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*The Psychological Aspects in Solomon
Northup's Twelve Years a Slave*

*An Extended Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for
a Master's Degree in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Civilisation*

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Dedication

This research paper would not have been possible without the support of my family, especially my mother; a strong and gentle soul who taught me to trust in Allah, believe in hard work and that so much could be done with a little.

To my father, for earning an honest living for us and for supporting and encouraging me to believe in myself.

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Abstract

Much of antebellum culture can be understood as a response to the dynamic and rapidly changing social, political and economic context of the nineteenth century. As well as in African- American literature; the black writers in the south tried to contact the white in the north by writing autobiographies. Among these writers Solomon Northup describes the historical context and literary review in his autobiography of *twelve years a slave*. This experience opened a discussion in the psychological fields, about psychological aspects of Solomon Northup, to analyse both his historical and literary facts at that period.

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General Introduction

General introduction

Slavery has been of significant importance in American history. During the antebellum period, slavery undergirded the economy of the United States, dominated politics and eventually led to the war between the north and south, after the Civil War, the legacy left behind of slavery continued to influence American history, from the Reconstruction era of the twentieth century.

After the American Revolution, slavery became an institution in the south. This institution imposed a place in the world of literature. This created a new and strong genre of literature which was full of suffering and racism, as well as the devil of slavery. This genre was called slave narrative; among these narratives this research tends to shed light on Solomon Northup's story, in his experience during twelve years in the world of slavery in eighteenth century.

Solomon Northup is one of the most brilliant slave narratives in the eighteenth century and even nowadays after the adaptation of his story in 2013. His autobiography Twelve Years a Slave is a widely read narrative story. Solomon Northup is also the unique narrator after Frederick Douglass who still has a significant popular readership, and his reality about slave life in the south has entered into popular literary culture. Twelve Years a Slave was the autobiography that shocked people about the illustration of all what was hidden in American history, and the real connexion between the masters and slaves in the north and the south. Based on the aforementioned illustration, the current research aims at answering the following research question:

- How did slavery affect the psyche of Solomon Northup?

This question comes with the hypothesis that the effect of slavery on Solomon Northup's psyche is deemed positive. And to tackle this study, the researcher has adopted an analytical approach in order to delve into the inner entirety of Solomon Northup as a slave.

This analytical research is divided into two main chapters, the starting point is an introduction of American history during the antebellum period, and the life style of both

the north and the south as well as the causes of the civil war. This chapter tackles the most significance achievements of African American literature in general and slave narrative in particular, in addition to some slave narrators as an example.

The second chapter deals with the biography of Solomon Northup and the summary of Twelve Years a Slave, then the psychological aspects in Solomon's description, which is divided into two part; the first part about the psychology of Solomon from freedom to slavery, and the second part about Solomon changing psyche from slavery to freedom.

**Chapter One:
Reflections on the
American Pre-Civil
War**

Chapter One: Reflections on the American Pre-Civil War

1.1 Introduction

According to expert and historians, The Antebellum period was the most significant and sensitive period in the history of the United States of America during the 18th century. Its impact on the American society provoked some complications, such as slavery issues which was the most prevalent topic of the period. All the pain and misfortune that came with it gave birth to a unique and strong genre of literature that was full of experiences and challenges in searching for freedom, this genre is called African American literature that treated different situations, which ultimately changed the political, social, and economic climate of the American country.

Accordingly, this chapter aims to shed light on the historical period of the pre-civil war, proceeding to the African American literary tradition in a chronological manner. It also tackles the important slave narratives of the time.

1.2 The Pre-Civil War Era From 1800-1861

The pre-civil war period was among the most chaotic in American history, a time of significant changes that took place as the United States came of age. During these years, from 1800 to 1865 the nation was transformed from an underdeveloped nation of farmers and frontiersmen into an urbanized economic powerhouse. As the industrialized North and the agricultural South grew further apart, five major trends dominated American economic, social and political life during this period.

In the same period, slavery was the famous word and the perfect job for the Americans southerners. Thus, slaves were kidnapped and sold to the plantations of the south, because in 1850, the cotton plantations were very profitable. Slaves were treated like animals, they were beaten until death if they did not respect their owners, and also they were the statue and the symbol of their owners. In this period some African American slaves started to search and fight for their freedom. . Peter argue in his book about statue of slavery in American society during the 18th century. “During the eighteenth century, slavery became entrenched as a pervasive and in many colonies central- component of the social order, the dark underside of the American

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dream.” (Peter, 4). Peter asserted that the dream of America has changed to the worst while the coming of slavery through the American society.

In 1812, the antebellum period in American history was generally considered to be the period before the civil war, in this period the abolitionist movement started in the north and the country began to be split over the issue between north and south. Volo in his book explains the historical characteristics of the north and the south during antebellum era.

The antebellum period, particularly in American South, conjures images of oversized verandas, lazy rivers churned by the paddle wheels of luxurious steamboats, exaggerated hoop skirts, and trees hung with Spanish moss. At first glance, the slower pace of the civil war antebellum period, 1820-1860, seems to have rendered it an era untouched by time..... Meanwhile, the North was developing its industrial strength and a modern sophistication concerning business, ethics, and morality (Volo, 2).

Volo asserted that America was divided into two countries, the north was developing with industrials and intellectuals people however the south was agricultural with rivers and plantations.

In the early decades of the 18th century, the difference between the American North and South was undeniable, while the North decided to take on the pace of the rest of the world and focus on upgrading its standards, weather it was on the industrial level where America marked its name in the world history, or on the social ethics and morality where discrimination and prejudice were excluded from objective and business-related matters, the South, on the opposite side of the map, was in a more outdated reality. Its people made their lives by working on the land keeping a traditional way of life, however, that simple life style held a darker face, besides farming, southern Americans practiced slavery. These matters will be discussed in the following points.

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1.2.1 The Characteristics of the Pre-Civil War

The antebellum era was the most graceful period that fixed the coloured light into the differences of the conflict between the divided countries; north and south of US, such as the difficult subject of slavery and the civil rights movement to the American history, these features will illustrate the economics and life style during the pre-civil war.

1.2.1.1 Economic Features

In the pre-civil war period, America might have been partitioned under two distinctive countries, the business of the north and the agriculturally of the south.

A. Industry in the North

At the time, the Northern America established projects in order to attract people with capabilities and knowledge to duplicate the European industry, while Britain put laws that forbade anyone to knowledge of its mechanicals from immigrating and sharing that knowledge. America countered that by paying bounties to any capable person, with that, the new industry spread across America, from New England to Massachusetts.

In the 1820's, instead of weaving at local farms, power looms were included in the mills, and specialized trained employees were set to run the mills, who were mainly young women. At the same time, a population shift from farms to cities had already begun; the promise of better income in factory jobs accelerated that movement giving rise to the concept of wage labour, which gradually began to overtake previous forms of labour, such as apprenticeship and indentured servitude, family labour and slavery in industrialized areas.

These advances included all kinds of industries and thus production was effective.

