

The Abolitionist Movement and the Civil War Reconstructed: A Study of Margaret Walker's Jubilee

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Abstract: *The examination of Margaret Walker's Jubilee has enabled us to understand that the Abolitionist Movement is initiated in the North of America by a category of white Americans who are now against slavery which they used to praise. This means that in this fight for the abolition of slavery, Blacks are no longer alone. They are helped by some white Northerners who, after reaching a certain level of economic development, decide then to ban slavery in spite of the opposition made to them by some Southerners like Grimes and Salina, to quote only two. The movement later results in a civil war opposing the Union Troops to the Confederate ones. It is only after three years of fighting that Blacks open the door to freedom thanks to the "Emancipation Paper" signed by President Abraham Lincoln who is viewed as a "Moses" by all abolitionists.*

Keywords: Blacks, The Abolitionist Movement, The Civil War, Emancipation, Freedom.

I. INTRODUCTION

This article analyzes the themes of the Abolitionist Movement and the Civil War portrayed in *Jubilee* by Margaret Walker. Published in 1966, this novel tells the story of a slave family from the slavery era to the post-Civil War period in the United States. It is mainly based on its female character named Vyry who is a witness of actual-historical events reconstructed by the author in her work of fiction.

Our choice of Margaret Walker's *Jubilee* for this paper is justified by the author's reconstruction of the Abolitionist Movement, the Civil War, and the Emancipation Proclamation which are grounded in the history of Blacks in the United States. David Lindsey who first scrutinized it, considers it as "a revisit of Blacks' experience of rejection and victimization due to their position of second zone citizens in the American society".¹ This is to say that there is a restitution of actual-historical events in Walker's narrative that urges us to concentrate on the answer to the following question: To what extent is Margaret Walker's *Jubilee* an account of Blacks' social experience on the American soil? The author's portrayal of events such as the Abolitionist Movement and the Civil War attests of her incorporation of Blacks' experience in the white man's world.

Knowing that the novel examined contains a mixture of fictional facts which intertwine with the history of the United States, we find it necessary to resort to the historical and sociological approaches to better analyze it. The historical approach helps us demonstrate the interplay between history and fiction in *Jubilee*. For, this approach is termed by Greenblatt and Gallagher as: "A theory applied to literature that suggests that literature must be studied and interpreted

within the context of both the history of the author and the history of the critic" (Greenblatt and Gallagher: 2015, 119). The sociological approach, however, enables us to examine the relationship between white and black characters in the American community, for the writer, whoever he may be, is often inspired by a given society, as confessed by Krutch in these terms: "Art is not created in a vacuum; it is the work not simply of a person, but of an author fixed in time and space, answering to a community" (Krutch, quoted by Wilbur: 1962, 123).

Two main points are examined in this paper. The first is the author's contextualization of the Abolitionist Movement. The second refers to his reference to the Civil War which results in the Emancipation Proclamation by President Abraham Lincoln.

II. THE REPRESENTATION OF THE ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT

The Abolitionist Movement is initiated in the North of America by a category of white Americans now against slavery which they praised in the beginning. This means that in this fight for the abolition of slavery, black people are no longer alone. They are helped by some Whites who no longer want to see the continuation of this shameful trade based on human beings. This is due to the clash of interests between the North and the South of America. After reaching a certain level of economic development, leaders from the North decide then to ban slavery. In *Jubilee*, Walker reconstructs this movement through the character of Grimes, the overseer who is afraid of the "trouble" free Blacks may make among slaves. He knows that the movement will bring nothing but trouble to the slaves' masters who will no longer get profit from their slaves' hard work on plantations: "The overseer was afraid of the "trouble" free Negroes might make among the slaves, but there had not been a blacksmith on the place for a long time" (J, p. 73). This quotation shows that Walker is dealing with the Abolitionist Movement. One knows that the majority of "free Negroes" are against slavery which they consider as a way for Whites to exploit their black counterparts. They often advise black slaves to get involved in this movement which, they think, will lead them to freedom. That is why whenever a free Negro is around the plantation, Grimes does not feel at ease. For him, a free black is up to something: If he does not ask slaves to escape from the masters' plantations because he thinks they are not well treated, he will at least ask them to disobey their masters. Walker demonstrates this aspect when she tells of Randall Wheelwright and Old Bob Qualls who

have the reputation of helping slaves run away from plantations as a way to freedom: “*Randall Wheelwright and Old Bob Qualls had frequently been suspected of helping slaves escape to freedom and even daring to buy slaves on the auction block and, all purchasing them, giving them their freedom*” (J, p. 76).

