts is the need to identify authentic adaptations of folklore. Such identification requires demarcation between not only the researcher, the writer, and the Other, but also between the literary, expressive, and oral traditions of elite and folk culture. This demarcation begins through disciplinary classification fictional texts.

For the folklorist, there are two types of fictional texts created by writers who depict traditional culture. The first texts, emphasized here, are composed of those which employ folklore in their writing (de Caro, "Studying American" 411-21). As folklorist Richard Dorson has states, "literature itself must be regarded as a bountiful printed source of

folklore" ("The Use of Printed Sources" 471). He notes further that there should be a distinction between this use of folklore and folklore as it exists among traditional group members since,

Folklore in literature may be consistently transmuted from its oral form. The difference can become one of kind rather than degree. A folktale or folksong lodged in a newspaper or a local journal may be a blurred and inexact transcript of the original verbal text, but it does not radically depart from that text. A creative writer may introduce and develop characters and motivation, scenes and tensions, that change the structure and nature of the tradition. (471)

Consequently the work of these writers is, historically, approached from a "folklore in literature"¹ perspective, where items used in the text are identified and documented through comparison with compendiums of collected folklore and documented traditional knowledge of the author.

Problematic in this approach is the inherent valuation of certain literary texts over others due to their authentic or inauthentic use of folklore. For this dichotomous construction provides an end — the use of authentic folklore examples — without either consideration of the political, contextual, or personal imperatives lying behind such literary composition, or consideration of the mutually affective forces of authentic and inauthentic literary representations of folklore on a regional culture or folk group.

¹ For more information on this approach see Alan Dundes' article "The Study of Folklore in Literature and Culture," G. F. Dalton's "Unconscious Literary Use of Traditional Material," and Francis A. de Caro's "Studying American Folklore in Printed Sources."

Folklore and literature scholars began the process of addressing this lack by calling for new stylistic, narrative, and comparative studies to detail the manner in which author's used folklore in their texts.

Stahl identifies fifteen new ways² folklore and American literature may be conjointly studied in her 1983 article "Studying Folklore in American Literature" (422-33). Recent studies in this area extend Stahl's categories. For example in "*Writing and Voice*" folklorist Christina Bacchilega notes that folklore in literature studies now consider authorial intent behind the use of examples of folklore to portray gender (84). Jay Mechling expands on Bacchilega's point in his article "The Failure of Folklore in Richard Wright's *Black Boy*." Here he broadens approaches to authorial intent to encompass the use of folklore to provide depth of character or setting, to build plot lines, and to represent social groups (287, 291).

The second type of text created by local colourists is that which draws on a knowledge of folklore, without direct representations of actually recorded instances of occurrence. These texts are approached from a "folklore and literature"³ perspective,

² Stahl lists: "comparison and contrast of the basic concepts and assumptions ... the genres ... composition or style" of the two fields, "identification and study of poetic language ... folklore as literature ... myth criticism ... relationship between popular literature and folklore ... structure and narrative strategy ... metanarration and oral literary criticism ... metafiction and subjective criticism ... literature as process ... reader as audience ... applied folklore and literature ... folklore and children's literature (422-33).

³ For more on the "folklore and literature" approach see Roger Abrahams' article "Folklore and Literature as Performance" and Mary Ellen B. Lewis' "Why Study Folklore and Literature?"

where documentation of social structures and folklore of a region are contrasted with these fictional representations of a region, its people, and its folklore resulting in a contrasting of oral and literate cultural representation (Baker 474-475). Responding to the influences of cultural studies, this approach encompasses the folklore in literature perspective by maintaining that "the interplay between folklore and literature is an on-going aspect of cultural processes in literate societies" (Freake and Carpenter 97). From this viewpoint, both singly and in conjunction, folklore and literature become forces of change and communication within culture. Approaching folklore and literature as interactive cultural forces takes the theoretical inquiry afforded scholars beyond the opportunity to examine these forces as instances of performance to the study of these performances and their immediate contexts as elements within the context of cultural forces and *zeitgeists*. Cathy Preston suggests in *Folklore, Literature and Cultural Theory* that this new breadth of inquiry encompasses:

Focussing on the construction of community and disjunctures within community and on questions concerning identity politics and the possibility of "voice," contesting boundaries previously drawn between the oral and written (and oralities and literacies), exploring the negotiated and mutually appropriated domains of local and larger-than-local cultural production as well as questions concerning the politics of the authentic and the touristic . . . has provided a meeting ground for cross-disciplinary studies of variously situated performances . . . [opening] up the traditionalized, privileged literary canon in order to include literary performances of people variously situated by gender, class, ethnicity, race, nationality, and sexuality. (ix)

This approach to the study of folklore and literature opens the possibility for

consideration of the authorial use of folklore as an authentication strategy. Scholars following Preston's strategy of identifying and discussing the politics of representing cultures in a work have identified the contextual elements whereby an author and her work attempt to authenticate a fictional representation of culture. In 1995, Preston's call for folklore and literature scholars to open up the traditional literary canon (See the quote above.) also called for folklore and literature scholars to continue addressing "questions concerning the politics of the authentic" (ix). This approach has become potentially problematic for folklore and literature scholars since Regina Bendix's 1997 book *In Search of Authenticity*. For Bendix "advocates laying to rest the uses of authenticity within scholarship . . . [in an effort to] undermine the social and political power of discourses of authenticity" (226-27).

Despite Bendix's call to lay to rest the "uses of authenticity within scholarship" a combination of two approaches — the "folklore in literature" and "the folklore and literature" approaches — built around efforts to authenticate literary texts is used with emphasis being placed on a "folklore and literature" approach (226). The "folklore in literature" approach will be undertaken through identification of specific uses of folklore documented by scholars who collected folklore among the ethnicities of the Cane River region. This approach was implemented originally in an attempt to authenticate folk items mentioned in literary texts, thereby "elevating the authenticated [text] into the category of noteworthy;" however, in this dissertation the approach will be used to

identify the means —a personal quest for the authentic during which she compared herself to regional Others — by which Carver was able to encode her texts with a personal vision of the role of southern women (Bendix 7). The "folklore and literature" approach will provide contextualization of Carver and her portrayal of Cane River culture through the interdisciplinary perspective of feminist theory in Chapter Six.

Impacts of the Cane River Region

Carver's personal knowledge of the Cane River region shaped her authorial choices. Familiarity with African Americans and other cultural groups led to her use of beliefs and dialects that are directly traceable to the region's groups, as documented in Chapter Six. Her knowledge of the region is also apparent in her use of traditional knowledge acquired through membership in two groups, the folk group composed of southern women and the occupational folk groups composed of her fellow Cane River writers, the Melrose Writers.

Consideration of an author's membership in either a regional folk group or an occupational folk group is significant in a folklore and literature study such as this because of the factors governing membership. Members of folk groups who are closely tied to a region, including its natural and social environments share numerous common factors with other members of the same group. Knowledge includes familiarity with local social groups, regional history, local flora and fauna and their associated traditions. For

an author representing her home region, membership in a regional folk group imbues her work with a veracity not otherwise available since it brings personal knowledge and thereby authenticity to the work. For Carver in particular, membership in the traditional culture of the Cane River region is governed by her gender and heritage. Thus she was able to accurately represent Euro-American women of the Cane River region.

In contrast, occupational folk groups are composed of members with diverse backgrounds. Backgrounds may be so divergent that members share only one common factor, the work they do. Consequently the folklore shared amongst members of an occupational folk group is traditional information that exists in direct dialogue with the both the work experience and knowledge shared by members of the group. Such a folk group existed among Carver's friendship with several individuals who regularly visited Melrose Plantation on the Cane River and worked to preserve the region's heritage and cultures, as will be detailed in Chapters Six and Seven.

For Carver as a member of both regional and occupational folk groups, her membership in each was tied to the concept of authenticity. The consequence of her quests for authenticity through the lens of her folk group membership is legitimization of the subject matter presented in her short stories (7). Carver's experience of the Cane River region through the lens of southern femininity imbue her fictional environments and characters with an authentic flavour. As a member of an occupational group sharing an appreciation for historic and cultural items representative of the Cane River region,

Carver had a desire for authenticity, manifested in terms of her shared desire for the preservation of the Cane River's regional culture, as will be detailed in Chapter Five. Thus it is through memberships in folk groups that Carver's traditional knowledge of the Cane River region came to influence her literary production.

Literary Impact on the Cane River Region: The Authorial Role

Literary portrayals of a region by definition must be only partially authentic, since any given author can represent their own region authentically through reliance on first hand experience and no writer of fiction writes wholly about first hand experience. Representations of other elements of the region's traditional cultures are cultural appropriations. In these instances an author appropriates the right to represent a traditional culture or a folk group that is not their own. The hazard⁴ of such interpretations is of course the production of characters that may incorporate elements of local, social, or class stereotypes. Incorporation of such elements do not invalidate the traditional elements of the same characters, any more than the incorporation of folklore into a literary text invalidates the oral or expressive tradition from which it arose. In both

⁴ This use of the term "hazard" is not to convey that stereotypes — generalized images held in common by a group of people— are inauthentic, but rather that stereotypes by their definitive traits — oversimplification and uncritical judgement — hold the potential of negative interpretation. Such potential is innately political, holding the ability to re-enforce social and racial inequities and therefore potentially hazardous.

cases, the appearance of traditional culture in the work of an author requires a researcher to identify elements belonging to the local tradition. Identification allows for comparison, by the reader or scholar, between the documented tradition and the literary text's cultural representation.

Such appropriation occurs in Carver's short stories as she portrays African American, Creole and Redbone cultures through representative characters. There is however a sense of authenticity in her portrayals despite their being both fictional and of folk groups to which she does not belong. This authentic sense is a result of Carver's opportunity to observe, to hear local narratives about and to interact with members of other folk groups in the region. Consequently an author - like Carver - who is part of the region she portrays in her works lends authenticity to both her own and other regional folk groups through personal knowledge of the region of her birth that allows for "comparison of herself with the [region's] Others" (Bendix 7). For though she appropriates the voice of other groups at times, her representation is always accurate to her experience, an experience filtered through the lens of her own position as an Anglo-European female of the region.

Carver is in a unique position as author due to her appropriation of culture through the representation of other folk groups being affected by her own membership in folk groups of that region. Her knowledge of the region's cultural and natural environments allows her to accurately portray many folk beliefs documented as

belonging to African American cultures of the South. It, also, allows her to employ stereotypes of local folk groups to give depth to her characters. As detailed in Chapter Six, Carver's use of these stereotypic characteristics — symbolic cultural elements associated with specific groups — enables her to encode her short stories with a diagram of the roles available to southern women and the cultural restrictions that bound them.

The portrayal of the groups that compose a regional culture in a stereotypical manner suggests to readers familiar with Southern culture — in particular the Euro-American culture of southern females — that culture is a symbol. This suggestion stems from Carver's portrayals being a bit too stereotypical for an author who is intimately familiar with and devoted to her home region. Perceiving an incompleteness in such a symbolic (i.e., stereotypical) portrayal of Cane River cultures is an intrinsic characteristic of the act of decoding an encoded text (Radner and Lanser 2-4). However the fact that a literary text is coded, is not proof that the text is folklore. How a literary text can contain documentable examples of folk culture without being an item of folklore is the focus of the following discussion.

Summary: When Literature is Merely Literature

The current discussion has detailed the relationship existing between not only place and traditional culture, but also the two approaches folklorists take to studies focussing on literature portraying a sense of place and traditional community. Next,

discussion focussed on the means Carver employed in linking her short stories to the traditional culture of the Cane River Region. Finally, the act of literary production on the culture represented was considered. Each of these sections of the discussion delineated boundaries that demarcate discussions of the nexus between folklore and literature, and have suggested the central questions implied by such a discussion: why are these questions of import to scholars of either folklore or literature, what in this specific author's writing is folklore, and is her very literary production folklore?

Consideration is important not merely because these questions address the authenticity of texts, groups, and events studied while providing context, but also because by detailing the history of an author's valuing authenticity something more than a debunking of authenticity as a scholastic concept may be achieved. According to Bendix, searching for authenticity and then providing "pragmatic and evaluative dimensions" does not merely legitimize the subject researched, nor the research itself. Declaring authenticity legitimates,

the subject that was declared authentic, and the declaration in turn can legitimate the authenticator, though here such concerns as social standing, education and the ability to promote one's own view also play a role. Processes of authentication bring about material representations by elevating the authenticated into the category of noteworthy. (7)

Bendix's statement frequently holds true for the texts studied by "folklore and literature" scholars. A case in point is the short stories of Carver.

Carver's writing is a blending of the traditional and creative fiction. The

publication of her fiction and its emphasis on Cane River traditions raises these traditions to noteworthy status. Her writing is not folklore in and of itself, however her work possesses folkloric elements due to three distinct influences. First is the influence of traditional culture that occurs when she employs items documented as part of the Cane River region, as detailed in Chapter Six.

Second is the influence of the traditional strategy of coding — "the expression or transmission of messages potentially accessible to a (bicultural) community under the very eyes of a dominant community for whom these same messages are either inaccessible or inadmissible" (Radner and Lanser 3). The act of coding communication is a documented part of the corpus of folklore frequently used by women of the South, a folk group to which Carver belonged. Use of this strategy may be oral or written; it may be explicit or implicit (Radner and Lanser 2, 5). It may be linked with a specific life event or narrative text (Pershing 114-15). It may also be linked with a series of traditional texts of the same genre, as Rayna Green has shown in her analysis of southern women's bawdry lore. Green's analysis demonstrates that bawdry lore "is a form of socialization to the hidden agenda of women's lives and thoughts" (33). As such it has overtly fulfilled the need — their hidden agenda — for sex education, while showing young women through jokes and humour poking fun at the foolishness of individuals "what they can expect in private out of the men and institutions they are taught to praise in public, and they inform them as they have never been informed in 'serious'

conversation" (33).

The latter instance in this list as exemplified by Green is analogous to Carver's use of coding in a series of short story texts. The use of coding in a literary format by Carver is a personal tradition, as evidence exists in letters that shows the author was disposed to use coding in daily life as a means of controlling social engagements. Her use of this orchestrative strategy to delineate the boundaries governing what a southern woman should expect should she wish to express herself publically or work is illustrated in Chapter Three.

The third influence that marks Carver's literary productions is the fact that she was a member of two groups with documented folklore traditions. She belonged to the general folk group composed of Southern women with Anglo-European heritage, as well as the occupational folk group, the Melrose Writers, discussed in Chapters Five and Six. Membership in these groups based on shared, traditional knowledge is directly reflected in the compositional strategies employed by Carver in her short stories. The reflected knowledge, a self-consciousness, is evidenced throughout her short stories serving to make them depictions that are intimate in the manner of folk narrative (Leach 390).

Identification of these three influences validates, and consequently authenticates, Carver's short stories as worthy of a readership familiar with American regions and cultures, but it also authenticates these stories as worthy of folkloristic inquiry. The current inquiry then like folklore studies is linked to cultural politics, "where

authenticity bestows a legitimating sheen" (Bendix 7). Thus studies focussing on the nexus of folklore and literature, like this one, are not mere exercises in the identification of folkloric elements or a justification for the study of overlooked regional authors; they are exercises in validation and as such authenticate the authors, works, and regions discussed.

Before the current study is relegated to Bendix's category of scholarship that promotes authentication, it is important to note that studies using authenticity as a lens — to unravel the links between the folklore field's search for the authentic, the popular use of the field's documented knowledge, the popular documentation of folklore and the use of folklore by authors to self-legitimize — are mini-histories of the cultural changes caused by individual's interest in defining the authentic and such action delineating what is inauthentic by association. As mini-histories of both authenticity and the role of authenticity, such studies do continue the use of authenticating scholarship practices like the folklore in literature approach. However they do so not to promote the concept of the authentic, but rather to document the interaction of definitions of the authentic and inauthentic within culture. In this dissertation such consideration encompasses Carver's texts use of negative stereotypes to authenticate her regional knowledge and her short stories holding coded perceptions of the feminine South. Thus as mini-histories, studies that take the folklore and literature approach and concurrently acknowledge the role of authenticity within both text and theory adapted to the text studied do not merely

legitimate the role of authenticity within folklore studies, but chronicle its use and problematise its history through consideration of the inauthentic.

For scholars of traditional culture or literary productions, such studies lead to an understanding of the fields of both folklore and literature as inherently interactive within the human processes of cultural representation of place and of authentication. The fact that folklore interacting with literature creates a nexus means not only that literature can help re-envision the culture from which it springs, but also that treatises written from a "folklore and literature" approach can help re-envision the theoretical fields from which they come. By continuing to consider authenticity, folklorists need not necessarily promote authentication of folklore examples as an end, but as Bendix suggests begin to illuminate the negotiating process that composes the heart of our studies. Then,

"authenticity versus inauthenticity" can become an object of study itself. [Folklorists] can study the negotiation of authenticity once we have ceased to be a negotiating party, or once we admit to our participation in the negotiating process. (23)

Consequently rather than promote authenticity within the field, folklorists may acknowledge the attempts of popular and elite artists to authenticate their works in a manner similar to that used by folklorists before authenticity became a cultural force to be studied, as is done in this dissertation.

Acknowledging artists' attempts to validate their work through authentic and inauthentic claims of affiliation with Cane River region culture requires the

understanding of tradition within both theoretical scholarship and regional culture as mutable, as process. This understanding is intrinsic to folklore studies uniquely informing this inquiry into regional literature. In the following four chapters, the theme of authenticity is interwoven throughout a consideration of the contexts surrounding Carver's personal search for authenticity, her friendship with individuals interested in preserving the history of the Cane River region through authentic and inauthentic claims to membership in the regional community, and her use of authentic elements of Cane River culture within her short stories.

Chapter Three

Ada Jack Carver's Short Stories

Ada Jack Carver was born and resided—for the majority of her life—in the Northwestern section of the state of Louisiana. The region's geographic features and cultures became intertwined with the two other central interests in her life, the production of narratives and her family life. Conjointly, these three interests imbued Carver's life (1890-1972) with activities related to her southern heritage.

Carver's association with Louisiana's Cane River region was long, stretching from her birth on April 7, 1890 at the region's fringe through her literary focus on the region in her short stories written in the nineteen-twenties. She was born the first of four children to Ada Jack and Marshall Hampton Carver of Natchitoches, Louisiana. The Carver family was both educated and artistically oriented. This fostered Ada Jack Carver's life long interest in the creation of narrative. Not only was her father a lawyer and her mother a writer of modest local recognition, but her mother's two sisters were also writers (Taylor, Donnis 8-9).

Growing up under the influence of these adults in Natchitoches, Carver and her siblings lived in a home that had a gardener and plenty of outdoor entertainment for children. Miriam, Carver's sister, described their home, in her eulogy for the girls' only brother Marshall, as "a particular world":

of beloved pet chickens and three fig trees whose strong and ancient branches met and mingled, affording us a large ground-free leibenstraum. . . . we had a big yard with various "lots" for the animals [chickens, ducks and a horse]. We also had a river at the back door . . . (Carver Collection Folder 21)

This world, this beginning of Carver's was influenced by narrative creation. There was the tradition of women writers in her mother's family, but there were also summer visits from her paternal grandmother, Tante¹ Lisa.

Tante Lisa was a storyteller who regaled her granddaughter with narratives woven from the objects of their lives and family history: "odd pieces of old china, rich faded silks, and frivolous little fans" (Dormon 70). Many of these narratives harkened back to Creole days² and, according to biographers Donnis Marie Ward Taylor and Alma Dodson, inspired stories written later by Carver (Taylor 10, Dodson 21). There is a tendency for Carver's late stories to be about Creole culture and how the items of daily life may take on special meaning (such as the birthmarks of father and son in her story *Cotton Dolly*). It is this latter authorial characteristic that most strongly points to the tremendous influence of Tante Lisa's narratives on her granddaughter and the role of folklore and region in Carver's life work.

Relating personal experience and reputed events to her granddaughter as stories about everyday items in the surrounding environment, Tante Lisa was passing on her heritage, her worldview and more importantly composition and organizational skills to Carver. These skills are reflected in Carver's writing particularly in her emphasis on the

¹ *Tante* is the French word for Aunt, but was used in Carver's family as a designation for her grandmother.

² This was the period of Cane River history during which the area was a cultural centre for the thriving plantations of Marie Thérèse's family.

importance of environment in the creation of characterization, plot and use of tension (Taylor 53-55, 59, 61).

When Tante Lisa left and summer ended, there was school to entertain the young Carvers. Ada Jack Carver, with her brother and sisters, attended the local elementary schools. When she completed her public schooling she attended Louisiana State Normal Model School until 1908 (Dodson 26). Then she attended Judson in Marion, Alabama for a period where she focussed in the arts (26-27). In 1911, she returned to Louisiana State Normal Model School, which later became the University of Northwestern Louisiana, and completed a two year diploma (27).

To comprehend Carver's life and her relationship to the region of her birth, it is necessary to discern how writing was a means of blending these elements for her. Carver's published writing includes her thirteen short stories and a play. Unpublished writing includes many other short stories, a planned novel and song lyrics and poems. What little is known of the writing Carver did not publish reveals as much about her as all her published works. Nothing has been written about Carver's sub-literary pursuits. In fact, scholars have generally noted the absence of any work by Carver during two periods that spanned the years 1908-1915 and 1918-1925 (Fletcher 1-4, Taylor 37-38). The following discussion is based in a perusal of Carver's extant papers that reveals how she was actively pursuing her craft during these periods.

What seems of minor importance to the literary scholar—a school girl's

compositions of song lyrics for her sorority and pieces patterned after well known authors, mention of unpublished no longer extant work, or a mother's composition of poems and song lyrics for her young son—are actually important clues towards understanding Carver's approaches to and reasons for participation in the writing process (Dormon Collection Folder 522, Table 1). Understanding the whole of Carver's writing history requires not only an understanding of her relationship with other members of the Melrose Group, but also an understanding of the breadth of her history of composition. Detailing the breadth of her compositions and their role in her daily life necessitates the identification of milestones in Carver's compositional career.

The pivotal action that moves Carver from being just a part of her regional landscape to a public spokesperson for that region is her desire to be a published author. Pursuant to her first publication are influences that alternately furthered or stalled her writing career. The ensuing discussion details the dialectic between Carver's life experiences and her life long pursuit of self expression through composition, beginning with her childhood and continuing through the three periods of her publishing career. Carver's writing style develops throughout her life through several lenses: folk belief; secrecy, self sacrifice, and inheritance. In conjunction, her earliest work, though moralistic and two-dimensional, reveals an interest in the role of belief and local tradition as definitive markers of not only gender, but of region and ethnicity. She explores the interrelations of these elements of traditional culture relying more heavily

on them as she writes about cultural groups more and more removed from her daily life experience. As a result when Carver's short stories are viewed as a whole, the reader is presented by the end of her third period with an Euro-centric vision of northwestern Louisiana culture at the turn of the nineteenth-century that at times relies heavily on the use of coding³ to present a liberal view of the region and its people, for readers of the early 1900s.

The first of Carver's published works spans the years 1908 to 1915. There are three short stories composed during this time which centre about a theme of morality, as they highlight the seven deadly sins and seven virtues. Carver's next period of publishing covers the years 1916 and 1917. The two extant stories of this period examine the role of regional identities as keystones to worldview. The third publishing period encompasses Carver's most prolific writing interval spanning the years from 1925 to 1928. During this time, eight short stories were written using folklore to highlight and define regional identity (Table 1).

Troublesome in this categorization is "The Ring" (1908). This story though published early in Carver's career is distinctly more advanced in the area of narrative alterations in her writing technique. However, due to the unique characteristics of *The Ring* I posit that in any thematic discussion this work should be situated in the second

³ Feminist theorists Joan Radner and Susan Lanser define coding as a type of metanarrative that occurs when a "concealed message and the adoption of a code are undertaken" either consciously or unconsciously by a given group of individuals (6).

1907 - 1915		
1907	Stranger Within the Gates	<i>Guardian</i> (1907): 253-56.
[1908]	The Ring	<i>New Orleans Item</i>
1915	The Pink Inheritance	<i>Designer</i> (September 1915): n.p.
1916 - 1922		
1916	The Story of Angele Glynn	<i>Southern Women's Magazine</i> (July 1916): 8-10.
1917	The Joyous Coast	<i>Southern Women's Magazine</i> (September 1917): 7-9, 22.
1923 - 1929		
1925	Redbone	<i>The Harper Prize Stories</i> 1924-25
1926	Treeshy	<i>Harper's Magazine</i> 152 (February 1926): 353-65.
1926	Maudie	<i>Harper's Magazine</i> 153 (July 1926): 207-16.
1926	The Old One	<i>Harper's Magazine</i> 153 (October 1926): 545-54.
1926	The Raspberry Dress	<i>Century Magazine</i> 113 (December 1926): 189-98.
1927	Cotton Dolly	<i>Harper's Magazine</i> 156 (December 1927): 32-41.
1927	Singing Woman	<i>Harper's Magazine</i> 154 (May 1927): 689-95.
1928	Little Mother of the Church	<i>Harper's Magazine</i> 56 (April 1928): 554-61.
1929 - 1949		
1949	For Suellen With Love	<i>Centenary Review</i> 1 (Summer 1949): 13-20.

Table 1. Ada Jack Carver's Published Short Stories

phase of Carver's writing. Since no notes exist of correspondence with publishers, or Carver's personal writing schedule it is not possible to recreate the date stories were first composed, when they might have been revised, or who may have mentored a young writer. It is logical to assume that some stories may have been accepted for publication a year or more before they were actually published. Equally plausible is that an editor required a rewrite along specific guidelines that made "The Ring" a much tighter and richer short story than others published during the same period. Or perhaps, 1908 was the year Carver first met and was mentored in her writing by Carmellite Garrett Henry, a local patron of writers who will enter this narrative in detail in the next chapter. Whatever the particulars of this case, "The Ring" is a short story that highlights Carver's compositional skill in a manner only a few other stories of her third publishing period manage.

1907-1915

During the years 1907-1915, Carver was a school girl progressing into adulthood. As a young girl, Carver was encouraged to write. According to biographers, she wrote many unpublished pieces about the places and people that surrounded her such as the nearby nunnery and town characters (Taylor 11). The years spent at Louisiana State Normal Model School included time spent composing songs for her Kappa Delta sorority (Dormon Collection Folder 522). Also while in school, Carver produced many

unpublished writings according to an English instructor who remembers being shown pieces she wrote patterned after literature read in class (Taylor 12-13). Though no short stories or published works appear to have directly resulted from Carver's educational endeavours, she did actively exercise her skill as a writer and did publish three short stories during this period.

Her earliest surviving story "The Stranger Within the Gates" was discovered by Dr. Mary Dell Fletcher, editor of Carver's collected works, and has not been republished since 1907, and two other pieces: "The Ring" published in 1908 and "The Pink Inheritance" published in 1915 complete her published endeavours for this period. Though nothing more is known of these earliest writings, the three surviving pieces provide insight into Carver's early writing style.

These early works reflect both Carver's representation of idealism— through two-dimensional characterization and her thematic interest in institutional belief systems—and her representation of a feminine South. Specifically, "The Stranger Within the Gates," "The Ring," and "The Pink Inheritance" emphasize Christian ideals. These short stories highlight the Seven Virtues and the Seven Deadly Sins as they affect a central powerless heroine's negotiation between an institutional power system and culturally disempowered gender roles.

"The Stranger Within the Gates" tells the trite story of a young impoverished girl who finds the comfort and saving grace of the church. The narrative unfolds about representations of the seven virtues: faith, hope, charity (love), fortitude, prudence, justice, temperance. The young heroine is found asleep by a priest in a local church

where she stopped on the way home from work for a rest. The priest, representative of justice, takes her home, fields her mother's ire and discusses the new anti-child labour movement. The drunk father and angry mother rein in their emotions, grant the priest permission for the child to attend services and Sunday school once a week and thus represent temperance. As the child attends church, she is given charity from her new friends and comes to the faith. When the heroine disappears the priest visits and learns she is deathly ill. Offering the hope and love (charity) of Christ, the priest brings the parents to faith through prayer for their daughter. The parents' prudence in letting their child go to church and in accepting the hope of Christ is rewarded by the child's return to health. Fortitude, the final virtue, is represented by the story's two main characters: the priest, who had the fortitude to remain a constant in a poor child's life, and the child, who had the fortitude to not only labour for her family, but to continue attending church services.

In "The Ring," Carver begins, for the first time, to temper her representation of ideals and present complex characterization while focussing on one element of the Red River region's folkways. However this change, though important, should not obscure this story's similarity to the previous short story through its thematic manifestation of six of the seven virtues, and its insightful portrayal of southern Euro-American females through its heroine. Details making this link will be presented in a discussion of Carver's representation of gender in her stories later in Chapter Five.

The last story of this first period in Carver's writing, "The Pink Inheritance," deviates slightly in focus from other works of this period by highlighting the Seven

Deadly Sins, and the role of feminine inheritance. This short story simply contrasts innocence with four of the seven vices — pride, covetousness, anger, and envy. Here, unlike in previous works, Carver mediates the earlier oversimplified moral theme by avoiding incorporation of all the seven vices. The heroine, Tabitha, further balances this moralizing influence through her innocent childlike nature which is glimpsed on route to a "sociable":

as I walked sedately down the path I thought there was
never such a world before--never such smiling jonquils
bowing in the breeze, never such clouds of blossoms
against the sky, never such delicious whiffs of coming
summer from the far, green woods. Suddenly I lost my
dignity, and with the spring fresh air in my face I began to
run. I believe now that I have never been so mindful of
my creator as I was that day, as I was that moment,
running and leaping and praising God with my youth.
(Carver qtd. in Fletcher 47)

Carver creates in Tabitha her first attempt at complex characterization by employing character actions as signifiers of character traits. This complex characterization revolves around the passage above, and the Chopinesque theme suggested by her allusion to five of the seven deadly sins: sin can be inherited from the foremother (Boren 17).

Early in the story Carver introduces Tabitha as an inquisitive and emotionally sensitive child, who, when considering her father's family's Puritan inclinations wonders, "Do people inherit things from their fore-mothers?" (Carver 41). Description of Tabitha's environment suggests this does occur. Tabitha mentions a teacher she held in high regard, "Ignoring her goodness, I adored her beauty and her coral necklace. And

it was that same necklace . . . that started within my soul the rebellion against guinea-blue-calico aprons" (Carver 42). Here covetousness sparks a desire for a dress, never taken up or sized, but made just for the middle daughter, Tabitha. Such a dress would shine in contrast to the well-worn mundanity of calico work aprons. Due to a trip to visit an aunt new clothing was needed.

Going with her mother to the shop, Tabitha watches as many serviceable materials are presented. But when the perfect material appeared, she "looked at her mother and saw a woman unfamiliar--beautiful and shining-eyed . . . watched entranced while the years rolled away from her face, and her careworn cheeks grew as pink as the rosy folds she caressed so lovingly" (Carver 43). Perhaps remembering lost youth, the mother lusting for softness, colour or any of a number of unmentioned possibilities purchases "four yards of that wonderful pink" (Carver 43).

Tabitha's new dress "was not calico, but cashmere, and the cashmere was not guinea-blue, but pink. And because of the wicked exotic strain," Tabitha "was filled with pride" (Carver 42). Suggested here is the answer to Tabitha's query about inheritance because through a mother's coveting of beauty a daughter's deadly sin is further fuelled. Tabitha is of course prideful, but she adds to her questionable character when:

watching mother stitching away I rashly declared, in the presence of the assembled family, that I wished I might wear that dress forever and ever and ever, and be buried in it when I died. . . . how joyously the years stretched ahead--long, long years veiled like dreams in that sweet rose hue of youth! What matter if someday it should have to be dyed dark . . . What matter if someday it should take

on the hue of the dull, grey years? I would still have left
to me the glad, pink memory of it . . ." (Carver 44).

With her new dress and a trip to her aunt's, Tabitha is situated where she may attend her first "sociable." Adorning herself, she leaves for the event, as quoted above, glorying in childish happiness at the Creator's world (Carver 47).

On arriving Tabitha finds other children, male and female, dressed wonderfully, but no one was "as splendid" as she. Joining in the games, she is surprised when the organizers call for silence and begin presenting prizes. Awarded the little girls' prize, Tabitha is "aware in the din of a little maiden near by who was weeping and wailing and knashing her teeth and vowing that she oughter have it." Tabitha watched "the gratifying spectacle . . . being borne away by a shocked crimson-faced mother" (Carver 49). At this point Tabitha's friend, the envious Margaret, departs and Tabitha, filled with pride, joy and curiosity, asks a nearby girl why the prize of perfume and blue necklace had been awarded. Learning she had won the best dressed award for a tacky party,⁴ Tabitha "obeying a sudden impulse emptied that whole little bottle of flower breath" and went directly home. Having had one last, literal shower of sweet success, Tabitha soon was clean and "with chastened aspect" eating dinner, "enthroned on the Bible, between" her father's conservative aunt and uncle.

This highly moralistic tale of daughter echoing her mother's desire for nice things suggests that inherited feminine traits are equally influential in an individual's

⁴ Carver defines a tacky party as a party where "you dress as funny and as— ugly . . . as you can. And the funniest gets the prize" (Carver 49).

life, upbringing and moral disposition. The mere introduction of these traits highlights a point of tension within patriarchal society suggesting that women must frequently choose between sublimation of their own inherited desires to male preferences, or to cultural expectations delineating a woman's role (as supportive within the family: "The Ring," or as object of beauty: "The Stranger Within the Gates" and "A Pink Inheritance"). The tension signalled by these juxtapositions of feminine heritage and patriarchal cultural traditions is underlain by the moralistic underpinnings of "A Pink Inheritance," alluding to the fact that inherited feminine traits, although they create happiness within the hearts and lives of the individuals concerned, are generally not culturally acceptable when manifested in thought, or deed.

By re-introducing the subject of self sacrifice in each story in this period, Carver does more in these short stories than make a leap in technical writing skills. Granted, beginning with two-dimensional characterization and a simple moralistic plot in "The Stranger Within the Gates," she moves to a complex use of tension and coding in her creation of plot in "The Ring"; and finally, in "A Pink Inheritance" to complex characterization through symbolic action within a rich thematic construct and a complex plot structure. However, this change in plot creation, though important, is of particular interest because it highlights feminine experiences and echoes feminist themes used by other local colour women writers like Kate Chopin.

Each plot focuses on a heroine and a central feminine experience: the need for shelter and support, the necessity of balancing the needs of self and family, and the desire, due to inherited traits, to create a personal definition of beauty. But within this

thematic focus on feminine existence, general and romantic as it may be, Carver reveals how focussing on the elements of life that she knows well: the Catholic church and religious strictures, the relationship between mothers' desires and sense of family, and the desire of children to see themselves in their parents, lead her to an interest in the effects of non-institutional culture on the lives and activities of Southern women.

Of course, these early portrayals are all of Euro-American southerners; and as such, they offered Carver a lens that might lead her to unconsciously include tensions and elements of the southern female's mind-set due to her intimate familiarity with the southern Euro-American woman's experience. The Euro-American woman was in Carver's stories very similar to the portrayal of women in the Child Ballads, as detailed by Polly Stewart in the following quote:

in the tightly bounded world of the ballads, a woman's range of options is much more restricted than we have become accustomed to thinking of in connection with the term success, and a woman's achievement of something approximating success for herself is often accompanied by its opposite, failure in the expectations of the larger society. This is so because in the society depicted in the ballads, male prerogatives, including all those commonly found within the patriarchy—decision making, sexual control, ownership of family, and the assumption that the best place for a woman is in the nuclear family, propagating the race—are primary. . . . An unmarried woman is fair game. A married woman, as chattel, takes any initiative at her own peril. (56)

In each of the stories mentioned Carver's women are subject to the familial unit and decisions of its male head. However, the daughter in both stories finds a way to challenge the familial decision handed down to her. In "The Stranger Within the Gates,"

the daughter attains the right to attend church. She only does this through the intervention of a man though, a priest or father of the church. In "The Pink Inheritance" Tabitha and her mother choose a fabric colour that they know to be outside what Tabitha's father will consider acceptable. Then once a dress is made of the fabric, Tabitha does her own hair with a direct disregard for her mother's expressed wish that she have help. The way each of these female characters achieved their desires is an important distinction. The daughter of "The Stranger Within the Gates" achieves her desires with the support of the patriarchy, represented in her priest. She is literally sanctioned by the patriarchy and the representative head of her religious family. In direct contrast, Tabitha steps outside the bounds of not only family expectation, but cultural expectations as she disobeys father and mother. For a time Tabitha appears to have succeeded in becoming the belle of the ball and thus holds a culturally ironic position, as do female characters in the ballads who challenge cultural expectations.

According to Stewart the irony at play:

is that within restricted framework, a woman who seeks goals of her own, if these goals run counter to the social and cultural expectations established for her, will thus be achieving personal success only by effecting cultural failure in denying or escaping her designated role. (56-57)

The fact is, however, that Tabitha's success was short lived, perishing as soon as she learned that her first place award was for being the "best" dressed at a tacky-party. Consequently in this story, Carver underlines the hazards facing her female characters who challenge cultural expectations. Success is predicated on support from some element of the patriarchy in her stories. And success misperceived is awarded according

to a social majority's perspective in a sometimes hurtful manner to the unsuspecting, as was the case with Tabitha.

This feminist analysis of Carver's early short stories suggests that she may have created her new technique through the unconscious incorporation of emic knowledge, that is personal experience (i.e., cultural knowledge), into her short stories. For certainly, these stories offer themes reminiscent of teenage concerns: who has the power to help support my wishes, are my dreams or a family member's more important, and what have I inherited from the women who came before me? In addition, they all reflect the fact that Carver lived in a time and region noted for conservative expectations regarding feminine roles in society. Yet whether consciously or unconsciously created, this maturation of literary technique continues over the next two decades, resulting in a fuller and more complex use of elements of traditional Louisiana cultures in Carver's later short stories.

1916–1922

This period in Carver's life was one of transition. She was continuing to write and was published for the second and third years running in 1916 and 1917. Then in 1918, Carver married Mr. John Snell, who was principal of Bienville High School and then Minden High school before the war.⁵ Following the marriage, Carver took a short

⁵ Mr. Snell held several other public positions during his life. He was President and Manager of the Minden Cotton Oil and Ice Company, a member of the board of directors of the Minden Savings and Loan, the Louisiana State Fair association, and the Minden Cemetery Association. He was also a member of the Lions Club and served as President

story course in New York after following her husband there when he shipped off to World War I. And, she became a mother twice in the following years.

In her second publishing period, Carver extends her use of symbolism to add character depth and plot complexity to her two short stories, from the years 1916 and 1917. She does this through an enhanced focus on story setting, a focus that creates a direct relation between characters and their character traits to the stories' settings in the Cane River region. The two short stories written at the beginning of this chaotic span of Carver's life, "Angele Glynn" (1916) and "Joyous Coast" (1917), expand on the creative change of focus Carver began experimenting with in "The Ring." Taking on broader social issues, Carver creates stories steeped in feminine perspective, and deeply resonant in regional and universal concerns. In particular, each of these short stories focuses on the roles and positions of power available to the southern Euro-American woman within the family.

The narrative of "Angele Glynn" is one which balances the South's turbulent history and the Glynn family's women against the possibilities of love and change in the present. As Angele grows up incognizant of her mother's full history where love is concerned, she is also ultimately faced with making a choice between a Southern and a Yankee suitor. This highly idealized moral romance is made poignant by the allusions to the South's definition of taboo behaviour and use of censure based upon perceived

at different times for the National Cotton Seed Producers Association and Webster Parish School Board."J. B. Snell Dies at 75 in Minden," *Shreveport Times* 12-A, March 20, 1959. Vertical File, Ada Jack Carver Collection.

stigmas.

"Angele Glynn" is set after the Civil War in the New South⁶ which is no longer divided from the northern states by the Mason-Dixon Line, in a nation where "there is no North, no South" (Carver 27). Yet Carver dutifully and exactingly alludes to the fact that such differences, though erased from the geographical landscape, were thriving in the minds of the South's men and women. Redolent of this mental imagery are the descriptions suggesting regional ethnicities based on political and social allegiances, rather than skin colour. These descriptions question the effect of such allegiances on a southern daughter.