B. Economy in the South

In the South, cotton plantations were very profitable, at least until overplanting leached most of the nutrients from the soil, the industrial progress that occurred in the North and in Britain increased the reclaim for cotton fibres. The plantation owners were able to obtain large tracts of land for little money after the Indian Removal Act

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was passed in 1830¹. “As the cotton culture spread westward, slavery strengthened its hold on the south. The demand for slaves was greatest in the Deep South, and the upper south sold its slaves “down the river” at ever higher prices.”(Sage, 10)

Sage declared previously, as much archive that the southerners were requesting All the more slaves will partake, energizes the cotton ranches. That’s the reason the high society sold a huge number from claiming slaves who thus might make sold of the different plantations owners. These enlargements required a large amount of slave force, since slaves would not demand a raise of wages and their progeny insured a labour source that would last for generations. This process led to an increase in the slave prices, the farmers, thus, found a source of wealth in their slaves and started selling slaves farther to the south and west, which created a new sign of prestige and political power.

As the quality of soil decreased due to the over-plantation, farmers found the majority of their wealth in their slaves, consequently, they began looking for new lands further to the south like Texas and the Caribbean in order to expand their holdings and maintain their own way of living.

1.2.1.2 The Life Style

Since the two isolated nations might have been distinctive previously, economy and the places, they were likewise separate done life style.

a. Life in the South

The lifestyle of southern Americans had its own share in history, as historians struggled to bring the truth out of that reality that even at the time was difficult to understand. The world that was abiding by their own rules was divided into three classes; which are: **Independent farmers**: they are those who owned their own farms, which they worked, themselves with the family members. Most of independent farmers owned slaves, as their crops production gained more success, they began to expand their lands and buy more slaves. Accordingly, they increased their status in society and even became part of the elite (the upper-class men).

¹It is a law of United States proposed by the president Andrew Jackson and signed on 28 may, 1830, provided for the general resettlement of native Americans from east of the Mississippi River to lands west (Indian territory).

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Free African-Americans: they are mostly skilled in a kind of carpentry or had a musical gift, which they used to gain money for their masters, and by saving enough money they would buy their own freedom. There were some others who were given their freedom by their masters for some deeds or services, even though this act was considered illegal after the slaves revolted in the 1830's.(Williams, p7-8)

Most of these newly freed slaves earned their living in the cities by using their own skills; there were even those who became independent farmers; however, they stayed close to the place they used to belong because of their family members who were still slaves. Free African Americans had to pay certain taxes and keep their papers all the time in fear of going back to slavery. (Williams, p8)

- **Enslaved African-Americans:** they were an unpaid labour source, who worked from sun-up to sundown, they were given limited food and lived in one room, most of them spent their whole life in the same plantation, and some were bought and sold under their white masters' supervision. They had to carry a pass issued by their masters in order to travel from plantation to another, and they did not have the right to learn or acquire skills, for that would lead to their rebellion against their masters or they would gain their freedom. Any slave that would dare to defy the master, not working fast enough, getting late to the fields or attempting to run away, would be punished severely or be killed in order to set an example for the other slaves.(William p12)
- **African-American Slave Women:** African American female writers have written their experiences through biographies, poems, and essays to show the sufferance of the moral and physic abuses of slave women before and during the civil war, their aim was to show their talents as well as their broken feelings and emotions to the society in order to be free. (Rochelle and Sharon ,p 38)

“The concept has many dimensions and many possible understandings. In antebellum society in the south, there lived women of different colours, social statuses, and material conditions. The scale that would offer some measures according to which society could judge its women objectively was not easy to find”(Bartacova 11)

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h Bartacova argues that slave women, they existed as objects of sexual exploitation, had safeguards from being sexually, harassed or raped, they had to live as long-term concubines for their owners, even slave men were powerless in protecting the women they loved.

B. Life in the North

Life in the north was modern and civilized because of factories and industries like big cities such as New York; was the largest city in America, also it contained 800,000 inhabitants. The most of northerners lived in the urban areas; their life was easier and more successful than the life in south as well as in transportations, politics, education, business and medicines. Sage explains in his book more important details about lifestyle of the north, “the idea of being “on time” represented a significant change in life style of most city duellers; and since the north was the most urbanized section of the country, “being on time” became characteristics of northern life”(Sage 6). Sage asserted that many northerners were very organized in their life; the idea of being punctual was the most important element that changed them to intellectuals and more current than southerners. (History Net, 2016)

C. Religion

Many slaves used religion to make their brutal lives bearable, some of them carried on their African religions, including Islam, and others practiced Christianity. In addition, they used religions in their stories and poems to feel confidence in god. To this end, “Religion played an important role in early African American literature. Colonists in early America, like the family who owned Phillis Wheatly², often instructed their slaves and indentured servants in the tenets of the Christian faith” (Jones 6). Sharon argued that religion was the most important element in African American literature, because the Americans believed in faith like the family who owned Phillis Wheatly, they were humanitarian because they taught her and they

² Phillis Whitley was a black slave woman from West Africa, she was sold into slavery and became the first African American female poet in 1773.

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made her as a servant not as a slave and by the end they gave her freedom.(Antebellum Period 2016)

All the autobiographies and novels as well as poems of African American literature contain the concept of religion.

1.3 The Civil War and the Abolitionists' Movement

The American abolitionist movement sprung before and during the civil war in order to finish slavery in America. It covered many societies, churches, and members from both the South and the North, and even though it was fragmented, it was a success. The members included politicians, freed African Americans, white Americans and many others, despite the variations in their anti-Slavery ideologies; they formed a galvanizing power to eradicate slavery.

Civil war, the so-called “the war between the states”, was between the north and the south of America about many issues, among these issues was slavery that many historians agreed about. This war resulted in the end of slavery. “In 1861, the US .civil war (1861-1865) began. Northern states made up the union. Southern states that seceded from the union formed the confederacy. The war lasted four years and took the lives of more than 620,000 people.”(Amanda 4)

The two sides of the conflict were the union from the north US led by Abraham Lincoln, who was the president during the war. On the other side, there was the confederate, mainly made up of the South Eastern states of the US that were led by Robert lee. The war was triggered for two main reasons, slavery and states' rights. The north fought for the abolishment of slavery and the preservation of the United States; thus they didn't want the southern states to leave the union; however, southerners requested for a country of their own, where slavery would not be prohibited, and they would have more control over their lands.(Peterson ,p4)

In the north, even though many people held racist ideas, they were against slavery; and so the abolishment of slavery began long before the civil war; and succeeded to put an end to it. Since over thirty percent of confederate households had slaves, and the industries based on the labour of the plantations, slaves would be

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damaged if slavery was abolished; the confederacy feared that the new states laws would prohibit slavery and so their source of income would be endangered. (Peterson 4)

When the war was over, and the north had won, the number of human casualties was enormous, 620,000 men died in the battlefield. The north counted about 364,000 dead soldiers, including 37,000 black men who fought for their freedom. Countless men died during the war, not in the battlefield, but the conditions of the war were getting so bad that many soldiers died of disease or minor injuries that were not treated well which led to a more horrible death. Since most of the battles took place in the south, many fields and crops plantations were destroyed, the countryside was muddled by the passage of armies from both sides, and so most livestock was dead. (History Spark Notes 2016)

1.4 African-American Literature

The argument over slavery in the middle of the 19th century gave birth to a subgenre of African American literature that was called slave literature. This new kind of literature impassioned both sides of debate. On one side, the abolitionists' view of the evil of slavery was represented in books like Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's cabin (1852). On the other side, the white, southern writers, so-called Anti-Tom literature that represented the slave point of view; its most leading writers was William Gilmore Simms the golden Christmas (1852) (New World Encyclopedia, Hammon, 2009)

Charon argued that African American literature express the feelings and emotions of sufferings of slaves during their slavery and their dreams about freedom. "African American writers since colonial times have used their voices in written and spoken form to protest racial discrimination. Telling stories to assert the only form of power they had." (Charon 468). Charon asserted that in the colonial time the only weapons for African American writers were their writings and their voices to tell their stories that are full of sufferings and oppression.

