

Chapter 3

‘MOONLIGHT AND MAGNOLIA’: CIVIL WAR FILMS FROM 1908-1941`

*What the American public always wants is a tragedy with a happy ending.*¹

To understand the cultural implications of Hollywood’s representation of the Civil War after World War II it is essential to look at its approach during the previous four decades. In that period Hollywood not only established an image of the Civil War but reinforced views of race and national identity that confirmed the exclusion of many of its citizens from their civil rights.

The period from 1908 to World War II saw the production of several hundred Civil War films including the two best known and financially most successful – *The Birth of a Nation* (*Birth*) and *Gone with the Wind* (*GWTW*).² The vast majority, however, were produced during the first decade, which coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the Civil War (1911-15).³ Filmmakers saw an opportunity to join in the remembrance and the public was eager to see those not too distant visions of the past. (Fifty years later Hollywood’s approach to the hundredth anniversary would be very different.) During these decades the films were consistent in their presentation of white supremacy imbued with nostalgia for a once stable, agrarian civilisation. However the experience of the 1930s – economic hardship and the rise of fascism – began to change Hollywood’s outlook.

The Early Films

There is a certain irony in that the American Civil War achieved popularity with an audience that most likely knew little of American history. The early story films reflected the hardships, struggles and losses that the immigrants had experienced and Civil War films had similar themes with family-centred dramas of suffering, hardship, separation and reunion.⁴ The Progressives too could applaud the values that these films demonstrated. They could provide moral uplift to the immigrants and working classes and educate the potential citizens in American values. There were no sex scenes or innuendoes as all relationships tended towards the ideal and romantic. True love and sacrifice ruled. Heroes and heroines were committed to a cause. Violence was limited mainly to battle scenes. If

there was cowardice, it was either dealt with by the family, or the coward was redeemed. Compassion could be shown to enemies, as they were all Americans. Honour, integrity, patriotism, duty, coping with adversity - all had a place.

The rise of the Civil War film followed the rise of American patriotism, imperialism and national identity. In 1897 the American Flag Association was founded and soon the Stars and Stripes was flying on public buildings and in school classrooms. The Spanish-American War brought the country together for the first time since the Civil War and accelerated the movement towards reconciliation that had been developing - especially between the veterans of North and South. This combination of patriotism, reconciliation and identity reached its apotheosis with the semi-centennial celebrations when the Southern President, Woodrow Wilson, declared that 'we have found one another again as brothers and comrades.....our battles long past, the quarrel forgotten.'⁵ The 'brothers and comrades' here were white brothers and white comrades. The African American veterans were excluded in the same way as they had been excluded from the victory celebrations in 1865. The nation was conceived and defined in solely white terms. As Gary Gerstle argues, there were 'two powerful and contradictory ideals.....that decisively shaped the history of the American nation in the twentieth century – civic nationalism and racial nationalism.' At the beginning of the twentieth century it was racial nationalism that was far more powerful.⁶

This racial nationalism was supported by the development of Social Darwinism and the emerging 'scientific' theories of race, which graded races not only by colour but also by location. Even European immigrants were graded.⁷ Race mixing through miscegenation was seen as race suicide. 'Indiscriminate mixing,' Theodore Roosevelt said, 'would inevitably lower a race's intelligence, morals and courage.'⁸ This was directed not only against African Americans but towards all non-white races.⁹ Most northern historians accepted the 'scientific' explanation of race that indicated that African Americans were inferior.¹⁰ They also accepted the conclusions of James Ford Rhodes that while slavery was the sole cause of the war it was also due to circumstances outside human control, and Reconstruction had been a colossal mistake.¹¹ The Southern apologists who had created the myth of the Lost Cause were rewarded, for by the early 1900s their view had come to dominate all forms of popular culture.

These early Civil War films set the framework, the imagery and the general perception of the Civil War in popular culture for the next six decades. Hollywood had quickly discovered that the more romantic, noble and heroic ideals to be found in the defeated South were attractive to both North and South.¹² Southerners, who started the war, were generally portrayed as the heroic underdogs. Many films centred on wealthy Southern families, slave-holders living in mansions or on plantations with the war intruding into their ordered, civilised life of 'moonlight and magnolias.'

