

## **Narratives of Race and Resistance: A New Historicist Analysis of the Underground Railroad**

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### **Abstract**

The paper deals with *The Underground Railroad*, a novel written by an American author, Colson Whitehead. The novel deals with the atrocities perpetrated on black slaves at the slave plantations of Southern States of America before the Civil War. The paper examines slave discourse from the commercial perspective. It questions the economic interests behind the institution of chattel enslavement at the time of transatlantic slave trade. It also highlights the suppressed narrative of transatlantic slave trade that the institution of slavery is not the product of racial prejudice rather economic interest of slave owners is the dominant factor. The critical practice of new historicism is used to explore the hidden narrative of chattel slavery. The researcher has sought guidance from the theorization of Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher from their book *Practicing New Historicism*. The approaches of Preoccupation with Representation, recurrent use of anecdote and historical co-texting are used for the textual analysis of the primary text i.e. *The Underground Railroad*. This paper reveals the embedded hegemony of white community over the institution of chattel slavery. It also shows the settlement of Southern and Northern States of America to exploit the concept of race and regulate slavery as an institution. The study sets a dimension for readers to explore slave discourses from the multiple unaddressed perspectives of new historicism.

**Keywords:** New Historicism, Preoccupation with Representation, Recurrent use of Anecdote, Historical Co-texting, Chattel Enslavement, Transatlantic Slave Trade.

### **Introduction**

Since the study is conducted in the paradigm of New Historicism, therefore, it is critical to discuss new historicist approach not only as a critical practice but also a term in general. The term new historicism is introduced by Stephen Greenblatt around 1980s. Being a keen observer of renaissance literature Greenblatt observed that Shakespeare's plays are inseparable from the context in which Shakespeare had written. It leads him to understand Shakespeare less an author than an attempt to reestablish the cultural milieu and the complex political situation of renaissance era (Greenblatt, 2000).

The core idea of new historicism is that every piece of text is the product of socio-cultural force. A work of art is heavily influenced by a certain time and place according to the proposition of new historicism. Moreover, no one can understand a piece of text by separating it from the historical or social factors. Being a critical practice, New Historicism promotes the idea that every work of art should be taken as an outcome of a certain time and place instead of as an isolated piece of text. This methodology tries to rediscover history by eyeing on culture and context because only context does not encompass every aspect of the socio-political situation of a certain time period. New historicists argue that only context is not enough to reach the hidden ideologies of the text (Greenblatt, 2018). New Historicists are convinced that history is always written and interpreted, in simple words it is always textual and nothing more than a form of narrative; therefore, it is not

a continuous flow of events. New Historicists argue that it is a practice which is tied up with the historian's interpretative subjectivity.

This critical practice emphasizes not only on historical events but also examines the social, cultural and political practices in which literature is observed. New historicists do not believe in simply placing a text in its context because history is not a continuous flux of events. They argue that other factors become a part of this process. New Historicism is a significant critical practice which shows a revival of interest in history. The current paper is conducted under the same critical practice. The paper discusses an American published novel *The Underground Railroad* (2016) by Colson Whitehead. In an effort to analyze the text, certain preoccupations in the primary text are highlighted. Apart from preoccupations, race history is examined through anecdotes of slavery. Lastly, historical co-texting is used to understand the suppressed narrative of chattel enslavement. These methodologies are discussed by Greenblatt & Gallagher (1994)). Greenblatt is considered to be the pioneer of new historicism due to the innovative interpretations of renaissance literature. However, many critics examine new historicists' approach as an extension of new criticism because history performs a vital role in both approaches. It is also a noticeable point in new historicist approach that they do examine history but they do not confide in historic account. In their approach, history is an aspect which cannot be trusted fully since it cannot be examined objectively.