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Some former slaves from the north and the Caribbean who wrote accounts of their lives reached six thousands; in which 150 of them had their books published separately. Among the slave narratives, one can distinguish three different categories: tales of religious redemption, writings about progress and narrations to inspire the abolitionist struggle; the latter are the most famous since they tend to have a strong autobiographical motif, some of them are known as the most literary of all African American writings in the 19th century. Two of the best-known narratives include Frederick Douglass' *Autobiography*, and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs (New World Encyclopedia 2016).

1.4.1 Slave Narratives Literature

The former slaves' *Autobiographies* made the foundation of African American literature as it offered glimpses into their reality. The first published narratives in the 19th century showed the world for the first time the will to be known and resolve to write among a people so often defined out of humanity. "...they used writing, a freedom previously derived them, to publish slave narratives, poetry, letters, essays, and speeches, attempting to convince primarily white audiences of the evils of slavery (Charon 468).

Charon argued that the racial prejudice pushed the blacks to write first about their lives under the pressure of slavery, in order to demonstrate their humanity, and to demonstrate their reliability as truth-tellers of their own experiences. They also wrote to prove their own psychological, spiritual and literary independence, even though some of them were still legally fugitives when they wrote, but they not only revealed how they broke out of their chains, but they also showed it as a precious act because the pen released them from the prejudice of their society. In this vein, "African American literature, as the works in this anthology, illustrate, frequently embodies the theme of slavery versus freedom" (Jones 954).

In an honest and compelling language, former slave writers like Harriet Jacobs showed the daily dilemmas that slaves faced, especially women. "Why does the slave ever love?" "Why allow the tendrils of the heart to twine around objects which may at any moment be wrenched away by the hand of violence?" (West 36)

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In these passages, Harriet Jacobs showed how to trust and how to love a partner and children with all ones' heart, when all the world offers were endearment and the everlasting threat of families being torn apart, with the remarkable insight of an ex-slave who lived through sexual abuse, separation and the lack of safety much less finding the ability to love..Jacobs declared in her writings:“when separations come by the hand of death, the pious soul can bow to resignation . . . but when the ruthless hand of man strikes the blow... it is hard to be submissive....”(Blight 2009)

She tried, by the use of her writings, to escape from her past and to show the indulgence that she had to bear in her youth against the brutality and inhumanity like any other slave, like Frederick Douglass, who was one of the most famous former slave writers, had the same perspective as any other African-American writer. The man who had escaped at the age of twenty, left many unforgettable expressions of the meaning of slavery and freedom in the most eloquent and widely read slave narratives: *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass* (1845). His achievement of literacy formed a life-giving beacon for him, as it gave him the passion to rise against his enslavers; he also showed that the knowledge he gained turn out to be a new source of torment, as he grew more aware of his wretched conditions.

1.4.2 poetry

African American literature hired the poet as a means of putting down to earth the disruption of slavery and to emancipate themselves from its chains. African American writers used poems to captivate the white readers of the north, to convince them about the evil of slavery and maintain for the humanity of blacks. The first fascinating literary works appeared in North Carolina, and dealt with the issues that were common at the time, like slavery and American Indian-European conflicts, thus gained popularity.

Interestingly enough, Volo conferred that the pre-civil war was the most brilliant period of American poets, because of the war and the issue of slavery. To his belief, “the antebellum period began the golden age of American poets, which, although interrupted by war, continued throughout the 19th century” (Volo 236). The famous poets that sparked something extraordinary new at that time were Washington

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Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, James Fennimore Cooper, Edgar Allan Poe, and Phillis Wheatly. In Wheatly's first collection, there are poems on various subjects, Religious and Moral in 1773. Among these poems, one may recall:

On Being Brought from Africa to America:

Tw'as mercy brought me from my Pagan land,

Taught my benighted soul to understand

That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too;

Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.

Some view our sable race with scornful eye,

Their colour is a diabolic die. (Rochelle and Sharon 19)

During the civil war, many poems were written by native citizens and soldiers from the north and the south. These poems are printed in variety formats, as well as newspapers, magazines, broadsheets, and song sheets. All these poems make the image clear about the lives and emotions of citizens and soldiers at that time, and all the readers could understand how poetry helped unifying citizens, memorialized the dead, and muddled the nations under the devil of war. (Ledyard 2016)

African American oral traditions and cultures are also included in poetry, like songs and speeches are about freedom and faith in Christianity and their relationship with god. *Follow the Drinkin's Gourd* is a song from 1850's typifies the quest for freedom among fugitive slaves; these songs represent the big dipper, which signifies the direction of the North Star. These songs are very popular. (Rochelle and Sharon ,p39)

When the sun comes back and the first quail calls,

Follow the drinkin' gourd.

For the old man is awaiting for to carry you to freedom

If you follow the drinkin' gourd.

Chorus:

Follow the drinkin' gourd,

Follow the drinkin' gourd.

For the old man is awaiting for to carry you to freedom

If you follow the drinkin' gourd

(Rochelle and Sharon 84)

In the south of America, slaves sing this song during their work in the plantations in order to express their feelings and shorten the time.

1.4.3 African American Novels and Short stories

African American literature is a movement that represents a journey from slavery to freedom, for African American writers, social, political, historical, and cultural events shape African American literature as poets, playwrights, novelists, and short-story writers, seek to express their feelings under the hell of slavery as well as their faith into freedom. A lot of novelists and short story writers were known during the pre-civil war among the most significant of all is Harriet Jacobs. Harriet Jacobs was born in 1813 and died in 1897, her famous book is *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* in 1861. William Wells Brown (1814-1884) is a playwright and novelist, his famous works *Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave*, written in 1847, and the novel *the president's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States* (1853), also his famous play *The Escape; Or Leap for Freedom* (1858). Harriet E. Wilson (1828-1863) was considered the first novelist in African American literature. She is famous for her novels: *From Our Nig; Or, Sketches From the Life of a free Black, in a Two-story White House*, and *North: Showing That Slavery's Shadows Fall Even There* (1859).

1.5 Slave Narratives Writers

Differently called “The Slave Narrative”, “The Freedom Narrative”, or “The Liberation Narrative” are the stories of enslaved African American people recounting their personal experiences of antebellum period. Most of them had escaped from

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slavery and found their way to the north, finding their solace in writing among which one may be brought to the fore:

1.5.1 Frederick Douglass

His full name is Frederick Augustus Washington Baily. He was born in Maryland's Eastern shore in 1818, as an abolitionist, writer and orator. He was among the brilliant black American leaders of the 19th century. Douglass was born to a slave woman and probably, her white master; he gained his freedom at the age of twenty, and changed his name to Douglass; the name was inspired from Sir Walter Scott's *The Lady of the Lake*.