The phrase “giving them their freedom” suggests that free Blacks are aware of the slaves’ lack of freedom in the American society. This awareness pushes them to help their black fellows escape as a way not only to express their discontent towards their masters, but also to fight for freedom denied to them for years. The fact of buying “slaves on the auction block” in order to free them attests of the free Blacks’ contribution to the abolition of slavery praised by the majority of Blacks. For the plantation owners, the Abolitionist Movement is nothing but a “trouble”. At its very beginning, they did not understand what was happening among Blacks who could be found in groups as if they were planning something against their white masters. This attitude urges Salina to question Vry in these terms: “*Big Missy finally came out and questioned Vry sharply and asked her if she knew anything about the trouble that was being stirred up among all the niggers in the county*” (J, p. 80). This quotation shows that something has happened among Blacks and masters have felt it. Actually, the situation is linked to the disappearance of some black slaves on Marse John’s plantation favored by abolitionists who consider slavery as a bad trade. Knowing that the movement is for black slaves’ advantage, Vry hides the truth and lies to her Mistress in this way: “*Lord, no Missy, ain’t heard tell of nothing (...). When I does I will let you know*” (J, id.). The novel reads that when John Morris Dutton came back from Milledgeville in the 1850s where he was too busy discussing the slavery issue, he observed terrible changes on his plantation because of the abolitionists’ actions:

There were many changes at home on his plantation. At least a half-dozen of his slaves had died or disappeared during those stormy years of the fifties when he was very busy in Milledgeville. Sometimes he blamed his wife, Missy Salina, and their zealous overseer, Ed Grimes for this deplorable state of affairs (J, p. 150).

The disappearance of slaves on Dutton’s plantation is favored by abolitionists who find the opportunity to empty his plantation by taking slaves out of it in his absence. This abolitionists’ determination to ban slavery by any means necessary does not derive from the author’s personal imagination, for in Marcy Heidish’s *A Woman Called Moses*, one also sees how the Quakers help black slaves escape from the South to the North of the United States where they hope to enjoy freedom. The Quakers’ actions in the abolition of slavery are evidenced by Harriet Tubman who never forgets their helps during her escape through the Underground Railroad:

They smiled, smeared into the lamp’s glow, and I drifted back to sleep, wondering if the Lord had gided me to this safety, or if it had been the moss on the north side of the trees after all. I stayed

buried under the Quaker’s house for the better part of a week fevered and half delirious at first. The woman came often to bring broth, poultices, clean linen, or to empty the slop bucket (Heidish: 1976, 109).

In this passage, Harriet Tubman underlines the great role played by the Quakers in the abolition of slavery. They are viewed as valid heroes, because they have successfully helped fugitive slaves escape from bondage. In *Jubilee*, Walker’s efforts to account for the Abolitionist Movement are also evident with her reference to President Abraham Lincoln. One knows that this historical personality devoted his time to fighting for Blacks’ freedom in the United States. Though from “the poor people” Abraham Lincoln is feared by the plantation owners who are sure that his bravery and determination will help the Northern abolitionists ban slavery. This fear is evidenced by John Morris Dutton who considers him as a great man among abolitionists:

As Dutton told his wife, Salina, at the time, the northern abolitionists and free-soldiers have finally got themselves a man. They say he is from the poor people – a backwoodsman of low origin from Kentucky. He has been first one thing and then another (J, p. 151).