Thereby, new historicism discards the notion of traditional historians that we can understand historic facts through objective analysis. New Historicist approach propagates the idea that objective analysis of a literary text is impossible because a historian is also a part of certain time and place like other human beings. Therefore, his own experience is influenced by the circumstances in which he lives. A historian may claim that his approach is objective, but he is also a product of a certain culture. To that end, his personal beliefs of right and wrong can influence the ways in which he interprets events (Greenblatt, 1980). In simple words, new historicism is quite different from other approaches. They do not believe in facts, but they do believe in interpretations because it is purely a matter of interpretations. This is the reason that new historic approach provides us innumerable interpretations.

This critical approach is officially established in 1990s. Therefore, very few works are conducted in this field. New criticism is the frequent method in the interpretation of a text, but the method of preoccupation, recurrent use of anecdotes and historical co-texting is found rare. This being the case, in this paper certain preoccupations with representations are highlighted to untie the suppressed account of history. It is also a fact that our literary history is filled with slave discourses where racial prejudice is pointed out as a root cause of slave institution. This study examines the literary and non-literary discourses and presents a different contention. The economic prosperity and hidden alliance of political forces to regulate the institution of slavery are discussed here. It shows the hegemonic control of American slave owners on black slaves which formed the institution of commercial slavery. The exploitation of white community during the transatlantic slave trade is discussed in this study. It makes clear that Atlantic trade had a single agenda to prosper the Europe and white beneficiaries of Southern and Northern States of America before the civil war (Douglass, 1995).

This study also examines the exploitation of race concept which brought a wealthy community of white minority and miserable community of black majority on the slave plantations of Southern States of America. Moreover, the establishment of chattel slavery as an institution for economic prosperity is discussed clearly in this study. Certain similarities and dissimilarities of black exploitation from industrial view point are pointed out respectively while juxtaposing the primary text along with literary and non-literary texts. The literary histories and counter histories are discussed under the prescribed approach of New Historicism. Furthermore, the contribution of literary critics in new historicism is also a part of this study. This contribution shows the pre and post condition of new historicism. Therefore, it illustrates the progress of new historicist approach. Apart from new criticism, other fields are also indirectly linked with this critical approach. It

includes the post-structuralism and old historicism since text has primary role in both approaches. This study examines the previous research works conducted under this critical approach where historical co-texting is frequently used. The methodology of preoccupation and recurrent use of anecdotes by Greenblatt is used in this study to interpret the primary text *The Underground Railroad* (2016). The primal thing of study lies in the exploration of chattel slavery as an institution. This study discusses three aspects of chattel enslavement which include slave auction, generational servitude and personal property (Greenblatt, 1977).

History was examined as a phenomenon outside of literature that certified the veracity of literary interpretations during the twentieth century. History seemed to be unparalleled and it functioned as a substructure for reading literary works. In the seventies of the twentieth century, in American literary theory there came a change in attitude towards history, therefore, a new theoretical approach appeared which soon popularized as New Historicism.

From the day of its inception, this approach is identified with the study of Renaissance but, with the passage of time, other literary trends are involved. New historicism is an innovative and influential critical practice which shows a revival of interest in history. Though the term 'New Historicism' is coined by Michael McCannles, but it came into prominence when Stephen J. Greenblatt made a study on the renaissance literature especially on the work of William Shakespeare (Berghahn, 1992) therefore, this term is coined by Stephen Greenblatt in 1980s. He was a teacher at Berkeley University in California and had a keen interest in renaissance work especially in the work of great renaissance writer 'William Shakespeare' (Montrose, 1989).

Stephen Greenblatt along with other new historicist critics like Stephen Orgel examined that Shakespeare's plays are inseparable from the context in which Shakespeare had written. It leads him to understand Shakespeare less as an author than as an attempt to reestablish the cultural milieu and the complex political situation of renaissance period. For this purpose, he gave the example of Queen Elizabeth, who was worried about her thrones on the hands of "Essex rising" and it is a well-known fact. Shakespeare's play *Richard II* displays this suspense of the legitimacy of the throne in the Tudor family. In this way, Shakespeare's play is questioned through the well-known anecdote of Elizabeth's worry. Though the play is about the dethroning of king but it creates a narrative for the rebellion to stand against the queen. Thereby, the literary text helped change the course of history and created a power narrative (Gallagher & Greenblatt, 2000). The political function of literature is more concerned to New Historicists along with the idea of power which is the only source for the production and reproduction of cultures.

