

Hollywood's Racial Criticism: A Means to Rationalize the Endorsement of White Imperialism Objectifying Black Men as the Other Contrasted to Heroism.

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ABSTRACT: Majorly in films depicting men of colour in Hollywood, there is a portrayal of a White rescuer. But in academic and historical understanding, it has the reference to the colonial custom to recognise any answer to the call of the superior. But why do the men of colour need saving? Colonizers civilized the meaningless existence of colonized and thus brought survival but would not have necessitated had the colonizers or the white would have the conscious acknowledgement of their existence. Even if created keeping the black man's perspective in consideration, the emotional appeal of sympathy garnered for the black, is diverted towards a sense of pride by the classic action of the White, in spite of all the negativity of the White masters, thus reinforcing the colonial complex and satisfying popular Western belief of Afro-American dependency.

KEYWORDS: Black lives, White Messiah, White imperialism, Colonialism, Transgression, Hollywood colonial frame.

I. INTRODUCTION:

There are few cinemas which not only depict how racism and its subsequent gazes are established and practised in American society, but how a Black individual wishes to transgress the discourse of racism. These cinemas depict the ways whites look at the blacks and how, in some cases, a black gets a privilege from a white to dismantle the discourse made by the whites themselves.

II. THESIS STATEMENT:

By positing 12 Years a Slave and Django Unchained within the foundation of the modern idea of the American dream, it is to be asserted that equivocal rejuvenescent newness of American

cinema, white saviour complex in it, is symbolical of a racial concern to accommodate an equivocal western discourse for an all-embracing world audience. While the White saviour in Django Unchained was an enabler of Django, 12 years a slave was very close to just turn Solomon into a prop aiding Bass (played by Brad Pitt) in swinging all attention. Thus, even being too close enter the stereotype, there is a slim chance for the audience to watch the glorification of black characters securing the second position of approbation for the White facilitator.

III. OBJECTIVE:

The objective of this paper is to explore "class" and "race" etymologically and then study two American cinemas which successfully portray the confinement these spaces provide and the way a black individual constantly struggles to get out from the prevailing, claustrophobic, dominating space in the American society. The criticism focuses on the dominant group's being expressive, representative, directives and commissive in the American society where they, not only tend to practise the power resources to gain a control over the space, but they intend to employ social and cognition manipulation to manipulate the society at large. While studying Django Unchained and 12 Years a Slave as movies of counter-narrative on the dominant US discourse, this paper expounds abolitionism to draw comparison between the protagonists of these movies.

To understand the convention of the genre that mocks the opponent who is in a position to exercise the advantages of social politics in their favour and a dramatic performance to bring a recognition (cognisance) to the section exploited.

The dramatic display of turning points of expectations of both the films are to be seen differently since Django and the Doctor is more adhered to the portrayal of a militia of Ku Klux Klan through the bounty hunting. Usually in these genres the convention has a trope of White messiah who defines his existence through the course of rescuing a Black. Contradicting that, this paper proposes against an existential crisis of the black character and to observe the ability of existing on his own without making the saviour a narcissistic or exhibitionistic personality.

IV. STATE-OF-THE-ART RESEARCH:

An inter-disciplinary overview shows both the groundwork for acknowledging the inter-relations of different disciplines to explore the psyche related to racism and how doing so will provide a fuller understanding of these movies as a testimony. The movie refers to the racist science of phrenology which shows how a number of scholarly discourses have been used to justify the racial discrimination. Candie's monologue shows the rhetoric of scientific racism, Django's and Stephen's interactions with Candie, as "Field Negro" and "House Negro", explores the enslaver's notion of white supremacy. It must be an imperative for post-modern society to critique and consider the institutionalized narratives, cultural tropes and the academic or the popular texts that attempt to sideline Black ways of knowing and being¹. A serious treatment of America's horrible past with slavery and the tropes of the genre (spaghetti western) have been considered in another article which explores this genre, capable of depicting the nihilistic and dehumanising violence that undoubtedly characterised chattel slavery. While resisting the representation of human subjectivity, spaghetti western mirrors the relative silence around the psychological dimensions, not only of slavery, but also of the continuing crisis of structural racism in the post-civil rights era². Another article explores Django Unchained as Tarantino cloaks a revenge fantasy in a redemptive slave story³. The translation of the racist language

¹Holmes, David G. "Breaking the Chains of Science: The Rhetoric of Empirical Racism in Django

Unchained" *Black Camera: An International Film Journal (The New Series)* 7.2 (2016): 73-78.

