

# Introduction

Giuliana Fazzion  
James Madison University



## Introduction

## Introducción

### Giuliana Fazzion

Department of Foreign Languages, Literatures, and Cultures  
James Madison University  
fazziogx@jmu.edu

Recibido: 11 de marzo de 2014

Aceptado: 17 de julio de 2014

### Resumen

Presentación del monográfico: Emancipación: La liberación del yo en la literatura, las artes, la religión y el deporte.

**Palabras clave:** Emancipación; Liberación del yo; Literatura; Artes; Religión; Deporte.

### Abstract

Presentation of the monograph: Emancipation: Freeing the self in literature, arts, religion and sport.

**Keywords:** Emancipation; Freeing the self; Literature; Arts; Religion; Sport.

**Para citar este artículo:** Fazzion, Giuliana (2014). Introduction. *Revista de Humanidades*, n. 23, p. 15-22, ISSN 1130-5029.

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation as the United States approached its third year of bloody civil war. The proclamation declared, “that all persons held as slaves” within the rebellious states “are, and henceforward shall be free.” Although the Emancipation Proclamation did not end slavery in the nation, it captured the hearts and imagination of millions of Americans and fundamentally transformed the character of the war. The year 2013 marked the sesquicentennial of the Emancipation Proclamation and the fiftieth anniversary of the March on Washington, the largest demonstration of the 1960s fight for civil rights. In every epoch we study, from early civilizations to the twenty-first century, we find struggles for emancipation. We encounter enslaved populations seeking their freedom, colonized people seeking their independence,

and victims of tyranny seeking their liberties. Not all succeed, but their struggles and fights reveal the desire of individuals, groups, and nations to free themselves from oppression.

Emancipation generally means freeing or liberating someone from the control of another. It is the act of setting free from the power of another, from slavery, subjection, or controlling influence. It can be applied in several contexts: the emancipation of slaves, the emancipation of minors, the emancipation of a person from prejudices, and the emancipation of the mind from superstition, among others. Indeed, there are many synonyms for the word “emancipation,” including setting free, releasing, saving, delivering and rescuing. The Latin root of “emancipation” is manus, or hand. Mancipium meant “in hand,” or “possessed.” Ex mancipium meant to unhand, or relinquish possession. Such unhanding can manifest in many different forms.

The articles contained in this volume all present issues related to emancipation, but each author takes a unique perspective. The authors first presented their work at a conference entitled *Emancipation: the Struggle for Freedom and Equality*, organized by the Department of Foreign Languages, Literatures and Cultures at James Madison University in March 2013. The articles explore several aspects of emancipation which took place and still are taking place in many parts of the world, as manifested in literature, in the arts, in the film industry, in sports, and many other fields and under various social conditions.

Many ancient civilizations, such as those of Egypt, Israel, Greece and Rome, practiced slavery. The Ancient Greek civilization practiced slavery in different degrees in their different city-states. Slave labor was vital to the development of the Roman civilization. Around 1 AD, fully one third of the Roman residents were enslaved, yet it was possible for a Roman slave to become a freed man. In first-century Rome, manumission was fairly common. Freeing a slave could occur in various ways. A slave owner could manumit a slave in his last will and testament, or slaves could emancipate themselves from their bonds through duty and service. This was common practice during several epochs and in several places up to the pre-Civil War United States.

In Europe, remnants of slavery left over from the Roman Empire died out in the Middle Ages. In modern times, the best-known example of slavery in history involves the use of slaves from southern and western Africa to work on export-oriented plantations in the Caribbean, America and Brazil. In Brazil and Cuba slavery died out when it was no longer economically viable, though some slaves, especially household workers, were luxury goods and were kept even if uneconomical. This sort of slavery persisted among wealthy families in the northern United States until the 1800s. During the Civil War, in 1862, President Lincoln signed an executive proclamation ending slavery in the Confederate (southern) States effective January 1, 1863. Though the Emancipation Proclamation was not immediately effective

in Union (northern) States with slaves, it is widely viewed as the legal end of the institution of slavery in the United States.