The southern man was a man of honour, integrity, courage, chivalry and responsibility – encapsulated in the Southern code of conduct. A Southern man did his duty without question. He was fearless and loyal to the cause. Anything less would bring shame on the family.¹³ Heroism, death, or sacrifice to the sacred cause demonstrated the commitment of all Southerners to their ideals. Tracing the way that Hollywood represented this Southern code over the years indicates the changes in attitudes to the South and to the Civil War.

Southern women became heroines by delivering messages, acting as spies, or carrying out missions which ended in sacrifice for the Confederate cause.¹⁴ They were also presented as the ideal woman, loyal, loving and supportive who had to be protected from the roughness of the Northern forces and the unseen but ever present threat of rape by the uncivilised African Americans. Rape was not represented in Civil War films before *Birth* but it was implied from the earliest days of film. Many of the films ended in some form of reunion or reconciliation within the family or between families previously at war, signifying the reunion of the nation.¹⁵

African American inferiority was continually reinforced through the medium of popular culture and through its consumption - they were forced to sit in segregated areas in most theatres in the north as well as throughout the south.¹⁶ It is little wonder then that the early cinema reflected African Americans in a demeaning, stereotypical fashion in what film catalogues categorised as 'coon' films.¹⁷ They were presented as happy, helpful and smiling, always present to serve, defend and die for their masters and mistresses.¹⁸ They were loyal supporters who were at ease with their status and fearful if it was going to change. Not only were African Americans loyal to the point of death they were also presented as asexual creatures – the males obsequious, the females large and motherly - seeming to have no real relationship or life between them: their only role was to serve.¹⁹

This was another Lost Cause myth - the faithful servant – popularised from the 1890s with tributes in the *Confederate Veteran* magazine and with proposals to erect formal monuments in their honour.²⁰

In those early years when Hollywood was creating its version of the Civil War, it rarely, if at all, represented the repressive side of slavery, the Abolition movement, miscegenation or Reconstruction. There was no need to examine the lives of the slaves as they were of no consequence while slavery was presented as the caring and beneficial institution that the African Americans needed.²¹ To show the other side would have reversed the cultural image and done significant damage to whole process of reconciliation. Abolitionists were ignored until Griffith used them at the beginning of *Birth* to justify his view of the causes of the war.²² He portrays them as stern, unbending figures who used the African Americans as propaganda for their misguided cause. Miscegenation however, touched on the deepest psychological and racial views of the Southern cause in which ‘one drop of blood’ would determine a person’s racial category. This attitude embraced the Lost Cause ideal of the pure Southern woman who had to be protected from the monstrous, rapacious, animal-like ‘brutal black buck.’²³ The irony of this argument was that it had not stopped white males from fathering mulatto children, generally by rape, and creating a ‘mongrelised’ race of light-skinned African Americans.²⁴

Before *Birth* few films addressed the Reconstruction period.²⁵ This was a difficult subject in an era of white, national reconciliation since it would have to deal with the continuing subjugation of the South by northern whites or by their southern white and black scalawag accomplices. In *Birth*, although the narrative is centred on one Southern family, the film examines the immediate period of the Reconstruction era in more general, and therefore national, terms.²⁶ However what distinguishes *Birth* from other Civil War films was the presentation of the fear of black domination, rape and intermarriage. Freeing the slaves therefore, opened up society to anarchy and chaos - the complete break down of the social structure and the death of the white race and civilisation.²⁷ Griffith’s answer was the Ku Klux Klan, which saves the South (America) from the corruption and anarchy of black rule.²⁸

The film’s most significant legacy was to establish the racial images of whiteness and white supremacy for the audience. Miscegenation was not seen again in Civil War films

for forty years. The film transported the sectional myth of the South into a myth of white American nationalism, which, reinforced by similar films, became part of white memory, for several decades.²⁹ The film received the backing of the Progressives, while the National Board of Review applauded its 'historical accuracy and educational value.'³⁰ It was also a boon to the film industry, which had been seeking to attract the middle class.

