



Sadiq, Aisha. "Process-Oriented Imagination in *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856) by Harriet Beecher Stowe." *Plaza: Dialogues in Language and Literature*, vol. 6, no. 1, autumn 2016, pp. 27-34.

Aisha Sadiq

Process-Oriented Imagination in *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856) by Harriet Beecher Stowe

Despite its remarkable nature of small narratives and voices of the "dependant" as fissures or interruptions in the history of slavery, Stowe's *Dred* has been regarded as a novel of "futile" agency, reproduction of power and reappropriation of what it condemns.¹ In many scholarly studies, the political worth of Stowe's writing has been associated mainly with matriarchal utopian writing.² Matriarchal utopia in terms of ahistorical and separatist world with overemphasis of "care" and male extinction is a limit itself on matriarchal literary politics. This essay is an attempt to recuperate Stowe's political agency embedded in her novel from the obscurities of traditional criticism by introducing its processual and conceptual feminist utopian writing. *Dred* is a narrative in which the acknowledgement of the inevitability of change is not disentangled from the material continuities of the history. Stowe does not eclipse realities rather engages with them industriously to scrutinize the knowledge of history with the hope to imagine a better future. The novel does not offer a "utopian myopia," rather it contains multiple small narratives that weave together pragmatically to understand and disrupt the institutional structure of slavery.³ Stowe's political imagination in *Dred* can be defined in better terms in Sally Kitch's words whose notion of feminist imagination is a conceptual process to understand and *disrupt* the historical knowledge of inequality:

It is a framework for conceptual struggle, self-reflexive scrutiny, and ideological give-and-take within which plans for the future can be assessed. Instead of the utopian certainty of knowledge, it approaches knowledge and welcomes revision. (9)

The scholarship on *Dred* is enmeshed with contradictory responses of pessimism and optimism, structure and agency, hope and hopelessness, change and "mimeticism." This contradiction is also due to the inherent potential of the text that can be found in the form of its conflicts, ambiguities and questions. Dorothy Berkson in her essay "So we all became mothers" describes Stowe's political imagination generally in terms of matriarchal divine power of "love and caring" as an alternative to the masculinist God of politics, religion, race and gender. Berkson seems to appreciate Stow's matriarchal utopian power to combat masculine violence but also argues that the "proclaimed superiority" of women as well as women's values were a "myth" in the historical context (101). Richard Boyd in his essay "Models of Power in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred*" acknowledges that Stowe's political activism is not confined to the emancipation of women and slaves only; rather she works against universal servitude that captures whites/blacks, male/female and private/public equally. According to Boyd, Stowe's dilemma of oscillation between cynicism and matriarchal harmony ends with a complete "escape" from "the evils of the system." Thus, Stowe's ideal of matriarchal alternative with "self-sacrificing love" and "non-

¹ Richard Boyd in "Models of Power in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred*," like many other scholars confines Stowe's politics within matriarchal utopia that is nothing more than "good mimeticism" of the patriarchal order. He remarks: "Dred thus rests much of its hope for an alternative to slavery and male structures of domination on the possibility of good mimeticism, on the power of a benevolent matriarchal model to inspire in others an imitation that brings order and harmony" (24).

² Besides Richard Boyd, see Dorothy Berkson, Gail K Smith, and Maria Karafilis. Also Lang, Amy Shrager, "Slavery and Sentimentalism: The Strange Career of Augustine St. Clare," in *Women's Studies - An Interdisciplinary Journal* 12 (1) (1986): 31-54, Tompkins, Jane P., "Sentimental Power: Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Politics of Literary History," in *Glyph* 8 (1981).

³ Sally Kitch in her critique of feminist traditional utopian writing with its limited visions, ready-made answers away from the complex realities of life and "characteristics of a part on the whole" regard it as the problem of utopian myopia (5).

competitiveness” is a slavish “mimeticism” of power and is thus “futile” (29). Gail K Smith in his study of hermeneutics in *Dred* concludes that the novel proves a “climax” in Stowe’s writings of the divine “motherhood.” According to Smith, *Dred* is a move from the “fear of misreading, to a fear of the unresolved contradictions in the sacred word-pragmatically, the Bible, but also the revered political documents of the American republic” (306). These critics acknowledge Stowe’s literary agency but they are hesitant to see her politics beyond the limited matriarchal utopia of love, caring and non-competent agency.