² Dunham, Jarrod. "The subject effaced: identity and race in Django Unchained.;" *Journal of Black Studies* 47.5 (2016): 402-422.

³Charania, Moon. "Django Unchained, voyeurism unleashed." *Contexts* 12.3 (2013): 58-60.

of the film has been studied in a descriptive and pragmatic way with an employment of Relevance Theory⁴. Intertextuality and politics in this movie could be unveiled in an article which focuses on the reception of the movie from the right and the left wings while it raises questions of the relationship between aesthetics and race rarely considered with such public passion⁵. Schaefer's article, on the other hand, reads Steve McQueen's 12 Years a Slave through the lens of Sharon Patricia Holland's work on the "Erotic life of racism"⁶. Criticism of the literary sociology expounds how this film, as a literary work, reflects the socio-political conditions of the American society⁷. Another article explores both of these films as a part of the Civil War film culture that gave rise different movies on the theme in an interdisciplinary framework⁸.

V. GOAL:

To establish the black characters in the lead role to be formerly self-sufficient and non-submissive in the face of forceful modification of their state of being by the White supremacy. It is to be clarified that the ambiguous narrative of obscure present and future of these communities without the saviour is propagating the idea of racial discourse and reinforcing a colonial dictum.

VI. METHODOLOGIES:

With critical discourse analysis, this research paper, in a qualitative method, analyses the different racist utterances in the movie in order to

⁴ Martínez-Sierra, Juan José, and Antonia Sánchez-Macarro. "A Descriptive and Pragmatic Study of the Translation of Racist Language in Django Unchained." *Translation Quarterly* 79 (2016).

⁵ O'Neil-Ortiz, Javier. "Response: Intertextuality, Politics, and the Present Tense in Django Unchained." *Safundi* 16.3 (2015): 323-329.

⁶ Schaefer, Donovan. "Our peculiar institution: 12 Years a Slave, American Protestantism, and the Erotic Life of Racism." *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* 43.1 (2014).

⁷Ridho, Muhammad, Alfian Alfian, and Ulfatmi Azlan. *RACISM EXPERIENCED BY SOLOMON NORTHUP AS SEEN 12 YEARS A SLAVE MOVIE BY STEVE MC. QUEEN*. Diss. UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, 2018.

⁸ Warren, Craig A. "Patriotism as Institutional Racism: The Purge and the Fugitive Slave Act." *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 50.1 (2020): 29-40.

find a stronger explanation of Van Dijk's theory. Along with this, interpretation theory holds importance to study the evidences and contextualize them as a historical phenomenon.

VII. ETYMOLOGY AND TRAJECTORY OF "CLASS" AND "RACE":

In his book 'Keywords'⁹, Raymond Williams has said that the Latin word 'classis', a division according to property of the people of Rome, came into English in the last period of 16th century in its Latin form, with a plural 'classes' or 'classics'. In his book, he also asserts that the essential history of the introduction of class, as a word which would supersede older names for social divisions, relates to the increasing consciousness that social position is made rather than merely inherited. Then in the time of the argument about political, social and economic rights, between the 1790s and the 1830s, class was used in another model. There was Productive or Useful Class (the majority of the people – laborers, artisans, tradesmen and so on) and Privileged Class (priests, courtiers, public accountants, commanders of troops and so on).

In these days, the definitions of class structure make the groups of its members according to wealth, income, type of occupation and membership within a hierarchy, specific subculture or social network. People are at the centre of multiple intersections of power, inequality, and privilege as shaped by their class, race/ethnicity, and gender. Nobody fits into any one category alone; instead, everyone exists at the intersection of many categories that shape not only their view of the world and the actions they take but also other people's view of them. The overlapping of two or more of these classifications (e.g., race, class, and gender), however, is often unobserved in discussions about any one of these individual classifications.¹⁰

⁹ the trajectory of the terminologies is determined from the etymological study provided by Raymond William, a Marxist Critic. Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Oxford University Press. 1976. Pp. 60-250.

