

University of Bristol

Department of Historical Studies

Best undergraduate dissertations of
2022

Lucy Stimpson

**History Unchained: An Analysis of the
Representation of Violence, Women
and Whiteness in Twenty-First Century
Enslavement Films**

The Department of Historical Studies at the University of Bristol is committed to the advancement of historical knowledge and understanding, and to research of the highest order. Our undergraduates are part of that endeavour.

Since 2009, the Department has published the best of the annual dissertations produced by our final year undergraduates in recognition of the excellent research work being undertaken by our students.

This was one of the best of this year's final year undergraduate dissertations.

Please note: this dissertation is published in the state it was submitted for examination. Thus the author has not been able to correct errors and/or departures from departmental guidelines for the presentation of dissertations (e.g. in the formatting of its footnotes and bibliography).

© The author, 2022

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means without the prior permission in writing of the author, or as expressly permitted by law.

All citations of this work must be properly acknowledged.

History Unchained: An Analysis of the Representation of Violence, Women and Whiteness in Twenty-First Century Enslavement Films

Student Number: 1930345

Word Count: 10000

Content

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| Introduction | 6 |
| Chapter 1..... | 16 |
| Chapter 2..... | 23 |
| Chapter 3..... | 31 |
| Conclusion..... | 38 |
| Bibliography | 40 |

Introduction

'You will strike her. You will strike her until her flesh is rent, and meat and blood flow in equal measure, or I will kill every n****r in my sight.'¹

This quote is a line recited by antagonist, Master Edwin Epps (Michael Fassbender), in Steve McQueen's award-winning film *12 Years a Slave* (2013), that is based on Solomon Northrup's slave narrative, published in 1853.² Epps recites this line to Northrup, whom he is holding at gunpoint, and instructing him to whip Patsey's (Lupita Nyong'o) back. Patsey, is Northrup's close friend and is also in a complex concubine relationship with Mr Epps. The torture she is receiving is punishment for leaving the Epps plantation to find a mere bar of soap to clean herself, soap that she was previously denied by Mrs Epps (Sarah Paulson), due to her jealousy and resentment of Patsey's forced sexual relationship with Mr Epps. The audience are then forced to watch each lash that Northrup must strike onto Patsey's bonded body, until she is inches from death [Fig. 1]. Through each whip, blood sprays and Patsey groans uncontrollably. She becomes increasingly breathless. Northrup ceases to look at the torture he is causing. For Northrup, the agony becomes too extreme he refuses to continue. Epps angrily takes over, expressing pleasure through each lash, until Patsey falls to the ground. Epps then throws the blood-soaked whip and leaves. The scene quickly changes to Patsey lying face down on a table. The camera solely concentrates on her brutalised back and details every single gash.

Whilst T. McCrisken has claimed that the medium of film can never truly present the horrors of slavery, this scene is arguably the closest epitomisation of the ineffable experiences that enslaved people suffered in their life of bondage.³ It also provides a clear example of the immense power and historicity that twenty-first century enslavement films can evoke despite the inescapable limits of the medium. *12 Years a Slave* is just one example, of the plethora of

¹ *12 Years a Slave*, dir. by Steve McQueen (Twentieth Century Fox, 2013).

² Northrup, Solomon; David Wilson: 'Twelve Years a Slave', (New York: Derby & Miller, 1853).

³ T. McCrisken, *American History and Contemporary Hollywood Film* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 68.

enslavement-based films that have been produced within the twenty-first century.⁴ As has been exemplified through Patsey's whipping scene, twenty-first century films show a greater desire for portraying the brutality and hardships of enslavement. This has ignited a departure from the highly controversial slavery representations in twentieth century slavery films—such as *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Gone with the Wind* (1939)⁵—that present romanticised, mythologised versions of the Antebellum South. Despite the influx and influential changes of twenty-first century enslavement films, inquiry into *why* these changes have occurred has remained largely neglected within historiographies of slavery memory. This neglect is especially problematic within the 'digital age' where film is now critically considered to be amongst the main source of people's perceptions and memories of the historic past.⁶ This means it is essential to investigate the conception of and response to slavery in a popular context. These explorations are crucial to gain a deeper understanding of the enslavement legacies that may persist in today's culture, whilst also reviewing how racial ideologies and ways to remember slavery, have shifted in the twenty-first century.



[Figure 1]

12 Years a Slave, dir. by Steve McQueen (Twentieth Century Fox, 2013).

⁴ Other films that are not used in this dissertation include: *Belle*, dir. by Amma Asante (Fox Searchlight, 2013); *Birth of a Nation*, dir. by Nate Parker (Fox Searchlight, 2016); *Antebellum*, dir. by Gerard Bush (Lionsgate, 2020).

⁵ *Birth of a Nation*, dir. by D. W. Griffith (Epoch Producing Co., 1915); *Gone with the Wind*, dir. by Victor Fleming (Loew's Inc. 1939).

⁶ Ross Wilson, 'Representation Equals Recognition?' in *1807 Commemorated* (2007), <<https://archives.history.ac.uk/1807commemorated/media/analysis/representation.html>> [accessed 3 February 2022], 1.

This dissertation seeks to amend these exclusions, by analysing the representations of transatlantic enslavement within three twenty-first century Hollywood films. Namely, Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* (2012), Steve McQueen's *12 Years a Slave* (2013) and *Harriet* (2019) directed by Kasi Lemmons. In particular, this research will assess *how* slavery is represented in twenty-first century films, whilst also aiming to answer *why* enslavement has been depicted in these ways. This analysis of slavery representations will be conducted through the case points of violence, women and whiteness, which are three themes that are heavily referenced throughout each of these films. This thesis will argue that representations of enslavement in twenty-first century slavery films are shaped by the cultural context in which the films were produced. However, it will also suggest representations are more complex than this. It will also argue that in some instances, the films continue to be shaped by nineteenth or twentieth century ideologies and representation of enslavement.

The three films used in this study are based in the Antebellum South approximately between the years 1840-1865. Each film centres around a protagonist who is born into or becomes a victim of the enslavement institution. *Django Unchained* is a fictionalised spaghetti western, based on the enslaved character Django. Django is bought by German dentist-turned-bounty-hunter, Dr. King Schultz (Christoph Waltz), who requires Django to complete his bounty-hunting assignments. The film follows their adventures, that begin with bounty hunting but later move to finding and rescuing Django's wife Broomhilda, who is enslaved in Candyland—the plantation of cruel plantation owner, Calvin Candie (Leonardo DiCaprio). After the death of Schultz and Candie, and multiple dire situations, the film concludes with Django and Broomhilda reaching emancipation. *12 Years a Slave* tells the account of Solomon Northrup, who was a free, literate and wealthy African American living in Saratoga Springs, New York. After being drugged and lured into slavery, Northrup is forced to face twelve years of brutality, labour and psychological trauma. Northrup eventually regained his freedom and was reunited with his family, through the assistance of Samuel Bass (Brad Pitt) who willingly sent Northrup's letter to the North. Lastly, *Harriet* tells the extraordinary tale of abolitionist, Harriet Tubman (Cynthia Erivo). It follows her escape from her Maryland plantation and her on foot travel to the free land of Philadelphia. *Harriet* exhibits Tubman's joining of the clandestine Underground Railroad network, that led her to make multiple dangerous missions

to the South. Not only does she return for her family, but also freed hundreds of enslaved people who lived along the Underground Railroad routes.

The twenty-first century cultural context these films emerged in, is one of a semi-post racial climate.⁷ Whilst major disparities and racial subjection remain deeply embedded into the societal structure of the United States, —this is clear through racial stratification and mass incarceration—the last two decades has been considered as a hugely significant and symbolic period with regard to racial change.⁸ Most notably, the 2008 election of Barack Obama to US presidency. A momentous event that symbolised the pinnacle of racial advancement within the long civil rights movement.⁹ The twenty-first century racial status is further illustrated through; the huge rise of Black artists and celebrities in popular culture that have empowered black voices; the achievements and support of decentralised grassroots movements such as Black Lives Matter since 2013; and the multiple effort to recognise black histories, especially histories of enslavement in public memory, that are clear in works such as the 1619 Project.¹⁰ Cultural changes that are also emerging alongside these films are developments in historiography. Whilst the field continues to remain underdeveloped, slavery-based studies have flourished in the last two decades. Particular attention has been paid to the enslaved women’s experience, and the dismantling of twentieth century historical accounts—such as the work of U. B. Phillips— that interpreted a warped and mythical narrative of the South.¹¹

Literature

This dissertation contributes to the developing historiographical field, first credited in the late 1960s, that utilises film as a source for historical inquiry.¹² John O’Connor suggested that with intricate analysis, any film can be used as ‘evidence of social and cultural history’, due to their

⁷ Ian Lopez, Post-Racial Racism: Racial Stratification and Mass Incarceration in the Age of Obama in *California Law Review* (Los Angeles: California Law Review, 2010).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Jaqueline Dowd Hall, ‘The Long Civil Rights Movement’ in *The Journal of American History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹⁰ Multiple Contributors, ‘Black History Milestones’, *History*, 2022 <<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/black-history-milestones>> [accessed 10 March 2022].

¹¹ U. B. Phillips, *Life and Labour in the Old South* (New York: Brown and Company, 2007).