Is matriarchy with its reduced perception of “self-sacrifice” and “non-competence” the only tool to measure female literary imagination in the nineteenth century American literature? The historical study of female utopian novels in the nineteenth-century United States reveals that in major part the writings covered the problems of unjust marriages and insufficient training for children suggesting solutions in “male extinction” and superiority of mothers from the rest of the society. According to Carol Farley Kessler, the feminist utopian novels in the United States, 1840-1920, were about women’s independence and power through male-extinction in the fictional utopian writings.⁴ These studies are helpful of course to an extent but their critical emerges as limited when female utopian writer like Stowe with her *Dred* appears to interrupt the episteme with her politics of inclusive voices. Stowe’s political activism in *Dred* moves beyond the marriage issue of women and matriarchal culture to the political debates for national organization and reformation with the urge of democracy for everyone. The same historical study shows that there was also another category of feminist utopian writers who were called social reformers. These feminist writers built transformed worlds in their fictional world with the elimination of war and reverence of religion.⁵ Stowe’s intellectual imagination cannot be identified full either with matriarchal or reformist utopia as the novel is a critique of servitude (racial slavery and “universal servitude”) and it does not build any idealized world for its solution. *Dred* is not a transformed world but an analysis of the history with a constructive direction toward a better future.

Due to its engagement with all classes and especially with the oppressed, the novel stands more like a conceptual utopia for the nation with an acknowledgement of the change for democracy and emancipation of all humans that actually did not exist in the legislative and constitutional documents of despotism in the post-revolutionary America. Cathy N. Davidson states in her seminal study of the early novels in America highlights the “rebellious” and practical effects of the novels that were being composed to fissure in the “domestic space” when the government was domesticating and individuating the rights of the people especially of slaves and women:

A community of readers (men and women) turned to the novels as way of participating in national debates on a range of problems that were both included and overlooked in the nation’s founding documents (constitutions). Novels addressed ideas (such as abolitionism and female suffrage) that did not survive the secretive and partisan process of compromise, codification, and ratification that resulted in adoption of the final draft of the constitution. (5-6)

Intriguingly Davidson in her historical study of the novels that were both “rebellious” and “patriotic” in the formation of the nation does not mention explicitly and specifically the feminist political imagination. A critical study of Stowe’s imagination as portrayed in *Dred* can place it in the list of those “rebellious” and “patriotic” narratives that derives the combated despotic structure for the future of democracy in the nation.

Theoretically *Dred* can be studied as an imagination for the future with the processual knowledge of history. This practical imagination with the amalgamation of hope and analysis of history is quite different from the traditional ahistorical utopia. Stowe does not create a static idealized world with fixed boundaries rather problematizes the binaries of hope/hopelessness, absolute/social and questions/solutions.⁶ Her utopian world becomes a pragmatic exercise to understand the history in that present moment with the direction towards the future. Kitch, in her critique of feminist traditional utopia, highlights the necessity of “post-utopianism” as an alternative to traditional utopia that is both a

⁴ See Kessler’s “Introduction: Feminist Utopias by United States Women.” In *Daring to Dream: Utopian Stories by United States Women, 1836-1919*, 1-25. Boston: Pandora Press.

⁵ See Darby Lewes’ *Dream Revisionaries: Gender and Genre in Women’s Utopian Fiction, 1870-1920*.

⁶ Marjorie Levinson’s notion of “collision” versus “dialecticism” given in New Formalism can prove a good theoretical stand to study *Dred*.

critique as well as built on utopianism (9).

In the seminal study of “Feminism and Utopianism” by Alessa Johns, a contemporary feminist defines the conceptual feminist utopia in the terms of “process-oriented-feminist-utopia” and “critical mode” that requires “industriousness and involvement, an energetic engagement with people, environment and things” (192). John’s notion of conceptual knowledge can be visualized in *Dred* with its articulated form of “historical knowledge” and the dissatisfaction with the present for an inclusive future. It is an encouraging discovery when Johns remarks that “process-oriented-feminist-utopia” is not a new phenomenon but can be traced even in the late middle ages. According to Johns, feminist utopian writing favors gradual processes of change, accumulated history and shared power. In such practical political imagination, radical changes, abrupt transformations and absolute authority is dismantled and avoided. In utopian feminist writings small events and small narratives especially of “dependants” dominate the narrative. When these small events and voices are weaved together, they convey a strong message of accumulated history and gradual change. Johns’ notion of “process-oriented-utopia” is an “industriousness and involvement” in history through small events of the “dependants” to interrupt the grand narratives and elaborate a precise knowledge for the possibility of change on a long-term basis:

Indeed the notion of proliferation, coming from the dependant’s view of power and politics, shapes the feminist utopian view of history: it is not the traditional fantasy of suddenly summoning Eden. Instead it is a theory of history as accumulation, the combined power of many small, discrete events issuing in large impacts. (188)

Dred as a “process-oriented-utopia” or process-oriented-imagination can be viewed with its politics of small narratives (“small events,” “dependant’s views”) that prevail subtly and connectedly in the whole novel. These small narratives help to expose and disrupt the material history of the slavery and its extension.⁷ It is also important to remember that “process-oriented-utopia” based on the power of small narratives and events defends the deeper and stronger social change that is different from the rituals of radical and revolutionary change and its consequent reproduction of the same structures. The narratives of Milly (Black slave) and Cora Gordon (Black ex-slave) in the novel offer a study of such processual utopia or processual imagination. Their narratives are not just representation of two mothers who are deprived of their children. Their deprivation is connected with the exposition and analysis of the history of religion and law. These small narratives vocalized by the women appear just in a couple of pages in the thick volume of 593 pages but Stowe industriously performs their connectivity with other miscellaneous small narratives and voices as well as with other realities in the history. In other words, these small narratives or narrativized incidents appear to understand and interrupt the structure of power. The connectivity of power (religion-law-patriarchy) is responded with the network of small narratives and voices that provides a material and conceptual understanding of both the historical and textual formation. As Stowe avers: “There is no study in human nature more interesting than the aspects of the same subject seen in the points of view of different characters” (445).

Milly’s narrative as a brick in the wall can be viewed critically by understanding the well-connected picture of conflict between history and possibility. Her narrative under the title of “Milly’s story” in Chapter XVI appears as a response right after “Mr. Jekyl’s Opinions” in Chapter XV. Before giving an account of Milly’s story, we are well introduced with Mr. Jekyl and his religious doctrine prevalent in the South for the protection of the interests of slaveholders on the basis of ontological differences between whites and blacks. The chapter also exposes strong connection between law and religion in the institution of slavery. With an ominous advent of Mr. Jekyl in the previous chapter, “Aunt Nesbit’s Loss,” Mrs. Nesbit informs Nina (White mistress) and the reader that “Mr. Jekyl is a very respectable lawyer, and elder in the church, and a very pious man” (163). In the same chapter, we are told about the status of slaves as properties. The narrator with her own small narratives builds the introduction of Mr. Jekyl in “Mr. Jekyl’s Opinions”: “Mr. Jekyl was a theologian and a man of principle” (168). The narrator reflects on Mr. Jekyl’s theological “opinions” that dominate the actions and consequences both in the text and the history with the emphasis of “his theology” based on self-interests and the ontological differences. The narrator remarks that “Mr. Jekyl’s beliefs in slavery were founded on his theology. He assumed that the white race had the largest amount of being; therefore, it had a right

⁷ Maria Karafilis in her historical study of the background of *Dred* tells us that Stowe was writing the novel to question the constituency of the slavery in the 1950s (especially the 1854 Kansas –Nebraska Act) when the issue was at its climax. She remarks that: Intranational borders, then, and the “line” at which slavery stops were hotly contested, and with profound social, economic, and political consequences. *Dred* represents an intervention into the debate concerning spaces of “freedom” and spaces of slavery in the United States, and it is an argument against extending slavery into the new territories (24).

to take precedence of the black" (169). Mr. Jekyl as a theologian fully protects the exploiting rights (constitutional) of the slave-holders. It is crucial to see that Mr. Jekyl as a symbol of religious and constitutional doctrine works historical havoc not only to the life and narrative of Milly but also to another woman Cora Gordon. The chapter "Mr. Jekyl's Opinions" begins with his news to Tom and Nina (slave-holders) about the assets in the possession of Cora Gordon and her two children in Ohio who "by law" are subjects of Tom. He tells Tom that "The act of emancipation was contrary to law, and, though the man (Cora's owner/husband) meant well, yet it amounted to a robbery of the heirs" (166). It is necessary to remember that Cora Gordon and Harry Gordon though children of Tom and Nina's father, were considered slaves because their mother was a slave. In Mr. Jekyl's revelation of the whole discovery, the women and two children appear nothing more than the commodities or resource for the continuity of the plantation. Nina's satirical question about Mr. Jekyl's religious attachment "elder in the church" cannot elicit anything else than his self-evident response: "that woman and her children are as much your property as the shoe on your foot; there is no manner of doubt of it" (167). Cora's history is described in the beginning of the novel but her narrative in her own words is performed much after the narration of Milly near the end of the novel. Stowe in the construction toward Milly's narrative as an interruption in the history does two important things: firstly, she connects her narrative with other small narratives especially of Cora in this case; secondly, she builds Milly's narrative without any disentanglement from the harsh historical realities. These interconnected small narratives within the text work together conceptually and industriously to critique the history. We are told of the history of domination and suppression before we move towards the contingency of Milly's narrative.