The contribution of certain texts is crucial to new historicism. The text *Renaissance Self Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, appeared as the ground breaking text that influenced many other new historicists notably Jonathan Goldberg, Edward Pechter, Catherine, Jean Howard, D.A. Miller, Louis Aadvin Montrose at U.C. Greenblatt has inspired many scholars who were interested in renaissance literature. While he was at the University of Berkeley, he managed to shape a journal known as *Representation*, in which the important data about new historic approach appeared. The publication of *The Power of Forms and Forms of Power in Renaissance*, gave critics a kind of impetus to differentiate new historicism from other approaches to literature. There are other prominent names related to the critical approach of new historicism like 'Lynn Hunt and Michel Foucault'. Both these people were also a part of Berkeley Institution along with Stephen Greenblatt. Further, Greenblatt elaborated his ideas on new historicism in his famous essay *Towards a Poetics of Culture*. He starts his essay by claiming that he will not able to 'define' new historicism but he prefers to 'Situate it as Practice' (Greenblatt, 2013).

He argued that a piece of text is the product of social and historical circumstances. No one can understand a piece of text by separating it from the historical and social forces. In a nut-shell, a consensus was developed by historical critics that all written documents are the representations of history (Greenblatt, 1982). New Historicists started to extract meaning in a text by investigating the text within the framework of the prevailing ideas which are important in history.

## Research Methodology

The current study is conducted in the paradigm of new historicism. The analytical and interpretative method is used in this study because it is not based on questionnaires or interviews to make statistical analysis; the study analyzes literary text of a novel. The approach is emergent and inductive to study people, cases, phenomena, social situations and processes in natural setting to describe in descriptive terms the meaning that people attach to. The primary text for the study is a novel *The Underground Railroad* (2016) by an American author Colson Whitehead.

The researcher has sought guidance from the theorization of Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher from their book *Practicing New Historicism* (2000). It is critical to discuss that new historicist approach is quite different from other literary approaches in a sense that new historicists not only focus on the context or historical background of a piece of text but also take a keen interest in the social, political, and cultural forces that shape or influence a literary text. Literature and history influence each other and move hand in hand; therefore, a piece of literature contains many social, political, and cultural forces (Howard, 1986). This being the case, some literary facts become eluded and other become vibrant. To analyze or interpret a piece of text effectively, a researcher has to examine the socio-political and cultural forces which may influence a certain text. The primary text of this study refers back to the pre-civil war era of American history, therefore, to interpret and analyze this text, the researcher has to examine the interplay of various forces of that certain time period.

The researcher has found in the theorization of Greenblatt and Gallagher that the interplay of socio-political forces can be traced firstly, through the “preoccupation with the nature of representations” where researcher shows the preoccupation of author with certain representations in the primary text. Secondly, researches show that primary literary text echoes to the established anecdotes of history, where researcher analyzes the historic narrative of anecdotes. Lastly, through the method of historical co-texting, where researcher juxtaposes primary and contemporary literary text and presents certain similarities and certain dissimilarities. The similar description of events shows the vibrant flow of historic events while the dissimilar description shows the suppressed narrative of history. Therefore, researcher has used these methods in an attempt to analyze the eluded or suppressed account of history.

