



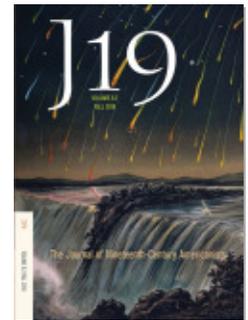
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## Stowe's Birds: Jim Crows and the Nature of Resistance in *Dred*

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“When little boys go out into the woods and fields which God has filled with beautiful trees and flowers, and with hundreds of little happy birds, all so curiously and beautifully made, and amuse themselves only with throwing stones at them, and killing them, must not God be displeased?”

—Harriet Beecher Stowe, “A Talk About Birds”

“I never kill the birds, because the Lord hath set them between us and the angels for a sign.”

—Dred, in *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*

On July 6, 1843, Harriet Beecher Stowe's brother George died in a freak accident shooting at birds, a mysterious yet violent event that would resurface in variant forms throughout her canon. Stowe recounts: “Noticing the birds destroying his fruit and injuring his plants, he went for a double-barreled gun, which he scarcely ever had used . . . Shortly after he left the house, one of the elders of his church in passing saw him discharge one barrel at the birds. Soon after he heard the fatal report and saw the smoke, but the trees shut out the rest from sight.”<sup>1</sup> Half an hour later, the family servant called for him and returned to the house to declare him dead. As if an echo of her brother's death, violence associated with birds perches itself throughout Stowe's children's stories, including “A Talk About Birds” and “The Nest in the

Orchard,” published in *Our Charley and What to Do with Him* (1858).<sup>2</sup> In the former, she moralizes to children against the abuse of animals like birds, and in the latter she castigates an angry farmer (an easy stand-in for George) who shoots and kills the bird family that eats his fruit.

Given the common instructive function of animals in children’s literature, Stowe’s connection between birds and human morality may not be especially surprising.<sup>3</sup> But that the black revolutionary figure in *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856) curiously repeats the same message against the killing of birds from Stowe’s children’s literature warrants us to take seriously the role that nature, and birds in particular, plays in Stowe’s construction of moral authority. Jennifer Mason insightfully connects Stowe’s “language of animality” to her ability to “transform potentially oppressive comparisons between people and animals into a key component of her broadly aimed program of societal reform.”<sup>4</sup> For Stowe, birds provide an unexpected but important means to reform. Her avian renderings portray the relationships among abolitionism, animality, and race in antebellum America.

Bird-human pairings unify the sprawling plotlines and large cast of Stowe’s *Dred*, her most tangled antislavery novel. Nearly every major and minor character, black and white, has a bird association, and many of these are highly racialized. On the novel’s first page, Stowe gives readers a portrait of the hummingbird-like Nina Gordon, heir of the Canema plantation—“the slight little figure sprang up as if it had wings, and, humming a waltzing-tune, skimmed across the room.”<sup>5</sup> The eyes of Anne Clayton, sister of Nina’s love interest Edward Clayton, have a “falcon keenness” (27). Tomtit (which is actually the name of a type of small black bird), one of Nina’s slaves, is called a “handsome, saucy robin” (65). Lisette, a music-loving mulatta woman and wife of Nina’s slave brother Harry, owns a singing yellow canary named Button (57). Most important is Stowe’s connection between black characters and crows or ravens in her winking portrayal of “Jim Crow” variants: Dulcimer and the Claytons’ other slaves appear “chattering and screaming like so many crows” (150); Old Tiff, slave to the Peyton family, and Dred speak to birds and are served by ravens; and Old Hundred, the insubordinate slave to the Gordons, owns a mischievous crow named Uncle Jeff.

This essay enters into dialogue with recent studies on race and animality that have emphasized that the association between animals and African Americans could work toward, rather than against, either abolitionist or antiracist agendas. Karen Kilcup, Brigitte Fielder, and Col-

leen Glenney Boggs complicate earlier arguments that dwell on how the suffering, victimhood, and dehumanization of slaves and free blacks was the end result of works by authors who analogized them to animals.<sup>6</sup> Fielder, in particular, examines how abolitionist children's literature depicting slaves as pets, and vice versa, produces a "progressive," "difference-based model of abolitionist sympathy" that counters the more pervasive "sameness-based model" that operates in literature that, for example, offers mulatto/a characters as points of sympathetic identification for white readers.<sup>7</sup> These arguments have tended to focus on domestic animals and the equation of human slave as pet, but it is readily apparent from slave narratives, agricultural laws, and fictional literature of the period that crows don't make good pets but rather masterfully elude efforts at domestication and capture. I suggest, then, that the uncaged and rambunctious crows found in *Dred* tell a different kind of story about the animalization of slaves, one which at bottom stresses the simultaneous incompatibility of keeping a crow as pet and a black person as property. In this way, many of Stowe's depictions of rebellious and subversive slaves resemble those found in the African American literature of her time by writers such as Frederick Douglass, Martin Delany, and William Wells Brown.

I will examine these human-animal linkages in order to argue that nature itself not only is the unifying force of *Dred* but also the source of moral authority. This nature-based authority radiates outward from the rebel slave leader Dred and the other black characters. It becomes clear that those characters whom Stowe depicts as the most right and just—especially Dred and Old Tiff—are the ones most strongly attuned to the natural world. They are also black, so it follows that moral authority, sympathy with nature, and blackness are linked.<sup>8</sup>

Stowe's racial essentialism is familiar to any reader of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), but that inclination takes a different form in *Dred*, in the service of different ideological goals. Critics have spilled much ink on the subject of Stowe's racial essentialism, but they only look at *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, where it ostensibly hinders her abolitionist vision. Scholars have in large part shown *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* limitations as a progressive novel, especially in Stowe's uses of minstrel caricatures to represent black identity and her portrayal of the passive and sacrificial Uncle Tom.<sup>9</sup> George Frederickson coined the term "romantic racialism" in 1971 to describe Stowe's attribution of benign stereotypes to the black race.<sup>10</sup> While his work reflects on the positives of her racialism, the more common stance in recent Stowe criticism has been to acknowledge the

racial ambivalences that pervade her work.<sup>11</sup> Jason Richards demonstrates how Uncle Tom, George Harris, Adolph, and Black Sam “employ blackface and colonial mimicry simultaneously to resist and conform to various aspects of national identity” and “undermine and reinforce racial hegemony.”<sup>12</sup> I seek here to extend to *Dred* the logic of Arthur Riss’s call not to dismiss Stowe’s racialism “as an embarrassing superannuated element that can be exorcised from the novel” but rather to see how it works within Stowe’s “‘progressive’ politics.”<sup>13</sup> In *Dred*, Stowe’s racialism and engagement with minstrelsy get even more complicated when she uses them to justify potentially violent revolution against slave owners.