¹⁰ Barak, Gregg., Leighton, Paul., and Cotton Allison. *Class, Race, Gender and crime: The*

According to Williams, "Race" came into English in C16. Though its earlier origins are unknown, there are a good range of meanings: i) offspring in the sense of a line of descent – "race and stock of Abraham" (1570) – as in the earlier uses of "blood" and the synonymous "stock", used from C14 in the extended metaphor of trunk or stem, ii) a kind of species or plants (1596) or animals (1605), iii) general classification, as in "the human race" (1580), iv) a group of human beings in extension and projection from sense i) but with effects from sense and ii) – "the last Prince of Wales of the British race" (1600). This range has existed, but this is from sense iv), with effects from sense i), the word has certainly become very problematic and there is an overlap and confusion with the comparatively simple senses ii) and iii). As a term "Race" has been used both as a genus and species in classificatory biology, but it becomes very difficult when the word is used to indicate a group within a species, as the case is with "races of man". From a certain and traceable specific offspring, the term extends to a much wider social, cultural and national groups. On a different level, serious physical anthropology, from Blumenbach (1787) was trying to trace broad differential groups among humans; his classification, mainly based on the measurement of skulls, distinguished the Caucasian, the Malayan, the Ethiopian, the MongoHan and the American (Indian), marked also by skin colour – white, yellow, brown, black, red. Around mC19 the idea of "Social Darwinism" became prominent, where the ideas of evolution as a competitive struggle for existence and here the "survival of the fittest" was extended from its biological source and this referred to the relations between species, to the different social and political conflicts and the various consequences within one species, the human. In the relation to **race**, the most influential turn was that of eugenics, a term coined by Galton in 1883, from the Greek roots, with the sense of the "the production of fine offspring". In some branches of eugenics, ideas of both class and **racial superiority** were widely propagated, and the scientific evidence of the variable heredity was, sometimes, mixed with and sometimes, overridden by the pre-scientific notions of "pure racial stocks" and of the inheritance, through blood or race, of culturally acquired characteristics (but Galton himself rejected this idea). In its gross framework, the perception of inherent racial superiority had an

Social Realities of justice in America. 5th Edition. Rowman and Littlefield. Pp. 134-137

interaction with the ideas of political domination and specially with imperialism. This is characteristic in finding the use in “distinctions of race-character in governing (Negroes)” (1866). In this regard, the supposed historical missions of the “Anglo-Saxon” and of the “German” races (later to be in “national conflict with each other) were extensively disseminated. Through this trajectory, the group of words around racial became conclusively distinct from its older conventions. **Racialism** appeared in the early years of C20; **racialist** was first recorded from 1930. These words are almost, at all times, very hostile words (recently, even shortened to racism and racist) while describing the actions and opinions of the promoters of racial superiority or different ways of racial discriminations. As a term, **Race-hatred** was coined in 1882 but we must also take a note of Macaulay’s “in no country has the enmity of race been carried further than England” (1849). This trajectory takes up, projects and generalises physical, cultural and socio-economic differences into consideration. The prejudice and cruelty than are often followed, or which are rationalised by confusions, are not only evil in themselves; they have also abundantly complicated, and in certain spheres under threat, the necessary language of the (non-prejudicial) recognition of human diversity and its actual communities.⁹

VIII. REFERENCING THE MOVIES:

According to the theory of Van Dijk, the participants of communicative situations, for the sake of an effective interaction, need to read each other’s mind in a metaphorical sense. In order to understand the actions which, include communicative actions, an intention needs to be attributed to the observed conducts of the actors present in the societal framework.

The first instance is Django Unchained, a 2013 film written and directed by Quentin Tarantino. The movie Django Unchained is set in the Old West and Antebellum South. In the film by Tarantino, we see how a narrative becomes digressive and ferociously profane at the same time. In this film, accompanied by a German bounty hunter, a freed slave Django travels across America to free his wife from a sadistic plantation owner.

The time of the setting of this film is early 1858, precisely three years before the American Civil war. As a movie, Django Unchained has been differently labelled as a spaghetti western, western, slave revenge fantasy and as Grindhouse feature film. This sprawling film shows the exploits of a recently freed-slave, “Django Freeman” (played by

Jamie Foxx) and his liberator, eventual friend and companion “Dr. King Schultz” (played by Christoph Waltz). The fundamental focus of the movie lies on Django’s reuniting with his wife “Broomhilda” (Kerry Washington). In the time of addressing racism in the film, the narrative also treads on the threadbare themes of Pygmalion paternalism and the racial characteristics of natural capacities and character temperaments. In the opening of the film, Django is seen shackled among a chain of slaves led by the “Speck Brothers” (James Russo and James Remar).