Moreover, some literary and non-literary texts of contemporary historic period are pertinent to show the preoccupation or to challenge the historic account of anecdotes. Thereby, researcher has considered *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) the literary text and non-literary text has considered *Narrative of the life of Fredrick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845) by Harriet Beecher Stowe and Fredrick Douglass respectively. This study is divided into five chapters; first chapter provides the overview and introduction of the study. Second chapter deals with review of literature, where new historicism as a critical practice is discussed and certain studies in the field of new historicism are comprehensively presented. Third chapter contains the framework and research methodology; certain approaches of new historicist study are discussed. The research questions are analyzed in the fourth chapter. In the final and fifth chapter, the study is concluded; therefore, it deals with the conclusion of this research. Since the work of Fredrick Douglass, particularly his non-literary works has the status of anecdotes in academia (Stone, 1973). In this study, researcher shows that Whitehead in *The Underground Railroad* (2016) recurrently refers back to the established narrative of Douglass. The recurrent echoing to the historic narrative highlights the substantial signs of chattel enslavement.

The researcher discusses certain lines and passages of *The Underground Railroad* (2016) in cohesion with the established anecdotes of Douglass on black race (Douglass, 1845). Douglass has frequently discussed the idea of generational servitude, auction, and slaves as personal property in his work *Narrative of the life of Fredrick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845), therefore, established the anecdotes of black race. In generational servitude, victims are kept under the

organized system of slavery for their whole life. Moreover, slaves are bought and sold among different slave owners and permanently considers the personal property. These signs are not only present in the pre-civil war era of American history but also present in the Ancient Greece, Mycenaean Greece, and Classical Athens. The researcher also points out these elements by analyzing certain lines from the primary text *The Underground Railroad* (2016) and shows the cohesion with grand historic narrative. The researcher establishes the link between established anecdotes of Douglass and *The Underground Railroad* (2016) and proclaims the establishment of slavery as an institution on the slave plantations of Southern America. The researcher comprehensively presents the historic narrative and shows that institution of black slavery is established as economic enterprise on the slave plantations of Southern America.

Anecdotes do not hold historic facts; it purely deals with interpretations because facts are less important for new historicism, therefore, many things become eluded or suppressed. Similarly, researcher proclaims that the historic narrative in the form of anecdotes does not engulf the commercial perspective of slavery as an institution. Whitehead refers back again and again to the anecdotes of slavery but the certain lines of primary text present a new interpretation of commercial slavery. Whitehead discusses corporate side of black slavery “More slaves led to more cotton, which led to more money to buy more land to farm more cotton”. According to Greenblatt, new interpretation or dimension in the field of new historicism is actually a counter narrative or history. It is preeminent to find in the counter history that political interference becomes undeniable when Whitehead invokes that “Congress’s real issue was who is going to pick all this goddamned cotton?”.

There are vivid descriptions in the primary text where the sole purpose of a black slave is to fulfill the demand of raw material. The primary text demonstrates the speech of Terrance Randall after his brother’s death that “In order to feed the world’s insatiable demand for cotton goods, he said, every picker’s daily quota will be increased by a percentage determined by their number from the previous harvest”. In the established anecdotes of Douglass and primary text, there is substantial cohesion but the presentation of Whitehead brings a counter history particularly when he gives a comprehensive account of African bodies “The ruthless engine of cotton required its fuel of African bodies. Crisscrossing the ocean, ships brought bodies to work the land and to breed more bodies”. Therefore, researcher shows that historic narrative and primary text moves side by side, but certain lines disrupt the established history to manifests new interpretations.

Greenblatt discusses another method of interpretation in the paradigm of new historicism which is termed as “Preoccupation with the nature of Representation” (Greenblatt, 2000). According to Greenblatt, social, political, and cultural force is the ultimate source of a piece of text. Moreover, these forces are hidden behind the representational passages of a text which can be traced. The synchronic structure of these passages is transformed into the diachronic account (Greenblatt & Gallagher, 2000). Every representational passage has a factual account of history; therefore, new historicist relates a certain representational passage to the factual account that already exists in history to get their interpretations.