Ironically, *Birth* aided the civil rights movement, as it became the first film to create a national protest led by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Although the protests had only limited success, they helped to heighten black awareness and identity across the country and ensured that controversy would follow the film wherever and whenever it would be shown.³¹ While rumours circulated in the 1930s, and again in the 1950s, that a remake was being considered it has never been remade. Additionally, their protests ensured that there would not be any further representation of the sexually aggressive black buck until the Blaxploitation movies over fifty years later. Racism, race and intermarriage disappeared from the screen leaving only the faithful 'good souls' and the comic roles, which greatly reduced the extent of African American representation in Hollywood films.³² But the issue of race continued on screen both through its absence and through the stereotypical representations of African Americans.

World War I and decline

Interest in Civil War films declined sharply in 1917 and did not pick up again until the depths of the Depression. Once war was declared Hollywood fully supported the cause of national unity. After the war there were new heroes to be remembered, another group of veterans to honour. Filmmakers too must have wondered how they could follow Griffith's *Birth*.³³ Besides, society was changing.

Hollywood's idealised and romantic representation of male/female relationships in Civil War films was contrary to everyday experiences. Young middle class women were 'discarding Victorian sexual morality' and breaking out of the moral codes of their parents' generation, by going out to work in increasing numbers, being more independent and now had the vote.³⁴ In the year that *Birth* showcased the sanctification of marriage as the highest Christian ideal, a survey recorded that 60% of exhibitors wanted more *risqué* pictures.³⁵ A Paramount memo stated, that '(w)hat the public demands, today is modern

stuff with plenty of clothes, rich sets and action. Nothing prior to the Civil War should be filmed.’³⁶ With modernity and sex high on the agenda both the plot and the social relevance of the Civil War movie were rapidly becoming outdated.

In the 1920s the studios saw women as their main audience. War movies, were avoided: Civil War movies are, by definition, war movies. The ‘woman’s picture’ became a selling point and surveys seemed to support this.³⁷ Women too were the subject of what Steven Ross calls ‘cross-class fantasy films,’ which stressed class harmony as everyone sought the benefits of a capitalist economy. This was a long way from the Civil War messages of class exclusiveness in a static, agricultural, slave-based economy.³⁸

The experiences of World War I must have changed perceptions of what war was all about. It was no longer a nostalgic episode, or a subject for ‘genteel lovers’ or a triumphal romp in Cuba but a hard slog of death and mud with increasingly powerful weapons of destruction.³⁹ Nor did it last long enough to alter the inherent racism in the army or improve race relations in general. Many African Americans who left the south to work in northern factories found that competition for jobs and housing soon created hostility, as did the stationing of African American troops in the south.⁴⁰ With a background of race riots and lynchings in a country supposedly united, plantation films of the Civil War and its era would hardly help the war effort.⁴¹ African American soldiers, who had patriotically enrolled, returned home to an unchanged South - a situation that was to be repeated after World War II.

Nevertheless Civil War films continued to be made. Between 1919 and 1933 there were thirty-three releases and three re-releases of *Birth* – the last one in 1930 with an added sound track. Griffith had obviously taken some of the criticism to heart because he changed the ending of the film to incorporate the national anthem and a colour shot of the American flag. The Klan had been displaced as the symbol of bringing forth the new nation by far more universal and acceptable symbols. This was an early indication of change – though not very much in the representation of race relations - in how Hollywood was beginning to modify its version of the Civil War.

In the same year that Griffith released his revised *Birth* he also released *Abraham Lincoln*.⁴² This treated Lincoln as the saviour of the Union – a logical follow on from

Lincoln's death, which was portrayed in *Birth* as the great tragedy for the South. Three years later the first film of *Little Women* was released at the cusp of the Depression and the New Deal. Here, a family was faced with having to make the best of a fall in their income in a time of war, but they still performed charitable tasks for those who were less well off. It did not matter that the film was set in a Northern town as the war was but the faint background to a show of traditional family values – it could equally have been set in a Southern town without impairing the message. The whole country could share in the family's sense of togetherness as America tried to cope with the effects of the Depression.