In the past two decades, *Dred* has received renewed attention for its complex treatment of race, but the critical conversation has not returned to the questions of racialism and minstrelsy that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* criticism pondered.<sup>14</sup> Robert S. Levine argues against trying to formulate “any sort of precise anatomy of Stowe’s racial views” and instead suggests that readers see how Stowe tested out racial categories in contradictory ways.<sup>15</sup> Levine further contends that “Stowe in *Dred* revises her racist representations, attempts new strategies of point of view that would allow for a fuller development of black revolutionary perspectives, and implicitly rejects African colonizationism—endorsed in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*—as a solution to the nation’s racial problems.”<sup>16</sup> But what exactly does this revised racialism look like?

Turning our attention to the relationship between blackness and the natural world through Stowe’s depictions of birds, we can see the evolution of Stowe’s racialism: Whereas in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* she presents blacks as peaceful, essential Christians—“simple, docile, childlike and affectionate”—in *Dred*, her presentation of the African race’s essentialized connection to nature authorizes potentially violent resistance rather than the kind of subservience and docility engendered by Uncle Tom.<sup>17</sup> Stowe’s birds in *Dred* show her remolding the heavily critiqued minstrel character types from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* into figures that work toward the overthrow of slavery in ways both large and small.<sup>18</sup>

*Dred*’s most intriguing human-bird pairing is the insubordinate yet entertaining slaves and crows, which together form “Jim Crows.” The novel features, for instance, a quarrelsome crow, Uncle Jeff, who causes trouble all over a plantation, including destroying plants and injuring people. Slaves like Dulcimer, who perform in a song and dance routine, “[bow] with the gravity of a raven” (324). Samuel Otter claims that Stowe is at her “paternalist, or maternalist, worst when she describes the en-

try into the schoolroom of Anne's uniformed, synchronized, hymn-singing *élèves* . . . This display is followed a few pages later by the happy Dulcimer's pageant celebrating Clayton's return to the plantation."<sup>19</sup> When all of the scenes where crows and ravens are viewed together, we see that Stowe is connecting black birds and defiance. Today we have come to associate the term "Jim Crow" with segregation and related forms of injustice, but for Stowe, the "crow" of Jim Crow sang in a different key. In *Dred*, Stowe tests the species limits of the Jim Crow figure—that is, what actual crows have to do with Jim Crow—in her attempt to imagine a possible end to slavery.

As I will demonstrate here, Stowe relies on crows' cultural status as social climbers or tricksters and their reputation as a highly destructive force on plantations in order to present a Jim Crow figure that participates in rebellion against the institution of slavery. *Dred's* setting on a dilapidated North Carolina plantation unites the threat of violent slave rebellion with the damage that real crows could inflict on the landscapes and pocketbooks of the practitioners of slavery. Scholars like Eugene Genovese have examined the ways in which slaves performed more localized forms of revolt, such as arson, shirking their duties, stealing, lying, and refusing the whip, in addition to more overt measures such as violence and escape.<sup>20</sup> *Dred* and his maroon community in the swamp contemplate violent revolt, and slaves like Dulcimer, Old Hundred, and Jim Stokes perform other types of defiance that upset the economic well-being of plantations. Since crows are intelligent, combative, and mischievous, they serve as an outstanding embodiment of small-scale rebellions in an agricultural context. Rather than portray *Dred's* plan to kill slave owners (*Dred* offers no specifics, instead speaking in vague, biblically apocalyptic terms), Stowe instead relies on the power of animals and the natural world as an inspiration for the kind of smaller-scale resistance she felt more comfortable endorsing publicly.

### Crowing Jim Crow

Though the history of the Jim Crow figure's origins is fraught with gaps, readers of *Dred* would be familiar with the minstrel brought to the stage by Thomas "Daddy" Rice. Some cultural histories of crows mistakenly charge that Jim Crow originated from an 1837 British poem, but historians of American culture generally agree that Rice, a New Yorker, "created" the character around 1828 and began receiving print stage reviews by 1830.<sup>21</sup> According to some accounts, Rice invented Jim Crow after witnessing a disabled slave and stable hand named Jim perform a

song and dance on a plantation in Louisville, Kentucky (or Cincinnati) belonging to a stable owner with the last name Crow.<sup>22</sup> Alan Green claims that Rice studied the slave's expressions, posture, and song, and "when he had them mastered, he dressed in old rags and blackface and 'jumped Jim Crow' on the stage before delighted audiences."<sup>23</sup>

As others like W. T. Lhamon have noted, however, the legend of trickster Jim Crow, and the phrase itself, preceded Rice's minstrel show, which ushered the figure into explosive national and transatlantic fame. Rice did not really "invent" Jim Crow but rather witnessed a slave performing a dance that may have origins in Yoruba culture, an ethnic group in West Africa.<sup>24</sup> Trickster figures who at first appear foolish but turn out to be cunning abound in a number of cultures, and the Yoruba have the legend of a duplicitous black bird named "Jim." Jamaicans also have stories and songs about "John Crows," a name for black buzzards, sometimes referred to as "carrion crows."<sup>25</sup> The term "John Crow" or "jancrow" is as complex as, and certainly related to, Jim Crow—it is at once a derogatory term for black people yet also associated with maroon rebel slaves in Jamaica who declared freedom from Spanish colonists in the seventeenth century.<sup>26</sup> The use of the word "crows" as an insulting name for black people may go back as far as the 1730s, according to the lexicographer Stuart Berg Flexner.<sup>27</sup> Lhamon insists that although the precise time that African legends "crystallized into the African American trickster" is difficult to determine, prior to the nineteenth century, "Jim Crow's vernacular gimp and pluck had already shaped a recognizable song and dance."<sup>28</sup> All of which is to say that people of African descent have a long colonial history of association with black birds that affirmed forms of both subjugation and rebellion.