Monsieur LeChamont, grandfather of Angele and representative of Carver's first ethnicity, is described as being small, "thin-lipped" and "over-faced."⁷ Negative characteristics such as these highlight this man's character. For he "sold his daughter and his country" (Carver 25). His daughter he married off to a Northern carpetbagger. His country he sold to his own greed, by making a fortune from his downtrodden "countrymen." Here is described in negative tone the southern postwar individuals who profited from the confusion following the war and would go so far as to welcome the

⁶ The "New South" is a term with many connotations. Here I am using it in the most general sense to denote the southern states and southern culture just after the American Civil War, 1861-1865, when both were undergoing changes due to these states having lost the war.

⁷ Though Carver does not define the term over-faced in her story, when taken in conjunction with the description of M. LeCharmont's being "thin-lipped" it suggests the gentleman was either large and jowled or had features which were large and unbalanced by his small mouth; for in either case his features would be excessive in comparison to the specifically mentioned lips.

conquerors into their home, in the end as kin; individuals who were visited by "sheeted figures" whose garb is suggestive of the Ku Klux Klan, and homes lost to fire due to their politics (Carver 25).

Pierre Lacoste, also a southerner from birth, is described in negative terms that categorise him as Carver's second ethnicity. He is the son of a man who is alleged to have connection to racist actions in the area and possibly to murder (Carver 25-26). The stains of the father are evident in the "relic of a ruined house," and in Jean's son Pierre, an "ugly, scrawny" child, who was despised by his playmates and grew to be the type of man his father was (Carver 26). Carver suggests that Pierre, shunned by his love, Angele, gathers acquaintances, burns the house of Senator Black Billy and then the Le Charmont home as well (Carver 36-37). Thus Carver delineates the second caste or ethnicity of the New South by aligning her character Pierre Lacoste with those individuals who during the post-Civil War years continued to persecute their fellow "countrymen" and who gathered under the banners of brotherhood to promote bloodshed and racial hatred.

Olive Glynn, Angele's father, was "an ugly man with a scar who rattled gold and knew intricate politics" (Carver 25). He was also a Yankee come to the south on the close of the war. Though political, he was like his transplanted sister essentially impotent in this new political arena since he ended up being shot on the courthouse steps (Carver 26). Both Angele's father and aunt are representative of those Northerners who came to the South to make money and/or a home, and are part of Carver's third ethnicity. They held certain political views, but were held apart from the community by

these very views, and their ethnic background. As Yankees, they were at least culturally, if not also politically, disparate from those amongst whom they settled. And if not the devil, certainly akin to him according to local beliefs and experiences of the recent past (26).

Angele Glynn is characterized as a crossbreed. She holds characteristics of Northern ethnicity as well as Southern, the former forgiven due to the latter.

She had our Southern duskiness of hair, her eyes were ours, her skin. Her voice was drawling Southern music. But from somewhere the blood of her father brought her something not quite like anything we had ever known--a little seriousness amongst irrepressible gaiety, a firmness, a love of truth that won out over his natural coquetry--a fresh touch, as of far away northern nights and cold, quiet stars. She was half devil, half angel--at heart an angel who would choose the right when the test came. (Carver 26)

As Carver's description makes plain, Yankee blood was "an undesirable thing . . . in the days when the South was still smarting from its wounds." Yet it also added mystery and virtue to some. Angele then represents the fourth ethnicity of the New South because her genteel Southern traits echo the stereotypical Southern lady, polite, educated, beautiful, and virtuous while also tending towards gaiety.

A fifth and final ethnicity is represented by the character of Madeliene, *bonne* to the Glynn household. Madeliene is a yellow Creole, old and withered (Carver 28). She knows how to read, a fact which seems mysterious to the young narrator; has slick straight black hair and is of the Catholic faith (28). All the traits Carver details for this character reveal she is a "true" Creole born of a line of Creoles who were sons and daughters of Planters and their slaves. This accounts for her education, her colour and

her religion and possibly for her position as *bonne* during the chaotic years following the Civil War when Creoles were generally persecuted by both Yankees and Southern Freemen.

Within this short story Carver again uses highly moralistic symbolism, yet this idealized presentation is somewhat mitigated by her incorporation of regional culture. Here for the first time Carver presents a general picture of Northwestern Louisiana's ethnic cultural mix. Further she defines the boundaries separating these ethnic cultures not merely through physical characteristics, but also through knowledge as when she cunningly reinforces Madeliene's Creole heritage through the mention of an ability to read:

. . . one of those pitiful relics of slavery so often found in the South. There was always something mysterious about Madeliene. She could read for one thing, and her hair, black and slick like oil, was combed smoothly over her ears. (Carver 28)

Her Creole heritage is further supported through a knowledge of the French language indicated through the use of the endearments *chère* and *doudouce* ⁸ (29-31).

*The Joyous Coast*⁹ builds somewhat on this juxtaposition of the North and South as culturally unique entities. Presenting Côte Joyeuse as the antithesis of the urban, educated North,¹⁰ Carver plays upon her readers' expectations by juxtaposing a male

⁸ *Chère* means cherished or dear one and *doudouce* means sweetheart.

⁹ The Joyous Coast is also known locally by its French name Côte Joyeuse.

¹⁰ This juxtaposition of North and South was not uncommon in the academic and popular press of the day. As late as 1930, the Agrarians were writing of the South's

northerner with the southern culture and peoples of the Joyous Coast.

Placing Joyous Coast among the back regions of Louisiana, Carver describes a place rich in folk belief and narrative tradition:

Along the Côte Joyeuse, that strip of paradise fringing the Cane, family ghosts are as common as teapots or family noses; for to obtain a family ghost in this lotus-haunted land all one has to do is climb high enough in one's family tree to dislodge the inevitable tragedy that lurks among its branches. (Carver 50)

Entering this arena Henry,¹¹ a young businessman from the North, arrives to modernize the area with a bridge over the Cane River and with dreams of a paved main road, electricity and running water. Looking for a place to stay he settles on a house hesitantly sporting,

an apologetic little sign, and rather ill at ease, and one could see that the inmates of the house half hoped, half feared that the blushing crêpe myrtles would screen it from the proud eyes of the town's gentility. (Carver 51)

Miss Tinette greets Henry, interviews him, and satisfied that he is an upstanding young man due to the fact that his grandfather Bryson had fought, albeit on the wrong side, in

farming and natural heritage in texts such as *I'll Take My Stand*. And popular folklore collections of the WPA programs espousing the connection of folklore to rural, economically disadvantaged Americans were still being produced and read.

¹¹ This story through name choice and placement appears to be the first that is directly influenced by knowledge of Melrose Plantation and the Henry family history. As John Henry's father came to the Isle Brevelle area with visions of roads and building a successful plantation enterprise, so does the Henry of this tale.

the Civil War, she rents him a room.¹² As time passes, Henry begins to settle into the rhythms of southern agrarian living and begins to encounter ghostly events. He hears a harpsichord being played in the middle of the night, and disembodied laughter and is always caught by Miss Tinette just as he begins to investigate the attic from which these sounds seem to come.

Just as he begins to admit that falling in love with a ghost might be acceptable, the ghost begins to pass him notes, tossing them from an attic window when Henry is walking the grounds. Entranced Henry begins attempting to locate this mysterious ghost and succeeds. He finds a very beautiful young woman and is asking about her identity when someone calls him to Miss Tinette's sick bed. At her bedside, Henry learns that Miss Tinette, who has mistaken him for his grandfather, has been waiting for his grandfather, the love of Miss Tinette's sister and grandfather of the young lady in the attic, to return. She also reveals that she has hidden the girl, her grandniece, to avoid the young people falling in love. Obvious once the secret is revealed is the fact that the young people were too closely related to wed, and so destined to live with

¹² Such parlour interviews are a long time tradition in the deep South. As late as the fall of 1989 in preparation for beginning my first year of graduate school, I went through such an interview with an 83 year old potential landlady in Lafayette, Louisiana. To this day I am convinced that my Yankee manners did nothing for my case though the presence of my southern born mother beside me revealed to this elderly gem the upstanding character existing under the tarnish of my Yankee upbringing in Saint Louis, Missouri. At later times, this supposition was reinforced when my landlady would tell me, "What a nice young lady you are. I knew you had to be for a mother to care so much to be with you looking for a place." This tradition is one I now recognize as part of my family's lore. For after completing my arrangements for lodging with my new landlady, my mother told me of family narratives about similar events. A specific incident related how a lodging for my uncle was obtained some two decades earlier when he went to graduate school.

unconsummated love.¹³

Within this narrative, there is again the theme of the North versus the South. Associated with this minor theme of regional identity is the folkloric allusion, mentioned early in the story, to every southern family possessing a ghost, if one looks hard enough in the family tree. Carver uses this allusion neatly to create a climactic event in her narrative which closes a circle of constructed reality. In other words, each bit of information proffered by Carver as part of her narrative is at the story's climatic event revealed to be a strand in the weave of the unknown truth which is revealed at this climax. This cyclic narrative structure is first used by Carver in the stories composing her second writing phase and reveals a burgeoning ability to craft both complex characters and plot lines.

Specifically within "The Joyous Coast," Carver for the first time does not rely heavily on a major theme to bring her reader to the story's conclusion. Though characterization is not strong, it is also, at least where the main character Henry is concerned, not merely two dimensional. She instead employs themes from earlier works: the effect of the past on present events, the place of the family in a woman's life, and the roles of regional identity, as means of character and contextual definition. Unfortunately, the years following 1917 resulted in a dearth, not only, of publications for Carver, but of exercises in producing such characterization.

¹³ In 1900, the First Cousin Law of Louisiana was enacted, prohibiting marriage between first cousins because scientific studies showed genetic problems possible in the offspring of such marriages.

Carver's writing from 1918 to 1922 was all of a personal nature, unpublished and reflective of a period in her life when her vocations were predominantly wife and mother. In 1919, Carver gave birth to her first son. Then in 1920 she and John Snell, Sr. moved closer to Mr. Snell's business interests in Minden, Louisiana. Settled there, the next year found Carver pregnant again during the summer. In March, the Snells' familial bliss shattered when after a chilling walk their son John was given a warm bath. History has obscured the details of what actually happened, but it is known that the young boy was, accidentally, scalded badly enough to result in death. Carver, due to shock over the loss of her child, gave birth to her second child David on March 27, 1921 (Taylor 16). Following the death of their son John, Carver went into seclusion.

There are, in addition to her publications during this period, several pieces of unpublished literature that Carver most probably created for her sons, though her sons are not specified by name in the texts and at least five short stories (See Table 2.). These songs and poems are romantic, and emotive, expressing the desires of caring mothers generally. There are more personal messages within the three songs extant from this period. "Interlude," though not dedicated to her son John, must have been written in response to his death:

I think this is the very end of time./ I think that you and I
have died,/ And it will always be like this/ A song
unfinished/ Your eyes grown strange and cold,/ Unmindful
of the things they say to me. (Melrose Scrapbook No.
217¹⁴ 61)

¹⁴ Of note is the discrepancy between the year of production for Aunt Cammie's scrapbooks and the dates ascribed to items included therein. No specific composition

In contrast, "Songs to My Little Son" expresses specific promises from mother to son. Each verse suggests what Carver will sing to her son to teach him of life. The fourth verse offers a fine example of Carver's weaving promises into a verse which not only reinforces the link between mother and son, but suggests proper behaviour and a religious role model:

This will be the song that I shall sing/ To make him grow:/
Lord Christ himself was once a little child,/ Sipping his
milk from a pretty cup,/ Breaking his bread into an earthen
bowl,/ Can't you be good and eat, like little Jesus?
(Melrose Scrapbook No. 217 61)

Such writing is all that exists from this period in Carver's life though other pieces were probably composed, since it is known that Carver spent much of her time focussing on writing rather than her home (Taylor 21-22). In 1922, all this changes when Carver, with her hands full helping oversee the Snells' new house built, wins an award for a movie script she wrote.

While the dearth of published short stories in this time frame has puzzled scholars, there are several reasons suggested for only three stories being published between 1908 and 1925. The two critical theories which receive greatest acceptance—Carver's loss of her first son and her subsequent reclusive life style, and the task of raising her second son—were originally proffered in the thesis of Donnis Marie Ward Taylor. Interestingly, Taylor does not mention Carver's unpublished writing

date can be attached to these pieces other than an approximate date of [1926], which comes from the majority of letters included in this volume. Dates ascribed in this manner will appear throughout the text in square brackets, as above.

Date	Story or Subject	Source
n. d.	"Wedding Cake"	Dormon Collection, Folder 519 (undated letter)
n. d.	"His Name"	Dormon Collection, Folder 519 (undated letter)
n. d.	Old French Quarter story (planned)	Dormon Collection, Folder 519: a letter dated March eleventh, no year
1925	"Noon"	Dormon Collection, Folder 520: a letter postmarked July 2, 1925
[1926]	"Written With a Green Pencil"	Henry Scrapbook 217, page 79 (undated letter)
1926	Concept for a novel mentioned (planned)	Henry Scrapbook 217, page 52: a letter dated July 12, 1926
1927	"Duet"	Dormon Collection, Folder 518: a letter postmarked July, 27 1927
1927	Lynching story (planned)	Dormon Collection, Folder 522: a letter postmarked August 30, 1925
1928	Briarwood story with two titles: "February" and "October"	Dormon Collection Folder 524: a letter postmarked March 2, 1928
1933	"Souvenir"	Mentioned in the <i>Shreveport Journal</i> November 10th, page 12.

Table 2. Ada Jack Carver's Unpublished and Planned Fiction

during this period and thus suggests these events arrested Carver's writing. In actuality, Carver's need to compose was redirected to the genres of song and poetry in an attempt to express the joy and sadness of motherhood in writing, her cathartic format.

That Carver found writing an emotional outlet is not unusual, in and of itself. Of consequence, here, is the fact that this period of her life proffered two compositional influences that were to remain disjunct until her third period of published writing: elements of traditional culture and her thematic focus on the social roles of women. These two influences will be highlighted in the following discussion of Carver's use of gender and ethnicity to portray the Cane River region.

At this juncture, technical growth in Carver's published writing once again occurs in concert with a more adept incorporation of traditional culture. Though her use of folklore is symbolic, stretching to stereotypical, it creates the illusion of an intimate depiction of Carver's conceptualization of America's cultural, ethnic and regional, divisions. In the two stories comprising this period, Carver actually delineates a vision of the United States from a Louisiana perspective, identifying five groups: Euro-American Yankees and Southerners, Yellow Creoles, French Creoles, and African-Americans.¹⁵

Carver created a map of American ethnic and regional divisions that depicts ethnicity from a southern perspective. This perspective does not identify ethnic

¹⁵ Carver's representation of Louisiana's cultural groups is broadened through her portrayal of a sixth ethnic group, the Acadians, in her one-act play "The Cajun." This group is not discussed further due to being located outside of the Cane River Region.

differences amongst Euro-Americans. It focuses instead on differences of greater import to those living south of the Mason-Dixon line, the regional difference based in the Great War of Northern Aggression:¹⁶ Yankees versus Confederates. Otherwise Carver has created an ethnic make-up which relates directly to northwestern Louisiana's major population groups: Creole which encompasses the European, French and Spanish, influence; Yellow Creole which indicates miscegenation between individuals of Creole and African-American heritage; Acadian which covers the prairie Cajuns of middle and northern Louisiana; and the African-American population.

Carver's perspective toward American regional and ethnic cultural groups is problematic, for her external viewpoint frequently leans toward the stereotypical. As previously noted, Carver's cultural portrayals are broadened, albeit minimally, through the identification of regional and ethnic groups with traditional culture. Such representations of traditional culture includes beliefs purported to be held by regional groups: beliefs of Southerners about Northerners (ex. that Northerners are greedy, ugly carpet baggers), and beliefs about ethnic groups, as seen when Madeliene the Creole *bonne* believes her dead mistress is a saint to whom one can pray. Such use of thematic and folkloric content as a means of weaving contextual details into her stories and as a means of defining character is greatly refined in Carver's third period due to the second influence added to her compositional style in this period, an emotive connection to the people and events described in her writing.

¹⁶ Familiarly known as the Civil War today, the Great War of Northern Aggression was so called in southern public schools as late as the 1950s (Carol Gholson Interview 1999).

1923–1929

From 1923 through 1928, Carver published seven short stories and participated in the social whirl her publications created. She was, after all, a public figure in the small town of Minden due to her literary success at this time. Due to these many demands on her time and her son, David, falling seriously ill, Carver visited Melrose rarely after 1924. She remained, however, in touch with her Melrose friends through letter writing when not able to visit.

Friends also helped keep the Melrose Group informed about each other by this time. In May of 1933, a friend, Mary Belle, wrote to Henry to relate news about Minden following the recent touch down of a tornado in town:

Saw Ada at the Armory. The next day Mr. S[nell] said she was working at the Relief station. Said she had been there since 6 o'clock in the morning. Was glad to go, of course, that she could get material there, too. Perhaps this tragedy although it didn't touch her personally will stimulate her talent once more. (Melrose Collection folder 97)

Here Belle indicates that Carver was still interested in gathering writing ideas, but that like an artiste Carver might need emotional inspiration to focus strongly on her writing. She had not published since 1928 at this point. Though no extant text exists perhaps she did find material during her work at the relief station, since Carver again began writing in 1933, a short story called "Souvenir."

Despite a lack of publishing after 1928, Carver published the majority of her extant stories and began several others during this period. Her published works are complex constructions in which characters reflect and magnify traditional characteristics

of the Cane River region while descriptions of the region encompass reflections of character motivations and traits. The following sampling of Carver's writing from this period highlights this compositional technique, which continues to reference Carver's experience for elements of traditional culture.

In her writing Carver represents many of southern Louisiana's ethnic groups. Indicative of the time period and perhaps her desire to create narratives which echoed with regional veracity, she often employs ethnic descriptors and eye-dialect¹⁷ in her narratives. Often it is only through the use of eye-dialect that the reader learns a character is not Euro-American. Yet the writer certainly cannot rely on dialect alone to indicate a character's ethnic or social¹⁸ background. As a result, Carver generally indicates by name what group she is writing about. For instance in "Redbone," Carver not only names the narrative with the appellation used for individuals of Native American, Spanish and French bloodlines, but later in the story reinforces her main character's affiliation by describing why he murdered a man:

¹⁷ Eye-dialect is used in the manner defined by Levenston, as "nonstandard spellings of standard pronunciations. . . the eye perceives them as nonstandard forms, though the ear recognizes their normality" (55). That is eye-dialect occurs when an author spells words phonetically in an attempt to represent folk speech. Carver uses this approach with spellings such as "yaller" for yellow, "Lawd" for Lord, "chillun" for children, and "trifflin'" for trifling.

¹⁸ Eye-dialect has a long history in fiction as a device for identifying characters' social status. See Levenston (56). Folklorist MacEdward Leach highlights this history and its relationship to regional American authors when he notes the authorial tendency to use key words and phrases rather than phonetic spelling to suggest the "quality of folk speech" ("Folklore in American Regional" 392). Carver also uses elements of Leach's definition when in instances such as when a character calls Mulattos, "dem stuck up yaller folkses" in her short story "Singing-Women."

Baptiste got up presently and yawned, and moved off into the shadows. He slipped through the fields and was first at the tryst. And when he saw Olaf coming he stepped out into the moonlight with something horned and hoofed and forked about him . . . The Indian in Baptiste performed the deed with neatness and dispatch, so that Olaf for an instant knew only a face before him--high cheek bones, thin straight lips, and comic eyes that were sad. The Spanish in Baptiste dug the grave and the French tossed a rose upon it. (Carver 79)

Such stereotypic characterization achieved through allusion to folk beliefs about other cultures is a trademark of Carver's writing, as will be discussed in the following chapter. Technically this characterization serves her well in the compact literary format of the short story.

Of Carver's thirteen extant stories, the five written at this time are explicitly about individuals of non-Euro-American ethnic backgrounds. These five stories are each about different ethnic groups¹⁹ of the Cane River region and include the previously mentioned Redbones, the Mulattos, the Mud Mulattos, and the African-Americans. In "The Old One" and "Singing Woman," Carver presents two portrayals of Mulatto individuals. In "The Old One," Nicolette and Balthazar are presented in favourable terms:

The free-mulattos of French descent owned their own land. . . . It was true of course that Nicolette and Balthazar, her grandson, had only a strip of river front

¹⁹ Held by the Cammie G. Henry Research Centre, the unfinished Inez thesis entitled *The Negro in the Works of Three Contemporary Louisiana Writers* has considered the portrayal of blacks in Carver's writings. Inez defines the Black ethnicity broadly including several of Carver's own differentiated groups under this heading.

left--"shoestring land" it was called. But they made a good living. Balthazar was industrious, a quiet, likely boy with no inclination to gad about and waste his time philandering. (Carver 119)

Predominantly Carver uses dialect in this story to create a local feel for her narrative with conversations such as this one between Rose and the "old one," Balthazar's mother, about a bed Rose wishes to sell:

"You *mean* that's what," Rose was saying. "What is an old bed to you, and we promise to buy you a new one?"

Granny whimpered and plucked at her covers. "You mean, too," she said. "You is mean, wicked gal--" (Carver 131)

Though dialect is the mainstay of Carver's portrayal of Mulattos she also lightly employs folk belief. When Granny falls ill it is Balthazar who carries on her religious duties. He brings "fresh flowers everyday to put in front of the virgin" (Carver 130). Meanwhile when Rose seems about to get her way, having made sure Balthazar will be out of town all day the next day and called someone to purchase Granny's bed that same day despite Granny having been claiming illness, a long night full of omens passes as Granny lies in bed. During the night an owl visits Granny's Umbrella-China²⁰ and can be heard. Then the clock seems to lose its pace:

Tick, tock went the clock on the mantel. Then slower and slower . . . *tick!* She could scarcely hear it. Had it stopped? It is bad luck for your clock to wind down in the night. (Carver 132)

²⁰ This is another colloquial term for the China Berry tree.

Each of these omens, the hooting owl²¹ and the stopped clock²², marks the event of Granny's upcoming death during the early morning hours.

The story *Singing-Woman* builds on these earlier descriptions of Isle Brevelle's Mulatto population, while romantically describing the Joyous Coast:

Little by little the Joyous Coast was changing.

The old rutted road that fringed the Cane had been abandoned. The highway cut through the swamps and marshy lands and fields full of corn and refused to follow the whim of the river. It seemed to old Henriette relentless and terrible. It even ploughed its way through people's dooryards, rooting up ancient landmarks: oaks and chinars and gnarled crepe-myrtles, their branches bowed to the earth with bloom--trees under which Henriette in her day had been courted and won.

Isle Brevelle, where the French mulattos live, is not lonely and strange as is an island lost in the sea. With the river curving about it, it is like a maid in the arms of a lover who woos her forever. (Carver 148)

The people who inhabit this milieu are represented as proud individuals, defined by where they live and their biological heritage. According to the main character Henriette, "for generations now her people had guarded the blood in their veins. Ignored by the whites, ignoring and scorning the blacks, they had kept to themselves" (Carver 148). Their third definitive characteristic is composed of culturally specific traditions which are dying out. Within this corpus of traditions Henriette and a friend found themselves,

²¹ An owl foretelling death is motif B147.2.2.4.

²² A clock stopping ticking at the death of its owner is motif E 766.1.

the only singing-women left on Isle Brevelle. Time was when a singing-woman was as necessary as a priest, when no one who was anything could be buried without a professional mourner. In those days Henriette and Josephine were looked up to and respected. . . . Nowadays people seemed to have lost the fear, the dignity of death.

It was the same way with midwifery. Young women nowadays engaged trained nurses, or went to town to the hospitals to have their babies. Nowadays people didn't care how they died or were born. (Carver 149)

Without dead to mourn with her singing the fourth defining characteristic of this traditional community, religion, is not enough to fill Henriette's days:

The days on Isle Brevelle were long and filled with the drowsy chatter of ducks and fat red hens. Henriette's prayers took up part of the time. But a person can't pray forever! Nothing to do but sit and think of the past, and of death and dying. (Carver 150)

Henriette relies on her Catholic faith to fill much of her days, with thoughts of death filling the rest. Central to Carver's portrayal of Mulatto culture on Isle Brevelle are religious traditions of Catholicism, the death omens foreshadowing Granny's death in "The Old One" and the portrayal of the singing-woman tradition. In either of the short stories based on Mulatto culture of Isle Brevelle, Carver accentuates her plots by entwining them with cultural beliefs that not only add breadth to her main characters, but foreshadow plot climax.

Two final groups, the blacks and the Mud Mulattos, are explicitly mentioned by Carver in her short story "Cotton Dolly." Within the narrative Carver defines her title, "On the plantation there is always an old black woman who takes care of the plantation babies while their mothers are out in the fields. Such an old woman is called a cotton

dolly" (Carver 160). She adds further characteristics²³ which are traditional in nature:

A good cotton dolly is hard to find. To begin with she must be old. Not too old. Just old enough. Old enough to have wisdom, strength, shrewdness, tolerance and pity. She must have religion, yet she must be versed in voodoo, in the ways of plat-eyes and witches: a good cotton dolly stands in with God and the devil. (160)

But she was always well-mannered and she kept her self tidy. The kerchief knotted about her neck Cotton-Dolly fashion, was clean and snowy; and under her patched calico skirt her petticoat was trimmed with lace. (162)

When replaced by a new cotton dolly the main character of this story is moved to a home across the branch²⁴ in the woods near the swamp. It is here that a young pregnant girl is found by Cotton Dolly. "Cotton Dolly knew her kind, her stripe of people. They didn't live on this plantation, they lived down the river. The girl was a "mud mulatto." This meant she was partly Indian, but nigger too" (160). No further characteristics are offered for the girl of Mud Mulatto heritage.

Carver's portrayal of her ethnic characters doesn't vary greatly. Each is provided a depth of character through the assignment of folk beliefs or eye-dialect which doesn't significantly vary from one individual to another. She employs French words with southern dialect to indicate individuals of Creole or Cajun heritage. She employs dialect

²³ Cotton Dolly's link to traditional belief systems which were a syncretisation of Christianity, beliefs connected with the devil, and Hoodoo are further supported by events connected to the birth of the girl's baby. There is the fact that she talked to death (159, 164-65), recognized omens foretelling death (171-72), and held beliefs predicting the nature of a child with a birthmark (166).

²⁴ A branch refers to a small stream or waterway in this context.

quite lightly or not at all when presenting individuals of Euro-American heritage.

Carver supplements southern dialect with dities — the verbal description of a belief — and religious belief systems when presenting her other ethnicities: Red Bone, Black, Mulatto, Mud Mulatto. I do not wish to suggest by these comments that Carver only assigns folk beliefs to non-Euro-American characters; she does, however, use them with less frequency where her Euro-American characters are concerned. Further, these beliefs are not as evident because they are presented as minor influences, or as feminine traits valued by the United States' dominant Judeo-Christian belief system.

Underlying this inequity of presentation by Carver is the supposition that those who are uneducated, or isolated due to remote living locales, gender or age hold on to traditional cultural beliefs more strongly. This was certainly a stance which Southern writer Lyle Saxon promoted as early as 1925 when he wrote about Cane River superstitions among the African-American community after first pointing out that all people hold superstitions:

Scratch the veneer of civilization on any man and you will find the savage, afraid of devils, shadows and witches. Is it any wonder, then, that the uneducated negro, of the back country in Louisiana, is surrounded by an unseen world full of omens and signs and strange taboos? . . . The thing that the white man seems least capable of understanding is the vast world of the unseen that exists for the negro, just over beyond the pale of commonplace and everyday happenings. Such a world of sorcery and imagination exists, I am sure, for him. . . . that is, for the negro of the plantation, even today.

For the last year I have lived in a cabin on Cane river, far from towns and cities, and in my quest for folk-tales and proverbs and songs I have encountered many strange beliefs. . . . So I have given them all [sic. here], to

view as you see fit, for your idle amusement and toleration, or, perhaps, as a sort of key to understanding something of the psychology of the plantation negro in Louisiana. (*Times-Picayune*, September 20, 1925 3)

This lengthy quote is important for the viewpoint it gives concerning the Melrose Writers and their view of the communities they wrote about. First, the term superstition itself reinforces the time period's belief that superstitions were beliefs which could not be proven true, and consequently individuals could be educated out of belief in superstitions. Second, the link made between superstition and the "plantation negro" in conjunction with the first point conveys the sense that individuals who were civilized (i.e., educated — and thus presumably Euro-American in this era) were intellectually superior to varying degrees, the degree being dependant on the level of their own distance from belief in superstition. Third, there is a literary caveat here which infers the need for an authorial justification of uncivilized subject matter, and acknowledgement of the tenuous position reporting on racial subject matter presented by any southern writer. These ideas, also, underlie the work of Carver, as she reveals an image of the Cane River region within her short stories that relies on several elements of traditional culture for self definition.

The first and foremost element is the definition of regional groups in relationship to the Cane River and the geography it creates, specifically Isle Brevelle. Isle Brevelle and its environs are where the non-Euro-Americans live. The island itself was home to the area's Mulatto population. The Euro-American population lives primarily in town away from the outlying river settlements near Isle Brevelle.

Carver further defines this northwestern region of Louisiana and its peoples through the portrayal of the belief systems to which each group adheres. Carver rarely portrays Euro-Americans as having distinct systematic alternative belief systems, but other ethnic groups are linked to alternative beliefs. The alternative beliefs used in Carver's short stories range from beliefs which would have been termed superstitions at the time to syncretic religious beliefs. All of these beliefs would have been understood by the typical reader of the day as being held by uneducated individuals, people not educated in science, Christian religion and the other systems of knowledge and belief accepted as standard by the dominant Euro-American population.

In portrayals of the Mulatto community, Carver's characters are attributed with beliefs in omens documented as part of traditional southern culture in Wayland Hand's *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions*. For instance hooting owls²⁵ (132, 154), locust chorus²⁶ (151) and clocks which stop ticking²⁷ (132) forewarn of an upcoming death. Also frogs are purported to create warts²⁸ (152). Another coupling of ethnicity with superstition occurs for Carver's Redbone character which is connected with beliefs such

²⁵ In *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions*, an owl hoot is noted as belief 28157ff "a portent of death" (1190), 30639 "bad luck" and 30638 "a bad omen" (1300).

²⁶ In *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions*, a locust chorus is belief 26304 a "hell hound" (1109).

²⁷ Notations about clocks indicate that a clock stopping is belief 17546, "bad luck" (715); belief 27325, something that occurs when a person dies (1152) and belief 28682, a means of helping a sick person die early (1214).

²⁸ Frogs are a cause of boils according to belief 8132 (325-26).

as bats²⁹ serving as an omen of ill events (66, 72).

It is the African-American community, as portrayed in Carver's work which is most strongly identified with alternative beliefs. The African-American community is represented by three characters in Carver's short stories. The first, Cotton Dolly is associated with many beliefs and omens. Beliefs include concepts such as Death becoming more active in August (159), Death not coming if the watcher of the sick person stays awake (165) or repeats a certain verse (164). If death is near and held off by these or other means, then leaving the door open is sure to let Death depart (165). And in opposition, stars are believed to take part in a birth due to their link to the Christ child's birth (165).

Individuals may also be linked to beliefs by omens which mark their person. For example, birthmarks indicate either a troubled or virtuous life lies ahead (166). Also eyes of differing colour are a mark indicating that an individual can talk with the devil (176); if one is blue, then the individual is supposed to have second vision (178).

A plethora of other beliefs such as "God doesn't listen to sinners" (172), the wings of bull bats dig graves (171), a broom stick lying across a grave indicates ill events (170) indicate an active folk tradition. That the tradition is actively used is indicated when the threat of a ghost returning to haunt is used in an attempt to elicit good behaviour from another (172), and oral communication is shown to have the power

²⁹ Bats are noted portents of death should they fly over your house: 27820ff (1174), or fly "in attic": 27821 (1174), in house rafters: 27823 (1174); "at the window" 27824 (1175) or "down the chimney": 27822 (1174). They may also influence one's luck: 30698 or make a person ill by flying over a his head: 6735 (1303, 267).

to transform an individual from up-standing neighbour to untrustworthy witch (161).

Not only traditions are attributed to African-Americans, but alternative religious beliefs are as well. Specifically an African-American character described as "blue gummed" is linked with hoodoo (i.e., voodoo) which she uses in the form of incantations and potions in her role as midwife to the benefit of her charges (64, 67, 74, 76).

While tradition in the form of omens and alternative religion are strongly linked to African-American culture, some other ethnic groups in the region also have association with beliefs concerning omens and fate. And even some of Carver's Euro-American characters show acceptance of and familiarity with trusting in folk religion, as they pray to a dead mother, "mother saint," to help them make the correct decision regarding a secret and the dead woman's daughter (39-40). Thus Carver imbues her Cane River landscape with a living folk tradition while adding depth to her characterization. This technique depicts, further, a South which echoes the Emotional South that was defined in Chapter Two as a region identified through its inhabitants' connection of emotionally symbolic events, or beliefs with an area they perceive is the South. In this manner, the use of living folk tradition offers a symbolic link between Carver's characters, her fictional South, and the American South.

Gender Relations

Carver's stories define and verify the boundaries of a Southern woman's life from a middle class Euro-American perspective, and are composed about universal

themes of love, loss, and memories. They are set in the post-Civil War era, unlike the pre-Civil War era, when women of elite Euro-American society were not generally required to do physical labour. And they exist in affiliation with two topics briefly addressed by Carver in her writings: the family and men.

The southern family is, perforce, a nebulous construct in Carver's writing dependant upon social class, ethnicity, and economic standing for its constituent elements. Higher classes have servants which may be like family members (28-31, 63). Lower classes or individuals in hard economic times may lack a traditional member of the family (103, 109). In any of these cases one trait Carver assigns to the Southern family tree is tragedy. For in her south every Southern family has at one time suffered an unspeakable tragedy (50). But even steeped in tragedy, when the family includes a male role that role is a cross-culturally sanctioned role of strength.

Men in the family and society are expected to take a public role in both politics (36-37) and socializing, as shown by Baptiste's many trips to town, (62-80). They reinforce the patriarchy by presenting good wives with rewards in the form of gifts which mark important events such as the birth of a child (62). And men are given the responsibility of helping women conform to cultural expectations, even to the extent of employing deceit to promote superstition (53, 55). Further, men as head of the house, and their wives in association, are traditionally accorded the right to inhabit the front room of the house. This is true, for example, within Mulatto culture according to Carver's portrayals (120).

Given that men are generally accorded higher social standing than women in

Carver's South, particular attention should be paid to Carver's portrayal of feminine roles. For these are portrayals of a disempowered cultural group which spans ethnicities and so may have differing social options based on social, economic and ethnic membership.

Subsequently, understanding the writings of Ada Jack Carver and southern women in general requires a twofold approach to the definition of "self." The self must be understood as a culturally migratory entity evolving over the life span which is composed of multiple, not necessarily integrated self perceptions is, as discussed in the work of Carole Boyce Davies.³⁰ Progressing from this perspective, an investigation of the writing techniques and cultural knowledge Carver employs in creating her vision of the South, including a feminine South, must integrate what is known about her life, her beliefs about her actions and her writing, as is done here.

Cogent to this discussion concerning the construct of self is Dorothy Brown and Barbara C. Ewell's polysemic understanding of space as a concept in which bounded experiences interact, that is, how the experience of being female influences the experience of belonging in a specific region, and vice versa (3-4). The southern woman is, as member of a society, not merely defined by the South, but a definer of the South. In the South of the early 1900s women, as others, were defined by their place in one or more social realms or spaces based on factors such as gender, skin colour, and economic standing which were each definitive of a specific societal place; women, even an

³⁰ Davies, Carole Boyce. *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations on the Subject*.

individual woman can be the nexus point for several of such spacial ideals. Important for the current topic is an element of Ada Jack's self-definition as it relates to the place she was allowed to use and occupy as a southern woman, and her portrayal of the space allowed the women of her short stories. Or in other words, how Carver balanced the restrictive roles of wife and mother with the role of author. However, before this can be discussed in Chapter Four, the last years of Carver's life and key relationships that influenced her writing career need to be detailed.

1929-1949

Letters revealed that mid-1927 was a year filled with health problems which would continue to plague Carver throughout her life. That summer she was diagnosed with malaria and her asthma was also particularly bad (Dormon Collection Folder 523). Writing to Dormon in April of 1929, Carver again refers to her difficulty with asthma:

Carrie darling: Bless your heart!—How I longed to accept your invitation to run down to Briarwood³¹ today and lie under the "[game] wood tree." But I have [asthma] again. I can scarcely speak, and must keep very quiet. I'm furious and am frightfully bored with this persistent and maddening malady. (Dormon Collection Folder 524)

This time of illness marks the beginning of a deepening need to withdraw from public life and friends for Carver. Conjointly this meant a withdrawal from writing as well. For Carver had become something of a local celebrity due to her writing and seems not to have found a way to withdraw from only the public aspect of her life. None of the

³¹ Briarwood was Caroline Dormon's, this friend's, family home.

planned short stories or the novel mentioned in her letters came to completion in these last decades of her life. Letters to fellow Louisiana writers taper off and then cease and only two pieces of writing reach the public during these last decades of her life.

When Carver did write in 1934 she did not publish her work. She wrote a children's play that was produced locally. The script has been lost and the only remaining documentation is a play program. During this year Carver also wrote non-fiction for the first time, but this writing though published was not to be strictly identified with her name, since she was writing as part of the national government's writers' project of Louisiana, a small section of the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

In 1935 her friend Lyle Saxon, who was head of Louisiana's WPA project for writers, appointed her to Louisiana's fourth district writers' division of the WPA. This division of the Louisiana WPA worked to produce entries for the *American Guide*, "a detailed, encyclopaedic guide for travellers" that supplied historic, economic and traditional information about the forty eight states (Henry Scrapbook No. 217 92). There is no record of specific projects or writing completed while she held this position. Nor is there any indication of the date she returned to being, primarily, a mother and wife. A lack of correspondence to her closest colleagues and a lack of mention in local papers does suggest that this period marked the beginning of Carver's final withdrawal (Taylor 37). Yet as Saxon remained at the head of the Writers' Project in Louisiana until it was closed January 1, 1943, Carver more than likely did the same, despite a leave of absence for an operation in March of 1934 (Henry Scrapbook No. 217 89). These

were, after all, the years of the Great Depression when money and jobs were scarce.

The years between 1935 and 1949 were filled with losses for Carver. In 1946, her mother died and then in 1948 Mrs. Henry, a longtime supporter of Carver's writing career, also died. It was in 1949 just after Mrs. Henry's death that Carver wrote her last short story for publication, "For Suellen with Love."

"For Suellen with Love" is a work reminiscent of Carver's earliest stories with their two dimensional characters that focussing on the role of women in society convey moral undertones. Suellen, the focus of the tale, is a young female eccentric who collects religions, as other girls her age might collect jewellery, dolls, or first kisses. The narrator recalls Suellen's religious migrations fondly, one constant being the young girl's fake pearl necklace which had broken the day she was refused First Communion in the Catholic Church. Returning to that church for her reminiscences the narrator looks to the floor boards and finds in a crack one long lost fake pearl yet waiting to come to light. In the following chapter's discussion of Carver's influential friendships with her writing peers, this story will clearly stand as a tribute to Carver's long relationship with Mrs. Henry. For the moment it is enough to note that this is so and that the central character of the story is a female defined as eccentric by her community and who is able to create a space for personal expression in an otherwise restrictive social context.

Following this last published work, Carver became reclusive more frequently and for longer periods of time. She lost her husband in 1959 and, then, her son David in 1970. In 1971, Carver went into a nursing home where she remained until her death in 1972.

Writing was, then, the longest vocational constant in Carver's life, the thread that whips together her disparate, modern selves: mother, author, wife, mentor,³² for some thirty-four years. As a result, it is not surprising to learn that Carver began to withdraw more frequently toward the end of her career in the early 1930s, eventually becoming known as a local eccentric (42-46).

As a whole the stories of this phase reveal Carver's finesse at incorporating Cane River folkways into her characterization as elements of traditional culture are used to create foreshadowing, plot complexity and character depth. Further, portrayals of the Cane River region's folkways become central to Carver's exploration of ethnicity in these short stories. But this set of stories should be further divided into two subsets composed of those which fully incorporate folkways into themes and characterization, and those which appear later in this period.

