

Wu, Emily. Section D. “The Silent Cost of Freedom: Exploring Humanity and Oppression in *12 Years a Slave* through a Cinematic Analysis of Dehumanization, Resilience, and Gendered Violence in 19th Century America.”

Abstract

Steve McQueen’s *12 Years a Slave* portrays the oppression and the resilience of the black slaves in 19th-century, offering a critique of slavery’s brutality in terms of the systemic hierarchy, dehumanizing treatment, and sexual abuse of female slaves. The central research question guiding this study is: How does the movie show oppression based on race and gender, and how do the black characters such as Solomon Northup, the protagonist, and Patsey, the female slave, survive it? This analysis shows how McQueen’s *12 Years a Slave* depicts slavery through both psychological and physical oppression. Drawing on critical readings by Brown, DiTomaso, Hampshire, Longenberger, Simmons, Stevenson, and Wilderson, and on McKittrick’s theory of territorialization and Stauffer’s concept of survivalism, this paper examines how Steve McQueen’s film *12 Years a Slave* addresses the unsolved problems of racial discrimination in 19th century America. *12 Years a Slave* depicts the American South’s hierarchical social system and the cruelty of the human trafficking that took place, in terms of the dehumanizing behaviors of the white slave owners, the rare human resilience of the black slaves, and the sexual abuse of the female slaves.

Notes:

1. My RP belongs to the category of: ☒ Literary Studies or ☐ Social Studies
2. Related websites: (one or two URLs).

Brown, Kimberly Juanita. “At the Center of the Periphery: Gender, Landscape, and Architecture in *12 Years a Slave*.” *The Global South*, vol. 11, no. 1, Spring 2017, pp. 121-135. Indiana University Press. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2979/globalsouth.11.1.07>.

Longenberger, Bryce. “The Inability to Commit Suicide: An Analysis of Steve McQueen’s *12 Years a Slave*.” *A Critical Introduction to 12 Years a Slave*, edited by Kathryn Hampshire, Bryce Longenberger, Ramona Simmons, and Esther Wolfe, *Digital Literature Review*, vol. 2, Jan. 2015, pp. 31–35, doi:10.33043/DLR.2.0.15-35.