Since "Jim Crow" has become linguistically akin to words like "scapegoat" or "Gatorade"—terms we use without consciously considering the animal pulsing within them—we have not paid enough attention to the crow half of Rice's man-bird hybrid, something which would have had more resonance with rebellion and violence for nineteenth-century audiences than it does today.<sup>29</sup>

It is fitting that writers like Stowe would pair especially rebellious slaves with defiant members of the Corvidae bird family, since both groups came to embody the desire to escape present social conditions by means of deception and ingenuity throughout human history.<sup>30</sup> Mischievous corvids have long been associated with trickery, prophesy, and cunning, holding prominence in Euro-American culture and Native American tradition, among others. As has been suggested, the popular-

ity of the Jim Crow character could be tied to Aesop's fable of the jackdaw pretending to be a peacock, a "commoner who imitated the ways of the nobility."<sup>31</sup> Boria Sax argues that the socially climbing jackdaw manifested itself throughout the nineteenth century as a representative of "any sort of pretender that ever tried to enter a sector of society that was forbidden to him."<sup>32</sup> This common fable, along with that of the "Fox and the Crow," is featured in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American fable books.<sup>33</sup> Another of Aesop's fables depicts a crafty crow that fills a water pitcher with stones until the water level reaches the top so that the thirsty bird can drink from it. Scientists have recently shown that crows are actually capable of performing this trick, helping to prove the point that some of the behavior in these tales is not just a result of the characteristic anthropomorphism of such legends but a testament to the birds' great intelligence and causal understanding abilities.<sup>34</sup> Anthropomorphism, as Jane Bennett reminds us, can be viewed not as just an act of the human colonization of the animal subject but rather an effort toward communion among species, an attribution to nonhuman entities of the agency that humans so sacredly clutch.<sup>35</sup> So at the same time that crows performed lessons for the benefit of human readers, those legends relied on the demonstrated intelligence and cleverness of the animals themselves.

The culture that bred and accelerated Rice's Jim Crow fame was paying close attention to particular kinds of bird species and their behaviors, making it apparent that Stowe's Uncle Jeff character, the literal "crow" in her Jim Crow, certainly would have registered as rebellious and violent. In the early nineteenth century, and most especially in the 1820s and 1830s, around the same time that Rice brought Jim Crow onto the stage, ornithology gained a popularity in the United States and in Europe that continued throughout the century. For example, John James Audubon published his illustrated *The Birds of America* from 1827 to 1838.<sup>36</sup> The noted botanist and ornithologist Thomas Nuttall also published *A Manual of the Ornithology of the United States and of Canada* in 1832.<sup>37</sup> While anthropomorphic descriptions of animals were common in these kinds of works, in his discussion of crows Nuttall relies remarkably heavily on the language of war and battle, writing that crows are known to "engage at times in *general combat*; but it has never been ascertained whether this hostility arises from civil discord, or the opposition of two different species."<sup>38</sup> He comments on how "their armies, like all other great and terrific assemblies, have the power, in limited districts, of doing very sensible mischief to the agricultural interests

of the community.”<sup>39</sup> While we know much more today about the profound intelligence of crows, Nuttall’s study also emphasizes their cleverness in finding and preparing food, and their trickery in stealing things from unsuspecting people.

### Thieving Tricksters and Racial Double-Agents

In the scenes leading up to the slaves’ song and dance routine, Stowe’s breakdown of “Jim Crow” into its component parts, man and crow, fits in with her racialist propensity to grant her black characters a power derived from a connection to nature. Stowe clearly emphasizes the connection between the crow as an animal and Jim Crow minstrels when she associates many of the black slave characters with crows and other types of black birds. For instance, when Tomtit or Dulcimer enter a scene, usually carrying a piece of mail, white characters frequently comment on their mischievousness and boisterousness. In the chapter before the slave ensemble performs the “North Carolina Rose” song, Nina says that Dulcimer has a “sort of waggish air that reminds [her] of a crow” (318). Anne Clayton, the teacher at the plantation school, responds, “He was the prime minister and favorite under the former reign,—a sort of licensed court jester,—and to this day he hardly knows how to do anything but sing and dance” (318). For this reason, he is assigned only the “light tasks” that “suit his roving nature” (318). We might pause to consider the incongruence of Anne’s statement about Dulcimer being a jester. Typically, a court jester is highly knowledgeable and able to provide insightful and telling critiques of royalty in a way that is still entertaining. Anne’s insistence that Dulcimer’s abilities are limited to song and dance betray her lack of knowledge about the role of the jester—that there is more to him than might meet the eye.

Dulcimer’s associations with crows emphasize his penchant for destruction, which Stowe uses to build multiple layers of irony in his relation to blackface performativity. While Nina cheerfully expresses her admiration for Dulcimer, Anne says that he is “troublesome” and “the most lawless marauder on the place” (322), indicating that his activities disrupt the day-to-day work of the plantation. Anne even goes so far as to say that Dulcimer “is as wholly destitute of any moral organs as a jackdaw. One sometimes questions whether these creatures have any more than a reflected mimicry of a human soul . . . All I can see in Dulcimer is a kind of fun-loving animal. He don’t seem to have any moral nature” (322). What is especially troubling about Anne’s statement is that she is speaking as an educator of black slaves. Through this statement, Stowe

depicts a common antebellum attitude that black people were amoral and therefore not fully human. Dulcimer thus becomes doubly dehumanized in Anne's eyes—once as a stock figure playing a part, and twice as a “jackdaw” bereft of “moral organs.” The emphasis on Dulcimer's “mimicry” evokes blackface minstrelsy in another way, since the Jim Crow character was invented as an imitation of a slave dance routine. These convergences are amplified further when coupled with the fact that crows have long been known to mimic and mock those around them, and Dulcimer mimics the behavior attributed to him through the blackface caricature.

Given the great cunning of their animal counterparts, the scenes in which the Jim Crow slaves perform acts of seeming subservience must be read with an eye toward their trickery and mischief. That the “Magnolia Grove Troubadours” elect to perform as their first song “Mas'r's in the cold, cold ground” indicates that they may seek to send a message about the death of slave owners that goes above the heads of the Anne and the rest of the white audience, thereby linking them to Dred's call for insurrection (325). Before and during the performances, Stowe renders Dulcimer again as a crow, raven, and a jackdaw—a source of trouble and entertainment. He enters the veranda, which serves as the stage area, with three other slaves dressed up, “all wearing white ribbons in their button-holes, and carrying white wands tied with satin ribbon” (324). Dulcimer then “bowed with the gravity of a raven” (324), and right before he starts to sing, Anne warns Nina to watch out for him, “the wretch flirting himself out like a saucy crow” (326). Written by Stephen Foster in 1852 and performed by the Christie Minstrels, the song originally titled “Massa's in the Cold, Cold Ground” portrays slaves mourning the death of their benevolent master. The grave tone of the tune prompts Nina to remark that “it seems to me they are beginning in a very doleful way” (325). Anne then responds, saying, “‘wait a minute. This is the old mas'r, I fancy. We shall soon hear the tune changed.’ And accordingly, Dulcimer, striking into a new tune, began to rehearse the coming in of a new master” (325). The scene could be read in at least two ways—Dulcimer intended the song as Anne said, a paean to the old deceased master, or perhaps he literally changed his tune once he realized Anne and Nina caught on to the strangeness of singing about their current master's death. The ambiguity of his song choice and action effectively represent how easily the minstrel slave characters, and minstrelsy at large, could be read as blindly subservient (Dulcimer follows Anne's orders) or subversive (singing about the master's death). Given