In this study, researcher has introduced the preoccupation of Whitehead with certain passages which are frequently used by the author. It includes the preoccupation of political maltreatment with black slaves and preoccupation with the deterioration of black slaves respectively. In the primary text *The Underground Railroad* (2016), researcher shows that Whitehead is preoccupied with the political maltreatment of black slaves particularly when he directly points out the role of government that “Most of the colored folk in the state had been bought up by the government”. The researcher has also pointed out the preoccupation of Whitehead with the deterioration of black slaves while discussing the compromise of 1850, because the freedom of black natives of Free States can be doubted “property remains a property”. Moreover, the methodology of historical co-texting is also used in this study, where primary literary text is juxtaposed with contemporary literary text of pre-civil war era to present the suppressed narrative of chattel enslavement. These

approaches of new historicism are applied in this study to present the suppressed narrative of established history.

### **Preoccupation with the Deterioration of Black Slaves**

In order to establish the preoccupation from the text with the deterioration of black slaves the text discloses the second half of the novel where slaves are recapturing and being brought on the slave plantations. It can be seen in the text that Cora escapes from Randall plantation “Ridgeway waved Cora on with his pistol. He would not be the first white man to see the Underground Railroad, but the first enemy. After all that had befallen her, the shame of betraying those who made possible her escape”. It becomes possible after the enactment of fugitive slave act because this law gives permission to slave owners that they can recapture the slaves from the free states of America. This is what the upper lines tells that although Cora get success in escaping from Randall Plantation, Terrence, the owner of plantation set out Ridgeway to capture Cora.

The text proclaims that early on, she is in the company of Caesar and Lovey but Lovey is captured and brought back on the plantation. She keeps on moving through South Carolina, North Carolina and finally settles in Indiana with a slave Royal. Ridgeway is also in search of Cora and he also has a personal grudge with Cora because he remains unsuccessful in the capture of Mable. After the devastation of Valentine farm, Ridgeway along with Homer spots Cora on the farm. They also give ad for Cora that she is a fugitive slave escaped from Randall plantation. She keeps on moving and eventually reaches in Free States of America “New York was a Free State, they argued, and any colored person become magically free once they stepped over the border”. Here, the demonstration of fugitive slave act can be seen, when Ridgeway captures her from the Underground Railroad. She feels cursed when Ridgeway comes to know about this secret path.

Even though she is no more a property in Indiana but still fugitive slave act declares freedom for Ridgeway to recapture her. The text uncovers that hundreds and thousands of slaves starts moving toward Free States. But slave owners believe that “property remains a property”. Ridgeway brings black slaves back on Randall Plantation “King Cotton crowded the countryside with slaves”. Slaves are capturing from the Free states which shows the despotism of white community. The active part of government becomes clear in the establishment of fugitive slave act when slaves starts becoming the property of government “Most of the colored folk in the state had been bought up by the government”. When demand of cotton increases in the New World, government starts purchasing slaves to meet the demand. We find that “government had purchased Bessie Carpenter and Christian Markson”. Hence the above account establishes the preoccupation of despotism with black slaves especially when the role of Congress becomes clear in the slaves purchase and fugitive slave act since they were the indirect beneficiaries of slavery. Now this preoccupation can be verified from the text of Uncle Tom’s Cabin.

This particular text explains that fugitive slave act favors the Simon Legree who is a cruel slave owner. He beats his slave on the plantation near the Red River. He sets competition among his slaves on the plantation of cash crop. He recaptures many black slaves including Sambo and Quimbo from the Free States because according to this act Free States have to compromise with slave planters. Moreover, new slaves are becoming the part of Simon Legree’s plantation to meet the demand of cash crop. Legree buys Tom and Emmeline in an auction for his Red River plantation. Another planter buys Susan and her mother for his commercial field. Since fugitive slave act declares slaves as the property of slave owners, it can be seen in the novel that slavers actually treat slaves as their property. When Legree beats Tom to death, nobody asks any question because there are no white witnesses to the act and above all, he is destroying his own property according to the law.