Milly's small narrative, with its connectivity with other narratives as well as institutions, emphasizes the "dependant's view" and the blunt exposition of history. The Chapter "Milly's Story" begins when Milly is ready to leave the Gordon family as being sold to another master in the town to compensate Aunt Nesbit's recent property loss. Before she leaves to follow the history, she tells her narrative to Nina. In first place, Milly's narrative reveals the dilemma of her parents who could not narrate their sufferings and exploitation because of their inefficiency to speak in English. Milly tells Nina: "Father and mother could not speak a word of English when dey come ashore; and she told me often how she couldn't speak a word to nobody, to tell'em how it hurt her" (172). Milly's narrative exposes not only the erasure of the oppressed voice in the history but also opens up its own space to let Milly narrate her story in her own voice and dialect. Besides foregrounding the erasure of the dependant voice (woman/slave), Milly's narrative also decentralizes the domination of the slaveholders who are actually dependent on the slaves for their economic survival. Milly tells about the uncle of her owner Miss Harrit who advises her to sell Milly for saving her estate and the future of her children. The systematic slavery with the notion of slave as property connects the theologian Mr. Jekyl in the previous chapter with the unnamed mercantilist priest in this chapter. We are exposed to this history now in Milly's voice and interpretation as she recalls the churchman who becomes responsible for her deprivation. Milly repeats his words: "Nigger is rising in de market. Since Missouri came in, they's worth double; and so that black girl Milly of yourn'—you may be sure, now, I pricked up my ears, Miss Nina—'you don't see a girl of finer breed than she is, says he, just as if I'd been a cow, you know. 'Have you got her a husband?' (175). Stowe's representation of Milly's narrative is not only a strong verbal interruption but also a material fissure in the structure of constitutional and legislative norms. The previous chapter, "Jekyl's Opinions," ends with the declaration of his theology of self-glorification in the eternal torments of others (170). The succeeding chapter "Milly's Story" explicates the fact how theology breeds slavery on the plantations. Milly replaces the responsibility of her maternal deprivation from her mistress Miss Harrit to her uncle, the church man who induces her to sell Milly's children. He comes with his self-glorification of his "prayers, and exhort, and den come prowling round my place like a wolf, looking at my chil'en." (177). When Stowe connects the small narratives of Milly and Cora in the structure of the history she also meticulously weaves their factors together.

The small narratives of the "dependant" contain a repetitive force besides their interconnections. It is crucial to see that like Cora's narrative, Milly's narrative is also described much before its actual performance in the text. Cora's narrative is foreshadowed by the discovery of Mr. Jekyl whereas Milly's narrative is narrated by the narrator in Chapter IV, "The Gordon Family," before it is performed in Chapter XVI, "Milly's Story". The narrator conveys the same thought pattern and sequence of Milly's narrative with an additional insight into the history of slavery:

Milly's children, from their fine developments, were much coveted articles. Their owner

was often tempted by extravagant offers for them; and therefore, to meet one crisis or another of family difficulties, they had been successively sold from her. At first, she had met this doom with almost the ferocity of a lioness; but the blow, oftentimes repeated, had brought with it a dull endurance and Christianity had entered, as it often does with the slave, through the rents and fissures of a broken heart. (51)

The repetition and explication of Milly's narrative shows that the small narratives of the historical "dependants" are, in fact, not small in this text. Stowe does not romanticize the exceptional loving and self-elevating character of Milly but draws our attention to the bleak realities in which unlike Milly, many spirits are crushed and demoralized under the subservience.