This passage shows the plantation owners’ despair in their fight for the continuation of slavery. For John Morris Dutton, Abraham Lincoln is one of the powerful opponents to his opinion. That is why whenever he sees or hears about him, he feels half-hearted; he no longer burns with the same enthusiasm with which he had at the beginning of the movement. For example, when he makes his third long journey out of the state for slavery issues, he feels insulted and humiliated because of the speech made by abolitionists to discourage slavery in the American territories:

This was his third long journey out of the state in the past six months. No wonder his body felt weary to the bone. Last year during the summer he had attended two conventions, both Democratic. The first one was held in the North, where the South felt insulted and infuriated with the compromising tactics used to discourage slavery in the territories. The second was held in Baltimore, where loyal southerners took a bold stand against those radical anti-slavery northerners and nominated Breckinridge as their states’ candidate (J, p. 150).

Through this passage, one understands that Walker’s text deals with the American history. For, it is known that before the abolition of slavery favored, to some extent, by Abraham Lincoln who proclaimed the Blacks’ Emancipation in 1863, black slaves’ owners were invited to attend conventions about the matter of slavery. At the end of each convention, Southerners were shocked because of the privilege accorded to the notion of anti-slavery. One also knows that the name “Breckinridge” is far from being from the author’s personal imagination. It is, as a matter of fact, the name of a personality who has really existed and is grounded in the history of the United States. The man has effectively been nominated as a

candidate for the Northern States' rights thanks to his determination for the abolition of slavery².

John Morris Dutton's fear for Lincoln's position for the slavery issue is so evident that the author continues to illustrate it in these terms: "I believe I heard once he made his living splitting rails, and just lately has been a lawyer of sorts who got himself elected to the Illinois Legislature. He is obviously nothing but a willing tool for those northern radicals" (J, p. 151). This quotation demonstrates the Southerners' fear for Lincoln who is pictured as a great opponent to those who fight for the continuation of slavery. While American authorities hold their meetings to ban slavery in different towns of the United States, black slaves hold theirs in the forest as a way to challenge their white masters. In *Jubilee*, the author through the character of Aunt Sally shows how motivated black slaves are to partake in such meetings held in secret:

Vyry could not understand the troubled look on Aunt Sally's face nor the great hurry that made her walk so fast. Long before they left Marse John's other plantations and were on their way deep into the woods toward the secret meeting place in the swamps, Vyry was so tired she felt she would drop (J, p. 40).

Black slaves hold their meetings in secret to avoid punishments or whippings by their white masters. This attitude attests of their determination not only to take an active part in the Abolitionist Movement, but also to denounce the wrongs of Whites over them. This means that they are tired of living in bondage and must fight for their freedom in the white man's world. Despite the teachings about God they often receive from Brother Ezekiel who often asks them to keep cool, black slaves are no longer ready to wait for a "Moses" to set them free. That is why they are motivated to provide themselves with some strategies leading to freedom. The novel reads that most of the slaves' meetings are seldom held "on bright moonlight nights", but deep in the forest: "Always the meetings were held deep in the swampy woods, seldom on bright moonlight nights that these meetings served a double purpose" (J, p. 39). The first purpose of these meetings is linked to the knowledge of the Bible they often get from Brother Ezekiel. The second is linked to the opportunity they find to plan for freedom denied to them by Whites who take them for granted. Many black slaves are interested in these meetings to such an extent that Vyry is even astonished to find out that even those who often refuse to come are now motivated:

At last, when they reached the place, Vyry knew that this was no ordinary Sunday meeting. Aunt Sally's Sam and Big Boy were there and some of the other slaves they knew from Marse John's nearby plantation, but there were several strangers including a white man and a free black man from the village (J, p. 40).

This passage shows not only black slaves' massive participation in the Abolitionist Movement, but also that of free Blacks and Whites who help them achieve their freedom. The presence of a white man and a free Black is a proof that

slaves are no longer alone in this tough fight for freedom. The conclusions of their meetings are reproduced by Walker who refers to Vyry's account in these terms:

Their talk sounded like a plan for a plot or an uprising but all of it was confusing to Vyry's young ears, though she felt the tension of the time so taut that it was standing still. It was dusk-dark when they first gathered and this, in itself, was a crime (J, pp. 41-42).

