

Region and the Short Form in American Literature. Symposium in Honor of Jochen Achilles  
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Abstract

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“Violence in the South: Charles W. Chesnutt’s ‘The Sheriff’s Children’”

Charles Chesnutt, one of the prominent regional writers of the nineteenth century, is known for the precision with which he rendered local dialects and sociolects. His stories also reveal that he had an acute understanding of the psychosocial dynamics of small southern communities. On the basis of a close reading of the short story “The Sheriff’s Children” I will argue that Chesnutt presents the social consequences of the history of slavery with the accuracy of a sociologist *avant la lettre* and that in dealing with mob violence and lynching in the South, he – unlike other writers – insists on the agency of the victim.