### **Historic Account of Race in the Established Anecdotes of Chattel Slavery**

Both Gallagher and Greenblatt argued about the characteristics of anecdote that it carries factual and fictional attributes. As researcher is dealing with factual anecdotes so it is necessary to discuss

the factual attributes related to the chattel slavery. The idea of chattel enslavement usually attributes to the Southern States of America in the 16<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> century before the American Civil War. The factual attributions of race in established history of anecdotes includes generational servitude, auction and the concept of personal property (Douglass, 1845). Therefore, researcher identifies the specific concept of chattel slavery and discusses the factual attributions from the primary text *The Underground Railroad* (2016). There are many passages in *The Underground Railroad* which refers back to the established anecdote of Chattel enslavement and shows that primary text has got the influence of grand historic narrative of black slavery.

#### **a) Generational Servitude and Chattel Slavery**

Generational servitude is an aspect of chattel slavery where generations of slaves remain under the hegemony of slave owners (Hoover, 1992). The selected text provides the impression of this kind of slavery when the text proclaims that “Dahomeyan raiders kidnapped the men first, then returned to the village the next moon for the women and children, marching them in chains to the sea two by two”. These are the lines where Whitehead refers back to the institution of slavery because these lines reflect the concept of chattel enslavement especially when black slaves are marching into chains towards the plantations in the start of novel. It can be seen in the first half of the novel that a slave action takes place in the early march of 1859, couple of miles away from Savannah, Georgia. Almost, four hundred slaves are captured including Ajarry. These are the black men, women, and children. Many characters in this novel can be seen to be the victim of this subjugation. Notably, Ajarry, the grandmother of Cora, who is the protagonist of this novel. The whole family of Ajarry including Mable and Cora reflects their generational servitude since they are kidnapped from their native lands. The text demonstrates that Ajarry is young when she is kidnapped by raiders. Now, she is surviving into the permanent servitude. She is chained and her movement is restricted. A couple of slaves die around Ajarry but their dead bodies tie for hours along with living souls. She cannot get emancipation and eventually dies on the cotton field. After the death of Ajarry, Mabel does not spend a single day outside from the Randall Plantation. When she tries to escape, she loses her life. Her daughter Cora also becomes the victim of this servitude, when she leaves her alone on the Randall Plantation. This is what we call chattel enslavement.

Moreover, when Cora tries to escape, she also remains unsuccessful and eventually “The slave catcher got into the wagon for the first time since he picked up Cora”. This specific line of second half of the novel once again refers back to the historic narrative of anecdotes where every person, who tries to escape the Randall plantation loses his/ her life as in the case with Cora’s friend Lucy and Caesar. When Cora plans an escape, she is captured, and works for her master Terrance. When Cora tries to escape from Randall Plantation, the slave owner Terrence hires Ridgway to recapture escaped slaves. Ridgway kills few people including Jasper, he shoots Jasper on his face. Slaves are warned because slave absence means absence of cotton, so “New slaves were quickly warned against the Hob women”. Whitehead echoes to the physical trials of black slaves which is a fundamental concept of chattel slavery while identifying the historic account of anecdotes that hob women try to escape but eventually, they are captured. They are brutally tortured, one of them goes into a state of mental instability. Two of them never speak after their capture because they lose their tongue as a punishment. Another two commit suicide after the physical exploitation and last one is slaughtered in front of other slaves in order to warn them. The text discloses that the above situation is not unusual. This identification depicts the anecdote of generational servitude where emancipation of black slaves seems impossible.

#### **Conclusion**

The element of subjectivity does not allow literature grow independently since it blurs the difference between fact and fantasy, truth and untruth. This study concludes that literary history has also become the victim of this idiosyncrasy especially when one examines the literary history of chattel enslavement. It gives the impression that chattel enslavement is a product of racial prejudice. Moreover, this impression made roots when many white representatives notably