The word "uprising" is indicative, for it draws the reader back to the final decision of the slaves' meetings. Vyry cannot really figure out what is going on, because she is too young and has never thought of such a decision before. This "uprising" seeks nothing but Blacks' freedom in all the spheres of the United States.

Walker's determination to account for the abolition of slavery is so evident that she gives the number of people who gather for the Blacks' cause: "There were more than seven slaves together and a white man and a free man with them and this was an offense with the serious punishment of flogging or prison" (J, p. 42). The Abolitionist Movement is seen not only as a concern of slaves, but also of free Blacks who want to provide their black fellows with freedom. Some Whites also devote their time to helping them in such a fight, because they are conscious that all men are created equal and are endowed by the Creator with inherent and inalienable rights.

The Abolitionist Movement finally brings about a kind of exodus in many villages and cities of the South. In fact, many black slaves start leaving their white masters' plantations and go to the Northern States viewed as the "Promised Land" where everybody is supposed to enjoy the full fruition of life. This makes their white masters send patrollers to go after them with dogs in order to get them back to the plantations, as illustrated by Jane in Ernest James Gaines's *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*: "Then the people started leaving. But the people had always left from here. All through slavery people was trying to get away from the South. The old masters and patrollers used to go after the people with dogs" (Gaines: 1971, 71). As it can be seen, what makes black slaves leave the South for the North is their desire to live in a place where people are not judged according to the color of their skin, but to their way of behaving and acting within the society. The sending of patrollers after runaway slaves suggests that if one of them is caught, they will take him back home for a serious punishment. If the runaway slave who is caught is known as a trouble-maker, they will simply sell him. And if he becomes so stubborn to masters, they will finish up killing him.

Having no successful results until 1861, abolitionists find it necessary to engage in a civil war as a way to obtain Blacks' freedom through violence. This fratricidal conflict opposing the Union Troops to the Confederate is viewed as the continuation of Blacks' fight for freedom in the United States.

III. THE REFERENCE TO THE CIVIL WAR

The question of anti-slavery extolled by the majority of Northerners in the United States brings about protestations and tensions between the North and the South of this great nation.

While the North aims at abolishing slavery, the South, however, rejects this aim which results in the American Civil War. In *Jubilee*, Walker tackles this fratricidal conflict by introducing the reader to the title “*John Brown’s body lies a – moldering in the grave*” (J, p. 149). This title draws the reader back to the American Civil War, because “John Brown” was an anti-slavery leader who thought that violence was the only way for Blacks to get freedom denied to them for years on the American soil, as Evayoulou recalls:

In the summer of 1865, he organized a band follower at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, who would inaugurate a slave uprising and establish a free state in the mountain to which all Blacks would escape. When the US Army was informed by the band, Robert Lee arrived with the Federal Troops and captured John Brown who was promptly tried for treason and executed (Evayoulou: 2009, 37).

Evayoulou’s mention of this passage is a way to tell the reader that Walker has incorporated actual-historical facts in her work of fiction. This incorporation of historical events linked to the history of the United States, shows the interplay between history and fiction in her novel. One can for example observe the presence of events such as the abolition of slavery with regard to the political role played by Abraham Lincoln:

In 1857 the south won a moral victory with the Dred Scott case, but then came 1858 and that threatening speech of Seward’s about the rising of an irrepressible conflict and the dire imminence of a social revolution. It was still 1858 when Abraham Lincoln, the candidate, declared that the country could not remain half-slave and half-free but would have to be one or the other (J, p. 151).

The expressions “half slave” and “half free” mean that the United States is composed of two groups of individuals: That of black slaves who are deprived of freedom and that of white Americans who can never be treated as slaves, because they have the right to enjoy the full fruition of life thanks to the color of their skin. The author’s use of this passage is an illustration on Blacks’ living conditions in the United States. In fact, what one notices after reading a great number of books dealing with the question of Blacks’ treatment in the United States is that, in most of their speeches, black Americans denounce racial prejudice and claim for an equalitarian America where every individual of any race will be equally treated, enjoying the full fruition of true democracy regardless of the color of their skin. When Abraham Lincoln says that “the country could not remain half-slave and half-free”, he worries for racism and discrimination which gangrene the American society. This sentence shows clearly how shocked he and Blacks are for what is happening in a country which is known as a land of democracy. Through the above passage, the author draws the reader back to the historical moment when Abraham Lincoln delivered his powerful speech against the dislocation of the Union:

A house divided against itself cannot stand (...). I believe this Government cannot endure permanently half-slave and half-free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved. I do not expect

the house to fall, but I do expect it will cease to be divided (Lincoln, quoted by Inges: 1987, 340).

