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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL DISCOURSE AS PROTEST WRITING: A READING OF HARRIET JACOBS'S *INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF A SLAVE GIRL*

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Résumé

Cette étude explore les vécus d'une esclave dans *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* d'Harriet Jacobs. L'étude vise à analyser son discours autobiographique comme une protestation contre l'esclavage. Ainsi, la réflexion vise à démontrer que le récit personnel de l'auteure s'inscrit dans le cadre d'une écriture engagée. En effet, l'autobiographie de Harriet Jacobs est un espace narratif qui décrit le combat d'une femme noire opprimée contre l'asservissement. Au prix d'un énorme sacrifice, elle parvient à s'affranchir du joug de son oppresseur. En utilisant la méthode qualitative, notre analyse convoque la narratologie et la théorie postcoloniale.

Mot clés : autobiographie, écriture engagée, esclavage, liberté, moi.

Abstract

The article explores the autobiographical narrative in Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. The study seeks to analyze her autobiographical discourse as protest against slavery. In doing so, the reflection aims to show that the author's personal account is inscribed into the framework of a committed writing. In fact, Harriet Jacobs's autobiography is a narrative space which depicts an oppressed black woman's struggle against enslavement. Because of tremendous sacrifice, she succeeds in freeing herself from the yoke of her oppressor. By using the qualitative method, narratology and postcolonialism are the theoretical backbones of our analysis.

Keywords: autobiography, committed writing, freedom, self, slavery.

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Introduction

The autobiographical discourse as protest writing is a reflection about Harriet Jacobs's work. Considered as one of the worst tragedies in the history of humanity, slavery is

a topical issue in the twenty-first century. In fact, the abolition of bondage in the nineteenth century fails to put end to its practices. Today, we observe the resurgence of enslavement referred to as modern slavery. Many voices

start to denounce it within communities. To tackle the issue, the institution like Human Rights Watch initiates anti-slavery campaigns by resorting to legal actions. Yet, little attention is paid to the role of authorial voices against enslavement. In fact, the denunciation and struggle against slavery-related practices through literature is overlooked in our society. In this regard, slaves' narratives are autobiographical works that seem to contribute to the fight against bondage. Actually, born and grew up in bondage era, Harriet Jacobs -- also known as Linda Brent -- recounts her experience in the South of the United States of America. After having a normal childhood like all the girls of her age, enslavement poisons her life when she gets fifteen years old. Since then, Harriet Jacobs's sufferings begin. To escape ill-treatment and be free, she runs away. In her escape, she surmounts many obstacles and nearly perishes. Eventually, after self-sacrifice, she gets freedom. In fact, an autobiography is a personal-centered narrative, which means that it is a writing based on the self.

Yet, atypical narrative, Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* appears as a committed writing. As Cuddon (2013) argues: "A committed or engagé writer...is one who, through his work, is dedicated to stand against of certain beliefs...especially those who

are...ideological and in aid of social reform." (p.142).

In this view, the substance of protest writing is to combat a system, an ideology and advocate change in society. So, what are the textual characteristics of Harriet Jacobs's work? To what extent is her autobiography a committed writing? This paper under the prism of narratological and post-colonial theories intends to show that the scriptural textures of Harriet Jacobs's work have an extra-textual stake. In other terms, we will show to what extent her autobiography is inscribed in the framework of a committed writing. In this regard, the scope of the scriptural texture of the work, the raise of the audience's consciousness, the perspective of Harriet Jacobs's text, and the substance of her struggle to freedom are analyzed.

1. Harriet Jacobs's Subversive Writing

Set in the southern area of the United States in the nineteenth century, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* describes one of the worst forms of slavery. In fact, the autobiography of Harriet Jacobs, also known as Linda Brent, is the introspective and retrospective account which edifies humanity about atrocities committed by slave masters. In the same vein, Harriet Jacobs's discourse

on bondage is characterized by some specificities which set the debate about the scope of her artistic production. Strikingly, the use of the epistolary writing through her book is revealing. Epistolary forms refer to correspondences. They enable an individual to express his self and share personal information with others. So, the epistolary writing anchors the story into Jacobs's private life. Illustratively, she writes:

Dear Grandmother:

I have long wanted to write to you; but the disgraceful manner in which I left you and my children made me ashamed to do it. If you knew how much I have suffered since I ran away, you would pity and forgive me. I have purchased freedom at a dear rate. If any arrangement could be made for me to return to the south without being a slave, I would gladly come. If not, I beg of you to send my children to the north. I cannot live any longer without them. Let me know in time, and I will meet them in New York or Philadelphia, which ever place best suits my uncle's convenience. Write as soon as possible to your unhappy daughter,

LINDA. (Jacobs, 1861, p.144)

Ostensibly, this correspondence is the record of Harriet Jacobs's experiences. Through the first-person narrative "I" she marks her presence into the narrated events. In this vein, her message highlights that slavery impact family life. Arguably, this correspondence seems significant in Harriet Jacobs's life. It is the sole one she publishes in her work. As to the numerous letters, she just mentions them in the text without publishing their contents. Presumably, the published

correspondence summarizes the author's predicaments till her freedom. Far from being friendly letters, Harriet Jacobs's message contains complaint and melancholia.

The sentence which reads: "I have purchased freedom at a dear rate" is revealing. In fact, even though the author's grandmother is the addressee, by writing this in the book, the message is intended for the audience. To quote Genette (1980): "...[Jacobs], abdicating [her] function of choosing and directing the narrative, allows [her]self to be governed by 'reality', by the presence of what is there and what demands to be 'shown'" (p.165). Actually, it is that motive which drives the author to write by sticking to reality she experiences. Implicitly, the author's message connotes sacrifice through actions. In other words, the slaves must not expect liberty if they do not stand up for it. In the same vein, the correspondence also contains touching words intended for the readers who are supposed to be sensitive to slavery in the American society. Yet, correspondences disrupt the flow of the story line.

In fact, the epistolary writings that pervade the work challenge the conventional literary archetype. In other words, the use of correspondence confers a non-prosaic style which pervades the work. That technique used by the author plunges the text into a fragmentary style typical to postmodern way of writing. About fragmentary writing,

Hoppenot (2002) puts: “It is not the commitment as such which leads [the autobiographer] towards the fragmentary style, but the mode of expression of that commitment.... Now, that means that one must write differently; there has been a rupture in History which implies a radical change” (2-3)¹. In like manner, Harriet Jacobs’s writing technique shows a rupture with the mainstream society’s way. Her writing strategy is in the straight line with an implicit claim aiming to initiate profound change in the American society regarding masters and enslaved people’s relationships.

Presumably, Harriet Jacobs’s autobiographical discourse embodies a manifesto which develops a technique incarnating a revolutionary writing style. Living as a “subhuman” in the South of the United States of America, she relates her life experiences in an atypical style. Thus, the non-compliance with mainstream culture’s writing canons evidences the author’s rebellious attitude against dominant culture norms. Ostensibly, to stand up against oppressive conditions and debasing treatment, she adopts a subversive writing. Arguably, by using that symbolic style, Harriet Jacobs’s seeks to redefine the connection between the oppressors and the oppressed. That technique

is also the expression of a form of identity in this respect. To cite Barthes (1967): “[The autobiographical narrative] becomes the receptacle of existence in all its density and no longer of its meaning alone” (p.32). By breaking the conventional rules of prosody, Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* sets in motion two concepts that polarize the society during and after the end of bondage era —“Us” and the “Others”. Indeed, the author’s consciousness of inhumane treatment inflicted to slaves remains the catalyst that informs her writing:

"Where laughter is not mirth; nor thought the mind;
Nor words a language; nor e'en men mankind.
Where cries reply to curses, shrieks to blows,
And each is tortured in his separate hell."! (Jacobs, 1861, p. 41)

The verses stranded in inverted commas are detached and set off in the narrative. Presumably, that is expressive of seclusion slaves endure. “Torture in his separate hell” in the last verse of the stanza is a substantial evidence to the conditions of slaves in the South of America. In the light of this instance, one notes that Jacobs’s text embeds distinct materials specific to some literary genres. The use of poems in a prose narrative connotes the breaking with the established rules. As Lejeune (1989)

¹My translation of: « Ce n’est pas l’engagement en tant que tel qui conduit [l’autobiographe] vers le fragmentaire mais le mode d’expression de cet engagement.... Maintenant cela signifie que l’on doit

écrire autrement ; il y a eu une rupture d’Histoire qui implique un changement radical... (Hoppenot-pp. 2-3) ».

underscores: “Autobiography is a retrospective prose story...” (p.52). So, by adopting that way of writing, the autobiographer adopts a posture which aims to denounce enslavement as social injustice. Thus, the external texture of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* connotes a sentiment of revolt against the established social norms.