Dulcimer's propensity for mockery (he used "his wit to cover a multitude of sins"), disobedience, and lawlessness, this introductory song can be seen as a dark joke imagining the current master Edward Clayton's death (322). As Robert Levine argues that Stowe draws on black culture in *Dred*, the whole scene of trickery and performance resonates with one from William Wells Brown's *Clotel* (1853), in which the slave character Sam appears to his masters to be obedient and trustworthy, but as soon as his master dies, he sings joyfully, "He will no more trample on the neck of the slave; For he's gone where the slaveholders go."<sup>40</sup>

By the time Stowe published *Dred* she had witnessed the explosion and dispersal of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* into a range of minstrel shows and plays throughout the Northeast. Without the ability to copyright her work, she saw her characters spin out from her control, warped into far more grotesque forms than she ever intended, and even used as proslavery propaganda. It seems to me that Stowe's Jim Crows are her attempt to redirect the blackface routines her own work spawned and to place the minstrel form into the service of an antislavery agenda. If she is using characters like Dulcimer as a screen to slight the mockery of her work, then viewing these characters as conscious imitators themselves displays how Stowe's racial understanding is of far greater depth than many critics acknowledge. Eric Lott has pointed out how black theater performers in the 1840s actually blacked up and performed blackface themselves, making it further likely that Stowe may have had something similar in mind.<sup>41</sup> *Dred's* black slaves are effectively blackface performers aware of the artificiality of their own actions. Minstrelsy is a "safely imitative form," Lott explains: "the trusted counterfeiters [were] mocked in return by a representative of those from whom they had stolen; a public display of black irony toward whites, all stammers and jerks and gracelessness, who had tried to become better blacks."<sup>42</sup> The crow imagery Stowe attaches to black slaves in *Dred* further reinforces her irony in these characters and indeed becomes a symbol for her own sense of feeling underestimated—for crows are more intelligent and deliberate than most people realize.

Yet if Dulcimer's routine mocks subservient slavery or illustrates its performativity and falseness, the white characters' reaction to the songs only seems to affirm another form of racial essentialism: the innate musicality of slaves. Stowe refrains from using her usually intrusive narrator to comment on the minstrel performance and the whites' appreciation of it. After the song, Anne's brother Edward, who eventually be-

comes an abolitionist, says that “the African race . . . if ever they become highly civilized, they will excel in music, dancing, and elocution” (328). He further claims that religious people who have educated slaves “have wasted a great deal of their energy in persuading them to give up dancing and singing songs . . . There is no use in trying to make the negroes into Anglo-Saxons, any more than making a grape-vine into a pear-tree. I train the grape-vine” (328). As much as Stowe seems to be conscious of the performativity of race and of the futility of accurately depicting blackness in white female terms, her criticism does not extend to the essentialist idea that blacks made great entertainers. She maintains the essential differences between whites and blacks. Despite *Dulcimer's* mischief, Stowe shows how he genuinely wants to perform in song and dance routines, even if he uses them as a form subversion rather than subservience.<sup>43</sup>

Importantly, Stowe's crows are not contained to the stage: Uncle Jeff, the novel's live, headlining crow, takes his perch as another troublesome menace on the Canema plantation. Stowe utilizes the defiant coachman Old Hundred and his pet crow Uncle Jeff to counter what could be perceived as the subservience of her *Jim Crows Tomtit* and *Dulcimer* and their willingness to put on a show and entertain their white masters. She grants Uncle Jeff, a “large, black, one-eyed crow” who sits “perching with a quizzical air” and “smart, observing attitude” on Old Hundred's knee, quite a backstory:

In various skirmishes and battles consequent on his misdeeds, Jeff had lost an eye, and had a considerable portion of the feathers scalded off on one side of his head; while the remaining ones, discomposed by the incident, even after stood up in a protesting attitude, imparting something still more sinister to his goblin appearance. In another rencounter he had received a permanent twist in the neck, which gave him always the appearance of looking over his shoulder, and added not a little to the oddity of the general effect. (73)

Jeff could easily stand in for a rebellious slave. In fact, Rice's original “*Jim Crow*” is a fugitive slave. The earliest songs about “*Jim Crow*” depict him as a runaway who undertakes a journey after having just left the Tuckahoe plantation in Virginia.<sup>44</sup> He rambles from town to town chasing after women, willing to battle anyone and anything that crosses his path: he fights a man whose name he can't remember, “wip [his]

weight in wildcats,” “eat[s] an Alligator,” “sit[s] upon a Hornet’s nest,” but kneels to the buzzard and bows to the crow.<sup>45</sup>

Uncle Jeff’s fighting demeanor and battle wounds certainly resonate with Jim Crow’s story as well as with the observed violent behavior of crows from ornithological texts like those by Thomas Nuttall. The rebellious Uncle Jeff upsets the plantation by perpetrating small acts of defiance, which are “equally disliked by all the inhabitants of the place” (73). Stowe describes Uncle Jeff as a great thief and small terror, as he is caught “pulling up corn, scratching up newly-planted flower-seeds, tangling yarn, pulling out knitting-needles, pecking the eyes of sleeping people, scratching and biting children, and any other little miscellaneous mischief which occurred to him” (73). Like Tiff and Dred, Old Hundred has a unique fellowship with his bird. Between Uncle Jeff and Old Hundred “there existed a most particular bond of friendship and amity,” where each one covers for the other’s misdeeds, and when Old Hundred pretends to scold Jeff, he winks back at him with his one remaining eye (73). Jeff’s wink might be Stowe’s wink at us between the lines, a request to read her *Jim Crows* with an eye toward their irony. Jeff “was a standing apology for any and all discoveries made on his premises of things which ought not to have been there. No matter what was brought to light,—whether spoons from the great house, or a pair of sleeve-buttons, or a handkerchief, or a pipe from a neighboring cabin,—Jeff was always called up to answer” (74). Their reciprocity and kinship extends to their names, too; “Jeff” the bird has a human name while the name “Old Hundred” is dehumanized from his original given name John, emphasizing numerical value as a reference to a long metered hymn (72). As coachman, Old Hundred similarly wreaks havoc on the plantation by always having a store of excuses not to take out the carriage, his main duty. In fact, he refuses to assist anyone but the quadroon plantation overseer Harry and constantly tells Nina that he will not take out the horses and carriage for her. Old Hundred disrupts the flow of business by delaying the sending and receiving of mail, and getting his masters where they need to go, so in many ways he, along with Jeff, is responsible for the already decaying plantation’s fall into further disrepair.<sup>46</sup>