In the beginning, we see a group of shackled black slaves on foot, one of those slaves is Django They are stopped by Dr. King Schultz, a German dentist-turned-bounty-hunter willing to buy Django for his knowledge of the three outlaw Brittle brothers, overseers of the plantation of Django’s previous owner. Agitated with the taunting behaviour of Schultz, the Speck brothers respond with violence just to unveil that the doctor is a superior gunsmith, placing his character as a White Knight. Schultz offers Django his freedom and \$75 in exchange for help tracking down the Brittles. Here we see an instance how freedom is achieved in the exchange of a favour. In this opening sequence of the cinema, Django is shown a duality of how the slaves are treated in those days in the antebellum South. When he is in the shackles, he is a slave, and when he is purchased, he becomes a bound servant to Schultz, who abhors slavery. As written in the historical period that took away the rights of the African American slaves, this scene allows no room for Django to practise his personal agency. His fate is then shown as a binary between the good nature of some white men versus the cruel, evil and brutal nature of some other white men. In no way in the movie, the character of Django is unveiled as a man with some extraordinary capacities to act independently of an acutely paternalistic societal atmosphere. While performing his duties with the doctor, he gives Django a Pygmalion-style makeover, a brand-new outfit and he is further instructed on the specific rules of etiquette. When the outlaws are successfully assassinated in a typical Tarantino-style grotesque manner, Django is made free by the doctor. It is that specific time when the master-apprentice relationship is established between the two.

The doctor, here, decides to get engaged to this partnership as he feels extremely responsible for freeing Django. He had never performed this before and because Django’s life reminds him of a popular German doctor, dear to his heart, he becomes desperate. The theme of paternalism

continues within this relationship when it reveals the dichotomy of presented personal attributes of the primary protagonists. In this film, Schultz has been portrayed as a debonair and a highly professional character while Django has been shown as raw brawn and a very “natural” marksman. The acute representation of the innate African American athletic ability is a very standard myth that is always manifested as a benevolent, if not complimentary, form of racism. But this absolute portrayal is more easily identifiable as a racist phenomenon when contrasted so heavily with the myth of the inherent white cerebral nature. There is one instance when these two fool an eminent buffoonish collective of the Ku Klux Klan. Around the end of Django’s training with him, the doctor finds that Broomhilda has been enslaved at the infamous Candyland plantation run by the sadistic “Calvin Candie” (played by Leonardo DiCaprio).

The doctor, once again, proves his cerebral prowess when he attempts to concoct a very elaborate scheme to rescue Broomhilda. The doctor and Django pretend to be interested parties in purchasing a Mandingo fighter along with a female slave attendant for him and here, the female attendant would be Broomhilda. Though, Candie, primarily, gets furious by this deceptive manoeuvre, he promptly steadies the wrath and offers to sell Broomhilda to them. When this deal seems to get consummated with a firm handshake, the doctor’s enormous disgust for Candie takes him to gun the man down. In this plot, Schultz is finally killed; but Django survives and he goes forward stepping in the role as the saviour explained by Schultz.

We see Dr. Schultz saying others “My valet does not walk.” Here, at this moment, Django’s position is uplifted when Dr. Schultz says so. At ‘Big Daddy’ Bennett’s Tennessee plantation, we see ‘Big Daddy’ instructs to treat Django unlike any other nigger there. On being instructed, Betina (a black maid servant of the house) asks whether she should treat Django like a white man or not. ‘Big Daddy’ answers her to treat not like a white man but like another nigger of elevated situation. A point of counter-essence is being unveiled here when Django is being seen differently. Betina can’t believe that Django is ‘free.’ This depicts that the freedom of a black slave was beyond any imagination at that point of time. Here, the conception of ‘free slave’ has been shown as an absurdity to the white men and the other black slaves as well. A black slave is empowered thus. The essence is further dismantled when Django whips a white whipper. This denotes a complete