One knows that in 1860 when Abraham Lincoln participated successfully in the presidential election in the United States, one of the most important things he did was the preservation of the Union, and he kept his opinion during the Civil War. Walker’s efforts to reconstruct the historical moments of this democratic nation are also obvious when she refers to the victory of the Republican in the presidential election with Abraham Lincoln:

Then came Election and the Republican won with Abraham Lincoln. South Carolina saw the handwriting on the wall and immediately seceded from the Union, but in Georgia they waited, chiefly on the advice of Howell Cobb, who was still in Washington. But on January 19 when the legislature met, Georgia seceded (J, p. 151).

This passage attests of Abraham Lincoln’s election as the President of the United States. It also shows the role played by this President in the American political matters. Walker emphasizes on this important moment of the United States by drawing the reader’s attention back to Lincoln’s inauguration which took place on March 4, 1861: “*On March 4, 1861, Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated the seventh President of the United States*” (J, p. 155). Then, the author reconstructs the beginning of the American Civil War with a direct reference to the Session of seven Southern States: “*Now during the month of February (1861) in Montgomery, Alabama, seven southern states formed the Confederate States of America: South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Louisiana, Florida, and Texas*” (J, p. 151). As it can be noticed, Walker’s text is nothing but a discourse on the American history, for all the states mentioned here belong to the United States. One knows that on February 1, 1861, those Southern States followed South Carolina out of the Union to form a Confederacy. This makes the reader understand that in writing *Jubilee*, Walker was deeply inspired by the American history. Consequently, one may talk of the encroachment between history and fiction in her work of fiction. This encroachment classifies her literary text into the category of historical novels. Being deeply influenced by this history, Walker continues to give the precise moment of the beginning of the Civil War in these terms:

The April sun was shining when... the Winston boys startled young Master Johnny and Kevin Mac Dougall with the news that the guns of Charleston, South Carolina, had fired on the Federal flat at Fort Sumter, and Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America had declared the seceded states of the Confederacy to be in a state of rebellion which must be put down if the Union were to be preserved (J, p. 164).

This passage attests of the author’s efforts to account for the Civil War, for it goes without saying that the Civil War began effectively on April 12, 1861 at Fort Sumter, South Carolina. Walker’s endeavors to portray the American fratricidal conflict are nowhere more evident than in the passage where she draws the reader back to the memory of President Jefferson Davis who is known as another great man

of the American history. This President is viewed as a radical opponent, because he participates in the war to defend the Confederate Troops as a way to “encourage” slavery:

Johnny knew that his departure from home did not mean that he was going straight to the battlefields. In Georgia the troops were still forming and organization was painfully slow. As a West Pointer he was needed to train the raw recruits who had volunteered in such vast numbers as patriotic answer to President Jefferson Davis’s first call for volunteers. But Johnny’s hopes were high that he would see action in this war between the states and when the slaves were finished singing ‘Dixie’ he got on his father’s favorite chestnut bay horse (J, p. 173).

It is important to recall that when Jefferson Davis became President of the Confederacy in 1861, one of his dreams was to have the South of the United States as an independent nation. That is why one sees how he is motivated to look for volunteers to fight against the Union Army, as a way not only to maintain Blacks under the authority of Whites, but also to prevent them from the civil rights in the United States. A close reading of Walker’s *Jubilee* also makes the reader come across the “Duttons”. In fact, these people are real opponents not only to Abraham Lincoln, but also to all abolitionists. They are willing to challenge those who fight for the abolition of slavery. John Morris Dutton, for example, does not want to lose his life and wealth because of the Northerners’ decisions. That is why after learning from Big Missy about Lincoln’s position for slavery, he becomes a real enemy of all abolitionists:

He had too much time to think. First, he reflected on the state of affairs of his beloved Georgia and the whole South-land. Big Missy read the news to him and he chafed with the way things were going. He hated the name of Lincoln. As for his slaves, when he thought of how Sam had died that night (...) he concluded that if the northern radicals only knew and understood his nigra slaves the way he died, they would not carry on such foolishness about containing slavery and not letting it spread to the territories (J, p. 157).