'Thomas Jefferson' claimed that "All people are created equal except Africans". This typical thought pattern of white community has made things controversial in literary academia. But the new historicist study of *The Underground Railroad* (2016) has solved this complex. By referring back to the anecdotes of slave history, researcher has presented the suppressed narrative of chattel slavery. This narrative proclaims that racial prejudice is not the actual reason behind the institution of chattel enslavement. This study makes clear that the established history in anecdotes of Douglass and other contemporary literary text suppressed the narrative of commercial slavery. The recurrent referring of Whitehead in the primary text has made things clear when it uncovers the economic perspective of Southern States of America for cotton plantation and cash crops, where European colonists started to use black slaves as commercial labor. Similarly, certain preoccupations are established from the primary text which regulate the history of slavery. These preoccupations proclaim that political forces of Southern and Northern American States were indirect beneficiaries of cotton slavery. Particularly, after the industrialization of Europe, black slaves became the by-product for white slave owners because demand in cotton suddenly got increased. The preoccupation with political maltreatment uncovers commercial alliance of cotton plantations and Senators. This study of *The Underground Railroad* presents the true reality of transatlantic slave trade since white community has used it for their economic prosperity. The hidden account in the anecdote history of transatlantic slave trade demonstrates that the race myth is used to cover the insane commercial labor on cotton plantations.

It can be seen from the historic narrative presented in literary and non-literary works that cotton proposition of white community is not vivid. Therefore, the suppressed narrative in the established anecdotes and preoccupations proclaim the single agenda of commercial labor which is not a part of our literary academia. As Greenblatt argues that there is always something real outside of the historical narrative because history and literature influence each other. This "real" is suppressed by socio-political forces prevailing in a society. In an attempt to get this "real" the researcher has presented that Greenblatt echoes back the anecdotes of history by putting certain lines and passages from the primary text. This study also concludes that the history of chattel enslavement is distorted in literary academia to suppress the brutal practices exercised on black slaves for economic sake. Moreover, it includes political involvement highlighted through anecdotes of politics that is not discussed in literary history.

This study demonstrates that political involvement has completely exploited the institution of black slavery especially in the context of transatlantic slave trade. In this study, it is made clear that the institution of chattel slavery is far away from the concept of race. It is economic enterprise which established the institution of chattel slavery. Since new historicists manifest the literary and historical facts which are embedded in text with biases therefore, the historic account pervaded in anecdotes of insane practices like generational servitude and auction manifests the embedded economic proposition of slave owners. This study shows that black slaves are sub-human for slave planters, they have no identity and no rights. They are kidnapped from their native lands to meet the increased demand of cotton in Europe. Unfortunately, the concept of black race is linked with chattel slavery in literary history which does not make any sense.

It is clear in the study that transatlantic slave trade was the commercial alliance of three continents, Africa, Europe and Southern States of America. Africa provided black slaves to European ships for manufactured goods, Europe provided the ships of black slaves to Southern plantations and received raw material for their industrial development. While, American senators were indirect beneficiaries of this slave trade which is highlighted in the preoccupation with political maltreatment. New Historicists are more concerned with interpretations rather than facts because objective analysis is not possible being a part of any society.

This study includes the examination of Slave States of Southern America as well as the influence of Northern States on the institution of slavery. The linkage of 'Compromise of 1850' and 'Fugitive Slave Act' is made clear with the interest of slave owners. This study also discards the previous

thought pattern that Northern States were against the institution of slavery. It is evident that many representatives were also slave owner like Jefferson and Henry Clay. Only few got emancipation before the Civil War or Second American Revolution. This hidden history explains how white community exploited the concept of race to achieve its economic interests. The interpretation of economic prosperity discards the previous notions of Atlantic trade and chattel enslavement; therefore, the study of *The Underground Railroad* (2016) not only presents the pervaded history of chattel slavery but also regulate the insane history of slavery as an institution. Moreover, this study sets a new paradigm because it challenges the literary history where the link of race conflict is established with racial prejudice. Finally, the manifestation of commercial enterprise in the institution of slavery draws attention to analyze slave discourses with economic view point. Therefore, it is argued with conviction that commercial slavery as an institution and established narrative of black slavery are two different things.

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