The later examples move Carver's general focus on tradition and folkways towards a more specific focus on belief and worldview. Carver presents non-Euro-American characters in the pieces and attempts to personalize them by attributing folk beliefs to them, but this leads her to equate race with superstition, as she returns once again to writing highly moralized tales which portray tensions of everyday Cane River life through the use of coding. Much of the tension that is encoded is based in the fact that characters' ethnicities are never clearly stated, but alluded to through Carver's use of folklore (i.e., emic knowledge).

³² See the letter dated Sunday July 26th, no year which reveals that Carver aided Dormon and a young man in their writing (Dormon Collection Folder 522).

Carver's use of traditional culture becomes slanted in this period of her writing. She predominantly links ethnic characters and groups, which she would only be familiar with from an outsider's perspective, with folk belief and dities.³³ This linkage highlights and emphasizes superstition as a characteristic that is closely tied to Creole, African-American and Redbone (individuals of mixed ethnic heritage which includes Native American ancestry) characters. In this way Carver expands on her sketch of American cultures by broadening the ethnic groups she presents as part of Louisiana's cultural landscape.

Throughout this period Carver focuses on Creole culture as she focussed on Euro-American culture in the first period of her writing. This fact suggests that Carver was most comfortable writing about characters with heritages similar to her own. So it is surprising that in 1925 her writing of "Redbone" suddenly focuses strongly and fully on a main character who is neither Euro-American, nor Creole, but who is male and has a complexity of character not previously seen in her work.

Following the publication of "Redbone," Carver wrote and published a play and eight more short stories, six or seven of which overtly focus on main characters of non-Euro-American heritage, Creole and mulatto predominantly. Her play continues her interest in Louisiana's traditional culture, presenting an image of Cajun culture, but the short story "For Suellen With Love" deviates from this approach by centring again on Euro-American characters.

³³ The term dite is used in the general sense here, in accord with the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition which defines a dite as a saying, or phrase that describes a belief.

Carver uses folklore more readily as she begins writing about the ethnicities of the Cane River region, but this does not preclude her use of folklore in the representation of Euro-American characters. Carver does use folklore in her portrayals of Euro-American characters, particularly those in her later short stories like "For Suellen With Love." This fact highlights how Carver's writing begins suddenly, with her publication of "Redbone" in 1925, to employ folklore in the creation of tension in her plot lines through her broadening of characterization and her presentation of definitive, sometimes stereotypical, ethnic characteristics. Carver's use of folklore to build these areas occurs as a result of her strong reliance on the use of belief systems and dities. This move toward the use of belief systems and dities to represent ethnic groups borders on the stereotypical as some ethnic groups are more liberally associated with dities than others.

Portraying Cane River's ethnicities with varying intensities of folk belief, Carver risks depicting these ethnicities in a condescending manner. She runs this risk if her portrayal is banal enough to have been acceptable to national publications sensitive to the race issue, or if her placing such views in the recent past made them more acceptable to readers of her era. Her writing must, however, be contextualized within the cultural expectations and folklore study trends of the time. Considering the type of folklore research going on at the time, I would say she is avant garde and presenting a more liberal image of the South than might be expected. This interpretation necessitates consideration of how she could write from such a liberal viewpoint and not be socially ostracized.

Bridging all three of these periods and the technical growth Carver's writing

underwent over her career is a short story published in 1926, but which Carver is known to have worked on since 1912. *The Raspberry Dress*, though not Carver's best work, since the characterization remains two-dimensional, is however one of her better pieces since the story's main characters are non-Euro-American and Carver's use of folkways in the story is not done in a superfluous manner, with the primary intent of exoticizing non-Euro-American cultures of the Cane River region. In fact, Carver's use of folkways in this story is one of her most holistic portrayals of tradition. She uses folkways as a means to define both a region and its peoples by linking them to Louisiana's rivers. Indicative from this division of Carver's writing is the thematic emphasis placed on her portrayal of Red River Region's folkways, that will be discussed in the next chapter, and the currently relevant thematic concerns centring about the use of stereotyping.

Summary

Symbolic of Carver's use of folklore as a stereotypic element of character development in the latter periods of her writing, "The Raspberry Dress" highlights Carver's preference for linking folklore with non-Euro-American characters. For though Carver does in these latter two periods of her writing link folklore with all ethnic groups, she enters into this expressive technique by strongly linking dits and folk belief with non-Euro-American character groups during her most prolific writing period. There is currently, of course, a great sensitivity to dovetailing of folk belief and ethnicity, or stereotyping of certain ethnicities as less sophisticated due to a reliance on "folk belief."

But this is a sensitivity acknowledged by American society much later in Carver's life span. This being the case it becomes pertinent to identify the role of Carver's use of folklore.

Identifying the role Carver's employment of folk belief took in her writing doesn't take us far from current concepts of racist portrayal. In fact, folk belief serves to identify, primarily, not ethnic groups, but social classes in her work. This is a fine line, but within the South before Civil Rights changes in the law there it is nearly impossible to differentiate between social class and ethnicity; inequities due to a class system based on ethnicity were evident in the areas of education and economics. As a result, generalizations in the form of identifiable characteristics of social classes would tend to highlight economic and educational inequities. In other words those considered lower class would be expected to be less educated and therefore more prone to stereotypical behaviours and beliefs, or to use a term of the time, superstitions.

Categorization of groups in this manner was not uncommon at this time; superstition was after all a focus of folklore in the early 1900s. Folklore scholars studying the South, such as Frank Dobie, John and Alan Lomax, and Frank C. Brown, were still focussing on unusual, remote, or ethnic populations and researching dities, folk beliefs and other oral forms of knowledge transmission such as folk tales and folk song. In literature there is a trend towards realism in reaction to Romanticism and local colour writing trends of the late nineteenth-century and the tendency towards identifying such communities by associating them with traditional culture and beliefs set a precedence for Carver's similar use of folklore as she employs these writing genres.

Writing amongst these cultural influences Carver created short stories which were not racist according to the cultural parameters of the time. Yet this fact raises a query: were her stories merely echoing the social status quo? This would be true had Carver not used coding as a part of creating the tensions which are the keystones of her plot lines. It is her use of coding which presents multiple interpretations of tension filled events. Yet if Carver does not present the status quo, and does not write from a racist perspective then what function does her use of coding serve?

Carver's use of coding is something which parallels her increased use of folklore. But the technique's adherence to proposing multiple interpretations through the presentation of traditional culture is applied, by the end of her career, to all the ethnic groups of the Cane River region which she represents in her work. This breadth of traditional culture representation used in conjunction with the technique of coding suggests that Carver employs traditional culture to embed controversial viewpoints in her short stories. Her use of coding repeatedly offers, from the second period of her writing on, non-standard interpretations of cultural expectations that do not directly represent the status quo (i.e., social politics) of the Cane River region. Carver was not primarily writing in an attempt to promote cultural change, however.

Carver's short stories were and are first and foremost, when taken collectively, writings about her region, literary expressions which are an attempt to promote that region. This interpretation is supported by her well documented friendships with individuals linked to Melrose and Cammie Henry. It further suggests that promoting the region was directly linked to Melrose and Miss Cammie's desire to promote Melrose as

a cultural centre in the region.

Events following Carver's withdrawal from the Melrose Cadre in the 1930s, may have contributed to this distancing, which was signalled by an infrequency of letters. Carver's correspondence to Miss Cammie stops in 1930 and to Dormon in 1933 just a few years before Francois Mignon arrived at Melrose in 1939. Factors that may have contributed to this distancing were her devotion to her son, the loss of supportive writing partners when Dormon began publishing non-fiction and promoting the creation of Kitsatchie national forest, and Saxon's return to New York.

Whatever the factor or factors which actually led Carver to retreat from writing prolifically, her presentation of Cane River's traditional culture was integral to both her writing technique and the multifaceted presentation of Cane River's people, events and cultures. Her use of traditional culture emphasized social, political and ethnic tensions. These highlighted tensions offered her readers the opportunity to accept stereotypes, or to delve into the presentation of stereotype. The following chapter begins detailing the role of Melrose Plantation under the Henry auspices as an influence on Carver's knowledge and portrayal of the Cane River region.

Chapter Four

Ada Jack Carver (Snell) and Melrose Plantation

The landscape Carver created in her short stories interprets the peoples and culture of the Cane River region. Integral to this portrayal of the region's land and people was Melrose Plantation. Melrose was not only situated in the heart of the Cane River region, but was filled with situations and items that would evoke images of pre-Civil War days when plantations were a locale for visitation, daily crafts, and key centres supporting slavery. As such, Melrose under the Henry auspices was for Carver a lens onto the daily life presented in the pre-Civil War and Reconstruction Souths of her stories.

It is unclear when Carver was first introduced to Melrose Plantation and its owner, Mrs. Carmellite Garret Henry, due to a lack of verifiable dates. Several factors suggest two possible periods for this introduction. These periods are selected due to evidence that Carver and her writing were strongly influenced at two different points. The first occurred during her school years and the second during the 1920s.

It is likely that Carver's first introduction to Melrose took place during her school days at Louisiana State Normal School in Natchitoches. At least four plausible means exist for such an introduction. Local narratives indicate that the English classes from the Normal School were welcomed frequently at Melrose, though the only verifiable visits are mentioned in Francois Mignon's newspaper articles of the 1930s, would be much too late to be Carver's introduction to Melrose. Such visits provided youngsters a chance to meet the artists who visited Melrose in order to write, to learn about the region, or to visit with Miss Henry and may have had earlier precursors. These visits allowed students the

chance to benefit from the knowledge of visiting writers who were willing to discuss their own creative writing, or students benefited from the experience of learning to incorporate aspects of the Louisiana countryside into their writing. For Carver to have visited Melrose at this time is not implausible.

More likely, Carver learned of Melrose by one of the following possibilities. In the last few years of school, Carver may have been coached by a teacher and encouraged to produce a story unmatched by her other work of this phase. A third possibility is that of an encouraging teacher or mother guiding the young author who had been recently inspired by a visit with an acquaintance of Carver's mother, Mrs. Henry of Melrose Plantation. A fourth possibility would entail Carver meeting Mrs. Henry through her new school friend Caroline Dormon in the summer of 1907 after the girls' meeting at Judson College in Marion, Alabama that year. Dormon graduated with a degree in art and literature, sharing with Carver an interest in writing.

Dormon's family did have a summer home, Briarwood, nearer Natchitoches than Melrose. It is plausible that after a year at Judson the girls met again at Briarwood and that Dormon introduced Carver to Melrose. Most likely is a combination of these last two sets of possible events. Support from the mothers of the two girls probably brought these new friends to Melrose to meet their peer Mrs. Henry. Guidance and editing by Carver's mother, teachers and Mrs. Henry would certainly foster Carver's more sophisticated approach to compositional context and technique seen in her short story of

1908, "The Ring."

However inspired, Carver's short story "The Ring," written in 1908, is a prime example of how a student's work might be influenced by such input. This story's technique and characterization, which will be discussed in Chapter Five, is the best evidence existing to support the theory that Carver's first visit to Melrose occurred sometime during the years 1907-08. This chapter will further situate Carver's short stories in relationship to her general experience of Melrose Plantation and the Cane River region under the guidance of Miss Cammie.

Carver's Introduction to Melrose

Into Melrose, a symbol of Cane River's Creole culture came Carver, a young school girl. The historical resonances of Melrose embody Carver's, her family's and her region's southern experience. This experience was unique to Louisiana's racial and ethnic make-up and reminiscent of the narratives Carver's grandmother told her during summer visits, narratives based on family history and articles from Creole days.

Romanticised portrayals of regional history, such as these in conjunction with an introduction to Melrose as a symbol of Louisiana's southern heritage, served as a logical foundation for Carver's "The Ring," which portrays a household's heritage as inseparable from the pride that links locals to their region's recently war-torn history. Carver, then, came to Melrose, and was inspired to address subject matter she knew: regional pride,

female roles and expectations and the power of secrets. She likely received compositional guidance due to her sudden ability to craft a thematically complex story with characters of depth unmatched both by her earlier work and work to follow for several years thereafter. This marked the beginning of the influence of Lou Carmelite Garrett Henry's Melrose on Carver's life and writing, an influence that, as the next section reveals, encouraged visitors to forefront the Cane River region, its people and Melrose in their art.

Melrose Plantation and the Henry Family

From the beginning of the Henry family's ownership, as from Carver's first visit, Melrose was linked to literary symbolism and metaphor. It was during Reconstruction that Yucca Plantation was purchased by the Honourable Joseph Henry, who was of Irish ancestry. He "renamed it 'Melrose' in honour of Sir Walter Scott's burial place, Melrose Abbey" (Mills 51, Gallien July 5, 1970). A year after the January 11, 1898 marriage of his son, John Hampton, and daughter-in-law, Lou Carmelite Garrett Henry, Melrose became home for the couple (Gallien July 5, 1970).

From 1899 forward, it is nearly impossible to separate the individual, Carmelite Garrett Henry, from the use of the land, buildings, and areas surrounding the main house of Melrose. While her husband focussed on the economics behind running and

modernizing a plantation and its store¹, Mrs. Henry alternately restored and transformed several aspects of the Melrose grounds (Gallien July 9, 1970). This division of labour remained in effect both during the marriage and after Mr. Henry's death in 1917. After Mr. Henry passed away his son, J. H. Henry Jr. "assumed the overseeing of further development of the plantation, and the expansion of pecan groves, the most extensive in Louisiana, while furthering his mother's projects" (Mignon *Plantation Memo* 2).

Mrs. Henry first came to Melrose Plantation as a bride in the 1890's by boat from the general area of Abbeville, Louisiana, according to local knowledge (Mignon 156, Carnahan 131). Her husband soon occupied himself with the running of Melrose: overseeing the family's cattle, their cotton fields, and beginning interests in the raising of pecans. While Mr. Henry was working the plantation, class restrictions and the physical environment further helped to create a nearly impenetrable isolation for the young bride.

Ensnared in her new home, Mrs. Henry found her nearest Euro-American neighbours ten miles away. Roads were difficult at best during the rainy season,

when the floods came, you couldn't get out of town. I
remember one time that for three months we couldn't get to
Natchitoches. Could use boats to follow the road's

¹ Plantations generally had stores from which supplies for all aspects of the plantation were taken. Later following the Civil War, plantation stores became places of business where freedmen could purchase supplies. When crops were poor plantation owners would offer a lien against a freedman's property in exchange for store credit. When bad crops resulted in a debt larger than a property's worth store owners would offer credit based on a percentage of a farmer's crop. This resulted in the share-cropping system, a form of tenant farming, that remained part of Louisiana's economy into the mid-nineteen hundreds.

telephone poles [though]. (Carnahan Interview, Tape One 378)

You could only follow telephone poles in this way in the mid- to late- twenties; such amenities arrived even later to Cane River,

They got telephones on Cane River in '28 or '29. Only telephones were in the stores, or maybe the plantation home. Doctors and storekeepers were about all. (340-59)

The nearest town to the south, Cloutierville, was home to teacher Lucille Carnahan. She recalls that "the sidewalk was two planks side by side when she came [for the 1928-29 school year]" and most "people travelled by river boat. The [Cane] River paralleled the town" (290).

On her own in these restrictive circumstances for most of the day, Mrs. Henry searched for distraction and settled on a collection project that would not only occupy her for the rest of her life, but become a reason for visitors to come to Melrose. The project began with the accumulation of historical events presented in articles and photos of the local newspapers and their ensuing arrangement in scrapbooks. As time passed, Mrs. Henry also included correspondence she received, photographs, play bills, and other ephemera. Once writers began visiting Melrose the scrapbooks were used to document the lives, as they appeared in the press, of these famous visitors; and the writers who became friends of Mrs. Henry often had two, or more scrapbooks dedicated to their careers and time spent at Melrose. Eight of these scrapbooks hold information about Carver. In this manner, a core of friends who were artistically inclined developed, met at

Melrose in varying compositions and were chronicled, preserved for history, through the documentation efforts of Mrs. Henry.

The upkeep of her scrapbook project became cumbersome over the years, as is shown by Mrs. Henry's requests for documents from Saxon and other friends, like Dormon:

I'll be glad to see you any day — or hr. — please if you will, bring your negatives of Natch[itoches] — scenery — especially those enlargements and don't forget the typical old coloured woman with local setting — want purely for scrapbooks. Ada Jack Snell has landed a story with Harper's — you can do as well — just stick to it — but you've sure got to paint a picture for me — and a big one at that — it was a bargain see and I got to have it — for my capt.! (Dormon Collection Folder 590)

Late in life Mrs. Henry had fallen behind in the creation of scrapbooks from her collected clippings and considered stopping her work altogether, but she was encouraged to continue by her good friend Irene Wagner,

I must get busy —and paste—gotten way behind. You make the scrap-books worth while (God bless you)—I do believe if you had not come into my life—I'd given up the hobby. You save the books and my morale—more you could not do—[For] me—your daily life is a tremendous incentive to me— to carry on— little do you realize how valuable your influence—your example is to many. Don't lose sight of this fact— we need you—You are an asset to La. [literature] your bibliography must go over— far to valuable to even [waste] opportunity. Opportunity—must be made! You are the power.

I want Lyle [Saxon] to know exactly what the work is— ++
I am beginning to feel the need (sorely) of a catalogue.
(Wagner Collection Folder 8)

Unfortunately, no friend, save Dormon, knew Mrs. Henry had decided to destroy elements of the scrapbooks that were about herself and her closest friends early in 1930 (Dormon Collection Folder 600). According to a letter that passed between Dormon and Henry, Dormon was concerned that some information in the scrapbooks might be harmful to those they were written by or about. Dormon's concern seems to have arisen from the fact that more and more people - reporters, Northwestern State University professors and students - were gaining access to the scrapbooks.

Since many people were beginning to ask for access to Mrs. Henry's scrapbooks, as they researched the area and the area's historical personages, Mrs. Henry's friend Irene Wagner and Mrs. Wagner's mother undertook to create an index for the scrapbooks (Wagner Collection Folder 8).

Over the years, Mrs. Henry found new interests that distracted her from the scrapbooks, and were also means of preserving the Cane River area's history. She sponsored a local writing competition for individuals who wrote their own plays through the Lesche² club (Carnahan 130). Also among Mrs. Henry's projects was renovation work on the main house. The main house was modernized without great deviation from its early nineteenth-century design. The kitchen remained a detached building behind the house, and porch areas were used for dining. Later as the family grew and the boys became older, a back wing was added to the house and *garçonnières* (or rooms

² Lesche is pronounced "less-key".

traditionally inhabited by young unmarried men of a family, which open to the outdoors and the house) were added to either end of the house to make room for the Henrys' male offspring (Figure 7).

Other changes were minor and ongoing. Mrs. Henry over the years decorated her home with antiques that were collected from surrounding plantations going-to-ruin or from local families. One example is the door from the second story front-porch into the south *garçonniere* which with its stained and etched glass was bought from the owners salvaging a plantation further down the road (Melrose Docent 021). The building itself underwent one further change after 1930 when the outdoor bathing room was turned into a chapel for Catholic workers (Melrose Docent 204). The sum total of the *garçonniere* additions is that Melrose no longer looks like a standard Creole Cottage.

The interior of Melrose underwent innovations as well when Mrs. Henry's caretaker found a loom on the grounds in a barn attic (077). She had the loom put together and brought a weaver in from New Orleans to teach her how to weave. Over the years Mrs. Henry wove³ fabric she used to re-upholster furniture throughout the main house and out buildings (62). She would make the fabrics from cotton grown, spun, and dyed with "natural dyes made from pecan and black walnut shell, fruit such as persimmon and indigo" on-site (93).

Another lengthy project was the gardens, eventually some three acres in size,

³ Mrs. Henry did some weaving herself, but also house servants and friends worked at the looms to help complete her projects.

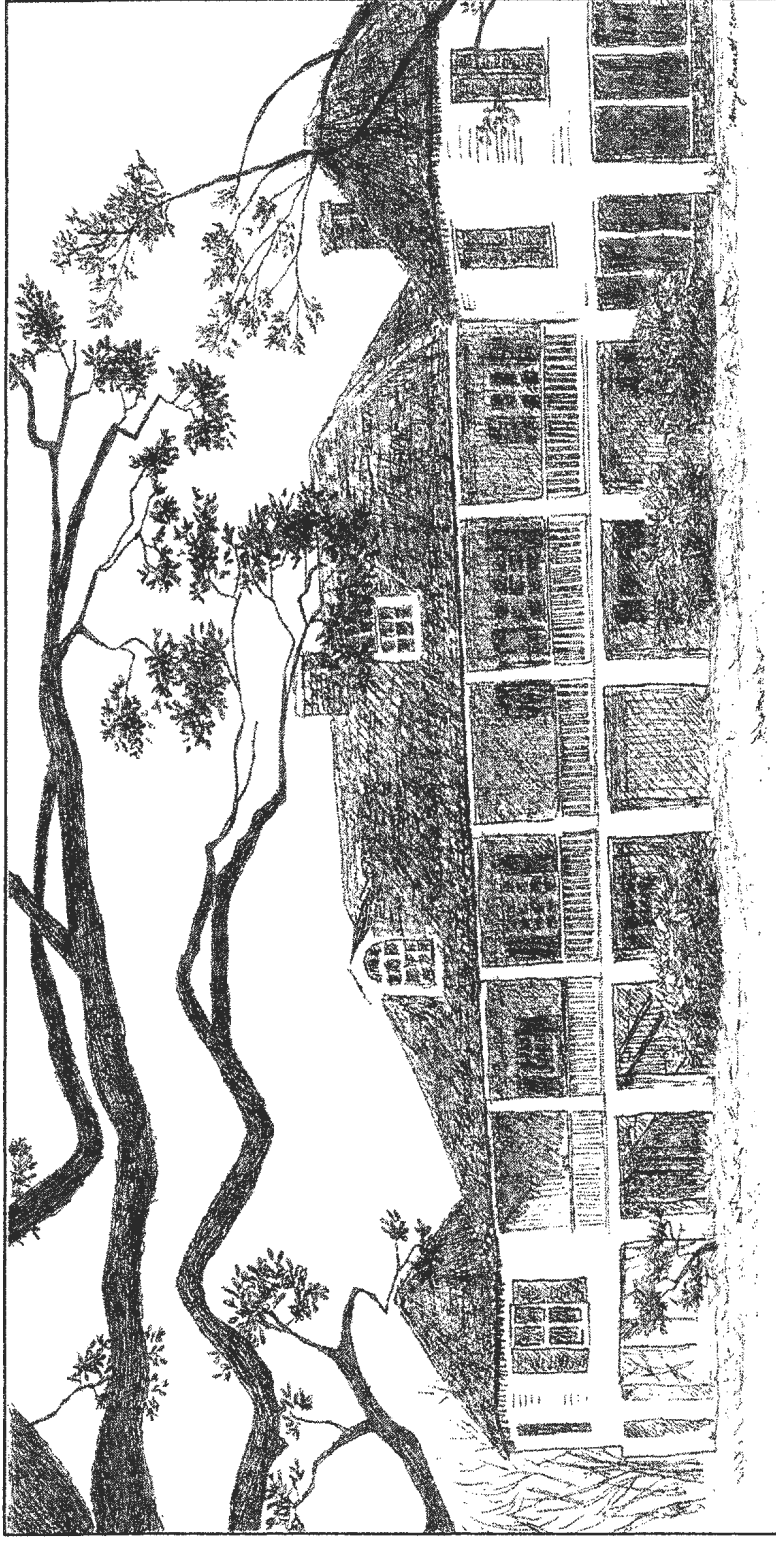


Figure 7. Melrose After Mrs. Henry's Additions.

Artist, Amy Bennett.

surrounding the main house (Louisiana's Writers Project 637). These beds were planted with many indigenous Louisiana plants, especially irises, thanks to help from Mrs. Henry's friend Miss Caroline Dormon (Gallien July 19, 1970). A side product of these endeavours were the benches set under the nearly 200 year old live oak that graced the front yard of the house. Mrs. Henry found pieces of broken dishes while she was gardening and crafted⁴ these to cover the bench seats.

Mrs. Henry was also known for rescuing entire buildings from demolition and decay. Several old log cabins and *bousillage*⁵ buildings were moved to the area surrounding the house (Gallien July 9, 1970). Today these cabins number among the few remaining examples of buildings used as slave quarters, or inhabited by the first Creole families of the Isle Brevelle area (Figure 8). They were incidentally collected and restored by Mrs. Henry with money raised through other endeavours, as this entry in her 1934 diary shows:

Have begun weaving wool rugs again. Sold three for \$35.00. This is fine and will help my building project. (Had taken to cleaning out the "shop," a cabin that had been used as "a kitchen, then a blacksmith shop, then lumber house. Building is old, put together with wooden pins"). (June 7, 1934).

⁴ Other craft interests are reflected in the holdings of the Melrose library, such as Atwater's *Shuttle-Craft Book of American-Weaving*, *The Columbia Book of Yarns*, Finley's *Old Patchwork Quilts and the Women Who [Make Them]*, and Hicks' *The Craft of Hand-Made Rugs*.

⁵ Bousillage is a mixture composed primarily of Spanish moss, animal hair, local earth and/or clay that was used to create walls in buildings with wood frames.

A month later, she notes: [getting another building] "This is to be all loom room — need it; have looms and spinning wheels all over the place" (October 8, 1934). The space was needed as Mrs. Henry eventually had five or six looms going simultaneously (Melrose Docent 85). Once watertight, the cabins were used early on to house Miss Cammie's weaving operation, as mentioned above, collected artifacts and her book bindery.

At this time the cabins moved to Melrose were recontextualized, their use as slave and share-cropper homes replaced with the functions of serving as out-buildings for Mrs. Henry's craft operations and as storage for her antiques gathered on collecting trips.⁶ Later on Mrs. Henry acquired several other cabins, and made at least one of the storage "cabins," that to be known as the writer's cabin, habitable. As more room was created, invitations were given to artists, writers and scholars to visit and,

the plantation . . . became the renowned centre of Louisiana culture. The old Cane River Arts were revived, and the ancient crafts such as weaving . . . were renewed in commemoration of the plantation's past.

As "Miss Cammie's" collection of Louisiana lore increased, Melrose rapidly became known as a treasure trove for authors, artists, and historians. (Mills 51-52)

⁶ Cammie Henry's collecting trips are part of accepted tradition for well-to-do women of the time period, a tradition her library reveals at least marginal familiarity with due to the inclusion of Scarborough's *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs* (1925). See Ian McKay's discussion of Canadian females who collected cultural items— both Helen Creighton's folklore collecting activities and Mary Black's role in the handicraft revival of Nova Scotia—and the place of such activities in the "traditional nineteenth-century conception of a gentlewoman's artistic pursuits" (61-62). See also Whiznant's discussion of the role of women in teaching "traditional" crafts in the Appalachian mountains for an American context.

This is the Melrose created by Mrs. Henry, the Melrose Carver knew. Once invited, she and other visiting authors and artists remained as long as they followed Mrs. Henry's three rules: "You must work. You must not disturb others in their work. You must do as you please, so long as you obey the foregoing two" (Gallien July 26, 1970, Henry Scrapbook No. 83 104). Many prominent individuals - Rachel Field, Harnett Kane, William Faulkner - reputedly enjoyed Mrs. Henry's hospitality.⁷ And a few formed a close-knit group which kept up with each other through letter writing and visits. This core group was formed of Lyle Saxon, Ada Jack Carver, Caroline Dormon and, of course, Lou Carmelite Garrett Henry. Carver's role in the group and shared interests that promoted her connection with group members will be detailed in the next chapter.

Melrose Plantation is the locale for this core group and the locale for Carver's writing inspiration. Like the locale that supports a traditional fisherman⁸, folk artist⁹, or a trapper¹⁰, Melrose was a place with ties to the surrounding traditional culture. As a result, Melrose became a centre where "understanding of the nature of a region" could occur (Allen 3). A place where authors and artists could live,

⁷ See Gallien July 26, 1970 for a fuller list of visiting authors.

⁸ See Mary Hufford's *One Space, Many Places* and the discussion of local occupations (69-71).

⁹ Charles Martin discusses the interlinking effects of regional culture and that culture's folk artists in "Creative Constraints in the Folk Arts of Appalachia."

¹⁰ See Erika Brady's discussion of regional identity in her article, "Mankind's Thumb on Nature's Scale."

adopting the perspective of residents to see [the] place from the inside rather than the outside, to understand "the totality of perceptions and knowledge of a place gained by residents through their long experience of it, and intensified by their feelings for it." (Archie Green qtd. in Allen 3)

exist and promote both writing and other art by Carver and the core group. Melrose evolved into a place to support such endeavours while owned by the Henry Family.

Melrose served many functions while under the Henry auspices. It was of course a working farm, as well as being a gathering place for individuals interested in art, and technical crafts like weaving. In addition, Melrose was an agricultural showpiece that with Mrs. Henry's additions of cabins and furniture and other items of historical value also became a kind of museum of history. However, its most important role, as a gathering place for local luminaries, occurred under the influence of Mrs. Henry, and directly affected Carver's writings.

During such visits not only the main house, but eventually several surrounding buildings served as both "hostel" and work areas for visitors. For a select few of these artistically inclined individuals who were good friends of Mrs. Henry, and this included Carver, Melrose functioned as a haven where for weeks and even months at a time their work could take precedence over everyday trials and tribulations.

They gathered in various groupings at Melrose, able to rely on the daily environment Mrs. Henry created for structure and even inspiration. The day and opportunities to visit with other guests revolved around meal times for writers, like

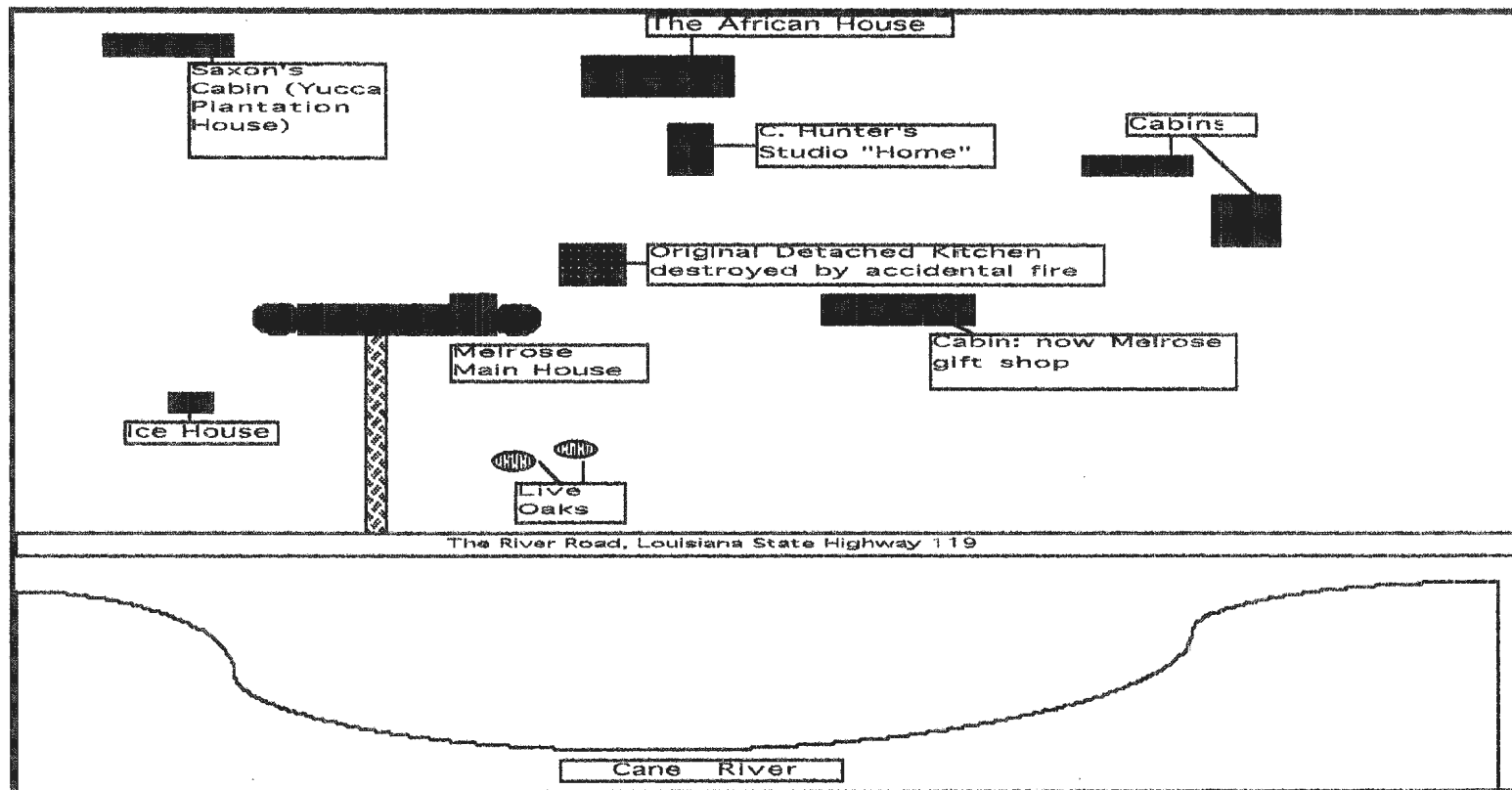


Figure 8. Melrose Plantation Layout 1995

Carver. These times were reminiscent of an idealized plantation south, a time when visitors remained for lengthy stays and had their whims catered to by house slaves. Melrose did not have slaves, but house servants made the writer's stays extremely comfortable.

Each morning at dawn Henry Jack, the "coffee man" would rise and make coffee (Federal Writers' Project Folder 134). Coffee was poured for the field hands, the plantation store workers across the street, for visitors in their cabins, and those in the main house (Fletcher 337). Visitors, like Lucille Carnahan, recall that "Every morning at five in the morning coffee would be served to you in the bedroom. The fireplace was always ready to light. The black individuals were always ready to talk to you" (Carnahan Interview 120). Breakfast, like morning coffee at the main house, was an optional meal. If you desired it breakfast arrived at your room, otherwise you could eat at the main house.

Mid-morning coffee occurred at 9 o'clock and generally lasted until 10 o'clock, at which time people were free until dinner and Mrs. Henry was generally upstairs in the main house darning socks, or winding wool and having private chats with friends (Mignon Interview Tape Two 48, 63). "Everyone went to dinner at the big house. Then, at 3 p.m. you would see whoever was there, if you wanted" over afternoon tea (55). Lucille Carnahan remembers afternoon tea as a tradition she and many girls of the area

were familiar with from their Louisiana State Normal Model School¹¹ days. Though the time for tea varied, according to Carnahan, it was always exciting attending.

To meet people of consequence, we would go down to Melrose. Mrs. Henry always had a little 4 or 5 o'clock lunch (part of the old Normal School) and they could hear whoever happened to be there at the time. Lyle [Saxon] we loved, a wonderful storyteller and very nice looking. (155)

Supper was eaten at the big house as well, the time varying with the seasons. Again

Mignon offers a description of evenings at Melrose,

supper [was] at 5 pm in winter time; 5:30 or 6 pm in the summertime. After, Mrs. Henry always walked around in the garden. Talked . . . Then we'd sit either on the gallery, or under the big tree. (66-79)

This daily pattern portrayed by Mignon allowed visitors to socialize, and work as best suited their purposes,

If [they] came to Melrose, [Cammie] Henry liked them to work. At the same time if they preferred to come for afternoon tea, or nine o'clock coffee in the morning that was fine. But if they preferred to be working in those hours, [well] everyone had certain hours . . . they lived in the different houses here and if one wants to work at one time and one at another why by all means . . . one is busy and the other is not busy . . . (69)

Both socializing and work were considered important because socializing could supply help for your project. People, often, in socializing could help solve a problem without

¹¹ Normal schools originally stood apart from elementary and high schools, as they provided education for teachers of the elementary schools. The curriculum would consist of an overview of subjects taught on the elementary level. They were later replaced by Teacher's Colleges and University Departments of Education (*Lincoln Library* 1625-26).

knowing they were doing so (79-98). This was the environment Mrs. Henry carefully crafted and which Ada Jack Carver found beneficial to her friendships and work. Carver found Melrose and Mrs. Henry, who she called Aunt Cammie, such a support that she openly expressed longing for time there and that she would share thoughts and feelings there which she'd share nowhere else, as is seen in the following quotes.

You know at times Melrose seems so far away from Minden, although we are only a Sabbath's day journey apart.

Carver February 19, 1930

(Melrose Collection Scrapbook No. 217 79)

[I want Melrose] and of course leisure and solitude to write . . . and a desire to understand [there], and be understood, by those I love and who love me.

Carver May 6, 1930

(Melrose Collection Scrapbook No. 217 77)

What a letter I have written, and you'll never be able to read it. —But you see, somehow it isn't an effort to write to you, Aunt Cammie. And do you know that you're the only friend I have with whom I can really gossip and slander and dissect my other friends, without feeling disloyal and conscience stricken!

Carver Sunday, January, 8th [no year]

(Carver Collection Vertical File)

Carver found at Melrose a place where she could write in a structured, comfortable environment. She found a network of friends and colleagues who supported her creative endeavours. Melrose was a place to be creative, to share and learn, and to belong.

Summary

Melrose was refuge-like for Carver as it offered both the opportunity to work without interruption and to interact with individuals accepting of the artistic mind set, as defined by Mrs. Henry's expectations. These individuals, and the region surrounding Melrose engaged Carver's attention, offering up inspiration in the form of creative support and writing material respectively. Consequently, Melrose was a cornerstone in Carver's authorial process, offering both refuge and inspiration.

Carver found release from her energy- and time-draining social obligations in Natchitoches -- the rounds of teas and speaking engagements she abhorred--through removal to Melrose. The time spent at Melrose was equally fraught with social opportunities, and yet lacking the responsibility of attendance. This was, of course, due to Melrose's owner Mrs. Henry who sustained a supportive structure for visiting artists and writers. She succeeded in this by orchestrating an environment that at once both welcomed visitors of differing interests and backgrounds and encouraged all visitors to recognize the need for writers and artists to be responsible to their creative process first and social opportunities thereafter.

In this supportive environment, Carver had the opportunity to closely observe the region of her birth and its peoples. These observational opportunities came through exchanges about personal experience with fellow visitors as well as through forays into the countryside surrounding Melrose. The inspiration Carver received from the landscape

and people surrounding Melrose are reflected in her short stories. How her friendships and observational endeavours relate to her stories will be addressed in Chapter Five. Of synonymous import is the fact that these endeavours closely tied Carver to a select group of authors and writers who shared her interest in the Cane River Region, producing a network that supported its members' creative expressions.

How this select group of people who gathered at Melrose under Mrs. Henry's auspices became close friends of Carver's and how they affected her writing as well as her experiences of the Cane River region is the focus of the following chapter and will include a consideration of how these factors affected her representations of the region in her short stories.

Chapter Five

The Melrose Friends

This chapter establishes how Carver's Melrose peers and their interests were influences on her writing, and gives the biographical details of her peers' lives. Carver had three close friends who were also associated with Melrose Plantation and are here called the Melrose Group. She frequently met with these individuals at Melrose. When unable to connect at Melrose, the group kept in touch and communicated about their activities, particularly those focussing on Cane River, by letter. Integral to the current discussion is how these communications both at Melrose and by letter promoted and supported Carver's interest in the Cane River region's culture and history.

Mrs. Henry

As noted in the previous chapter, Mrs. Henry and Melrose Plantation are inseparable. For Carver this made Melrose a forceful influence. It meant more to her professionally than Mrs. Henry's role as a mentor and friend. As mentor, Mrs. Henry fostered her chosen writers' interests in not only the Cane River region's history and culture, but in the work produced by their Melrose peers. Regional history, culture and items symbolically preserving that cultural wealth, were available in the plantation environment of Melrose. Carver then, as did her peers, found in Mrs. Henry a supporter of her writing, a friend and confidant, and a link to other writers as well as someone interested in all things related to their unique corner of the South, the Cane River region. Carver's relationship to Mrs. Henry will be clarified, in the following discussion, as her

connective and collaborative role within the group unfolds during a consideration of how each individual's personal interests came to bear on Carver's presentation of the Cane River region in her short stories.

