

Appendix 3

ESTABLISHING A CIVIL WAR FILMOGRAPHY

Appendix 2 shows the number of Civil War films produced each year by Hollywood, from 1946-75, which, as far as can be ascertained, fit the criteria set out in Chapter I. Appendix 6 lists the films in chronological order. Appendices 1 and 5 do the same for the period 1908-45. Appendix 7 lists the films from 1976-99.

There are a number of problems in establishing a Civil War filmography. The first is that there is no agreed definition of what constitutes a Civil War film. In the early silent days the films focused on the war itself and rarely, until *The Birth of a Nation*, portrayed the Ante Bellum or the Reconstruction periods. With the advent of the Civil War western, most of the films focused on the post-war period and were located away from the South. Some historians talk about the 'Civil War era' and include the various versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the revived plantation films of the Blaxploitation era, while others include only films that involve an historical figure or event. It depends on the focus of the research. A film historian who is interested in race relations may not include westerns – or only those that have Native Americans as the racial 'other' – or a film historian interested in westerns will exclude films where the story is located in the South.

A second problem relates to identifying films that are about the Civil War. Copies of many silent films have been lost and are only known through indirect sources – magazines, letters, memoirs, etc. Use can be made of film reviews to identify films but the name of the film must be known beforehand. The two most comprehensive sources are the *New York Times* and *Variety*. Bound copies of their reviews going back to the early silent days are available in the British Film Institute library.

It was only with the establishment of the Hay's Office in 1922 that some central co-ordination existed across the industry. This was strengthened in 1934 when adherence to the Production Code became mandatory. However even copies of subsequent films have disappeared as there was no policy in Hollywood to retain a copy of each film until the early 1950s.¹

There is a third problem – that of assigning a film to a particular year. With all films requiring the approval of the Production Code Administration (PCA) a film has two possible dates: the date of PCA approval and the date of first exhibition. Film historians tend not to specify which date they have used although exhibition usually follows fairly quickly after approval. This thesis uses the date of approval, wherever possible, as this fits the argument that films relate to the context of their production.

There are a number of useful bibliographies specifically on Civil War films. Paul C. Spehr produced the first bibliography of Civil War films, *The Civil War in Motion Pictures*, in 1961 to coincide with the centennial and to mark the ‘growing importance of motion pictures as a form of documentation.’ Spehr includes feature films, *actualites*, newsreels, documentaries and educational films. It is a list of information about each film – he gives no commentary other than a brief description of the content or plot if it is a feature film. Jack Spears in his essay *The Civil War on the Screen* (1977) gives a commentary but it mainly addresses the narrative, production, directors and actors although he occasionally comments about the ‘questionable facts.’ Both these bibliographies have surprising omissions. For Spehr it is mainly in the post 1945 period while Spears omits more of the early silent films. When this occurs they have to be cross-referenced against other sources where possible. There are also some discrepancies between them as sometimes the same film is given a different date, film company, director and a slight change in the title. The latest survey of Civil War films is by Bruce Chadwick. His book, *The Reel Civil War* (2001), offering considerable commentary and analysis, covers the whole of the twentieth century, but concentrates on the early silent period and *Gone with the Wind*. It includes a large number of film titles but also contains discrepancies in its detail and information.

Other bibliographical works include Civil War films as part of a wider review. Frank Wetta and Stephen Curley have a chapter on the Civil War film in *Celluloid Wars*, their guide to America’s experience of war. Larry Langman and David Ebner focus on a century of southern films in their *Hollywood’s Image of the South* (1993). There are twenty chapters, including one on the Civil War, while those covering plantation life, slaves and slavery and Reconstruction are equally useful. Michael Pitt’s *Hollywood and American History* (1984) lists over 250 films with considerable detail of the films and including some history and social analysis. A more general cultural overview of the Civil War can be found in Steven Woodworth’s *American Civil War: A Handbook on Literature and*

Research (1996) with a section on films and television. Edward Campbell Jr.'s *The Celluloid South* (1981) and John Kirby's *Media-Made Dixie* (1978), integrate literature and film against the political and social context while Kenneth Cameron in *America on Film* (1997) concentrates more on the relationship between narrative and film.

Since the 1960s Hollywood's representation of race has attracted increasing interest and analysis. Three books, which do this and include many Civil War films, are Donald Bogle's *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks* and Thomas Cripps's, *Slow Fade to Black* (1977) and *Making Movies Black* (1993). Looking specifically at African American representation these books are a valuable source of Civil War film titles as are those that analyse the iconic American film – the western. John Lenihan's *Showdown* (1980) is particularly useful but any books on this genre will unearth films that are not generally known.

There are a number of glossy film books - the best of which is Roy Kinnard's *The Blue and the Gray* (1996). About eighty films are briefly reviewed in this 'pictorial history' but it contains little, or nothing, of the 'careful analysis of how each movie reflected the period in which it was made' as the dust-jacket claims. It does have a list of Civil War films of the Silent Era (1903-29) in an appendix. In addition there are a number of film and video guides published annually. Especially useful is Halliwell's *Film and Video Guide*, which gives a brief synopsis of each of the films and tries to date them by the year of first showing – 'an onerous and debatable task.' Another guide, *Videhound's Golden Movie Retriever*, covers the same ground and has a useful Category Index, which includes 'Civil War,' 'Civil Rights,' and 'Slavery.' Although it only lists films that are available on video and DVD – unlike Halliwell's guide – more and more films are now becoming available in these formats and therefore makes this guide increasingly useful.

With the development of the internet, access is easily available to detailed data bases and other information about film. Particularly useful is the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) which has details about filmmakers, cast lists, tag lines, genre type, film length and country of origin although synopses and comments on the films are submitted by subscribers. It provides another source to check titles, dates, etc. but also has the same deficiencies as those noted above. Academic and other institutions, especially in the United States, are another sources of films and can be accessed through the internet. Particularly useful are

the Library of Congress and the University of California Los Angeles or any other institutions that are depositories of film archives, for example the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In the United Kingdom the British Film Institute is the main source.

¹ Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1985), 45.