Revival: 1934-41

It was Roosevelt's election that indirectly re-ignited Hollywood's interest in the Civil War, which continued until the attack on Pearl Harbor. Roosevelt restored faith in America and provided a vision of national unity through the New Deal. Hollywood responded by abandoning the social realism films of the early 1930s and replacing them with musicals and nostalgia. Its films reaffirmed faith in the American system and values.⁴³ In doing so Hollywood revived the past and the past included the Civil War.⁴⁴ Civil War films had values that had seemed to be abandoned during the 1920s.

At the same time there was additional pressure on the film industry from the Catholic Church to produce family friendly films. Under this pressure, and Hollywood's own financial crisis, Hollywood decided to direct 'its enormous powers of persuasion to preserving the basic moral, social and economic tenets of traditional American culture' by fully implementing the Production Code.⁴⁵ The Code ensured that controversial issues, or anything that might criticise the country and its institutions or damage exports, were avoided, softened or changed.⁴⁶

The Production Code gave the film industry a set of moral standards. However, these not only presented a distorted view of America to America and to the rest of the world, but also gave Hollywood the perfect excuse as to why it need not tackle particular subjects, or why it presented them in a particular way. In addition it was inherently racist. It prohibited 'white-slavery' but not black slavery; 'miscegenation' - but that excluded the many millions of mulattos who were the product of miscegenation; profanity – even 'damn' – but not 'Nigger'; and 'the sale of women, or a woman selling her virtue' but not the sale of

women into or within slavery.⁴⁷ The irony of this institutional racism was that it was accepted by the ethnic minority (Jewish) producers who were themselves subject to racism (anti-Semitism). At the same time many Jewish activists were in the forefront of pressing for civil rights for the African Americans.

America in the 1930s needed examples of her former greatness and the means to recover it. Setting examples in a nostalgic past removed them from direct criticism of the present. *Little Women* extolled the family. *Judge Priest* (1934) was a whimsical, reconciliationist look at how a small Border State town resolved its conflicting loyalties whilst retaining its memory of the war. It both re-enacted and turned history on its head with a southern judge defending false accusations of rape against a young African American and defeating the modernising northern lawyer in an election.⁴⁸ While films like *So Red the Rose* (1935) and *GWTW* ended in defeat for the South, they both showed the resilience and courage of white Americans, who, in defeat, were able to face the future and rebuild their lives, not by collective action, but through the hard work of the individual and the family.

With the return of the Civil War film came the return of the southern racial myths. However, Hollywood began to take a slightly different view of race in the mid-1930s. African Americans became more visible, with more rounded and varied roles, with speaking parts and easy relationships with the white characters.⁴⁹ While most remained servants, some were shown helping the war effort as *In Hearts in Bondage* (1936).⁵⁰ The nearest that Hollywood came to a slave insurrection was in *So Red the Rose*. With Union troops close to the plantation, the slaves refuse to work. 'All this is yours,' says Cato, one of the field hands. However, Valette, the daughter of the plantation owner, persuades them that the Yankees will make them work whether they are free or not and appeals to their former harmonious past. This defuses the situation and they follow her back to the house in one mass of singing nostalgia. Not only has white supremacy been vindicated and restored but also the limitations of the New Deal welfare programmes have been exposed. People cannot get something for nothing: welfare support, like freedom from slavery, is a temporary measure. The future depends on work, responsibility and organisation. Hollywood was fully behind the New Deal. Valette's attitude towards the African Americans is the same as that of Shirley Temple in her two Civil War films of 1935 – *The Little Colonel* and *The Littlest Rebel*: African Americans are basically children at heart who need to be handled with firmness and sweetness. And there is the loyal, faithful slave

in *Rainbow on the River* (1936) in which, reminiscent of *His Trust Fulfilled* (1911), she cares for the orphaned boy of her former white master until relatives in New York find him and he is forced to move north.