Caroline Dormon

Dormon was a cherished friend of Carver's from school days, a fellow writer who composed poems and historical stories, as Carver emotively outlines in the following letters:

My dear Carrie¹: Your precious letter was so much appreciated. I have really spent hours talking of you to John and other people—and your right ear must have nearly burned off. (wasn't it the right ear—according to Lyle's superstitions—that means nice things are being said about you?) I was so glad to hear you had been working—on your child poems and other things.

Ada Jack Carver to Caroline Dormon
(Henry Collection Folder 519)

Carrie dear: Your little flying visit seems like a dream; and it made me positively sick for a talk with you. Our kind of nonsense! You will simply have to come and stay with me again this summer. I mean it. I need you. Bear it in mind, and we'll do some work together. I really find it hard to forgive you—popping in like that, and then popping off again and leaving me with a hundred questions unasked and unanswered; and a thousand things unsaid.

Ada Jack Carver to Caroline Dormon
(Dormon Collection Folder 522)

¹ Carrie is the nickname commonly used by the Melrose group for Caroline Dormon.

Not only was Dormon a cherished friend when talks and meetings were possible, but she was mentioned to family members and missed by the family when visits were hurried or divided by extended periods. Also, Dormon was for Carver a friend who shared delight in indigenous botanicals and gardening; and who was interested in writing short stories, poetry and non-fiction. How these shared interests were fostered by Dormon's background and life experiences is the focus of the following short biography.

Dormon was born "at her family's summer home in Natchitoches Parish to James A. Dormon, a lawyer, and Carolyn Tweak Dormon. Caroline spent her childhood in Arcadia² with a few weeks at the summer home [Briarwood] each year" (Stringfellow 1). Later, she lived much of her life in the pine forest of northern Natchitoches Parish at that family summer home with her sister, Judith (Rawson 121). Little is known of Dormon's formative years. She did attend Judson College in Marion, Alabama, as did her schoolmate Ada Jack Carver, earning a bachelor's degree in literature and art in 1907 (Rawson 122, Stringfellow 1). After college Dormon spent much of her time working as a private teacher of singing and drawing, and subsequently as a public school teacher.

Ultimately feeling confined by her career choice, Caroline moved in with her sister, making Briarwood their permanent home in 1918 (Rawson 122). Briarwood and

² Arcadia refers to the lower Louisiana parishes which today are known as "Cajun Country." These southern parishes became home to Acadian immigrants ejected by England from the Canadian colonies. This population settled in what is today the southern region of Louisiana when that region was under the control of France, and offered sanctuary from English persecution.

its hundred plus acre environs located fairly near Natchitoches became indispensable to Dormon, according to the perception of local newspaperman Francois Mignon in his following description of her and her life's prevailing interest:

Caroline Dormon lives in her own forest in the hills of Natchitoches Parish. Here are towering pines and oaks, clear streams and a pond. And here, for thirty years, she . . . collected native trees and flowers of the south . . . studied the varied requirements of these plants and when she did not have the right type of soil, she has given [plants away] for testing to those who could grow them in alkaline clay, river soil, or what ever she thought was needed. She has introduced a number of these to horticulture. . . . She has been a fellow in the Royal Horticultural Society for many years and has sent seeds of native plants to Wisely and Kew Gardens . . . to New Zealand, Australia and Japan . . . (73)

Dormon further focussed on her botanical interest locally by becoming State Chairman of Conservation for the Louisiana Federated Women's Clubs (Rawson 123). Through the opportunities available from this post, Dormon was able to begin the life project for which she is most remembered: the creation of a state forest in the Natchitoches region.

In 1921, Dormon joined the state forestry department and received a position that had no job description (Rawson 124). She was hired to do educational work for the Department of Conservation from 1921-23 and 1927-29. She also undertook many speaking engagements during her tenure with the Louisiana forestry division (1921-22) that were used, ultimately, by her supervisor to bring their feud to a climax.

Superintendent of Forestry V. H. Sonderegger and M. L. Alexander hired

Dormon, the first woman in the Louisiana forestry division in December of 1921.

Sonderegger wrote to her nine months later requesting a general history of her work for inclusion in his history of the department's work, indicating in his letter that he had no idea of Dormon's ideals, plans, or methods (Johnson 35). As time passed the superintendent became more critical of Dormon questioning the fact that Dormon stayed with friends who would not allow her to pay them when she travelled and questioning the "time she spent working on reports and studying" (35). Central to this feud seems to be the superintendent's feeling left out of the loop as he met individuals who were inspired by work Dormon was pursuing of which he knew nothing (36).

As both criticism and the pressure for information increased, Dormon decided that the only way she could continue her work was to resign from her position, which she did in September 1923 (Rawson 124). She kept her forestry contacts, however, and introduced many of them to the northern Louisiana region, ever gaining greater numbers of supporters for her endeavour to create a Louisiana state forest (Rawson 125).

Throughout this period, she, also, spearheaded several efforts that aided in her dream of creating a state forest. She lectured on conservation and native flora at Louisiana State Normal Model School. She drew on her brother's knowledge of law to have an enabling act drawn up which would permit the federal government to buy land in the state (Rawson 124). She returned for a year to the state forestry department in 1927, but she did not see the Northern Louisiana State Forest created until 1930, when her

energies had become refocused on her writing career.

Dormon also continued to ceaselessly promote the local flora of Louisiana. She undertook the reformation of local Christmas tradition, highlighting the damage to Louisiana's natural environment that occurred each year when fresh holly and pine trees were harvested for decorative purposes (Johnson 43-45). From the twenties onward, she collected local iris which grew in the ditches and boggy fields of Louisiana. Her interest in this area was increased by local enthusiasts (52-53). By the thirties, Dormon was collecting and cataloguing new varieties of local iris, even bringing scholars to Louisiana to aid in identification when she believed she had a previously unknown variety. Unfortunately in several instances, Dormon's shared knowledge of her discoveries concerning new varieties of irises and other plants was usurped by these scholars (66-69). This did not, however, stop her work.

In 1938, Dormon undertook the landscaping with local flora of the Midstate Hospital's forty-five acres in Pineville (Stringfellow 1). She also worked for the Louisiana Department of Highways from 1940-42, drawing on her knowledge of the natural landscape in a consulting position.

Dormon did not succeed in writing fiction for a living, though she did publish a few children's books of historical fiction in the late 1960s based on her knowledge of local Native American tribes. According to narratives which portray her as an artistic eccentric, she was not any more successful with her painting, due to personal choices. In

at least one instance, Dormon's devotion to her art did keep her from monetary gain:

A multimillionaire Texan saw one of [Dormon's] iris paintings and wanted more like it. He sent her a check — Mignon recalls it was for \$3,000 — as down-payment on a commission, promising to buy all the iris paintings she could produce. But Carrie had moved on to a new project, a children's book about local Indian tribes. "Oh pshaw! I haven't got time to be bothered with *him*!" she said—and tore up the sizable check. (Snell 32)

Dormon's public destruction of this check revealed personal priorities that placed the documentation of Louisiana's *flora* above the practice of art for monetary gain.

Consequently Dormon did focus her energies on creating paintings that could be used in her non-fiction texts which catalogued native plants of Louisiana and the South. Using her artistic talents, Dormon "wrote two books which she illustrated with paintings and drawings, compiled a pamphlet on native Louisiana trees, and furnished the illustrations for a third book. She [wrote] more than eighty articles on native plants and Indians of Louisiana, " many of which she also illustrated (Stringfellow 2, 5-9). Her first book *Wild Flowers of Louisiana* was published in 1934. Following seven and fourteen years behind, respectively, were *Forest Trees of Louisiana* in 1941, and *Flowers Native to the Deep South* in 1958.

Dormon's abiding interest was always the flora and fauna that surrounded her. Besides writing books on these subjects, she often devoted her time and energies to helping others learn about plants by consulting with academics at Louisiana State University and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. on plants indigenous to

Louisiana (in particular irises) and with Mignon, who sometimes published her findings in his newspaper column (Mignon *Plantation Memo* 129, 131, 215). During this period, Dormon also wrote fiction based on local Native American culture. Research for this writing led to her consulting with archaeologists and, ultimately, to being recognized as a knowledgeable amateur on the subject of early Louisiana cultures during the 1930s, when she was included on the United States Commission to determine the route DeSoto³ took through the U. S. (Mignon 133, Stringfellow 1, Johnson 79). Once again Dormon was the only female appointee to a government post, though this experience was a predominately positive one due to commission members freely sharing information (Johnson 86).

The list of Dormon's accomplishments reveals a strong-minded, trailblazing woman. She never married and refused to be ashamed of the fact, even emphasizing it. During her work with the Smithsonian she received a commission from President Roosevelt addressed to **Mrs.** Dormon; she refused to accept the commission until it was addressed properly (Mignon 134). Her earlier work with the Louisiana Department of Conservation and with the Louisiana Department of Highways was similarly groundbreaking as these fields were predominantly male, and Louisiana's universities had no forestry degree at the time (Stringfellow 1). Her interest in promoting and preserving Louisiana's distinctive natural wonders through authorship was a tie to Melrose's many

³ Hernando DeSoto was a Spanish explorer who "discovered" the Mississippi River in 1541.

visitors.

Dormon's preferred method of portraying the region's natural beauty was painting. It is well documented in writings about Melrose by Francois Mignon and letters exchanged between members of the group that Dormon often became so involved in her painting that she generally forgot the mundane aspects of life, as the following narrative told by David Snell, Carver's son, who wrote for *Time Magazine*, reveals:

When they reached the plantation, Aunt Cammie's irises were at the peak of their glory. Carrie flew to the gardens and began sketching and painting. Whoever had brought her recognized the signs, gave up and left.

At nightfall Carrie nibbled her supper as though in a trance and Aunt Cammie led her off to bed. Realizing that Carrie had not brought any luggage, Aunt Cammie provided toilet articles and sent a servant to gather her garments, launder them and return them during the night. Before daybreak Carrie bounced out of bed and at first light was back with the irises.

So it went, day after day, for almost a fortnight. Carrie was never aware of the nightly laundry service. Late one afternoon, as the irises were starting to fade, she announced she'd have to be getting home because she had not planned on staying the night and had brought nothing to wear. No one bothered to tell her of the gap of almost two weeks in her life. (32)

Dormon's interest in botany, while sometimes all consuming and certainly rigorous, was in particular a tie with Mrs. Henry, since it linked her and Mrs. Henry through their shared interest in the gardens of Melrose (Mignon 199).

Dormon's studies in botany linked her with Carver and others of the Melrose

group through an aesthetic⁴ that focussed on the very region that the group's majority wrote about in fiction. She shared with Mrs. Henry, Carver and other group members an appreciation of the region and its beauty, botanical in this instance, that led her to document and thereby preserve aspects of the region through her art, writing, government appointments and gardening work. Though these interests and activities were not folkloric in nature they did dovetail with the Henry's collectivist impulses and Carver's interests in both Cane River cultures and folklore. All three individuals were impelled to collect, write, or otherwise actively record aspects of the Cane River region. Such manifestations of their shared interest in the region as well as in preservation activities served as a binding aesthetic that strengthened their friendship ties.

Lyle Saxon

The last of this group to be discussed was by far the best known writer of the group. Lyle Saxon was a writer of newspaper articles, fictional and historical books who became known as a primary interpreter of Louisiana before focussing on the Cane River in the later part of his writing career. For Carver, Saxon was a mentor, a proven-writer

⁴ Aesthetic is used throughout this inquiry in the manner employed in Mary Hufford's *One Space, Many Places*. Hufford defines beauty as a relative concept that when applied to landscape involves all the senses and can be best identified through the scenic preference test that requires identifying when individuals see beauty and importance within their own environment. In the present discussion, this test is important in identifying the Melrose group's aesthetic preferences in both their regional and work environments (75).

who was interested in both her work and the Cane River region. Lyle was interested in many aspects of Cane River's cultures and was known for accompanying Mrs. Henry on her collection trips. He was also known, as was Mrs. Henry, for encouraging people to aid him in his pursuit of items he wished to collect. In a letter to Mrs. Henry's mother, Dormon details Lyle's collecting fervour for local quilts:

Lyle crazy as ever about quilts — [lays] off to buy pieces
when he gets to the getting place and plans a quilt for us to
make — don't you want to help?

Mother Garrett⁵, March 9, 1930
(Dormon Collection Folder 600)

Collection of items was insufficient for Lyle, who would also gather quilting patterns or draw them by his own hand in hopes that others might reproduce them. Such fervour and intensity was one of Saxon's idiosyncrasies cherished not only by Dormon, but also by Henry and Carver. Another, noted by Caroline Dormon in the following quote, was Saxon's tendency to come to and go from Melrose seemingly on whims:

I suppose we just have to accept Lyle as he is—mysteries
and all! If Ada knew anything about his flight to New York
she kept it under her hat!

Caroline Dormon, November 2, 1926
(Melrose Collection Folder 326)

Central to Saxon's role in his friends' lives and his working relationships with them was the need to be accepted without explanation of his motivations. The following short biography will outline several plausible motivations for his actions towards other

⁵ Mother Garrett is the name by which Cammie Henry's mother was known to family and visitors to Melrose.

members of the Melrose group and for his role as mentor to Carver.

Lyle Saxon was a pivotal figure not only in Carver's life, but within the Melrose group. He took on the role of writing and editing mentor with Carver and Caroline Dormon. He was also a valued friend for the two, with whom they could enjoy a gossip session. But more than two decades would pass before Saxon was to meet Carver and Dormon during his weekend visits to Melrose Plantation. The following biographical sketch begins by outlining the years preceding Saxon's introduction to Melrose Plantation.

From 1891 until he entered college, Saxon lived in Baton Rouge. Raised predominantly by his mother, a newspaper writer, he spent much of his early years watched over by his extended family while she worked to support them. By the time he was a teenager, his mother was seriously ill with cancer (Thomas 12). By the time he was sixteen, he had enrolled at Louisiana State University to study agriculture. Only five years later, in 1912, Saxon began working at the *Baton Rouge State Times* newspaper (14). This job was to see Saxon begin the work that would lead him towards local colour writing, and ultimately the production of his own novel.

After his mother became critically ill in 1914, Saxon spent several years moving between jobs and towns. The one linking factor during this time was his continued writing for the press as either a freelance or full-time newspaperman. During this period several important events occurred. Saxon was not accepted for service in World War

One, a fact that suggests his later illness,⁶ syphilis, was already beginning to reveal its presence (14). Also Saxon found work for a time handling publicity for the New Orleans Red Cross under Harry Hopkins, "who later headed the WPA for Roosevelt" (18).

In 1918, Saxon returned to Louisiana and began work for the New Orleans *Times Picayune*. This move was to solidify Saxon's growing interest in writing fiction and in promoting historic preservation. Taking up residence in the old French Quarter of New Orleans, Saxon also took up the pen, trying to build appreciation for this dilapidated area of the city. During this period, Saxon opened his home after working hours to local writers. His salon helped create interest in the Vieux Carré and make that area of town one known for its resident artists. Saxon's newspaper articles were vibrant and emotionally moving in their Romantic appeal. Those focussing on New Orleans' architectural heritage in the Vieux Carré area helped promote a new, more positive public opinion of the area, and served to move public opinion behind the idea of preserving this dilapidated area of the city. In the end reclamation of the area became a possibility when,

the Vieux Carré Society was established shortly after World War I, and a city ordinance was passed stating that no further changes could be made to a building in the quarter without the sanction of the society. (31)

In conjunction, Saxon encouraged artists to visit his Vieux Carré home. Visiting artists

⁶ 1928 saw the beginning of a heavy reliance on alcohol for Saxon (Harvey 326). A 1931 letter indicates he is "plagued by neuritis" (Harvey 328). In 1932, he is sick for an eight month span with syphilis (330-31), and in 1946 he finds out that he has cancer; shortly after this he dies of pneumonia (Harvey 447).

began to find the area appealing both for its low cost housing and the creative environment produced by artists living in a central area.

Many individuals Saxon met during his time in New Orleans were contacts and friends that would last a lifetime. He worked with Roark Bradford at the *Times Picayune*, and came to know Grace King, a well known Louisiana author who introduced him to Mrs. Henry in 1923.

Having spent a majority of his newspaper career promoting the historic significance of New Orleans' traditions and architecture, Saxon had much in common with Cammie Henry. In fact, their shared interest in preserving Louisiana's past led Henry to invite him to visit Melrose. Saxon's visits became "regular weekend jaunts" by 1925; and in February and April of that year, he made extended visits so he could focus on his writing away from his active social life in the Quarter (51-52). During this period, Saxon first met Carver. It was, also, at this time that the two began working together on their short story writing.

Coming to Melrose marked another beginning for Saxon, his book writing career. In fact Saxon spent so much time at Melrose between writing and editing his eight books that Mrs. Henry made Melrose's Yucca House permanently available to him once the ex-slaves who lived there passed away (66). All eight of these works focussed on the South and some, like *Children of Strangers*, were specifically based in the Cane River region.

Though Saxon invited artists to visit Melrose and though he often craved the quiet

of the plantation so he could focus solely on his writing, long stays at Melrose often seem to have left him feeling alternately bored or discontent with his work, isolated, over-run with social opportunities, and lonely. Feelings of loneliness, discontent, and isolation were combatted through liquor consumption—to some success. But the feelings of social entanglement often preceded Saxon's journeys away from Melrose. In 1933, he wrote Caroline of these feelings and his need to break away from Melrose.

In retrospect, it seems obvious that Saxon might need a break from the demands made on his company at Melrose. Not only did visitors arrive to see the famous author in residence, but the Melrose Group relied on Saxon for support and understanding (Henry Diary No. 182 January 30, March 11, and April 13, 1934). Mrs. Henry, in particular, relied heavily on Saxon's company, as the following effusive excerpts from her 1934 diary reveal:

Lyle [Saxon] returned . . . and was never gladder to see him. Am always rejoicing at his coming. I hope he lives with me forever — I ask no better. To me Lyle is the perfect companion, always the same. He and I have so many meeting grounds — and animals always favourites.
(Henry Diary #182 November 16, 1934)

An entry written two days before Saxon went to Baton Rouge on a trip lasting one and a half days again indicates Saxon's key role in the Group:

Lyle is always a pleasure, and adds 100% to the life at Melrose — be a tremendous vacancy in my life if he dropped out. Let's never strike oil and Lyle never go to Hollywood. Both would be the ruination of Melrose.
(Henry Diary No. 182 November 26, 1934)

A month later, Mrs. Henry indicates that she has let Saxon read her diary. Her entry for December 27, 1934 reads, "[says diary worthless] 'I am tempted to destroy it.'" Despite this critique she makes one last entry four days later. This wish for the New Year implies in its effusive thanks, an impotence and sense of hopelessness where her desire for steady companionship is concerned,

But for Lyle [Saxon] I would have mighty little companionship. The boys are as good as gold, but have their own way to go. Thank God for Lyle. May he be here next year and on and on, as long as I live. I could live with Lyle forever, and enjoy every day. He is always entertaining, so glad he feels fine again. (Henry Diary No. 182 December 31, 1934)

As a result of such influences, Saxon was often torn between seeing his Melrose cabin alternately as a haven and a prison (67). At these times Saxon would plan excursions in an effort to lighten his social responsibilities, as a frank letter to Caroline Dormon — which ends in a request that she destroy the letter — evidences:

If you [Dormon] can't make it down here, I'm coming to see you before I go. I have one, secret way to go, and I shall elope alone, leaving a note on my pillow. McBride, the clerk, has offered to rent me his car if I need it; he volunteered one day when I had been put off again — for the fifth consecutive day — when I wanted to go to town for a haircut and to buy things I needed. I'll just rent his car and drive up alone and spend a couple of hours with you — if you want to see me — It will have to be the middle of some week, for he uses his car on week-ends. I'll keep it a secret, for surely as anyone knows it, my trip will be gummed up; either other people will want to go, or obstacles will be put in my way of going at all. I know my Melrose. (Dormon Collection Folder 558)

Saxon's escapes were not always understood by his friends, as a letter from Carver written in response to Mrs. Henry after a similar escapade reveals:

Lyle's letter was lovely. What a person he is! I told you—didn't I? That he is the kind you must accept, just as he is. I sometimes feel that if you try to grapple him to you with hoops of steel, he is gone! (Hoops of steel always rather frightened me too, I must admit!) (Melrose Collection Folder 324)

In spite of this frequent need for personal space — when other members of the Melrose Group would come for visits, or when his work load became too heavy — Yucca house could serve as a much-needed haven for Saxon. This was particularly true when he took on the directorship of the WPA folklore collection project for the state of Louisiana. This collection brought Saxon's life full circle. For it not only focussed on Louisiana and her historic heritage, but also brought its literary skills to focus fully on the folklore his grandmother was so interested in during his childhood (Jordan and de Caro 45-46). This was of course not the first time Saxon focussed on these topics as he "sought to formulate his personal identity in his books," but it was the first time he had done this in a nonfictional format of book length (51). As such, *Gumbo Ya-Ya* was the culmination of a life's work reporting on Louisiana culture. It was, however, *Children of Strangers* which Saxon would have considered his culminating literary work, a final testament to his skill as a writer of novels, to his interest in Louisiana's folklife, and to his Melrose friends.

Linking Carver, Dormon, Henry and Saxon was an aesthetic built on an appreciation of traditional crafts, indigenous plants, historical records, and artistic

representations of the Cane River region. They supported each other in the collection and preservation of representative samples of Cane River life and its landscape. This shared interest in objects and places that are representative of Cane River promoted a shared aesthetic, a valuing of items perceived as traditional to the regional landscape, that became a shared conceptualization of the Cane River region.

Discussing the diverse interests which came together under the Melrose group's shared aesthetic to promote a shared conceptualization of the Cane River region entails a consideration of what they believed to be traditional to the region. It also requires a consideration of whether the items and subjects the group termed traditional were indeed so in the folkloric sense. The following section considers what knowledge and education in the area of folklore these individuals possessed, suggesting that what knowledge they did possess was a large factor in determining the cultural elements they deemed traditional to the Cane River region and so eminently collectable.

Folklore Knowledge: the Melrose Preservationists

Saxon's grandmother was both a writer and a member of the New Orleans Branch of the American Folklore Society, a group that actively collected folklore from the Creole and African-American populations of the state. What Saxon learned in passing or otherwise from his grandmother about folklore is lost to time, though it is not farfetched to assume that in his visits to New Orleans as a boy and later when he lived in New Orleans during his days at the *Times-Picayune*, he overheard some discussion of her

activities (Thomas 10). What influence upon his work came from his grandmother and other strong female influences on his life—like Henry and Carver—is an intriguing question. Unfortunately answers are unlikely due to the personal nature of the subject. Saxon also had knowledge of folklore through his WPA work. All of these influences are reflected in the titles in his personal library (Appendix I).

Mrs. Henry knew the work of Texas folklorist, Frank Dobie, as is evidenced by his books among the Melrose library's titles (Appendix I). She was secure enough in her position as a preservationist to write him early in Saxon's writing career, asking for information that would help Saxon in his research about LaFitte the pirate (Thomas 112). Further proof of Mrs. Henry's folklore knowledge are the nine folklore texts written by Dobie and found in the Melrose library. The texts which could have been acquired prior to Saxon's 1930 release of his book were *Publications of the Texas Folk-Lore Society* (1925), and *Follow De Drinkin' Gou'd* (1928). So the two individuals central to the Melrose group were acquainted, in a fragmentary way, with academic folklore collecting.

This group shared not only their knowledge about the area and its suitably collectable objects with each other, but their writing skills as well. How this exchange of information affected the work of each individual and how each individual felt connected to the Cane River region is the focus of the next section.

The Melrose group's written portrayals of Cane River regional culture are a contextual frame for the folk-like knowledge shared by the members of the Melrose group about composition and publication. The group's shared aesthetic is the bridging concept which links the scrapbooks of Mrs. Henry, the non-fiction texts and biological

interests of Dormon, and the fictional writing of Carver and Saxon.

The following discussion will reveal how, like an occupational folk group, the Melrose writers used their knowledge to support Carver's compositional process. Due to the closeness of the relationships between the members of the Melrose group and the tradition-like sharing of occupational information, I will refer to them — in the remainder of this chapter — by the nomenclatures they used with each other.⁷

The Melrose Writers: 1923 – 1930

The Melrose Writers: Lyle, Ada and Carrie, supported one another's short story writing during the years spanning 1923 to 1930. These dates encompass, respectively, Lyle's first visits to Melrose, and Ada's last known letters to Carrie and Aunt Cammie. The Melrose Writers' productions frequently drew on background information available in the Melrose library, or Aunt Cammie's scrapbooks of Cane River history. The fictional texts of the writers were a logical complement to Aunt Cammie's scrapbooks, since they both, frequently, presented themes based in Cane River's history and cultural heritage. In creating these short stories, the Melrose Writers shared both editing skills and compositional knowledge, either one-on-one during visits or through the mail.

The groups members' desires to remain in contact with each other resulted in an extensive body of correspondence, large portions of which are archived in the Cammie G.

⁷ These individuals referred to each other by first name, excepting the cases of Mrs. Henry who was known as Miss or Aunt Cammie, and Caroline Dormon who was known as Carrie.

Henry Research Centre at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, Louisiana.

Ada's correspondence, in particular, offers examples of the types of occupational support these individuals offered each other. Letters exchanged between other members of the group further diagram the driving force behind their written representations of Cane River, an aesthetic shared between these writers and their benefactor, the preservationist-minded Aunt Cammie.

For Ada, sharing her writing with Carrie and Lyle was a means of sharpening her research and writing techniques. The group also offered her a place among friends where she could admit to the frustrations and trials of pursuing her writing. Among those frustrations were the responsibilities of being a wife and mother, the round of requested social appearances following the success of "The Cajun," and the difficulty of trying to write while fighting successive illnesses: malaria and asthma. Thus, the writers' group offered Ada not merely personal and professional support, but a set of friends with whom she could learn how to root her fictional texts in the factual events of the Cane River cultural milieu.

The Melrose Group's Aesthetic: Framing the Melrose Writers

The main informal information which brings the members of the Melrose group together is a shared aesthetic, their shared occupational knowledge, and implicit accompanying belief system. There were three subgroups created from the five Melrose group members and their shared aesthetic interests in preservation, writing, and the

restoration of Melrose: the preservationists, the literati, and the naturalists. Aunt Cammie shared some level of interest in each of these aesthetic areas. As a naturalist, she shared with Ada and Carrie an interest in the creation of beauty using indigenous plants. Lyle and Aunt Cammie, the preservationists, shared an appreciation for the beauty of Creole culture. Finally, along with all members of the group: Ada, Carrie, Lyle and Francois, Aunt Cammie was part of the literati who shared an interest in portraying, preserving, and enhancing the beauty of a region through the written word.

Creating beauty from indigenous plants of the area was an aesthetic shared by Carrie, Ada, and Aunt Cammie. Caroline was a self-educated botanist who identified several new species of Louisiana plants. Her studies⁸ were motivated by a desire to paint the plants she saw (as James Audubon had his birds) and to share the plants she grew with others. Aunt Cammie's driving aesthetic was the beautification of Melrose and its gardens. Ada worked on a home garden of her own in Minden, and enjoyed the outdoors. She and Cammie frequently wrote to Dormon to share some experiences, as the following two excerpts indicate. The first is from Aunt Cammie:

Mate dearest—Am sick because you didn't get to carry out your cute plan—wouldn't we have had fun? The weather has been delightful, and the road from here to Minden is lovely. Ada, John, and David spent awhile with us last Sunday. Mrs. Storm and her niece were here, and we all roamed the woods—gathered chinkapins⁸, nuts and berries. How we wished for you and Little Sister! (Melrose Collection Folder 326)

The second is from Ada after a recent visit to Briarwood:

⁸ This refers to the White Oak and by association here to the acorns of that tree.

Dearest Carrie—I am just back from the train—having seen John off—and am wishing you were to be with me in his absence. I have a sort of lost feeling when John is away, you know a feeling that something is wrong somewhere.

However I am refreshed and strengthened [from] my [brief] [glimpse] of you and "The Face of Nature" and have been hard at work today. If I could get to Briarwood and Melrose [oftener] my periods of pure inspiration wouldn't be so few and far between!

The trip home in moonlight was lovely— "through the ageless and eternal fields"—and I wished for you.
(Dormon Collection Folder 520)

Over the years such letters reinforced both the friendship between these women, and their gardening plans.

Cammie worked several years changing the gardens from large sections of bamboo and local bushes to cultivated grounds that highlighted Louisiana plants. Carrie frequently provided plants, cuttings and bouquets from her own Briarwood gardens to both Aunt Cammie and Ada, as shown in the following letters from Ada:

Carrie darling—the beautiful box of living gold came Saturday! It was a grey, misty afternoon, but "it wasn't raining [rain] to me, it was raining daffodils" And if you could have seen and smelled my living-room you would have known that "Ada's house in the rain" is a joyous place, when filled [with] a "breath of Briarwood."

Also, let me tell you this: the [flowers] came on the anniversary of our wedding!. . . the flowers made me dreadfully homesick for you and for Briarwood! and the [moss] with its wet woodsy smell was too much! I wanted to fly straight to you. Also I almost decided to call my sketch of Briarwood (which I've never finished!) "February" instead of "October." (Dormon Collection Folder 524)

It was darling of you too to have the [privets] for me. You

know how I love them and these are to me most
[attractive]. For some time I have waited to suggest that we
take those [privets] to someone who could display them to
greater advantage. (Dormon Collection Folder 520)

None of the women were schooled in the skills of landscaping, but they strove to create aesthetically pleasing natural environments. More than that, the creation of gardens predominantly composed of native plants at Melrose and Briarwood by these two constitutes "*systematic cultural intervention*" which occurs when "someone (or some institution) consciously and programmatically takes action within a culture with the intent of affecting it in some way that the inventor thinks desirable" (Whisnant 13). These friends often went so far in their attempts to construct their vision of nature that they would go on gathering trips together, and make note of the location of desirable additions for future trips. The following excerpt of a letter from Aunt Cammie to Caroline Dormon alludes to such activities:

Things are never as good as when you 2 are along — some
beautiful wild flowers blooming on our roadsides — too
early to dig but fine to locate — if you can make it come —
if you can't I'll understand — phone me from Natch. — so I
can get some number 3 [Brownie] films. Expect I'll die
collecting — open your eyes help me collect some
evergreen [ferns] — I'm awaiting you both. hastily yours—
Mate (Dormon Collection Folder 625)

Creating gardens which could educate visitors about the natural wealth of Louisiana's forests and bogs while visiting a friend was one approach to cultural intervention taken by Dormon and Cammie.

This particular approach was primarily a by-product of the focus of Dormon's work. Dormon's extensive collection, documentation, and dissemination of native

Louisiana iris plants to family plots, botanical gardens, and her own Briarwood was one devoted to changing the place of the native plant from a poorly documented marsh or bog plant to a well known plant added to national and international botanical garden's collections and hybridized for use in gardens like that at Melrose. Later her interests broadened to include the nearby pine forests, these she devotedly promoted until a national forest was created preserving them, but changing the local landscape and its use by local individuals forever.

Aunt Cammie's desire to enhance Melrose aesthetically blended with Dormon's botanical interests, but also extended to her explorations of the Cane River area with Lyle and other friends. These forays were often undertaken as follow-ups to leads about memorabilia connected to the heyday of the Cane River region when it was home to Creole plantations. Cammie and Lyle would ride out and visit descendants of the old families and offer to buy furniture or paintings from the old days. Their offer would include the rehabilitation of furniture, paintings or photographs, so that these items might be preserved. Sometimes they were even known to provide families with copies of portraits considered too dear to be parted with and, in a few cases, previous owners were invited to visit Melrose and see the original any time they pleased. This was the case with a painting Creole narratives about Melrose still mention today. Ms. Rocque related the events surrounding that painting as follows:

[Melrose] wasn't like it is now. Back then they were just getting all this, accumulating, getting all this stuff together. A lot of that furniture, and stuff that you see there, that wasn't there. Back then she was going around different places and getting all this stuff to put in there. [pause] . . .

Back in those days when, those people thought, I guess they thought that was an honour. She was coming to visit with `em and you know, you know. . . . But just on the other hand this, this was what was happening. She, a lot of her stuff was, as you say she was getting it, ah for instance the picture we have in our church today, [St. Augustine. The lady, that property was church and everything. . . .] This picture was in my father's house when he brought that house. And he always had it. When he sold the house to an old aunt [he gave this picture to her] because 'I want this picture to remain in this house' and uh, when this came time . . . the typhoid fever in 1922, my father and mother had to move to Shreveport with me. And while we were gone this lady, Heloise Rocque, a cousin down the riverbank there. She went in that house and got that picture, took it to her house. And Mrs. [Cammie] Henry used to send a man to pick her up and to take her to Mass every Sunday. Now of course, when her, uh, she had the picture; Mrs. [Cammie] Henry saw the picture. And that she gave, the picture, [for taken her to church and stuff]. So then when Melrose Plantation came up for sale. There was a man from New York who came down to purchase that picture. But the priest that we had at home there. He got up and he gave a talk about what the picture meant to the parish and how the people felt about this picture. [People were crying.] Since he was the one, the leader of the church. And so he opened the bid for the picture at \$2,000.00. And the man from New York that came, he [worked for] New Orleans salvage; he went back when the pastor said that. So therefore the picture went back to us for the \$2,000.00. But we were paying \$2,000.00 for something that was ours, but in the end we had it. But some lady had given it to her. (Rocque Interview 61-100)⁹

While those originally involved likely perceived this exchange both fair and socially polite — since the donator of this image gained the preservation of a family heirloom and Aunt Cammie received that painting as thanks for supplying her acquaintance with

⁹ See an alternate interpretation of these events in Francois Mignon's "Cane River Memo" column of July 12, 1970.

weekly rides to church — others since have perceived such collection forays—as inequitable exchanges as is shown in my continuing interview with Ms. Rocque:

Rocque: Not only at Melrose, a lot of these museums and these places, a lot of the things that they have to show now — when people are too old to pay so much to go and see — are things that they got for next to nothing from elderly poor people who didn't know the value of what they had.

Interviewer: There must almost be a generation that felt disinherited when they found out that those things had left . . .

Rocque: Mmm, hm.

Interviewer: and they couldn't get them back.

Rocque: Yes. (100-123)

Though such outings fulfilled Aunt Cammie's goal: that of preserving vanishing and deteriorating remnants of Creole culture, collecting activities by her and others also resulted in mixed feelings for subsequent generations of Creoles who no longer had ownership of the material representations of their heritage. Equally important was the influence they had on Lyle. When Lyle accompanied Aunt Cammie, he was provided with more ephemeral materials that he subsequently used to represent this culture in his fiction.

Lyle was exposed through these trips to a view of the world he would not have seen in his long time residence of Baton Rouge, nor in New Orleans or New York. He became entranced with this area that still offered a distinctive regional lifestyle. Ingress into homes otherwise closed to him offered him the chance to compose mental portraits of the region, its land and the land's relation to her peoples. This invigorated him; it was

part of what brought him to accept work documenting the Mississippi flood of 1927. It was also part of what brought him back to Melrose many times during his life, both in spite of and because of the plantation's isolated locale. Lyle alternately adored and hated the isolation of Melrose. Melrose sometimes provided him the ability to escape his heavy socializing and focus on his writing. However, long stints at Melrose would emphasize its isolation from the social life he enjoyed. The drive to return to Melrose in order to find or recreate the aesthetic impulse that sparked so many of his written works was also part of the aesthetic which he shared with the novice writers, Ada and Carrie, whom he met and worked with at Melrose.

Notes, letters, short stories and novels written by the three reveal an aesthetic that valued the atypical social structure and cultures of northwestern Louisiana. In written media, this aesthetic is also evident in the work of Francois and Aunt Cammie. The aesthetic was in many ways governed by Aunt Cammie, as is shown by a letter written April 6, 1946 to Irene Wagner about Harnett Kane's text¹⁰ based about Isle Brevelle:

Dear dear Irene— your letter was a god send — so glad you wrote me as you did. That book of Harnett Kane made us all [] — all so wrong. Dan declares Kane shall [never] visit Melrose again — of course he is so ignorant — and now since he thinks he is [forward]—he does not take the trouble to be accurate—my friends in St. [Francisville] are all furious—Louise [Rutter] wrote—Kane's picture of me was a caricature not a portrait. . . . Kane created what he wrote— every place he wrote about was wrong— The Parlange's at New Roads were incensed— well its [quite]

¹⁰ According to the date on Aunt Cammie's letter and Kane's publishing record, I identify the book referred to here as Kane's *Plantation Parade: The Grand Manner in Louisiana* which was published in 1945.

[clear]—money— is all that counts— J. H.¹¹ only read the first part of [] —and said all about Isle Brevelle is inaccurate—Kane just never got it. Of course he should have let me read the Mss. before publishing—he did not have the [] — of course it would never have been published, if I had seen it. (Wagner Collection Folder 8)

Alluding to the role Aunt Cammie took in overseeing her authors and their creations, this letter reveals, as no other, how her disapproval and hurt affected other members of the Melrose Group. In this instance, Lyle who introduced Harnett Kane to Cammie Henry and Melrose dealt with his guilt in New Orleans, as Aunt Cammie's letter reveals without interruption:

I am so sorry he gave me that publicity — Lyle says he can't do a thing about it—for people would say he (Lyle) was jealous — Lyle is a gentleman. . . . I hate to tell, me. Lyle took [] to drink — nearly killed himself — is in a hospital right now — he had his nurse write me—all she said—Lyle was doing as well as could be expected—which tells [nothing].

Aunt Cammie's words allude to her beliefs about the books "her" writers produced and their public reception. For her, these books represented Cane River as it truly was. People read the books to learn about and come to know the region. She, and her writers, had a responsibility to the public and the individuals the books represented. Consequently the Melrose Group, like the entire occupational group of authors known as Local Colour Writers, was steeped in an aesthetic demanding authoritative representation of the regions they wrote about. They adhered to an aesthetic which was tradition-like in its governance of their work, governing through the shared knowledge of both the

¹¹ "J. H." refers to Aunt Cammie's husband John Hampton Henry, Senior.

Melrose writers and the inhabitants of the Cane River region.

In many ways, the four who gathered at Melrose to pursue their writing skills and their benefactor, Aunt Cammie, shared an interest in regional culture, its historic preservation through writing and through material culture collection and preservation. Information about the region often came from oral sources, individuals who had lived in the area all their lives and were willing to talk about their personal, ethnic and regional history.

Thus apart from most of the newspaper clippings in Aunt Cammie's scrapbooks the writings of these individuals were influenced by their direct contact with Cane River culture, with Aunt Cammie, and with personal experience narratives and traditional narratives they were told—as well as with their immersion in the total atmosphere of their Cane River surroundings.

The attention each group member gave to Cane River culture could be attributed to the artistic eye for details. There is, however, a stronger influence at work among this group. The influence is linked to two of its members' knowledge of folklore. Both Aunt Cammie and Lyle learned about folklore informally through their libraries, acquaintances, and acquaintance with the WPA's work, subsequently sharing that knowledge with other members of the Melrose group.

As with all interpretations, those created by the Melrose Writers would not sit solitary, not without subsequently imposed interpretations. In 1930, Mrs. Henry was to welcome another writer to Melrose, Francois Mignon. Mignon reinterpreted the Writers' aesthetic over the next two plus decades in the popular press through his personal

newspaper column. How Mignon's writings and visitors' reinterpretations of Melrose subsequently frame the Melrose Writers and their texts within the politics of cultural appropriation that surrounded activities at Melrose is the focus of Chapter Six. The following chapter will situate Carver's stories in the literary and folklore trends of her period and, then, consider her reinterpretation of the Cane River as a representative symbol of the South.

Chapter Six

Southern Letters and American Folklore

The short stories of Ada Jack Carver, in conjunction with her play *The Cajun*,¹ are her only published works. As such, they serve as a finely polished lens through which Carver, following the general standards created of Louisiana Local Colour writers, presented the Cane River region to the American reading public over a span of forty years. The stories' subject matter and composition, specifically considering Carver's use of folklore, steadily evolve, forming three distinct writing periods for her. Contextualizing this evolving writing strategy, this chapter will first briefly delineate both the Southern Literary movement and the field of American folklore studies from a Louisiana point of view. Second, Carver's work will also be situated in relationship to Louisiana's Local Colour movement. Third and finally, her use of tension in the depiction of female southern characters will be discussed as a product of these various contextual influences.