contrast of Django’s position, that is elevated again when Dr. Schultz shows a fellow-feeling for searching Broomhilda as he himself is German. Dr. Schultz is elated to free him and he names Django as ‘Django Freeman’. They learn that Broomhilda’s new owner is Calvin J. Candie, who forced slaves to wrestle to death in brutal ‘Mandingo’ fights. This is an instance of the black men being used in the entertainment of a white master. There are numerous instances of essence of slavery and the way they were treated at that time, like the black man was supposed to fight with few ferocious dogs (this is where the essence takes place). In this film, the essence and the dismantling of the same have taken place side by side. Another important event of dehumanization is when Calvin shows the skull of Old Ben to them and tells that he is amazed to see why Blacks do not kill the Whites. Then he refers the science of Phrenology and asserts that the area of submissiveness in the skull of Old Ben is larger than that of any other human being from any other part of the world. Here again, the essence of the discourse has been exposed from the gaze of a white man. There we find Calvin saying “Broomhilda is my property.” In those days, slaves were seen as a property of the owner and they were entitled to use the property as they wanted to.

In the next morning, Django is tortured and about to be castrated and then he is informed to be sold to a mining company. This can be seen as a point where a black slave is punished for the transgressing the essence, he is supposed to be within. On the way to the mining company, he uses his wit showing first handbill to prove to his escorts that he is a bounty hunter and promises the escorts \$500 of the reward money. Being released, gaining the faith of the escorts, Django kills them at first. This can be seen as a point of revenge as he was treated badly previously. He recovers Broomhilda’s freedom paper from Dr. Schultz’s corpse and frees her killing the trackers there. Django exacts a brutal revenge on all of the survivors of the plantation, rescues Broomhilda. At the mansion, Django kills everyone but releases the remaining black house slaves. Stephen is given the most severe punishment here. He is left in the mansion to watch the fuse reach the dynamite and die in the resulting massive explosion and conflagration- a typical graphic climax of Tarantino. Finally, the frame of the exploded house is shown aesthetically as Django and his wife sees it from a distance before riding off together, as the ultimate protagonist. It is, here, notable that Stephen, a self-hating slave of Candyland plantation, is given the most inglorious death rather than his owner Candie, a man who decidedly happened to bring more suffering and, by

reasonable assumption, programmed Stephen's traitorous behaviour.

While showing the black slaves' position in the society with respect to the white men's gaze and treatment towards them, this film shows us a universal template and an individual's struggles to transgress it. The discourse and the dismantling of this has been put in the movie altogether. At the end of the movie, Django and his wife ride off together, both freed slaves and both, at the end, beholden to the exemplary lessons, as imparted by the dominant class members in the society. The film is highly applauded among the critics as a victorious story of retribution and reunion (between Django and his wife, Broomhilda) along with a very strong message of racial cooperation in the American class-divided society. With a sharp outlook to dismantle the racist predicament in the society, the movie successfully upholds different aspects of a racist society. There are underlying messages of the reliance upon and the role of the dominant class in the society, for both guidance and the realization of the goals of a person, constantly objectified in the discourse of racism.

IX. RHETORIC:

Important to notice the female lead character Broomhilda Von Shaft is a German-learned slave who is named by her German mistress. Her tortures symbolise the Nazis tormented by the Jews. Also, the name Broomhilda brings an allusion to German folklore¹¹, which helps the German dentist believe in the cause and quest of Django to be of cultural significance.

Whenever the portrayal of enmity enters within the Whites' circle, there is a formality of etiquettes between Dr. Schultz and Candie. Whether a cruel master of South or a criminal of West, a proper show of etiquette is a reminder that the ultimate twist of turns is handled by one who is not black or a slave.

As a film, Django Unchained won many appraisals and awards. It had the nomination of five Academy Awards and four Golden Globes, among an extremely daunting list of awards and laurels. But there is a fact of great irony as a film about slavery that none of the mainstream nominations were garnered by lauded African American

performers in the film (Jamie Foxx, Samuel L. Jackson and Kerry Washington) and they were, throughout, refused acknowledgement by the Golden Globes and Academy Awards.