¹² P. Smith, ‘Introduction’ in *The Historian and Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1.

ability to articulate the ‘values of filmmakers and the concerns [or attitudes] of society at the time.’ Similarly, P. Smith and Pierre Sorlin have applied these notions specifically onto factual history films, such as biopics.¹³ They claim that academics should not look at what the film physically records to understand historical periods. Instead, they state analysis must focus on what has been called ‘unwitting testimony’—unintentional information that can be derived from the film, that reflect the mental and social world of its makers and audience.¹⁴ Moreover, Marc Ferro is the leading contemporary exponent in the quest for understanding the ‘non-visible’ and ‘beneath the surface’ ideologies within fictional films.¹⁵ He highly praises the use of fictional historical films for research, believing deep analysis can provide a plethora of information regarding the period it was produced. Since this research, many film historians have started to explore representations of United States history through film, and what these mediums can tell us about the culture they emerged in¹⁶. Yet, this research has entirely ignored analysis of enslavement films, the burden in American history. This is especially ironic with slavery being the entirety of what American history was built on.

Moreover, this dissertation contributes towards histories of enslavement memory and its representation in the public sphere. Although it remains an underdeveloped field, the exploration of slavery memory and its public representations has recently drawn much attention from the academy. Pioneers in this field, Marcus Wood and J. R. Oldfield have examined representations of slavery visual culture and commemorative events in the African diasporas and Britain.¹⁷ Both scholars conclude that enslavement has predominantly been depicted through emancipation and abolitionism. In particular Oldfield has suggested Britain is a ‘culture of abolition’, that replaces the enslavement horror with celebrations of white heroes such as William Wilberforce.¹⁸ More recently, historians Stephen Small and Jessica Moody have explored representations of enslavement in both American Plantation Houses

¹³ P. Smith, 5; Pierre Sorlin, *The Film in History: Restaging the Past* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1980),

¹⁴ Arthur Marwick, *The Nature of History* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1989), 216-218.

¹⁵ Marc Ferro, ‘Film as an Agent, Product and Source of History’ in *Journal of Contemporary History* (London; SAGE, 1983), 357-364.

¹⁶ Robert Toplin, *History by Hollywood* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

¹⁷ Marcus Wood, *The Horrible Gift of Freedom: Atlantic Slavery and the Representation of Emancipation* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2010) 1-34; J. R. Oldfield, *Chords of Freedom* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007),

¹⁸ Oldfield, 15-20.

and British Country Houses.¹⁹ They suggests that these sites have largely obscured and trivialised their connections to enslavement. Yet, they draw upon some notable efforts that have been made in recent years to diversify public history narratives and expose their horrific past. Additionally, Derrick Brooms has conducted research on representation of enslavement in American museums, concluding their value for presenting enslaved culture, humanity and brutality.²⁰ Lastly, Madge Dresser has explored the memorialisation of enslavement in public statues and memorials, in the contexts of London.²¹ All these scholars rightly identify the importance of analysing the representation of slavery, their effects on memory and the influence cultural changes have had in these representations. However, they have failed to examine slavery representation within film, that has been amongst the most popular sources of information toward the public's understanding of the past.²²

Yet, there are some notable exceptions within historiographies of slavery representations, that have started to explore the medium of film. Natalie Zemon Davies has offered an analysis of late-twentieth century enslavement films.²³ However, her analysis centralises the historical 'authenticity' of the film's content and considers the potential of film to tell narratives in a meaningful way. Consequently, Davis fails to address wider questions surrounding the representation of enslavement in public memory and how these representations are shaped. Brenda E. Stevenson has developed the work of Davis, by broadening the period of coverage.²⁴ Stevenson explores multiple twentieth century enslavement films, from *Uncle Toms Cabin* (1903) to *Amistad* (1997).²⁵ She demonstrates the centrality of enslavement films to Hollywood, whilst also suggesting film can both solidify and challenge popular and scholarly images of history. Moreover, by analysing the changes of enslavement representations from early to late twentieth century, Stevenson demonstrates these films are intertwined with the

¹⁹ Jessica Moody; Stephen Small, 'Slavery and Public History in the Big House' in *Journal of Global Slavery* (BRILL, 2019), 1-2.

²⁰ Derrick Brooms, 'Lest We Forget: Exhibiting Slavery in American-American Museums in *Journal of African American Studies* (New York: Springer, 2011), 508-523.

²¹ Madge Dresser, 'Set in Stone?' in *History Workshop Journal* (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2007), 162-199.

²² Wilson, 1.

²³ Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Introduction' in *Slaves on Screen: Film and Historical Vision* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), 4-5.

²⁴ Brenda E. Stevenson, 'Filming Black Voices and Stories' in *Journal of the Civil War* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 514.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 489; 507.

cultural context in which they are produced.²⁶ Whilst Stevenson brings a well-needed analysis of twentieth century films, she fails to extend this research into a twenty-first century context. This dissertation seeks to fill this gap in the literature, by analysing the films *12 Years a Slave*, *Django Unchained* and *Harriet*. In particular, the analysis will answer the questions of *how* these films represent enslavement, but also *why* is enslavement depicted in these particular ways.

Despite the neglect of analysing these three twenty-first century enslavement representations, in recent years some influential anomalies have emerged. These include Robert J. Patterson's 2019 essay on Northrup's representation in *12 Years a Slave* and Douglas Woodhouse's masters thesis that provided a chapter on the *12 Years a Slave* protagonist representation and its connections to Barack Obama's presidency and #BlackLivesMatter.²⁷ Whilst this research acknowledges the importance of analysing twenty-first century films, they fail to analyse representations beyond the black male protagonist. This dissertation, whilst acknowledging the importance of film analysis in understanding contemporary slavery representation and remembrance in public memory, will provide a more nuanced and comprehensive approach by investigating representations beyond the male black protagonist. More specifically, this dissertation will provide three chapters that aim to analyse the twenty-first century filmic representations of violence, women and whiteness. Exploration of these themes have been chosen in response to their clear neglect in historiographies. Yet, they are crucial counterparts to acknowledge to understand the representations of the slavery institution holistically. Additionally, this dissertation will assess *Harriet* and *Django Unchained*, that have gauged huge attraction, yet have been completely overlooked in this field.

²⁶ Ibid, 488.

²⁷ Robert J. Patterson, '12 Years a What?' in *The Psychic Hold of Slavery* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2019), 17-20; Douglas Woodhouse, 'Cinematic Blackness in the Age of Obama and #BlackLivesMatter' (unpublished master's thesis, Harvard Extension School, 2018), 63-70.

Methodology

Although the three films central to this study, were chosen due to their lack of consideration within historiography, their careful selection was also based on their diversity. This ensured that a rich and varied exploration could be conducted on twenty-first century enslavement films. Most notably, these films differ through their genres and contrasting narratives. For example, *12 Years a Slave* is a deeply emotive and sombre biopic, depicting the hardships of enslavement. This contrasts hugely to the fictional spaghetti western, *Django Unchained*, that enhances Black agency and power through humour and wit. Lastly, despite following the same biopic genre as *12 Years a Slave*, *Harriet* centralises and empowers the female enslaved voice. This female focal point is unique within the ubiquitous male centred enslavement films, and therefore communicates a strong female perspective. Additionally, these films were chosen due to their wide range of budgets. For instance, *Django Unchained* was given \$100 million budget.²⁸ Whereas, *12 Years a Slave* had a budget of \$21 million.²⁹ At the lower end of the scale, *Harriet* had a smaller budget of \$15 million.³⁰ Although each film was clearly successful, this variety in film budgets will have a huge impact in the delivery of enslavement representation and the limits the actors, crew and directors will encounter. Furthermore, variety is also achieved through the diversity of each film's director. McQueen, Tarantino and Lemmons bring a pronounced difference in their directing style and artistic vision, that offers a variety of perspectives and interpretation into the past. In other words, these films offer a variety of perspective and representations to the twenty-first century slavery memory field.

When researching these films, my analysis was at first limited to reading the films at face-value, and only considering the film individually. However, as film historian John E. O'Connor emphasised, although 'the film is valuable as a historical artefact in its own right', it cannot be truly understood without looking beyond its production.³¹ In other words, valuable film

²⁸ IMDb, "'Django: Unchained:' Box Office', (2021)

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1853728/?ref_=tt_rvi_tt_i_2> [accessed 30 November 2021].

²⁹ IMDb, '12 Years a Slave: Box Office', (2021) <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2024544/?ref_=tt_rvi_tt_i_3> [accessed 30 November 2021].

³⁰ IMDb, 'Harriet: Box Office', (2021) <<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4648786/>> [accessed 30 November 2021].

³¹ John E. O'Connor, 'History in Images/Images in History' in *The American Historical Review* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 1205-1206.

analysis must assess the films reception, the directors' intentions and promotional features. Thus, my film analysis was cross-referenced with directors notes to gain a detailed understanding of the acting and cinematography objectives. Further, this understanding was enriched through director and cast interviews from news platforms, that were accessed through YouTube. Additionally, this dissertation incorporates critic review sources from online newspapers such as The Guardian. Whilst also using online amateur reviews and review platforms, to gain an insight into public perceptions. Alongside the three central films, these supplementary sources enable a comprehensive and well-textured analysis to be conducted.

This dissertation is indebted to the helpful guidance of Sian Barber's book 'Using Film as a Source', that provided an introduction to historical research for the moving image.³² Barber's guide offers a refreshing perspective that details the importance of analysing film as a collaborative process. This advances the film analysis techniques of previous scholars, who have tended to separate elements of filming into inter-production and post-production analysis.³³ Barber explored analysis methods such as camerawork, costume, lighting, mise-en-scene, sound and editing, and demonstrated how these can work separately, but also how they can work simultaneously. The methods illustrated by Barber, were foundational to this dissertations film analysis. To ensure that Barber's methods were intricately conducted, each film was watched three times. Each time, the analysis was centred on one specific theme— either violence, women or whiteness. This ensured undivided attention was obtained, that resulted in a higher concentration to smaller details, than what could be achieved through one chaotic and singular watch.

³² Sian Barber, *Using Film as a Source* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 28-50.