Whilst many of these Civil War films were still full of the Old South mythology the Civil War western began in 1937.⁵¹ Setting the Civil War in the west started the process of removing the ‘moonlight and magnolia’ image. It also heralded a change of class emphasis away from the aristocratic planters to the more ‘democratic’ classes of working people – a change that would be taken up fully after 1945. Of the six films produced (1937-39) the most outrageously Reconstructionist in its Southern sentiments was *The Texans* with images straight out of *Birth*. After a damning, pro-South statement about Reconstruction, a drunken African American soldier staggers along a pavement forcing an elderly couple off the sidewalk, while others are shown gambling at cards on a confiscated grand piano.⁵² A later scene shows carpetbaggers planning how to squeeze more taxes and profits out of the defeated South. At the end, reconciliation is achieved through the mutual respect of the Union officer and the Confederate hero who together push a wagon out of a river. But even here the southern view is being changed when a plan to start a guerrilla force – like the Ku Klux Klan – is called by the southern heroine, who had been prominent in trying to continue the war, ‘childish..... this is America, we govern by law not by night riding.’⁵³ This a-historical statement reflected more on the rise of fascism in Europe and was designed as a warning to America. The way that African Americans were depicted was obviously not relevant.

Griffith’s film lay like a shadow over the filmmakers. David O. Selznick admitted that he had considered remaking *Birth* around the end of 1935 but decided against it because of the need to represent the Klan in a way that would not meet with the current perceptions of the ‘Klan of our times.’⁵⁴ When it came to producing *GWTW*, Selznick struggled with the book’s representations of race, the white South, its Ante Bellum myths, the treatment of the Union army and Reconstruction. Selznick resolved this by toning down the more extreme racialism in the book and even by reversing events.⁵⁵ Running through the film is the commentary from both Scarlett and Rhett about the ‘sham and shame’ of the Old South.⁵⁶ This is a radical departure for Civil War films as it attacks the South’s fundamental beliefs and shows that underneath good manners, the feelings of superiority and the honour codes there is hollowness, self-deception and hypocrisy. There is a further

departure when, in the discussion on the possibility of war, Scarlett's father admits that slavery is the cause of the poor relations between North and South.⁵⁷

GWTW is the watershed in Civil War films. While covering the same ground as *Birth* it had a different focus. *Birth* looked back to reproduce the past in the future. In *GWTW* there is no going back. There is only the way forward - the way that Scarlett takes. She is not afraid to labour in the fields or go into trade. She takes the New Deal way of getting a little help in order to succeed. She pokes her nose at the southern code, which puts honour and dignity above realism and success. She is the New South just as she is the 'new woman' of the twentieth century. Her struggles to survive the destruction all around her must have resonated with all those who had to cope with the years of Depression - and America in 1939 was still depressed. Ironically it would take another war to lift the economic gloom.

The film's impact was staggering. Unlike the failed 'epic' *So Red the Rose*, which had been shunned by northern audiences, *GWTW* was universally applauded.⁵⁸ It caused problems for the African Americans and liberals. Whilst it could be castigated for its traditional southern interpretation, the racism had been toned down and the prominence of the black actors was welcomed as a significant shift in Hollywood's racial attitude.⁵⁹ As Donald Bogle comments the black actors had 'transformed their slaves into complex human beings.'⁶⁰ The film seemed to reflect the times. America had survived the nadir of the Depression and was rebuilding. Scarlett therefore represented not only the South, but the country in her fight for survival, in her determination 'never to be hungry again.' 'The film shows,' says Edward Campbell, 'that a society strong in its beliefs can survive anything.'⁶¹