Strikingly, the poetic coloring in the text is also characterized by what one can term a fragmentary aesthetic of the narrative. Not only is fragmentary aesthetic remarkably identifiable by the mixture of prose narrative and poems, but it is also identifiable by capitalization. In fact, through the text, one notes the use of capitalized phrases which challenges the grammar rule. AFTER MY LOVER WENT away (p. 65), and AFTER THE ALARM CAUSED by Nat Turner's insurrection (p.76), to cite but a few, are fragmented styles which pervade the book. Not only are Capital letters more visible than lower case letters in the work, but they also seem to dominate them. This caricature implies inequalities exacerbated by slave masters' authorities over enslaved people. In this regard, Hill (2012), asserts: “The fragment interrupts continuity, it breaks unity apart, it contests authority, and it breaches the norms” (p. 2). In light of Hill's reflection, one can assume that by using fragmentary style, Harriet Jacobs tries to contest authority and breach the systemic enslavement. So, it can be

construed that Harriet Jacobs's subversive scriptural techniques express a vision aiming to breach the norms.

The most obvious distinguishing mark is that her work is an extremely mixed production. The atypical internal and external textures of Jacobs's work offer another version of slaves' narratives. In this respect, Barthes (1967) avers: “It is not granted to the writer to choose his mode of writing from a kind of non-temporal store literary forms. It is under the pressure of History and Tradition that the possible modes of writing for a given writer are established” (p.16). Indubitably, Harriet Jacobs's scriptural strategies equate with an unfathomable anti-slavery movement through her work.

Consciousness-Raising through Slaves' Experiences

Memories of bondage are real testimonies that describe the wrongdoings of a social practice against human-beings. Because it is the embodiment of lawlessness, slavery deprives people of minimum right of existence. Worse, slavery does not make any difference between age groups. Both adults and adolescents are affected by it. Actually, known as chattel slavery in the South of the United States, bondage proves to be dehumanizing. That is the reason why voices raise up through literature to condemn enslavement. In this vein, the emergence of the abolitionists' movement in the nineteenth

Century marks the polarization of the American society. Whereas the North advocates the end of bondage, the South remains adamant. Aspiring to freedom, a lots of slaves unveil their debasing social status. In this perspective, not only does Harriet Jacobs crystallize slaves' experiences, but she also calls on the ban on bondage. So, her autobiography stands as a manifesto against slavery. That is all the more evident since her narrative goes beyond her sole life experiences. In other words, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* is the receptacle of slaves' living conditions. In fact, Jacobs depicts how she is born slave according to slavery rules. Very young, her life turns upside down because of the social status she is imposed on. As evidence, she relates: "After a brief period of suspense, the will of my mistress was read, and we learned that she had bequeathed me to her sister's daughter....So vanished [my] hopes.... I was her slave..." (p.10). Like Jacobs, descents of slaves are treated as belongings. Considered as part of their legacy, enslaved people are automatically inherited by their late master's offspring or family members. Grew up in this perpetual vicious circle, the oppressed children have no dignity and cannot expect a brighter future. In an edifying passage, Jacobs puts it: "...in Dr. Flint's family, I was accustomed to share some indulgences with the children of my mistress.... But I now entered on my fifteenth year-a sad epoch in the life of a slave girl"

(p.30). After mentioning the foregoing lines, Jacobs' story takes on the appearance of a trial. She seems to take the slavery issue in front of a criminal court by writing:

I cannot tell how much I suffered in the presence of these wrongs, nor how I am still pained by the retrospect.... If I went out for a breath of fresh air, after a day of unwearied toil, [my master's] footsteps dogged me. If I knelt by my mother's grave, his dark shadow fell on me even there. The light heart which nature had given me became heavy with sad forebodings.... Reader, it is not to awaken sympathy for myself that I am telling you truthfully what I suffered in slavery. I do it to kindle a flame of compassion in your hearts for my sisters who are still in bondage, suffering as I once suffered. (Jacobs, 1861, pp. 31-32)

Significantly, the above-mentioned quote highlights the motivation which drives Jacobs to share her experiences with the audience. So, one notes that her autobiography is inscribed in a double-role perspective. Not only does it demonstrate the degree of animosity of bondage, but it also seeks to ban it. That is all the more evident since the author's plea concerns all those who still suffer debasing treatment. In this regard, proceeding in the same dynamics, the author says: "Reader, I draw no imaginary pictures of southern homes. I am telling you the plain truth. Yet when victims make their escape from this wild beast of Slavery, northerners consent to act the part of bloodhounds, and hunt the poor fugitive back into his den..."