He illustrated his years as a slave in his most known writings: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845), *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) and *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881) which marked his greatest contributions in literature history. As an antislavery propaganda and personal revelation, his writings were referred to as the finest examples of the slave narrative tradition and as classics of American autobiography. The mentioning of his master's name and location sent Douglass on a long speaking tour to Great Britain and Ireland in order to escape the threat of returning to slavery. (Rochelle and Sharon p107)

His attacks on Jim Crow and lynching in the 1890s and abolitionist activities in the early 1840s ranged his life as a reformer. His work editing in an influential black newspaper for almost two decades and the thousands of speeches, he levied an irresistible indictment against slavery and racism; thus achieved international fame and great persuasive power. (Rochelle and Sharon 107)

1.5.2 William Grimes

William Grimes (1784-1865) was considered as the first narrative writer of an American ex-slave biography, *Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave*, published in 1825. He was born in King George Country, Virginia. His father was a wealthy plantation owner and his mother was a slave in a neighbouring plantation. His works differed from servant, valet to field worker and stable boy, that was because he had more than ten masters, until he reached the age of 30 when he escaped by stowing

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away on a ship that sailed from Georgia to New York City. He settled down in Connecticut and started a new life as a barber; his clients were mostly Yale college students. Soon after that, his former master tracked him down demanding him to pay for his freedom or face the threat of re-enslavement, as he mentioned in his memoir that he wrote in hopes of recovering his finances. On his death, at the age of 81, his obituary was published as far away as Brooklyn. (Williamson 2006)

1.5.3 Charles Ball

He was born near the end of the 18th century, in Maryland from a kidnapped African father. He lived as a slave there until, at the age of thirty, he was sold and taken away from his wife and children. He spent the next years working on the cotton plantation in Georgia, which was one of the harshest slave colonies at the time. After many attempts of escaping, he settled down as a fugitive in Pennsylvania, where he wrote an anonymous narrative entitled *Fifty Years in Chains, or The Life of an American Slave*, 1859 (Henderson 2004)

In Ball's autobiography, published in 1836, he mentioned in detail the evolution of the cotton industry and the subsequent increase in demands for slaves, which affected the lives of enslaved African Americans. His autobiography was entitled *The Life and Adventures of Charles Ball* written in 1837. (Spartacus Educational 2015)

1.5.4 Harriet Jacobs

She was born a slave. Her father was a skilled carpenter, who allowed her and her family to live in a comfortable home. Even though multiple families owned them, Harriet considered her early years of childhood happy; that lasted until her mother died and soon after that her father. Harriet and her brother faced the cold life of slavery as they were handed from house to house. (Rochelle and Sharon 107)

Tutored by her mistress, she learned to read and write. Jacobs was championed by white abolitionists among them Lydia Maria Child who edited her book. Harriet used fictitious names in her autobiography in order to protect the identity of family members. Like any other autobiography, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* is Harriet's version of events that occurred in the slaves' everyday life. In addition, she

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narrated about her sexual abuses by white men and the pathetic forfeit of her two children that each black woman might have experienced at that time (Rochelle and Sharon 107).

1.5.5 Phillis Wheatley

She was born in Senegal/Gambia in 1753. She was kidnapped from West Africa and sold as a slave to Boston, Massachusetts in 1761. John Wheatley bought her as a personal servant for his wife; soon the Wheatleys educated Phillis the Latin and Greek language until she started to write highly praised poetry. She published her first book of poetry in 1767, and her first book of verse, *Poems on various subjects, Religious and Morals*, in 1773. Later she was freed from slavery and got married with Wheatley. She was the first African American woman to publish a book of poetry during the colonies in 1773. However, she didn't find a publisher for her second book of poems, later she died in Boston on December 5, 1784 (ibid 19).

1.5.6 Harriet. E. Wilson

Harriet was born in Milford, New Hampshire on March 15th, 1825. She was born free and lived as an orphan. She married twice. Harriet was considered the first female African-American novelist, her autobiographical novel *Our Nig: Sketches from the Life of a Free Black*. The novel treated racism in the pre-civil war North, after Henry Louis Gates. Jr discovered her novel in 1982, who documented it as the first and the best-known African American novel. Harriet died in Quincy, Massachusetts on June 28, 1900 (Harriet E. Wilson Biography 2016).

1.6 Conclusion

The Antebellum era was the period before the civil war, where the United States entered a phase of radical change in economics, society and every other side in human life. This created a breach between the North and the South. At that period, slavery gained popularity among the white population, which was one of the main reasons that led to the eruption of the civil war. With that movement, the African American literature was pioneered by the writings of some former slaves who were fortunate enough to gain education and win their freedom. This literature included poems,

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stories and novels that were used as instruments against slavery, like the autobiography of Solomon Northup that will be discussed in the second chapter.

**Chapter Two:
Psychological Aspects
in Solomon's "Twelve
Years a Slave"**

2.1 Introduction

Solomon Northup is an interesting and particularly amazing slave narrative writer in African American literature, because he has become famous by only writing one book about his slave experiences during twelve years. Solomon reflects the reality of slavery and Abolition during the pre-civil war by giving all the details of masters, slaves, abuses, and the true feelings of both men and women into slavery, his autobiography called Twelve Years a Slave would present a concept of slavery.

This chapter tends to shed light on the biography of Solomon Northup, the summary of Twelve Years a Slave, and the Psychological aspects in Solomon's polished gem work.

2.2 Biography of Solomon Northup

Solomon Northup was an African American, born in what is now known as Minerva, New York. It was mentioned in *Twelve Years a Slave* that he was born in July 1808. He later declared in a statement that he was born a year earlier. Unlike him, his father Mintus was born as a slave, and later gained freedom after his master's death. After a certain time, he was able to have his own farm and enough land to gain the same rights as any other citizen. Solomon grew up working in his family's farm and gained some education. At the age of twenty, he married Anne Hompton. Ten years later, in 1838, they sold their farm and moved to Saratoga Springs, New York, where they worked odd jobs in order to support their three children, there, Northup made a name for himself as a talented fiddler (Fiske 2016).

Few years later, in March 1841, he came across two men who claimed to be with a circus, they offered him a place in their act as a violinist and a fair pay. While heading south, as soon as they reached Washington DC, he was drugged and sold as a slave while he was unconscious. He woke up and realised that he was chained in an underground cell. He was transported by Richmond, Virginia, and then delivered by a ship to New Orleans, where he was sold in a slave market. His name changed to Platt Hamilton. After that he spent 12 years as a slave in the Bayou Boeuf plantations of central Louisiana's red river valley (Fiske 2016)

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His first owner was William Prince Ford, who Northup mentioned his kindness. However, the financial exigencies forced Ford to sell Solomon to the brutal John M. Tibaut, but Northup was sold as a repayment of a debt. Tibaut owned only forty percent of him as the debt was less worth than the slave himself. So, Tibaut had Northup as his only slave, when he tried to whip him, Northup resisted and overpowered him. Tibaut, furious by his resistance, sought help from neighbouring overseers, but Northup was rescued by Ford's overseer. He also escaped from a second attempt of assault and found refuge with Ford, who demanded that Tibaut sell or sets Northup free (Fiske 2016).