Like Milly, Cora Gordon's narrative is another small but significant female narrative that emerges to interrupt the historical frame of exploitation in the text. Chapter XX, "The Slave's Argument," narrates her life in a few pages that make panoramic connections with the history both textually and politically. Whereas Milly raises her resistance in the form of conscientious love against the self-glorification and corrupt theology of Mr. Jekyll, Cora disrupts violently the placidity of legal deformities and the religious coalition with the law by killing her own children. Cora's narrative in "The Slave's Argument" in Vol. II can be also viewed as a reversal to Milly's religious love in Vol. I. Like Milly's narrative, Cora's narrative is placed in direct relation to the history in order to disrupt its well-established flow. Right before Cora's narrative, Chapter XIX, "The Result," shows Clayton's (white master) futile efforts to bring social change through religious reform. This chapter opens another cesspool in which the law fuels the slavery. The chapter unfolds the process of subjugation in which slaves are legally deprived of their rights of property, family and education. Clayton in his meeting with the influential group of clergymen remarks: "when the slave has a legal existence and legal rights, can hold property and defend it, acquire education and protect his family relations, he ceases to be a slave, slavery consist in the fact of legal incapacity for any of these things" (430). The reader is informed that it is the legal formation that considers "a man a dead, inert substance in the hands of another." Clayton's meeting with the clerical group ends with a futility at the face of institutional coalition among slaveholders, law and religion. Cora's narrative emerges in this context to further materialize history by studying its effects on its subjects. Unlike Milly's permanent status of slavery, Cora, a mulatto, is pushed back with her children into slavery after the death of her owner-husband. She and her children are "dead or inert substance" by law and become a circulating commodity from one slaveholder to another. In other words, in the frame of capitalist law, her children are "dead" already before their murder by their mother. Where Milly's narrative emerges against the capitalist theology and is registered by Nina, Cora's narrative emerges against the capitalist legislation and is registered by the court itself.

Like Milly's narrative, Cora's narrative is also repeated to emphasize its connected and revealing nature. In the same chapter, "The Slave's Argument," before Cora's narration of the murder of her children, we hear about her in the small narrative of her brother, Harry. The chapter begins with Clayton's reading of Harry's letter that we know has arrived from the habitat of Dred (outlawed black slave). Harry in his letter requests Clayton to know about his sister who has been victimized by the law. Harry narrates Cora's story with the same thought pattern and sequence that is performed later on by Cora in her own voice. Harry remarks: "Tom Gordon is the heir-at-law. He has sued for the property and obtained it. The act of emancipation has been declared null and void, and my sister and her children are in the hands of that man, with all that absolute power; and they have no appeal from him for any evil whatever" (437). When Harry tells Cora's story to Clayton, he also makes an appeal against the impostures of religion and constitution in the United States. Clayton becomes a substantial listener as well as representative of white domination at this time when Harry criticizes the state and slaveholders by addressing him. Harry highlights the religious coalition with the slavery in its protection of scriptures from the black scrutiny. He also gives a robust critique of the federalist documents. Like the religious scriptures, the constitutional documents were also used to privatize, naturalize and domesticate the rights of people in the post-revolutionary America.⁸ Harry's remarks are simultaneously "rebellious" and "patriotic" in their appeal: "The Bible and your Declaration of Independence. What does your Declaration say? 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that *all men are created equal*; that they are endowed by their creator with certain *inalienable* rights: that among these are life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness'" (435). Harry's letter interrupts the artificiality of the constitution and centralizes his appeal to know about Cora and her children. What Cora speaks in the court later on is the repetition of Harry's

⁸ See Cathy N. Davidson's *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (2004).

narrative from the habitat of Dred.

We are surrounded by the swamp of small narratives that can be termed as a “notion of proliferation” originated in the power and politics of the “dependant’s view.” Johns regards this conceptual process of feminist utopian writing as a gradual movement of connections in which “no master plan governs; instead, one improvement leads to another and one event to the next” (187). Cora’s narrative of her legal incapacity is narrated by three voices (Jekyl’s, Harry’s and Cora’s) that unveil multiple connections among different events, narratives and realities in the history. Johns relates the same quality with the grand narrative of “process-oriented-feminist” or “pragmatic” utopia:

Grand narratives depend on the individual stories of which they are composed, just as powerful princes depend on their various underlings, just as events are influenced by hidden causes: the two forms of understanding history, like the distribution of power between sovereign and the subject exist in dialectical relationship. (189)

Stowe compiles these narratives of women for the critique of the systematic suppressions of gender, race and class. In other words, her critique of history begins with women’s condition but relate them intersectionally with different institutional divisions and oppressions.