³³ James Monaco, *How to Read a Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Chapter One: Violence

By nature, transatlantic chattel slavery was an extremely violent institution. This violence was embodied through many different forms and exerted endlessly, to re-assert the master's dominance over their 'property'.³⁴ Additionally, it intended to weaken the enslaved both physically and mentally to prevent resistance and sustain white supremacy. The centrality of violence within the institution, suggest the necessity to represent it within enslavement public memory. Thus, this chapter will explore *how* violence has been represented in twenty-first century enslavement films, whilst also examining *why* violence has been depicted in these particular ways. It will argue that violence is presented through brutally graphic and psychologically traumatic ways, that can demonstrate representations of violence are shaped by the twenty-first century cultural contexts. Yet, it will also suggest that omissions of violence within *Harriet*, imply that some twenty-first century enslavement films continue to be shaped by twentieth century ideologies of slavery.

Twenty-first century enslavement films have tended to use explicit, graphic and brutal physical violence to denote realistic scenes of the enslaved experience. This is exemplified through the harrowing scene in *12 Years a Slave*, where Northrup is pictured attempting to be lynched by one of the white overseers.³⁵ When the attempted lynching fails, the scene continues to display Northrup's distraught body hanging from the tree [Fig. 1]. The scene is excessively prolonged for a total of four minutes and thirty-nine seconds. This elongation reflects the longevity of suffering Northrup endured, which is further reinforced through the sky fading from a morning sun to an evening dusk. Northrup's suffering is also enriched through the disturbing sound effects of choking and gurgling from the tight rope around his neck, along with the frequent squelching of his bound feet in the mud, as he tries to prop himself up. As McQueen explained in an interview, this lynching scene intended to memorialise the thousands of individuals who suffered incredible pain but remain

³⁴ Ana Lucia Araujo, 'Histories of Violence; Slavery in America', LA Review of Books, 2019, <<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/histories-of-violence-slavery-in-america/>> [accessed 8 March 2022].

³⁵ *12 Years a Slave*, dir. by Steve McQueen (Twentieth Century Fox, 2013).

unnamed.³⁶ This scene does not allow the audience to look away, forcing them to witness the uncomfortable harsh realities that enslaved individuals faced.

Similar depictions of graphic physical violence are also clear in *Django Unchained*. For example, one scene details a fugitive slave being mauled to death by an enslaver's dog as punishment [Fig. 1.2]. The scene only shows a glimpse of the actual attack, leaving the audience to only imagine what is taking place. Instead, the audience is shown the reactions of other enslaved individuals who are watching the attack unfold, whilst noises of ripping flesh, barks and screaming underscore the scene. Both scenes illustrate McQueen's and Tarantino's attempts to uncover the cruel and inhumane institution of slavery, replicating the horrific torture enslaved people would encounter daily. These graphic depictions of violence demonstrate the twenty-first century films have started to develop a greater desire for honesty and accuracy. Such depictions can also be read as resistance or counter-speech to the destructive modes of erasure that have presented romanticised narratives of enslavement, such as *Gone with the Wind* (1939).

These non-romanticised depictions of violence mirror similar trends of slavery representation that are visible in the cultural contexts of these films. Most notably, in 2019 the New York Times launched the *1619 Project* that created podcasts, articles and school programmes to commemorate the four-hundred-year anniversary since the start of transatlantic enslavement.³⁷ The project 'reframes the country's history' by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of African Americans at the centre of the United States national narrative. The project debunked the romanticised and trivialised depictions of enslavement, through centralising the grotesque treatment of enslaved individuals by white people. One podcast in particular, 'The Land of our Fathers', intricately details the daily brutalisation and physical violence that enslaved people endured on the Louisianan sugar cane plantations. Moreover, as Dorota Golanska has demonstrated, the Whitney Plantation in Wallace, Louisiana, also dismantles romanticised narratives.³⁸ Golanska

³⁶ Henry Lois Gates Jr., 'A Conversation with Steve McQueen', in *Transition* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2014), 190.

³⁷ Multiple Contributors, 'The 1619 Project' in The New York Times (August 2019) <<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>> [accessed 17 March 2022].

³⁸ Dorota Golanska, 'Against the "Moonlight and Magnolia"' in *Museology and Cultural Heritage* (Slovakia: Univerzita Komenskeho v Bratislave, 2020), 137-140.

demonstrates that since its reopening in 2010, Whitney has shifted from depicting a mythical narrative of whitewashing, to presenting a narrative that exposes the truthful harsh treatment of enslaved individuals. The plantation centralised the African American experience and unmasks the brutal institution—for example through its presentation of torture equipment. A review on TripAdvisor also reinforces this by stating the tours ‘did not “gloss over” the horrors and brutalities of slavery’.³⁹ It is important to note this review is only the response of one individual, which means it cannot substantiate the experiences of all visitors or the quality of all the tour guides. Yet, it can demonstrate in some ways Whitney challenges romanticised narratives. The examples of the *1619 Project* and the Whitney Plantation reflect that an ethos of depicting the graphic brutality of enslavement is emerging in twenty-first century culture. In this vein, it can be suggested that it is these higher concentrations of slavery brutality in twenty-first century culture, that have shaped the graphic depictions of slavery in film.



[Figure 1.1]

12 Years a Slave, dir. by Steve McQueen (Twentieth Century Fox, 2013).

³⁹ Chantelle W. ‘Amazing Tour’, TripAdvisor Review, 23 July 2018, <https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowUserReviews-g14166006-d7276731-r598851973-Whitney_Plantation-Wallace_Louisiana.html> [accessed 19 March 2022].



[Figure 1.2]

Django: Unchained, dir. by Quentin Tarantino (The Weinstein Company, 2012).

On the opposite end of the scale, some twenty-first century enslavement films have omitted depictions of white physical violence from their narratives. For example, *Harriet* fails to present any enslaver or white person using physical violence towards an enslaved person.⁴⁰ This has faced a lot of criticism from the public, with one review claiming this omission of violence is ‘utterly unfathomable’.⁴¹ In an interview, Kasi Lemmon’s responded to such criticism by articulating she did not need to ‘beat’ Black people to show that slavery was violent, and that violence was already implied.⁴² Whilst Lemmon’s response is true to some extent, as the film includes subtleties that imply physical violence has been a part of Tubman’s life, such as the whipping scars engraved into her back. Yet, as Jenifer Eichstedt and Stephen Small have suggested through their research of Southern plantation museums, by preventing the public from witnessing the physical violence white people inflicted onto the Black body, a somewhat romanticised narrative is formed where white involvement is distanced.⁴³ Yet, we

⁴⁰ *Harriet*, dir. by Kasi Lemmons (Focus Features, 2019).

⁴¹ Jill Robi, ‘Harriet Biopic Erases White Violence’ in *Digital Spy Blogs* <https://www.digitalspy.com/movies/a29871460/harriet-tubman-review-violence-slavery/> [accessed 28 March 2022].

⁴² American Film Institute, ‘Kasi Lemmons and Harriet’, online video recording, YouTube, 7 November 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8eQ7a90W_vY>, [accessed 13 March 2022].

⁴³ Jennifer Eichstedt; Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery. Race, Ideology and Southern Plantations Museums* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 1-10.

must consider that the age rating of *Harriet* is parental guidance, which differs from the 18 rating of *Django* and the 15 rating of *12 Years a Slave*. This suggests that the films were produced for different audiences, limiting the violence they could portray. However, the complete omission of violence not only allows white people, such as Tubman's enslaver Gideon, to become a 'likeable' character, but it can also formulate a false perception of the Antebellum South as a more tranquil era. This omission of violence causes *Harriet* to share similarities with twentieth century representations of enslavement. For example, the same omissions can be viewed in the film *Gone with the Wind* (1939). As scholarship has demonstrated, *Gone with the Wind*, also fails to depict the ubiquitous white violence inflicted onto Black bodies.⁴⁴ Instead, it presents an uttermost nostalgic narrative that romanticises and defends the Confederate South.⁴⁵ While it would be wrong to suggest *Harriet* is also sympathetic to the Confederate Cause, it would also be incorrect to propose similarities between these films do not occur. Thus, this evidence implies that in some instances, twenty-first century enslavement films continue to be shaped by twentieth century ideologies and representations of the 'idyllic' South.

Despite this, twenty-first century enslavement films have also moved beyond just representing physical forms of violence. They have become increasingly focused on depicting the deep psychological violence that was routine in Antebellum enslavement. Enslavers used these forms of violence as a dehumanising weapon to weaken the enslaved mind and generate vulnerability, that allowed the maximisation of his/her own white supremacy.⁴⁶ By reflecting these forms of violence, it can help to humanise the enslaved by portraying individual perspectives and emotional experiences. This is exhibited through a scene in *12 Years a Slave*, where Northrup is stripped down to his naked beaten frame and forced to remove his clothing.⁴⁷ He is instructed to replace this clothing with white garments given to him by the enslaver. The whiteness of the clothing reinforces the lack of personality and humanity he has, whilst homogenising his existence with every other enslaved people in this

⁴⁴ Stevenson, 495.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Dacia Green, 'Dehumanising Effects of the Regulation of Slave Women' in *Duke Journal of Gender Law and Policy* (North Carolina: Duke University, 2018), 191-197.

⁴⁷ *12 Years a Slave*, dir. by Steve McQueen (Twentieth Century Fox, 2013).

slave pen. Additionally, within this scene Northrup is appointed the slave name, 'Platt'. The scene presents Northrup being torn away from his identity. He is disassociated from both his clothing and name, the last connections he possessed that connected him to his life as a free man. This scene implies the forms of non-physical violence that enslavers used to control and dehumanise the enslaved, whilst instilling emotional distress. This non-physical violence is reinforced through the heart-breaking scene of Patsey, who is captured playing with dolls she had made from cornhusks, in the Epps Plantation.⁴⁸ The camera pans above her and reveals the plantation mistress, Mrs Epps, attentively watching over her from the upstairs balcony. The psychological violence is represented here through Mrs Epps' threatening intimidation and attempt to indicate her unyielding control over Patsey. Additionally, this scene depicts the effects of the psychological violence in enslavement, through the representation of Patsey with perennial child-like qualities, despite being a grown woman. It reflects how the persistent psychological abuse overshadowing the enslaved community, helps to maintain a system of paternalistic control, that subordinated Black bodies.