Under the claim of Ford, Northup was sold to Edwin Epps, and remained his slave for the next decade. Under Epps' ownership, Solomon had various tasks, from being an artisan slave to a field hand, besides that, he was mostly a driver in charge of other slaves.

Epps had a sadistic aspect, and never missed a chance to show his skills in wielding a whip. In those ten years, Solomon tried many times to escape but all his attempts were a failure. Only by the arrival of a Canadian abolitionist, a carpenter named Samuel Bass, who came on a visit to Epps' farm, Northup was managed for some letters to be delivered to some of his friends in New York. In those letters, he mentioned all the events he went through and asked for his rescue. One of those letters was addressed to Anne Northup, who sought for the help of Henry B. Northup, an old friend of Solomon's and the grandnephew of the man who set Mintus free; Northup's father. (David Fiske 2016)

Henry acquired a large support from the leading citizens of Sandy Hills, now known as Hudson fall. In 1852, Gov. Washington Hunt, an agent of the state of New York, called Henry to rescue Northup. Henry armed himself with an array of documentation alongside with a Supreme Court order and letters from a senator, and then travelled to Louisiana, where they were able to locate Solomon and save him from slavery. It was on January 1853 that Northup was legally a free man. (David Fiske 2016)

Solomon was lately able to join his family. The operation of his rescue was widely known. In Washington DC, he brought charges against James H. Birch, the man who enslaved him, but because of his skin colour, he was not permitted to testify and so the case was dismissed. Later that year, Northup, together with the help of a local writer David Wilson, wrote his memoir Twelve Years a Slave, which sold 30,000 copies. (Fiske 2016)

Solomon purchased an estate in upstate New York where he spent the rest of his life with his family. Northup became a national celebrity; he took place in extensive speaking tours, and as a result, the men who kidnapped him were arrested in 1854. The case reached the Supreme Court, but after all the legal actions it was eventually dismissed. After that, Solomon disappeared from public view, but it was speculated that he joined the Underground Railroad, where he provided a safe passage for slaves to reach Canada. The circumstances of his death as well as his place of burial remain unknown (Fiske 2016)

Twelve Years a Slave is the main reference to know the details of his experiences.

2.3 Summary of the Autobiography Twelve Years a Slave

Twelve Years a Slave was recorded by David Wilson, a white lawyer and legislator from New York who claimed to have presented "a faithful history of Solomon Northup's life, as" (Northup 1) "received it from his lips" (Northup 15). Dedicated to Harriet Beecher Stowe and introduced as "another Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin", Northup's book was published in 1853, less than a year after his liberation. It sold over thirty thousand copies. It is therefore not only one of the longest North American slave narratives, but also one of the best-selling (Derby & Miller 2016).

In chapter one and two, Solomon's narration is about his life as a free man living in Upstate New York, born to an ex-slave in July 1808. He worked on a farm with his father. He also received a simple education by learning how to read and how to write. Additionally, he has learned to play the violin. At the age of 21, he married Anne Hampton and started a new life. Solomon gained many skills by performing in

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different kinds of work such as farming, lumber jacking, and playing the violin, whereas Anne cooked to earn some money. The couple brought up three children.

In 1841, Solomon encountered two white men who offered him a well- paid job with a circus, provided that he would travel with them to Washington D.C.

“ I at once accepted the tempting offer, both for the reward it promised, and from a desire to visit the metropolis.”(Northup 30) he accepted the offer and joined them, but after a day of drinking, he became terribly ill, “ On these occasions, after serving themselves, they would pour out a glass and hand it to me... I felt extremely ill. My head commenced aching—a dull, heavy pain, inexpressibly disagreeable. At the supper table” (Northup 36). On his way to see a doctor he fainted, when he woke up he found himself alone and chained in a dark room.

--Chapter three and four in the Autobiography describes the second sequence of Solomon's life. He stated how he found himself as a slave prisoner under the brutality of James H. Burch who was a cruel slave trader in Washington, D.C. “... that I had been kidnapped. But that I thought was incredible.” (p 38) When Solomon declared himself as a free man, Burch bashed on him, and threatened to kill him if he ever mentioned his freedom again.

“I asserted, aloud and boldly, that I was a freeman—a resident of Saratoga, where I had a wife and children, who were also free...Burch commenced beating me. Blow after blow was inflicted upon my naked body. When his unrelenting arm grew tired, he stopped and asked if I still insisted I was a free man.” (Northup 44-45). Solomon was obliged to join the other slaves in silence. At that moment, Solomon acknowledged his hopeless situation. Then, he was transported downriver. Later, he was settled down in Orleans, Louisiana. where Burch changed Solomon's name and the other slaves' in order to erase all their past, Solomon was named Platt and he was put for sale, but his sale was delayed when he contracted smallpox, which nearly killed him. later he was sold along a slave woman named Eliza to a man named William Ford, Eliza was a mother of two children, “... It was enough to melt heart of stone to listen to the pitiful expressions of that desolate and distracted mother. Her name was Eliza ” (Northup 52) she pleased Ford to buy her children, but Burch asked

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a lot of money for the whole slave family, so Ford refused to buy the children. All those harsh experiences left Solomon with a trauma as his own foundation was demolished under his master's whip.

From chapter seven to eleven, that part of the narration is about the first two years under the first master's enslavement., "I was now known as Platt, the name given me by Burch" (p 91). Under the name "Platt"; Solomon spent his days working in his master's fields, his master, Ford was a gentle master and a religious man; he also used to teach Christianity to his slaves. As for Eliza, she has been depressed for the loss of her children, "She was so distinguished in the conveyance to Ford" (p 91). She cried day and night until Ford's wife could not support her voice so she ordered to kill her. On the other hand; Solomon had found the pleasure to be in Ford's services. "On Ford's arrival at the mill, we were employed in piling lumber, and chopping logs, which occupation we continued during the remainder of the summer" (p 97). Solomon proposed to his master some work's structure to save money and time by transporting lumber through water instead of land. Ford liked Solomon's ideas, but good moments cannot last for long. Ford had to sell Solomon to a cruel carpenter named John M. Tibbeats. Soon Tibbeats became the archenemy of Platt. As he tried to kill Platt twice, the first one he tried to shoot him with a weapon and the second time he tried to hang him, but Mr Ford and his overseer Mr Chapin saved his life ". I was now no longer the property of Tibbeats—his dog, his brute, dreading his wrath and cruelty day and night; and whoever or whatever my new master might prove to be, I could not, certainly, regret the change."(p 161) At that time, Tibbeats sold Platt to the notorious Edwin Epps the nigger breaker.