American Literature in the South

American Literature has a long and beneficial relationship with folklore studies. This relationship is of particular import for writers working in the period spanning the shift from American Romanticism to Realism. These writers, known as local colourists, were a dominant force in American literature during the 1880s and were noted for weaving elements of traditional regional culture into their work. Predominantly writing

¹ *The Cajun* will not be discussed in detail in this work due to extant scholarly discussions by Fletcher, Taylor, and Ford that more than adequately cover the play. It is a one-act play that presents a young couple who learn on their wedding day that they cannot legally marry because of the recent passing of the first cousin law.

in the western and southern regions of the United States, these authors included Mark Twain, George Washington Cable, and Sarah Orne Jewett.

Of these authors, Twain is a good example of local colourists and their integral ties to folklore. A newspaperman turned novelist, Twain, as other local colourists, was familiar with the texts folklorists collected and their link to traditional cultures of the regional United States. Local colourists were writing short stories and novels representing regional life and peoples as accurately as possible through the use of "speech, dress, mannerisms, habits of thought and topography." However the end product "emphasized verisimilitude of detail without being concerned often enough about truth to the larger aspects of life or human nature" (Holman and Harmon 280).

Many southern writers not only worked in this tradition, but were familiar with folklore studies through local or national associations. In fact of those individuals commonly cited as Louisiana's first folklorists - Lafcadio Hearn and George Washington Cable - Cable was also a Louisiana local colourist. They were the first authors of note to arise from the South following the Civil War. These two writers were situated in New Orleans for a good portion of their career. Situated in New Orleans they faced difficulties since there were few outlets for their work.

The years preceding the Civil War of 1861-65 decimated the literature of the South, beginning with the recruiting of the region's authors to promote and defend its social policy of slavery. Following the Civil War, there was little infrastructure left to support local writers, though the late 1800s saw the creation of little magazines in major southern cities. Most writers at this time were "home grown" and even if formally

educated, needed further self education to succeed. Those who succeeded in writing well, faced a nearly impossible publishing environment.

The South's few literary organs after the War could not afford to pay writers well (Hubbell 717). There were publishing agencies in the North which could pay well, but they were not interested in publishing authors whose writings promoted southern beliefs and life (714). These beliefs and the way of life they promoted had recently been the cause of the Civil War and were still not merely divisive, but incendiary in nature. By the 1920s, there were a few newspapers and magazines in the South that were the sum of publishing venues at this time.

Many writers turned to these papers as a means of making a living or wrote their fiction after earning a living in some other field. In Louisiana, Saxon and George Washington Cable began their careers as newspapermen (Kennedy 2). Others such as Grace King and Kate Chopin were able to write because they were women of means, or were supported by their family connections (Taylor 47, 145).

Despite the lack of local publishing outlets, southern writers obviously found outlets for their work during these early years – if they presented traditional Southern culture bereft of current Southern social and political beliefs. Southern literary historian Jay Hubbell suggests that it was in the 1870s when northern publishing houses discovered that it was profitable to publish Southern fiction for Northern readers. The success of George Washington Cable's *Old Creole Days*, published by the house of Scribner in 1879, demonstrated that it was possible for a southern writer to find a nationwide audience provided that he expressed no opinions that were repugnant to Northern and

Western readers (713). *Old Creole Days* is a prime example of how authors in this period could focus on the exotic traditional cultures of their state or region. Over time the interest in Southern culture grew, and other writers such as Georgia's Joel Chandler Harris, with his collections of African-American Uncle Remus tales, and Missouri's Kate Chopin began writing about the South.

Some of these writers came from academic backgrounds, but many were self-educated. They learned the craft of writing in newspapers or they improved their skills as part of their role as self-appointed cultural preservationists. In either case, the collection, creation and presentation of these works was not merely an attempt to save the heritage of dying cultures, but an attempt to save the "dying South." These texts were intrinsically linked to the South's postwar condition. They typified a region that in losing the War had lost its right to express its individuality, its political views in print. This writing, then, reacquired the right to express a regional identity that was distinct from that of the Union States, the Northern conquerors.

American Folklore in the Early 1900s

American Folklore scholarship as a field of inquiry was well defined through its annual journal by the time Carver published her first short story in 1907. Founded in 1888 along with the American Folklore Society, the *Journal of American Folklore* was in its nineteenth year at the time of Carver's first publication (Dorson xvi). Since its inception, the *Journal of American Folklore* was the leading voice of American scholars

collecting and publishing folklore, particularly anthropologists through the nineteen-forties (Zumwalt 26, 45). The emphasis of the field's primary organ on representing folklore as an area of study within anthropology resulted in several particular representations of folklore and groups possessing folklore. These representations and how they represent the Cane River region's cultural groups are the focus of this section.

In advance of Carver's time as a published author through her short stories of the mid- to late-twenties, the *Journal of American Folklore* frequently included Louisiana folklore. From the first issue of the journal, there were references to Louisiana's Creoles's folktales and the culture of her indigenous Native American tribe, the Caddo. And in 1905, the journal published George Williamson's "Superstitions from Louisiana" (229-30). The subject matter and groups representing Louisiana in the journal at this time were tied to marginal groups, small of number and existing outside or at the fringe of what was considered acceptable society at the time. This was, however, also true for the majority of groups from whom folklore was collected for publication in the journal.

Emphasis on groups of dissipating numbers can also be seen during Carver's lifetime in articles like John R. Swanton's "Mythology of the Indians of Louisiana and the Texas Coast" (285-89). Swanton's first two pages of a four page article detail the names of the area's tribes and the numbers of individuals left who represent them. He totals his count at 250 and supports the need for preservation of these peoples' lore and mythology by noting that merely one-third of this remaining population speaks their tribe's language.

Turning to articles written about folklore outside of Louisiana, there is a

complementary emphasis on primarily two groups. Those perceived as disappearing, and those marginalised from mainstream society by ethnicity, poverty, language or geographical isolation. The former groups primarily included tribes of Native Americans and the latter mostly non-Western European groups, excepting Scottish, Irish, and some German immigrant groups.²

Non-western European groups included African-Americans in the southern states,³ Native American tribes and groups in North, Central and South America,⁴ as well as groups in Puerto Rico and the Philippines.⁵ These groups were marginalised primarily by the differences between their ethnicity or language from that of their reporting scholars. Representative of the scholarly mind-set that identified these groups as different from mainstreamed European cultures is the following quote by Emelyn E. Gardner, who published folklore she collected in Schoharie County of New York in 1914.

In this excerpt, Gardner describes why the people of the county she collected from should be considered a folk group despite the fact that they cannot trace their ancestry to any particular ethnic group or geographical locale:

² Such as William G. Bek's article "Survivals of Old Marriage-Customs Among the Low Germans" 21 (1908): 60-67 and E. C. Perrow's "Songs and Rhymes From the South" 24 (1911): 137-55.

³ Such as: "Record of Negro Folklore" 21 (1908) 263-67, 22 (1909) 102-04; Cross's "Folklore from the Southern States" 21 (1909) 251-55; Odum's "Folk-Songs and Folk Poetry, as Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negroes" 24 (1911) 137-55.

⁴ Such as: "Record of American Indian Folklore" 21 (1908) 258-63, 366-75; Dixon's "Shashta Myths" 23 (1910) 8-37; Radin's "The Ritual and Significance of the Winnebago Medicine Dance" 24 (1911) 149-208.

⁵ See *Journal of American Folklore* issues for 1916.

A considerable number, of mixed blood in the main, know little of their forebearers outside of an inherited tradition or two concerning "big water"— a river, maybe—which it took many days to cross. It is chiefly among this latter class—who have allowed themselves gradually to be crowded away from the rich bottom-lands of the main valley to the poor, almost untillable farms of the isolated and barren hollows which have been scooped out of the soft sandstone formation...that survivals of folk-lore are most in evidence. (304)

Here the distinction of a folk group as individuals belonging to a specific ethnic, national or geographically placed group is broadened to include a group delineated due to a lack of education and to living in relative isolation and poverty.

Similarly the Euro-American groups studied were generally either bearers of folk song and ballad traditions believed to be dissipating, or groups that came from economically disadvantaged areas in Europe, or groups living in remote areas. Many groups were associated with more than one of these characteristics, as is evident from this excerpt from Louise Pound's description of the difficulty she faced researching traditional ballads in Nebraska.

Nebraska is not a very old State; and its population is somewhat heterogeneous, derived from various sources. It has, so far as I have yet discovered, no very old or stable communities, no isolated inbred communities, among which balladry best thrives, like those in the Cumberland Mountains, or like many in the Ozarks. (351)

This was a period in folklore scholarship when folk groups were being identified, and their folklore collected, around the world. The characteristics linking these disparate groups across nations, geographic features and climes, and languages, were their illiteracy or near illiteracy – with its associated poverty levels, isolation and, as in this last quote,

their possession of an identifiable folk tradition despite lacking a majority of the previously listed traits. In this way, educated individuals and children could be entertained.

The idea of folklore as an element of culture did occur as play party games are collected in the teens in the mid-west, superstitions are collected from college girls, and children's singing games are collected in the late twenties.⁶ Interestingly each of these broadenings of the concept of folk group was rigorously linked to the discipline's dominating perception of folklore as a product of groups possessing the traits mentioned earlier. Thus, for example, the superstitions of college girls are collected and each girl's ethnicity documented,⁷ and children's singing games are identified as survivals of folk poetry.⁸ Such reliance on the item as folklore, specifically on the item's historical connection to a history of economic disadvantage or ethnic heritage as a means of identifying folklore remnant, results in folklore being identified among the ranks of educated individuals.

As this expansion in the definition of folk group was occurring from the teens through the late twenties, folklorists were concurrently turning their attention to the South, and Louisiana in particular, again. This was a period when the results of the

⁶ See Ames' *Journal of American Folklore* article "Missouri Play-Party."

⁷ As in the article by Martha Warren Beckwith, "Signs and Superstitions Collected from American College Girls" *Journal of American Folklore* 36 (1923) 1-15.

⁸ See Jean Heck's "Folk Poetry and Folk Criticism" *Journal of American Folklore* 40 (1927) 1-77.

WPA's physical productions were being reaped. New and better roads throughout the Deep South opened up previously closed areas. Researchers focussed on groups who once isolated, now expanded the base of information previously collected from more accessible representatives of their ethnic groups. Some of these groups were composed of educated individuals.

Louisiana offered new access to Cajun and Creole communities that were previously isolated due to a lack of roads, necessitating travel by boat in earlier periods. Education was difficult to attain in many such isolated areas. Yet Creole communities, in particular, composed of literate individuals due to the special social position afforded by their heritage before the Civil War were included in folklore research. For like the school girls mentioned above, these individuals possessed knowledge of folklore that was traceable to a specific ethnic heritage. The item collected justifying collection from an educated group of individuals.

Now, in the late teens and twenties, scholars romanticised these groups as they emphasized their remote locales and blurred local ethnic nomenclatures, even as they attempted to document them. Hilda Roberts's romantic description of Louisiana's cultural groups within Iberia Parish, in a 1927 *Journal of American Folklore* article, stands as an example of the cyclic definitions which often further blurred regional nomenclatures instead of clarifying them.

Here, then, the nations of Europe met to overcome the dangers of the wilderness, threatened by contact with two savage races. The Indian has almost entirely disappeared; the negro remains; and from the white race three distinct groups have evolved—the French, the Creoles or Cajuns,

who are descendants of French and Spanish ancestry, and the "Americans," who may be either English, or Scotch or Irish. . . . the term French refers to a small group of refined, intelligent French people, who according to some class distinctions might be called Creoles, but who could not possibly be confused with Cajans [original spelling retained]. (144)

This excerpt is of particular importance because it not only delineates the main cultural groups that inhabit Louisiana as a whole, but alludes to the French, and by association other groups possessing some education, as separate from ethnic folk groups, through the use of "refined" and "intelligent." For Roberts, this effectively partitions the French as a group from the Creoles and the Cajuns.

Though Roberts's research in Louisiana's southern portion (Iberia Parish in Cajun country) separates the French from the Creole and Cajun populations, previous discussions have revealed this distinction to be a finer one in the Isle Brevelle area of the Cane River Region, where Carver and her friends were setting their literary cultural portrayals.

The Cane River Region's French—by Roberts's definition and from this point referred to as Creoles in the current discussion—were uniquely situated, so as to be encompassed by the newly expanding definitions of folk group. This educated and previously privileged group, marginalised by the events following the Civil War, had always existed in relative geographical isolation on Isle Brevelle. It was during Carver's lifetime that this geographical isolation was accentuated through the community's becoming further impoverished, and through its losing elements of its traditional culture as this isolation was penetrated with roads, telephones and electricity.

Thus by the time Carver was at the height of her short story production in the teens and twenties, the Creoles of Cane River were identifiable by several traits as a folk group in danger of losing its traditions. How a writer such as Carver, who lived during the period of American Realism, could make a career of short stories written in the Romantic mode, necessitates a consideration of Louisiana's literary movements and influences as well as of Carver's place within this literary context.

Mentoring & Louisiana's Local Colour Movement: The Melrose Writers and Folk Groups

The Melrose Group or Melrose Writers mirror characteristics of both occupational folk groups and computer-mediated folk groups. The blending of these characteristics formed the situation where several educated Euro-Americans came together to share information about writing and publication in the South. As seen in the previous discussion of Southern literature, information regarding editing, writing and publication was learned and shared informally. A few northern publishers hand picked southern authors and coached them in the subject matter and authorial styles acceptable to Northern readers. A prime example of this transferral of informal knowledge was Grace King. The relationship she had with her publisher was extended to promising Southern authors through her Thursday salon. Saxon, an attender of this salon, learned how to network and author publishable works informally from Grace King and other attending writers. When Saxon began sharing what he'd learned with other younger authors through his personal salon in the Old French Quarter and, then, continued these activities

at Melrose with Henry, Carver and Dormon, he was creating a third generation of mentors and writers who'd learned information necessary to the successful composition and publication of their craft through informal communication.

The supportive relationship existing between Saxon, Carver, Dormon and Henry that began at Melrose continued even when the group was unable to meet face-to-face at Melrose. They remained in touch, sharing information about their writing and preservation activities while away from Melrose by letter writing in a manner that mirrors activities of computer-mediated folk groups. For as many computer mediated groups develop communication strategies that are unique to that group and its members, such as emoticons or group specific acronyms⁹ the Melrose group developed a system of communication unique to their letters. This systems is primarily seen in the provision of emphasis through underlining. Underlining and double underlining, like the use of emoticons, provides clarification suggesting emotional levels of the letter writer through this added emphasis. This style of communicative emphasis is particular to the group's exchanged letters, occurring with greater frequency there than in correspondence with members outside the group. The greatest frequency occurring in letters communicating with Mrs. Henry. The following discussion highlights other characteristics of occupational and computer-mediated folk groups that are mirrored by the Melrose Writers.

⁹ See Bruce Mason for group specific examples of emoticon and acronym use. Nancy Baym discusses group specific understandings of space, as represented in a text-mediated format.

Occupational folk groups share informal knowledge about a specific vocation's or trade's tasks including the work experiences and skills required to successfully complete such tasks. While McCarl's original definition of an occupational folk group¹⁰ was formed to describe the folklife of counter hegemonic working class groups, it offers unique insight into the creative process behind much literature.¹¹ Like occupational folk groups which have a life composed of skills and techniques, worker's narratives, and customary behaviour on the job,¹² members of the Melrose literary circle not only supported each other through correspondence, but exchanged research techniques, observational practices, and techniques concerning their styles of expressive behaviour: letter writing, photography, and literary composition. Members of the Melrose Writers were also part of the Melrose Group, and therefore shared an aesthetic which made them members of that folk group which used folklore and preservation activities to solidify their link to the Plantation South, and to the elite Euro-American society of their own era. In addition as members of the Melrose Writers, these three individuals shared

¹⁰ Occupational folklore is composed of "the complex of techniques, customs and modes of expressive behaviour which characterize a particular work group" (McCarl 3-18).

¹¹ McCarl has proposed that counter-hegemonic groups exist within institutional contexts and Bacon-Smith has proposed that such groups exist within popular culture. I am here proposing that we can find similar situations in elite culture. Similar situations include those where the techniques of elite culture are used to further counter-hegemonic thought.

¹² This list is the summary Archie Green gives of Robert McCarl's definitive characteristics of occupational folk life in his 1975 *Journal of American Folklore* article on fire-jumpers (71-102).

informal knowledge concerning research practices and editing strategies. The types of informal information and interests they shared with Ada is the subject of the following section.

The Research Process

The process of representing local culture required Ada and the Melrose Writers to not only study, participate in and observe the Cane River region's ethnic cultures and traditional events, but to also communicate their findings with each other. Face-to-face communication occurred infrequently for the Melrose writers and even when it did occur the entire group was not generally present. Thus like many computer-mediated folk groups "the Melrose Writers' interactions span time asynchronously" and frequently occur in written format (Baym 143). The letters exchanged by the Melrose Writers frequently included enclosures of stories they'd written for reading and comment by other members. Also enclosed were letters received from other members of the group, or newspaper clippings and references of interest because they were about the Cane River Region. Information exchanged thus mirrors the type of communication that occurs today on the Internet thru e-mail, newsgroups and listserves since groups in each of these situations share three characteristics of folk groups.

First, these groups primarily communicate in written formats that span time asynchronously. Second, these communications further a shared understanding of the group itself—and frequently by extension a common understanding of a specific

locale—concurrently such groups are a central aspect of information sharing amongst a larger societal group (Correll 272). Third, the shared communications offer an evolving perception of the group and/or its locale (Correll 279-82).

The Melrose Writers, as a group, communicated primarily through letters about their shared experience of daily life in the South, about their representations of the Cane River Region in literature, gardens and art. They were also a smaller portion of a larger group of Southern writers struggling to gain recognition in a publishing environment dominated by Northern publishers and authors. Sharing experiences and insights about their creative endeavours, the Melrose writers like other folk groups created a sense of community despite infrequent face-to-face visits through:

the sense of common reality [that] serves to maintain a community that carries out many of the same functions as do geographically anchored communities. (Correll 297)

The Melrose Writers created a sense of common reality as they approached the research portion of the writing process in three ways. First, they frequently exchanged and bought texts for each other and also referenced texts found in the Melrose Plantation library. Second, they planned group forays into the region and more distant areas of the state. Third, they shared information about observation practices of others, and about cultural observations made when the group was dispersed. The Melrose Writers took three informal approaches to researching local culture for presentation in their writing.

The Melrose Library held several texts of interest for Ada and her friends. The library held volumes on American history, folklore, literature and crafts, particularly volumes focussing on the American South (Melrose Collection Folder 322). Texts

about folklore included works by Andrew Lang, Frank Dobie, S. Baring-Gould, Modie C. Boatwright, Ruth E. Finley, and Zora Neale Hurston, among others (Appendix II). Books of interest to the Melrose Writers were loaned to them by Cammie Henry, often for extended periods. Ada made use of this option, frequently departing Melrose with several books at a time (Melrose Collection Folder 325, Scrapbook 217 65, 101, Scrapbook 83 75).

Another means of learning about regional peoples and events used by the Melrose Writers and Henry was travelling the Cane River region. These trips were frequently orchestrated by Henry or an acquaintance and included various groupings of her friends (Dormon Collection Folders 519, 522). Some were short overnight trips, due to responsibilities at home and costs of the trips, as this letter from Henry to Dormon details:

Mate — fearfully disappointed you can't go this coming week — of course I understand — but all was set here for [journey] — had full car — so would cut expense — [Fred] to drive — all seemed perfect Miss [Lay] so wants to see the weavers — and her visit is out — such a pity we can't make it — my getting off so uncertain and such an undertaking — I doubt very much if I can go after the 20th — wanted to see the Iris in bloom once more. . . . Mate — if we could go to the weaver now be ideal — remember the Iris would be in bloom — and we should be at [McHenry's] at dusk to see gathering of birds — Be a tremendous undertaking for me — but I could be about one night.

Let's try it — I'll not go unless you come . . . so if you can come at once — not Saturday or Sunday. Those days I must be at Melrose — signs don't keep people off the grass.

You and I can have fun. Fred drive —Love, Mate
[Aunt Cammie] (Dormon Collection Folder 600)

Other trips were planned by group members who were always on the look out for places to visit, as the following letter from Carver to Henry shows.

Here Carver offers another in a series of several trips to Cajun country:

I'm planning to go down to Natchitoches before long, however, for a visit to Mama, and at that time we must go to the Teche. We simply must...the road is calling! I'm furious with you and Carrie by the way for not asking me to go down with you on that boat! How could you forget me that way! . . . Am crazy to hear all about your trip. Have a new place lined up for us to go — "Grand Isle" — in the [Barataria] swamps or did you take it in on your recent trip? A friend has told me about it. (Carver April 15, 1927)

Such trips were a special treat for those journeying, offering Melrose Writers extensive uninterrupted periods with Henry, as well as new observations which might guide their writing.¹³ At times, trips were orchestrated events for select groups of acquaintances.

One such event is mentioned in a letter from Carver to Henry in 1927 just before *The Cajun* was staged in Natchitoches:

Aunt Cammie, dearest of friends: How can I ever thank you enough for the wonderful things you passed on to us when we were with you last Sunday!—for the privilege you so graciously gave us of enjoying Melrose on such a lovely afternoon. We were after "atmosphere," "local colour," the "feel," the "pathos" that would best help our cast to interpret *The Cajun*; but atmosphere is a poor word for all that we got from our trip. . . . They were simply carried away with you and with Melrose. We talked of you all the way to Natchitoches, and each expressed himself as having come away with the thing he most needed: . . . You know I told you once that you do this for people; its one of the nicest things about you.

¹³ 1926 was also the year that Carver's play "The Cajun" played in Shreveport.

Henry, here as at many other times, offered outsiders a glimpse of her Cane River Region. She shared the history of the items she'd collected, the house she lived in, revealing the Melrose Group's common reality, their understanding of the pathos and local colour of the region.

A final means of broadening knowledge of the Cane River region employed by the Melrose Group was the sharing of clippings and letters about writing ideas and about personal experiences of observational activities. This, too, is seen in Carver's letter to Henry of April 15, 1927:

I'm sending you some clippings about *The Cajun's* triumph in Dallas, where it won first place the other day in the state's tournament for one-act plays. Won out over . . . twelve others; so we were all pleased. Oh, I have so much to tell you, and ask you about! for I'm thinking of beginning my novel at last, and need your help.

Exchanging information about their experiences, the Melrose Writers created for themselves a sense of community despite at times being separated by hundreds of miles. An example of an orchestration of cultural experiences is found in letters detailing an interest in Catholic nuns. As early as 1925, Ada wrote to Henry about both missing Saxon and observing three Catholic sisters at the fair grounds:

I have thought of Lyle so often, and have hoped he wasn't absorbed by people. The last I heard of him was the letter you received when I was at Melrose; but I always know, wherever he is, he likes us just the same. Of course he has too many friends, but then he'll always have, being the charming, provocative creature he is! I thought of Lyle the other day, when John, David, and I went to the fair in Shreveport. On the fair-grounds I was simply entranced, watching three nuns taking it in. (We followed them.) The climax came when they played the wheel, and one of them

won a baby doll. (You know the kind: intricate, curly hair; inscrutable, saccharine smile; tinsel dress tilted wickedly up in the back, etc.) She — the nun — was very pleased, and walked off with the thing in her arms. It was a delicious incongruous picture! . . . and one that Lyle would have enjoyed. (Melrose Collection Scrapbook 83 75)

Henry forwarded the letter to Saxon, who replied,

Got . . . the letter with Ada and Carrie inside! What girls they are, and aren't the letters absolutely characteristic? I chortled with glee over both of them. They are so completely themselves. I can picture . . . Ada following the nuns about, at the fair. What a lovely thing to have happen. I'm quite envious. (Federal Writers' Project Folder 125)

A few years later in May of 1931, Saxon wrote to Dormon detailing his current interest in the nuns of New Orleans and the recording techniques of a photographer acquaintance:

I wish you were here; I made a trip to New Orleans to meet Doris Ulmann, the photographer, and — after spending one day with the Ursulines, and two days with the nigger nuns in their respective convents, and some more time at the banana wharf with Mimi and Popo, we drove up to Melrose, where Doris is taking pictures like mad. Or rather with a methodical saneness and intense activity, an average of about four dozen per day. She doesn't photograph places, ever, but takes only portraits of Sammie Peace with a cross-cut saw, etc. . . . She doesn't even glance toward acer rubrum or salix babylonica, except with a thought as to a suitable background (out of focus), so I suppose that she wouldn't interest you much; but her figure studies are really superbly good. (Dormon Collection Folder 557)

Sharing experiences like these, the Melrose Writers' texts benefited not only from first hand research, but also from second-hand accounts of observations, as well as Saxon's

shared speculations about Ulman's photographic choices.

A third way of creating a common experience was through sharing information about books read, stored in the Melrose library, or bought to be shared with the group. Letters do not generally list titles of books borrowed¹⁴ from the Melrose library. However letters do mention texts that one or of the Melrose Group felt another should read, as in this quote from a letter from Carver to Dormon:

I wish I could accept your invitation and run down for a few days but I am terribly involved at present. Why can't you come to me? I'll give you leisure to work and I've so many things you ought to read. Please come! (Dormon Collection Folder 523)

Through such informal sharing of personal experience, excursions into the surrounding region and formal texts from the Melrose library, Ada and the other Melrose Writers actively shared with Henry an interest in the local region and its people. They also informally taught each other about the region and ways to research local culture. The skills they developed and the knowledge they attained polished their finished texts, as much as the editing knowledge they shared with each other.

The Editorial Process

Carver, as a member of the Melrose Writers, was part of a group of individuals who frequently offered their editing skills for other members' use. Letters reveal that

¹⁴ The mention of books taken from Melrose often occurs when Henry has inquired about missing texts, or one of the group writes to her explaining their tardiness in returning a text or the importance of having had the text at hand, as in Carver's March 21, 1927 letter to Henry (Melrose Collection, Scrapbook 217).

these writers, when unable to meet face to face, would mail drafts of stories to each other for review. For Carver, Dormon was a writing companion, while Saxon more frequently reviewed her short stories.

Correspondence again reveals how the exchange of information between the Melrose Writers took place. At times, they were able to visit each other and offer their editing skills while in residence. However, when unable to travel, they would rely on the mail. Such a reliance occurred while Dormon was writing her piece "Clothesline." "Clothesline" was written and shared with Saxon. Saxon on reading the piece and offering his congratulations on a well crafted work, suggested that Carver read it:

I've been thinking about "Clothes Lines" and the longer I think, the more sure I am that you have hit the bull's eye this time. I'm crazy for Ada to see it. Send it off quick!
(Dormon Collection Folder 565)

The mail served, in this way, to link the Melrose Writers and deliver helpful advice from Saxon, the group's frequently travelling mentor. It also served as a means for planning writing and editing visits for Carver and Dormon. For while Carver, Dormon, and Saxon would sometimes gather at Melrose for this purpose, it was more likely that Carver and Dormon would meet either at Briarwood or at Carver's home in Minden to write in company, and afterwards edit each other's product.

According to her letters, Carver was frequently the instigator of these visits. She certainly felt isolated, without the support of any literary community in Minden as the following letter mentioning the discovery of a peer shows:

Wood and I are having a lovely time with poetry. He has some charming things. I want you to see them. And he's

done a one-act play that's a perfect gem. It positively thrills me to think there is someone in Minden besides myself who wants to write! . . . (there are others who want to write, as I've found out to my sorrow. But this boy really has a gift.) (Dormon Collection Folder 522)

Before this period, Carver worked hard to retain Dormon's interest in short story writing, by offering writing visits and materials about the writing process to Dormon:

Carrie dear — listen: I want you to come up and see me at once, will you? Come from [Chestnut] on the [train] or if it would be more convenient to you, I could meet you in Shreveport and we could drive back to Minden. It's like this: I want you to bring [some] of your stories (esp. "Possum") and let's work on them. And then, I have some books I want you to read, on the short story. The [Palmer] people, by the way, sent me recently this whole short-story course complimentary. Of course I'm not going to bother with it, but will look over the books. I had [written] them a rather scorching letter denouncing them for exploiting me and misrepresenting things in their advertising — and so evidently they wish to conciliate me! I thought perhaps I'd bring these books with me to Briarwood — but it would be better for you to come here. Then later perhaps David and I could visit you.

Now I mean this. You must do it. Write me at once when to expect you. For I think it would do you good, dear. And I am sure it would help me. I need you to talk to — and laugh with. As for clothes — take no thought what you shall wear! It's a rather off — season in Minden just [now] and we do not have to bother with people much at present. I mean there are not a lot of parties in [Minden] just now so it would be a nice time to come. We would really work and get something done. (Dormon Collection Folder 524)

Such incentives worked for a time, but then Dormon's interests shifted towards the production of non-fiction writing, and her forestry job. This change in focus left Carver more isolated than before, a fact alluded to in letters, like this one written in 1926, that

plea with Dormon to visit:

Carrie dear—It has been ages since we have seen each other, and we have so much to discuss and talk over! I'm so sorry you haven't been able to spend a week-end with me— but when your school is out I want you for a real visit. (Dormon Collection Folder 521)

Letters such as this one do not appear to have resulted in the support and camaraderie of new writing visits as Carver had hoped, leaving her more isolated at a time when her visits to Melrose Plantation began to wane due to her ill health and family responsibilities. Just a few years later, Francois Mignon installs himself at Melrose, where he claimed to have heard about Carver from Henry and Saxon, but never to have met her.

Carver, Feminist Local Colorist: Encoding the Female Mind of the South

Feminist theory has moved beyond the collection and preservation of traditional communication strategies used by women that was the focus of feminist folklore compendiums such as Farrer's *Women and Folklore: Images and Genres* written in 1975 or Jordan and Kalcik's later *Women's Folklore, Women's Culture* of 1985. These texts' focus on genres as a means of gendered expression that delineate a world within a world. For as Folklorist Margaret Yocom makes plain when women meet they do so bounded by their shared experiences within a patriarchal culture,

for women, when they meet, know that they have many common bonds, especially in the work they do to maintain both their homes and their bodies. They cook and trade

recipes, bear children and raise them, worry about their relatives, clean, decorate, sew and make gifts, welcome guests, and share information about sicknesses, cures, and doctors.

What they do not or cannot do also bonds women together. Although they might keep the records in the family Bible up-to-date, for example, they will not inherit the book itself. Because women cannot pass on to their children the name they themselves received at birth, they often do not inherit family documents, furniture or land. . . . Because women have no voice in many decisions, they do not represent jobs, power, or money to one another.
(49-50)

Building on this premise of a traditional group whose interactions and communications are structured by gender, feminist scholars in folklore consider other key structuring characteristics of this traditional gendered discourse noting that it frequently expresses "the power of reproductive labour." Folklorists Kay Turner and Suzanne Seriff highlight the areas where this reproductive labour occurs and the philosophy behind its activities,

Among these are child-rearing, nursing the sick, care of the dying, the organization of family gatherings, and a variety of spiritual practices centred upon the well-being of the family.... the political significance of a maternally derived ideology of reproduction... emphasizes social practices based on affiliation, concern for others, sharing, caring, gifting, and noninstitutionalized religious belief.
(113)

As feminist theory defined these characteristic elements of gendered folklore, other characteristics of women's communication strategies were defined. Important in regard to the up-coming discussion is the need for women, that is individuals with bounded lives, to be able to present themselves according to accepted societal norms as sociologist Erving Goffman detailed in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

Building on Goffman's position that norms govern an individual's presentation of self, sociologist Edwin M. Schur indicates that "once we recognize that there are norms governing how we present ourselves to others, we can see the enormous potential for gender-based deviance defining to occur in routine interaction" (54).

Identification of deviant self presentation in traditional activities of women entered the purview of folklore with Joan Newlon Radner's compilation of articles on the subject in *Feminist Messages: Coding in Women's Folk Culture*.¹⁵ These articles detailed how women used symbolism and everyday activities as venues for subversive self expression or opportunities that afforded women the chance to encode their self expression within acceptable daily activities from quilting and singing to the cooking of dinners.¹⁶

Encoding these self expressions requires the use of coding strategies. Coding is the means that governs,

the expression or transmission of messages potentially accessible to a (bicultural) community under the very eyes of a dominant community for whom these same messages are either inaccessible or inadmissible. (Radner and Lanser 3)

Radner and Lanser expand this definition noting that there are three specific types of coding: implicit, explicit and complicit. Complicit strategies use "a code that has been

¹⁵ Though Radner and Lanser focus on implicit coding in their book, it is their definitions of coding and general comments regarding complicit coding that are of particular importance for the current discussion of Carver's coding strategies.

¹⁶ Articles discussing these elements of traditional women's expression include: "She Really Wanted to Be Her Own Woman": Scandalous Sunbonnet Sue," "Wishful Willful Wily Women: Verbal Strategies for Female Success in the Child Ballads," and "Burning Dinners: Feminist Subversions of Domesticity."

collectively determined ahead of time and can therefore be adopted by an entire community" (5). Thus coding strategies can divert attention from sensitive themes with esoteric knowledge to suggest to the decoder, frequently a cultural insider, that the ostensible theme encompasses a covert message.¹⁷ The following discussion of Carver's activities as a writer will consider the boundaries placed on her authorial activities, and detail how she used her short stories as a venue for complicit¹⁸ coded self expression.

Analysing Carver's stories from the viewpoint of feminist theory's concept of coding is one important step in defining not merely her presentation of the southern feminine experience or her perceptions of Louisiana's Cane River region, but also, as Brown and Ewell have noted, in analysing "the female mind of the south."

One aspect of such an analysis is a better appreciation of how these essentially restrictive experiences interact, that is, how being a woman is shaped by Louisiana's particular brand of southernness. (Brown and Ewell 3-4)

For Carver and her female characters, being a woman is shaped by "Louisiana's particular brand of southernness." Both are shaped by the state's actual—and in the stories portrayed—dominant patriarchy. As shown in Chapter Two, this empowered patriarchy

¹⁷ This type of narrative within a narrative is generally termed metanarration in English literature studies. Coding refers to metanarration with the intent, conscious or subconscious, of communicating information surreptitiously. (Brown and Ewell 3-4)

¹⁸ Radner and Lanser's definitions of coding are problematic in the current instance due to no extant communications documenting Carver's deliberate use of stereotyping. Due to Carver's use of a code, stereotypes of southern culture, that was known across the region I have termed her use of coding complicit. However her use could have been unintentional due to the lack of verifying documentation and therefore her covert message implicit coding as are the examples offered in Radner and Lanser's book.

supports a cultural system that offers limited roles to women, and the women existing within Louisiana and Carver's stories are able to challenge cultural expectation only with approval of the patriarchy or through encoded endeavours. Encoding, the act of coding, as defined by Joan Radner and Susan Lanser, requires both a "concealed message and the adoption of a code" (6).

In an attempt to broaden the knowledge base which informs "the female mind of the South," this chapter considers how Carver, as Euro-American-southerner, author, friend, sister, mother and wife, is shaped by the surrounding cultures and traditions of Louisiana. And secondly, continues to decode:

. . . how, Louisiana--and the South--is constructed by its women[, Carver in particular, since]. . . that interaction could go an important distance toward construing 'the female mind of the south,' (Brown and Ewell 3-4)

This will be done by detailing how Carver constructed, and at times encoded, a personal version of the South she knew in her writing, a South published and read across the nation, which expands on the myth of the post Civil War South; and, how Carver's portrayal of the women of the South reveals that due to ethnic differences there cannot be one female mind of the South, as Brown and Ewell posit.

Carver's short stories are of particular interest because they present several views of the South and Louisiana's Cane River region, in particular, from a female perspective. They provide, then, a second perspective from which the 'female mind of the south' can be constructed. Carver's stories reveal a feminine sense of place that is sometimes tied to homes owned by others, but more often reveals places defined, created and

perpetuated by Southern women. Reviewing her works suggests the simple interpretation of lifelong pursuit of self understanding. Her earliest works focus on the relationship of mothers to their daughters; her second period writing concentrates on the feminine years of courtship; and her later short story writing concentrates on aging within the ethnic cultures of her region (Meese 144).

What Carver has created in her fiction, then, is an image of cultural interactions from an Euro-American woman's perspective. Her short stories outline those characteristics that are definitive of the South, of Euro-American women within southern culture, and of ethnic cultures in the Cane River region of Louisiana. As Brown and Ewell have aptly noted, concerning local colour portrayals of this region, there is in the South a notorious 'sense of place,' one that is reflected by its fictions as well as by its statistics. Rural isolation and a dramatic shared history have contributed much to what Richard Gray calls southerners' "belief in the power of environment, this feeling of attachment to landscape . . . one of the structuring principles of Southern myth" (4).

This element of the Southern myth furthered the link popularly made between folklore and "the untrodden pathways" of the South. For literature, the technical element Carver employed in propagating this myth is of import. For folklore, the representations of folk belief, the support she received from her folk group and the cultural ramifications of her writing (and the folk group's work) on regional culture and the creation of folklorism¹⁹ is of import.

¹⁹ Folklorisms are created items which follow the expected stylistic and technical format for a traditional folklore genre, but which have been created. As a general rule

Below, I address three areas of interest for folklore and literature scholars: 1) does Carver portray documented traditions in her work; 2) does she represent these traditions faithfully; and 3) to what end does she employ them in her short stories? Attention to the technical use of folklore in the representation of southern culture will be considered through the exploration of Carver's portrayal of the feminine southern experience and of the ethnic cultures of the Cane River region, while addressing Carver's portrayal of the South, Cane River and women.

Carver's Conceptual South

Piecing together descriptions of the South, as portrayed in Carver's short stories, is a process that requires not only identification and analysis of these descriptions, but also comparison with her descriptions of the North. For Carver's descriptions of the South rely on oppositional presentations of cultural characteristics. Her consistent pattern of presentation draws the reader into the geographical South as a character enters the region or describes perceptions of the region; then sporadic notions of cultural differences between the regions are introduced to delineate social and familial differences between the regions. Consequently, Carver contrasts, and so identifies, four pivotal definitive elements in the delineation of Northern and Southern regions within the United States: geography, social interaction and structure, the use of technology, and

since these items have been created, they neither exist in living folk tradition, nor have been documented by folklore scholars. See Regina Bendix's *The Search for Authenticity* and Terri Brewer's *The Marketing of Tradition* for examples and further discussion.

the role of family.

The point of departure for this discussion of definitive elements must be a recreation of Carver's oppositional definition of the South. The South in her writing was after all what the North was not. If the South was home, then Cane River was the front porch; and the North was one's misunderstood, but grudgingly acknowledged neighbour. Identifying the characteristic elements of Carver's South begins with the most general element of her various descriptions, the differences between the social life of the North and the South.

Descriptions of the North by Carver are notable for their paucity and vagueness. Generally her descriptive characteristics are attributed by the narrator to two characters: Phyllis, the female dancer in "Maudie" who is known to perform and travel in the North, and Harvey, the hero of "Angelle Glynn." Phyllis finds the difference between servants in the two regions humorous when her front bell rings and no one goes to answer the door:

"The maid is probably asleep," Phyllis murmured. The incompetence of our servants always amuses Phyllis when she returns to us from the East, gives her quiet satisfaction. "It's so . . . *Southern*," she says with her laugh. (107)

While Phyllis comments on these differences as a southerner noting characteristics of her homeland with amused comfort, Harvey describes Louisiana as an outsider who is confused over the contradictions in evidence about him:

Harvey made an effort to summon his drowsy faculties and thrash out the matter in cold reason, but the scented land got into your bones somehow and he heard the song once more. He was beginning to rue the day he had

looked away to Dixie land. . . . a land where railroads awakened the stillness of Indian pinewoods, and industry prevailed. What right had any river . . . to sing a community to sleep? What right had any town, to follow a stream's wild whim? What right to exist had street lamps, laboriously lighted at dusk by aged darkies? . . . As for those crazy old houses!—you went down two superfluous steps to your clothes closet, and you ascend two superfluous steps to the bathroom with its built-in wooden tub.

"They planned 'em this way to make it hard on the slaves," said Harvey viciously to himself.