Milly and Cora despite their small narratives are effective replication of the lethal rebel of Dred against the slavery. The small narratives of Milly and Cora that spread intersectionally in the whole text reveal not only the conceptual and connected knowledge of the history but also women’s disruption of that knowledge. A cursory reading would view Milly simply as a figure of non-competent submission and self-sacrificial love, but a more critical lens shows that she curses the slavery with the same ferocious spirit as it is found in Dred in the novel. She invokes God and gets angry at Miss Harrit at the murder of her last son, Alfred, in the same tone as Dred admonishes the pack of priests in “The Camp-Meeting.” She brings up the clothes of his murdered son to her owner and remarks: “You see dat *hole!* said I; ‘you see dat blood! Alfred’s killed! *You* killed him; his blood be on you and your chil’en! O, Lord God in heaven, hear me, and *render unto her double!*” (181). Passing through the deprivations wrought on her, Milly develops from anger “I got that wild, it seemed as if I could tear a hole through de sky” to the submission to love. Stowe in her imaginative industriousness tries to create an unconventional possibility of love at the face of the hierarchal structures. But at the same time she draws our attention to the fact that Milly is an exceptional case. She remarks, “where one soul is thus raised to higher piety, thousands are crushed in hopeless imbecility” (51). Milly is a contingency and not an answer to the questions posed by the knowledge of history.

Like Milly, Cora is a ferocious and violent replication of Dred in her resistance to the slavery. More so, she exceeds him in a sense in her revolt. Her murder of her own children resonates with what once Milly thought of Lucy, her daughter: “if she’d a died right off after one of dem, it would have been better for her. O, honey, ‘long dem times, I used to rave and toss like a bull in a net—I did” (178). Cora proclaims in the court that she murders her children with the intentionality of their freedom from the entanglements of the slave-trade. She sacrifices her motherhood but obtains their liberation who are already incapacitated and “dead” by the law of the slavery. Cora’s narrative also offers a contingency to combat the institutions but it is not supported in the way that Milly’s response is supported. Cora’s narrative of murder of her children appears more as an ugly mole or violent fissure in the narrativization of the state. Nature as a solace and inspiration also links these women with the violent character of Dred in the text. The nature as a dynamic force is not confined to Dred alone, as Milly also wanders in the woods to find God and Cora murders her children in a green secluded place: “I sent them to lie down in green pastures with the Lord” (440).

It would be insufficient to say that Stowe’s politics resides only in Dred in the Dismal Swamp. Where Dred confines his rebel in his outlawed status in the swamp along with his other outcast slaves, the study shows that the women resist and respond to the sociopolitical hierarchies and structures of slavery in the daily life out of the swamp. Stowe’s “pragmatic” imagination sympathizes with Dred but does not defend his ahistorical habitat and radical revolutionary spirit. On other sides, the small but conceptual and interconnected narratives of the women pave the way towards the inevitability of change through deeper engagement with history both textually and politically. Dred as a symbol of violent revolution is not supported, but Dred as a processual or gradual revolution through precise knowledge of history is defended when it emerges in many small narratives to unfold the dissatisfaction with the present for the inevitability of change.

Maria Karafilis in her Foucauldian study of the *Dred* regards Dred’s swamp as “heterotopia,” a

“real, material place” that is a “counter-arrangement” to all other arrangements of utopia, “no real actual place” that can be found within society (26). According to her, the swamp, viewed as heterotopia, subtly connected with the dominant structure reveals strong resistance to it. The Foucauldian treatment of the swamp as “heterotopia” can be applied to the analysis of the novel but with a certain necessity of the revision. The space of swamp with political value and revolution notion is not limited within the cartography of the swamp; rather its essentials of anger, analysis, defense, invocation, burden and disruptive force can also be found more prolifically in the female narratives outside the swamp. If swamp is a spirit of dissenters it appears even in “The Summer Talk” when Nina disputes with other characters in her attempt to dismantle the social ideologies based on gender biological differences. The spirit of political and intellectual imagination for change lurks under the surface in different voices and narratives to understand and refute the conventional knowledge.