The fourth sequence of events was exhibited in the twelfth to the twentieth chapter. That period focuses on the ten years Solomon lived under the rule of Edwin Epps. Solomon described those ten years in detail working on two different plantations in Bayou Boeuf, in Louisiana. Epps was the worst and the cruellest master that Solomon had ever seen. He whipped his slaves every day and every time until death. To this end, Solomon narrated many stories that happened every day in Edwin's plantations and home, all these stories were about abuses and humiliation of

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all the slaves. "Master Epps was a roustering, blustering, noisy fellow, whose chief delight was in dancing with his "niggers," or lashing them about the yard with his long whip, just for the pleasure of hearing them screech and scream, as the great welts were planted on their back" (p 163)

The most interesting story at that period was that of Patsey; a slave girl of twenty-three years old. She was always raped and whipped by Edwin. "Patsey wept oftener, and suffered more, than any of her companions. She had been literally excoriated. Her back bore the scars of a thousand stripes; not because she was backward in her work, nor because she was of an unmindful and rebellious spirit, but because it had fallen to her lot to be the slave of a licentious master and a jealous mistress." (p 189) At the worst moment, when Patsey went to visit her friend in order to get a bar of soap to wash herself, Edwin became angry thinking her guilty of a sexual meeting. Thus, Platt was forced to whip Patsey naked, but he tried to relieve her beaten but Ford's wife demanded for more, until Edwin replaced Platt and whipped her without mercy.

The years went by and Platt took every opportunity to write letters to his friends by using papers and any material he could get. "I appropriated a sheet, concealing it in the cabin, under the board on which I slept, after various experiments I succeeded in making ink, by boiling white maple bark, and with a feather...This letter I kept a long time, contriving measures by which it could be safely deposited in the post-office." (p 230-231)

Yet, with time, he lost hope, until he met a carpenter named Bass; an abolitionist from Canada who employed him to work on a building project for Epps. Solomon told his story to Bass; "He was deeply interested asking numerous questions in reference to localities and events. Having ended my story, I besought him to write to some of my friends at the North, acquainting them with my situation, and begging them to forward free papers, or take such steps as they might consider proper to secure my release." (p 271) Therefore, he decided to help him, so he sent Solomon's letters to his friends in the North, asking them to come and liberate the man from his slavery.

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The final part of Solomon’s story was represented extensively from chapter twenty-one to twenty-two. In 1853, Solomon’s friends in the North located Solomon after ferreting out everywhere. Henry B, a white man, was Solomon’s close friend, came to Louisiana to save him. After many inquiries, he found Northup with the help of a local sheriff. Finally, he was rescued from the hell of Edwin Epps. Later Solomon travelled back to New York, during his journey; he stopped for a short moment in Washington D.C to pursue legal charges against James H Burch for his role in his kidnapping. After some sequenced events, he rescued some slaves’ friends, and Burch was imprisoned. Finally, Solomon joined up his family in Saratoga Springs, “We left Washington on the 20th of January, and proceeding by the way of Philadelphia, New-York, and Albany, reached Sandy Hill in the night of the 21st. My heart overflowed with happiness as I looked around upon old familiar scenes, and found myself in the midst of friends of other days” (p 319). He found his daughter had married and gave birth to a baby who was named in his honour; Solomon Northup Staunton. “Margaret was the first that met me. She did not recognize me. When I left her, she was but seven years old, a little prattling girl, playing with her toys. Now she was grown to womanhood—was married, with a bright-eyed boy standing by her side.” (Northup 319)

2. 4 The Psychological Aspects in Solomon’s “Twelve Years a Slave”

When Solomon Northup tells his experience of slavery in his autobiography, the sociologists and the psychologists analyse his life. This analysis enables the reader to understand the real meaning of slavery as well as the slave’s mental.

According to dictionary definitions, psychology can be broadly defined as the study of the human mind and behaviour. (Heffner 2016)

Slavery is a dehumanizing institution, which assaults the human bodies and minds of the slaves, and changes their physical and psychological feelings to the worst. In Solomon’s experience, the trauma, violence and racism are the major elements that change his ego from a normal free man to a strong slave. To the end, the psychological analysis of Solomon’s autobiography will be divided into two main periods:

2.4.1 Solomon's Psychology From Freedom to Slavery

Northup's viewpoint was highly detailed in his autobiography, as he laboured for twelve years under various masters. He was the son of an ex-slave that led him a freeborn and successful man, working and getting married in New York. He was well educated and self-conscious about his situation. Interestingly still, he was able to read and write, and he learned how to play violin to show his talent and capacity as a competent man. However, his skill was not enough to save himself from his slaveholders. In the first two chapters, Solomon introduced his family's history, as the key theme that stretched through this book, which mainly centred on slavery. In this part, Solomon's psychology was divided into three situations that will be gauged and analysed in the following outlines.

2.4.1.1 Trauma

Dragged and beaten, Solomon Northup was illegally kidnapped from his home in Saratoga Spring in New York, and sold as a slave in Washington DC in 1841. When Solomon woke up he found himself chained in a dark room where he was suddenly transformed from a free black man in the north to a slave in the south. Solomon was shocked and asked himself "could it be possible that I was thousands of miles from home....that I had been chained and beaten without mercy...that I was even herded with a drove of slaves, a slave myself?" (Northup 1)

Detailing his transformation with the other slaves into animals' property, he claims it

would make us hold up our heads, walk briskly back and forth, while customers would feel our hands and arms and bodies, turn us about, ask us what we could do, make us open our mouths and show our teeth, precisely as a jockey examines a horse which he is about to barter for a purchase (ibid 2)

In this text, Solomon witnesses the other slaves being deprived of their pride as human beings and treated merely as animals. Therefore, it was traumatic that

Solomon could feel about the other slaves in his writing while he was forced to accept his new status or he chose between life and death;

I thought I must die beneath the lashes of the accursed brute. Even now, the flesh crawns open my bones, as I recall the scene. I was all on fire. My suffering I can compare to nothing else than the burning agonies of hell (Northup 45).

Solomon was sold down the river to Louisiana and laboured in the cotton plantation. The white refused to believe Solomon's freedom and this was the first major point that led the psychologists and historians to analyse the slave mental under the traumatic situation, "the systematic dehumanization of African slaves was initial traumatic... And generations of their descendants have born the scars" (Silja 2006).

This period was a traumatic experience in the life of Solomon that gave him a chance to discover the slave life in the south and their relationship with their white masters that he never heard about in his life; he was stripped of his humanity as well.

2.4.1.2 Dehumanization

The whites treat Solomon and other black slave characters as or even worse than animals. Solomon recounts how he has been separated from his hometown, and dehumanized by both of the physical and psychological components. In this vein, he asserts: "I felt there was no trust or mercy in unfeeling man; and commending man myself to the oppressed, bowed my head upon my fettered hands, and wept most bitterly" (Northup 39).

Solomon told the story of how he was sold to different masters and plantations, and how he was threatened by his masters. He explained his situation: "alone in utter darkness, and in chains" (ibid 38), and "a slave pen within the very shadow of the *capitol*" (ibid 43). Northup, like the other slaves, was brutally whipped by the slave trader James Burch each time he spoke about being a free man, so his name was changed to Platt in order to plant more despair in his heart and make his freedom even harder to gain "your name is Platt you answer my description" (Northup 76)

One of the characters Solomon describes in his novel was a young mother Eliza with her two children, Randall Berry and Emily Berry. She was sold with Solomon by William Ford and separated from her children. After a short period, Eliza died without ever seeing her children again.

