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Commentary on "'The Burning Agonies of Hell': De-romanticizing Slavery in *12 Years a Slave*"

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Commentary:

This paper, which was written for Dr. Proctor's Writing 101 seminar, examines the accuracy of Steve McQueen's historical argument in his film *12 Years a Slave*. The paper was uniquely difficult to write, rewrite, and revisit—namely because each revision required re-watching one of the most overwhelming films I've ever seen. *12 Years a Slave* is a film that challenges and eviscerates our preconceived notions about American slavery, the ones we modern viewers have established to distance ourselves from its cataclysmic atrocities that lurk in our not-too-distant past. Creating this paper, then, became an endeavor to explain how McQueen's depiction of unimaginable suffering was devastatingly, sickeningly accurate.

Revisions on this paper included expanding the discussion on historical preconceptions about slavery fostered by *Gone with the Wind*, further detailing the cinematic tactics the filmmakers employed to relate their argument, and correcting the grammatical errors that snuck their way in. The end result, I hope, is a paper that vindicates McQueen's historical argument and encourages readers to turn to the film should they want their preconceptions about slavery to be shattered.

-Audrey Metzger, Writing Center Consultant