For John Morris Dutton, slavery is allowed by God and the Constitution. For this reason, he cannot see why white Americans want to ban it. This belief grows upon him every day. That is why even when he broke his leg in the war, he continues to struggle for the preservation of slavery which he considers as a heritage:

If it has come to war, then let it come. But they are nothing but cowards and they won’t dare fight us. They know we would whip them so fast it would be pathetic. The Bible is witness to the benefits of slavery. The church defends our system and the Constitution protects it. I don’t see where they have a leg to stand on, but I wish I were out of this bed (J, p. 157).

John Morris Dutton’s determination to “encourage” slavery is even shown through the way he perpetuates Vvry’s

enslavement. For him, Vvry is nothing but a girl deprived of freedom and entitled to work for him as long as he is alive: “Think I forgot what I told you? I promised to set you free when I die, didn’t I? Got it in my will, right here! And he patted the books and papers beside his bed (...). You ain’t free till I die, and ain’t dead yet” (J, p. 161). The utterance “you ain’t free till I die” shows that during slavery, white masters were conscious of black slaves’ lack of freedom in the United States, and that they were proud of seeing them in that wrongful position. Being so sure that the South will win the war, John Morris Dutton decides then to preserve his life as a Southern slave owner who thinks that the Union Army is likely to lose it: “They must take us for big fools if they thought we would stay in their Union and let them control Congress and dictate to us against our interests” (J, p. 157). Through this quotation, one sees how Margaret Walker renders John Morris Dutton’s hatred for Abraham Lincoln and the Union Forces. This hatred is shared by his wife, Salina who expresses her feelings of satisfaction for the beginning of the Civil War in these terms:

There would be no more compromises and there could be no more evasion. The South would soon show the world how well she could defend her rights, and there was no question but that she would prove the victor because Right was on her side. Don’t the Bible and the Constitution and the Church say “yes” to slavery? Who is the enemy of the South in the White House who dares to go against the Bible, the Constitution, and the Church? It is just the same as trying to fight God (J, p. 168).

In this passage, the author demonstrates Salina’s hatred for the Union Forces. Considering the Civil War as a family matter, she asks all her family members to participate in the war with no condition. A case in point is the moment when she decides Kevin, her son-in-law to follow Robert Lee in the fight without knowing his opinion:

Frankly, Kevin is not just uninterested in the war effort, and making no immediate plans to go, but he seems downright opposed to it. You know how he has always felt about war. He says that no matter who wins the battle nothing will be solved by the war... A lot of people will be killed for nothing and though many things may be changed at the end of the war, the fundamental issues will not change (J, p. 170).

This passage shows the strange reaction of Lillian’s husband, Kevin to Salina’s decision of seeing her son-in-law participating in the war to defend the South. By so acting, Kevin shows not only his wisdom in such a situation, but also his capacity to tell things as they will happen. For, one knows that the Civil War did not bring satisfaction to the expectations of all Blacks in the United States in spite of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Finally, the author depicts Kevin who is killed in the battlefield and John Morris Dutton who dies of a terrible agony: “She was not so stupid as not to realize that she was burying a large part of her life now that her married life had ended” (J, p. 163). The author’s use of words like

“tears”, “burying”, and “ended” tells the reader that John Morris Dutton is no longer alive.