When Eliza saw that Freeman would not let her go with her child, she screamed with all her might and held her daughter Emily refusing to go without her; full of rage Freeman tore the child from her mother by force and pushed Eliza harshly forward as her daughter begged her to stay. Therefore, even the bond between a mother and her child could not survive the cruelty of slavery (Northup 87).

Another symbol of dehumanization in this story was the young girl Patsy. She was the best slave in the plantation, yet, she was threatened crueller than the other slaves were. This was delineated in the autobiography, "naturally she was a joyous creature, a laughing ...yet Patsy wept of tenner, and suffered more than any companions...but because it had fallen to her lot to be the slave of a licentious master and a jealous mistress" (Northup 188,189). Overall, Patsy and Solomon were the major characters whose sufferings painted the cruelty of slavery in Twelve Years a Slave.

2.4.1.3 Violence and Oppression

Twelve Years a Slave is one of the most authentic descriptions of slavery from the viewpoint of the slave himself. Extreme violence is central in Northup's narrative mostly when Solomon emphasizes that the slave owner's authority is only maintained by terrorizing enslaved black people they own with relentless physical and psychological violence. Whips, paddles, shackles, and the stocks make repeat appearances, especially in Solomon's description of his life as a newly kidnapped free man. Stripped of his clothing and nailed to the floor, Northup endures blow after blow to his naked body after he awoke in a slave pen; his enslavers paused only to ask if their prisoner would accept his new status. As Northup recollected:

As soon as these formidable whips appeared, I was seized by both of them, and roughly divested of my clothing. My feet, as has been

stated, were fastened to the floor [...]. With the paddle, Burch commenced beating me. Blow after blow was inflicted on my naked body. When his unrelenting arm grew tired, he stopped and asked if I still insisted I was a free man. I did insist upon it, and then the blows were renewed, faster and more energetically, if possible, than before (Northup 44-45).

Solomon explained the moment when Mrs Burch whipped him during his insistence of his freedom. In another scene with Tibeats when tried to kill him "The good genius, which thus far through life has saved me from the hands of violence, at that moment suggested a lucky thought" (Northup 133-134).

Solomon Northup also detailed the experiences of the slave women he encountered during his twelve years, and especially elaborated by the experience of Patsey, a twenty-three year-old slave who was the victim of a licentious master and a jealous mistress. Caught between her white mistress's jealous wrath and the sexual abuse of her master, Northup recalled that Patsey lived her life in torment and fear; "the enslaved victim of lust and hate, Patsey had no comfort of her life" (ibid 183). Patsey was the clear symbol of violence and oppression when she was between cruel white Americans, and the devil master Mr Epps and his jealous wife.

Another example of oppression was Mr Epps who forced Solomon to whip Patsey when she went to visit her friend to give her a bar of soap;

...He then seized it himself, and applied it with ten-fold greater force than I had. The painful cries and shrieks of the tortured Patsey, mingling with the loud and angry curses of Epps, loaded the air. She was terribly lacerated—I may say, without exaggeration, literally flayed. The lash was wet with blood, which flowed down her sides and dropped upon the ground (Northup 257)

Solomon was shocked, dehumanized and threatened by violence and oppression, as well as the other characters in his story. His experience opened a large window that reflected the reality of slavery and colonisation in the antebellum era¹.

2.4.2 Solomon's Psychology from Slavery to Freedom

Twelve years a slave is a story that is deemed the best slave narrative in African American literature by virtue of the fact of its challenges between slavery and freedom. This passage reveals the will Solomon showed for his freedom after over a decade of servitude, and after all the events that should have destroyed every ounce of his humanity he preserved his sanity and thus made clear that his pride and hope were not something his master could erase.

2.4.2.1. Otherness

In Solomon Northup's Twelve Years a Slave, otherness is the problem of this story. This peril has various forms. The researchers find the problem of otherness, such as human trafficking, oppression and forcefulness. In this story, otherness is manifested in Solomon being one of the black people, and those who have sold him and his masters as the white people.

Solomon stated in his story the fact that even children are not spared from the slave traders, and so it is made clear that otherness overlooks the age of slaves. "There I found three slaves- one of them a lad of ten years, the other young men of about twenty and twenty-five" (Northup 48).

The masters forced Solomon as a slave, and did not consider nor asked whether he was a free man or not. He thought about using force to oppose his enslavers and reclaim his former state; however, he soon realised that it was for the better to keep silence, since speaking about himself being a free man would only gain a lot of floggings "all his brutal blows could not force from my lips the foul lie that I was a slave" (ibid 45).

¹ During the antebellum era 1800-1865 the united states of America were divided into two countries (the north and the south), this reasons make them enemies, also slavery was the major problem between them, and in Solomon's story there are a few details about violence and colonialism of the north and the south.

Solomon was forced to change his name and forget his past, and change his personality from a free man to a slave man.

In another passage, Solomon was forced to work day and night without eating and sleeping, because masters were obliging their slaves to work or whip. "There I still stood in the noon-tide sun, groaning with pain. For long before daylight I had not eaten a morsel. I was growing faint from pain, and thirst and hunger" (Northup 120)

Solomon suffered from hunger, whipping, oppression and in general slavery, he was tired to stay in this situation, all those factors triggered his will to pay them back for all the mistreatment.

2.4.2.2. Revenge

After a thorough analysis of Solomon's story, researchers found a hint of a will to avenge all the mistreatment he had gone through. This idea seemed instinctive to Solomon, since he was born as a free man and was not fully aware of the gap that existed between black and white people; however, for those who were born as slaves, they lacked the pride of a human being that created that will to take revenge.

There was "a lurking devil" in my heart that prompted me to kill the human blood-hound on the spot—to retain the gripe on his accursed throat till the breath of life was gone! I dared not murder him, and I dared not let him live (ibid 135).

This statement was when Tibbeats used a hatchet to assault Solomon while Mr Ford was absent, but Solomon could not bear this violence, thus, he tried to kill him, however, he did not.

The same reaction occurred in another scene; after his friends rescued him, he went back to James H Burch in order to take his revenge in a lawful way; he used all the legal ways to make his capturers pay for their crimes. However, all his actions were in vain. Therefore, he returned to his family and spent the rest of his life in peace.

2.4.2.3. Freedom

When Solomon decided for the first time to write a letter, he requested the favour from a white labourer, who unfortunately betrayed him and told Mr Epps about his plans. Yet, Northup was cunning, he only requested a favour without handing the letter, and so if he were to be interrogated he would deny any accusations. Later on, a Canadian carpenter and abolitionist visited the plantation, so Solomon found his chance and trusted him with some letters. "My previous ill-fortune had taught me to be extremely cautious", "the great necessity of strict silence and secrecy" (Northup 269-271).

In these statements, Northup and his friends had to take some cautious measures to insure the success of freeing him, since not only Solomon would be punished if they were exposed, even Bass' life would be at stake. Northup, then, started to despair of ever gaining his freedom, until one day he was found and rescued by Henry B. Northup; a member of the same family that his father served.

Solomon found the reason of the delay between sending the letters and being freed. It appeared that his wife had to prove his freedom in front of the New York City government, and then Henry was named an official state agent to rescue Solomon. After gaining federal support from the Louisiana government and Supreme Court, Henry had only one obstacle, no one knew Solomon by his true name, and so locating him was a hard task to do. It was only by mere chance that they could finally find him.