Old Hundred’s stewardship of animals—crow and horse—underscores Stowe’s commitment to ending slavery by showing its inherent unnaturalness through the simultaneous immorality of keeping human beings as property and taking undomesticated animals as pets. Thus, to call Uncle Jeff Old Hundred’s “pet” would be a misnomer, since

he has his own agency, and as in other stories about crows, any attempts at the domestication of crows are generally futile. In Annabel Lee's story "Jim Crow" from an 1874 issue of Scribner's children's magazine, *St. Nicholas Magazine*, the narrator tells of her pet crow, "a remarkably handsome bird" but "shameless little thief" that taps at her window pane to be let in as she writes.<sup>47</sup> The story's relation to minstrelsy is obvious: Lee explains, "We named him Jim Crow, after a colored man, renowned in song."<sup>48</sup> Lee acknowledges that while Jim "knows his name . . . is very affectionate, and loves to be petted," he is equal parts "mischievous and provoking," but his ills are forgiven on account of his performance of "funny little tricks."<sup>49</sup> Throughout the story, like Stowe's Uncle Jeff, he steals and returns many of the family's items, like thimbles, pocketknives, keys, as well as pulls up neighbors' plants and eats their pets' food.<sup>50</sup> In children's stories and in *Dred*, it becomes difficult to parse the layers of human embodiment and anthropomorphism. Jim becomes inextricable from Crow, and the Crow from Jim the black man. One would be hard-pressed to find crows or ravens in literature or popular culture that do not have the name Jim or who are not racialized.<sup>51</sup>

Crows not only made poor pets but, as agricultural laws and slave narratives can attest, they were a highly destructive presence on plantations, inflicting damage on both Southern and Northern economies. For instance, in a set of acts from 1768, the North Carolina General Assembly declared that because of the great increase of squirrels and crows in the state, plantation overseers were required to kill at least seven crows per year or be forced to pay a penalty of four pence for each crow or squirrel not killed.<sup>52</sup> In *Cape Cod*, Henry David Thoreau describes similar laws in Massachusetts regarding the mandated killing of crows, and even today crow-killing contests still take place.<sup>53</sup> A few narratives by slaves working in fields also emphasize the trouble that crows caused them and their masters. An escaped slave from Alabama, J. H. Banks (1861), describes several instances of crows destroying corn plants, and how "in spite of [his] utmost vigilance it so happened that crows would get into the corn"; his master would punish him "for what he regarded as a neglect of [his] duty, in not keeping them away."<sup>54</sup> Similarly, James Lindsay Smith (1881) writes in his autobiography that one of his main tasks on his master's plantation was to "attend to the crows, to prevent them pulling up the corn."<sup>55</sup>

Given this history of crows on Southern plantations, it becomes apparent that Stowe is using the crow Uncle Jeff and his owner Old Hundred

to enact on a micro level a type of slave insurrection that the novel leads up to but ultimately does not depict. In the end, it is another Jim Crow character, Jim Stokes, Tom Gordon's "confidential servant and valet"—a spy for the maroon community—who provides a potential model of slave rebellion as subversion, betrayal, and escape rather than the overt violence advocated by Dred (522). Stowe describes Jim in the same language as the Jim Crow Dulcimer, writing that he had a "peculiar mixture of boldness, adroitness, cunning, and drollery" as well as the "licensed audacity of a court buffoon" (522). While pretending to be a loyal slave to Tom, he is a double-agent for the ex-slaves living in the swamp, telling Tom that he leaves the plantation to attend and mock camp meetings when he actually joins Dred and his conspirators in the swamp. His performance of trustworthiness for his master allows him to leave and come back to the plantation at his own discretion, and he, like a minstrel performer, gives "burlesque imitations of all the proceedings [of the camp meetings], for the amusement of his master and his master's vile associates" (523). When Tom discovers that Jim has escaped, he curses him and calls him an animal: "The ungrateful dog! The impudent puppy, who had had all his life everything he wanted, to run away from him" (525). Jim's characterization through Tom's rage comes as a result of his rebellion and betrayal, underscoring the lengths Stowe has gone to demonstrate the subversive power of nature and animality. In the final pages of the novel, it is revealed that Jim has joined Clayton's settlement of ex-slaves in Canada and is thriving. Once again, we see that one of Stowe's minstrel slave characters far surpasses his expectations as a "buffoon" whose sole existence is devoted to delighting his master, an aspect of blackface minstrelsy that became prominent in the 1850s.<sup>56</sup> By introducing Jim's role late in the novel, right after Dred's death, Stowe uses him to carry out some of Dred's aims in different form. Dred, as the title character, rightfully takes his place as the center of the novel, but ultimately it is the Jim Crows, the racial double-agents, who survive to enact in lesser degree the insurrection that Dred imagined.

### Natural and Divine Resistance

The relationship between African American figures and nature could be more broadly pursued to investigate the intertwining issues of moral authority, animality, and rebellion in antebellum literature. For instance, in addition to the evocation of minstrelsy with her Jim Crow characters, Stowe uses birds' connection to the Bible to link Dred's moral authority to the connections between divinity and nature. As racial and spiritual

signifiers, ravens in particular come to embody the nature-based spirituality and authority of blacks in the novel. In one scene, Dred says that he is served by ravens like the prophet Elijah: "I sleep on the ground, in the swamps! You eat the fat of the land. I have what the ravens bring me!" (199).<sup>57</sup> Later, he leaves out food for Old Tiff and the Peyton children, and Tiff imagines, "May be ravens brought it, as dey did to 'Lijah—bread and flesh in de morning, and bread and flesh at night" (410). Frederick Douglass describes the figure of Madison Washington in *The Heroic Slave* (1853) in similar terms: "His eye, lit with emotion, kept guard under a brow as dark and as glossy as the raven's wing."<sup>58</sup> Ravens are referenced frequently throughout the Bible (in Psalms, Job, Kings, and Leviticus), and they play an important role in Genesis. Noah first sends out a raven to search for land after the flood, then a dove. Ravens thus become the perfect symbol of Stowe's notions of black spirituality derived from nature.