What beastly right had all these things to unite in creating an old-world atmosphere, the pathos of which somehow took hold of a man? (55)

Harvey struggles to remain aloof from this old-world atmosphere and pathos of the Cane

River region:

In vain he brought himself to think of his bridge building, and the smug Yankee environment of his youth. He even concentrated upon a silly but ingenious device some Yankee mind had invented to supplant the truant collar button. But a nebulous sense of unreality persisted. As he strode about the room, Harvey observed something hanging against the wall, something that released a gentle, fragrant dust when he touched it. It was a calendar of the year 1859. (55-56)

What Harvey struggles with is the idea of a New South, a South whose history falls into three phases: pre-Civil War, Civil War and post-Civil War. During his experiences in the post-Civil War, he confronts a region characterized by the best of the old South gentility, and the pathos of the legacies left to the loser of the Civil War. This dichotomy reveals a further richness of irony.

The irony resides in this story's depiction of a stereotyped South, as a region — industrialized and civilized by northern technology brought to bear on ravaged, agrarian

land after the Civil War — which engenders even in the victors of this war a sense of longing for the slower agrarian lifestyle destroyed by that very war. For Harvey this identification was so strong, he wrote his grandfather a letter suggesting his growing lassitude, "in which he stated shamelessly that the only way to live in the North was never to come South" (59).

The North was then to Harvey and the Yankees he symbolizes a place of reason, and technology, with few links to the past. Daily life progressed at a much quicker pace than in the South, for both servants and employers. Life was not closely linked to rural ways of living. Though Carver suggests in these descriptions of differences between the North and South several characteristics of the South and her populace, other short stories offer fuller descriptions of the region and its characteristic markers.

Carver adds to the vision of an agrarian South accepting the raiment of the North's technology while integrating a healthy appreciation of the South's pre-Civil War traditions by presenting four other characteristics of the South. She offers an image of the South based upon the politics, geography, social structure, community, and role of family in the Cane River region.

Politics and the South cannot be discussed without attention to the Civil War and its effect on the Southern states. Carver briefly pays tribute to these events, describing the South just after the War from a stereotypical southern view point:

Louisiana and her sister states lay fallen, victims of the
smooth-tongued black-hearted vultures who came to feed
on our shattered land in its sorrow. (25)

Though romanticised and patently designed to stir empathy, this description of

Louisiana after the war does allude to the decimation that occurred under the economic depression of Reconstruction. Harvey observes that southerners did not see the need to,

repair things which went to pieces, — fences, porches, and gates, for instance, that moaned as if neglected and took on an uncanny human aspect. (56)

They refused, concurrently, to "repair" their culture, letting the past traditions survive in tattered form as daily life in the New South continued. These traditions were sometimes continued due to regional needs, such as the South's need, to rely heavily on waterways for transportation while railroads were repaired after the War. Thus, such traditions determine a context for the importance of Cane River to the characters in Carver's South.

Carver's geographic perspective of the South relies on the New South's implicit dichotomy between technology and the natural environment, a direct result of Northern attentions following the war. For the Cane River region is described as existing along the Cane River and its communities, linked to each other and the outside world by the River road and, subsequently, a new highway.

The rivers are central modes of transportation following the Civil War for the state of Louisiana, but they serve as indicators of weather and crop success or failure too:

An overflow in April and a drought in July and August, when the hot earth drank up the river and it shrank to silver trickle. And then came the funny green grasshoppers, and the ants and bugs and scorpions. The distant hills grew lean, forlorn; and in the curious beauty and apathy of the land people hungered, and many were sick. (122)

The river is thus a central indicator of well-being for crops and the local community. When the river fails, ill winds blow sickness and pestilence into the lives of the Cane River's residents. But when the river runs full, there is peace in the local area and access to "the river," the Mississippi and so the centre of Louisiana culture, New Orleans (136).

Along Isle Brevelle the locally significant geographical feature is situated on either side of the region's Creole community; existing like an island (148), culturally isolated in the physical landscape of Louisiana:

The free-mulattos of French-descent owned their land and raised cotton and corn and sugar cane. They maintained a convent for their children and a priest who shrived their souls in the little white church on the river. All day long the pigeons cooed from the low hanging eaves of the houses. All day long the white geese waddled by on the roadside. (119)

The river shone in the sunshine. White geese swam under the bank and a crane stepped gingerly along the shore with his slim coral legs. The lilies were thick in the little bays, shining against the dark banks. A paper-mulberry tree dripped its yellow leaves into the water. . . . Along the banks, each with its strip of river-front, squatted the low adobe houses of the people, the free-mulattos. The houses had batten shutters and wide, leaning clay chimneys. (123)

This community, like Carver's South, is not immune to change, to the touch of the North. In fact in Carver's South, the River Road is representative of this influence, for it is "where willows [are] cool and grey with summer" (114),

The old rutted dirt road that fringed the Cane had been abandoned. The highway cut through the swamps and marshy land and fields full of corn and refused to follow

the whim of the river. It seemed
. . . relentless and terrible. It even ploughed its way
through people's dooryards, rooting up ancient landmarks:
oaks and chinas²⁰ and gnarled crepe-myrtles, their
branches bowed to the earth with bloom. (Carver 148)

Carver's geographic South is in flux, changing through additions of transient Northern workers to her population and of these workers' products, their bridges, roads, and the legacy of their cultural interactions with and perceptions—sometimes changed—of the South. Despite these new influences, the social structure of Carver's South remains steadfastly rooted in economics and ethnicity, as does her region's look of disrepair remain steadfast.

Carver's South revolves around a social structure which is a continuation of the pre-Civil War South in its hierarchical approach to community interactions based on individuals' racial and gender affiliations. Carver alludes to and defines this construct through her characters' perceptions of each other and her descriptions of their daily activities. The primary factor governing social hierarchies of Carver's South, specifically the fact that the region's Mulatto population lives in relative isolation from all other social groups, emphasizes two facts characteristic of the South's social structure: race and economic standing. Mixed racial heritage, specifically Euro-African-American, may offer not only opportunity for social and economic benefit: the right to be free land holders, but the need to isolate one's community, Isle Brevelle, in order to

²⁰ "Chinas" refers to the China Berry tree which is indigenous to the sub-tropical climates of the southern United States. The berries have wrinkled seeds which are often dried and strung as beads.

hold on to these benefits.

This position of influence in Carver's southern society is due to the characteristics and values placed upon racial identity. Rarely placing Euro-American characters overtly above or in opposition to characters of differing heritage, Carver implies their status at the top of her South's social structure by overtly contrasting the social placement of other groups in the region, beginning with the Mulattos of Isle Brevelle and the region's African-American population. In "Singing-Woman," Carver articulates the Mulatto social position through the voice of the aging Henriette,

For generations now her people had guarded the blood in their veins. Ignored by the whites, ignoring and scorning the blacks, they had kept themselves to themselves. But now there was change all around them. (148)

This change is directly acknowledged by yet another Mulatto character of Carver's known only as Granny, or old Granny:

Time was, before the War, when the people had lived in clover, and had even owned slaves. Now the negroes looked down upon them, with hatred and bitter scorn. "Dem stuck up yaller folkses — ." (123)

Thus purity of bloodlines or biological ethnic heritage offers individuals the opportunity for security and social standing, but does not guarantee it. For as Granny's word choice suggests Mulattos had not only been privileged, but were representative of Louisiana as American Indians have represented the United States in the past, serving as a symbol of a people linked to a specific soil. American Indians being "the people" of the United States were symbolic of pure Americana, as the Mulatto or Creole of Colour is distinctive to Louisiana.

Consequently, these quotes reveal that in Carver's South the definition of where a race stands within the South's social hierarchy is dependent on the race and related beliefs of the assigner. For Carver indicates — through both character employment and juxtaposition of Euro-American and Mulatto characters — that from the Euro-American perspective Mulatto heritage is preferable to African-American heritage.

This divergence in racial classification of the South's social structure though based in the same belief, purity of bloodlines, differs in interpretation. Carver's South has Euro-Americans and Mulattos (i.e., Creoles of Colour) defining purity in terms of Euro-American heritage and African-Americans defining purity in terms of bloodlines of a race not being contaminated, or crossed with those of another racial heritage. Thus the placement of African-Americans and Creoles within the South's social hierarchy is in flux (this is a post War change after all), is mutating and so at present in Carver's South existing in opposition.

Typical perceptions of the South's social structure as existing in opposition between Euro-American and African-American cultures does not hold in the Red River region because of other ethnic communities there which are locally identified through nomenclature that recognizes racial mixing. Such groups include Mud Mulattos, and Redbones.²¹

Mud Mulattos and Redbones are both cultural groups with multi-racial heritage.

²¹ The term Redbone is problematical as this group has at times been legally defined as African-American in Louisiana. However, it is generally accepted that this group's ethnic heritage, at least, includes Spanish, French, and Native American ancestry.

Mud Mulattos are in Carver's "Cotton Dolly" defined as "partly Indian, but nigger too" (164). Redbones are portrayed as below serious notice of Euro-Americans and African-Americans in Carver's story "Redbone." For Baptiste, a Redbone, would catch the interest of local children due to,

. . . something of quaint buffoonery that charmed little children, even the little boys and girls who lived in the fine old houses along the River front and walked abroad so sweetly with their nurses. . . . And then they would laugh in elfin delight as if they snared some wanton secret with him. And their nurses — respectable, coal-black mammies — would pull them away, disgruntled: "Lawd, white chillun come along. Dat triffin', low-down redbone—" (63)

Thus both Mud Mulattos and Redbones exist in some nebulous grey area below African-Americans in the South's traditional social hierarchy. Interestingly in Louisiana's legal system, Redbones were classified as Negroes during the time Carver's uncle was a federal judge which reveals that Carver was portraying not the legislated social structure of the South, but her understanding of the Cane River region's traditional social structure, as well as the points of contention which existed between different groups' perceptions of this structure and their place within it (Carver 62).

Carver's South is further delineated by its definition of community. Carver's southern community is composed of groups defined by the link between their race and socio-economic class. Writing just after the turn of the twentieth-century, Carver employs groupings that are familiar to her readership, partially as a result of the social forces struggling for prominence before and during the Civil War of the American States. At this time, "the mid-nineteenth century, [America] saw the blossoming of . . .

'romantic racialism' in the North" (Bendix 90). Romantic racialism resulted from interest in African American culture through exposure to concepts such as social relativism, abolitionism and Christian paternalism, leading Americans to search for authentic examples of the African American culture in music, folk expression, and other forms of expressive culture (90-91). Carver's portrayal of a general southern community builds on this American familiarity²² with African American culture of the South²³, weaving cultural preconceptions with examples of folk speech, folk belief and folk medicine to create stereotypical images of Louisiana's people of colour.

In addition to stereotypes of the South and her community groups, Carver defines her communities through three general characteristics concerning geographical placement in a rural environment shape these Cane River communities. First, a general ethic requires one to "make allowance" for others, specifically those who have suffered some tragedy in their lives (52). For example Carver's character Treeshy is an acknowledged thief, but allowance is made for her actions due to her having only one

²² American familiarity with African American culture can be projected from a sample of publications held in the Melrose library: *Gospel Hymns Consolidated* (1883) Gonzales' *With Aesop Along the Black Border* (1924), Johnson and Adum's *Negro Workaday Songs* (1926), Guillaume and Munro's *Primitive Negro Sculpture* (1926), Hurston's *Mules and Men* (1935), Kerlin's *The Voice of the Negro, 1919* (1920), and Scarborough's *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs* (1925).

²³ Familiarity with African American culture in the South led to an American acceptance of the South as a place of many collectable cultures. This is evidenced by holdings of the Melrose library: Petitjean's *Cajun Folksongs of Southwest Louisiana* (1930), the Reds' *The Medicine Man and Texas* (1930) which was given to Mrs. Cammie Henry by the author, Schertz's *Legends of Louisiana* (1922), and Dobies' books on Texas cowboys.

leg (89) and to her actions being classified as eccentric (95). Second, there is a value placed on eccentricity. Eccentric behaviour is forgiven, as with Treeshy, and often cherished as something quaintly southern as in the case with Suellen whose love of religion possesses her to participate in several religious institutions in her town to the amusement of teachers, neighbours and ministers (196). Third, and in some ephemeral way linked to the preceding two, to be a member of Carver's Southern community one must appreciate the importance of kept secrets, secrets kept from outsiders (39-40), and secrets kept from fellow community members (102). Within Carver's fictional South there are several themes that become evident.

Reviewing a portion of Carver's short stories, I will begin considering her representation of the "female mind of the south." The first two short stories discussed reveal Carver's feminine South as portrayed through her Euro-American and Creole characters. The second set of stories reveal her feminine South from the perspective of African-American characters. The third set centre about characters whose ethnicity is not clearly attributed. Bridging all three groupings of short stories is Carver's coding, a technique used to present a fair, multifaceted image of the feminine South.

The first set of short stories consists of "The Ring" and "The Raspberry Dress." The former story focuses on an Euro-American couple and is placed not long after the Civil War. The latter revolves around a Creole family and is not temporally specific. Each revolves about the secret of a woman, love and the manner in which each woman's familial position affects her secret. It is the entanglement of these three elements of her characters' lives which reveals two aspects of "the female mind of the South."

In "The Ring," Martha, the main character, is introduced as she realizes that her anonymously submitted writings have won a prize and moves from stunned surprise to elation upon recognizing that the winnings will finally allow for the fulfilment of her life long desire, the ownership of an engagement ring. Carver emphasises both the importance of this ring and the self-effacing nature of her heroine as Martha falls into reminiscing:

She could get it now...What did they matter, these later, stiller years when she and John were alone again in the house?

"You know, sweetheart, there is no money left," John had said that summer morning long ago.

And she, thinking of her ruined south, had smiled bravely....And John had kissed her slim, unringed finger...And afterward there had been children, and sickness...But even then they would talk of it, and the little girls would quarrel gleefully over whose it would be when they were grown-up ladies...but...there was college for them all...and weddings...how could they imagine that she still wanted it...more than anything else in the world? Why, when she was seventeen, with wild roses in her thoughts, she boasted to Marie, her best chum, that she would never get married without a ring--you would feel almost as if it wasn't quite legal or something... (Carver 21)

Martha continues her daily chores, aiding her John who is "helpless as a child" in the search for his Confederate uniform and dreaming all the while of attaining her engagement ring. The next day, dressed in a daughter's hand-me-downs, Martha watches John's Confederate regiment's annual pre-reunion parade on her way to the jewellers. Nearby Martha's friend from youth, Marie, waves a beringed hand to her husband who had never missed a reunion. Meanwhile John bows to Martha from the

ranks "and she, with roses in her thoughts, blushe[s] and respond[s] with a little cheer nobody heard but herself" (24). Later in the final events of the story, John comes home to find Martha ironing and reproachfully reminds her that she missed "the speakin," the only other part of reunion celebrations he'd ever been to (24).

"I--I had something else to do," she answered, with wild roses in her voice--"Take off your uniform so's I can press it."

Softly she brushed her knotted, unringed fingers across her shining eyes.

"Your ticket's on the mantel-piece," she said.

"You're--you're going to the reunion, John." (24)

A surface reading of the last events in this piece would reveal a woman who gave up her dream of an object in order to foster the dream of romance. Considering this same scene again, keeping in mind the power of the unstated or the encoded, the elements of setting are of great importance.

Here, as in many of her short stories, Carver uses the strategy of distraction to encode one woman's method of becoming more than a housewife. Distraction is the term assigned to coding "strategies that drown out or draw attention away from the subversive power of a feminist message" (Radner and Lanser 15). By forefronting Martha's romantic relationship with her husband and her husband's attachment to his military unit, Carver keeps the reader's attention focused on the emotions of her two characters. Even the final scenes — focusing on Martha's tears over a ring she decided not to buy and on her tearful-joy over giving her husband his long desired dream of attending his unit's reunion — subvert the reader's attention from the fact that Martha's gift is funded by prize money won through her secretive story writing. For the central

fact of this narrative is that Carver's Martha has given her husband the chance to fulfill a dream, at the expense of sharing with him her own recently achieved dream of being a successful author. Depicting Martha as a living conundrum who hides personal dreams in order to create dreams for others, Carver is actually presenting an encoded message to her female readers that debunks the southern social expectation that women will sublimate personal desires when they challenge the cultural expectations which delineate women's roles in the south. Further she presents this message in a manner that is accessible to her women readers, and secretive, due to men finding feminine coding difficult or impossible to decipher.²⁴

Carver achieves this by drawing on several roles that are available to the southern woman. Martha is not a selfish feminine stereotype from the antebellum south; neither is she a disempowered, self-deprecating slave of cultural expectations; she is something which encompasses a bit of each. There are in Martha's character two conflicting cultural expectations (or roles) that need to be filled which result in a heart-wrenching quandary based upon her need to fulfil the expectations of both roles. The role of caretaker is highlighted both by Martha's description of John: "helpless as a child," and her earlier expressed belief in providing for her children before herself (22). The other assumed social role is the proverbial role of lady. To have attained this second goal Martha's life would have paralleled that of her friend Marie. She would have been

²⁴ Carver's coding strategies at no time resulted in documented reactions or social from her community as would have been expected once her vision of the South was uncovered. Instead she was lauded as a local artist and asked to attend numerous social functions, as will be mentioned later in this chapter.

engaged properly, have accepted a ring. She would have watched the parade from her carriage rather than from amongst the crowd on the street; and there would have been money enough to provide John with transportation to his reunion each year.

In the end, Martha obviously takes care of John by providing transportation to the reunion; but through the same gift, she also gives to him the semblance of the mythical role of gentleman. The tickets are, so to speak, his ring. They "say," you have always done right by me always made me happy, now you be happy. As a result, the character Martha moves into the realm of regional ideology (i.e., an emblem of the Southern myth). She seems to become the proverbial post-Civil War lady who thinks of others first and provides for them despite the personal cost.

Martha's actions indicate her character is much more complex however. When she answers John's reproach, the wild roses in her voice call to mind her visit to the jeweller, her dream of the ring. The change in her voice parallels the changing of her dream, as she asks for his uniform so she can press it. Continuing with the ironing she brushes shining eyes with the "still empty fingers" and tells John that his ticket is on the mantelpiece. Here even as she personifies the finer qualities of a "lady," tears begin to swell over her lost dream and are kept in check with the focus of implied work rhythms as the iron swipes cloth. The combined tone of voice and action of the iron imply that the individual's needs, Martha's, have not been completely met. They encode the fact that her unhappiness is based in being trapped between the contradictory expectations of her society, in the necessity of living a quandary where her deepest desires, expectations and needs, her very self is allowed to exist only in the private-spaces created through

dreaming and secrecy. Martha is left in a life, within a cultural space which demands love based on unshed tears and drudgery, rather than providing the realization of dreams in the name of wild roses. Carver's readers are left with Martha, as a symbol of unrecognized success. Encoded in this short story, through Martha, is the belief that successes and the attainment of dreams that are not shared lose relevance.

In "The Raspberry Dress," a similar story unfolds amongst the generations of a Creole family, emphasizing the power of traditional expectations concerning gender roles among women of lower socioeconomic status. As in "The Ring," "The Raspberry Dress" unfolds around a desired object and memories of youthful love. But here the symbolic object is actually attained before being given to another.

Eugenie is the grandmother and central character of this story who spent her youth finding and enjoying love at a "house of entertainment on the river just below New Orleans" (136). She often remembers these times and the finery she owned by unearthing items from the time that she keeps hidden from daughters she raised to be good, religious girls. Having received a letter from an old friend from the New Orleans days, grandmother Eugenie, secretly elated, plans a shopping trip for a raspberry dress and a trip to visit these old friends. During these events a favourite granddaughter falls in love, and then begins grieving as her love absents himself day after day. Finally after having bought her dress and after hearing her granddaughter cry many days, Eugenie again attempts to visit her granddaughter. Accepted into the young one's room, she notices signs of religious devotion, a prayer cushion and a rosary. These items warm her to the girl's pain reminding her of youthful days and loves past as her granddaughter

Aline reveals that her love has begun seeing a city girl whose dresses are colourful and ruffled. Eugenie is moved to reveal her recent purchase to Aline. Seeing the dress on her granddaughter, Eugenie realizes it was never created for someone her age and so she tells a white lie, saying the dress was bought for Aline. Then while revelling in the girl's joy she recalls that Aline reminds her of herself at the same age which leads her to verbally reinforce the value of moral behaviour:

'Aline, cher, you must be a good girl. I raise your momma religious [. . .] Me, I'm saving some money for you, *mon enfant*, if is good girl. For when you marry, *hein?* To help buy a trousseau, and linen perhap, when time come for marry with Jules.'

But Aline seemed not to have heard her. The girl's eyes were mournful, and strange . . . And Eugenie grew more vehement. 'Aline--you must never let the boys kiss you . . . ' (147).

Eugenie's exhortations having fallen on deaf ears, the reader is left with the final image of Eugenie preparing to go to church and to confess the white lie, her arms laden with white lilies.

In this last story, "The Raspberry Dress," Carver's storyline is again composed of an older woman whose greatest desire is to reacquire in some measure the joy, freedom, and romance of her youth. And as in "The Ring," this desire is not only represented by an object, but is at the point of fruition when sublimated by love for another. Love again results in self-sacrifice here though Carver's symbolism suggests a different result in this short story.

Here Carver again uses distraction to encode her views concerning self-sacrifice. The story's primary symbol, the dress, represents youth, freedom and a means of

attaining male attention. Its eventual ownership by Aline reinforces these associations focusing the reader's attention on the obvious difference between Aline and her grandmother, their ages. This focus acts as a distraction allowing Carver to encode a second symbol with a subversive message.

In the closing paragraphs of this story, Eugenie prepares to walk to church to confess to her friend the local priest the white lie she told her granddaughter. Eugenie, lacking a raspberry dress, is adorned with an armful of white lilies. The obvious symbolism of the lillies includes white for purity and a Christian association with both death and rebirth. This heavy symbolism highlights Eugenie's purity of purpose when she lied, thereby accepting through her self-sacrifice the death of her youth and her dream of being the center of masculine attention.

This overt symbolism is once again the technique of distraction in Carver's hands. For although Eugenie loses the chance to attract attention and companionship due to provocative dress, her acceptance of this loss will result in confession. Confession is a symbolic rebirth that occurs as a direct result of pure, that is non-sexual, male attention. Encoded here is Carver's image of a woman's reward when she adheres to societal expectations and self-effacement: the ability to gain a semblance of what she desires.

Each of these two short stories resonates with themes of adulthood, responsibility, self-effacement and love; it is the latter, love, in its various definitions which joins these themes together. Here, love is defined differently at the individual and cultural levels; and these definitions taken as a whole outline the ambiguous parameters

of the space in which Carver's fictional women may live. Love for oneself allows her women to strive to attain their dreams: engagement rings, raspberry dresses; love for others entails aiding them in attaining dreams to the extent of working at cross-purposes to one's own dreams; and finally, her writings imply that society values self-sacrifice over compromise when individuals must choose between attaining their own dreams or their loved one's dreams.

Carver's African-American Female South

Carver's presentation of African-American women relies more heavily on the integration of folklore into her story lines and characterization, than the use of coding strategies. Her characters further differ from Euro-American and Creole characters due to a greater availability of social roles, three of which will be discussed. It is the interstices of these available social roles and folklore which delineate many of the boundaries for this aspect of "the female mind of the South."

In "Redbone," Carver introduces an African-American female named Granny Loon who works as a midwife/nursemaid to young children at all levels of society:

Granny who brought her babies in baskets (white ones and black ones and yellow and red ones!) and charged a fortune a day. . . . shifting her mysterious basket, passed with dignity down the shaded street. She could be high-and-mighty when it pleased her and, blue-gummed African though she was—and proud of her pure decent— she was by virtue of her calling above and beyond all race distinction. (64)

Granny Loon enjoys the special status of social boundary crossing due to her talents as a

midwife, but her talents are due to complementary bodies of knowledge in the areas of midwifery and hoodoo²⁵ as evidenced by Balthazar, her employer in this story (76). Her tendency towards hoodoo is further evidenced in descriptions of her midwifery,

Granny was muttering incantations over her ill-smelling brew: runes for the newborn babe and his mother; spells against milk-leg and childbed-fever. (67)

It is also evidenced by the fact that women came to her for information concerning feminine topics:

. . . away they would bustle to talk with Granny of broths and brews and teas; of the merits of sassafras root boiled down to make the milk come fast; of this and that and the other thing which women have always known. (74)

From these examples it is evident that Carver has openly suggested that some African-American women were in the special position of crossing class and racial barriers due to their knowledge of hoodoo. But being associated with hoodoo does not always open doors as is evidenced by Cotton Dolly in Carver's short story of that name.

Cotton Dolly is not only the name of a character, but also a job some African-American females took on the plantation which accorded them a position of respect and responsibility (160). With the job of cotton dolly,

she had lived in a nice house then up at the Quarters²⁶ and, of a morning, the mothers had brought her their babies:

²⁴ Hoodoo is more commonly known as voodoo or vodou. It is the syncretic religion which combines elements of Christianity and traditional African religions (Brown 3).

²⁵ The word quarters is the colloquial term which refers to the area of housing on plantations which was reserved for slaves and is more generally known as the slave quarters. After slavery, the term came to be used for labourers' housing.

black ones, brown ones and banana coloured. (160)

When a new overseer came she lost this position, and was moved to a "tumbled down cabin" where at first people still came to visit sharing news about the new cotton dolly and about remedies she used. Visits dropped off after awhile though because,

. . . it was hard to get to Cotton Dolly's cabin. You had to cross the branch. You had to go through the swamp, or around through the woods. Tuggle [the overseer] had talked so much mouth, back and forth, that he got all the people uneasy. You take an old woman, a crone, dabbling in this and that. You never can tell what will happen. It was easy enough, as the months passed, to think of Cotton Dolly as a conjure-woman who would "spell" you, if you meddled her. Best not to go near her. (160-61)

Alluded to here is the creative power of oral communication. In a community which relied heavily on oral communication, being linked to traditional remedies could be positive when in a position of power and respect, the position of Cotton Dolly. However being linked with such remedies when isolated from society makes it easier for the overseer to turn her facility with remedies into conjuring abilities. This shows the power of oral narrative in regard to changing social opinion and belief. It further suggests that though women could have a position of respect and limited power as a cotton dolly, they were reliant on the good will of men to let them stay in that position.

Carver's third presentation of African-American culture revolves around a character known as Aunt Crissie in the short story, "Little Mother of the Church." Aunt Crissie is characterized as a woman with a strong link to mystical powers, as suggested by Carver's symbolic use of folklore.

The title Little Mother of the Church is,

what they call her in the African Baptist churches, the old woman who for a pittance looks after God's house, who sweeps it and cleans it, and puts fresh flowers on the pulpit and around the white feet of Mary, who keeps the communion-cloth sweet and clean to cover the body of Jesus. (176)

So Aunt Crissie is elderly and African-American, though never outright described as belonging to a particular ethnic group, since the Creole community is predominantly Catholic. Her mismatched eyes are an omen indicating that she has the power to talk to the devil (176). Her powers are expanded due to the fact that one of these eyes is blue, an omen denoting the capability of second sight (178).

Here once again Carver has delineated a role for African-American women which exists outside the family and the home. It is a role which relies, at least in the provided instances, on a close association of the individual with both folklore and a community which believes in the powers indicated by folk belief. Empowered by folk and religious knowledge African-American women are provided greater opportunities than those available to Euro-American women in Carver's short stories. However these opportunities are contingent on male or community support, and they also carry a stigma when an individual's link to folklore comes to be seen as a negative asset by the community, as in Cotton Dolly's case, resulting in an isolated existence.

Carver's short stories also present several characters whose ethnicity is not clearly attributable. These characters are described in the short stories "Maudie," "Treeshy," and "For Suellen with Love." In these short stories, Carver presents characteristics of the South which, as they are assigned to feminine characters, delineate

further constituent elements of the female mind of the South: the importance of secrecy, and the roles of eccentricity and self sacrifice.

The short story "Maudie" focuses on the relationships between two sisters and between the older sister and a school acquaintance. Maudie was always considered a slightly off-beat individual, due to her not fitting in, to having lost her mother while a child and due to her beauty residing solely in the huskiness her voice attained whenever she was on the verge of tears. Maudie is described by her schoolmate in detail:

There had always been something persistent, unquenchable about Maudie Turner. I mean, she was , under stress of any situation , so terribly as God (or was it her frail erring mother?) had made her, without thought of change or betterment . . . People were wont to speak of Maudie distrustfully. "Maudie Turner? . . . let me see. Didn't her mother run away with another woman's husband and join a show?"

Throughout high school the shadow, the frail fragrance of this pretty, erring mother clung to Maudie, poor solid old Maudie, who was a plump ineffectual creature, her every movement comic and futile, her cheeks habitually puffed with caramel candy. (103)

Being without a mother, Maudie watched over her younger sister making concessions as needed so that she could be dressed properly:

In a little rush she confided to me certain little family secrets. The shoes were really Vera's. They belonged to Vera, as did the orange hat and the rose parasol. She always bought her hats and shoes, and things like that, to suit Vera; and then they used them together. Vera was so particular, so finicky about the things she wore. And it didn't matter so much about her, so fat and ugly that way. But a pretty girl has to have pretty things. Vera was pretty and talented too. (110)

Maudie made these little sacrifices for her sister, and could without bad feelings because

she had a beau who was willing to wait for her, to wait until Vera no longer needed Maudie to look after her (109). Maudie, in the end, sacrifices much more to protect and provide for her little sister.

Vera gets pregnant and tells Maudie that the father is her beau, Adam. Maudie sees the two married and throughout holds on to her pride, as her school friend relates,

I understood, understood the pride, the hint of triumph in her voice. She had, for nine long years, been both loved and desired; and now through her pain she was clinging to this; at least she had this to remember. She was holding Adam's love aloft like a banner. In her heart she made herself think of Adam as tragic, tortured with love. And now pushed to the wall. (116)

To Maudie, Adam had been made to wait too long for their marriage and so he had turned to her sister as a result of Maudie's insistence that they wait to marry. As the story unfolds further, Maudie tells her friend that Vera died shortly after her daughter's birth (117). Adam, left alone, was trapped when his boat caught fire a week after Vera died, and drowned (118). Left alone Maudie is raising her niece, still selling cheap makeup to make a living and recalling Vera's parting gift, the knowledge that Adam really wasn't the father of her child.

The short story "Treeshy" also centers about love, lost lovers and how individuals cope with the secrets associated with forbidden love. The story unfolds about a young, one-legged, sewing woman named Treeshy who unknown to the community had a liaison with an artist who was passing through town. The liaison resulted in a daughter who no one knew since she lived elsewhere. This secrecy implies that Treeshy sent her daughter away so that she would not be soiled by the community's

condemnation of her mother's actions.

Meanwhile Treeshy is seen by her employers in the community as eccentric due to her special skills,

Treeshy was in great demand. For she could turn out an enormous amount of work and she sewed with tenderness. . . snipping the last thread on a joyous little petticoat and giving it a pat and a goodbye kiss. . . she had for each of us a sort of trademark—so many tucks, so many ruffles, so many bands of insertion—so that one little girl's petticoats differed from every other little girl's petticoats in glory.
(88)

Treeshy's other skill was more devious in nature for she was known for acquiring items during her sewing visits. For example,

Silk stockings, Treeshy was stealing one year, and books and music the next. Had we cared enough and had we been astute enough to figure it out we should, I think, have discovered a certain significant sequence in poor old Treeshy's thieving. (93)

No sequence was discovered though. And it wasn't until the thieving exceeded standard expectations that the activity was called into question,

Treeshy happening by, had walked off with mamma's amethyst pin, a pink silk camisole of mine, and Greataunt Agatha's prayer-book. (94)

Consideration required explaining local acceptance of Treeshy's actions to Great Aunt Agatha, an outsider. Local opinion, as stated by the narrator's mother, held that,

if Treeshy gleaned, she gave in return—pressed down and running over. Somehow, mamma explained, we felt in Natchitoches the truth of this concept: that reputation is what the world thinks of a man, and character what God *knows*. . . what we do for Treeshy is not done for her . . . but for something bigger and better than Treeshy,

something inside of her . . . as if Treeshy's stealing were not exactly stealing, but a tithing she takes for a purpose.
(95)

Thus illegal activity is presented as eccentric behaviour that is somehow justified, if it served a greater good. What is known only by the narrator of Treeshy's story, and her family, is the secret behind Treeshy's actions.

What they know and have kept from the community is Treeshy's secret which she shared only on her death bed, as this family took care of her. Her secret is not merely that she has a child, but how,

long ago when her poor little baby was born she herself had taken it to New Orleans to a beautiful Catholic school. . . . and had kept her there. She had been sly about sending the things she stole. Often, Treeshy said, she would go to some neighboring town to dispatch the boxes.
(99)

When Treeshy's belongings were gone through, it was found that she had saved a large sum of money. The money was passed along to her daughter, a famous violinist, and so the town came to know part of Treeshy's secret (100). However while on tour, the daughter, browsing in local businesses,

ran across some really lovely paintings—the work of an old man, it seems, who died here a pauper and crazed.
(101)

She sends them to the family, and no one tells her that these paintings are by her father, keeping the last bit of Treeshy's secret and so honouring Treeshy's memory by not revealing the paintings to community members who might recall the paintings and make a link between the artist and Treeshy.

Here, eccentricity is forgiven even when it entails illicit activity, if it seems to be in evidence due to physical differences, or due to some finer purpose. In this case, the finer purpose is the protection of and provision for family. And the protection of family further excuses the immoral act of keeping secrets for Treeshy and the family she trusted with her final secrets.²⁷

In "For Suellen with Love," the main character Suellen is an eccentric child who fabricates tremendous tales and dresses in rags though her family is one of the richest in town (189). And though concern is expressed by town members to her widowed father, Suellen's antics remain something to be regarded with lighthearted goodwill by the man (190).

As the years pass, Suellen's eccentricities expand into new areas when she takes an interest in religion, according to her childhood friend,

It was Spring, I remember, that Suellen got religion, I mean *really* this time, the Real Thing. . . . "It was like something suddenly left me cold and bare," Suellen said, "And — sort of *exposed*. And then suddenly something . . . *alighted* near me, like a bird, something with the feel of *wings*. Only I couldn't see it." And as I looked at Suellen and envied her, to my surprise tears welled in her eyes, and Suellen *crossed* herself, reverently and rapturously, — though our Catholic friends, when we told them, said that Suellen had no *right*. But Suellen went on and *took* the right anyway, and made the sign of the cross just the same, every chance she got . . . "Suellen's crazy!" we said. (193)

²⁶ There is behind this one other concept which I have not yet dealt with here, saving face. The family Treeshy trusted with her secret was the family which welcomed the itinerant artist into the community by offering him a place to sleep and a possible job. So their keeping Treeshy's secret also protects their own family from town gossip and condemnation.

It was at this time Suellen "bought herself a white dress, and took communion in the Catholic church" (194). Despite her peers reacting to her presence and her home-made rosary breaking, Suellen marches down the aisle to receive some manner of blessing from the priest. After this she seemed to change, for "she stayed in love with religion":

beautifully and with tranquillity, and a total absence of sin; yes even lying, — all through that period when the rest of us in our set were falling in and out of love with boys, and with young men in college who wouldn't look at us, and with heroes of stage and screen . . . (196).

She is found again by her friend some years after college. Suellen as an adult is a Methodist with a husband and five children "to guide through the heartaches and ecstasies of religion, and falling in love" (197).

This short story presents eccentricity as an uncommon, but grudgingly accepted, phase in the pre-teen and teen years. This is a phase which will be grown out of and, yet, affect the manner of adult a person will be. If the adult is well adjusted, then the eccentricity is something to be remembered fondly, and even celebrated (197).

This last set of short stories focuses on a juxtaposition of pride and femininity. Specifically how doing what's right for one's self or one's family can act as an isolating factor. Personal desires, pride, and belief in one's self are seen as acceptable and feminine, if eccentric, as long as they do not compromise collective standards or the family unit. Thus femininity is by default defined even in its most eccentric and acceptable forms as protective, conformative and potentially self effacing. Considered in conjunction with the short stories depicting women of Euro-American, Creole and African-American heritage these analyses highlight specific characteristic elements of

Southern femininity which dovetail with Carver's own life experience and written communication concerning the experiences of being a woman in the South to compile a female mind of the South, according to an Euro-American woman's perspective in the early part of the twentieth-century.

In the South of the early 1900s women, as others, were defined by their place in one or more social realms or spaces based on factors such as gender, skin colour, and economic standing which were each definitive of a specific societal place; women, even an individual woman can be the nexus point for several of such spacial ideals. Important for the current topic is an element of Carver's self-definition as it relates to the place she was allowed to use and occupy as a southern woman, and her portrayal of the space allowed the women of her short stories. Or in other words, how Carver balanced the restrictive roles of wife and mother with the role of author.

It was not unknown for women to pursue a career as author in the late 1800s or even early 1900, though it was also not commonplace. Authors like Kate Chopin usually were based out of larger cities like New Orleans and St. Louis, but as with Chopin at times lived in rural areas. As a case in point, Chopin spent time in Cloutierville, Louisiana just south of Isle Brevelle on the Cane River. She was known as a feminist who hiked her skirts so high every man in town would come out to see her take an evening walk; who would go riding astride without a saddle; and, who would ride with men after dark (Carnahan Interview 253- 288). Such was the perspective local culture had on middle class, Euro-American women who broke with tradition, being mothers and authors (i.e., working) concurrently. Such women broke with traditional

expectations and, if openly flaunting their independence, were ostracized by local society. Though Chopin was at the vanguard of such independent women in rural Louisiana, it is not inconceivable that a mere fifty years later when Carver was writing and living full time in the rural South, women who worked and raised a family were still viewed with suspicion.

Local conventions as expressed through the interview narratives mentioned above concerning Chopin reveal that women who work, particularly as authors, and attempt to raise a family should be treated with caution. For such women are breaking with tradition, and doing this in a blatant manner of self-expression akin to wantonness; and, either immoral act is a direct challenge to stability, to tradition, and therefore to the very roots of what was left of Southern culture following the War, the creation of the New South, and current northern imports of the early 1900s.

Living, writing, and raising a family in this environment, Carver was in many ways a person who had several concepts of her self which didn't necessarily mesh. She was wife and mother; she was author; and she was socialite. And though these aspects met within her as a person they were not necessarily integrated as one personality. In fact they couldn't be if she were to retain her social standing and acceptability and maintain her role as author and independent woman.

Due to Carver's desire to remain both an active writer accomplished in her craft which was based in accurately portraying the South and her desire to remain acceptable to the society of Natchitoches, it was inescapable that she would come to certain impasses in her authorial role. She had to have come on subject matter which was

controversial or forbidden according to traditional expectations of white middle class Southern culture. Topics not discussed outside the community; topics not discussed within the community; or even topics such as slavery and the Old South which were discussed, but discussed quite differently dependent on the company in evidence.

Such an environment was surely a strong influence on Carver and her craft. Indisputably, it is a pertinent reason for her encapsulating themes concerning sensitive issues like the feminine South deeply within the narrative of her short stories; for no caring mother would wish to expose her family to the sanction of a tightly knit community like Natchitoches. I would further suggest it is one reason for her frequent focus on three areas: secrets, secretive behaviour, and the influences which promote change within all the traditional societies or ethnicities of the Cane River region.

The South: Carver's Perspective

In writing about how feminine perceptions of love, sacrifice, secrets and uses of folk belief define the limited social space women were allowed to inhabit in the late 19th-century and early 20th-century, Carver creatively mirrors restrictions which affected her daily life in the South. Living in a society which praised and awarded prizes to author Ada Jack Carver and only rarely mentioned her second life as mother and wife, Carver was caught between social expectations, cultural expectations, and individual expectations. And as many of her female characters, she wished to follow her dream, her individual path. Neither full-time author with time for academic engagements, nor full-time mother with time for social group membership and entertainment, she strove to

fulfil dreams which fell somewhere between the social-cultural niches available to her, as is indicated in a letter to Caroline Dormon on the 2nd of July, 1925:

My dear-I was [conveyed] into a party yesterday, and am supposed to go to one today. Only God in heaven (and maybe you) knows how I loath and despise these things where a lot of women talk and [jabber] about nothing for hours. I always come back from them completely sapped of all strength of mind and body. I believe I give a piece of myself to every person I come in contact with and when I'm alone once more there is nothing left.-About an hour ago I telephoned mine hostess for this afternoon and tried to get out of going to her party. I gave one excuse after another and she simply refuses to accept any of them. Oh Carrie, I wish I lived next door to you! Or in New York-I can do nothing here. I will be a nervous wreck in a few years if people don't let me carve out my life to suit myself. As Miss Cammie says: "its H----." (Dormon Collection Folder 520)

Carver certainly did not enjoy her social obligations when they consistently took time away from her family, or her writing. So straddling cultural expectations as her characters could not, Carver existed fully only in moments when she fulfilled the dream of simultaneously being author and mother.