(p. 39). The foregoing extract confers to Jacobs's narrative an extra-personal dimension. Since a lots of enslaved people do not have the opportunity to write about their experiences, she plays the role of their spokesperson. In this respect, the story is recounted in a first-person narrative point of view. Jacobs also makes a superimposition of her identity in the narrative. To cite De Man (1987): "[Harriet Jacobs] is the author of the text and the author in the text" (p.72). She identifies with both the author, narrator, and protagonist.

Moreover, many slaves' spoken testimonies suffer from lack of credibility. Davis and Gates Jr. (1985) declare: "Yet while the published slave narratives were increasingly used, the unpublished testimony of slaves was scarcely touched" (p. 49). By taking the foregoing statement for granted, one can assume that Jacobs's story goes beyond her own person's life. The narration of other slaves' sufferings in her work is illustrative.

3. Socio-Political Stake of Jacobs's Autobiography

According to Lejeune (1989): "Autobiography [depicts] a real person's...own existence, in which he or she gives emphasis to his individual life, and to the history of his personality in particular" (p.52). In other words, the autobiographical narrative is a self-centered discourse. Yet, not

only does *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* describe Jacobs's life experience, but it also depicts that of the oppressed people. In this respect, the "self" and the "others" intersect in the work. That textual reality confers to Jacobs's narrative a pluralistic dimension.

In fact, the para-title *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* connotes collective pain under bondage. Instead of reading *Incidents in the Life of the Slave Girl*, one notes the use of the indefinite article (a). By writing so, the story represents voiceless oppressed people and inscribes into a collective vision. The writing takes into account the concerns of those who suffer in silence. Thus, by incorporating the collective experiences into her work, Jacobs makes inclusive her struggle. In this perspective, she extends the borders of the anti-slavery movement. That also corroborates the commitment of the author to narrate the oppressed people's every day's predicaments by stressing female's conditions. In this edifying excerpt, she relates: "Southern women often marry a man knowing that he is the father of many little slaves. They do not trouble themselves about it. They regard such children as property, as marketable as the pigs on the plantation..." (p. 39). In order to push for the uprooting of the evil, Jacobs gives more credit to her narrative by renewing her pledge to the audience. In line with this, Davis and Gates Jr. (1985) assert: "...the views of the slaves were considered at

least as important to an understanding of slavery as the views of the slave-owners” (p.49). That is why the author asks her audience to believe what she narrates. In this vein, she underlines: “....Surely, if you credited one half the truths that are told you concerning the helpless millions suffering in this cruel bondage, you at the north would not help to tighten the yoke...” (p. 31). Jacobs’s message aims to mobilize people in the North to help those in the South in their struggle. In this respect, she mentions testimonies regarding animosity and lack of compassion of slave masters towards female slaves. That is corroborated as follows:

....I once saw a young slave girl dying soon after the birth of a child nearly white. In her agony she cried out, “O Lord, come and take me!” Her mistress stood by, and mocked at her like an incarnate fiend....She exclaimed, “I am glad of it. You deserve it all, and more too.”....The poor mother turned away, sobbing. Her dying daughter called her, feebly, and she bent over her, I heard her say, “Don’t grieve so, mother; God knows all about; and He will have mercy upon me.” (Jacobs, 1861, p. 16)

As an omniscient narrator, Harriet Jacobs gives detailed information concerning her enslaved peers. The foregoing excerpt shows that even slave mistresses inflict torture to children. In fact, slave descents also face the unescapable fate of bondage. As evidence, Jacobs remembers: “On one of these sale days, I saw a mother lead seven children to the auction-block. She knew that some of them

would be taken from her; but they took all. The children were sold to a slave-trader, and their mother was bought by a man in her own town” (p. 18). Like goods, a lot of children are sold and taken away from their father and mother. Thus, without any assistance, parents are terribly affected by the painful separation with their beloved ones. This is evidenced as follows:

Could you have seen that mother clinging to her child, when they fastened the irons upon his wrists; could you have heard her heart-rending groans, and seen her bloodshot eyes wander wildly from face to face, vainly pleading for mercy; could you have witnessed that scene as I saw it, you would exclaim, slavery is damnable!” (Jacobs, 1861, p. 26).