As leader of the Great Dismal Swamp ex-slave community, Dred has the most intimate and powerful connection with nature, a notion Stowe extends to the whole black race. She explains that Dred is modeled after Nat Turner and is the son of the slave leader Denmark Vesey; like Vesey, Dred "appeared to be gifted with that peculiar faculty of discernment of spirits . . . sharpened into a preternatural intensity by the habits of his wild and dangerous life" (495–96). In a carryover from the sensibility that informed *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe broadly attributes this kind of heightened spiritual awareness to "the African race," who "are said by mesmerists to possess, in the fullest degree, that peculiar temperament which fits them for the evolution of mesmeric phenomena; and hence the existence among them, to this day, of men and women who are supposed to have peculiar magical powers" (274). Among these "magical powers"—and here Stowe departs from the essentialist cosmology of her earlier novel—is Dred's ability to be "perfectly *en rapport* with the [nursing influences of nature] as a tree; so that the rain, the wind, and the thunder, all those forces from which human beings generally seek shelter, seem to hold with it a kind of fellowship, and to be familiar companions of existence" (273–74). Ian Finseth rightly points out Stowe's racialism in these depictions, in terms of her reliance on racial primitivism and notions of "black animality."<sup>59</sup> Dred's fellowship with nature is a major source of his power, and thus Stowe's racialism is precisely what makes Dred as slave rebel at once so dangerously powerful and also so alien and inhuman to the white community in the novel and to white readers. He has the ability to prosper among the untamed and uncultivated, in

blatant defiance of, and geographically distant from, white civilized spaces.

Dred's care for children and his ability to speak to birds demonstrates his depth as a religious authority. In addition to his wildness and his revolutionary spirit, Dred also had within him "a vein of that gentleness which softens the heart towards children and the inferior animals," and he spends time "drawing towards him the birds and squirrels from the coverts of the forest, and giving them food" (447).<sup>60</sup> Tiff and the poor white Peyton children eventually join the swamp community, and in one conversation Dred explains to the children how God communicates with him through birds. Stowe frames this natural ability in biblical terms. Dred proclaims: "After the great judgment, the elect shall talk with the birds and the beasts in the new earth. Every kind of bird has a different language, in which they show why men should magnify the Lord, and turn from their wickedness. But the sinners cannot hear it, because their ear is waxed gross . . . I never kill the birds, because the Lord hath set them between us and the angels for a sign" (448). Here Dred places birds on a higher moral plane than humans, capable of the most direct communication with God himself. Stowe thus discloses the reasoning behind the novel's emphasis on birds—different kinds of birds reveal truths that humans cannot intuit on their own. In the end, Stowe's birds acquire the power to provoke the smaller-scale kinds of revolution that are inspired by the divinity found in nature.

For African American authors, the striking image of the bird in flight appears repeatedly as part of metaphors of freedom and unfreedom, but Stowe's specific and deliberate use of crows and ravens is different. Harriet Jacobs refers to the system of slavery as "that cage of obscene birds" in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861).<sup>61</sup> Paul Dunbar's 1899 poem "Sympathy" ends with the famous line "I know why the caged bird sings."<sup>62</sup> In his 1845 *Narrative*, Frederick Douglass sees the white sails on ships and is painfully reminded of his enslavement—for they become to him "freedom's swift-winged angels, that fly round the world," while he is "confined in bands of iron."<sup>63</sup> (74). In such cases, the flight of birds in a more generic sense is associated with a flight to freedom, whereas the crows in *Jim Crow* represent the freedom to flee, but perhaps more subversively, the simultaneous power to escape *and* to remain in order to inflict subterfuge on the oppressors, the keepers of slaves. Stowe's use of a variety of birds throughout *Dred*—robin, hummingbird, canary, hawk, raven, crow—registers the suffering of enslavement but also the

inherent characteristics that allow the slaves' longing toward escape to become direct action.

## Notes

I am grateful for the encouragement and insight on this project from Brigitte Fielder and the conference panel audiences at ASLE and C19 where I presented earlier versions of this essay, as well as the feedback from Leonard Cassuto and the anonymous reviewers at *J19*.

1. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Compiled from Her Letters and Journals*, ed. Charles Edward Stowe (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1890), 108.

2. Harriet Beecher Stowe, "A Talk About Birds," *Our Charley and What to Do with Him* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson & Company, 1858), 94–108. Stowe, "The Nest in the Orchard," *Our Charley and What to Do with Him*, 108–17.

3. According to Harriet Ritvo, throughout the eighteenth century, animal stories for children were split between being "relatively materialistic and relatively moralistic approaches to the animal kingdom." Natural history books appealed to children and became a form of entertainment and moral instruction. By the end of the eighteenth century, the animal and it-narratives (stories told from the perspective of a material thing) that were aimed at a wider audience increasingly became targeted toward young readers. Harriet Ritvo, "Learning from Animals: Natural History for Children in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Children's Literature* 13 (1985): 72–93, 74, 78.

4. Jennifer Mason, *Civilized Creatures: Urban Animals, Sentimental Culture, and American Literature, 1850–1900* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 96.

5. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*, ed. Robert S. Levine (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 7. Hereafter cited parenthetically by page number in the text.

6. Brigitte Nicole Fielder, "Animal Humanism: Race, Species, and Affective Kinship in Nineteenth-Century Abolitionism," *American Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (2013): 487–514. For more on domesticated animals and slaves, see Colleen Glenney Boggs, *Animalia Americana: Animal Representations and Biopolitical Subjectivity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); Lesley Ginsberg, "Of Babies, Beasts, and Bondage: Slavery and the Question of Citizenship in Antebellum American Children's Literature," in *The American Child: A Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Caroline F. Levander and Carol J. Singley (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 85–105; Karen L. Kilcup, "Frado Taught a Naughty Ram: Animal and Human Nature in *Our Nig*," *ELH* 79, no. 2 (2012): 341–68; Elise Lemire, "*Miscegenation*": *Making Race in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); Mason, *Civilized Creatures*.

7. Fielder, "Animal Humanism," 490.

8. My claim here builds on Ian Finseth's consideration of how Stowe's notions of nature are "integral to *Dred*'s more aggressive racial politics specifically and to its philosophical core more broadly." Ian Finseth, *Shades of Green: Visions of Nature in the Literature of American Slavery, 1770–1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 262.

9. From the time of its publication, the novel has met with a myriad of critiques, but it of course has its critical defenders, starting with Jane Tompkins. Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). In his famous essay "Everybody's Protest Novel" (1949), James Baldwin condemns Stowe's black characters for being as "white as she can make them." James Baldwin, "Everybody's Protest Novel," in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (New York: Norton, 2010) 532–39, 534.

10. George Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 101.

11. Frederickson describes how some generally antislavery whites held a "comparatively benign view of black 'peculiarities'" or "romantic racialism," which "acknowledged that blacks were different from whites and probably always would be, . . . [and] projected an image of the Negro that could be construed as flattering or laudatory in the context of some currently accepted ideals of human behavior and sensibility." Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, 101–2. In the past half-century, critics have taken a wide range of stances on Stowe's depictions of race. For more influential essays and chapters on Stowe and race, see Sundquist, Yarborough, Ammons, Fisher, Zwarg, and Hochman. Elizabeth Ammons, "Stowe's Dream of the Mother-Savior: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and American Women Writers before the 1920s," *New Essays on Uncle Tom's*

Cabin, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 155–95. Philip Fisher, *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Barbara Hochman, *Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Reading Revolution: Race, Literacy, Childhood, and Fiction, 1851–1911* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011). Eric Sundquist, "Introduction," *New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1–44. Richard Yarborough, "Strategies of Black Characterization in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Early Afro-American Novel," in *New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 45–84. Christina Zwarg, "Fathering and Blackface in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 22, no. 3 (1989): 274–87.