Whilst *Harriet* failed to integrate physical white violence, themes of psychological violence are very apparent. Psychological violence was a hook that director Kasi Lemmons wanted to focus on. Lemmons stated: 'I really felt that I wanted to speak about a different kind of violence, which was the trauma of family separation'⁴⁹ This form of psychological violence is portrayed in the opening scene that shows Tubman's scarring memory of being separated from her sister. The memory presents Tubman and her sister hysterically crying, whilst her sister is being driven away in a horse and cart. The scene is given a dark grey colour palette and is underscored with screams and sombre music. This scene demonstrates the devastation and emotional distress this family separation caused.

We can suggest the representations of psychological violence, is ultimately shaped by the twenty-first century cultural context. In the last two decades, other mediums have also concentrated on presenting the psychological effects of enslavement. This is exemplified through the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), that was

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ American Film Institute, 'Interview with Kasi Lemmons', online video recording, YouTube, 7 November 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8eQ7a90W_vY>, [accessed 13 March 2022].

established in 2003.⁵⁰ One exhibit, 'Slavery & Freedom', has dedicated an entire section to discussing the psychological trauma and strain that enslaved people would face daily. In particular, it discusses the trauma of transition, family separation and enslavers methods of emotional violence, such as degradation and verbal abuse. Additionally, the exhibit traces the legacies of psychological violence in contemporary society. The increased recognition of psychological violence is reinforced if we compare these representations, to the depictions of slavery in the television mini-series *Roots* (1977).⁵¹ Lily Rothman suggested that, despite presenting physical violence, the mini-series was deeply flawed.⁵² These flaws according to Rothman, were rooted in the lack of representation of psychological violence, that limited showing the perspectives and emotional experiences of individuals. By comparison, we can suggest the increase of psychological violence representations, has set twenty-first century films apart from the narratives of the post-civil rights 1970s. Thus, both the NMAAHC exhibit and *Roots* demonstrate that the twenty-first century has made significant headway in presenting psychological trauma. With this increased awareness emerging in the cultural milieu, these representations have ultimately influenced the shaping of psychological violence within twenty-first century enslavement films.

⁵⁰ NMAAHC, 'Slavery and Freedom', Searchable Museum, 2021 <<https://www.searchablemuseum.com>> [accessed 10 April 2022].

⁵¹ Lily Rothman, 'What Critics Said About the Original Roots', *Time*, (2016) <<https://time.com/4338417/1977-roots-reviews/>> [accessed 18 March 2022].

⁵² *Ibid.*

Chapter Two: Women

This chapter will explore the representations of enslaved women in twenty-first century enslavement films. It will argue that women's depictions as humanised and empowered agents, alongside the recognition of their sexual exploitation, demonstrates that the films are shaped by their cultural context. Yet it will also suggest that in some instances women are depicted as stereotypical 'jezebel' characters. This can suggest that films continue to be influenced by twentieth century cultural contexts.

Twenty-first century enslavement films depict women as humanised and empowered agents, that can challenge previously entrenched stereotypes of Black womanhood. Derrick Brooms has brought forward a similar argument in the context of African American museum exhibitions.⁵³ He demonstrated the importance of representing the enslaved as 'resistors' with humanistic qualities such as, identities and personalities, in order to defy continued racial subjugation in memory. These methods are used within Kasi Lemmon's depiction of Harriet Tubman. Tubman demonstrated the active strength and power that an enslaved woman could project, whilst reflecting Tubman's fearlessness to resist white power structure, despite the life-threatening consequences it caused. Tubman is repeatedly humanised not only through this empowerment and resistance, but also through Lemmon's focus on displaying her emotions, relationships, spirituality and her strong opinions. She is presented with complex human characteristics that individualise her amongst the enslaved community and oppose homogenising her existence and experiences.

Similar notions of women as humanised, empowered agents are visible in *12 Years a Slave*. This is best exemplified through the scene where Patsey visits Mrs Harriet Shaw [Fig. 2.1]. Mrs Shaw was the well-treated, Black concubine of Mr Shaw, the owner of a neighbouring plantation. This scene presents Patsey and Mrs Shaw eating luxury food, drinking tea, talking, laughing and building a friendship. Both women wear elegant dresses and stylish hats, and freely speak their own opinion. In this scene, enslaved women are reflected through an aura of individuality and agency. Especially within the context of the brutal South, this scene portrays to the audience a sense of normality that separates Patsey

⁵³ Brooms, 515-516.

from the dehumanising institution of slavery. This normality helps to present her with ordinary human qualities and engages her with everyday human activities.

Moreover, Patsey portrays herself as an empowered agent during the scene where she asks Northrup to assist her suicide. She approaches Northrup in the dead of night, pleading with conviction and determination: 'All I ask, end my life...take me by the throat and hold me low in the water until I am still and without life.' Terry L. Snyder demonstrated that the enslaved whom inflicted pain on themselves or feigned illness, did so to resist the rule of their masters.⁵⁴ In some cases, Snyder explained that the enslaved would commit suicide. This was viewed as 'the ultimate form of resistance' one can perform.⁵⁵ Linda Kay Kneeland extended this to suggest that enslaved suicide not only served to resist their master's authority but constituted a dual purpose as an act of escape and release from pain.⁵⁶ Although Patsey asks Northrup to assist her suicide wish, rather than fulfil this desire alone, she details the religious reasoning behind her inability to do it herself. If we apply Snyder's and Kneeland's notions of suicide onto Patsey's request, we can suggest that she is exhibiting an ability to possess control over her own life. She maintains empowered through her expression of individual thought and conduction of freewill onto her own body. These examples of women as empowered, humanised agents directly challenge the racist stereotypes of Black women as homogenised, subservient and passive victims that were ubiquitous in twentieth century culture.⁵⁷

These depictions of enslaved women share similarities with the changing ideals and norms that are prevalent within the cultural contexts of these films. For example, in the last two decades, the film industry has started to alter the representation of women in films more generally. Women are no longer restricted to supporting roles but can be cast and represented as a heroine in her own right. This change has been evidenced by Niharika Koka, who conducted an intricate study comparing the representation of women from the twentieth century to the twenty-first century. Koka concluded that the flourish in 'third-wave'

⁵⁴ Terry L. Snyder, 'Suicide, Slavery and Memory in North America' in *Journal of American History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 40.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 42.

⁵⁶ Linda Kay Kneeland, 'African American Suffering and Suicide Under Slavery' (unpublished master's thesis, Montana State University, 2010), 9.

⁵⁷ Rashonda Daniels, 'Black Stereotypes', (unpublished master's thesis, Washington University in St. Louis, 2019) 13, 15.

feminist ideologies by the twenty-first century, has consequently replaced the stereotyped 'damsel in distress' character with depictions of women with qualities such as leadership, intellectuality, individual agency and empowerment.⁵⁸ These changes are visible through popular characters such as Elizabeth Swan (Keira Knightly) in *The Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise and Katniss Everdeen (Jenifer Lawrence) in *The Hunger Games* trilogy. Although some stereotypes inevitably remain in this male-dominated industry, this evidence nevertheless demonstrates that there is a clear shift in the representation of women within twenty-first century films. Thus, we can suggest that these wide-ranging cultural shifts of women's representations, has inevitably influenced the depictions of women in enslavement films. Therefore, demonstrating that these films are shaped by their twenty-first century cultural context.



[Figure 2.1]

12 Years a Slave, dir. by Steve McQueen (Twentieth Century Fox, 2013).

However, in some instances the films continue to uphold twentieth century stereotypes of Black enslaved women. For example, the hyper-sexualised 'Jezebel' stereotype is evident in

⁵⁸ Niharika Koka, 'The Evolution of Feminism in Film: How the Last Decade Became a turning point for Female Representation', (unpublished master's thesis, Baylor University, 2020).

12 Years a Slave.⁵⁹ As Margaret Loft examined, the 'Jezebel' emerged during slavery, outlived the institution and flourished in twentieth century culture. The 'Jezebel' was characterised as an immoral and unrestrained Black woman, who sharply contrasts with the ideal notions of 'true' white womanhood.⁶⁰ She is characterised by sexually compulsive behaviour and an inability to control sexual urges. This stereotype is embodied through the unnamed enslaved woman, who forces Northrup into an uncomfortable sexual encounter at the beginning of the film. She uses Northrup's hand to bring herself to orgasm. It is likely that McQueen used this scene in order to convey the desperation for human contact amongst the deprivation accustomed to slavery. Yet, the forceful nature of this woman's actions that take place in the middle of the night, surrounded by several other sleeping enslaved people, implicitly upholds the promiscuous 'Jezebel' stereotype where Black women are 'always ready for sex and seeking it out' no matter the time of day, environment or situation.⁶¹

The 'Jezebel' caricature is also prominent in *Django Unchained* through the character Sheba (Nichole Galicia) [Fig. 2.2].⁶² Sheba is Candies 'mullato' concubine. Her character is sexualised through her provocative dress that accentuates her breasts and exposes her skin. Her lines are spoken in a deep and sensual tone, that elongate each word. When sitting on a chaise, she drapes her body across it and places her body language in a very open position, reflecting her readiness to display herself. Even Sheba's common mannerisms are sexualised. For example, she is filmed seductively eating a lobster, through an elongated sucking motion. Sheba does not display any additional individual identity that detach her from the 'Jezebel' stereotype. She is solely connected to her role as a concubine that presents a dehumanised and sexually objectified narrative of women. These characters of the unnamed women in *12 Years a Slave* and Sheba only play minor roles within the film, and are therefore not the predominant representation of enslaved women. Additionally, it is difficult to know whether these depictions of women are based on the directions of Tarantino and McQueen, or if they are interpreted by the individual actors. Nevertheless, these characters suggest that subtle

⁵⁹ *12 Years a Slave*, dir. by Steve McQueen (Twentieth Century Fox, 2013).