Although it is almost impossible to mention all the points used by the novelists to describe the American Civil War, one must know that in *Jubilee* this war does not bring satisfaction to all expectations of Blacks. Racial segregation and racial discrimination remain a reality, because some Whites do not want to see Blacks around them. This racist matter is evident in Walker’s narrative through Randall Ware who manages to reach the North to offer his services to the Union Army but is so shocked to find out that black soldiers are not needed in the Union Army: “*The Union Army didn’t want nigger soldiers (J, p. 188)*”

Blacks’ expectation for freedom is mounting higher and higher during the fratricidal conflict. It is only after three years of fighting that they open the door to freedom: “*God has sent us a Moses (J, p. 229)*”. This sentence linked to the Bible stands for Abraham Lincoln who is considered as a “Moses” by Blacks for signing the “Emancipation Paper”. This means that Blacks who have long been in bondage are now allowed to live freely in a world ruled by Whites. The word “Jubilee” which is the title of Walker’s novel is another biblical reference to Blacks’ freedom in the United States. In fact, according to the Bible, “Jubilee” is viewed as a fortunate year coming back every fifty years and marked by the equalitarian redistribution of the land, and the liberation of slaves.

In Walker’s fiction, the word “Jubilee” implies that black slaves are waiting for the moment when every black slave will be free to enjoy the full fruition of the American democracy. The moment comes then with President Abraham Lincoln who provides all Blacks with freedom by signing the “Emancipation Paper”: “*As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy (Lincoln: 1858, 532)*”. This quotation stands for Abraham Lincoln’s opinion not only about slavery, but also about what democracy should be in the United States. Despite the fact that he is a white authority, he does his best to denounce the American democracy which, he thinks, is not applied to Blacks wrongly seen as submen by their white peers. Consequently, he invites all Americans to forget about their racial differences. He appears, in this respect, as a true democrat who wants democracy to be applied to all races in the United States. Knowing that they had been fighting for freedom for years, celebrating it is a way for them to show to the world how grateful they are to President Abraham Lincoln and God who have not abandoned them. They express their joyful feelings about their Emancipation Proclamation with the repetition of the word “free” used in the following song:

You is free, you is free!
 Minna you is free!
 You free as a jaybird setting on swinging limb!
 Jubilee, you is free!
 Jubilee, you is free! (*J, p. 234*).

The repetition of the word “free” in this song is linked to the importance of the event which has happened to slaves. In fact, the enjoyment which inhabits Blacks after their Emancipation Proclamation leads them to forget about all the

wrongs done to them by Whites in the American society. They now think that they are recognized as black Americans who have identity and the right to enjoy freedom. But Walker does not indicate that this freedom is the source of new problems for black slaves. In fact, despite their excitement for freedom, some of them have trouble to take care of themselves. In *Mama Flora’s Family*, for example, Flora’s grandparents think that slavery is better than freedom, because they are rejected and have lost their value to their white masters after being set free: “*In many ways her grandparents thought freedom was worse than slavery, because at least as slaves they had been of value to their massas, if only as livestock (Haley: 1999, 3)*”. This quotation shows that during the Emancipation Proclamation, some freed Blacks seemed to be worried, for they felt in danger of being abandoned by their masters on whom they used to rely.

IV. CONCLUSION

At the term of this exploration, we have discovered that the themes of the Abolitionist Movement, the Civil War, and the Emancipation Proclamation are grounded in the American history. They do not derive from the author’s personal imagination, but have been reconstructed by the latter to show the historical dimension of her work of fiction. The Abolitionist Movement appears as the starting point of Blacks’ fight for freedom denied to them for years by their white counterparts who consider them not as American citizens, but as properties or submen. It is indeed thanks to the Civil War that slavery is recognized illegal by the American Constitution. This recognition pushes President Abraham Lincoln to sign the “Emancipation Paper”, which gives Blacks the right to freedom in the United States. Lincoln’s implication in the abolition of slavery indicates that white people have also struggled for Blacks’ freedom in the United States. The result of this struggle is that Blacks are declared free. But one may still wonder whether they have the same rights and opportunities as Whites in this democratic nation. Actually, Blacks’ excitement about their freedom does not fit all their hopes. For, shortly after they are declared free, they face a mourning event that is the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln by a Southern white man called John Wilkes Booth, on April 14, 1865.³

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