12. Jason Richards, "Imitation Nation: Blackface Minstrelsy and the Making of African American Selfhood in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 39, no. 2 (2006): 204–20, 204–5.

13. Arthur Riss, "Racial Essentialism and Family Values in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *American Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (1994): 513–44, 515.

14. Gail K. Smith argues that in *Dred*, Stowe proposes a model for sorting out the problems relating to interpreting America's "sacred texts" (the Bible, Declaration of Independence, law). Gail K. Smith, "Reading with the Other: Hermeneutics and the Politics of Difference in Stowe's *Dred*," *American Literature* 69, no. 2 (1997): 289–313, 290. Gregg Crane, Laura Korobkin, and Caleb Smith have analyzed the novel's race relations through Stowe's depictions of the legal system, while others like John Carlos Rowe and Richard Boyd focus on the central role of violence in both shaping and destroying slave communities. Richard Boyd, "Violence and Sacrificial Displacement in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred*," *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory* 50, no. 2 (1994): 51–72. Gregg Crane, "Dangerous Sentiments: Sympathy, Rights, and Revolution in Stowe's Antislavery Novels," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 51, no. 2 (1996): 176–204. Laura H. Korobkin, "Appropriating Law in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred*," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 62, no. 3 (2007): 380–406. John Carlos Rowe, "Stowe's Rainbow Sign: Violence and Community in *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856)," *Arizona Quarterly* 58, no.1 (2002): 37–55. Caleb Smith, *The Oracle and the Curse: A Poetics of Justice from the Revolution to the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013). Elizabeth Duquette argues that *Dred's* focus on social responsibility and civic engagement indicates a revision in Stowe's ideological reliance on sympathy as a form of healing the national ills of slavery. Elizabeth Duquette, "The Republican Mammy? Imagining Civic Engagement in *Dred*," *American Literature* 80, no. 1 (2008): 1–28, 2. Emily VanDette argues that "Stowe adopted the sibling bond paradigm in order to complicate the notion of nuclear family that informed her earlier abolitionist efforts." Emily E. VanDette, "'A Whole, Perfect Thing': Sibling Bonds and Anti-Slavery Politics in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred*," *American Transcendental Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (2008): 415–34, 416. More recently, Christina Zwarg (2015) considers "Stowe's experiment with mesmerism as both topic and method, especially as it relates to the odd interaction of people and things" in *Dred*. Christina Zwarg, "Who's Afraid of Virginia's Nat Turner? Mesmerism, Stowe, and the Terror of Things," *American Literature* 87, no.1 (2015): 23–50, 23.

15. Robert S. Levine, *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and the Politics of Representative Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 146.

16. Robert S. Levine, "Introduction," *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), ix–xxxviii, x.

17. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Boston: Jewett, 1854), 41.

18. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe is conscious of her use of minstrel types; St. Clare says of Topsy, "I thought she was rather a funny specimen in the Jim Crow line." Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 218.

19. Samuel Otter, "Stowe and Race," in *The Cambridge Companion to Harriet Beecher Stowe*, ed. Cindy Weinstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 15–38, 30.

20. Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), 598.

21. For more on the origins of blackface minstrelsy, see W. T. Lhamon, *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Katrina D. Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About: The Racial Politics of Music and Dance in North American Slavery* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014).

22. Alan Green, "'Jim Crow,' 'Zip Coon': The Northern Origins of Negro Minstrelsy," *Massachusetts Review* 11, no. 2 (1970): 385–97, 390. Many different narratives circulate about Rice's creation of Jim Crow. See Robert Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

23. Green, "‘Jim Crow,’ ‘Zip Coon!,” 390.

24. See Frank W. Sweet, *Six Gems of Forgotten Civil War History* (Palm Coast, FL: Backintyme, 2005), 7.

25. According to Jonathon Green's *Dictionary of Slang*, "John Crow (also jancro, jancrow) [john crow, the carrion crow]" is "a general derog. description of a person." The examples he cites are typically describing black people, the first from 1827. Jonathon Green, *Green's Dictionary of Slang*, Digital Edition, <https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/2omnvvy>. Accessed July 12, 2018.

26. For more on Jamaica's maroon rebels, see Werner Zips, *Black Rebels: African-Caribbean Freedom Fighters in Jamaica*, (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999).

27. Stuart Berg Flexner, *I Hear America Talking: An Illustrated History of American Words and Phrases* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976). The first cited instance of "crow" as a "derog. term for a black person" in Green's *Dictionary* is Cooper's *Pioneers*: "Kirby turned fiercely to the black and said—'Shut your oven, you crow.'" Jonathon Green, *Green's Dictionary of Slang* (London: Chambers, 2010), 1427.

28. W. T. Lhamon, *Jump Jim Crow*, 8.

29. To be sure, Lhamon and Toll have noted that Jim Crow was part of the animal fable culture of minstrelsy, but they have not dealt at length with the associations that crows, ravens, and other blackbirds brought to bear on depictions of slave culture.

30. The Corvidae bird family includes crows, ravens, jackdaws, rooks, jays, magpies, treepies, nutcrackers, and coughts.

31. Boria Sax, *Crow* (London: Reaktion, 2003), 122.

32. *Ibid.*, 123.

33. For example, see "The Vain Jack-Daw," in *The Royal Fabulist: Being a Choice Collection of Entertaining Fables* (Hartford: Lincoln & Gleason, 1806).

34. Authors Jelbert et al. conclude that New Caledonian crows understood water displacement at the heart of Aesop's fable. They found that "crows preferentially dropped stones into a water-filled tube instead of a sand-filled tube; they dropped sinking objects rather than floating objects; solid objects rather than hollow objects, and they dropped objects into a tube with a high water level rather than a low one . . . Our results indicate that New Caledonian crows possess a sophisticated, but incomplete, understanding of the causal properties of displacement, rivalling that of 5–7 year old children." Sarah A. Jelbert, Alex H. Taylor, Lucy G. Cheke, Nicola S. Clayton, and Russell D. Gray, "Using the Aesop's Fable Paradigm to Investigate Causal Understanding of Water Displacement by New Caledonian Crows," *PLoS ONE* 9, no. 3 (2014). For more on the intelligence of crows and ravens, see Bernd Heinrich, *Mind of the Raven: Investigations and Adventures with Wolf-Birds* (New York: Cliff Street Books, 1999); John Marzluff and Tony Angell, *Gifts of the Crow: How Perception, Emotion, and Thought Allow Smart Birds to Behave Like Humans* (New York: Free Press, 2012); John Marzluff and Tony Angell, *In the Company of Crows and Ravens* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

35. See arguments by new materialist Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); and material eco-critics Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, ed. *Material Ecocriticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

36. John James Audubon, *The Birds of America, from Drawings Made in the United States and Their Territories* (New York, 1840).