⁶⁰ Margaret Loft, 'Syrups, Stereotypes and Sexualisation: A Historical Analysis of the Hyper-Sexualisation of the Black Female Body' in *History Publications and Presentations* (Oregon: University of Portland Press, 2020), 6-7.

⁶¹ Loft, 6.

⁶² *Django: Unchained*, dir. by Quentin Tarantino (The Weinstein Company, 2012).

undertones of stereotyped Black women that continue to be depicted in twenty-first century enslavement films.

These twenty-first century representations of enslaved Black women share similarities with depictions of women within twentieth century society. For example, the 'Jezebel' is apparent in D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915).⁶³ As Manuel Kuck has evidenced, the epitome of the 'Jezebel' can be viewed through Lydia Brown's character.⁶⁴ She plays the role of the '*mulatto*' mistress to Senator Stoneman. She is portrayed as savage and lascivious. Her overt sexual promiscuity is illustrated through her raunchy dress that contrasts to the conservative dresses of the white women. Moreover, as the film is a silent movie, her movements are enhanced as overtly erratic, alongside her frequent making of devious and sexualised facial expressions. These stereotypes were not confined to the early twentieth century but were also popular in the 1970s Blaxploitation era. For example, Trina Parks as Thumper in the 1971 James Bond film *Diamonds Are Forever*.⁶⁵ Thumper was Bond's archnemesis and always displayed in erotic bikinis. Thus, the continuation of the 'Jezebel' stereotype into twenty-first century films, suggests that some enslavement films remain embedded with twentieth century cultural ideologies.



[Figure 2.2]

Django: Unchained, dir. by Quentin Tarantino (The Weinstein Company, 2012).

⁶³ *Birth of a Nation*, dir. by D. W. Griffith (Epoch Producing Co., 1915).

⁶⁴ Manuel Kuck, 'Mammies and Jezebels', *Aventinus*, 2014, <https://www.aventinus-online.de/visio/varia/art/Mammies_and_Jez/html/ca/view.html> [accessed 26 April 2022].

⁶⁵ '*Diamonds Are Forever*' dir. by Guy Hamilton (United Artists, 1971)

These films also depict women as victims of sexual harassment, revealing the sexual exploitation they endured from their master. For example, although *Django Unchained* spares the audience from watching explicit forms of sexual harassment and rape, the film nevertheless makes reference to the sexual harassment women frequently experienced.⁶⁶ This is evident in the scene where Broomhilda is locked in the cabin as punishment for Django's shooting massacre in Candyland. Broomhilda's exploitation is suggested when Django—whom, is also receiving punishment for the massacre, by being suspended upside down and threatened with castration—is directly told she will be raped in order to antagonise him and cause further distress. Additionally, the dimly lit cabin that Broomhilda is captured in, holds nothing but a bed, that implies the sexual activities that will take place there.

Moreover, *12 Years a Slave* presents female sexual exploitation more explicitly. Most notably in the scene where Patsey is raped by her master, Epps [Fig. 2.4].⁶⁷ McQueen refrains from offering the audience moments of respite, by forcing them to focus on the uncomfortable scene for over two minutes. The disturbing scene is accentuated through the harrowing nights silence and the absence of underscoring, that is filled with nothing but Epps' grunting and heavy breathing as he thrusts himself vigorously into Patsey's body. This completely hijacks the audience's senses by creating an overwhelming inescapable atmosphere. Epps' bodily positioning directly on top of Patsey, and his controlling actions that force her into positions, demonstrate the master and puppet power dynamic between these characters. Epps presents complete domination over Patsey, who simply lays there traumatised. Thus, these examples in from *Django Unchained* and *12 Years a Slave* demonstrates the routine sexual harassment women endured, that distinguishes their enslaved experiences from men.

These depictions of women as victims of sexual exploitation have undoubtedly been shaped by changes within the cultural context of these films. For instance, since the early 2000s, historical scholarship has uncovered the pervasiveness of sexual exploitation of female slaves by their masters, and the centrality this sexual exploitation took in their enslaved experience. Most notably, in 2008 Annette Gordon-Reed published work on the complex

⁶⁶ *Django: Unchained*, dir. by Quentin Tarantino (The Weinstein Company, 2012).

⁶⁷ *12 Years a Slave*, dir. by Steve McQueen (Twentieth Century Fox, 2013).

slave-master relationship of Sally Hemings and Thomas Jefferson.⁶⁸ Specifically exploring how Hemings used her role as Jefferson's concubine to negotiate the best circumstances for her family. Gordon-Reed's work marked a major departure from ubiquitous histories that centralised the male experience. Additionally, twenty-first century culture has become increasingly focused on raising awareness of female sexual harassment. These ideological shifts are clear in the #MeToo Movement. Whilst the #MeToo Movement has garnered widespread media attention since 2017 in response to the sexual allegations of Harvey Weinstein, the movement roots back to 2006.⁶⁹ It's founder Tarana Burke, coined #MeToo as a technique for Black women to expose stories of sexual harassment and achieve 'empowerment through empathy'. These cultural developments and movements demonstrate that the twenty-first century has a greater desire to recognise and uncover the prevalence of sexual exploitation towards women. This has changed dramatically from the lack of acknowledgement of women's sexual harassment in previous centuries.⁷⁰ Thus, it can be suggested that this gradual unveiling of sexual exploitation in culture, will undoubtedly have influence on the ways that women's accounts, lives and experiences are depicted throughout history. Overall, these shifts within culture and its mirrored depictions in slavery films, can lead us to believe that twenty-first century enslavement films are shaped by their cultural context.

⁶⁸ Annette Gordon-Reed, 'The Hemingses of Monticello' (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008).

⁶⁹ Me Too Movement, 'History & Inception', 2022, <<https://metoomvmt.org/get-to-know-us/history-inception/>> [accessed 25 April 2022].

⁷⁰ Ibid.



[Figure 2.4]

12 Years a Slave, dir. by Steve McQueen (Twentieth Century Fox, 2013).

Chapter Three: Whiteness

Within the minimal explorations of enslavement films, there has been no analytical work conducted on representations of whiteness. This absence of research could be attributed to the necessity to divert from analysing white elites, and to centralise marginalised enslaved voices. Yet, analysing depictions of whiteness are crucial for a comprehensive understanding of representations of the institution. The term ‘whiteness’ will refer to people who are depicted as ethnically white. This will mean an analysis of individuals such as white enslavers and people who embody the ‘white saviour’ characters. ‘White saviourism’ is a critical description of a white person who is portrayed as a figure who saves and liberates non-white people.⁷¹ It has unfortunately been very apparent within Hollywood film culture, with characters such as Skeeter Phelan (Emma Stone) in *The Help* (2011).⁷² In essence this chapter will explore representations of whiteness. Similar to the previous two chapters, it will demonstrate that depictions of whiteness are shaped by their cultural context they emerged from. This will be shown through white enslavers presented as immoral. Yet, it will also address the complexities of these representations. It will also argue that depictions of ‘white saviourism’ suggest these films continue to be shaped by nineteenth century ideologies.

Twenty-first century films portray white slave owners as callous and sinful individuals, that can dismantle the notion of the ‘good slave master’. This is explicit through the character of William Ford (Benedict Cumberbatch) in *12 Years a Slave*. Many public reviews have been critical of McQueen’s representation of Ford, claiming that he presents a benevolent enslaver that nourishes white guilt and conceals the suffering white enslavers caused. One review condemned the presentation of Ford as it created a romanticised narrative of ‘moonlight and magnolias’ not the true narrative of ‘blood and tears.’⁷³ Yet, it can be argued that such perspectives have missed the true intention of McQueen’s aims. A deeper analysis of Ford challenges such perspectives and suggests McQueen presents much more nuance. Whilst there are subtleties that contrast Ford to the brutal actions of other enslavers, McQueen

⁷¹ Matthew W. Hughey, *The White Savior Film*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014), 166.

⁷² *The Help*, dir. by Tate Taylor (Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, 2011).

⁷³ Manohla Dargis, ‘Blood and Tears, Not The Magnolia’, *New York Times*, 17 October 2013, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/18/movies/12-years-a-slave-holds-nothing-back-in-show-of-suffering.html>> [accessed 13 December 2022].

nevertheless refuses to solely portray him in this way. For example, Ford does not hesitate to separate Eliza from her two young children when he buys her at a slave auction. This demonstrates he is merciless and uncompassionate to her distress or loss.⁷⁴ Additionally, Ford outright refuses to hear Northrup's declaration of freedom, going as far as to exclaim that 'I have debt to be mindful of'.⁷⁵ This refers to the \$1000 mortgage he holds on Northrup. This suggests his avarice over his care for his slaves. Thus, his goodness is only depicted and extends as far as the white system of supremacy allows. Whilst he is not willing to beat his slaves, he is nuanced through his presentation of fault and malevolence within the system.

Moreover the 'good' slave owner narrative is further deconstructed through the characters of both Master Epps and Candie in *12 Years a Slave* and *Django Unchained* respectively. Both characters are portrayed as sadistic, erratic and barbarous enslavers who pride themselves in their ability to cripple enslaved people. They are clearly made to be hated by the audience through their callous actions, repeated use of racist epithet and brutal treatment of the Black body.