In Saudi Arabia slavery was officially abolished in 1962. Former slaves of the Royal Family remained in senior government positions. These people were highly respected and quite influential both before and after emancipation. In the essay *The Slave-Girls Who Enslaved the Free-Born: Slave-Girls and Their Masters in Islamic Literature*, Aram A. Shahin gives an introduction to the history of slavery in the Islamic world. The Qur'an prescribes the manumission of slaves in certain cases, for example, as an act of charity. In the Islamic world, slavery was finally prohibited in the nineteenth century. In the early period there were two types of slaves: those used in military service and those called domestic slaves. The slaves in military service became powerful, and some became masters of large Islamic regions. Among the domestic slaves, slave-girls had a prominent place. These slave-girls often were quite talented, educated and intelligent. References are found in Islamic literature in which there are stories of masters that fall in love with the slave-girls and for their love are willing to risk anything—honor, wealth, and even their lives. Thus Shahin's analysis shows that the relationship of enslavement is inverted at times in these stories. The slave-girl is master and the master is enslaved by love.

The struggle for emancipation has involved entire enslaved populations that have risen to fight occupying powers. This is the case of the historical figure Aben Humeya in José Ignacio Barrio Olano's essay *Literary Approaches to Aben Humeya*. Aben Humeya was the leader of a thwarted Moorish revolt against Philip II of Spain in the sixteenth Century. He inspired playwrights and novelists, for in their eyes Humeya embraced both political symbolism and aesthetic pageantry. For the Romantic liberals of the nineteenth century he served as an antecedent of the struggle against a repressive government, both in the peninsula and in the colonies.

Thomas L. King's article *Performing Jim Crow: Blackface Performance and Emancipation*, explores the history of blackface performance and how it has enacted American contradictions and anxieties concerning race, class, emancipation and the concepts of blackness and whiteness. Jim Crow was the name of a minstrel routine (actually *Jump Jim Crow*) performed beginning in 1828 by its author, Thomas Dartmouth ("Daddy") Rice, and by many imitators. The term came to be a derogatory epithet for blacks and designation for their segregated life. Under the system created by the Jim Crow Laws—laws that enforced racial segregation in the South after the civil war and before the civil rights movement (roughly 1870-1965)—African Americans were given second class status by laws that directly and indirectly stripped blacks of their rights.

African-American professional sportsmen have long confronted challenges in negotiating the biases of a social institution and its member organizations dominated by white owners, general managers, and coaches. James R. Zimmerman's *It's Not*

*About American Football: Tony Dungy's Journey of Self-Emancipation from Rejected Black Quarterback to Celebrated African American Coach*, uses the life and career of former Indianapolis Colts Coach Tony Dungy to illuminate the professional struggles of African-Americans to gain access to the power structure of football and society at large. The inspiring source of this essay is Dungy's surprise bestselling 2007 memoir, *Quiet Strength*. In it, Dungy indirectly addresses issues of civil rights and social justice through the medium of American professional football, with dozens of examples from his own life to show the details of sometimes very subtle discrimination.

James W. Ward's *The Moral Arc of the Universe: Salvation as Emancipation* deals with the modern understandings of the notion of salvation that spiritualize and personalize salvation. Salvation makes it possible for an individual soul to spend eternity in the heavenly place. The Jewish and Christian notions of salvation are richer and include an understanding of salvation as emancipation from "powers and principalities." To be saved was to be adopted by the rightful ruler of the universe and liberated from servitude to all other false rulers. To make sense of three of the major emancipation movements in the history of the United States, and perhaps in the world, the American Revolution, the abolitionist movement, and the Civil Rights movement, Ward analyzes and helps us understand the ways in which Jewish and Christian views shaped these emancipation movements. He outlines the influence of both the Exodus event,—liberation from the false rule of enslavement to the Pharaoh—, and the Christian understandings of the kingdom of God in which the falseness of social, economic, and religious inequalities of this world would no longer matter. The uncontested force of the story of Moses, and the Exodus, had an impact on Martin Luther King, Jr. This influence is clearly reflected in his mountaintop sermon, 1968, given the night before his assassination.