GWTW's success seemed to herald a renewed interest in the Civil War genre. The 'plantation' film appeared to be back. So stirred were the aged trio of Griffith, Aitken and Dixon that they considered a sound and colour version of *Birth* to rival *GWTW*.⁶² But it was not to be. The war in Europe was impinging ever closer. Roosevelt's victory in the 1940 elections dealt a severe blow to the isolationists who wanted America to keep out of the war. The two years following *GWTW* saw Hollywood not only helping to prepare America for war but continuing to change its approach to the Civil War. The underlying theme became unity with Hollywood turning to its favourite icon Lincoln⁶³ whilst the *Santa Fe Trail* (1940) – about John Brown - for all its many faults, became a warning

about fanaticism.⁶⁴ More significantly the films were becoming pro-North in their sympathies and were beginning to show southern characters as villains and traitors.⁶⁵ This can be seen in *Stagecoach* (1939) where the southern 'gentleman,' the immaculately dressed aristocratic Hatfield, 'a notorious gambler,' represents the 'fag-end of southern gentility.'⁶⁶ He lives under an assumed name, treats everyone, except the southern lady, with disdain and is the only one to be killed.

For the African Americans the changing economic circumstances, and then the war, became another opportunity to demonstrate their patriotism and their citizenship. Participating in America's wars was not about supporting white America, as the slaves had done in *GWTW* when they marched through Atlanta on the way to dig fortifications, but to fight against the forces of racism at home and abroad. The different political outlook of the 1930s recharged the civil rights movement and on the outbreak of World War II it was stronger than it had been for twenty years. During the war the NAACP gained many more supporters and won some notable victories in the courts.⁶⁷ Even the army, under pressure from the liberals in the Roosevelt administration, began to acknowledge that it had to change its attitude to the African American troops. African Americans gained respect and self-esteem and also benefited from the upturn in the economy. They looked forward to maintaining these gains when peace resumed. After Pearl Harbor, Hollywood all but stopped producing Civil War films although *GWTW* continued to be shown. If Hollywood was to resume its interest in the Civil War when peace came would it return to the formula of its most successful film or would it take an entirely different approach?

¹ William Dean Howells, *Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 1990, quoted in Eric Foner, *Who Owns History? Rethinking the Past in a Changing World* (New York: Wang and Hill, 2002), 191.

² Both films were adapted from popular novels: *The Clansman* by Thomas Dixon, published in 1905 and *GWTW* by Margaret Mitchell, published in 1936. Griffith only used *The Clansman* in the second part of *Birth* – on the Reconstruction period.

³ The majority of these films were one-reelers, and lasted no more than fifteen minutes.

⁴ Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 494.

⁵ Quoted in David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 11.

⁶ Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 4.

⁷ The Anglo-Saxons and the Nordic peoples were considered superior to all other Europeans. Southern Italians, for example, were seen, especially in the South, as closely resembling African Americans and called ‘white-skinned negroes.’ Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 175.

⁸ Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 3-6.

⁹ Lewis L. Gould, *America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1914* (Harlow, England: Longman, 2001), 23.

¹⁰ Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The ‘Objectivity Question’ and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, first published 1988), 75-6.

¹¹ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 357-8. But those in control of the history syllabuses in the South would not accept versions that did not accord with the Lost Cause myths. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 295-9.

¹² Celia Elizabeth O’Leary, ‘“Blood Brothers:” The Racialisation of Patriotism, 1865-1918’ in John Bodnar, (ed.), *Bonds of Affection: Americans Define their Patriotism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 78.

¹³ Cowardice in battle was particularly heinous as shown in such films as *The House with Closed Shutters* (1911) and *The Honor of His Family* (1910). It was also related to alcohol, which reflected the temperance campaign by the Progressives, and led to the Eighteenth (Prohibition) Amendment in 1919.

¹⁴ In such films as *A Special Messenger* (1911), *Nan, the Girl Spy* series (1909-12), and *The Price of Victory* (1914).

¹⁵ In such films as *A Dixie Mother* (1910) and *One Flag at Last* (1911).

¹⁶ In 1913 a ‘colored’ woman who refused to sit in the balcony of the Victoria Theatre, Rochester, New York, lost her suit to defend her civil rights to sit where she wanted. The balcony was reserved for ‘Italians and the rougher elements.’ Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema*, 9-10.

¹⁷ ‘Coon’ is an American term meaning a raccoon, a sly fellow, as well as a pejorative term for a Negro. Examples of these are *Dancing Darkies* (1896), *Watermelon Contest* (1899), *A Night in Blacksville* (1900), *Shooting Craps* (1900), *The Chicken Thief* (1904), *Nigger in the Woodpile* (1904) and *Avenging a Crime or Burned at the Stake* (1904).