Overall, these characters verify that twenty-first century enslavement films depict white enslavers as evil and callous individuals. These depictions challenge the romanticised tropes of the 'good' enslavers and can dismantle notions of white benevolence and slavery as a benign institution. These depictions that challenge the 'good' slave owner narrative, is also mirrored within the cultural context of these films. For example, renowned newspaper companies, such as the New York Times have published several articles about rethinking the 'good' enslaver narrative. Most notably, the article titled 'The Making and Breaking of the Legend of Robert E. Lee'.⁷⁶ This article debunks the myth of confederate general, Robert E. Lee, as a benevolent white abolitionist who didn't own enslaved people. Instead, it illuminates Lee's connections to slavery, not only through his family, but also through his own enslaved workers, that had previously been concealed. This evidence suggests that there is a shift in the depictions of white enslavers within the cultural milieu of the twenty-first century. This dismantling of the 'good' white enslaver in culture, will inevitably seep into and influence the

⁷⁴ *12 Years a Slave*, dir. by Steve McQueen (Twentieth Century Fox, 2013).

⁷⁵ *12 Years a Slave*, dir. by Steve McQueen (Twentieth Century Fox, 2013).

⁷⁶ Jacey Fortin, 'Making and Breaking the Legend of Robert E. Lee', *New York Times*, 28 August 2017, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/28/books/review/eric-foner-robert-e-lee.html>> [accessed 18 April 2022].

representation of whiteness within film. Thus, we can conclude that the presentation of 'whiteness' is shaped by the twenty-first century cultural context.

Although the films dismantle the good enslaver trope, they persist to exhibit narratives of 'white saviourism'. These depictions are used to elevate white guilt by it centralising the 'goodness' and virtue of abolitionist figures. Not only do these narratives damage the agency of enslaved individuals by portraying them as weak and reliant on white heroism, but they can also trivialise the brutality of enslavement. This is clear in *Django Unchained* in the character Dr. King Schultz (Christoph Waltz).⁷⁷ Schultz literally buys Django his freedom, trains him in the art of bounty hunting, finds Django's enslaved wife, Broomhilda and kills Broomhilda's Master (Candie), which leads him to sacrificing his own life for Django. This suggests that Django did not cause his own Black liberation but was saved by a white paternal redeemer. This results in the presentation of white individuals as grandiose, and the enslaved as impotent and weak.

Correspondingly, the character Samuel Bass (Brad Pitt) in *12 Years a Slave* also generates similar issues. Bass is a white Canadian who is working on the Epps Plantation. He eventually agrees to 'save' Northrup by posting his letter to his family and friends in the North. Pitt's character can be defended on the grounds that Northrup's slave narrative demonstrates he was aided and saved by a white man.⁷⁸ However, the issue does not lie with the character, but with the character's filmic presentation. Bass is portrayed as a godly figure with 'messianic' qualities [Fig. 3.1]. This depiction is enhanced through the shining sun and warm tones within the scene, that reflect the safety Bass brings to Northrup. These tones contrast drastically with the rest of the scenes on the Epps Plantation, which are cool toned and gloomy. He is presented with white linen clothing that represents his purity and long hair, that flows in the breeze as if he is floating. Moreover, during this scene Bass aligns himself on the same level as Northrup multiple times. This demonstrates Bass resonates towards Northrup and lets him voice his narrative. This reflects his views of racial and human equality and can replicate god like qualities.

⁷⁷ *Django: Unchained*, dir. by Quentin Tarantino (The Weinstein Company, 2012).

⁷⁸ Northrup; Wilson, 'Chapter IXI', 194-223.

Moreover, narratives of ‘white saviourism’ are also clear within *12 Years a Slave’s* advertisement. For example, in 2013, controversy arose surrounding the films box office posters in Italy [Fig. 3.3]. The poster presents Bass, who plays a small role, as a godly protagonist in the film, whilst Northrup’s role is diminished. We must consider that these posters were not widespread and only produced in Italy. Additionally, the Italian distributing company, eventually apologised and removed the advertising material that was not approved by the producers.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, the posters clearly elevate the importance of Bass and present him as the godly saviour to audience members.



[Figure 3.1]

12 Years a Slave, dir. by Steve McQueen (Twentieth Century Fox, 2013).

⁷⁹ Dave McNary, ‘Italian Company Apologises for Controversial ‘12 Years a Slave Poster’, *Variety* <https://variety.com/2013/film/news/italian-company-apologizes-for-controversial-12-years-a-slave-poster-1201001022/> [Accessed 3 April 2021].



[Figure 3.2]

Variety, 'Italian publicity for 12 Years a Slave', 2013, Photograph, 24 December 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2013/dec/24/12-years-slave-italy-posters-pitt-ejirofor> [accessed 24th November 2021].

Lastly, *Harriet* also continues the 'white saviour' trope through Tubman's enslaver, Gideon Brodess (Joe Alwyn).⁸⁰ The film's main antagonistic is a Black male bounty-hunter called Bigger Long (Omar Dorsey), who agrees to work with Brodess to re-capture Tubman. The white saviourism is exposed during the scene where Long attempts to shoot Tubman after reciting the words 'you gon' die bitch'. As Long missed his first shot at Tubman, during the moment that he realigns his gun to take another shot, Brodess quickly shoots Long to keep Tubman alive. In this scene, the white enslaver kills the Black villain bounty-hunter to 'save' Tubman from harm. As the characters of Gideon and Long are completely fictional and could therefore have been avoided, we can suggest that the film works with a stereotyped agender

⁸⁰ *Harriet*, dir. by Kasi Lemmons (Focus Features, 2019).

to vilify Black men as violent individuals, in order to elevate white people as the heroes and alleviate their connections to slavery. Thus, this depiction of white enslavers creates a distraction from white people's crimes against humanity and allows these crimes within enslavement public memory to be glazed over and downplayed. This scene's 'white saviourism' received considerable criticism from the African American population. Many turned to Twitter, using hashtags such as #notmyharriet to encourage people to avoid the film. For example, @EricaLeShia tweeted a video that completely summarises this point. The video stated that 'Harriet has no respect for #ADOS [African Descendants of Slavery]. How dare you demonise a Black man, with the mission to make White Supremacy the hero'.⁸¹

In essence, this evidence demonstrates that the three slavery films contribute to depicting white people through the white saviour complex. In this view, it can be argued that these films continue to be shaped by ideologies rooted in nineteenth century cultural contexts. These ideologies are exemplified through the Emancipation Memorial in Washington DC [Fig. 3.4]. Erected in 1876, the memorial presents, the tall and dignified Abraham Lincoln, condescendingly standing over a Black man. His arm is stretched out, symbolising the white mans 'aid' to previously enslaved people. The man who kneels, displays broken shackles around his wrists and ankles. As Wood has demonstrated, this monument propagates a narrative where the enslaved are eternally grateful for the 'gift of freedom' that white philanthropists have granted.⁸² He claims it disguises the memory of white brutality, with a redemptive narrative of white heroism. This helps to disassociate immoral white involvement, whilst simultaneously presenting the enslaved as subservient and dependent on white emancipators. This statue is just one example of the plethora of nineteenth abolitionist material that presents the 'white saviour' narrative. The white saviourism similarities that these films replicate, suggest that the films continue to be shaped by these deeply rooted nineteenth century societal beliefs.

⁸¹ Erica LeShia, Video Attachment, [Twitter post], (@ericaleseshai, 1 November 2019).

⁸² Wood, 'The Horrible Gift of Freedom': An Odd Title', *The Horrible Gift of Freedom*, 1-34.



[Figure 3.4]

Unknown, 1876 Emancipation Memorial, 2021, Photograph, Washington DC, <<https://medium.com/weoc-1619-project/lincoln-was-not-black-americans-white-savior-6bfd7193927>> [accessed 28 April 2022].

Conclusion

In the digital age of the twenty-first century, film has emerged as hugely influential for the dissemination of public memory. Yet, studies on enslavement public memory have frequently neglected and undermined the pivotal medium. When scholars have explored film, they have been confined to analysing the twentieth century and male protagonist. As this study has detailed, it is necessary to delve much deeper into this field, to understand enslavement legacies in popular culture and the shifts of racial ideologies in the public sphere.

Each chapter within this dissertation has followed the same line of argument, yet it has been developed through three different case points. It has argued that twenty-first century enslavement films exhibit representations of slavery that are shaped by the cultural context they are produced in. Yet, it has also highlighted the complexities of enslavement representations in film. In particular, it has argued that filmic representations of enslavement are sometimes bound to and continue to be influenced by racial ideologies and enslavement memories that are rooted in nineteenth or twentieth century culture. Chapter one of this study has examined representations of violence and conclusively proven that depictions of graphic brutality and psychological trauma, are shaped by the twenty-first century cultural context. Yet, the omission of violence through films such as *Harriet*, has suggested that twenty-first century enslavement films continued to be penetrated by twentieth century influences.

Chapter two explored the filmic representations of enslaved women, a category that has too often been neglected. It has demonstrated that twenty-first century films have tended to depict women as humanised, empowered agents. Moreover, it has suggested that these films have rectified and given a voice to enslaved female experiences of sexual exploitation, giving recognition to narratives that were previously buried in the American public memory. From these representations, a direct link has been drawn to suggest that these depictions have been shaped by contextual changes, most notably in historiographies, the #MeToo Movement and feminist influences on film. However, complexities in these representations has been illustrated by suggesting twentieth century Black women stereotypes have

continuously been presented in twenty-first century slavery films. Especially that of the 'Jezebel', which can imply these films continue to be influenced by twentieth century cultural contexts.