The question arises why is it necessary to read Stowe’s *Dred* as a feminist processual imaginative writing? Why not just a document of historical critique or/and a refutation of radicalism? As this essay shows, it is necessary to read the novel with the lens of “process-oriented-feminist” imagination because of its acknowledgement of change, message of hope and spirit of future through the power of small narratives. The lurking spirit of hope and change through small narratives underneath Stowe’s industrious engagement with the history elevates the novel from the pessimist confinement that is produced generally by the observation of history. In short her conceptual work with its political imagination of small voices and events illuminates the worth of art. It is Stowe’s feminist imagination that keeps the narrative moving in the direction of future even after the deaths of its protagonists Nina and Dred. It keeps moving to find a space where it could situate its hope for the future. The end of the novel despite its all complexities of the history ensures one triumph in which Milly becomes a guardian to teach children from different races the lesson of love and equality. Stowe does not defend radicalism but advocates a deeper and conceptual change that can be achieved with the power of small but conscious, connected and repeated narratives. *Dred* with its desire for a better future, dissatisfaction with the present and precision of the history becomes an exemplary document of intellectual imagination. The necessity of such intellectual imagination appears more vitally in the present moment of the world when the grand narratives usurp the vacuum produced by the silence and dispersion of the small narratives. We are in need of Stowe’s pen once again to elevate art to connect small voices of hope and change that can conceptualize and disrupt the dynamics of history.

Works Cited

- Albinski, Nan Bowman. “Utopia Reconsidered: Women Novelists and Nineteenth-Century Utopian Visions.” *Signs*, vol. 13, no. 4, Summer 1988, pp. 830-841.
- Berkson, Dorothy. “Millennial Politics and the Feminine Fiction of Harriet Beecher Stowe.” *Critical Essays On Harriet Beecher Stowe*, edited by Elizabeth Ammons, Hall, 1980, pp. 245-258.
- Berkson, Dorothy. “So We All Became Mothers.” *Feminism, Utopia, and Narrative*, edited by Libby Jones and Sarah Godwin, U of Tennessee P, 1990, pp. 100-115.
- Bloch, Ernst. Introduction. *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*, by Bloch, MIT P, 1988, pp. xi-xlii.
- Boyd, Richard. “Models of Power in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Dred*.” *Studies in American Fiction*, vol. 19, no. 1, Spring 1991, pp. 15-30.
- Davidson, Cathy N. Introduction. *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*, by Davidson, Oxford UP, 2004, pp. 3-58.
- Geoghegan, Vincent. Introduction. *Ernst Bloch*, by Geoghegan, Routledge, 1996, pp. 1-8.
- Johns, Alessa. “Feminism and Utopianism.” *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, edited by Gregory Claeys, Cambridge UP, 2010, pp. 172-199.
- Karafilis, Maria. “Spaces of Democracy in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Dred*.” *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory*, vol. 55, no. 3, Autumn 1999, pp. 23-49.
- Kitch, Sally. Introduction. *Higher Ground: From Utopianism to Realism in American Feminist Thought and Theory*, by Kitch, U of Chicago P, 2000, pp. 19-20.
- Lora, Romero. *Home Fronts: Domesticity and its Critics in the Antebellum United States*. Duke UP, 1997.
- Muñoz, Jose Esteban. Introduction: Feeling Utopia. *Cruising Utopia; The Then and There of Queer*

- Futurity*, by Muñoz, New York UP, 2009, pp. 1-18.
- Ni Dhuill, Caitrona. "Engendering the Future: Bloch's Utopian Philosophy in Dialogue with Gender Theory." *The Privatization of Hope: Ernst Bloch and the Future of Utopia*, edited by Peter Thompson and Slavoj Žižek, Duke UP, 2013, pp. 144-163.
- Roemer, Kenneth M. "Paradise Transformed: Varieties of Nineteenth-Century Utopias." *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, edited by Gregory Claeys, Cambridge UP, 2010, pp. 79-106.
- Rowe, John Carlos. "Stowe's Rainbow Sign: Violence and Community in *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856)." *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory*, vol. 58, no. 1, Spring 2002, pp. 37-55.
- Smith, Gail K. "Reading with the Other. Hermeneutics and the Politics of Difference in Stowe's *Dred*." *American Literature*, vol. 69, no. 2, Jun. 1997, pp. 289-313.
- Speicher, Anna M. "A Deep, Immortal Longing': Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Spiritual Path." *Reviews In American History*, vol. 43, no. 2, June 2015, pp. 249-253.
- Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Dred; A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*. Penguin Books, 2000.