¹⁸ There are a comparatively large number of such films including: *The Confederate Spy* (1910); *Uncle Peter’s Ruse* (1911); *Hearts and Flags* (1911); *Mammy’s Ghost* (1911); *None Can do More* (1912); *A Gentle Volunteer* (1912); *Old Mammy’s Secret Code* (1913); *A Slave’s Devotion* (1914); *In the Fall of ’64* (1914).

¹⁹ In films such as *The Old Oak’s Secret* (1914), and *His Trust* and *His Trust Fulfilled* (1911).

²⁰ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 284-91.

²¹ The Southern historian Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, even proposed the reintroduction of slavery in 1904. Hugh Tulloch, *The Debate on the American Civil War Era* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 37.

²² Abolitionists were rarely represented – apart from the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* films and the two John Brown films – *Santa Fe Trail* (1940) and *Seven Angry Men* (1955).

²³ Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretative History of Blacks in American Films, New Third Edition* (Oxford: Roundhouse, 1994, first published 1973), 10-14.

²⁴ There were a few, non-Civil War, films that examined miscegenation in which the heroine – it never applied to the hero – finds that she has Negro blood and has to give up her white lover as in *The Crimson Stain* (1913) and *A Gentle Volunteer* (1916) in which the heroine dies protecting her lover, and in *The Bride of Hate* (1916), in which a white man is tricked into marrying a light-skinned mulatto.

²⁵ *Swords and Hearts* (1911); *His Trust Fulfilled* (1911); *An Orphan of the War* (1913); *My Fighting Gentleman* (1917).

²⁶ The story concerns two families, the Camerons from the South and the Stonemans from the North but the film is related through the experiences of the Camerons and is mainly set in the South.

²⁷ Robert A. Armour, 'History Written in Jagged Lightning: The Realistic South Versus the Romantic South in Birth of a Nation' in Warren French, (ed.), *The South and Film* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1981), 16.

²⁸ Ironically, for a further thirty years, Griffith's means of saving the white race, the Ku Klux Klan, in Civil War films was either eliminated or only hinted at. This is an interesting comment on Hollywood's perceptions about race relations since the Klan's ride to rescue white America at the end of *Birth* was considered one of the most exciting and significant episodes in the film.

²⁹ Quotations are inter-titles from *Birth*.

³⁰ Michael Rogin, 'The Sword Becomes a flashing Vision: D. W. Griffith and The Birth of a Nation' in Robert Lang, (ed.), *The Birth of a Nation: D. W. Griffith, Director* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 276.

³¹ Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Film: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Ewing, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 195-213. Staiger follows this through to the late 1960s.

³² Terry Christensen, *Reel Politics: American Political Movies from Birth to Platoon* (New York: Blackwell, 1987), 19.

³³ The film company, Selig, attempted to do this with the twelve-reeler *The Crisis* in 1916 – the longest and most expensive film that company had made. It relates the Civil War from a northern perspective with honest disagreements over slavery. Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black*, 124. On the whole it was 'a slow and disappointing film.' Spears, *The Civil War on the Screen and Other Essays*, 45-48.

³⁴ Lary May, *Screening Out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and Motion Picture Industry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 202. Women's suffrage was achieved by the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, August 1920.

³⁵ A survey carried out for Universal Pictures and reported in *Motion Picture Weekly*. Kevin Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence* (London: Johnathan Cape, 1990), 8.

³⁶ Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900-1942* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977, reprinted 1993), 137, gives the date as 1918, but Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies, Revised and Updated* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994, first published 1975), 94, gives 1917.

³⁷ Melvyn Stokes, 'The Civil War in the Movies,' in Susan-Mary Grant and Peter J. Parish, (eds.), *Legacy of Disunion: The Enduring Significance of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 68.

³⁸ Steven J. Ross, 'The Rise of Hollywood: Movies, Ideology, and Audiences in the Roaring Twenties', in Steven J. Ross (ed.), *Movies and American Society* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 67, 80.