Lastly, with whiteness being a major component within the slavery institution, chapter three has explored twenty-first century filmic depictions of ethnically white people. It concluded that the white enslavers have been presented as implicitly or explicitly evil and immoral characters, that have dismantled the 'good white enslaver' narrative. These representations are synonymous with shifts within the twenty-first century cultural context that have also deconstructed notions of the 'good enslaver'. Moreover, this chapter has demonstrated that all three films depict elements of whiteness through the white saviour complex. Thus, illustrating that twenty-first century enslavement films also continue to display narratives that are rooted within nineteenth century culture.

Taken together, these chapters can demonstrate that film does not emerge in a vacuum and is intimately intertwined with its cultural context. This dissertation opens the door for further explorations to be conducted on twenty-first century enslavement films. A medium that is incredibly powerful and significant in the creation and maintenance of slavery public memory.

Dissertation Bibliography

Primary Sources

Francis B. Simkins, *Virginia: History, Government, Geography* (New York: Scribner, 1957)

Northup, Solomon; David Wilson, *Twelve years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup, A Citizen of New-York Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841 and recued in 1853 From a cotton Plantation Nar of the Red River in Louisiana*, (New York: Derby & Miller, 1853)

Me Too Movement, 'History & Inception: The Evolution of our Movement', 2022, <<https://metoomvmt.org/get-to-know-us/history-inception/>> [accessed 25 April 2022]

Boston Arts Commission, Abraham Lincoln 1876 Emancipation Memorial, 2021, Photograph, Washington DC, <<https://medium.com/weoc-1619-project/lincoln-was-not-black-americans-white-savior-6fbfd7193927>> [accessed 28 April 2022].

Films

12 Years a Slave, dir. by Steve McQueen (Twentieth Century Fox, 2013)

Amistad, dir. by Steven Spielberg (DreamWorks Pictures, 1997)

Antebellum, dir. by Gerard Bush (Lionsgate, 2020).

Belle, dir. by Amma Asante (Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2013)

Birth of a Nation, dir. by D. W. Griffith (Epoch Producing Co., 1915)

Birth of a Nation, dir. by Nate Parker (Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2016)

Django: Unchained, dir. by Quentin Tarantino (The Weinstein Company, 2012)

Gone with the Wind, dir. by Victor Fleming (Loew's Inc. 1939)

Harriet, dir. by Kasi Lemmons (Focus Features, 2019)

Lion, dir. by Garth Davis (Transmission Films, 2016)

Roots, dir. by Marvin J. Chomsky (Warner Bros. Television, 1977)

The Blind Side, dir. by John Lee Hancock (Warner Bros. Picture, 2009)

The Help, dir. by Tate Taylor (Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, 2011)

Uncle Toms Cabin, dir. by Edwin S. Porter (Edison Manufacturing Company, 1903)

Reviews

Armond White, '12 Years a Slave, reviewed by Armond White', New York Film Critics Circle (2013) <<https://www.nyfcc.com/2013/10/3450/>> [accessed 14 December 2022]

Chantelle W. 'Amazing Tour', TripAdvisor Review, 23 July 2018, <https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowUserReviews-g14166006-d7276731-r598851973-Whitney_Plantation-Wallace_Louisiana.html> [accessed 19 March 2022]

Ewa Zubek, 'Why 12 Years a Slave' and 'Roots' are Inadequate Representations of Slavery' <https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/ewa-zubek/12-years-a-slave-and-roots_b_4873061.html> [accessed 5 Dec 2021]

Janet Neary, 'Witnessing Violence: Thought on McQueen's 12 Years a Slave' <<https://avidly.lareviewofbooks.org/2013/10/24/witnessing-violence-thoughts-on-mcqueens-12-years-a-slave/>> [accessed 4 Dec 2021]

Jacks Movie Reviews, '12 Years a Slave: How Steve McQueen Uses Violence', Online video recording, YouTube, 18 Feb 2017, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WkYKiltzJU>> [accessed 10 Dec 2021]

Jill Robi, 'Harriet Biopic Erases White Violence – And That's a Big Problem' in *Digital Spy Blogs* <https://www.digitalspy.com/movies/a29871460/harriet-tubman-review-violence-slavery/> [accessed 28 March 2022]

Lily Turner, 'I was not convinced!!!', IMDb, review, 2018, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1853728/reviews?ref=tt_ov_rt> [accessed 13 April 2022]

Moon Charania, 'Django unchained, Voyeurism Unleashed' <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1536504213499880>> [accessed 10 Feb 2022]

Rachael the Lord, 'Blog: The Romanticisation of Slavery in American Media'
<<https://medium.com/@LordRach/romanticization-of-slavery-in-american-media-c77ea0024bfe>> [accessed 4 Dec 2021]

Sarah Redmond & Jasmin Chacko, 'Afterlives of Slavery: Django Unchained'
<<https://afterlivesofslavery.wordpress.com/film/django-unchained/>> [accessed 11 Feb 2022]

Newspaper Articles

Brit Bennett, 'Ripping the Veil', *New Republic*, 2 August 2016,
<<https://newrepublic.com/article/135708/colson-whiteheads-fantastic-voyage>> [accessed 11 Feb 2022]

Catherine Shoard, "'No one will know the difference": Studio wanted Julia Roberts to play Harriet', *Guardian*, 20 November 2019,
<<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/nov/20/studio-wanted-julia-roberts-to-play-harriet-tubman-cynthia-erivo>> [accessed 4 April 2022]

Manohla Dargis, 'Blood and Tears, Not The Magnolia', *New York Times*, 17 October 2013,
<<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/18/movies/12-years-a-slave-holds-nothing-back-in-show-of-suffering.html>> [accessed 13 December 2022]

Jacey Fortin, 'Making and Breaking the Legend of Robert E. Lee', *New York Times*, 28 August 2017, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/28/books/review/eric-foner-robert-e-lee.html>> [accessed 18 April 2022]

Meilan Solly, 'The True Story Behind the Harriet Tubman Movie', *Smithsonian Magazine*, 30 October 2019, <<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/true-story-harriet-tubman-movie-180973413/>> [accessed 16 December 2021]

Michael Blackmon, 'Ok Fine. Let's talk about Harriet', *BuzzFeedNews*, 6 November 2019,
<<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/michaelblackmon/harriet-kasi-lemmons-criticism-white-savior>> [accessed 4 Dec 2021]

Multiple Contributors, 'The 1619 Project' in *The New York Times*, August 2019,
<<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>> [accessed 17 March 2022]

Variety, 'Italian Publicity for 12 Years a Slave featuring Brad Pitt and Michael Fassbender', *Guardian*, 24 December 2013, <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2013/dec/24/12-years-slave-italy-posters-pitt-ejiofor>> [accessed 5 Dec 2021]

Interviews

Henry Lois Gates Jr., 'A Conversation with Steve McQueen', in *Transition* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2014) 185-196

ABC News, 'Interview with Jamie Foxx, Tarantino, DiCaprio', online video recording YouTube, 8 January 2014, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMUhaCXPyg8>> [accessed 10 Feb 2022]

Vibe Magazine, 'Spike Lee Talks "Django: Unchained"', online video recording, YouTube, 21 December 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJIWe_71mw> [accessed 10 February 2022]

BlackTree TV, 'Quentin Tarantino on Violence, the 'N' Word, and Django Unchained, online video recording, YouTube, 19 December 2012, <<https://youtu.be/fCPTDQkKe3I>> [accessed 11 February 2022]

American Film Institute, 'Writer/director Kasi Lemmons on her approach to the slave story in Harriet, online video recording, YouTube, 7 November 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8eQ7a90W_vY>, [accessed 13 March 2022]

Review and rating platforms

IMDb, "'Django: Unchained:' Box Office', (2021) <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1853728/?ref=tt_rvi_tt_i_2> [accessed 30 November 2021].

IMDb, 'Harriet: Box Office', (2021) <<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4648786/>> [accessed 30 November 2021].

IMDb, '12 Years a Slave: Box Office', (2021) <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2024544/?ref=tt_rvi_tt_i_3> [accessed 30 November 2021]

Tweets

Black Action, 'apparently the film 'Harriet's the newest edition of 'The Birth of a Nation' series. The white supremacist and white saviourist propaganda machine never sleep. It only adapts #NotMyHarriet #ADOS' [Twitter post], (@Black_Action, 1 November 2019)

Erica LeShia, 'I really hope people don't see #Harriet and think its historically accurate #notmyharriet #afrochat, with video attachment' [Twitter post], (@ericaleseshai, 1 November 2019)

Yarima Karama, 'Until we control our own media there will always be a white saviour, with video attachment' [Twitter post], (@YarimaKarama, 2 November 2019')

Secondary Sources

Ball, Erica L., 'The Unbearable Liminality of Blackness Reconsidering Violence in Steve McQueen's 12 Years a Slave' in *Transition* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2016)

Barber, Sian, 'Film and History' in *Using Film as a Source* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015)

Barber, Sian, 'Film, Form and Aesthetics' in *Using Film as a Source* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015)

Barber, Sian, 'Film Historiography' in *Using Film as a Source* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015)

Barber, Sian, 'Introduction' in *Using Film as a Source* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015)

Berlin, Ira, 'Coming to Terms with Slavery in Twenty-First Century America' in *Slavery and Public History*, (The New Press, New York, 2006)

David Bordwell, *Film Art: An Introduction* (London, McGraw-Hill Education, 2010)

Brown, Adam, 'Narratives of Judgement: Representations of 'privileged' Jews in Holocaust Documentaries' in *Documentary Filmmaking Practices: From Propaganda to Dissent* (La Revue LISA, 2014)