As indicated in the above-mentioned extract, bondage does not make any distinction between age groups. Besides, adult slaves, children are potential chattels slave masters can sell. To escape tortures, some enslaved people commit suicide. In her testimony, Jacobs writes:

...I saw a woman rush wildly by, pursued by two men. She was a slave, the wet nurse of her mistress’s children. For some trifling offence her mistress ordered her to be stripped and whipped. To escape the degradation and torture, she rushed to the river, jumped in, and ended her wrongs in death. Senator Brown of Mississippi could not be ignorant of many such facts as these, for they are of frequent occurrence in every Southern State. (1861, p. 136)

The extract shows how the practice of slavery claims many lives in the Southern area

of the United States everyday. The local authority condones all wrongdoings against the oppressed. By naming Senator Brown of Mississippi, Jacobs's discourse is intended to the legislators. Significantly, that calls on lawmakers to pass anti-slavery allowing the oppressed people to have human dignity. The lack of legislation against chattel bondage urges many slaves to run away.

4. The Path to Freedom

Freedom is one of the fundamental rights any individual must get. It is necessary to human-beings' fulfillment and is essential to its existence. That is the reason why many subjugated people are ready to sacrifice their lives to achieve freedom. This existential fight marks the beginning of a rebellious attitude among slaves. In this regard, waves of protests start in the South of the United States of America. The struggle causes lots of collateral damage among the oppressed people. For instance, in the Caribbean, slave masters suppress slaves' revolts using all forms of atrocities. Fearing their masters' retaliations, fugitives sacrifice their lives like in *Incidents in the Life of a slave Girl*. In fact, Harriet Jacobs's story retraces the long and tedious path to liberty. As a runaway, she shows how slaves are treated. By narrating her experience, she reveals hardships a slave endures in order to be a free person. She writes:

I was twenty-one years in that cage of obscene birds. I can testify, from my own experience and observation, that slavery is a curse to Whites as well as to the Blacks. It makes the white fathers cruel and sensual; the sons violent and licentious; it contaminates the daughters, and makes the wives wretched. And as for the colored race, it needs an abler pen than mine to describe the extremity of their sufferings, the depth of their degradation. (Jacobs, 1861, p. 58)

The above passage illustrates how the yoke of servitude undermines human values. To surmount this social injustice, the oppressed people need to rise up because: "Some believe that the abolitionists have already made them free, and that it is established by law, but that their masters prevent the law from going into effect" (p. 50). Obviously, by ignorance some believe that bondage era is in limbo. Therefore, Jacobs wants to raise her peers' awareness about the ongoing bondage. Despite the fact that actions are taken to combat oppression, the subjugated people still suffer. In a corroborative extract, she underlines:

One woman begged me to get a newspaper and read it over. She said her husband told her that the black people had sent word to the queen of 'Merica that they were all slaves; that she didn't believe it, and went to Washington city to see the president about it...That poor, ignorant woman thought that America was governed by a Queen, to whom the President was subordinate... (Jacobs, 1861, p. 50)

Through this excerpt, Jacobs dismisses the propaganda about the end of slavery in the South. Undoubtedly, some slave masters send misinformation to the abolitionists about the conditions of the oppressed. They often misinterpret scriptures to advocate and justify bondage. Actually, the oppressors use the verses from the Bible to impose their will on the oppressed. In this edifying lines, Jacobs puts it:

The reverend gentleman knelt in prayer...His text was, ‘Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ....You are rebellious sinners. Your hearts are filled with all manner evil....God is angry with you, and will surely punish you, if you don’t forsake your wicked ways....God sees you. (1861, pp. 76-77)

As indicated in the passage, the weight of religion and faith prevents the oppressed people from freeing themselves. In this tensed social context, slave masters justify their practices by fallacious interpretations of the Bible. Implicitly, Jacobs castigates the negative impact of Christianity on her peers. Therefore, she urges the oppressed to face adversities no matter what happens. This is evidenced by the difficulties she encounters during her escape as follows: “...we were covered with hundreds of mosquitos. In an hour’s time they had so poisoned my flesh that I was pitiful sight to behold. As the light increased, I saw snake after snake crawling round us” (p. 126). Assuredly, through that

story, Jacobs intends to motivate the enslaved not to give up their struggle despite obstacles. By rendering public these testimonies, she criticizes an oppressive system. Evidently, affected by the weight of bondage like Jacobs, a lot of oppressed people try to flee the South. In this vein, during their escape, they are exposed to all sorts of dangers and run the risk to die. Jacobs’s courage to confront with the hostile environment to her survival epitomizes self-sacrifice. As illustration, she writes:

I HARDLY EXPECT THAT the reader will credit me, when I affirm that I lived in that little dismal hole, almost deprived of light and air, and with no space to move my limbs, for nearly seven years. But it is a fact; and to me a sad one, even now; for my body still suffers from the effects of that long imprisonment, to say nothing of my soul. Members of my family, now living in New York and Boston, can testify to the truth of what I say. (Jacobs, 1861, p. 164)

Spatial indications such as New York and Boston are extra-textual verifiable places which confer to the story a certain degree of veracity of recounted facts. Jacobs’s strategy produces on the reader what Barthes (1989) coins: “The reality effect” (p.148). In fact, she upholds that her story is not fabricated. The last sentence of the extract above shows that the narrated events are verifiable and real. Besides, in her search for freedom, Jacobs flees the South to take refuge into so-called Free States in the United States. Unfortunately, she is disenchanted because she uncovers that slaves are also confronted

with racism. In this edifying extract, she reveals:

They don't allow colored people to go in the first-class cars." This was the first chill to my enthusiasm about the Free States. Colored people were allowed to ride in a filthy box, behind white people, at the south, but they were not required to pay for the privilege. It made me sad to find how the north aped the customs of slavery. (Jacobs, 1861, p.183)

As the above indicates, like all the subjugated people, Jacobs is stranded between two ideologies. Not only is she dehumanized by the slavery ideology, but she is also discriminated by the racist ideology. Actually, Jacobs's story sheds light on difficulties Black people face both in the South and in the North:

What a disgrace to a city calling itself free, that inhabitants, guiltless of offence, and seeking to perform their duties conscientiously, should be condemned to live in such incessant fear, and have nowhere to turn for protection!....Every colored person, and every friend of their persecuted race, kept their eyes wide open. (Jacobs, 1861, pp. 213-214)

Visibly, upset by discriminatory practices in Free States which are supposed to advocate freedom, Jacobs's hope to live there as a free citizen turns into a nightmare. In addition, liberty is like a commodity a slave has to purchase. Despite the fact that she can buy her freedom, Jacobs thinks it is unfair. Arguably, she protests against that practice because many slaves cannot afford it. In this corroborative excerpt, Jacobs opines: "I had objected to having my freedom bought..."

(p.218). The foregoing quote testifies that Jacobs has no revenue enabling her to buy her liberty. She even upholds: "... yet I must confess that when it was done I felt as a heavy load had been lifted from my weary shoulders. When I rode home in the cars I was no longer afraid to unveil my face and look at people as they passed" (p.218). Slavery is a socio-economic weight on the oppressed people. Thus, consciously or unconsciously, Jacobs's autobiographical discourse contributes to the anti-slavery struggle.

Conclusion

The main concern of this analysis is to show that Harriet Jacobs's autobiographical work is a protest writing. The study articulates around the semantic significance of the author's writing techniques, the awareness-raising discourse, the socio-political dimension of the narrative and Jacobs's search for freedom. In this connection, the reflection reveals that Harriet Jacobs's uses her authorial voice to make the diatribe of slavery in the United States of America. Indubitably, through her autobiographical book, Jacobs succeeds in conveying an anti-slavery message. In a narrative style challenging the pre-established norms regarding prose writing, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* pleads the cause of the oppressed people. Thus, the atypical internal and external textures of the work are symbolic. Implicitly, Jacobs evinces her protest against

enslavement by rejecting the established norms regarding prose writing. By writing so, she contributes to the liberation of the enslaved. Assuredly, through moving testimonies, Jacobs does not fail to raise both the national and international audience's awareness. As Kaye (2005) upholds: “[Her] personal testimonies...brought the [practices of] slavery into the public consciousness as never before” (p.7). This preceding passage confirms the extra-textual scope of Jacobs's text. Her struggle against slavery goes through awareness-raising. Evidently, the substance of her discourse is to make slavery an issue of public concern.

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