The ending of his autobiography clarified the legal actions that occurred after finding him, and the obstacles they had to go through until they arrived to Washington. The story ended with Solomon's reunion with his wife Anne, his daughters and his grandchild that he had the chance to see them for the first time. Northup concluded his narrative with the following statement.

My narrative is at an end. I have no comments to make upon the subject of Slavery. Those who read this book may form their own opinions of the "peculiar institution." This is no fiction, no exaggeration. If I

have failed in anything, it has been in presenting to the reader too prominently But I forbear. Chastened and subdued in spirit by the sufferings I have borne, and thankful to that good Being through whose mercy I have been restored to happiness and liberty, I hope henceforward to lead an upright though lowly life, and rest at last in the church yard where my father sleeps (Northup 321)

Northup narrates every detail about slavery and masters, their behaviours and feelings. Solomon learned the feelings of freedom and the torment of slavery. His own experience has been the best story and a unique slave narrative ever told in African American literature.

2.5. Conclusion

Concisely, Solomon Northup was a slave narrator, a free African American who was kidnapped and sold into slavery. That experience made him one of the most recognised slave narrators whose writings were revolutionary.

Twelve Years a Slave was distinguished by its detailed description of slavery and plantation society, particularly being compared to the writer's previous life as a musician and a free citizen of New York City. During his enslavement, Solomon experienced many situations such as violence, otherness and dehumanisation that caused a trauma, which contributed in changing his psychology. Therefore, the idea of freedom was more significant to him than any time before.

Twelve Years a Slave was adapted into a feature film in 2013, which gave a clear image of Solomon's story and of African American life in the south during the antebellum era.

General Conclusion

General conclusion

Across the centuries, The United States of America survived through different eras, each one had its impact on the nation. One of the most significance was the antebellum era, in the 18th century, in which the issue of slavery held an important part in the economic and social life; thus a new literature came to light. The African American literature was used as a weapon in the hands of slaves to gain their freedom and prove their humanity to a prejudicial public.

As the United States turned from being an immature gathering of farmers into a massive economic power, new issues appeared, and so conflicts between the north and the south ripped the nation apart. At the time, slavery gained popularity among the American population, as the cotton industry grew more profits, the African Americans were kidnapped and sold as animals, and they had no right to defy the will of their masters.

In the first half of the 18th century, the gap between the north and the south grew even bigger, and the differences between the two sides were undeniable, the north took the pace of the world and created a civilisation where discrimination and prejudice held no place, as for the south, the population chose a more simple life of farmers, however on a deeper side of the southern life, the Americans took pleasure in the slave trade. During that conflict, certain movements appeared which dealt with the issues of slavery and civil rights.

The southern population was divided into three main classes: farmers, independent African Americans, who gained their freedom through their skills or those fortunate enough to have nice masters who freed them for a good deed; and enslaved African Americans: they were considered as a labour source, spending their whole life ripped of their humanity and were kept from anything that could lead to their freedom.

African American slave women had their share in literature as they wrote about their experiences in biographies, poems and essays, in order to show to the world about the sufferings they lived through.

In comparison with life in the south, the northern America was more civilised, as factories spread in big cities, education, transport and medicines were acquired easily compared to the south.

African American slaves found refuge in religion, as it gave them the hope that beyond all that suffering they'll find salvation in god's side.

The abolitionist movement had its impact before and during the civil war, as people from both the south and the north took part in it, not only white slaves were freed but also African American slaves, as the sole purpose of that movement was to eradicate slavery.

The civil war had two main reasons, the eradication of slavery and the preservation of state's rights, as the north under the leadership of Abraham Lincoln sought to stop slavery and create a united Nation, the south had opposite goals.

Even though the ideologies were different, people among the abolitionist movement fought for freedom, and they succeeded, however the price they paid was great, both sides sustained damage both in flesh and money.

In the 19th century, a new subgenre of the African American literature came to light, slave literature had the sole purpose of dealing with slavery issues, as the former slaves wrote about their sufferings, former slave masters wrote about their ideologies and opinions about slavery.

Many former slaves made their own autobiographies, and thus created the foundation of the African American literature, as they showed the world, for the first time, the will to be known and acknowledged by the others. In a simple and defined language, those writers proved their humanity in a world that deprived them of it.

As another means, poetry was used to captivate the readers and reach their hearts in a way that novels couldn't. During the civil war, many poems were written by various kinds of people to describe the events they lived through in that period.

Slave narratives, also called freedom narratives were former slaves who gained their freedom after a long suffering, and they wrote about their experiences. The most famous of them was: Frederick Douglas, a slave turned into an abolitionist and one of the greatest writers of his time. There was also William Grimes who was considered the first former slave writer, he fled from his master and made a name as a barber. As for Harriet Jacobs, she is known for being the first African American women writer, on another topic, Phillis Wheatley used poetry instead of novels to tell her own story. Besides those writers, many others had their parts in slave literature such as Harriet E Wilson and Charles Ball.

One of the most outstanding writers of that time is Solomon Northup. In only one novel: twelve years a slave, he described the power that slavery holds on one's self and on his surroundings, as he wrote about his life from being a free man to his fall into slavery, unlike most of the other writers, he also used his writings to tell the misfortune stories of his fellow slaves.

Born as free man, Solomon grew and lived a good life working in his family's farm, and even having the fortune of making a small family of his own. But his fortune came to an end, as he was kidnapped and sold into slavery. people were indifferent to the fact that he was a free man, all that mattered was that he became a mere merchandise. Luckily his first master was a kind man, but fate was not kinder to him, his second masters was anything but a kind man, he took pleasure in ripping his slaves of any shred of humanity. He endured a long time of suffering until he found hope in some letters he sent to his friends in the north and so after a long struggle he found his freedom and was reunited with his family once again.

During those years of slavery, Solomon went through all kinds of treatments that showed him his value in his master's eyes. Before his captivity he was not fully aware of the gap between white and black people, so his psychology took a great hit when he lost his freedom, all his morals and ethics fell to the ground. The treatment his peers went through and even he did not escape from his master's wrath, created a trauma that would have turned him into a mindless being however that only made his will and pride even stronger.

Solomon detailed the otherness that he came to know as a slave, which in his younger years, did not know the impact it could have on a person when confronted in a divided world. It made a scare in Solomon's mind as his image of the world changed into a different one.

Northup described in many occasions, the short moments he acted against his master's brutality, he had many chances to end his enslaver's life but in his opinion, if he had acted on the spur of the moment and took his life, then he would lose the humanity that he had protected for so long. And so Solomon kept himself from acting violently towards his master until he regained his freedom, he took the appropriate measures in front of the court to punish all those who had part in his enslavement however it was in vain.

With the help of his friends and the abolitionist movement, he became a free man once again and was reunited with his family for the first time in twelve years.

In this analysis, we learn about the United States' dark history, and the struggles its people had gone through. As for Solomon Northup's narrative, we deduce that all the betrayal, oppression, brutality and discrimination the author lived through could not break his will, and thus our conclusion is : our humanity is our foundation and cannot be erased under any circumstances.

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