Released in 2013, *12 Years a Slave* is a dramatic interpretation of slavery but concerning the memoir of a freed slave, based on an enslaved individual of 19th century. Solomon Northup (Chiwetel Ejiofor) although an African American, was born a free individual in the pre-civil war Northern America. He creates an impression of being educated, fitting to the modern American social cultures by earning his living as a violin player in parties. He married a free woman, Anne Hampton (Ashley Dyke), and managed to have a normal family life so far. His stability and freedom were so well portrayed with a comfortable home, shopping outings, and engagement with other white families that it was hard to be misread. By all means he led an aspiring African American life fitting to the bourgeoisie white society. This life setting was disrupted suddenly by being conned by two whites, who failed to grasp the concept of a free African family amidst bourgeoisie class. They go on saying: "Creatures from the darkest Africa as yet seen by civilised man... acrobats from the orient who contort themselves in the most confounding manners." He was approached with the offer of employment, and then by getting him drunk at the dinner, he was kidnapped and sold as a slave. It is a sudden alteration of someone's identity, he vanished into a one-way tunnel. In the next scene, we see Northup chained in the Slave Pen of William in Washington DC, where he is already being subjected to the process of dehumanization. In the movie, audience can witness the change and a reverse subversion of a modern, independent man of the freed northern states to become a sold slave of South. A total identity alteration of Solomon Northup, a citizen living amidst bourgeoisie American Class into a slave named "Platt Hamilton". This dehumanization not only lost him his identity but it stripped him of his pride, spirit and family. His voice got subjugated against the system of slave-trade when he was being torn from his habitat and sold in Deep South as a property to the plantation owner of Louisiana. The identity of his old life was related to music, as a violin player. When this fact comes to the master's knowledge, he gives him a violin to play, but sadly as a slave playing a violin he is still away from his original self of an artist, although his demand increased in the slave market for the extra talents. At one point, to keep track of his old life, perhaps to prevent himself from being lost from humanity, Northup engraved his

¹¹Schultz explained the story of Brunnhilde who disobeyed her father and was put in a ring of fire, from which only the bravest man could rescue her. He is not referring to the Ring opera of Wagner, rather only to the German folklore, because those two are almost created anachronically and Django's time predates the Opera.

children's names, Margaret and Alonzo, and that of his wife's on the wood of violin. With the progress of the movie, he is later moved to a different farm, where he was working in plantation for a violent and intolerant owner, who destroyed the violin not being bothered of his past life and existing memories attached to it.

To study the racism discourse in the film, **qualitative method** could be applied to explore and analyse the data. There could be seven different acts found in this movie, which, altogether endorse and are responses to racism in American society: genocide, prejudice, oppression, redlining, segregation, stereotyping and violence. Here, prejudice and oppression happen four times (16%) and violence double it (8 times, 32%). Genocide, stereotyping and segregation happen for 3 times (12%) and finally, redlining, the last act of racism, happen eight times (32%).¹²

Northup had never lost the hope of rebelling and achieving his lost life. But the master breaking his violin served as a blow to his tolerance as he felt threatened of being detached from his family and life.

According to the memoir and historical record shown in the film, Northup was ultimately freed from the forced slavery. This occurred through the intervention of a Canadian carpenter played by Brad Pitt. When the carpenter gets to know the unfortunate incident of Northup, being a man of conscience, he decides to help him by taking his message to his family back in New York. Despite being one of the whites he would ask them to make a plea to the immediate authority and get him released. The scene of his rescue commenced with the aid of a white friend of Solomon's family, a merchant who went and informed the local sheriff of Louisiana about Northup's situation. In the final scene of the movie, we see a man held on to the little light of hope of meeting his family again, managed to gather help from a benevolent stranger and friends, who chose not to give up when his fate forced him to see only darkness around as he witnessed other men and young women being tortured in the name of slavery. Throughout the film we see him haggard from the tiresome heroic fight for escape against the adversity and his triumph as evidence of possibility and believe, but the appearance of Brass turned the scene around making him seem like a distressed victim waiting to be saved.

There is an extremely arresting scene when Northup's life is hung by a thread. A white carpenter of malicious nature (John Tibeats, played by Paul Dano) starts criticising the work on an outbuilding. When Northup wants to defend himself, determined to showcase his authority, he unnecessarily attempts to whip Northup (not for his work, but for answering him back). Northup loses self-restraint and he becomes unable to feign subservience any longer while he asserts his own superior physical strength, remorselessly whipping the white man¹³. This quite clearly showed ability to defend himself and also the fact that action of one benevolent white carpenter doesn't weigh more than the malpractice of the whole community.