Carver's writing reflects cultural beliefs held by southern women concerning love, as well as the cultural boundaries imposed by those beliefs and their inhibiting factor at the personal level. This fact raises a final query though: why didn't Carver, as fellow author Kate Chopin did in her regional novel about Louisiana, portray her characters challenging their culturally-imposed boundaries? Such writing certainly would not be acceptable to Carver's social peers who had difficulty imaging Carver as a working mother. But Carver, as noted earlier, had little use for public opinion where it

concerned herself. So, why not create characters whose actions mirror the life choices of their author?

Three suggestions offer themselves. Were Carver to create challenging characters, then social reaction, already in opposition to her dual role, would likely have grown. Such growth would certainly affect Carver's ability to balance work and family responsibilities, to the detriment of the latter. Or perhaps Carver felt that encouraging women to attempt balancing career and work would be wrong, since it was for her a constant struggle. And when constantly struggling to balance either responsibilities, cultural expectations, or both, it is as difficult to feel a dream is attained, as it is when the imaged scent of wild roses produces tears. Finally, it is equally plausible that Carver was not looking to proselytize through her work, but rather attempting to outline the tensions behind the choices available to southern women, by building fictional short stories for widespread consumption from possibilities gleaned from her own life experiences and resultant reflection. Any of these reasons may have been the factor governing Carver's approach to authorship, but most probably they all played a factor in her decisions concerning how she represented the South in her writing.

Carver consistently focussed on the elements of southern culture and feminine beliefs which forced her to exist between the culturally sanctioned roles available to her. By highlighting these elements in her writing and by not suggesting women change or challenge them in these stories, she focussed social attention on them without creating scandal. Encoding the trap offered by cultural and gendered definitions of love, she tenderly balanced her roles of socially acceptable mother, wife, and author, thereby

preserving her empowering venue of self-expression, short story writing. Protecting her right to work as an author was a position Carver assumed due to cultural influences which defined a woman's possible roles in the deep South of the early 1900s. There would have been much pressure on Carver to tow-the-line in her presentations of Southern culture and life in order to conform to traditional white middle class expectations concerning the sensitive issues motherhood, working women, and presentations of race within the South.

It is possible that Carver had to deal with social reaction not only to the subject matter she used in her short stories, but also to the fact that she was a female author. Carver was, after all, living in an era when the options available to women during their lifespan were well defined. Working for a living was generally considered acceptable only if a well-bred woman held one of a finite set of positions: teacher, nurse, or writer, and if she worked during the period of life which fell between the schooling years and the marriage years. Though Carver took on an acceptable role she did not use that position of safety to write rebellious or protest oriented works. For in her writing as in other aspects of her life (social responsibilities in particular) she conformed. Challenging the South's established expectations in her work would have been difficult for her, for that would have opened the door to face-to-face criticism as she spoke at various venues. Such criticism would have opened up her private life for public speculation and display. The latter, in particular, would mean putting her family in the limelight, and this was something she didn't personally enjoy.

Social condemnation of Carver's work might also have occurred due to her

presentation of feminist ideas, since she does represent women of diverse ethnic backgrounds who work in several of her short stories. Interestingly all of the working women Carver portrays, when facing a choice between their careers or personal dreams and helping their family, support their family over all other options. Carver may have portrayed her female characters this way because she didn't want to write from a reactionary feminist point of view. There are, however, other possible reasons for her writing from this perspective. Carver may not have felt that work was more important than family.

In her own experience as a working mother, she did not allow for the neglect of their family, as there was in-house help to clean and cook while Carver was occupied writing. Building on this interpretation of Carver, the working mother, it would not be improbable that Carver felt only those who could provide for their families while working should be able to pursue an occupation. If such was the case, it's quite possible that Carver did not perceive herself as a feminist even though she was of a small number of white middle class women who worked and provided for her family's needs.

It is intriguing to consider the fact that an individual who (most probably) did not consider herself a feminist was nonetheless progressive in her choice of writing matter, if not in its presentation. Using the Local Colour writing style was an encoding in itself, since the coding strategy of trivialization "involves the employment of a form, mode, or genre that the dominant culture considers unimportant, innocuous, or irrelevant" (Radner and Lanser 19). Local Colour was out of fashion as a writing style, romantic and quaint. However by using it, Carver was able to present a multiracial perspective of the world

inhabited by Southern women. For Carver was choosing to write about and present the roles women held in the Cane River region – both historically and during her time. She was able to present these roles and the tensions which existed for women who filled them through a heavy-handed use of stereotyping. For she used stereotyping to offer cover for her encoding of the tensions cultural boundaries created for women who conformed.

This use of coding strategies further supports the idea that Carver seems not to have considered herself a feminist, due to the fact that her coding alludes to her characters' controversial responses to traditional cultural expectations while those same characters acted conservatively. In fact, far from being either a feminist or a social reformer of merit, Carver was presenting as true a picture of the roles and choices women had and held in the South, as possible. She based these creative short story representations on her own experience, and on her observations of Cane River life.

Thus, Carver was in a position, despite these cultural restrictions to present through the skilful use of an antiquated writing form and other coding strategies, a truer image of the South and its racial relations than many of her peers. That Carver often used stereotyping to encode information and/or distract the reader indicates she had, at least, a partial cognizance of traits regionally attributed to individuals as based on each person's racial backgrounds. However it is doubtful that she ever had full cognizance of such attributes, especially outside her own Euro-American heritage.

Summary

Reviewing the image of traditional culture which Carver presents in her short stories about the Cane River region, it is necessary to consider whether Carver's use of folklore in her stereotyping is a positive or negative action. In that it sometimes allowed for the presentation of sensitive feminine responses and allows the author to contrast emic and etic perspectives of the region through coding, this action was perhaps a necessary evil and therefore positive.

Of course, Carver's very subject matter, Cane River cultural groups, was original on the national scene due not only to its unusual breadth, but also to its detailed descriptions of cultural groups with which few readers, outside of Louisiana, were familiar. Further, her use of folklore across both gender and racial groupings was novel, though it increased in frequency the further down the social scale a group was found. Like many authors of the period, including Lafcadio Hearn and Kate Chopin, Carver was not formally educated in folklore. She did, however, know about folklore, local belief systems and cultural traditions because of her observant nature, her informal knowledge gained through her friendship with Lyle Saxon, Director of the Louisiana Writers' Project. She used that knowledge to her benefit in her writing.

Though these elements indicate that Carver's short stories were original, they were not and are not enough to accord her status in the literary canon. Her antiquated writing style, Local Colour, meant that the stories were composed with overly romantic plots and with florid language. Despite being antiquated in style and language, these short stories are of relevance to understanding the interstices between popular literature,

the use of folklore in literature, and cultural representation.

Carver's writing is, nevertheless, of great import since it was a force upon the popular imagination of women across the United States. These stories were published and received by a national audience in the popular women's magazines of the time, in particular *Harper's*. Moreover this national audience of women consumed, through a popular format of the time, short stories, a gender bounded experience which was all too familiar to them.

The romantic leanings of the style Carver chose to write in made her ideas and work accessible to women while encoding her messages concerning the tensions which marked the boundaries of feminine experience in the early twentieth-century. For Carver, using folklore to encode controversial tensions creates a levelling of a society which defines its social structure on race, education level versus superstition, and economics.

As a result of these factors, she reached a powerful audience of active decoders with the idea that races, genders and individuals shared certain tendencies. She was able to achieve this end due to the combination of her writing style, the publication of her stories in popular magazines, and her use of folklore in portraying the Cane River region. Due to the dovetailing of these factors, Carver was able to write short stories which taken as a whole presented a tripartite interpretation of the South. For the corpus of her short stories interpreted universal life experiences, and regional traditional cultures, as well as encoded Carver's personal understanding of the tensions affecting Southern life. This structure was possible because of her use of coding and is the

cohesive strength behind her short stories.

Chapter Seven

Artistic Preservation

Carver's work and interests were just two of the many activities that were part of the events that took place at Melrose. Other writers incorporated Melrose activities and interests into their work. Some of these portrayals, like Hartnett Kane's *Plantation Parade*, offered interpretations of Mrs. Henry's Melrose. One such writer was well known in the region due to his depictions of Melrose and the Cane River region in the local newspaper. This writer, Francois Mignon, took up residence at Melrose in the 1930s and began melding a new vision of Melrose.

This chapter will begin with a brief biography of Francois Mignon, focusing on his legacy of recreation which began with himself and later turned to Aunt Cammie, Melrose, and the Cane River region. How Mignon's recreation of Melrose in the popular press both continued Aunt Cammie's emphasis on cultural preservation and deviated from the particulars of her approach as implemented by the Melrose writers is, then, addressed. Concluding the chapter will be a consideration of the effect of Mignon's narrative creations on Carver and their effects on Carver's relationship with her Melrose peers.

Francois Mignon

Francois Mignon was a talented individual who had a long history of working with the written word. His particular talent, the identification of varying perceptions and melding of those views into one for presentation, not only aided him in creating an opening for an introduction to Melrose, but also helped him retain a home there, even

after Aunt Cammie's death. Late in his life Mignon noted in an interview that several versions of Melrose existed, depending on the view of the person spoken with:

Of course, the whole concept of Melrose is Cammie's, [and] different from popular concept. Some people said they had to work there, if they stayed; nobody had to work. It was such a wonderful green pasture. [There was also] more than one line of endeavour; [you could] write, paint, carve, bind books, garden, read, and all of that. (Fletcher interview with Mignon 13-29)

Inherent in Mignon's statement here is that not only did a popular concept and Aunt Cammie's concept of Melrose co-exist, but concepts were created by Melrose visitors in differing artistic forms, preserving several more concepts of Melrose in interpretive formats. What interpretive formats Mignon chose to highlight in his newspaper column, in order to publicize Melrose, relate strongly to the theme of eccentricity which appeared not only in his self-recreation, but in the Melrose writers' letters and works, particularly Carver's short stories.

Mignon claims he never knew Carver as she didn't visit Melrose during his time at the plantation, but heard of her often from Mrs. Henry and Lyle Saxon (Mignon Interview 152-76). Mignon learned — in the same manner — of Carver's and the other Melrose Cadre members' writing. Such knowledge, based on hearsay and information gathered from Saxon and Aunt Cammie, provided Mignon a particular place of authorship. He was at once both distanced from his subjects and in possession of intimate knowledge of Melrose and Carver through the personal narratives of Saxon and Aunt Cammie. He also knew of the group's shared aesthetic from these two sources.

Mignon expounded on the group's aesthetic in his newspaper columns, as the following biographical discussion reveals. Having liberally portrayed such first hand information, he was more likely to liberally use second hand knowledge gleaned from his friends' personal narratives.

According to local legend and many of his closest friends, Mignon was “the gentleman who came to dinner and never left”; yet he lived many years in the North before he found his way to Louisiana and Melrose (Mignon, *Plantation Memo* ii). Historian Oliver Ford discovered previously obscure information concerning these years which he details in his article “Francois Mignon: The Man Who Would be French.” Mignon was born Frank VerNooy Mineah on May 9, 1899 in Cortland, New York, to Walter Fish Mineah and Mary Ella (Howland) Mineah (Ford 52). His father was a first generation American citizen, Mignon's grandfather having emigrated from Holland. His mother, a New Yorker from birth, was also a first generation American, the daughter of Canadian immigrants.¹ There are no known details concerning Mignon's childhood, and in what information does exist “nothing suggests that his family background is appreciably different from the vast majority of respectable, middle-class families who populate[d] the United States” during that era (Ford 53).

Further details suggest that Frank Mineah was often in New York City when members of the Melrose circle were there on one of their various stays in the city.

¹ Oliver Ford provides no further details, in his *Southern Studies* article, concerning from where in Canada Mignon's mother's family emigrated.

Though New York is a major metropolis, the similar interests of the Melrose group and Frank Mineah could have led them to meet through acquaintances or allowed Frank Mineah to hear of publicity surrounding the work of Carver and Saxon. For not only did Carver and Mineah attend Columbia University within two years of each other, but Carver and Saxon were participating in New York's literary circles of the day while Mineah was working for the international bookstore, B. Westerman Company.

The first of the group to spend time in New York was Carver, whose husband was in military service and shipping out from that city. Carver accompanied him to New York, and stayed on to attend Columbia University, where she took a course on the short story in the summer or fall of 1919 (Taylor 15). Just two years later at the age of twenty, Frank Mineah also enrolled at Columbia University, attending classes in the fall of 1921 and the spring of 1922 (Ford 54). During a second visit to New York in 1926, Carver attended the presentation of her award winning play "The Cajun." Though there is no proof Carver and Mineah ever met, it is quite possible Mineah heard of Melrose's visiting author during her play's New York run.

During the years spanning 1927 to 1930, Saxon spent time in New York's Greenwich Village, which in the late twenties was still the area preferred by artists, though it was not the close knit community it once was for him (Harvey 215-16). During this period, Saxon had an active social life as he reentered this community of artists and reconnected with old friends (230-33). In 1927, Saxon saw his work *Father Mississippi* published, and reviewers began creating the mythological Saxon through

their erroneous assumption that *Father Mississippi* was an autobiographical piece which, in its early chapters, explained Saxon's youth on a southern plantation (229-30). By the beginning of 1928, Saxon was again at Melrose working on his next book, *Fabulous New Orleans*, and did not return to New York until July (237). By the end of 1928, he was outlining his new work *Old Louisiana* which was loosely based around Melrose (246). By the beginning of 1930, Saxon had left New York for good, returning to Melrose.

Interestingly, Saxon's mythological self, as fostered by northern book reviewers, echoes characteristics of the mythological self created by Frank Mineah when he became Mignon: a French heritage, a past linked to prestigious cultural images and history, including images linked to the mythology of Louisiana's southern plantations. Mignon's legendary characteristics are detailed, as if factual, by his benefactor and close friend Ora Williams in the introduction to the posthumous collection of his newspaper articles entitled *Plantation Memo*,

[Francois] Mignon . . . was from childhood a veritable heir of the 17th and 18th centuries, steeped in the lore of Chateaux life in France and breathing the same cultural air that permeated Louisiana from the time of its initial founding and unfurling of the lillied banners of Louisiana, named for Louis XIV and his mother Anne of Austria. It is the beginning of this fusing of the essence of historic France with the flavor of all that is Louisiana that impregnates the unique Mignon presentation of plantation life of today with its special charm.

In the late 1930's, Mignon engaged in foreign trade in New York City. Here he and a boyhood friend from Ile de France [sic] days, at this time devoted to consular

affairs, found themselves occupying offices in adjoining buildings in Rockefeller Centre. (ii)

The claim that Mignon had been “steeped” in French culture from his birth might be supported by the fact that as a young boy Mignon taught himself much of the culture while writing poems about Versailles (Ford 54). Later his claimed links to diplomatic work in New York's Rockefeller Centre have similar fragments of truth incorporated. Mignon's early poetry was forwarded by a friend to a Dr. Van Dyke, the American Minister to Holland, and subsequently followed by correspondence between Mignon and Van Dyke (54).² Diplomacy aside, Mignon did work in New York for an international bookseller, where he was in charge of the French department from 1932 to 1939 (53). It was during this time span, most probably about 1935, that Mineah took on the name Mignon. It seems that Mineah's use of the name Mignon was an extension of a lifelong interest in the French language and culture, an extension acknowledged when his New York friends would call him Mignon in conversation (Ford 53). But this change was not merely a result of friendly banter, for Ms. Erna Fasse, a friend and co-worker, related to historian Oliver Ford in an interview that Mineah decided to adopt the name Mignon because “of the unusualness of his given name,” Frank Vernooy Mineah (53). Whatever the original reasons for adopting this name in the mid-1930s, this change must have been influenced by his failing eye sight, and his trip south during which he was, ostensibly, first introduced to both Saxon and Melrose (53). It was this introduction that resulted in

² See Mignon's memo to Erna Fasse of November 15, 1951 quoted in Ford.

his finding room and board at Melrose Plantation for many years after that.

Ora Williams notes that Mignon and a friend travelled south from New York City, ending up in New Orleans where, while visiting Roark and Mary Bradford, they met Saxon. The friend Mignon travelled with was,

Christian Belle, a French Deputy Counsel later appointed as Consul de France in San Juan, Puerto Rico. En route to New Orleans they stopped in Natchez, where blossomed Mignon's attraction to the one culture in the United States where he felt at home. (56)

The histories collected concerning Mignon's introduction to Melrose vary at this point. Ora Williams suggests he received two invitations to Melrose, but does not detail from where these invitations came. In contrast, historian Ford Oliver has traced Mignon's introduction to Saxon. Saxon was a friend of Roark Bradford, with whom Mignon and Belle visited in New Orleans (Williams ii).

Mignon visited the plantation on a busy social weekend which, according to Mrs. Henry, "made it impossible for anyone to get very well acquainted"; yet when he returned to New York, he "found a letter awaiting him from Mrs. Henry. It read: 'Dear Francois: So many people here the weekend you were. I got the impression you had too much sense to waste your life in the city. Come down and live in the country. Aunt Cammie'" (Mignon ii). A year later, following the outbreak of World War II, Mignon reportedly took Mrs. Henry up on her offer by coming to dinner and living at the plantation until it was put up for sale in the 1970s.

If a change in name connotes a change in life, becoming Mignon was a boon in

Mineah's life. Offered by Mrs. Henry the opportunity to be "a congenial contact for a life time," Mignon took the opportunity to live at Melrose for six weeks in the fall of 1939; those six weeks eventually turned into thirty-two years (Ford 56-57). It is unknown whether Mrs. Henry and other close friends of Mignon's Louisiana days ever knew his true name. Mrs. Henry did indeed request such information (Ford 56). It is doubtful that either Mrs. Henry or others learned his true name since no responses to her early queries were found by scholar Oliver Ford (56). Yet the possibility she did know should not be accepted outright since it is known that Mrs. Henry radically "edited" her scrapbooks' contents at least once. Mignon, by keeping his origins secret and using an assumed name and heritage that linked him to elite Louisiana culture via France, gained entrée into a tightly knit regional society of the Deep South.

While his assumed name and background opened doors for Mignon, this was only the first step in his entering northwestern Louisiana society. Being linked with Mrs. Henry would not have hurt his social standing over the years and probably did much to aid him in attaining a job writing for the *Natchitoches Times* from 1957 to 1970. The articles Mignon wrote from April 26, 1957 to December 25, 1958 were printed under the column title "Cane River Memo." In the years from 1959 to December of 1970, his column's title changed from a regional focus to the new column title "Plantation Memo" perhaps echoing the fact that Melrose had become one of the largest pecan plantations in the world. Obviously, this title change reemphasizes the importance Melrose and her folk group had taken in Mignon's daily life and work. The change in column title, also,

foreshadowed his winning the Louisiana Press Association's column contest three times during the years 1961-1963 (*Plantation Memo* iii).

Generally the articles that formed his column focused on local history, and events of importance to Mignon, such as the sale of Melrose³ and the destruction of its chapel. The portrayals of events and people important to Mignon were often romanticised, incorporating local legends.⁴ The strongest of these personalized articles engage a sense of history, such as those that trace antiques to former owners, or discuss individuals enjoying the new uses they found for old items. Mignon's column not only revealed glimpses of Cane River life and activities at Melrose, but also promoted his own background and the background of his Melrose friends in a legendary manner. Articles frequently lauded the activities of Dormon and Carver and Mrs. Henry. Such articles deserved recognition for work done by these individuals, but also were a courtesy to Mrs. Henry, whose social standing and beneficence had made Mignon's life easier in these later years, during which his eyes grew so bad that he would often spend the morning dictating his column to a "secretary from the island school"⁵ who would type up his words (Carnahan Interview 316).

That the white elite society of northwestern Louisiana venerated Mignon based

³ See articles such as "Auction Stirs the Graveyard," "Readers Write," and "Adventures of a Portrait."

⁴ See the article, "Saint on the Block."

⁵ "The island school" refers to the Isle Brevelle school.

upon his legendary connection to France, at a time when the heritage associated with the term Yankee still inspired distrust and hatred in many hearts, is further evidenced by the fact that when Melrose was sold and Mignon lost his home he moved into Natchitoches to live on the grounds of Judge and Ora Garland Williams' home. It is also evident in an article written by David Snell about Caroline Dormon, following her death, where Mignon's history is further inflated to "a Paris born specialist in international law" (31).

Personal reasons for his use of an assumed name and promotion of a fake heritage while in Louisiana are facts lost to time and death. What little information Mignon left behind suggests that he felt justified in using his intelligence to create a place for himself at Melrose and in northwestern Louisiana. It is probable that Mignon felt that his finding individuals and a place where he could be happy gave him the right to use his "God-given talents" to create a place for himself there, as his journal suggests:

Ever so long ago I became convinced that God, for mere convenience, fitted us up in patterns — physically — along lines of our progenitors, but gave us the recompense of finding souls of similar pattern to our own in any old place, and by no means tied to the blood kin from whence the body came but from whence the soul did not. We are happier in company with people whose sense of values and people is more identical to our own, and God has scattered those souls far and wide, so that every day in our lives holds the promise of finding another kindred soul, not labelled on the family tree as anything particularly special. (Mignon qtd. in Ford 51)

Mignon found his cadre of like souls at Melrose. Through the support he received from Mrs. Henry and his new friends, he became a corner stone of the Cane River and

Natchitoches communities. He also became well known throughout the state of Louisiana due to his newspaper articles that focussed on Cane River culture of the past and present. One article in particular seems to reflect the essence of Mignon's journal entry concerning finding a place which is comfortable. Here as he often does in his writing, he looks to the ebb and flux of nature on the plantation in "A Cat Named Tom" and ponders the possibility that animals might share certain characteristics with humans.

Melrose— "Give us this day our daily mouse . . ."
So runs the feline rendition of the Lord's Prayer, I
suppose, and so prays my black cat, Tom.
That's one thing that makes Tom and all other cats I
ever knew different. They are endowed with sufficient
faith to believe they don't have to spend all day today
worrying about tomorrow's rations, wherein they are in a
class quite apart from most Christians, animal and human.
(*Plantation Memo* 244)

In retrospect, it is interesting that Mignon shared with cats the characteristic of being worry free. For nearly twenty years he was provided for in every way by his benefactor, Mrs. Henry. For following Mignon's entrance on the Melrose scene he did not have to work until nine years after Mrs. Henry's death in 1948.

In 1948 when Mrs. Henry died, Melrose became the responsibility of her sons, who managed the estate until 1970. During her sons' managerial years, entertaining no longer occurred on a grand scale, visitors arrived much less frequently at Melrose, and the previous numbers of visiting writers, scholars and artists in residence dwindled to a single representative. Francois Mignon, although for all intents and purposes blind, remained on the premises as resident interpreter and wrote award winning articles for

newspapers of the regional area (Mignon iii). Mignon took on this role at the request of the family, according to an interview he gave late in his life:

Now some members of the family [after Mrs. Henry died] wanted the flowers ploughed up and the buildings torn down. . . . Other members of the family feel . . . maintaining it. We [the family] feel that you are the only one who knows what it is she was trying to do. And if you will stay, we will leave the house and gardens as they are and not destroy them. . . . Well [I] said I'm blind, and I can't make any contribution to society; and if my staying here will keep this intact until someone comes along who can keep it intact, I'll stay. (135-45)

Meanwhile the sole artistic representative working on the plantation was the artist, Clemetine Hunter. A cook in Melrose's kitchen during her early years, Hunter began painting in her last decades, generally spending the days of her later years in "her cabin"⁶ at Melrose, creating scenes of field labourers and "plantation" life.

In August of 1970, Melrose Plantation was sold to Southdown Incorporated.⁷ At this time, Mignon removed to a small apartment in Natchitoches which he named New Haven House; and Hunter removed from a cabin which was directly across the road from Melrose to a trailer behind her daughter's home in a small town just outside of

⁶ According to Hunter's daughter Mary Davis, this cabin was never Hunter's home. Hunter spent her days living in a house across the road from Melrose, or later behind her daughter's house, which I visited, in a trailer. Each morning she would go to her Melrose "house" to paint. The painting environment was never air conditioned. People were brought in to visit and see her at work painting. Hunter was directed not to speak to visitors and never to handle the selling of her work (Gholson Field Journal 1995).

⁷ See the *Natchitoches Times* August 9, 1970.

Natchitoches (*Mignon Plantation Memo* 304). Subsequently, the Henry family's belongings, including the antiques collected by Mrs. Henry, were auctioned off. The auction was an emotional event for many. The *Natchitoches Times* covered the sale of Melrose, the auction, and some of the Melrose displays in windows along Natchitoches' Front Street. Printed just underneath photos of this window display appears the poem "The Melrose Auction" written by Amelia Holmes Aaron,

Dear Miss Cammie wherever you are. . . / You may not know
what has come to pass./ It seems a sacrilege akin to shock,/As
precious possessions go on the block./A sacred heritage beyond
compare/ To highest bidder from just anywhere./ Hearts cry out in
despair/ . . . Melrose history like a lovely old song/ With a haunting
melody, now forever gone. (3A)

Not merely romanticized in print, the auctioning off of Melrose is equally lamented and romanticized in local legends of the Creole community, though for radically different reasons.

Within the area's Creole community Mrs. Henry's collecting trips are remembered by some as occasions when the community's history was acquired, rather than preserved. Yet as future discussion will illustrate, the Creole community perceives Mrs. Henry's collection practices in a mixed light. Her role as preserver of Creole history, whether remembered as predominantly positive or negative, was in the end a coalescing factor where the cultural pride of the Cane River's Creole community is concerned. It brought elements of the community together during the auction, as they prepared to regain their heritage, or gathered for a last remembrance of Mrs. Henry's

Melrose.

Following the Melrose auction, local historical societies began petitioning the agricultural firm Southdown Inc., the new owners, to agree to a purchase price for the Main house and out-buildings of historical import. After lengthy negotiations, provision was made by Southdown Incorporated, for the main house and outbuildings of the plantation to be placed under the care of the Association for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches (Calhoun, et al. 71). Subsequently the members of the Natchitoches Historical Society invested in extensive repairs to the buildings. They even went so far as “collecting hair from Natchitoches barber shops to be used in the patching of bousillage walls in the older outbuildings” (Gholson Field Journal 1995 72). The society has further spent much time collecting items which were sold at the 1970 auction in an effort to re-appropriate and preserve the historical trove Mrs. Henry had collected. Today the main house and three outbuildings are open for viewing by the public. The main house contains photographs of the Henry family, clothing, and linen. Spread amongst the buildings are examples of Mrs. Henry's weaving activities and numerous works by Clementine Hunter. These are the last remaining reminders of the vibrant household which welcomed scholars, painters, writers, and the merely inquisitive, under the eye of the controversial Mrs. Carmelite Garrett Henry.

The Francois Mignon Years, 1939-1970: Adapting a Shared Aesthetic

From the time Mignon came to Melrose in the 1930s, he was adept in the art of creative presentation, having successfully created a French identity for himself. This talent was later adroitly employed in Mignon's newspaper columns. His columns alternated between presentations of regional history, and discussions of Melrose Plantation and events there.

These two columns focussing on Melrose events and people were an extension of his creative identity construction; for Mignon served in his column as a cultural impresario, presenting the Melrose Cadre as cultural managers with extraordinary talents, experiences, and contacts, and by association assigning Melrose Plantation the role of home to these cultural guardians.

Two examples of Mignon's strategy for tendering new identities were the presentation of Clementine Hunter⁸ as a Creole artist, alluded to in Chapter One, and the as yet unmentioned presentation of Caroline Dormon as a "world famous botanist."⁹ These examples are indicative of his approach to writing about both the Cane River region and its people, revealing a tendency to root his superlative literary descriptions in the vestiges of factual data. What Mignon gained by this compositional approach is the

⁸ Previous discussion of Mignon's packaging of Clementine Hunter as a woman of Creole rather than African-American heritage occurred in Chapter One of this thesis.

⁹ Quotes from Francois Mignon's newspaper column indicative of his strategy approach to Carrie Dormon's work are found in her section of Chapter Four.

topic of the following discussion.

When Mignon began his newspaper column in 1957, Aunt Cammie had been dead for nearly a decade. He continued to write until Melrose Plantation was sold in 1970, keeping the memory of Melrose Plantation alive within the region for nearly two decades after her death. The column's subject matter honoured her memory and the Cadre's shared aesthetic by retaining a focus on the local landscape, Melrose, and the events which occurred there due to Aunt Cammie's interests. In essence, then, Mignon's writing served a two-fold purpose: to honour the work of Aunt Cammie, and to advertise the history and therefore the importance of Melrose as a tourist site. Resulting from this purpose was a reinterpretation of Melrose Plantation's placement in a regional perception of the Cane River region as an historic part of the South.

Already mentioned are the characteristics of Louisiana's Cane River region, in particular its social structure, that marked it as unique among its sister-states. Mignon's reinterpretation offered a symbolic representation of the links between Melrose Plantation and the Old South that rather than emphasizing the Cane River region's social structure, as the Melrose Writers' had done in their work, collapsed it into an echo of the stereotypic social structure more commonly associated with the old South as a whole, where the historic South is equivalent to the plantation or Old South, and the social structure of that period did not fragment based on percentages of Euro-American heritage as it did in Louisiana. In the final analysis, Mignon succeeds in this by offering two contradictory representations of Cane River's Creole population.

Mignon's symbolism is tripartite with a focus on himself, Melrose Plantation, and artist Clementine Hunter. Beginning with himself, the public voice of the Cane River region, Mignon presents himself as the stereotypical Frenchman, so comfortable in a region imbued with French culture that he never leaves. Thus he comes to symbolize the Cane River region's historic ties to France.

Melrose Plantation also becomes a symbol representative of the Cane River region in Mignon's column. Historically linked to the thriving Creole community of plantations in his column, Melrose Plantation further symbolizes the affluent, mythologized plantation culture of the Old South. In direct contrast to this symbol, Mignon created a third symbol of his friend Clementine Hunter.

Hunter's move from the position of Melrose Plantation cook to artist resulted in Mignon's creation of this final symbol. Self acclaimed "discoverer" of artist Clementine Hunter, Mignon packaged and promoted this African-American artist as a "primitive Creole artist" going so far as to make sure her name was pronounced as if French.¹⁰ As always he did this adroitly, drawing on events which would both indicate Hunter's individuality and humanity. An example written after Aunt Cammie's death is an article which begins with Aunt Cammie wanting some fringe for a project she was completing. Having decided that Clementine could make the fringe if the acquaintance who'd made

¹⁰ Not only did Mignon encourage this pronunciation, as mentioned earlier, but his emphasis helped obscure the fact that Hunter was known by several names during her lifetime. She was known as Clemence according to the census records of 1900 and 1910 and was originally christened Clementiam (Wilson 20).

the original sample were to teach her how, Aunt Cammie asked the friend to visit. The first morning of the visit, near the end of breakfast, Aunt Cammie gave Clementine the sample and asked her to wait for Miss Davenport's lesson in a nearby room:

Half an hour later, Clementine tapped on Mrs. [Cammie] Henry's door and after nodding to Miss Davenport, handed Mrs. Henry a sample of fringe, saying, "Is this here what you wanted?"

Thinking it to be the sample that she had given Clementine shortly before, she glanced at it hurriedly . . . "Yes, this is exactly what I want . Go on back to the studio and Miss Davenport will be over to show you how to do it in a few minutes."

Without twitching a single muscle in her bland expression, Clementine with her other hand offered an identical sample of fringe, remarking casually, "This here one is what I just made up from this other what you say is the sample. It look like we don't hardly need Miss Davenport to help us if you all have some more talking that you want to do," and withdrew. . . . so in this case of Mrs. Henry's need for someone capable of being taught to make fringe, Clementine Hunter by her own intelligence had solved the problem to the satisfaction of all, thus demonstrating how the amateur can sometimes instruct the expert and the "tail wag the dog." (Mignon "Tail Wags the Dog" *Natchitoches Times* 2A)

Hunter, an illiterate, elderly woman, thus came to symbolize the innate creativity and intelligence of Creole culture of the mid-1900s. Her presence at Melrose Plantation, still a fully functioning pecan plantation during these years, emphasized its link to the plantation South rather than its Creole beginnings.

Creating these three symbols allowed Mignon to promote a concept which echoed the stereotypes of the South as a region defined by its agrarian economy and the

plantation system. This manipulation of facts, and the resultant reconception of history, was a particularly astute move, since it broadened Melrose Plantation's image in a manner that made it available as a cultural symbol to all individuals searching for a link to the Old South. Acting cultural impresario Mignon, in this way, assured that the promotion of Melrose as a tourist site would reach individuals across the South, securing in the process the possibility that the Melrose Cadre's work would be preserved not only in the local archives, but as a material part of the Cane River region's landscape.

Creating A Cultural Icon: Melrose Plantation and the Natchitoches Preservation Society

Written images, whether presented as fiction or non-fiction, are both original and truthful, in some sense, for their creator. If truthful, then they conform to either an individual's or group's worldview; and if they are fictional then they are creative reflections of known reality. In either case, the espousing individual or group reveals one vision of history. It is the balancing of these visions, the deciphering of how they interact, which ethnography often inadvertently addresses.

As will be detailed later in this work, the writings of the individuals who gathered at Melrose, at the behests of Cammie Henry, portrayed elite views of the Cane River region. In contrast, narratives of an African-American family closely associated with Melrose emphasized the economic inequalities of life in the Cane River region, proposing an alternate folk concept of this region's history. Thus written and oral

narrative forms may present an image of the past which is fuller than that held by any single group mentioned here. But that more balanced image is only the first of many images of the past built around descriptions of Melrose and the Cane River area. The writings and paintings of Melrose visitors which brought the Cane River into homes across Louisiana and the nation were some of the first centring on plantation life and times. And the most popular of these were created by outsiders to the region, individuals associated with Melrose and Cane River through Mrs. Henry's Melrose: Lyle Saxon, Francios Mignon, Caroline Dormon and Clementine Hunter. These creative expressions of the Cane River region romanticised the region, and played a part in the growth of tourism to the region from the mid-1970s onward.

Yet going to work for the *Natchitoches Times* and writing, there, articles glorifying both the work of his Melrose friends and the memory of Mrs. Henry, was a timely consequence for Melrose, as the Plantation was steadily losing money and, ultimately, was sold in 1970. The popularization of Melrose and its creation as a historical icon in the region's popular press was a key factor in saving the building and listing it as a National Register property. Thus, in the end Mignon's returning to the daily chore of worrying about where his next meal would come from served both himself and Melrose well.

Summary: Carver's and Mignon's Melrose

The documentation, collection and preservation activities of Ada Jack Carver and

other members of the Melrose Cadre, through the later influence of Mignon and Aunt Cammie, resulted in the promotion of a regional mythology that was tailored into an exotic locale in Francois Mignon's newspaper column and into a tourist location offering glimpses of the exotic, during his administration of Melrose after Aunt Cammie's death. In this way, Cane River, and Melrose in particular, became representative of Louisiana's cultural exoticism.

Before entering into the mechanics of Mignon's tailoring of Melrose into an exotic locale, a consideration of Carver's reaction to these events is worthy of discussion. During the late 1920s, Carver's letters to Aunt Cammie and Carrie are interspersed by longer and longer periods of silence. At this time, Carver is experiencing difficulties with her own health due to asthma and malaria and alternating between lamenting not being able to visit her friends due to these maladies and showing concern for the health of her friends. In particular, Aunt Cammie had several bad teeth as well as a mother who sickened and died during this time. Saxon's visits to Melrose were fleeting and full of intense writing, as he was desperately trying to make money to support his two aunts living in Baton Rouge. These events were things the group could and did share with each other in letters, however, once Mignon appeared at Melrose and with the help of Aunt Cammie and Saxon began to promote the plantation and region, Carver lost her potential place of comfort and her writing solitude. For Melrose was increasingly becoming like the teas she so detested, a place for the viewing of authors. As a result of this and her distaste for public life, she distanced herself from Melrose and most of the

Melrose group as well.

The following discussion will briefly diagram how the work of Carver and the Melrose Writers, followed by Mignon's subsequent re-conception of Melrose, has influenced not only Melrose's identification with the Cane River region and its survival as a tourist venue, but also the plantation's identification with individuals of the local Creole and African-American communities, clarifying events which reinforced Carver's desire to avoid the publicity now attached to Melrose.

Conclusion

Carver and her writing are intrinsically linked to Melrose and the Cane River region from at least 1917 when she wrote *Joyous Coast* until her story and letter writing nearly stop in the 1930s. As Carver's focus on presenting short stories representing the South continues from 1917 through the 1920s, she makes frequent visits to see the rest of the Melrose Writers. It is during these visits that the group shares interests with one another and begins to formulate a group aesthetic.

All of the shared interests—gardening, weaving, collecting heirloom and antique pieces, collecting quilts, objects and buildings with links to plantation life before the Civil War, writing stories, painting and preservation activities—are interconnected by a desire to preserve the objects, plants and cultural manifestations that are symbolic of the history and local colour of the Cane River Region and by a desire to promote the South. This shared preservationist aesthetic was realized by Carver in her short stories of the nineteen-twenties that focussed on local colour representations of the Cane River region.

Local Colour writing was, thus, a means through which Carver could present her authentic perception of southern society. This stylistic technique afforded Carver the opportunity to present thematic elements which intimate, through tension and regional presentations of the South, encoded views of the author. Carver focuses on thematic elements concerning the place of women, relations between the races and relations between diverse regions of the United States in her short stories. Her uses of coding strategies —trivialization and distraction — are subtle and based within an emic conceptualization of cultural politics, and contrasting racial worldviews. Because of her

use of coding Carver relies heavily on intervals of tension, rather than plot, to create short stories of interest.

Carver emphasizes certain characteristic elements of southern life, heritage and culture in the creation of these moments of tension. Primarily, she hinges her narrative on the juxtaposition of cultures through the presentation of conflicting definitions of regional, cultural or ethnic groups. One such instance occurs in the story "Cotton Dolly" when characters of African-American heritage define themselves, and their social placement differently: based on their jobs, and individual perceptions of ethnicity from the definitions assigned them by the other characters. Taken as a whole, such conflicting definitions build an image of the Cane River through the presentation of Carver's mental concept of the Cane River region: places visited, paths travelled, and groupings of individuals living within the region, which ostensibly stand for elements of the region's cultural groups' worldviews and seasonal living patterns. As a result, her short stories as a group proffer the reader a vision of the Cane River region which is both realistic and multileveled due to the inclusion of Carver's hidden meanings.

Were the reader of Carver's short stories to blend these perspectives, creating an image or map of cultural interactions in the Cane River region, an image influenced by skin colour would emerge and lead to questioning Carver's reasons for fore-fronting the skin colours of Cane River's ethnic groups. Why present the Cane River region as a colour coded image? What benefits might an author and her work receive from such a presentation, beyond the mere breadth of creative space offered exotic subject matter?

Perhaps the answer to this rests within the possibility that Carver created a color coded image of the Cane River region in an effort to present an encoded text of her own worldview. Validation of such a supposition requires consideration of how a feminine vision of the South could be encoded in an image of this sort, or a consideration of the prevalent written forms of the time, their function, and their implied meanings in contrast to the Local Colour movement.