Carr, Joi, 'Close Up: Django Unchained: Disrupting Classical Hollywood Historical Realism?' in *Black Camera Press* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2016)

Charlery, Helene, ““Queens of the Fields””: Slavery’s Graphics Violence and Black Female Body in 12 Years a Slave in *Slavery on Screen* (Transatlantica, 2018)

Cole, Tim, ‘Oskar Schindler’ in *Selling the Holocaust: Front Auschwitz to Schindler, How History is Bought, Packaged and Sold*, (London: Psychology Press, 1999)

Cotzee, Carli, ‘Django Unchained, A Black Centred Superhero and Unchained Audiences’ in *Black Camera* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2016)

Crane, Susan A., ‘Choosing Not to Look Representation, Repatriation and Holocaust Atrocity Images’ in *History and Theory*, (Connecticut: Wiley, 2008)

Davis, Natalie Zemon, ‘Introduction’ in *Slaves on Screen: film and Historical Vision* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2002)

Davis, Natalie Zemon, ‘Film as Historical Narrative’ in *Slaves on Screen: film and Historical Vision* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2002)

Davis, Natalie Zemon, ‘Witnesses of Trauma: *Amistad* and *Beloved*’ in *Slaves on Screen: film and Historical Vision* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2002)

Davis, Natalie Zemon, ‘Telling the Truth’ in *Slaves on Screen: film and Historical Vision* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2002)

Doherty, Thomas, ‘Bringing the Slave Narrative to Screen: Steven McQueen and John Ridley’s searing Depiction of America’s peculiar institution’ in *Cineaste* (New York: Cineaste Publishers Inc., 2013)

Dresser, Madge, ‘Set in Stone? Statues and Slavery in London’ in *History Workshop Journal* (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2007)

Dunham, Jarrod, ‘The Subject Effaced: Identity and Race in Django Unchained’ in *Journal of Black Studies* (Portland: Sage Publications, Inc., 2016)

Eichstedt Jennifer L., Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery. Race, Ideology and Southern Plantations Museums* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002)

Feinstein, Rachel, ‘Introduction’ in *When Rape Was Legal* (New York Routledge, 2019)

Ferro, Marc, 'the fiction film and historical analysis' in *Paul Smiths 'The historian and the film'* (Cambridge University press: 2011)

Fierce, Rodney M. D., 'The "exceptional n****er" redefining African American identity in Django Unchained' in *Movies in the age of Obama: The Era of Post-Racial and Neo-Racist Cinema* ed. by David Garret Izzo (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014)

Gazetas, Aristides, 'Film Narratives and Historical Representation' in *Imagining Selves: The Politics of Representation, Film Narratives and Adult Education* (Oxford: Peter Lang AG, 2000)

Golanska, Dorota, 'Against the "Moonlight and Magnolia" Myth of the American South. A new materialistic approach to the dissonant heritage of slavery in the US: The case of Whitney Plantation in Wallace, LA' in *Museology and Cultural Heritage* (Slovakia: Univerzita Komenskeho v Bratislave, 2020)

Annette Gordon-Reed, 'The Hemingses of Monticello' (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008)

Green, Dacia, 'Ain't I?: Dehumanising Effect of the Regulation of Slave Women and Family Life' in *Duke Journal of Gender Law and Policy* (North Carolina: Duke University School of Law, 2018)

Hall, Jaqueline Dowd, 'The Long Civil Rights Movement' in *The Journal of American History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

Hampshire, Kathryn, 'On Cinematography and Discomfort in *12 Years a Slave*' in *Digital Literature Review* (Indiana: Ball State University, 2015)

Hartman, Saidiya, 'Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery and Self-Making in *Nineteenth Century America*' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

Henley, Michael, *The South According to Quentin Tarantino*, (Mississippi: e-Grove, 2015)

Horton, James Oliver.; Lois E. Horton, 'Introduction' in *Slavery and Public History*, (The New Press, New York, 2006)

Hughey, Matthew W., 'The Significance of White Saviors in a "Post radical" World' in *The White Savior Film*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014)

Izzo, David Garret, *Movies in the Age of Obama: The Era of Post-Racial and Neo-Racist Cinema* (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014)

Kaisary, Philip, 'The Slave Narrative and Filmic Aesthetics: Steve McQueen, Solomons Northup, Colonial Violence' in *Multi-Ethic Literature of United State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

Kneeland, Linda Kay, 'African American Suffering and Suicide Under Slavery' (unpublished master's thesis, Montana State University, 2010)

Loft, Margaret, 'Syrups, Stereotypes and Sexualisation: A Historical Analysis of the Hyper-Sexualisation of the Black Female Body and the Predominating Stereotypes of Black Women' in *History Publications and Presentations* (Oregon: University of Portland Press, 2020)

Longenberger, Bryce, 'The Inability to Commit Suicide: An Analysis of Steve McQueen's *12 Years a Slave*' in *Digital Literature Review* (Indiana: Ball State University, 2015)

Lopez, Ian, *Post-Racial Racism: Racial Stratification and Mass Incarceration in the Age of Obama in California Law Review* (Los Angeles: California Law Review, 2010).

Map, Edward, 'Black Women in Films' in *Journal of Black Studies and Research* (London Taylor and Francis, 1982)

Marwick, Arthur, *The Nature of History* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1989), 216-218.

Maynard, Richard, 'The Birth and Demise of the 'Blaxploitation' Genre in LA Times (Los Angeles: LA Times, 2000)

McCrisken, T., *American History and Contemporary Hollywood Film* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005)

Monaco, James, *How to Read a Film: Movies, Media and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

Moody, Jessica; Stephen Small, 'Slavery and Public History in the Big House' in *Journal of Global Slavery* (BRILL, 2019)

Moody, Jessica 'The Rise of the Museums' in *The Persistence of Memory: Remembering Slavery in Liverpool, 'Slaving Capital of the World'* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020)

Morrison, Toni, 'Sites of Memory' in *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft Memoir* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995)

Multiple Contributors, 'Black History Milestones', *History*, 2022

<<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/black-history-milestones>> [accessed 10 March 2022]

O'Connor, John E., *Image as Artifact: The Historical Analysis of Film and Television* (Krieger, 2007)

Oldfield, J. R., 'Introduction' in *"Chords of Freedom": Commemorations Ritual and British Transatlantic Slavery* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007)

Otele, Olivette, 'The Guerilla Arts in Brexit Bristol' in *Embers of Empire in Brexit Britain* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. 2019)

Patterson, Robert J., '12 Years a What: Slavery, Representation, and Black Cultural Politics in *12 Years a Slave*' in *The Psychic Hold of Slavery* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2019)

Phillips, U. B., *Life and Labour in the Old South* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2007).

Rice, Alan, 'Naming the Money and Unveiling the Crime: Contemporary British Artists and the Memorialisation of Slavery and Abolition' in *Patterns of Prejudice* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2007)

Rosenstone, Robert A., 'History in Images' in *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (London: Harvard University Press, 1995)

Rosenstone, Robert A., 'The Historical Film' in *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (London: Harvard University Press, 1995)

Simmons, Ramona, 'Scoured Souls: The Imbalance between Mistresses and Female Slaves' in *Digital Literature Review* (Indiana: Ball State University, 2015)

Smith, P., 'Introduction' in *The Historian and Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

Snyder, Terry L., 'Suicide, Slavery and Memory in North America' in *Journal of American History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)

Sorlin, Pierre, 'Historical Films and Tools for Historians' in *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies* (New York: Centre for the Study of History and Film, 1988)

Stokes, Melvyn, 'Introduction' in *American History through Hollywood Film: From Revolution to the 1960s* (Bloomsbury, London, 2013)

Stokes, Melvyn, *Slavery' American History through Hollywood Film: From Revolution to the 1960s* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013)

Stevenson, Brenda E., '12 Years a Slave: Narrative, History and Film' in *Journal of African American History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014)

Stevenson, Brenda E., 'Filming Black Voices and Stories: Slavery on America's Screen' in *Journal of the Civil War* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2018)

Stevenson, Brenda E., 'What's love got to do with it? Concubinage and Enslaved Women and Girls in the Antebellum South' in *The Journal of African American History* (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 2013)

Thomas, Sarah, 'Violence and Memory: Slavery in the Museum' in *World Art and Legacies of Colonial Violence* (Farnham: Kingston University, 2013)

Toplin Robert Brent., 'Introduction' in *History by Hollywood: the Use and Abuse of the American Past* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1996)

Toplin Robert Brent.; Jason Eudy, 'The Historian Encounters Film: A Historiography' in *OAH Magazine of History* (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2002)

Vogel, Joseph, 'The confessions of Quentin Tarantino: White Washing Slave Rebellion in Django Unchained' in *The Journal of American Culture* (New Jersey: Wiley Periodicals, 2018)

Ross Wilson, 'Representation Equals Recognition?', *1807 Commemorated*, 2007, <<https://archives.history.ac.uk/1807commemorated/media/analysis/representation.html>> [accessed 3 February 2022]

Wolfe, Esther, 'Violent instability': Images of the Violence of Slavery in *12 Years a Slave* and Visual Culture' in *Digital Literature Review* (Indiana: Ball State University, 2015)

Wood, Marcus, 'Introduction' in *Slavery Empathy and Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Wood, Marcus, 'Introduction' in *Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America 1780-1865* (Manchester: Manchester University press, 2000)

Marcus Wood, *The Horrible Gift of Freedom: Atlantic Slavery and the Representation of Emancipation* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2010)

Wood, Marcus, 'Slavery, empathy, and pornography in John Gabriel Stedman's Narrative of a Five Years Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam' in *Slavery Empathy and Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Zubak, Goran, 'Remembering Slavery: The Mobilisation of Social and Collective Memory of Slavery in the 21st Century' (Linneuniversitetet, 2015)