The several versatile and illuminating characters of the John Ridley script helps to enlighten on the conditions of enslavement in the pre-war Southern states of the United States. The first and the central character of the film and those four was Solomon Northup. Chiwetel Ejiofor, the actor playing Northup Solomon allows audience to witness the process of dehumanization. Since the beginning of his captivity, whenever he tried to show and state that he was really a free man, his attempt proved to be frail compared to the vicious cycle of dehumanization. To him as a freeman it was unimaginable to endure the inhuman physical torture and brutality of being ragged, forced to bathe naked, and being kept with pigs in a yard. He was stripped of his earned dignity and was dragged from being an honourable member of a community to the level of most inferior level of a community. Once separate from his original identity he was forced to identify himself with the given name and had to face consequences for possessing any education. The slaves were meant to be illiterate and ignorant about their original identities because it keeps them from having any knowledge and understanding of plantation's list of holdings, and also about the injustice that goes unchecked. This ignorance gives power and enables the slave master to have upper hand in subduing the voices of the slaves. Witnessing this condition of existence of the slaves who are now hardly and marginally human, in order to survive Northup was compelled to detach himself from whatever remaining fragments he had of his prior self.

¹²Wulandari, Putri. "Racism Discourse in the 12 Years a Slave Film Script." (2017).

¹³Smith, Valerie. "Black Life in the Balance: '12 Years a Slave.'" *American Literary History*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2014, pp. 362–366., www.jstor.org/stable/43817639. Accessed 17 Aug. 2021.

The film *12 Years a Slave* starts with a slave writing something. This marks the position where a slave is given the writes, instead of just narrating. Then the movie shows a clumsy room where black slaves (both men and women) are sleeping together and a person tries to deliberately engage himself to a sexual attempt which results into the sobbing of the woman. The movie, thus, starts in medias res and then it shows how the fate of the protagonist happened to be like this. Prompted by the heart-rendering scene when a little black boy is taken away and kept apart from his mother Northrup regains his consciousness and makes a decision, "I don't want to survive. I want to live". Also, here the changing of name as Platt takes a vital role as this is attached to the cognitive discourse where a name holds attachments (cognition) at several layers.

Along with featuring Solomon as the pivotal character the film features and highlights the families of the enslaved ones around him. In the next part, he comes across Eliza when he boarded the slave-transport vessel to New Orleans. Eliza (Adepero Oduye) also once was a slave, who had gained freedom, but was captured again with her two children. Like any other being with maternal instinct Eliza suffered a loss, but was denied any opportunity to show and lament in pain so that there's no shirking of work due to any emotional reason. His first master was described as "kind" master, William Ford (Benedict Cumberbatch), who allows him to have violin, though ignorant of its significance. The second master was much cruel and malevolent Edwin Epps (Michael Fassbender) who showed no traits of humanity towards his slaves. Kind or not, the character difference of the two white masters does not change the fate of slaves.

On this Epps plantation, audiences are introduced to the concept of slave-mistress and sexual assault of slaves, which detested by all American Whites and yet was practiced by owners who were fond of the power they could have over another human's body. Patsey (Lupita Nyong'o) Edwin Epps's enslaved worker as well as his unwilling mistress. The informal arrangement proved to have a dual effect on Patsey since she faced the wrath of Epp's wife in form of whipping when she was not being raped by the husband. She remained a stark reminder that one white man's one benevolent action does not give the scope to call him saviour unless she and all like her are brought into the light of freedom.

She met the enigmatic and engaging Mistress Shaw (Alfre Woodward). She now is an ex-slave and mistress of the Shaw plantation, and

in her court, she is served by the ones she used to work with. When Northrup was invited to visit her on Sundays, it was significant to prove the possibility of rising above others and leaving behind the life of servitude all by themselves. She was example, that correct manipulation can help one benefit even from wrong circumstances like slavery without the assistance of White carpenter.

X. CONCLUSION:

Through these references, theoretical approaches and methodologies, this research paper has explored, in a qualitative method how these American movies become the successful counter-narratives of the dominating US discourse as well as they uphold abolitionism from different angles. The fact that some White abolitionists curbed the nuisance and improved the scenario doesn't by any means reduce the adverse negativity caused.

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