37. Thomas Nuttall, *A Manual of the Ornithology of the United States and of Canada*, volume 1 (New York: Arno Press, 1974).

38. *Ibid.*, 215, my emphasis.

39. *Ibid.*, 213.

40. Levine, "Introduction," xx. In *Clotel*, after Sam sings, the son-in-law of the dead slave owner, Carlton, says of Sam that "I could not have believed that that fellow was capable of so much deception . . . Our system of slavery is one of deception." Brown reinforces that deception and trickery are inherent in the slave system itself, and that it was common for slaves to rely on creative methods and displays of dishonesty in order to survive and make inroads toward freedom. William Wells Brown, *Clotel: Or, The President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000), 155, 153.

41. Lott, *Love and Theft*, 115.

42. *Ibid.*

43. For more on blackface minstrelsy and the idea of the innate musicality of slaves, see Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About*.

44. A great variety of versions of “Jim Crow” exist, some with up to 150 verses. See Lhamon, *Jump Jim Crow*.

45. *Ibid.*, 2–9.

46. For more on slave defiance, see Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*.

47. Annabel Lee, “Jim Crow,” *St. Nicholas: Scribner’s Illustrated Magazine for Girls and Boys*, vol. 1, November 1873 to November 1874 (New York: Scribner, 1874), 647–49, 647.

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*

50. Like Lee’s crow, Edith Frances Foster’s bird in *Jimmy Crow* (1900) constantly gets into trouble by hiding toys, stealing coins, starting fights with birds and children, spilling water on his owner Jack, and so on. Both Jimmy and Jim the crows are generally unrepentant for their thieving and sometimes violent behavior, but they nevertheless retain the favor of their “owners” for their entertainment value. Edith Francis Foster, *Jimmy Crow* (Dana Estes & Co, 1900).

51. For instance, see Frank Baum’s story “Bandit Jim Crow” (1906), Frank Baum, “Bandit Jim Crow” (Reilly & Britton Co., 1906); Disney’s *Dumbo* (1941), *Dumbo*, dir. Samuel Armstrong (Walt Disney, 1941); the name of real-life raven film star “Jimmy the raven” in Frank Capra’s *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946) and most of Capra’s films, Frank Capra, dir., *It’s a Wonderful Life* (Liberty Films, 1941); and “Crows” candy by Tootsie Roll.

52. The act even required that every “Master, Mistress of a Family or Overseer” bring to the justice of the peace the scalps of the killed squirrels and heads of the dead crows as proof of their completion of this duty. The justice of the peace would then issue a certificate as documentation. “Acts of the North Carolina General Assembly, 1768 North Carolina, General Assembly November 07, 1768–December 05, 1768,” Volume 25: 514–17, *Documenting the American South*, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.php/document/csr25-0051>. Accessed July 12, 2018. If someone brought in more than seven crows or squirrels, the county would actually pay the person four pence for each one. “Acts of the North Carolina General Assembly, 1767–1768 North Carolina, General Assembly December 05, 1767–January 16, 1768,” Volume 25: 510–13, *Documenting the American South*, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.php/document/csr25-0050>. Accessed July 12, 2018.

53. Henry David Thoreau, *Cape Cod* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1865). Vermont laws allow crow shoots during hunting season, but an event was canceled following social media protest. Dan D’Ambrosio, “Crow shoot canceled after storm of protest on social media,” *Burlington Free Press*, March 23, 2018, <https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/2018/03/23/crow-shoot-canceled-after-storm-protest-social-media/454379002/>. Accessed July 12, 2018. The Rip Van Winkle Rod and Gun Club in Palenville, New York, held a crow-shooting event called a “Crow Down” for at least four years. Kristin Wartman, “Killing Crows in New York State,” *Huffington Post*, March 27, 2014, [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/kristin-wartman/murdering-crows-in-new-yo\\_b\\_5035794.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/kristin-wartman/murdering-crows-in-new-yo_b_5035794.html). Accessed July 13, 2018.

54. J. H. Banks, *A Narrative of Events of the Life of J. H. Banks, an Escaped Slave, from the Cotton State, Alabama, in America*, 1861, *Documenting the American South*, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/penning/penning.html>, 12. Accessed July 12, 2018.

55. James Lindsay Smith, *Autobiography of James L. Smith, Including, Also, Reminiscences of Slave Life, Recollections of the War, Education of Freedmen, Causes of the Exodus, etc.*, 1881, *Documenting the American South*, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/smithj/smithj.html>, 21. Accessed July 12, 2018.

56. See Toll, *Blacking Up*, 68.

57. From 1 Kings 17: “Then a message came to Elijah from the LORD. He said, <sup>3</sup> “Leave this place. Go east and hide in the Kerith Valley. It is east of the Jordan River. <sup>4</sup> You will drink water from the brook. I have directed some ravens to supply you with food there.” <sup>5</sup> So Elijah did what the LORD had told him to do. He went to the Kerith Valley. It was east of the Jordan River. He stayed there. <sup>6</sup> The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning. They also brought him bread and meat in the evening. He drank water from the brook.” *New International Reader’s Version Bible* (Biblica, 2014).

58. Frederick Douglass, *The Narrative and Selected Writings* (New York: Modern Library, 1984), 303.

59. Finseth, *Shades of Green*, 269.

60. Stowe’s model of a black rebel who is at once fierce and gentle has precedent in antebellum African American literature. In *The Heroic Slave*, Douglass also emphasizes how Washington’s “whole appearance betokened Herculean strength: yet there was nothing savage or

forbidding in his aspect . . . A giant's strength, but not a giant's heart was in him. His broad mouth and nose spoke only of good nature and kindness." Douglass, *The Narrative and Selected Writings*, 303. Henry Blake, the leader of a slave revolt in Martin Delany's *Blake, or The Huts of America* (1859), is "bold, determined and courageous, but always mild, gentle and courteous, though impulsive when an occasion demanded his opposition." Martin Delany, *Blake, or The Huts of America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 17.

61. Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston: For the author, 1861), 81.

62. Paul Laurence Dunbar, "Sympathy," *The Collected Poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar*, ed. Joanne M. Braxton (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 102.

63. Douglass, *The Narrative and Selected Writings*, 303.