Emancipation can also occur through revolution. An example can be seen in the Haitian Revolution of 1804, when rebel slave armies defeated Napoleon's colonial forces and established independence through direct revolution. These independence struggles were termed emancipation struggles, or better "self-determination" struggles. The national emancipation struggle that involved the largest population in the twentieth century was India's struggle against British colonial occupation.

In the essay *The Role of Bullfighting and FC Barcelona in the Emancipation of Catalonia from Spain*, John Teac examines the Catalan independence or separatist movement and the role that bullfighting and FC Barcelona have played in it. The Catalan movement is a political movement that derives from the Catalan nationalism, which supports the independence of Catalonia from Spain and has roots in a nineteenth century thesis that Catalonia is a nation with its own history, language and traditions. Yet the movement for independence or emancipation is also fueled by two other very visible and culturally significant institutions: bullfighting

and soccer. Recently a parliamentary decision banned bullfighting in Catalonia. This decision can be interpreted as a regional response to detach Catalonia from “Spanish” culture. The ban hasn’t entered completely into effect and it doesn’t include a ban on the tradition of bull running. It is normal that rivalry exists between the two strongest teams in a national league. Yet from the start of national competitions the soccer clubs (teams), Real Madrid and FC Barcelona, were seen as representatives of two rival regions in Spain—Catalonia and Castile—as well as of the two towns. It is a rivalry that reflects what many regard as the political and cultural tensions felt between Catalans and Castilians.

The term “emancipation” can also refer to a gradual process of social change in which a subjected group gains more social power over time. The case of women in most modern nations is one in which there have been key watersheds, such as earning the right to vote, but also a bit-by-bit struggle against unequal treatment in various other arenas of social life. American women can vote, for example, but still struggle against economic inequality and dependency, as well as against male social power in the culture. The ongoing process is emancipatory, not having culminated as of yet in full emancipation. Muslim women in France struggle for emancipation and their social, economic and religious difficulties are expressed and examined, among others, through contemporary French and Francophone literature and film. The essay by Anna Kobylski introduces us to the French-Algerian filmmaker Yamina Benguigui who in *Inch’ Allah Dimanche* and *Mémoires d’immigrés: l’héritage maghrébin* illustrates these difficulties that have contributed to an identity crisis that is preventing Muslim women from achieving emancipation in France. Kobylski also analyzes two books, by Leila Sebbar and Nancy Huston, that examine the feelings of exile that so many Muslim women experience in France. Her analysis considers Western and Islamic feminist perspectives as well as the French position on secularism and its role in the French public sphere.

Another example of emancipation occurs at the end of Woody Allen’s *Midnight in Paris*, analyzed by Peter Eubanks. Paris has as many identities as there are observers, and it is a perception made unreliable by the need of the escapist to withdraw from the present in order to find refuge in an utopian past, the “Golden-Age thinking” as it is called in the film. This brings the protagonist to inhabit two worlds simultaneously. It is only when the protagonist finally discovers nostalgia within nostalgia, writes Eubanks, that he recognizes the flawed thinking behind his mythologized perception of the past. In this the protagonist reflects everyman’s realization that, after all, the past is the expression of our present needs.

In my view, the same movement towards emancipation can be seen in the music of Early Modernism, 1870’s, in which new methods of composition are emerging, one of the first being Claude Debussy. That method is closely followed by the “emancipation of the dissonance,” a concept or goal put forth by composer Arnold

Schoenberg and others. The phrase first appears in Schoenberg's 1926 *Opinion or Insight?* It may be described as a justification of atonality. As the ear become acclimatized to a sonority within a particular context, the sonority will gradually become "emancipated" from that context and seek a new one. Composers such as Charles Ives, Duke Ellington and Lou Harrison, connected the emancipation of the dissonance with the emancipation of society and humanity. It is my wish that the readers of this volume will find in this collection of essays a variety of examples of emancipation they had not explored before and thus continue to reflect on the forms and aspects of "emancipation" which are part of everyone's life.