Just before the turn of the century anthropology began producing scholars interested in studying the cultures within their homelands, folklorists. These scholars tended to focus on remote or culturally distinctive populations and present collections of lore traditional to these groups. The Southern states were a mecca for those researchers who wished to work outside of the Native American communities of the West. For example, southern states offered regionally isolated groups for study amongst the Appalachians, and among African-American communities such as those studied by Zora Neale Hurston in Florida. Louisiana's populations did not escape notice of these new researchers and their literary peers. Early researchers catalogued traditional lore and life held by both the Cajun and African-American populations of that state: Joel Chandler Harris, publishing heavily on the African-American folk tales he collected in the state, Lafcadio Hearn, publishing sketches of Creole life, and George Washington Cable, publishing dark realist portrayals of New Orleans' life. These texts, while scholarly in focus and intent, presented little known American communities in the popular press. As a result, readers were able to learn of other cultures within the United States about which

they might otherwise have never known. Due to this mental tourism to unusual traditional communities across the nation the researched communities were exoticised. They became representational of the exotic, traditional other.

This national trend towards objectifying cultures found further purchase in the field of fiction. Writers, just before the turn of the century, were often producing Local Colour pieces focussing on the daily life and the particular perspective of regional areas. Many referenced materials collected by scholars of traditional communities, while others would research facts for their writing by living and visiting in the area they planned to write about. In essence, these writers expanded the trend of exoticising to the regional areas of the United States. By the 1930s, American writers moved from a stylistic focus on Romanticism to Realism, a focus which the Local Colour movement survived as it became a principal inclusion of popular magazines. It was during this period that Carver was writing short stories of the Local Colour genre which focussed on the Cane River region.

As previously noted, Carver's use of Local Colour writing occurs during a time period when an author with connection to the New York and New Orleans literary communities through her writing mentor, Lyle Saxon, would know that the current trend in literary composition was Realism which focussed on presenting people, places, and their politics, as accurately as possible. Hence, how and why Carver wrote twelve short stories and a play using the Local Colour technique, as late as the 1920s, deserves serious consideration.

Though no extant documents reveal Carver's reasons for writing in the Local Colour genre, several definitive factors suggest that she was adroitly using an outmoded literary style both to reach the largest number of people possible and to promote a reactionary view of a specific way of life, integral to Louisiana. First, Carver was part of the second generation of writers active after the Civil War. These writers were isolated from literary centres; even those authors who were beginning to find a place in southern society were a few gathered in larger towns: New Orleans, Nashville, Charlottesville, etc., and far from the majority of writers. Second, Louisiana has a cultural history which is distinctive not only from the factors governing the history of the North and the West, but of the majority of the South's states as well. Finally as a second generation author, Carver was following an authorial tradition which primarily produced works for audiences unfamiliar with Louisiana and the South while promoting the myth of the Old South — Local Colour writing as influenced by Romanticism — and, concurrently, became part of an authorial tradition which dealt with these same differences by breaking the myth of the South — Realism. Equally important influences, which both supported Carver's writing and interests in the Cane River region and supported the Melrose Group's promotion of the Cane River region, are the interests each member of the Melrose Group had in preserving and promoting the distinctive history of that region.

The Melrose Group was composed of individuals and friends whose diverse interests celebrated the Cane River region's cultural and environmental heritage. All the members of this group remained in close contact through visits and letters. They also

created written texts which, like Carver's, focussed on this region. Francois Mignon wrote a newspaper column which frequently focussed on Melrose; Carrie Dormon an amateur botanist wrote several book length texts on local flora; Lyle Saxon wrote several fictional books which were inspired by the region; and, Miss Cammie created a collection of several hundred scrapbooks which held information about the region.

Other activities, also, affected the knowledge of the group, as they wrote about this region. Dormon's work with the Louisiana Forestry Department, her painting of local flora, and her work creating the Kisatchie preserve introduced her friends to Louisiana's indigenous flora. Miss Cammie brought to the group a strong interest in collection which stretched beyond her scrapbook project. She collected items, which being antiquated technologically, were stored in old barns and cabins, often in disrepair. A prime example of this type of collection is Miss Cammie's loom collection which helped promote a revival of weaving in the area (Melrose Collection Henry Diary 1934, Melrose Docent 077-098). Other items were family pieces: furniture, paintings, photographs, and buildings which were in disrepair due to economic changes making their up-keep too expensive for their owners. Saxon, also, collected items — mainly quilts and, subsequently, drawings of their patterns.¹ Also Saxon, like Miss Cammie, collected young individuals with artistic talent to his side, helping them further their careers as much as possible (Thomas 44). While others mainly collected items, Mignon

¹ See the letter from Miss Cammie to Caroline Dormon dated March 9, 1930 (Dormon Collection Folder 600).

collected the narratives attached to Saxon's, Miss Cammie's and Dormon's excursions and rewrote many of them for his column, promoting agrarian life, Cane River history, the importance of historic artifacts to be found in the region, and Melrose. Later after discovering primitive African-American artist Clementine Hunter, he promoted the collection of her work by others and her created identity as a Creole primitive artist by pronouncing her name as if it were French, instead of using the standard pronunciation used by her family (Gholson Field Journal 1995 71). In this way, Mignon aided in attracting tourists who wanted Clementine's paintings to Melrose.

All of the writings about and collections created at Melrose by these individuals were elements which dovetailed with each other to create and promote a regional ethos. This ethos was one of historic revivalism rooted in a search for authenticity. It was spawned from the combined elements of literary production and collection activities, but its origin is based in the tension producing subjects dealt with in Carver's writing: the myth of the plantation South, of racial and gender relations in the South, and of the Civil War.

Not accidentally, the Melrose Group were linked in friendship through the owner of Melrose Plantation, Miss Cammie. Melrose is a plantation with an unusual history. Created from lands originally owned by a freed slave, the plantation evolved from one of several homesteads the Creole children of Marie Thérèse Coincoin owned and operated. Due to its history and current use as a public tourism site, Melrose's continued existence has made it a central landmark of that historic Cane River Creole community.

The Cane River region is an area which to this day superficially resembles the mythic South's economic structure. In the midst of Louisiana's oil and gas economy, the state's northwestern corner and a southern corridor stretching to the southwest of New Orleans still rely heavily on agriculture. There are two types of plantation structures in these areas, homes left from the pre-Civil War South and farming conglomerates or other agricultural operations that are called plantations in the local parlance due merely to their large scale crop production. Both areas promote tourism through tours of plantation houses which date back to, at least, the Civil War. Those plantation homes in the Cane River area which promote tourism are novel due to their private ownership and placement amongst corporation owned and run plantations. Thus the Cane River region, though later than other sections of the South, lost its familial driven plantation system; yet, in the Cane River region this loss of familial farming did not connote a dissolution of this economic agricultural system. Rather corporation run plantations retained the economic, if not the social roles, previously undertaken by family run plantations. But, why consider such economic change? The relevance it has for five friends who met and frequently gathered at Melrose Plantation just after the turn of the twentieth-century is linked to the role Melrose currently holds as a tourism site along the "Auto Tour of Cane River" (*Historic Natchitoches* 7). Relating the activities which occurred at Melrose when a gathering place for these friends to changes in the region's economic structure during the early part of the twentieth-century requires a brief reconsideration of the group which gathered there and the context surrounding them.

The Melrose Group was a group of ethnically elite and economically advantaged individuals. They worked collecting and preserving both written information, Miss Cammie's scrapbooks, and material objects: quilts, photos, furniture, buildings, etc. typical to the region and its ethnic cultures. Perforce their work, their lives and their interpretations of the region were influenced by both Southern history's and mythology's link to the economic structure of the plantation. The Group's written interpretations of this atypical corner of the South, based not only in oral narratives they learned while collecting but also on the experiences of collecting, were predominantly published in the popular press with Mignon publishing in the local newspaper, Carver in regional and national magazines, and Saxon in newspapers and books and, as Carrie published, book length manuscripts.

Such publication constructed and promoted in the popular press an innovative construct of the Southern myth which echoing the Southern myth of an earlier generation of the South's writers presented a south steeped in social strata, racial divisions and gendered social roles. They wrote as self-educated preservationists in this outmoded style with romantic undertones. Their work has been acknowledged due to the substance of their writing. That substance, an allusion to the Plantation South, has an innate power. This power or strength is a message of discontent with the mythical South of writers of the previous generation encoded in the Local Colour of northwestern Louisiana, in the history and peoples of Cane River itself that promoted a new mythical South steeped in the folklore and local traditions of the individuals peopling that region

in the early 1900s.

Focussing their collective efforts on the preservation and promotion of this new mythical South, the Melrose Group were searching for historical authenticity (Bendix 17). The mythical South presented in the writings of these individuals is a plantation South both previously unrepresented and unique in the United States: a South where Creoles of Color who were plantation owners before the Civil War become less economically influential after the war though not less socially acceptable, a fact which outside the region mistakenly suggested a parallel with the social structure across the southern states that afforded all individuals of colour a lower social standing. It is the South of Louisiana and, therefore by right of birth, of Aunt Cammie, Caroline Dormon, Lyle Saxon and Ada Jack Carver.

Carver's approach to this birthright assumed a self-proclaimed role of guardianship. The locations and groups described in Carver's stories are representations taken from her daily experience and included trips to Creole and Cajun enclaves of Louisiana. The themes interwoven through these local colour infused short stories are another aspect of Carver's writing that is representative of the Melrose Writers' group aesthetic. She created themes that focussed on changing local traditions, regional differences and the role of belief in traditional communities. Set within this realistic portrayal was another realistic image that this author protectively guarded.

Carver encoded a second set of themes in her short stories. These themes reveal a controversial, for the time period, presentation of the role of southern women in daily

life. Coding allowed Carver to create a safe and accurate presentation of the themes that were threaded through the lives of Southern women. Women were predominately homemakers at this time who were living lives bounded by family, church and societal expectations. Despite this they found ways of expressing themselves and employing power that reached outside the boundaries imposed by society.

Carver's female characters find freedom of self expression through embracing the label and the mannerisms of eccentricity. Characters such as Suellen and Treeshy embrace eccentricity to the point of near societal condemnation as they try on every religion in town or steal numerous small items, respectively. Others such as the mother of the narrator of Treeshy's life story help maintain freedom gained by other women by keeping secrets. In this way, Treeshy's affair remains a family secret and the daughter she stole for, the daughter who grew up in another community was protected from her mother's crossing of societal boundaries. Thus Carvers' female characters achieve a greater freedom of self expression than her conforming southern women.

A conformist like Maudie, who though disliked was a respectable woman because of her attempts to afford her sister all that is commonly expected: a roof, shared meals, proper clothes, balanced portrayals of women gaining power through eccentricity and secret keeping. Due to trying to exist within society's boundaries, she ends up seeing the family honour besmirched because of her sister's out-of-wedlock pregnancy, she then loses her fiancé of years by marrying him to her sister. Likewise Martha of *The Ring* in keeping the secret of her submission of a short story and receipt of the resulting

prize—a bold step into the world of commerce for a southern woman—loses both the joy of openly sharing her accomplishment and her life-long dream of the engagement ring she never had, a realizable dream now that she's received prize money. Avoiding the possibility of censure, she does not make public the award. Avoiding the need for explanations, she does not purchase the long desired ring. Avoiding possible censure at home, she uses the money to purchase what her husband most desires. Her secrecy, an act of self-effacement, is rewarded by his positive response.

Secrets, sacrifice and eccentricity were elements of feminine existence that Carver knew well. Secrets were part of daily life, as it is still unclear how Carver's first child actually came to be scalded to death. Also, Carver alternately sacrificed being a mother to the role of author/public speaker and the role of author and public figure to that of mother. That she tried to balance these roles to the extent that her husband frequently cooked family meals while she wrote, or she went on excursions into ethnic enclaves earned her cloak of eccentricity.

Carver created, then, through the use of coding a thematic definition of the roles afforded women in the South and the ways women were able to manipulate those roles to suit their purposes. This approach to composition was not attempted by Carver as a way to publicly discuss the roles available to women of the South. Rather than seek public recognition for her portrayal of southern femininity, Carver presented these themes in a manner frequently used by women wishing to communicate without revealing their knowledge overtly. Coding, then, afforded Carver the chance to publish

controversial information in a manner recognizable by the majority of her readers, patrons of women's magazines, but not readily identifiable by those differently gendered.

Consequently of all the Melrose Writers, Carver came closest to achieving an ideal presentation of the local colour of the Cane River Region. She does this in a mere 13 short stories that present stylized portrayals of the region's ethnic groups in the standard format of local colourists. This achievement alone affords Carver a central role in the production of Cane River representations that led to Mignon's recontextualization of Melrose and the Melrose writers after 1930.

Carver deserves greater recognition though due to her use of coding. Such an attempt at accurate portrayal of the influences and culture surrounding a cultural group she knew intimately, through membership by gender, suggests her devotion to cultural presentation in local colour literature. Her devotion is backed up by the perhaps not so coincidental timing of Mignon's recontextualization of Melrose and her own dwindling visits there.

For with Mignon's approach, there was an increase in public visibility and a change in the reasons for retaining the carefully collected material objects symbolic of the region's earlier lifestyle and traditions. These items evolved from precious treasures to tourist draws. Concurrently the books and stories and scrapbooks produced by the Melrose Writers began to be reflections of Mignon's presentations of Henry and Melrose. Such a change in focus must have been abhorrent to Carver who struggled throughout her life with the desire to avoid public appearances. It is no wonder she

began to distance herself from Melrose and her fellow writers at this time.

In sum, the activities of the Melrose Group overshadowed Carver's short stories not only due to their efforts having direct ties to promotion of the region, but due to their formats. One example, Saxon's writing overshadowed Carver's stories due to his writing format, the novel, and the explicit setting of his *Children of Strangers* being on Cane River near Yucca Plantation. These activities overtly promoted Creole heritage, as well as traditional activities and knowledge of groups within the Cane River region.

Interestingly the promotion of Cane River's ethnic heritage through these means was different from the group's promotion for the tourist trade. In this latter instance, the discovery of primitive artist Clementine Hunter by Mignon and her promotion by Mignon and Miss Cammie suppressed Clementine's African-American heritage, subverting that heritage through the pronunciation of her name, to intimate a Creole heritage. In contrast to these promotion approaches of her fellow writers, the majority of Carver's short stories generally alluded to the Cane River area without overtly specifying the region as the setting for a story. In addition, her encoding of southern women's roles obscured her most important contribution to the Group's authentic portrayal of the Cane River Region, leaving her in the position of second fiddle to other members of the Group and in comparative obscurity for scholars of literature during the remainder of her century.

In spite of this whether promoting local cultures through written formats or Creole heritage through promoting Melrose as a tourism site, the Melrose Group as a

whole consciously blended their interests in traditional culture, literature and preservation through revival of past technologies to promote their region. The result of these machinations — the interrelationships of folklore in literature, revived traditions, and revived interest in history, and collection — precipitates two philosophical statements on racial relations.

First, these activities challenged current national, philosophic trends promoting segregation of the races by emphasizing ethnicity and cross-racial interaction. Carver and her friends were active promoting ethnic culture during a period of great conservatism in the South. While a few other centres were publishing the work of African-American writers or writers rebuking the Southern myth, these university presses and magazines were located in more northern areas of the South and were not publishing such materials before 1927-28 (Hubbell 849). Despite this trend toward publications debunking the mythical South created by writers following the Civil War, there was popularly a quite different philosophy concerning racial relations in the South. The turn of the century found the Ku Klux Klan gaining in numbers, and reaching the height of its membership numbers, in the twentieth-century, in 1930. Certainly from this period on through the 1950s, schools and other public areas in the South were also strictly segregated. Thus the South was a strict social hierarchy in which groups like The Knights of the White Camellia, the White League, and the Klan often regulated the behaviour of individuals considered to be acting in too liberal a manner from the 1880s through the 1930s (Wall *et. al.* 200, 203, 257). This social climate—even from a purely

historical vantage—certainly would have made the lives of the Melrose Group uncomfortable had they overtly suggested through their activities and writing that the South had a history of racial interaction and responsibility not commonly discussed. Despite this, the Melrose Group focussed on the unique ethnic relations of Louisiana's Cane River region.

Second, the writings of the Melrose Group, particularly those of Carver and Saxon, helped to debunk the stereotypical and traditional American plantation myth of the South by focussing again on ethnicity, in particular Creole heritage. As a result, they help to validate a Creole myth which is much like the American myth: work hard and you can make your dreams a reality despite your surroundings or background.

Emphasis on the local Creole community's early beginnings created a legendary narrative of import, as it echoes elements of an American legend. This Creole history suggests that if free, you can attain your dreams through hard work, common sense and proper values and is based loosely on the life successes of Marie Thérèse Coincoin, a freed Creole who bought her family members and worked a small piece of land into a thriving plantation. This legend's import is attributable only to the unique pre-Civil War social structure of Louisiana. Consequently, this legend validates Louisiana's plantation culture pre- and post- Civil War in a way no other Southern state can validate plantation culture.

To the Melrose Group in the early 1900s, this validation of plantation culture “equity”: a history of Euro-American and Creole plantation owners, offers merit to Miss

Cammie's family run plantation and, by association, to her friends. Thus the Euro-American owners and friends who gathered at Melrose, as collectors of Creole cultural items and preservers of Melrose, created a link between themselves and the region's affluent plantation days. Melrose as collection centre and showplace became under their influences an icon of both the Coincoin family's success and the success of plantation economics, through an allusion to the American legend of achievable success through self-sufficiency. By association then, these individuals were authenticating their preservationist efforts and artistic creations, stamping them with the reflected success of the economic grandeur attained during the region's cultural height that mythical pre-Civil War era termed the Plantation South.

In the end analysis, Carver is a short story writer of moderate skill. Yet she is, also, a key writer in building the history of the presentation and understanding of the feminine mind of the south. Her work—a mere publication record of 13 stories and one play—shows themes concerning women's daily struggles, encodes these struggles while concurrently reflecting the southern landscape, including the local culture, from which these themes and communication skills arose.

Much of Carver's work was influenced by her association with the group which gathered at Melrose and so provides important insight to the process of historic revivalism as well as the writing process. Reviewing the process which transformed the Cane River region into a literary construct containing traditional elements reveals the powers of popular writing, particularly of the Local Colour genre, and removes Carver

from her place as a short story writer who merely reflected the Group's vision of the Plantation South. Foremost, popular writing was for Carver a way to produce large numbers of publications, or reach many people with one piece of written text. Secondly as an outmoded style, Local Colour writing offered Carver a format for the use of the coding strategy trivialization. As a result of this combination of factors, this writing style had for Carver the ability to transform popular perception due to its accessible nature while safely promoting controversial concepts through encoding new ideas in commonly accepted mythology.

Though rarely acknowledged by the elite literary canon, Carver is, nonetheless, an important figure. She is a writer who presented a complex, alien, exotic region to her own country in terms which would not inflate either regional or gender-based animosities. Her short stories unfolded without seeming to glorify the ethnic and economic differences which made the South unique in the United States, differences which were still stigmatized outside the region. In the North, plantation society and the Southern myth were inextricably linked to the ills of slavery and the Civil War. In the South, Carver's writing was being read by individuals who generally saw ethnicity in binary terms, or as a question of social structure despite the upheavals experienced due to the Civil War and resultant years of occupancy during Reconstruction.

Carver's use of Local Colour allows her to use the genre to portray a South which meets the expectations of readers in both the North and the South as she makes narratives about the exotic South, the South of the other, the misfit, the ethnic outsider,

while encoding an image of the southern woman which navigates these regional stereotypes and their social foundation.

Using the myth of the Old South (and its understood social hierarchy based on race) Carver challenges stereotypical literary treatments of the South, by consistently presenting inter-racial characters. In conjunction, she succeeds in encoding these racial stereotypes by using folklore to emphasize both the alternate belief systems and the social astuteness of her non-Euro-American characters. Such use allows this Southern writer to present very human, caring interactions which often cross social boundaries of southern society stereotypically perceived in the North as impenetrable or patronizing; thus offering a clue to the complicit coding strategy's existence.

These strategies worked in the South because they seemed to validate the social structures of the Old South and promote the close emotional ties which occurred across colour lines despite a strict social hierarchy. In the North, her strategy worked because she presented her South as a racially exotic region that seems to debunk, frequently, the oppositional — black and white — social structure the North fought against during the Civil War. Subsequently, Carver's literary strategy, coding, saved her the embarrassment of presenting what in the South could be perceived as overly liberal thoughts in the popular press at a time when the Ku Klux Klan was at its greatest strength in numbers, and when the North tended to view the South as a violent, unruly region still stubbornly clinging to the mistaken philosophies of its past despite the Civil War and Reconstruction. Carver, then, uses a region she is familiar with due to her

introduction to Melrose Plantation, a familiarity with local customs and lifeways broadened by experiences with her friends (the Melrose Group), stereotypes based on social expectations created during America's period of "romantic racialism," and antiquated literary techniques to reach a national audience of readers with two subversive images: a controversial image of the South and an encoded image of the twentieth-century world of southern women.

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Appendix I

Folklore Holdings of the Melrose Libraries

The Melrose library was a resource which was known by scholars and writers nationwide to be invaluable for regional research focussing on Louisiana and northern Texas. The library was one of Mrs. Henry's many projects and like her scrapbooks available to visitors for perusal or use in their research. Several references exist supporting the fact that both Lyle Saxon and Ada Jack Carver used the library and frequently borrowed books from it. Saxon, also, made extensive use of the Library during the compilation of his works *Father Mississippi* and *Children of Strangers*. At his death, though his reasons are unknown, Saxon donated his library to Mrs. Henry; perhaps he did so because of the tremendous amount of time he spent using her collected works.

After Mrs. Henry's death, her extensive collection — which now included Lyle Saxon's personal library — was donated in 1970 to Northwestern Louisiana State University and subsequently catalogued as an MA thesis project by Mr. Robert Branson Sparks Jr. Mr. Sparks' five volume thesis catalogues the nearly 7,000 volumes. Fortunately, Mr. Sparks has annotated the volumes which are known to have come from the Saxon library. Unfortunately however, Mr. Sparks' work is neither well annotated nor indexed according to subject matter covered by the various volumes. Thus, in an attempt to ascertain the subjects covered by the 7,000 volume library, his work must be reviewed page by page.

In order to make available a list of those books whose subject matter may be

loosely termed folkloric, I have compiled a directory of the major works of the Melrose library which would fall under that term; they have been categorized on the following pages under the headings “Mrs. Cammie G. Henry's Melrose Library” and “The Lyle Saxon Library” so that knowledge and interest in Folklore genres may be easily ascertained. The division has also been made because Saxon purchased many unusual books in the late 1930's. These books reveal Saxon's interests at the time, suggesting an obsession with “exotic” belief systems, mores and cultural customs.

I have not included every collection of genres listed; leaving out for example, some lesser known children's collections and lesser known collections of fairy tales when accepted Folklore texts (i.e. those by Lang or the Grimms') were also in the collection. I have also included several types of works: biographies, autobiographies, and regional literature which though not generally considered folklore carry titles indicating that they hold regional information concerning Louisiana, its folklore and people. Finally several fictional works have been included when the author is noted for using folklore in his texts, when the author was a member of the American Folklore Society (ex. Samuel Clemens), or when the author was known to have connections with folklorists through friends (ex. Richard Wright was a friend of Langston Hughes who was a friend of Zora Neale Hurston.).

The volumes are re-alphabetized here according to author's last name or according to book title when there was no author listed or when there are several works

by a single author; and, I have retained Mr. Sparks' numbering system. Each volume's number, as assigned in Mr. Sparks' thesis, appears to the left of its volume.

Cammie G. Henry's Melrose Library:

Folklore Holdings

Book Number	Thesis Page	Book Title
01522	8	Adams, Edward C. L. <i>Congaree Sketches</i> . Chapel Hill: U NC P, 1927.
05276	10	Adams, Russell L. <i>Great Negroes Past and Present</i> . Chicago: African American Publishing Co., 1964.
04456	8	Adams, E. C. L. <i>Negro Sketches</i> . Charleston: Charles Scribner's, 1928.
R2278	9	Adams, Nehemiah. <i>Southside View of Slavery</i> . Boston: T. R. Marvin, B. B. Mussey and co., 1654.
06123	11	Addison and Steele. <i>The Spectator</i> . Philadelphia: James Crissy, 1838.
03306	14	Aesop. <i>Three Hundred Aesop's Fables</i> . London: George Routledge, n.d.
01986	14	<i>Aesop's Fables</i> . NY: McLoughlin Bros., 1901.
03908	149	Akers, Floyd. <i>Boy Fortune Hunters in Alaska</i> . Chicago: Riley M. Briton Co., nd.
00518	149	Akers, Floyd. <i>Boy Fortune Hunters in China</i> . Chicago: Riley M. Briton Co., 1909.

00869	149	Akers, Floyd. <i>Boy Fortune Hunters in Egypt</i> . Chicago: Riley M. Briton Co., 1908.
00741	149	Akers, Floyd. <i>Boy Fortune Hunters in Panama</i> . Chicago: Riley M. Briton Co., 1908.
04208	40	Andersen, Hans Christian. <i>Fairy Tales</i> . NY: Gilbert H. McKibbin, n.d.
03313	40-41	Andersen, Hans Christian. <i>Fairy Tales</i> . NY: McLoughlin Bros., 1904.
05240	53	Armour, R. C. <i>North American Indian Fairy Tales</i> . NY: Charles L. Bowman and Co., nd.
05375	63	Atwater, Mary Meigs. <i>Shuttle-Craft Book of American-Weaving</i> . NY: McMillan, 1928.
00519	63	Atwater, Mary Meigs. <i>Shuttle-Craft Book of American-Weaving</i> . NY: McMillan, 1931.
02299	79	Ballowe, Hewitt L. <i>Creole Folktales</i> . Baton Rouge: LSU P, 1948.
06106 05798	393	Balzac, Honoré de. <i>Drole Stories Collected from the Abbeys</i> . Np.: Bibliophiliste Society, n.d.
02295 04037	80	Bankston, Marie Louise Benton. <i>Campfire Stories of the Mississippi Valley</i> . New Orleans: L. Graham Co. ltd., 1914. [2 copies]
00647	83	Barham, R. D. H. <i>The Ingoldsby Legends</i> . Np., nd.

00655	84	Baring-Gould, S. <i>Curious Myths of the Middle Ages</i> . London: Rivingston, 1877.
00656	84	Baring-Gould, S. <i>Curious Myths of the Middle Ages</i> . NY: John R. Lovell Co., nd.
00761	84	Baring-Gould, S. <i>Curious Myths of the Middle Ages</i> . Boston: Robert Bros., 1880.
00762	83	Baring-Gould, S. <i>Legends of the Patriarchs and Prophets</i> . NY: Holt and Williams, 1872.
02445	93	Baudier, Roger. <i>The Catholic Church in Louisiana</i> . Np., 1939.
01559	94	Baum, L. Frank. <i>Baum's American Fairy Tales</i> . Indianapolis: Bobb's-Merrill Co., 1908.
01883	97	Beatty, John Y. <i>The Farm Book</i> . Akron: The Saalfield Publishing co., 1932.
02596	103	Belisle, John G. <i>History of Sabine Parish</i> . Louisiana Manning, LA: Sabine Banner P, 1912.
05096	106	Benet, Laura. <i>Fairy Bread</i> . NY: Thomas Seltzer, 1921.
05859	112	Berthold, Eugenie. <i>Glimpses of Life in Old Saint Louis</i> . St. Louis, MO: Historical Society, 1933.
02323	117	Biever, Albert Hubert. <i>The Jesuits in New Orleans and Mississippi...</i> New Orleans: Hausser, 1924.
04444	150	Bigelow, Payne. <i>The Boy's Life of Mark Twain</i> . Harper and Brothers, nd.

01404	127	Blain, Mary E. <i>Games for Children</i> . NY: Barse and Hopkins, 1923.
01744	131	Blom, Francis. <i>The Conquest of the Yuccatan</i> . Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1936.
05292	131	Blom, Francis. <i>Maya Books and Sciences</i> . New Orleans, Tulane U P, nd.
05292	132	Blom, Francis. <i>The Maya Game Pok-Ta-Pok</i> . New Orleans: Tulane U P, 1932.
05292	131	Blom, Francis. <i>A Maya Skull</i> . New Orleans: Tulane U P, 1933.
04751	135	Boatwright, Modie C., et al, eds. <i>Mustangs and Cow Horses</i> . Austin: TX Folk-Lore Society, 1940.
05110	134	Boatwright, Modie C. <i>Tall Tales from Texas</i> . Dallas: Southwest P, 1934.
04828	134	Boatwright, Modie C. <i>Texan Stompin' Grounds</i> . Boston: TX Folk-Lore Society, 1941.
01000	137	Boguet, Henry. <i>An Examen of Witches</i> . London: John Rodker, 1929.
01911	139	Bolmar, A., ed. <i>Perrin's Fables</i> . Philadelphia: Blanchard and Lea, 1859.
02437	141	Bonner, Sherwood. <i>Dialect Tales</i> . NY: Harper, 1883.
00625	142	<i>A Book of American Prose Humor</i> . NY: Duffield and Co., 1907.

00831	143	<i>The Book of Saints.</i> A. and C. Black Ltd., 1921.
00783	146	Boswell, James. <i>The Life of Samuel Johnson.</i> NY: Charles L. Bowman and Co., 1909.
02384	153	Bradford, Roarke. <i>How Come Christmas.</i> NY: Harper and Bros., 1930.
02380	154	Bradford, Roarke. <i>John Henry.</i> NY: The Literary Guild, 1931.
02379 02378	154	Bradford, Roarke. <i>Kingdom Coming.</i> NY: Grosset and Dunlap, 1933.
02381	153 1930.	Bradford, Roarke. <i>Old King David an' the Philistine Boys.</i> NY: Harper and Bros.,
02382	154	Bradford, Roarke. <i>Old Man Adam an' His Chillun'.</i> NY: Harper and Bros., 1928.
05017	161	Britton, Faye Adams. <i>Shakespearean Fairy Tales.</i> Chicago: Reilly and Britton, 1907.
05295	169	Brown, John Henry. <i>Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas.</i> St. Louis: L. E. Daniell, n.d.
R2156	170	Brownell, Henry Howard. <i>The Pioneer Heros of the New World.</i> NY: Dayton and Wentworth, 1855.
05835	173	Bryan, Mary E. <i>The Ghost of the Hurricane Hills.</i> Cleveland: Westbrook Co., 1891.

03687	171	Bruce, H. Addington. <i>Historic Ghosts and Ghost Hunters</i> . NY: Moffat Yard and Co., 1908.
04798	175	Bullfinch, Thomas. <i>The Age of Fable</i> . Gilbert H. McKibbin, nd. [Inscribed 1904.]
00654	175	Bullfinch, Thomas. <i>The Age of Fable</i> . Philadelphia: David Mc Kay, 1898.
03127	180	Burnett, Francis Hodgesons. <i>This Shuttle</i> . NY: Fredrick A. Stokes, 1907.
03691	184	Burriss, Ely Edward. <i>Tabo, Magic, Sprits</i> . NY: MacMillan, 1931.
06140	187	Burton, William E. <i>The Cyclopedia of Wit and Humor</i> . NY: D. Appleton and Co., 1858.
05152	191	Byng, Douglas. <i>More Byng Ballads</i> . NY: John Lane, 1935.
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02676	196	Cable, George W. <i>Old Creole Days</i> . NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, nd.

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01214	218	Caulfield, Ruby Van Allen. <i>The French Literature of Louisiana</i> . Np: 1929.
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R2516 R1772	248	Clapp, Theodore. <i>Autobiographical Sketches and Collections.</i> Boston: Philips, Samson and Co., 1857. [2 copies]
04305	252	Clemens, Samuel. <i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.</i> NY: Charles L. Webster and Co., 1885.
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02577	261	Coleman, Burrill. <i>Colored.</i> Franklin, OH: The Editor Publ. Co., 1886.
03526	266	<i>The Columbia Book of Yarns.</i> Np., 1922. [Instructions for knitting and crocheting]
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02949	202	Cooke, John Esten. <i>Campfires of the Confederacy.</i> Np., nd. [humor, songs, poems and adventure stories]
01423	285	Cooper, Paul Fenimore, trans. <i>Tricks of Women and Other Albanian Tales.</i> NY: William Morrow and Co., 1928.
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01244	320	Dana, Marvin. <i>A Puritan Witch</i> . NY: DoubleDay and McClure, 1903.
06120	331	Davis, Edwin Adams. <i>Plantation Life in the Florida Parishes</i> . NY: Columbia UP, 1943.
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02688	355	Deihlar, J. Hanno. <i>The Creoles of German Descent</i> . Philadelphia: Americana Germanica P, 1909.
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04897	379	Dobie, J. Frank, et al eds. <i>[A Collection of Texas Legend and Tradition.]</i> Austin: TX Folk-Lore Society, 1939.
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04300	426	Elson, William H., ed. <i>World History in Myth and Legend</i> . Np: n.d.
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01911	1111	Solmar, A., ed. <i>Perrin's Fables</i> . Philadelphia: Blanchard and Lea, 1859.
03420	528	Sommers, Montague. <i>The Geography of Witchcraft</i> . NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927.
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02724	1509	Webster, Marie B. <i>Quilts</i> . Garden City: Doubleday, 1926.
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03934	1571	Wright, Richard. <i>Native Son</i> . NY: Harper and Bros., 1940.
04059	1571	Wright, Richard. <i>Black Boy</i> . NY: Harper Bros., 1945.
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The Lyle Saxon Library:

Folklore Holdings

Book Number	Thesis Page	Title
00948	84	Baringsgold, S. <i>Early Reminiscences.</i> : E. P. Dutton and co., nd. [gift: to Lyle Saxon from Mrs. Henry, 1935]
03691	184	Burriss, Eli Edward. <i>Taboo Magic Sprites.</i> NY: McMillan, 1931.
04701	191	Byrn, M. Lafayette, ed. <i>The Repository of Wit and Humor.</i> Boston: John P. Jewitt, 1860.
02915	220	Cendrar, Blaise. <i>The African Saga.</i> First ed. NY: Payson and Clarke Ltd., 1927. [Short Stories from African literature. Translations.]
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00453	308	Crowley, Alester. <i>Magick in Theory and Practice.</i> Paris: Lecran P, 1929.
00567	395	Dubois-Dusaulle, Gaston. <i>Bestiality.</i> NY: Penurge P, 1933.
00107	457	Ferguson, Jan. <i>The Philosophie of Witchcraft.</i> NY: D. Appleton and co., 1925. [Has a Lyle Saxon autograph.]
05062	479	Flammarion, Camille. <i>Haunted Houses.</i> NY: D. Appleton, 1924.

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Appendix II

“The Stranger Within the Gates”

The choir had sung "Praise God From Whom all Blessings Flow," the voice of the great pipe organ was stilled, and noiselessly the old sexton swung open the door as an exit for the large congregation that filled Trinity church. The pastor, Rev. Dr. Johnson, was the last to leave, and as he walked down the aisle something in a far off pew attracted his attention which, upon closer inspection, proved to be a little girl who had made herself comfortable on the soft cushions and was sound asleep. Her scanty clothing and her careworn, starved expression left no doubt in his mind that she was a product of a sweat shop, and a veritable child of the slums. With a gentle touch he awakened her. "Come on little girl it is time to go home, or it may be you have no home." Tell me your name, why are you here and where are you going?" Between her sobs she gave him the following information concerning herself: Her name was Mary Masters and she lived on St. Peters avenue. Her mother had allowed her to go walking, and when she passed the church and heard the music she stopped to listen, then went in, and as she was very tired she soon fell asleep. She was very sorry, because she knew she was going to get a beating when she got home; but when the kind minister took her by the hand and promised to go all the way with her, like all childish sorrow, her's was soon at an end. To her attentive listener she told about her home life and of how her father had lost his job because he drank. Then, in a tone more confidential, she added, "and my mother drinks too, but that don't keep her from sewing, and she stays at home, while I work down town." Then she described the workshop and told in detail the whole process of flower making, from the tiny petal to the

full blown rose, until they came to a row of tenement houses on St. Peter's avenue, and stopping in front of one of them she said, "Well this is home." Through a long, dark alley she led, then up three flights of stairs. She led him to the damp, closed in room that she called home. She cautiously opened the door, and from within came the harsh voice of her mother. "It's high tim you were comin' back. I'll teach you how to stay off and keep from workin'." At this she stopped short as she caught a glimpse of the stranger, whom Mary introduced as Dr. Johnson. The man in the corner roused himself a little from his drunken stupor and managed to stammer out: "Throw them things off the chair and have a seat; and excuse the looks of things, as we've got sickness here."

A small, dingy window let in just enough light to reveal the dirt and filth of the poverty stricken room. There was a strong odour of whiskey, mingled with other odours more foul, pervading the atmosphere. Although a June sun warmed the earth there was a smouldering fire on the hearth, over which the mother prepared their scanty mid-day meal.

On one of the beds lay a child ill with typhoid fever and at her feet were piles of children's underwear; some finished and ready to be sent out; others just begun. The mother continued the conversation: "If you be one of those folks as don't bl've in chillun workin', we ain't got no time to talk wid you. Mary thar makes flowers and they tells me she's a furst rate worker, and I don't want no foolishness drummed into her head."

Dr. Johnson's heart was a receptacle that contained the sorrows of many, but was never too full for more, and his sympathy went out to these poor, ignorant people. He explained to them the anti-child labour movement, and told them about the good time that is coming when the wage earner will be better paid. He talked to them about his church, the one spot where the rich do not stand upon vantage ground, but the poor as well can come with their sorrows and their thanksgiving, and earnestly invited them to his services. He stated the benefits of Sunday school and asked that Mary be permitted to attend. Again the father roused himself, and, with dubious, distrustful look in his eye, replied. "We'se workin' people and ain't got no time for religion, but as for Mary, she can go to Sunday school, being as the child don't ever have no fun."

After this promise the week passed slowly for Mary, for with every child who has some bright prospect in view, time travels on laden wings. But Sunday came at last, and she found herself an eager pupil in Dr. Johnson's class. Beside her sat a little girl dressed in fine clothes with ribbon sash and long curls. For the first time in her life a feeling of self-consciousness took possession of Mary. She was ashamed of her little hands that were torn by the artificial thorns. She wondered if anyone knew that she wore a made-over dress of her mother's. Then remembering a hole in her stocking, she shyly tucked one foot and then the other under her until she sat upon both. But after awhile the organ played; she had a vague idea of heaven and she felt she must be there. Then the song "Little children, little children who love their redeemer are the jewels, precious jewels;

bright gems for his crown.” She forgot the wail of the wretched woman and the cry of the little child. She heard only the angels sing.

Next came the lesson, the text of which was “Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for such is the kingdom of heaven.” It was all over too soon, and her reluctant little feet were turned in the direction of St. Peter’s avenue. Happy days followed for Mary. Her little classmate with the sash had given her a doll, the first thing of her own she had ever had to fondle and love, and the same little girl’s mother had taken her home in her carriage one day when she was returning tired from her work.

Weeks glided into months, and the tiny mouse that had so timidly crept into church one day grew bolder and went again and again, and; unlike the proverbial “church mouse,” found crumbs of knowledge and drank of the living water, while the mother in her nest in the great stone wall kept up her unceasing grind and gnawed at the vitals of society.

But one Sunday came and there was a vacant seat in Dr. Johnson’s class, and when her name was called no little voice answered, and when the kind minister went that afternoon to make inquiries, he found that typhoid fever had been impartial in its claims upon the household, and that little Mary was its last victim.

Upon a soiled pillow rested the flushed face, with its halo of golden hair. By her side was the beloved doll, whose waxen features bore the imprint of many tear stains and

kisses from a dirty little face. Like a true mother, her baby had been her last thought before she lapsed into unconsciousness.

Dr. Johnson bent over her and called her name, but no smile greeted him.

It was the second week of the dread disease and she tossed in her delirium. Some times she was making flowers and would say, "I can't make these stems; my hands are too tired," and would sob and cry. Then she would hug an invisible doll, then push it away and say: "Be good, Dolly, till I come home; some day I am going to heaven where little girls don't have to work, and I'll play with you all day." It did seem that the little flower girl would soon be a rose bud in the beautiful garden, where Christ is the lily of the valley and the rose of Sharon.

To the tired burden bearers, who seemed crushed beneath their burden of sorrow, the minister told of the wonderful love of the Saviour, who died for all mankind. He then quoted the passage of scripture, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and when he knelt with them at the bedside of the sick child they surrendered their hearts to Mary's God.

Morning came again after a long night of weary watching, but it was the brightest day that had ever dawned in the dismal home. The Great Physician had visited the tenement house and his divine hand had touched the brow of the sick child and cooled her fever and she was out of danger.