³⁹ Evelyn Ehrlich, 'The Civil War in Early Film: Origin and Development of a Genre' in Warren French, (ed.), *The South and Film* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1981).

⁴⁰ About 330,000 African Americans moved North during World War I, Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 89.

⁴¹ There were major race riots in East St. Louis, Illinois in July and in Houston, Texas in September 1917.

⁴² Griffith's interest was stimulated by the success of Carl Sandburg's, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1926).

⁴³ By 1933 nearly one-third of all theatres had been closed, prices were down a third and audiences were 25% lower than the high point of 1930. Of the eight majors Paramount was in bankruptcy, RKO and Universal in receivership and Fox under reorganisation. Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 162.

⁴⁴ Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 189-94. Sklar also says that the 'majority of important money-making pictures had little to do with contemporary life. While this is true of the subject in Civil War films the present e.g. the New Deal certainly did.

⁴⁵ Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 161-4, 175.

⁴⁶ This was particularly true in regard to films, which had a left-wing bias such as *Black Fury* (1935) and *Blockade* (1938).

⁴⁷ Leonard J. Leff and Jerold L. Simmons, *Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship and the Production Code* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 285-90.

⁴⁸ As exemplified in the Scottsboro case.

⁴⁹ There was an increase in the number of African American parts from 1927 to 1940. Their voices were more suited to the new sound medium and they had music and rhythm as well. Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks*, 26.

⁵⁰ Helping in the construction of the Union gunboat *Monitor*.

⁵¹ If one disregards the Jesse James/Quantrill films, the earliest western that has some relationship to the Civil War appears to be *The California Mail* (1929).

⁵² 'There is no period in the life of any nation so disorganised as that which follows a great war. History calls it the 'Reconstruction Period' yet it was an era of lawlessness – of smouldering hates – of oppression. The American Civil War was waged for a great ideal. But hardly had the smoke of battle cleared before the ideal was forgotten. The South was ruled as a conquered enemy. Northern politicians wallowed in an orgy of power – of plunder by organised mobs – of tribute, of tyranny and death.'

⁵³ 1938 was the seventy-fifth anniversary of Gettysburg and was the last major celebration of that battle with veterans present.

⁵⁴ David O. Selznick in a memo to the screen writer Sidney Howard, then working on *GWTW*, 6 Jan. 1937. Available from: xroads.virginia.edu (accessed 11 May, 2005).

⁵⁵ The Klan is never mentioned nor is Rhett Butler's killing of an African American. Scarlett is attacked by a white man and it is the African American, Big Sam, previously the foreman of her field hands, who saves her. A watermelon scene was removed as was the word 'nigger.' The North only appears in the guise of

carpetbaggers and scalawags and the Union army is represented by one 'deserter' soldier, whom Scarlett kills.

⁵⁶ Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks*, 88.

⁵⁷ 'It's time we made them understand that we'll keep our slaves with or without their approval.'

⁵⁸ Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black*, 360.

⁵⁹ Hattie McDaniel received an Oscar for her performance as Mammy.

⁶⁰ Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks*, 88.

⁶¹ E. D. C. Campbell, *The Celluloid South* (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee, 1981), 134.

⁶² Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black*, 68.

⁶³ *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939), *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1940) as well as the twenty-one minute short *Lincoln in the White House* (1939). He is also seen in the pro-South *Virginia City* (1940), telling the Southern belle who had come to plead for her Northern lover's life that 'we are not enemies but friends.'

⁶⁴ Bowsley Crowther commented, in the *New York Times*, 21 December, 1940 about this film on John Brown, that 'for anyone who has the slightest regard for the spirit – not to mention the facts – of American history it will prove exceedingly annoying.'

⁶⁵ In such films as *Colorado* (1940) and *Dark Command* (1940).

⁶⁶ Edward Buscombe, *Stagecoach* (London: BFI Publishing, 1992), 24.

⁶⁷ *Smith v. Allwright* 1944 by the Supreme Court. This was seen as a 'Second Emancipation' and voter registration efforts were stepped up across the South. Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 200-1.